

THE PRIVATE TUTORING EPIDEMICS

REPORT OF PRIVATE TUTORING MONITORING IN AZERBAIJAN

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Private tutoring is not a new phenomenon in Azerbaijan. It existed during the Soviet period (1918-1991), survived the Nagorno Karabagh conflict (1988-1994),¹ and has blossomed during the post-1991 period of Azerbaijan’s independence and transformation. While private tutoring has persisted throughout these turbulent times, the social perception of private tutoring has evolved. Reflecting on the differences in public perception of private tutoring during the Soviet period and after independence, a veteran literature teacher from Baku noted that “during the Soviet period private tutoring was a shameful activity, which students were hiding from others. Today, students are bragging about how many private tutors they hire.” Remarkably, private tutoring moved from being associated with a student’s academic ineptitude during the Soviet period, to symbolizing a student’s intellectual sophistication and economic status in the post-Soviet context.

While private tutoring has been a neglected topic of education policy analysis in Azerbaijan, its importance has been increasingly recognized. The role of private tutoring has become particularly important in the context of increased demand for higher education during the transformation period. Given the strong linkage between education and the employment market, private tutoring is often seen as one of the best investments that parents can make for their children’s future. In addition to the “diploma disease,” higher education has increasingly appealed to Azerbaijan’s youth for other reasons, including the possibility of avoiding army recruitment among male students. According to the State Student Admission Commission (SSAC, 2004), the number of applicants for higher education admission examinations had more than doubled since 1992, rising from 40,000 in that year to 77,000 in 2000 and over 90,000 in 2004. Of the 70 percent of secondary school graduates who applied for higher education entry examinations in 2004, only 26.4 percent were able to gain places (SSAC, 2004). In this context of rising demand for higher education and limited opportunity, many secondary school students see private tutoring as a valuable way to advance to higher education.

While private tutoring may have many positive effects, such as increasing human capital, providing constructive after-school activities for students, and generating additional income for tutors (often under-paid teachers), it also produces a number of negative effects. For example, private tutoring may distort the public school curricula, put pressure on students, exacerbate social inequities, and facilitate the spread of corruption in the education

system. In the context of educational decentralization and free market reforms in Azerbaijan, should private tutoring be welcomed or controlled? Is it a useful complement to mainstream schools or the sign of a rapidly deteriorating education system? This chapter analyzes the complexity of the private tutoring phenomenon in Azerbaijan, examines its consequences for the education system, and identifies challenges that confront education stakeholders and policy-makers as they decide how to respond to this rapidly changing, although hardly new, phenomenon.

This study is the first in Azerbaijan to document thoroughly the general characteristics of private tutoring (scale, cost, geographic spread, and subjects), the main factors underlying the demand for private tutoring (quality of secondary education, higher education entrance examinations, and education financing), and the educational, social and economic impact of private tutoring on the education system. The study draws from both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data result from a survey of 913 first year university students and 1,019 secondary school students from different regions of Azerbaijan, including the capital Baku and more rural areas of Ganja and Lenkaran. Qualitative data derive from document analysis, focus group discussions, and interviews with students, parents, teachers, tutors, and education officials.

Goals and Objectives of the Study

This study aims to examine the scope, causes, and impacts of private tutoring in Azerbaijan. For the purposes of this study, we adopt Bray's (1999b) definition of supplementary private tutoring, which deals with tutoring provided by individuals and private entrepreneurs for profit making? For subjects that are covered in school (such as languages and mathematics), "assessed by examinations and explicitly used in the gate-keeping process of transition from one part of an education system to another" (p.20). The study focuses on private tutoring in secondary schools of Azerbaijan and analyzes factors underlying the demand for supplementary private tutoring in the country. In particular, the study aims to examine the following issues:

- General characteristics of private tutoring (scale, cost, geographic spread, and subjects)
- The main factors underlying the demand for private tutoring (quality of secondary education, higher education entrance examinations, education financing, etc.)
- Educational, social and economic impact of private tutoring on the education system (geographic, socioeconomic, and gender inequities)
- Policy options and alternative approaches

Research Methodology

To reach the goals and objectives of the study, both quantitative and qualitative data was used. The quantitative data enabled us to identify the scope of private tutoring,

while the qualitative data helped us to understand how the private tutoring phenomenon works and what are its causes and consequences. To identify the scope of private tutoring in secondary schools, two separate surveys were conducted among two different student populations, including first-year university students and secondary school students. In addition, qualitative data was collected to examine the causes and consequences of private tutoring in Azerbaijan, including document analysis, as well as focus groups and interviews with multiple education stakeholders.

Quantitative data

Two quantitative surveys² were conducted to identify the scope and nature of private tutoring, as well as examine student attitudes towards private tutoring. The first survey targeted 1st year university students (freshmen). University student sample was chosen purposefully to ensure more open student responses about their private tutoring experience in secondary schools. Having just entered higher education institutions, the first year students have fresh memories about their private tutoring experiences in schools and feel free to talk about it. Although the university sample provides important data, it does not represent all students leaving secondary schools in the country. Therefore, the second survey targeted secondary school students, thus expanding the respondents' pool and allowing us to report about all students graduating from secondary schools in the country.

University student sample (Population A). A total of 913 respondents were surveyed from five universities in Azerbaijan, including Azerbaijan State Economics University (31.1%), Azerbaijan Teachers' Institute (15.8%), Baku State University (32.2%), Western University (10%), and Lenkoran State University (11%). The first four universities are located in the capital Baku and the last one in the south of the country. All universities are state, with the exception of Western University, which is a private university. The university student sample consisted of students studying in high and low demand programs.³ Overall, 66.2% (604) of students from high demand programs (business- and law- related programs), 29.6% (270) from low-demand programs (pedagogical programs), and 4.3% (39) from other programs.⁴ In particular, 43.4% (396) of surveyed students were enrolled in business-related programs, 22.8% (208) students from law programs, 29.6% (270) students from pedagogical programs, and 4.3% (39) from other programs in universities.

Secondary school student sample (Population B). A total of 1019 students from secondary schools were surveyed. The sample included students from the last two grades of secondary school, including 45.6% (465) students from the 10th grade and 54.4% (554) of students from the 11th grade. The sample covered three geographic regions of Azerbaijan, including 49.8% of students from Baku (507), 25.6% from Ganja (261), and 24.6% from Lenkoran (251). Information on the number of students successfully passing university entrance examinations was obtained from the State Student Admission Commission, which publishes these reports annually. For the purposes of this survey, three types of schools were identified, including secondary schools with the highest, average, lowest numbers of students entering universities. For each school type in the

selected geographic areas, random sampling was used to identify schools for administering student surveys.

Private tutor sample. A small-scale, exploratory survey of 24 private tutors was used to examine the most popular subjects, as well as costs of private tutoring. Surveys were administered through the State Student Admission Commission, which attracts many tutors in different capacities – as test writers for centralized university entry examinations and tutors seeking teaching materials for their private lessons. The surveys were left in an accessible area and all interested tutors were encouraged to fill them out. Overall, 24 tutors filled out the survey. They included tutors of different subjects, including history (10), geography (8), biology (5), and Azeri language and literature (1).

Qualitative data

Qualitative data was collected through document analysis, focus group discussions, and interviews. It was used to complement quantitative data from student surveys and explain the causes and consequences of private tutoring.

Focus groups. Five focus group discussions were organized for teachers and University students, schoolchildren and parents to discuss their experiences with private tutoring and the impact of private tutoring on teaching and learning. Two focus group discussions were organized with school teachers, including a focus group with a sample of teachers from the Russian-language sector (8 people) and from Azeri-language sector (8 people). All teachers participating in focus group discussions were from different schools in Baku. Focus groups discussions lasted from one to two hours and examined such issues as teacher perceptions about the dynamics of private tutoring growth, the impact of private tutoring on schools, teachers, and students, as well as positive and negative consequences of private tutoring. In addition to school teachers, two focus groups were organized with first-year university students and school students to examine their experiences with private tutoring (a total of 15 students and 15 schoolchildren from 10th and 11th grades). Finally, one focus group with parents of secondary school students was organized to examine their attitudes towards private tutoring (7 parents).

