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## **TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD SHADOW EDUCATION IN TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH**

**Bhim Lal Bhandari**

*Associate Professor*

*Butwal Multiple Campus, Faculty of Education, Tribhuvan University, Nepal*

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper aims to explore teachers' and students' attitudes towards shadow education in teaching and learning the English language in the context of Nepal. This study adopts narrative inquiry as research method to explore the attitudes of participants through their lived narratives. For this purpose, two secondary-level English language teachers and two students have been selected as the participants who were involved in shadow education for the study from two community secondary schools in the Rupandehi district. The study uses unstructured interviews for collecting the required data. The study revealed that teachers and students have both positive and negative attitudes towards shadow education in English language teaching and learning. Tuition and coaching supported students to improve their self-confidence and language proficiency in English and teachers to be financially strong. Similarly, poor classroom teaching, attending fewer classes and giving less attention to the students during the regular teaching hours are the negative consequences of shadow education. Thus, the study can contribute to the discourse of shadow education to get insightful ideas and add new knowledge in reforming the existing educational policy in school education minimizing negative effects of it in Nepal.

**Keywords:** Coaching classes, Home tuition, Learner-centred, Shadow education, Tuition classes

### **INTRODUCTION**

Shadow education or private tutoring system is playing a significant role in learning the English language in Nepal. An international phenomenon known as private tutoring (PT) has been linked to marketization and privatization. Shadow education

refers to various methods of educating students outside of formal school or college. Private tutoring, as a new form of privatization of education, has grown at a fast pace over the few decades all over the world and has become a billion-dollar business in the global market (UNESCO, 2017). The term "shadow education" is now frequently used in literature to describe private tutoring. It imparts education to students outside of the traditional settings of a school or college. It bridges the gap between what students expect and what they study in the typical classroom (Bray, 2007). Thus, shadow education provides additional support to the students in their academic subjects of conventional schooling for improving school performance.

English language teaching in secondary schools in Nepal is much criticized as the students have to take tuition or coaching classes for the preparation of the final examinations of English. The need from schools for their students to be better prepared for exams is one reason for the high level of tutoring, in addition to students' enthusiasm for education (Nath, 2007). Shadowing in education can help students achieve higher marks on important exams like the SEE and the 12th grades (Kshetree, 2020a). Thus, students are engaged in shadow learning activities to enhance their formal school career by acquiring subject knowledge in English and increasing their educational opportunities in the formal system of education. Taking tuition, hiring a home tutor and joining coaching classes are the most common activities of it.

Education that takes place outside of regular schooling is referred to as "shadow education" and is intended to benefit the student's formal academic career. Regarding shadow education, Bray (2010) asserted that it is suitable for several purposes. In almost all societies, mainstream education receives much more attention than shadow education and the characteristics of the shadow system are much less distinct than those of the mainstream system. First, private supplemental tutoring only exists within the mainstream educational system. Second, as the size and shape of the mainstream system change, so do the size and shape of supplementary tutoring. In this respect, Bray (2013) contended that private tutoring is perceived as a normal component of traditional schooling, such as final board exams, and university entrance which helps to increase the likelihood of getting a job in the government.

The private complementary tutoring provided by informal educational institutions is a common phenomenon that is considered as shadow education (Bray & Silova, 2006). The most frequent activities associated with shadow schooling in Nepal include paying

tuition, hiring a home tutor, and enrolling in coaching programs. Private tutoring increases students' performance in the SEE and final examinations of 12 classes. But others claim that the popularity of private tutoring undermines children's capacity for learning by promoting rote memorization (Upadhaya, 2005). The services are closely related to the formal education system and are meant to assist students in fulfilling the requirements of the curricula. Private tutoring is regarded as a form of social inequity, exploitation and lack of social harmony among students (Loyalka & Zakharov, 2016). Thus, private tutoring facilitates to fulfil the necessities of formal education. Likewise, Bray (2013) mentioned that the history of private supplementary tutoring is older than the history of formal education. It has long been thought that children and teens should seek additional assistance in order to keep up with peers and further their learning.