Interviews. A total of seventeen interviews were conducted with different education stakeholders to examine their perceptions of private tutoring and its impact on teaching and learning. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of 11 tutors, including nine school teachers working as tutors and one Director of preparatory courses Center. The majority of the interviewed tutors were from Baku and one from a rural area in Azerbaijan. The main objectives of these interviews were to examine teacher perspectives on the reasons for the growth of private tutoring, its impact on the education system, as well as the role of tutoring in closing the gap between teaching practices at schools and university testing system administered by the State Student Admission Commission. In addition, seven interviews were conducted with education policy-makers and other education stakeholders to discuss the issues of education quality (e.g., school curriculum, teaching, and assessment), its relationship with

private tutoring, as well as examine the attitudes of education stakeholders towards the growth of private tutoring. Interviews were conducted with three officials from the Ministry of Education (including the Minister of Education and the Head of Higher Education Department at MOE), one government representative (Chairman of the Education Committee of the Parliament of Azerbaijan), one representative of the Institute of Education Problems, and two representatives of the State Student Admission Commission.

Limitations

Any research on private tutoring commonly encounters various obstacles (Bray & Kwok, 2003). The study conducted in Azerbaijan was not an exception.

In addition to the logistical difficulties, the study encountered several methodological limitations. First, the university student sample was limited to students from a limited number of programs (i.e., high/low demand programs). It would be important to also include medium-demand programs to further examine the scope of private tutoring. Second, the university student sample was largely limited to state higher education institutions and did not account for the scope of private tutoring among private university freshmen. Third, the study had limited geographical coverage, with the student sample covering three regions of the country only. Finally, and more importantly, neither university students nor secondary school students had satisfactory experience with completing multiple-choice questionnaires. It took a lot of time and effort for the data-collectors to administer the surveys, including lengthy, thorough explanations on how to fill out the questionnaires. Finally, the available state statistical data may not always be accurate, with different state agencies reporting different statistical data on the same issue. Whenever possible, we made an attempt to cross-check all statistical data to ensure its validity.

Despite these limitations, this study is unique in that it represents the first attempt in Azerbaijan to thoroughly document the general characteristics of private tutoring (scale, cost, geographic spread, and subjects), the main factors underlying the demand for private tutoring (quality of secondary education, higher education entrance examinations, education financing, etc.), as well as educational, social and economic impact of private tutoring on the education system. Following a brief analysis of the education context within which the private tutoring has blossomed, the study will present the analysis of the main findings.

Education Reform during the Transformation Period in Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan's general education system consists of 11 years of compulsory education. In the 2004/05 academic year, 4,553 general education schools enrolled 1,634,341 students. The vast majority of these schools were public schools, with only 11 private schools operating in the country (State Statistical Committee, 2005).⁵ During 2004/05, private schools enrolled only 0.3 percent of the student population.⁶ After graduation from secondary schools at grade 11, students can continue their studies in vocational schools and/or higher education institutions. In 2004/05 there were 60 vocational schools (including five private schools) with 54,600 students, and 42 higher education

institutions (15 private) with 121,500 students (State Statistical Committee, 2004). In order to gain admission to vocational schools and/or higher education institutions, students must pass a centralized higher education entrance examination, which is administered by the State Student Admission Commission (SSAC). The results of this examination determine student admission to all vocational and higher education, including specific vocational and higher education institutions and study programs. This centralized university entrance examination system was introduced in 1992 in the context of anti-corruption measures in higher education admissions.⁷ The SSAC introduced controls over admissions to the five broad occupational areas of vocational and higher education institutions through the national testing of graduates in 32 regions.⁸

The transformation period brought serious problems and major changes to the education system, most of which were related to the rise of private tutoring. The main factors underlying the demand for private tutoring include: (1) educational factors (e.g., deteriorating quality of education in public schools, and introduction of centralized university entrance examinations), (2) economic factors (e.g., declining education expenditures, and salary differentials among teachers), and (3) sociocultural factors (e.g., the high social value of education). Combined, an analysis of these educational, economic and sociocultural factors helps to explain the context within which private tutoring began to boom.

Educational Factors

Although the state guarantees free compulsory education for all, numerous studies suggest that the education sector no longer produces general school graduates with the minimum standards needed to meet the skill and knowledge demands of the market economy or the minimum qualifications required by post-secondary education institutions (World Bank, 2002). For example, the results from the Student University Admission Examination clearly reflect the low quality of general education, with more than half students scoring below 300 points (the failing mark) and about one-third unable to score more than 100 points (SSAC quoted in World Bank, 2002). This indicates that far too many general school leavers fail to achieve a satisfactory level of knowledge on State Student Entrance Examination. On the one hand, the quality of education in schools has deteriorated during the transformation period. On the other hand, school curricula have become increasingly incompatible with centralized university entrance examinations. Combined, these educational factors have contributed to the growing demand for private tutoring.

Declining education quality in public schools

Among the main factors affecting education quality are (1) outdated, teacher-centered curricula and teaching methods, (2) poor learning environments (as marked by shortages of textbooks, reading and teaching materials, supplies and equipment, and poor physical infrastructure), and (3) an ineffective system of teacher development (in-service and pre-service teacher education). The school curriculum is largely scientific and subject-driven, in contrast to the learner-centered and outcomes-based approach that is the dominant

paradigm in OECD countries and most of the developing world (CITO Group, 2003). The primary focus of the curriculum is on teaching facts rather than developing skills that allow students to apply knowledge in various situations. Curricula are generally overloaded, consisting of a large number of subjects (already reduced, but still 26 in 2005). Typically, curriculum developers work in isolation, “designing curriculum content based on their scientific background, and have no feeling for what is really needed in the evolving society” (CITO Group, 2003). Teaching methods have generally been based on rote learning rather than active, problem-solving skills.⁹ Even where there is a desire to move away from this model, administrators face a lack of resources. Although the Education Reform Program (1999) aimed to revise the general education curriculum and strengthen the skills and teaching methods of the teaching force through the provision of teacher professional development opportunities in interactive teaching methods, the implementation process remained slow.¹⁰

The quality of the learning environment in most schools has deteriorated considerably, contributing to inadequate learning outcomes, low attendance, and poorly trained school leavers. According to the World Bank (2002), this is largely due to the lack of access to textbooks and reading materials, the shortage of basic teaching and learning materials and equipment, and deterioration of physical facilities. The quality of education is also uneven across the country, with rural schools facing more serious shortages of educational materials¹¹ and having poorer physical facilities.¹² Urban areas such as Baku suffer from an acute shortage of school buildings because new school buildings have not been constructed to accommodate a growing population. As a result, an increasing number of schools (75 percent) have adopted two and sometimes three shifts per day. Because of the poor physical learning environment, qualitative reports suggest, teachers and students are demoralized and have little incentive to remain in schools.

A further problem has been deterioration of the quality of both in-service and pre-service teacher education. In the area of in-service training, resource constraints restricted the provision of effective in-service training during the 1990s.¹³ For example, the 2002 Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) study by the Ministry of Education indicated that about 15 percent of teachers in rural areas never attended in-service programs (MOE, 2002, p. 53). Despite some attempts to pilot demand-driven, school-based teacher training models, the state in-service training process remained rather mechanical and was more supply- than demand-driven, showing deficiencies in quality and effectiveness (World Bank, 2002; Crawford, 2000). Pre-service teacher education suffers from limited awareness of the range of possible methodologies (e.g., modern teaching and learning methodologies) and limited qualifications and experience of teacher training staff to introduce major changes (World Bank, 2002). As a result of constrained professional development opportunities and ineffective initial teacher training, teacher professionalism and morale have suffered, further contributing to the decline of education quality in schools.

Incompatibility of school curricula and centralized university entrance examinations

The declining quality of general education has become particularly evident with the introduction of the centralized university entry examinations, which shows that secondary school grades are not compatible with centralized examination scores. According to the State Student Admission Commission (2004), only 19.5 percent of all applicants with excellent grades in secondary school scored similarly during the university admission examination. Most applicants (97 percent) with fair/satisfactory grades in school scored between 0 and 200 (which was below the average satisfactory level).

While the introduction of centralized university entrance testing brought a new approach to the assessment of learning outcomes, the school-based assessment system did not substantially change.¹⁴ Given the absence of a national student assessment system, mastery of basic learning competencies is equated with high grades. Nearly all assessment of student learning in grades 1-11 is classroom-based, carried out by teachers evaluating their own students. The purpose of the assessment is to ascertain what students can remember rather than their learning abilities. The school-based and teacher-centered system does not provide a sufficiently clear picture of what students actually know, understand, and are able to do in terms of nationally set standards (World Bank, 2002). While all questions included on the centralized testing examinations are entirely based on the school curriculum,¹⁵ it is not surprising that the majority of “good” students do poorly on centralized university entry examinations given the glaring discrepancy in assessment approaches used in schools and SSAC.

Economic Factors

During the early years of the transformation period, a sharp drop in state fiscal revenues led to declining state education expenditures. Between 1992 and 1995, the share of the education budget as a percentage of GDP fell from approximately 7 percent to 3.5 percent. In 1995, government spending on education was only 27 percent of its level in 1992 (World Bank, 2002, p. 57). After the initial sharp drop in public spending on education, considerable efforts were made to protect education expenditures. With the economic recovery of the mid-1990s, investments in the education sector increased, but remained low compared to pre-independence levels.¹⁶ Among the most adversely affected have been teachers. During the transformation period, teacher salaries declined rapidly and in 2005 they remained below the national average salary. Despite salary increases at the beginning of the decade, teachers’ salaries averaged US\$20-25 per month¹⁷ and constituted an estimated 69.2 percent of the subsistence minimum (Sigma, 2005).

While state expenditure on education has declined, private spending on education has increased considerably. However, according to the World Bank (2002), a growing number of poor families cannot afford the increasing cost of education, particularly that of high quality education. For example, the Poverty Assessment Report (World Bank, 1997) found that reduced real government spending on critical economic categories had been partly replaced by increased private spending for education, especially in the form of informal payments (including payments for private tutoring).¹⁸ Sharp increases in out-of-pocket payments highlight problems not only of deteriorating education quality, but also education access and the transparency of the education system.

Sociocultural Factors

A rapidly escalating number of secondary school graduates taking university entrance examinations (e.g., in 2005 over 70 percent of all secondary school graduates) indicates that education prestige has remained high during the transformation period. Those who see education as a way of escaping the hardships of the transformation period may invest in private tutoring to ensure that their children enter higher education institutions and have access to better paying jobs. This has been confirmed by qualitative studies examining parent opinions about the level of education they consider sufficient for their children (Sigma, 2000; UNICEF, 1995). For example, one study indicated that most respondents in large cities (78.2 percent of all respondents in this group), as well as in regional centers (77.3 percent) and villages (65.5 percent) wanted their children to receive higher education (Sigma, 2000). The high prestige of education in Azerbaijan has also been noted by some foreign experts. For example, a report by a UNICEF mission (1995) stated that “there is very strong family tradition [of valuing education] in the country. Families are ready to sacrifice a lot to ensure that their children receive high quality education.” While many parents realize that having a higher degree is not a guarantor of employment, they believe that it may be the best investment a family can make to prepare its children for the future.

Findings: The Private Tutoring Epidemic

Based on the data from quantitative and qualitative surveys, this section examines the general characteristics of private tutoring, the main factors underlying the demand for private tutoring, and its the educational, social and economic impact.

General Characteristics of Private Tutoring in Azerbaijan

For most students in Azerbaijan, education neither begins nor ends with schooling. The majority (61.8 percent) of surveyed school students received supplementary private tutoring in addition to learning in mainstream schools. Of all surveyed school students, 57.1 percent received private tutoring lessons and another 4.2 percent attended private tutoring courses¹⁹ (see Figure 5.1). These findings confirm data from a survey conducted by the State Statistical Agency (2002), which estimated that 56.3 percent of students received some form of private tutoring. Of those school students taking private tutoring lessons, the majority (93 percent) reported starting private tutoring lessons in secondary schools, with 55 percent of students hiring tutors from grade 10 and 38 percent from grade 11. A small group of students used private tutoring in earlier grades, with five percent of students using private tutors from grade 9, 1.5 percent in primary school (grades 5-8), and 0.7 percent in elementary school (grades 1-4). Generally, the number of students attending private tutoring lessons increases with the grade, with 52.7 percent of grade 10 and 60.8 percent of grade 11 pupils receiving private tutoring.

The fact that the majority of students begin to receive private tutoring in the last two grades of secondary school suggests its connection to high-stakes testing, i.e. centralized university entrance examinations. This connection becomes even more apparent after reviewing the findings from the university student sample. Of all surveyed freshmen, 91.8 percent reported using private tutoring lessons and six percent joined private tutoring courses as

supplements to mainstream schooling (see Figure 5.1). This represents a worrisome pattern that university enrollment is unlikely to be achieved without supplementary private tutoring. As data from the university survey confirm, the vast majority of respondents (89.2 percent) perceived private tutoring as having either “a great” or “some impact” on their university entrance examination results.

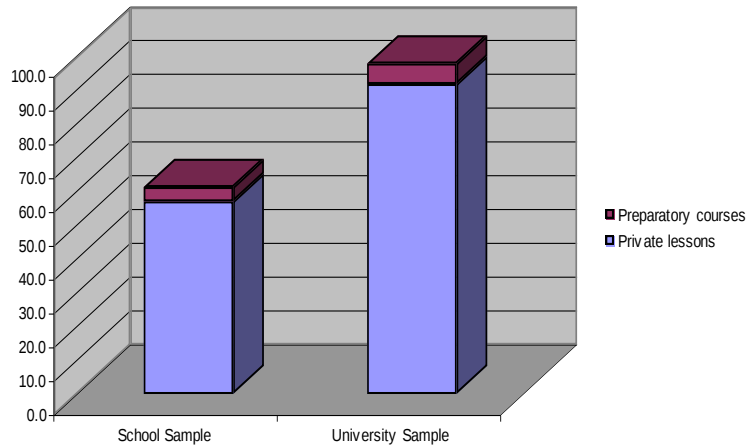


Figure 1.1. The Scale of Private Tutoring, Azerbaijan (Percentage of secondary school and university student samples who reported engaging in private tutoring)

Geographic spread of private tutoring

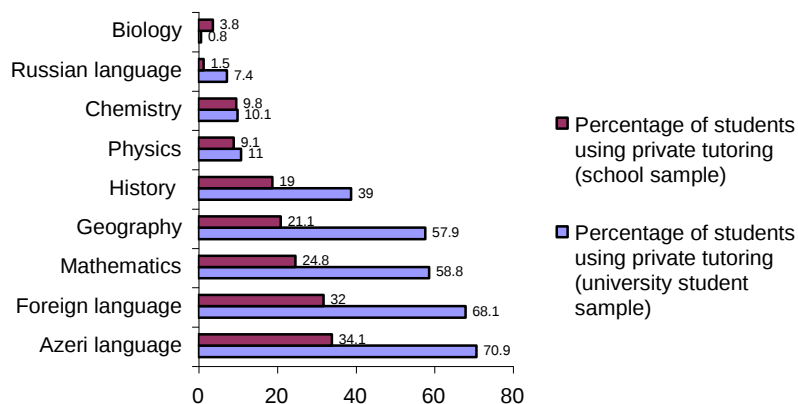
Private tutoring has no geographical borders in Azerbaijan. It is widespread across the country, in both urban and rural areas. For example, 58.8 percent of secondary school students from Baku, 57.4 percent from Lenkaran, and 53.6 percent from Ganja reported using private tutoring in the last two grades of secondary school. Data from the university sample revealed that approximately 90 percent of all surveyed students, no matter whether they graduated from urban or rural schools, used private tutoring to prepare for university entrance exams. For example, 91.4 percent of students from Baku and 90.5 percent of students from rural areas used private tutoring to enter universities. While the use of private tutoring seemed to be fairly equal across different geographical areas of the country, university admissions seemed to favor students from urban areas. In particular, the university student sample revealed that approximately 75 percent of university students came from large urban areas. This may be explained by a variety of factors, including the aspirations of students, the quality of mainstream schooling, as well as the quality and frequency of private tutoring use.