Shadow education is a worldwide phenomenon, and it is one of the fastest-growing industries in many countries around the world. In this regard, Grodsky (2010) argued that shadow education is distinct from other methods of promoting educational inequality, such as school segregation and ability grouping, which are all under the control of educational organizations. In the same vein, Bray (2006) noted that although some nations, like South Korea, Uganda, and Mauritius, attempted to ban shadow education, the attempt was unsuccessful. If shadow education does affect academic performance, it has important implications for educational opportunity and social stratification.

Shadow education is a means for maintaining and increasing social stratification by conferring educational advantages on students who are already advantaged in terms of their rich economic, social and cultural capital. In the past, private tutoring in Nepal was a very common phenomenon as home-based teaching was inspired by Hindu philosophy. It was known as Gurukul Shikshya. Therefore, before the existence of a formal school education system in Nepal, there was the practice of receiving education from some educated well-known Gurus (Kshetree, 2020a). This indicated that the shadow education system was in practice long before the formal one. During the Rana regime, the common people received education through home-based tutoring and even Rana's children also received education in their palaces from the educated persons. Only after the establishment of Durbar School, the common people got a chance for formal education in school. After the downfall of the Rana regime, schools were opened in various places for common people's children. However, the students started getting

private tutoring, joining coaching classes or even hiring a home-based tutor for their support in the subjects they felt difficulty with. As English subject was difficult for most of the students, they started engaging in shadow education.

Guardians send their children to private tutoring or employ private tutors to come to their homes because of the social struggle to enrol in better educational institutions, preserve their high status, and boast to others (Pallegedara & Mottaleb, 2018). Despite the high cost, parents hire private tutors or enrol their children in private tuition to show their social class and position which creates social inequality (Dang & Rogers, 2008). In this sense, private tutoring is interfering with public education and creates a sense of social mobility or division (Jerrim, 2017). Two or three months before the SEE examination, the majority of the students start taking tuition and coaching classes in their schools as well as in other educational institutions. As a result, the system of shadow education has been a fashion among students and parents. Majumdar (2014) asserted that private tutoring is just another instance of student social inequity, exploitation, and social injustice. Parents who are unable to assist their children with their academics or who lack the time must enrol their children in private tutoring or hire a home tutor. They have found this phenomenon to be beneficial in helping them to tackle their problems. The study of Kshetree (2020b) in Nepal showed that the students are captivated by participating in shadow activities of education and they think that shadowing, not regular classes, was the reason for their success. The study also reveals several undesirable behaviours of the teachers engaged in shadow activities, such as providing test preparation information and supporting students in the exam room.

Most of the students of rural municipalities studying in community schools felt very difficult to study English so the parents manage private tutoring for their children so that they could easily pass the SEE and final exam of 12 classes. To my understanding, many children are engaged in shadow education activities to increase their grades in the exams whereas teachers are engaged to increase their income. The study can contribute to systematising the activities of shadow education. Moreover, the teachers and students get insights into its positive and negative consequences. Many research works are carried out on shadow education in foreign contexts. In the context of Nepal, Subedi (2018) and Kshetree (2020a 2020b) have carried out similar research on it however, none of the researchers has carried the qualitative research on teachers' and students' attitudes towards shadow education so this study intends to fill the knowledge gap. Thus, the

objective of this study is to examine teachers' and students' attitudes towards shadow education in teaching and learning English in Nepal. In particular, this study attempts to deal with following issues: How do the English language teachers and students perceive shadow education in teaching and learning English? Why do English language teachers and students engage in shadow education?