Academic subjects

Among the most popular academic subjects studied through private tutoring are Azeri language and literature, foreign languages, mathematics, geography, and history (see Figure

5.2). While the use of private tutoring in the first three subjects (native language, foreign languages, and mathematics) generally corresponds to international patterns (i.e., the subjects needed for educational and socio-economic advancement), geography and history are usually not among the top choices for private tutoring in other education contexts. In Azerbaijan, these subjects are important because they are included on the centralized university entrance examinations and bear more weight compared to other subjects, thus allowing students to collect more points. For example, Azeri language and literature are included on higher education entrance examinations for all five occupational groups, mathematics and foreign languages for three out of five groups (including some of the most highly demanded programs such as economics, management and law), and history and geography for two groups (including highly demanded programs such as international relations and law). Interestingly, the use of private tutoring in the sciences is less widespread, with only about 10 percent of students attending private tutoring lessons in physics and chemistry, and less than four percent in biology.²⁰

Figure 1.2. Percentage of Students Taking Private Tutoring in Specific Subjects, Azerbaijan (University and school student sample)



The intensity of private tutoring use

University and school samples suggest that students spend an average three to four academic hours²¹ a week (equivalent of four to five regular hours) on one subject with a tutor, with over 60 percent of students spending three or more academic hours a week with a private tutor. The majority of the surveyed university students (79 percent) reported that they used private tutoring in three or more subjects on a regular basis throughout the last school year to prepare for entrance examinations. On average, this equated to 9-12 academic hours a week (equivalent to 12-16 regular hours a week), which students spend studying in addition to the regular school load. While there is a discrepancy in the reported intensity of private tutoring use among university and student samples, the fact that university student sample used private tutoring more frequently may indicate that they were successfully

admitted to higher education institutions partly because they spent more time with tutors while preparing for university entrance exams.

The size of private tutoring groups

Data from the survey of university and school students revealed that only 17-18 percent of all surveyed students attended one-on-one private tutoring lessons. The majority of students attended private tutoring lessons organized for groups of 2-5 people (see Table 5.1). For example, approximately one third of all respondents attended lessons organized for groups of 2-3 people, and one quarter studied in groups of 4-5 people. In addition, 20.7 percent of university students and 26.5 percent of school students reported studying in groups of six or more than six students during private tutoring lessons.

Table 1.3. The Size of Private Tutoring Classes, Azerbaijan (Percentage of university and school student sample)

The Size of Private Tutoring Classes	University Sample	School Sample
Individual lessons (one-on-one)	18.5%	17.1%
Group of 2-3 people	34.6%	32.3%
Group of 4-5 people	26.2%	24.1%
Group of six and more than 6 people	20.7%	26.5%

The private tutoring courses offered by institutions are much larger than the private tutoring lessons. According to teachers in institutions offering private tutoring courses, the average size is about 20 students. However, data collected for this study reveal slightly smaller private tutoring courses. For example, 51.0 percent of the university sample who reported that they had enrolled in private tutoring courses studied in groups of 5-10 students, and 34.5 percent were in groups of 10-20 students. Closely resembling the average size of mainstream school classrooms, private tutoring courses were less attractive to students because of their larger size.

The costs of private tutoring

The cost of tutoring varies significantly by type, with courses offered by institutions being considerably cheaper than individual lessons. Private tutoring courses are usually more popular with low-income families who can afford to pay 250,000 manat (approximately US\$50) per year for a full private tutoring course package consisting of three or four subjects. Generally, however, students prefer private tutoring lessons, which cost much more. On average, school students reported spending US\$157 per year for one subject and US\$434 for all subjects. The costs for private tutoring lessons varied significantly, with almost five percent of all surveyed students paying more than US\$1,000 per year. University students reported spending higher amounts on private tutoring during the last year of secondary school, with an average of US\$180 per subject and US\$600 for all subjects. There are several explanations for this difference. First, the sample of school students was more varied geographically and included a higher number of rural students,

whereas the majority in the university sample came from Baku. Given the higher socioeconomic level of households in the capital city, it is likely that urban students spend more on private tutoring compared to rural students.²² Second, university students constituted a select group who may have successfully entered universities partly because they had spent more money on private tutoring, or tutoring of higher quality.

Private tutoring costs differ by geographical areas. Lessons are most expensive in the capital, Baku with some tutors charging US\$10-25 per academic hour, and least expensive in rural areas with tutors charging on average US\$1-3 per academic hour.²³ Finally, private tutoring costs also depend on the type of tutor, with the most expensive tutors being affiliated with the State Student Admission Commission as test writers. A survey of test writers revealed that the majority charged US\$25 per academic hour of tutoring. According to interviews with students, test writers were among the most popular because of their intimate knowledge of test content and direct participation in test design. Given the highest fees, however, their services were available to only a few students.

While one of the common beliefs is that higher investments in private tutoring in secondary school could increase the probability of students' admission into state-financed higher education programs (thus relieving parents from paying for the education of their children for the next four years), this does not seem the case in our study. Based on the findings from the university student sample, paying large sums of money for private tutoring in secondary schools does not necessarily guarantee student admission into state-funded groups. For example, approximately 40% of those who paid less than \$400 a year for private tutoring and only 25% of those who paid over \$1000 were admitted into state-funded higher education groups. Overall, approximately one third (32.6% or 237) of those who took private tutoring lessons in secondary schools study in state-financed higher education programs, whereas the majority (67.4%) studies in self-financed groups (i.e. pays for their education).

The Producers: Who Offers Private Tutoring and Why?

From a legal and taxation viewpoint, private tutoring courses have been institutionalized and income is regularly reported to tax authorities based on a transparent accountability system.²⁴ Private tutoring courses are offered by several institutions, including universities, private agencies, and a tutoring centre established by the SSAC. The majority of teachers of private tutoring courses are university lecturers and professionals from the respective fields of study, although some are school teachers. Many instructors use these private tutoring courses as a springboard for individual private tutoring. For many of them, private tutoring courses present a great opportunity to build a clientele base and become known among potential tutees.

Of all surveyed students taking individual private lessons, over 70 percent reported that their private tutors were teachers (72.3 percent of the university sample and 79.8 percent of the school sample). Private tutors from higher education institutions seem to be much less popular, with only 11.7 percent of university sample and 8.2 percent of school sample using private tutoring services offered by university professors and lecturers. Data from student questionnaires further confirm these findings, with 78.2 percent of students "disagreeing" or "strongly disagreeing" that university lecturers are better private tutors than secondary

school teachers. Reflecting how private tutoring has changed over the last decade, interviews and focus groups suggested that the popularity of tutors shifted from university professors/lecturers to schoolteachers in the beginning of the 1990s. This, incidentally, coincided with the creation of the State Testing Committee in 1992, which took control over all university entrance examination procedures in an effort to fight corruption in universities.²⁵ As a consequence, university professors, who were previously powerful in influencing university admission outcomes, lost much of their popularity as private tutors.

A survey conducted by the State Statistical Agency (2002, p.140) indicates that approximately 45 percent of all teachers (including primary and secondary school teachers) are involved in private tutoring, with more in urban areas (approximately 47 percent) and fewer in rural areas (approximately 38.6 percent).²⁶ Interestingly, 40-50 percent of students from the present survey reported that their private tutors were teachers from their own schools. Approximately one third of all surveyed students reported that their tutors were teachers from other schools. Of the school sample, 25.6 percent of students reported that their tutors were their “class teachers” (homeroom teachers) and 25.5 percent reported that their tutors were other teachers from their own school (i.e., possibly teachers who teach different subjects to these students during school hours). While some teachers may be genuinely interested in helping their own students, the majority of interviewed students explained that their teachers forced them to take private tutoring lessons, threatening with lower grades.

The Consumers: Who Takes Private Tutoring and Why?

The majority of students taking private tutoring are secondary school students. Students seeking the services of private tutors are typically good learners, with the majority (87.6 percent) getting the highest marks in school (i.e., four and five based on a five-point grading scale). This contradicts the usual assumption that private tutoring is a form of remedial assistance for weak students, which had been widespread during the Soviet period. In fact, 78.0 percent of the school sample and 89.2 percent of the university sample disagreed with the statement that “only low achieving students take private tutoring.” In the context of Azerbaijan, it is good students who find it necessary to use supplementary private tutoring in order to compensate for the shortcomings of the education system and prepare for university entrance examinations.

The likelihood of students taking private tutoring is partially dependent on the education level of their parents. The higher the education level of their parents, the more likely it is that students will take private tutoring. For example, about 60 percent of students taking private tutoring lessons have parents with higher degrees, compared to 40 percent of students with parents having no formal education (i.e. no diploma). While mothers’ professional occupation has no statistically significant relationship to the probability of students taking private tutoring, fathers’ occupation shows a significant positive relationship. This could be explained by cultural factors – fathers are often perceived as the main breadwinners in families and therefore make the financial decisions with regard to the overall family expenditures, including private tutoring.

Gender differences among students using private tutoring are only modest, with 55.3 percent of female students and 59.9 percent of male students from the school sample attending private tutoring lessons. The 4 percent gender difference favoring male students may be explained by two factors. First, qualitative data suggests that some families (especially large ones) prefer to invest in the education of their sons rather than daughters, believing that boys have a better chance of getting well-paid jobs and later supporting their families. Second, some families view private tutoring as a mechanism to increase their sons' opportunities to enter higher education institutions in order to avoid military service.

Individual lessons vs. private tutoring courses

The vast majority of students engaged in private tutoring prefer to take lessons offered by individuals rather than courses offered by institutions, even though the latter are much cheaper. Generally, students believe that individual lessons are more effective than courses preparing students for university entrance examinations. For example, the majority of surveyed students (over 60 percent) stated that they would prefer to attend individual lessons instead of courses in order to prepare for university entrance examinations. Over 75 percent of students thought that individual private tutoring lessons would have a greater positive impact on examination outcomes. Students cite large class size and traditional approaches to teaching and learning as the main reasons for not choosing private tutoring courses.

The Main Factors Underlying the Demand for Private Tutoring

The high demand for private tutoring is driven by multiple stakeholders, including the students (and their desire for quality education) and tutors themselves (and their drive for more adequate financial compensation).

Private tutoring as a compensation for the low education quality in public schools

The majority of the respondents offered education-related explanations as the main reasons for their use of private tutoring. Of all the surveyed students, the vast majority (90 percent of the school sample and 93.9 percent of the university sample) agreed with the statement that "students use private tutoring to increase their chances of entering higher education institutions." Furthermore, the majority of the respondents (54.4 percent of the school sample and 64.5 percent of the university sample) believe that students who use private tutoring are more likely to enter universities compared to students of equal ability who do not use private tutoring. Overall, students report a combination of reasons for taking private tutoring. The most frequently mentioned reason is "to better prepare for university entrance examinations only," followed by "filling a gap in knowledge," "memorizing and systematizing topics learned earlier," and "better understanding topics taught at school" (see Table 5.2). This indicates that students have limited confidence in the quality of education provided in public schools and, therefore, are partially seeking private tutoring to meet their educational needs. Of the university sample, 75.9 percent of the respondents stated that the low quality of teaching in schools was the main reason for their decision to take private tutoring.

Table 1.4. The Main Reasons for the Use of Private Tutoring in Secondary Schools, Azerbaijan
(Percentage of university and school samples)

Main reasons for private tutoring	University Sample	School Sample
To better prepare for the university entrance exams only	36.5 %	27.8 %
To fill a gap in knowledge	37.2 %	21.5 %
To remember and systematize topics learned earlier	28.8 %	16.3 %
To better understand topics taught at schools	24.1 %	14.5 %
My friends took it, that is why I decided to take private tutoring	3.7 %	6.2 %
Parents made me take private tutoring	1.2 %	0.6 %

Private tutoring is perceived at least partially to compensate for these shortcomings of the mainstream education system. According to the survey results, every second student agrees with the statement that “private tutoring is the only way to get high quality education” (52.7 percent of the school sample and 59.5 percent of the university sample). Interviews with students explain that private tutoring offers a more individualized approach to learning, which is rarely present in public schools. For example, students suggest that private lessons are usually interactive, teaching students to analyze facts, organize data, think critically, and draw conclusions. Furthermore, interviews with tutors and students indicate that private tutoring aims to ensure the psychological readiness of students for centralized examinations, promptness of intellectual reaction, public speaking, presentation skills, professional orientation, and other skills important for both the higher education admission processes and the future labor market. More importantly, good tutors foster students’ desire to learn, which many students lack in secondary schools..

“...We are now observing the growth of private tutoring in our country. The worse the education quality in school, the better for my business. The tendency towards paying for education is obvious and private tutoring is becoming more and more popular.”

From an interview with a private tutor (January, 2005)

Private tutoring as indispensable income generation activity for teachers

In Azerbaijan, as in many other countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, the rise of private tutoring has been at least partially triggered by the declining socioeconomic status of teachers. Qualitative research conducted by Sigma (2000) found that the overwhelming majority of teachers interviewed (79.9 percent) identified their living standards as "low" or "very low," with 56.1 percent and 23.8 percent respectively. Teachers explained that financial constraints and a shortage of work

“If my salary was sufficient to meet my basic needs, which are really modest, I would gladly stop this slave tutoring work...”

School-teacher (focus group)

force them to supplement their meager salaries through other income-generating activities, including private tutoring. As our qualitative research indicates, some teachers are so distraught by their economic destitution that they resort to unethical behavior by forcing their students to take private tutoring lessons with them. Many interviewed teachers stated that they would not offer private tutoring lessons if their salaries were only slightly higher.

Educational, Social, and Economic Impact of Private Tutoring

Private tutoring has major implications for educational, social, and economic development. This section examines the impact of private tutoring on (1) mainstream education, (2) social inequalities, and (3) the economic sphere.

Private tutoring and the threat to mainstream schools

Private tutoring has a mixed impact on schools. On the one hand, it provides for some students a chance to extend their learning and gain additional knowledge and skills outside school. On the other hand, it has a number of potential negative effects. First, qualitative data suggest that private tutoring may decrease student motivation to learn in school. Interviews with teachers indicate that some students become disinterested in school, thinking that private tutoring is a more effective and engaging way to prepare for centralized university examinations. Students explain that private lessons are usually student-centered and interactive, which is uncommon in mainstream schools.

Second, private tutoring may increase school non-attendance. While this is not officially documented,²⁷ numerous interviews with school directors, teachers, and students reveal that school non-attendance increases shortly before the end of the school year (especially in the last grade of secondary school), when students begin skipping classes to attend private tutoring lessons during school hours. Some students pay bribes to their teachers or school administrators to be excused from school and instead attend private tutoring lessons. Many interviewed teachers and education officials reported instances of empty classes in secondary schools, when students would leave schools en masse to attend private tutoring lessons instead. Although this practice may not be widespread across Azerbaijan's education system, the reported cases of school substitution by private tutoring indicate a lack of public confidence in the mainstream education system.

Third, private tutoring may lead to physical exhaustion among students and teachers. On average, students spend 28 hours at school (38 lessons) and an additional 12-16 hours in private tutoring lessons every week. Combined, this constitutes over 40-44 hours a week, which equates to more than a full working week of an adult. Exhausted, many students relax in school, saving their energy for private tutoring lessons. While “the private tutoring fatigue” is especially common among students, teachers are also affected. Given that most private tutors are schoolteachers, they offer private tutoring lessons in the evenings. Tired after the full day of teaching (often up to 12 hours a day) and demoralized because of low salaries (69.2 percent of the subsistence minimum), teachers are likely to invest less time in preparation for the following school day. According to the interviews, teachers feel motivated to invest more time into preparing for private tutoring lessons because it is more rewarding both financially and educationally.

Fourth, mainstream education is beginning to lose one of its most important functions – youth socialization and civic awareness. Exhausted after many hours of studying at school (during regular school hours), attending private tutoring lessons (after school hours), and preparing for school and tutoring lessons at home (in the evenings and mornings), many students have neither interest nor energy to engage in extra-curricular activities. Interviews with teachers highlight that some of the most socially active students become disinterested in extra-curricular activities during the last two grades of secondary school. Their full and undivided attention is given to private tutoring in a mad race for positive results on centralized higher education entrance examinations.

“...Private tutoring is killing the [public] school. I would like to learn more than the four subjects required at the university entrance testing, but I don’t have time for it and school teachers are not really interested in teaching us during the last two years of school. I would like to get involved in some extra-curricular activities and to spend more time with my schoolmates, but it is not possible. I feel imprisoned by private tutoring lessons. My dream is a school where supplementary private tutoring is not necessary after school hours.”