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study has used a narrative inquiry method to explore the attitude of English language teachers and students in teaching and learning English. One of the few human endeavours that are commonly accepted as both a fundamental component of human life and a critical method of evaluating the human expression is the narrative (Kim, 2016). In this regard, knowledge is regarded as personal, subjective and unique (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2009). Four participants, two English teachers and two students learning English, have been selected purposively who had been involved in shadow education from two community schools in the Rupandehi district. As Creswell (2014) suggested, a small size population is useful for analyzing the data properly. After informing the participants and taking their consent, the time for the interview was fixed and unstructured interviews were used to collect data in order to learn more about "the world of human experience" and connect with experts on specific topics (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007) through the Zoom link in Nepali. Because of the problem of the pandemic situation of COVID-19 to uncover their attitude on shadow education, interviews were conducted for two times and the average length of the interview was about 20-30 minutes. Respondents' opinions were recorded with their permission before transcribing them using Microsoft Word. The study further reassured them that the data will only be used for this particular research study and nothing else. The participants agreed to share their lived stories regarding their attitudes on shadow education in teaching and learning the English language in Nepal. While transcribing the data, pseudonyms has been used to maintain privacy.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the information collected from the participants, the results of the study are discussed and analyzed on teachers' and students' attitudes as follows.

### **Teachers' attitude to shadow education**

English language teachers believed that shadow education would support them in promoting student learning. Regarding this, Bishnu stated, "I know that for many years, shadow education has been equated with coaching or tuition. It is typically provided before or after school hours, either, inside or outside the school's premises". The responses from the participants indicated that shadow education is offered to the students before or after school hours and sometimes during school hours. He further stated, "As my salary is low, shadow education offers me extra financial income. The salary I receive from school is not enough for house expenses. After taking tuition coaching classes, I am collecting additional income sources which supported me to build a new residence in my locality".

The narrative of the participant indicated that as his salary was low, shadow education offered extra financial income to the teachers so, after taking tuition and coaching classes, he was able to generate extra income. His view is in harmony with Popa and Acedo (2006) who mentioned that the rise of private tutoring in Eastern Europe can be attributed to a combination of factors including declining public school financing, an ageing and poorer population, and low teacher salaries. Thus, shadow education supports teachers to get extra financial income.

The government has allocated a huge portion of the national budget for teacher preparation programmes and investments in children's education. However, the students are not satisfied with their teachers' teaching. Not only that, but the fact that the same teacher seems to be able to satisfy the pupils at the tutoring centre yet fails to do so in the classroom is amusing. In this regard, Bishnu stated, "The students who take home tuition, do not pay attention during the classroom hours. Doing so, they disturb other students in the class and they also impose an extra financial burden on their parents". The teacher's narratives indicated that the students who were engaged in tuition and coaching classes paid less attention during classroom teaching. Thus, on one hand, they disturbed their friends and on the other hand, they imposed an extra financial burden on the parents.

In this context, Prem mentioned, "When I teach a small group of students during the tutorial class, I can treat them individually, remove their confusions or difficulties

easily. Moreover, they can put their problems”. Prem reported his narratives that he taught a small group of students during the private tuition, and he could treat his students individually removing their confusion or difficulties easily as they were close to each other. In this line, Prem further stated, “I believe that the popularity of private coaching is making kids' academic performance appear casual. Their uniqueness and creativity are being destroyed by a lack of independent study and complete reliance on tutorial classes”. His experience of taking tuition classes clarified that due to the private tutoring, his students were careless in their studies and they had lack of self-study and creativity. In this milieu, Bishnu stated, “When the final Exams of SEE and 12 classes come near, my students start taking tuition classes. They only want to pass the final exams rather than having a deeper understanding of the subject matter”. Bishnu’s narratives showed that his students are engaged in tuition classes just to pass the final exams rather than having a deeper understanding of the subject matter. However, almost all the participant teachers had a positive attitude towards shadow education.

### **Students’ attitude to shadow education**

All the student participants of the study reported that due to tutoring and coaching, their level of English is good at the moment. All of them said that conventional school sessions were insufficient for improving test scores and developing English language proficiency. Two students of community schools were found to have joined spoken English classes with the hope of improving it. Raju asserted,

I take private tuition and coaching classes to get higher grades in the exams and to improve my English language. There is politics in community schools so, teachers are unable to do well. Due to the intimacy and good rapport with the teacher and I get extra support from them.