From a focus group with school students (Baku, 2005)

Private Tutoring Fever: A Typical Day from a Secondary School Student's Life

During the last year of secondary school, my daily schedule was completely full, keeping me busy from early morning until late at night. My parents hired four tutors for me to cover the basic subjects required for the centralized higher education examinations for my occupational area – Azerbaijani language, English language, mathematics, and history. The most important subject was mathematics because you can receive the greatest points for the correct answers.

I spent the entire last year of secondary school on the road, traveling from one tutor to another and I always wanted to sleep. I lived each day as robot, automatically going through the same routine day after day – weekdays, weekends, and holidays. Usually, I got up at 6 a.m. in order to prepare homework for private tutoring lessons. Closer to the entrance exams, however, I sometimes put on the alarm clock for 3 or 4 a.m. to make sure that I prepared well for private tutoring lessons. By 8 a.m., I was dressed and ready to go to school. I usually went to school for the first couple of lessons and then left school to study with tutors until the rest of the day. I was at home after 9 p.m. and prepared school and private tutoring homework until midnight. The last month before university examinations I went to my tutors every day, like to a real job. I had only one idea in my head – to pass tests and enter the university, nothing else.

Private tutoring lessons involved a lot of drilling and memorization, but I also opened a lot of new and interesting things for myself that I had never learned at school. Some teachers simply ignored us during the last two years of secondary school, especially if we did not take private tutoring lessons with them. I practically did not see my schoolmates during the last year of secondary school. Half of the class was absent, having paid teachers for not marking their “absence” in the class journal. Everyone thought that time was better spent with private tutors, not with teachers at school.

I had a conflict with some of my schoolteachers because I refused to take private tutoring from them. Having found out that I have another tutor, a teacher of mathematics expelled me from the class and told me and my parents that we did not understand who the real tutor was – “You can’t even distinguish the real from the forgery!” Throughout the whole year, I had problems with this teacher and I was afraid that he would get back at me during school final examinations.

This year was difficult on my family in terms of family finances. My parents saved money on everything they could to pay for my tutors. Of course, they tried to choose the best tutors, whose services are very expensive. We paid tutors approximately \$200 per month, which is a large sum of money for my family which is not very rich. Although my parents tried to hide it from me, I knew that they sold some valuable things from our house that year. Now my brother is graduating from school and the “tutoring fever” has plagued our home again. My parents have decided to hire the most expensive and prestigious tutors, which have a 100 percent rate of their student enrolling in universities. If my brother gets high scores on the exam, there is a chance that he will study in a state-financed higher education group. It was not the case with me and we now need to pay up to \$600 per year for my higher education.

Looking back, I think that going to school was a waste of time. I would have been better off studying with private tutors only.

Finally, and more importantly, private tutoring may lead to the distortion of the official school curriculum, which is particularly prominent in education systems where private tutoring is provided by teachers who already have responsibility for their students in the mainstream education system (Bray, 1999). On the one hand, teachers interviewed in this study said that the school curriculum is overloaded and that they could not possibly cover all of it during regular school hours. They explained that private tutoring was necessary to ensure that students master everything prescribed by the state program. On the other hand, the majority of the students in this study indicated that curricula in fact is not overloaded (see Table 5.3), which may indicate that school teachers teach below their capacity level and intentionally do not cover the full curriculum during school hours, to increase the demand for private tutoring. Knowing that some parts of the curriculum are essential for student success at centralized higher education examination, teachers may deliberately omit some topics from their public school lessons.

Private tutoring and social inequities

A widespread system of private tutoring puts some students at a disadvantage. The findings of this study indicate that higher education is largely inaccessible to those who have not taken private tutoring during the last grades of secondary school. Of all surveyed university students, the vast majority (over 91 percent) took private tutoring and only eight percent did not take tutoring lessons to prepare for centralized entrance examinations. Clearly, this puts some students in a disadvantage, especially those who cannot afford to pay for increasingly expensive private tutoring lessons.

Approximately one quarter (23.5 percent) of all respondents not taking private tutoring indicate financial reasons, explaining that private tutoring lessons are too expensive. Indeed, the number of students not taking private tutoring is slightly higher among those students who estimate their family welfare as “bad” or “below national average.” Of the respondents reporting their family welfare as “below the national average,” 55.6 percent do not take private tutoring, whereas the number is somewhat lower (37.8 percent) among students reporting their family welfare as “good.” Even if poorer families use private tutoring, they are likely to spend much less on it, compared to wealthier families. According to the findings of the household survey data (World Bank, 2001), the non-poor spend six times more than the very poor on various educational services, including private tutoring. This means that poorer families not only have less access to private tutoring, but also have less access to quality private tutoring. In particular, the majority of the respondents (68.9 percent) in the present survey agreed that students of wealthier parents can hire better tutors. While household income levels show little disparity in enrollment rates in primary and secondary education, there are large disparities in enrollment at the higher education levels, especially for upper secondary and higher education. According to a World Bank report (2002), about 30 percent of students in higher education come from the richest quintile, while only 12 percent came from the poorest quintile (p. 62). Given the relationship between private tutoring and higher education admissions, it is possible that the very poor are less likely to access quality secondary education, receive private tutoring, and attend post-secondary education.

In addition to socioeconomic inequities maintained or exacerbated by private tutoring, there is evidence of emerging rural/urban inequities. Indeed, students in Baku spend on average 40 percent more than students in Ganja and Lenkaran on private tutoring. Furthermore, Baku residents dominate the group of students who spend over US\$1,000 per year on private tutoring, with students from the capital city constituting 81 percent of those who paid more than US\$2,000 per year and 88 percent of those who paid between US\$1,000-2,000 per year. This is not surprising, given that urban areas have a higher concentration of the wealthiest strata of the population. Undoubtedly, students from rural areas are at a disadvantage, spending considerably less on supplementary private tutoring. This is confirmed by other quantitative studies (Sigma, 2000), which found that private tutoring was unaffordable to 48.6 percent of families in large cities, 60.0 percent in regional centers, and 61.8 percent in rural areas (p. 54). Furthermore, the academic disadvantage of students from rural areas is evident in centralized higher education entrance examination scores. The further the school is located from the capital city, the smaller the percentage of students scoring high on the centralized exam. For example, a total of 6.1 percent of high achievers come from Baku, whereas the number is much lower in rural areas, at approximately two percent (SSAC, 2004).

To summarize, this research suggests that students from poor and rural areas are more likely to have been affected by a deterioration of the educational quality during the transformation period. Having less access to private tutoring, students from poor and rural areas have less access to quality education, resulting in inequitable higher education admission and possible effects on labor market outcomes.

Private tutoring and corruption in schools

This research and other studies (World Bank, 2002; Sigma, 2000) suggest that there is an emerging relationship between private tutoring and corruption in secondary schools. Corruption is correlated to the existing low wages in the education sector, making poorly-paid teachers more susceptible to accepting bribes or to teaching below their capacity to gain extra income through supplementary private tutoring than well-paid teachers. Our survey results reveal that 71.1 percent of university students believe that the main reason for private tutoring is for teachers to receive additional financial income. Similarly, interviewed teachers admit that difficult financial situations force them into private tutoring. In order to make their ends meet, many teachers artificially create demands for tutoring through the lowering of student grades, distorting the official curriculum, and sometimes blackmailing their students. For example, teachers explained that the school curricula is so overloaded that they cannot possibly cover it during school hours, which provides them a convenient opportunity to “strongly encourage” and “require” their students to attend private tutoring lessons after school hours to cover the rest of the curriculum. Often, teachers do not cover those parts of the curriculum that they know are key at the centralized university entrance examination. Similarly, interviews with students confirmed that teachers do not always teach the whole curriculum at school (see Table 5.3). It is much more profitable to do it outside of school, for fees (Sigma, 2000).

Since approximately half of all surveyed students use their own teachers as tutors, it is likely that corruption is fairly widespread in secondary schools. The majority of students reveal that it is common for students to ask their class teachers to provide private lessons (64.6 percent of the university sample and 60.8 percent of the school sample) and state that their class teachers encourage students to take private tutoring lessons with them (55.8 percent of the university sample and 60.4 percent of the school sample). Students also indicate that teachers treat students who get private tutoring better than students who do not get such help (see Table 5.3). Interestingly, this fits the Transparency International Azerbaijan findings, which reveal that over 50 percent of respondents admit that they have had personal experiences with extortion in the education area (p. 8). In fact, 54.7 percent of the respondents think that it is impossible to receive education services without paying a bribe (p. 27) and 49 percent admit paying a bribe themselves (p. 31). Ranked as one of the most corrupt countries in the world,²⁸ Azerbaijan is becoming accustomed to corruption, with a considerable portion of the Azeri society viewing it as a normal phenomenon of everyday life (Transparency International Azerbaijan, 2004). Interestingly, private tutoring has in a way helped to institutionalize corruption at the secondary education level by masking financial extortion under the name of private tutoring.

Table 5.3. Student Statements Regarding Corruption-Related Issues, Azerbaijan
(Percentage of university and school sample agreeing or strongly agreeing with a statement)

Corruption-Related Statements	University Sample	School Sample
It is common for a student to ask his/ her class teacher to provide private lessons for him/ her.	64.6%	60.8%
Class teachers encourage pupils who have problems with a subject matter to take private lessons.	55.8%	60.8%
One of the main reasons for private tutoring is so that teachers can receive additional financial income.	71.1%	56.6%
Students use private tutoring because the school curricula are overloaded.	29.7%	33%
Students use private tutoring because the school's curricula do not cover everything that is required on university entrance exam.	68.5%	56.3%
Students use private tutoring because teachers do not explain subject matter thoroughly.	53.2%	32.7%

Private tutoring and the shadow economy

Given that 57.1 percent of students surveyed report using private tutoring lessons in secondary school, and taking into consideration that average costs are about US\$434 per

year, annual revenues of private tutoring in Azerbaijan could be as high as US\$57 million.²⁹ One result of this direct expenditure on private tutoring lessons is that it gives substantial income to large numbers of tutors. While some of these tutors already have other sources of income (e.g., working as teachers in public schools), others have no alternative sources of income. In these circumstances, private tutoring becomes an important income generating activity for many people who otherwise might have been unemployed. Because most individual and small group tutoring is a shadow activity (i.e., not legalized), the revenue received by these tutors is beyond the reach of government tax collectors. If taxed, this amount of revenue would have been over US\$10 million in 2004 alone.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The rise of private tutoring in Azerbaijan stems from major shortcomings in the mainstream education system. While private tutoring may have positive effects for individual students (i.e., providing an opportunity to learn more, outside school), its overall impact on the mainstream education system in Azerbaijan is destructive. As this research illustrates, private tutoring distorts school curricula, puts enormous pressure on students, exacerbates social inequities, and accelerates the spread of corruption in the education system. Despite strong indications that the education system is in serious distress and that education stakeholders are losing trust in schools, Azerbaijan's education policy makers have largely overlooked the private tutoring phenomenon and discounted the seriousness of its effects on mainstream education. With market forces reigning in all spheres of private and public life in Azerbaijan, some government officials have argued in favour of a "marketization" of education, saying that markets (including private tutoring) are best left to regulate themselves. Left unmonitored and unregulated, however, the private tutoring epidemic may have unprecedented negative effects on the already strained education system. As this study illustrated, private tutoring has begun not only to supplement, but also substitute, mainstream education for many of Azerbaijan's students. Students who cannot afford private tutoring find themselves at a major disadvantage when applying to higher education institutions.

It is important that Azerbaijan's policy makers consider more active involvement in monitoring and, perhaps, regulating private tutoring. While specific policy action should be thoroughly discussed with the involvement of major stakeholders, the following broad recommendations should be considered:

- *Public awareness raising about the nature, scale, and implications of private tutoring for the mainstream education system*

One reason for the escalating practice of private tutoring is public unawareness about its scale and negative effects on the mainstream education system. It is important that major education stakeholders (e.g., parents, teachers, and school administrators) and education policy-makers (e.g., Ministry and government officials) are better aware of the potential threats that private tutoring has for the education system. Given that private tutoring has

begun to substitute classroom instruction for many students in Azerbaijan, the question is – *why do you need public schools when you have private tutors?* While few doubt the indispensable value of mainstream education, it is important that major education stakeholders realize the negative impact of private tutoring on schools.

- *Efforts to regulate the nature, form, and quality of private tutoring*

In the long-term, Azerbaijan policy-makers should strive for basic regulation of private tutoring. This means that the Ministry could regulate the nature, form, and quality of private tutoring offered to students. Given a growing demand for private tutoring, some form of government control is necessary to alleviate the negative impact of private tutoring on mainstream schools and students. In particular, it is imperative to consider such regulatory actions as (1) prohibiting teachers from tutoring their own students for financial gain and from offering private tutoring lessons during school hours, (2) resuming the Soviet practice of organizing *free* private tutoring lessons for disadvantaged students, and (3) enforcing taxation on private tutoring, which could significantly increase the state education budget and aid necessary education reform initiatives.

- *Efforts to reduce the demand for private tutoring through improving the quality of mainstream education*

While public awareness and basic regulation are important in addressing the negative impact of private tutoring on schools, real changes can be achieved in a sustainable manner only if the quality and relevance of mainstream education is improved through such systemic efforts as developing new curriculum and standards, ensuring adequate teacher remuneration, and improving the overall learning environment in schools.

- *Efforts to reduce the demand for private tutoring through decreasing competitiveness among students*

The demand for private tutoring can be reduced by decreasing the culture of competitiveness among students. When the demand for private tutoring arises from social competition and a desire by parents to get their children ahead, it can be reduced by (1) avoiding public ranking of schools and students, which is presented as a measure of transparency by the SSAC in their paper and online publications of centralized university entrance examinations, and (2) avoiding an exclusive reliance on centralized test scores for university admissions and taking into consideration other student learning and civic experiences.

- *Continuous monitoring of the nature, scope, and impact of private tutoring on the mainstream education system*

It is important to systematically monitor the nature, scale, and impact of private tutoring on the mainstream education system. Such information will not only raise awareness among education stakeholders about the effects of private tutoring, but will also help in the planning of a reformed education system. While monitoring is a non-intervention strategy, it is the least that can be done concerning the worrisome trends of private

tutoring in Azerbaijan. It is crucial that policy-makers are aware of changes in the private tutoring market and use this information for reforming the mainstream education system. From the policy-making and planning perspective, the issue of private tutoring can no longer be ignored. Given its unprecedented scale and negative impact on the education system, private tutoring deserves much more attention than it has been given thus far in Azerbaijan. Although any decision regarding private tutoring is likely to involve politics, it is important to ensure that it is developed in deliberation with the major education stakeholders and based on a thorough examination of the existing data, a systematic evaluation of available policy options, and careful assessment of potential policy outcomes. It is crucial that not only the symptoms but also the causes of private tutoring are addressed in order to alleviate the adverse effects on mainstream education and society at large.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. Although there was no formal declaration of war, there was large-scale combat between Azerbaijani and ethnic Armenian forces over the Nagorno-Karabagh area, which is situated in south-western Azerbaijan and has predominantly Armenian population. The result has been many thousand deaths and over one million refugees and displaced persons. Since the cease-fire in 1994, there have been no major outbreaks of violence, yet there has also been no significant movement towards creating a basis for a lasting peace. As a consequence of the conflict, Azerbaijan and Turkey maintain a complete blockade on Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh, few refugees or internationally displaced persons returned to their homes, and economic and social development remained static. The conflict disrupted educational opportunities for the majority of children in the Nagorno-Karabagh area and strained the mainstream education system in Azerbaijan as it had to accommodate children of over one million refugees and internally displaced persons.
2. These surveys were based on a modified version of a questionnaire designed for the Lithuanian study on private tutoring (entitled "The scope of private tutoring for Matura examinations in Lithuania"), which was conducted by the Centre of Education Policy of Vilnius University in 2003.
3. The high/low demand of university programs was identified based on the data from the State Student Admission Commission (2004) about the scores necessary to enter specific higher education programs. For example, the high demand programs required scores ranging from 350-600, while the low demand programs required scores below 350.
4. Other programs include programs high demand programs at private universities, which usually required low university entry test scores (e.g., political science, sociology, etc.).
5. One private school has six different branches across the country.
6. The Education for All (EFA) Azerbaijan report (2000) stated that there was no demand for private schools, because "the state provides every citizen with the right to a free and compulsory general secondary education." The report (2000) further explained that, "as a result [of state provision of free compulsory general education], the private sector is active only in post-secondary education." In practice, however, vagueness in the legislative guidelines with regard to establishing private schools has discouraged development of the private sector in education.
7. During the Soviet period, higher education admissions were administered by each higher education institution based on relatively subjective oral and written student examinations. In an

effort to break away from the Soviet practices and fight corruption, the Popular Front of Azerbaijan asked the Turkish government for assistance with the introduction of centralized university examinations. The subsequent establishment of the State Student Admission Commission (SSAC) severely limited the freedom of higher education institutions in administering student admissions and thus reduced corruption at the level of university entrance (i.e., a common practice of paying for university placements).

8. When applying for the centralized university entry examination, applicants could choose up to 15 occupations, divided into five main occupational groups. The groups were (a) mathematics, physics, engineering, chemical technology, architecture, art and design; the (b) economics, management, and geography; (c) humanities, art and music; (d) medicine, biology, chemistry and sports; and (e), sociology, psychology and pedagogic. According to SSAC (2004), the most popular occupational groups were the first and the second, while the least popular was the fifth.
9. One study revealed that nearly 95 percent of the students had experienced a passive learning process (i.e., passive listening and questions and answers), and that interactive methods were not widely used by teachers (Crawford, 2000).
10. Since 1999, the MOE has attempted to gradually introduce a new general education curriculum designed to better prepare students for participation in Azerbaijan's rapidly changing economy and society. This reform has also been supported through the Education Reform Project (LIL) assisted by the International Development Association (IDA) that started the curriculum reform process for selected grades. The overall education reform plan includes comprehensive changes in curriculum, teacher training and institutional reform within sector. In 2002 the Education Reform Project was reviewed, and a Ten Year Strategy funded by the World Bank was launched. The design presented three stages, with the support of a World Bank loan of approximately US \$73 million (phase I of \$18 million, phase II of \$25 million, and phase III of \$30 million).
11. According to the World Bank (2002) estimates based on qualitative reports, only about 60-70 percent of the students in grades 5-11 in rural areas had core textbooks. Moreover, the limited textbook supply tended to be old, based on obsolete knowledge and of poor condition.
12. In some cases, especially in rural areas, deteriorated school buildings may present a serious hazard since many are in need of major repair (e.g., roof, heating, water, sewerage). Many rural schools also lack regular electricity (World Bank, 2002).
13. In-service teacher training is provided in Baku by the Baku In-service Education Institute and outside Baku through 12 regional affiliates of the Azerbaijan Teachers Institute. However, most of these teacher training centers are poorly staffed and ill-equipped to deliver effective teacher training (World Bank, 2002).
14. Over the past decade, the SSAC has brought a new approach to assessing student learning outcomes. Test questions are designed to assess student learning competencies based on specific criteria, including student knowledge of subject terminology and factual information, as well as student ability to generalize, explain, calculate, predict, and recommend actions.
15. According to the Head of Testing Methodology Department of the SSAC, Rahim Guseynov, the questions included in centralized tests completely matched school curricula and any changes in school curriculum were immediately reflected in university admission tests.
16. The World Bank (2002) estimated that state expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP was 3.7 percent in 2001.
17. The norm for teaching is 12 hours for which teachers are paid between AZM 80,000 to AZM 120,000 (on average about between US\$20-25). However, the average load for teachers in urban areas is 18 hours and some teach up to two loads (24 hours) to double their income. School directors are the main authority to increase the number of teaching hours, based on the school needs and other non-transparent criteria (World Bank, 2002).
18. The World Bank poverty assessment report (quoted in World Bank, 2002) indicates that private spending on education considerably increased during the 1990s, mainly because of informal payments. As the World Bank report (2002) highlighted, informal payments exist on both the

supply as well as the demand side. On the supply side, they include buying jobs and paying to have more hours of teaching, which then translates to more income. On the demand side, they range from paying to get into better schools or better classes with the best teachers within schools, to paying for the basic needs, grades, absenteeism, and private tutoring.

19. Given that the vast majority of students use private tutoring lessons, as opposed to private tutoring courses, this section will primarily focus on private tutoring lessons.
20. For the university sample, the low percentage of students using private tutoring in sciences (biology, chemistry, physics, etc.) can be explained by the fact that the study did not target students from higher education programs that include science subjects on centralized university entrance examinations (i.e. programs I & IV). The students surveyed were from higher education programs II & IV, which require the following subjects on entrance exams: mathematics, geography, foreign language, and native language/literature (for the second group) and mathematics, history, foreign language, and native language/literature (for the fifth group).
21. In Azerbaijan, one academic hour equals 80 minutes. This is a typical duration of both university and private tutoring lessons.
22. See the section on equity for a more detailed discussion of this issue.
23. Research on “formal and non-formal payments in the educational system of Azerbaijan,” which was conducted by Sigma (2000) shows higher costs of private tutoring lessons, with foreign language and math tutors charging up to US\$30-40 per academic hour in Baku and US\$10 per academic hour in rural areas.
24. For institutions offering private tutoring courses, the formula for distribution of incomes looks like the following: 18 percent Value Added Tax, 49 payment to the teacher, 33 percent income of the institution offering private tutoring courses.
25. During the Soviet period, corruption was widespread in universities, and the three countries in the Caucasus were infamous for selling university admissions.
26. The survey covered a sample of 1,708 teachers.
27. Interviews with students and teachers reveal that student absence is often not officially recorded. Fearing that they will be reprimanded for school non-attendance by the school authorities, students pay bribes to their teachers or school directors to conceal their absence.
28. According to the Transparency International Report (2004), Azerbaijan is ranked 140 of 145 countries in a Corruption Perception Index. Of a maximum score of 10 (with 10 being least corrupt and one being most corrupt), Azerbaijan has scored less than two.
29. 57.1 percent of all secondary school students (231,000) constitute 131,901 students who pay, on average, US\$434 a year o

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X ü l a s ə

FƏRDİ DƏRS DEMƏ EPİDEMİYASI: MONİTORİNQİN NƏTİCƏLƏRİ

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Ölkə tarixində yeni fenomen olmamasına baxmayaraq, fərdi dərs demə Azərbaycanın post-Sovet dövrünün təhsilində xüsusi yer tutur və alimlər və ictimaiyyət tərəfindən yetərinə diqqət verilməyən mövzulardandır.

Müəllifləri İveta Silova və Elmina Kazımzadə olan məqalə Azərbaycanın təhsil sahəsində fərdi dərs demə proseslərini təhlil edir və bu hadisənin əmələ gətirən səbəbləri, onun miqyası və təsirləri barədə ətraflı məlumat verir. Məqalə statistik və sənədlərin təhlili, fokus qrupları və müsabiqələr kimi tədqiqat metodlarından istifadə edir. Müəlliflər Bakı, Gəncə və Lənkəranda 913 universitet tələbələri və 1019 orta məktəb şagirdləri arasında sorğu aparmış və müəllim, valideyin və dövlət rəsmilərlə müsabiqələr keçirtmişlər.

Gəldikləri nəticələr ondan ibarətdir ki, fərdi dərs deməyin səbəbləri təhsil sistemində mövcud çatışmazlıqlardır. Məktəbdən kənar təlimlərin təhsilə ümumi təsiri zərərliyə onə görə ki, o, məktəb tədrisini zəiflədir, tələbələrə böyük təzyiq göstərir, sosial bərabərliyi pozur və korrupsiyanı inkişaf etdirir. Bunları nəzərə alaraq, müəlliflər bir neçə təklif irəli sürürlər hansılar ki, bu sahə ilə məşğul olan dövlət rəsmiləri öz təhsil siyasətində nəzərə ala bilərlər: ictimaiyyətin bu mövzu haqda məlumatlandırılması, fərdi dərslərin dövlət tərəfindən tənzimlənməsi və onların azaldılması üçün əsas təhsil sisteminin inkişaf etdirilməsi və, nəhayət, fərdi dərs deməyin və onun təsirlərinin daimi nəzarəti və monitorinqi.