His experience in tuition and coaching classes clarified the closeness and good rapport with the teacher and he got additional support from the English language teachers. But there are politics in community schools so; teachers are unable to do well.

Taylor asserted that the students attribute their higher exam scores to the tutoring centres rather than their schools and universities, and they advise others to participate in the shadow activities (as cited in Bray, 2013). This indicated that working together in study groups can improve the sociability aspect of a student's life. It was found that almost all of the students had enrolled in tutoring sessions with the teacher to receive

assistance with the various activities. The student enrolled in tuition with a well-known local tutor. On the other hand, Laxmi mentioned,

I take tuition because regular classrooms are overcrowded and classroom activities are not learner-centred and sufficient for obtaining good grades in the exams and improving my English language competency and proficiency. Moreover, it provides chances of getting government employment.

Laxmi believed that the usual classroom activities are not learner-centred and adequate for obtaining good marks in the exam and obtaining more opportunities in getting government employment. As students get immediate support and feedback from their teachers to improve learning by increasing their competency and proficiency in the English language, developing self-confidence and they had a positive attitude towards it.

The participant's attitude is in harmony with Subedi (2018) who explored that shadow education improved learning through timely support and feedback from teachers and the development of student confidence. He said that the tuition and coaching lessons, not merely the usual school classes, were responsible for his high grades. The participants claimed that shadow schooling helped them enhance their grades, English language proficiency and English test scores in important exams. Participants' views are in harmony with Thapa, (2011) who found that students in public schools who had got tutoring had higher scores by 1.74 percentage points. This study showed how students' test results increased as a result of participating in shadowing activities, such as enrolling in classes. According to Taylor, students attribute their higher exam scores to the tutoring centres rather than their schools and universities and they advise others to participate in the shadow activities (as cited in Bray, 2013). Raju narrated,

Teachers become more laborious, provide personal care to the weaker students, through exam-oriented learning to get success and correct our errors immediately in tutorials rather than in usual classrooms. I get immediate support and feedback from my teachers to improve learning by increasing my competency and proficiency.

Thus, shadow education helps achieve better scores in decisive examinations such as SEE, and grade 12 final examinations. As a result, it was found that rather than real learning, teachers and students had primarily focused on exam-oriented learning. Therefore, the system of shadow education is destroying mainstream schooling by rote learning. In this context, Laxmi stated, "When I take tuition classes, my tutor shows soft behaviours to make the subject matter clear; he uses varieties of reference materials



during the tutoring. Moreover, he provides adequate materials which generally lacks in our usual classroom teaching". Participant's lived stories showed that teachers are more compassionate, exhibit kind behaviours, and use a variety of reference materials when coaching students. Additionally, they offer sufficient materials, which are usually lacking in their typical classroom. Laxmi further added,

Our English language teachers usually do not complete the whole course in mainstream schools in time, they do not teach seriously as they do in tuition classes. So, without taking tuition, it is difficult to pass the exam with good marks and I cannot meet my academic demands only through mainstream education.

Hence, the participant's view is in harmony with Raju's. She claimed that she could not pass the exams with good grades and meet her academic achievement through mainstream education only due to uncaring pedagogy during class.

Her experience of taking tuition classes indicated that her teachers usually do not complete the whole course in the school in time and they do not teach them seriously. The English language teachers who provide private tutoring to students frequently do not devote their full attention to the classroom or do not take instruction seriously during class, forcing students to sign up for tutoring (Choi & Choi, 2016; Jayachandran, 2014). Her comments expressed her frustration that without taking tuition it is difficult to pass the exam with good marks. This showed that the students believed their school classes were insufficient and inadequate for them to become better English language users and get higher grades. Raju asserted, "My ability to enhance my proficiency is aided by cooperative learning, sufficient practice, problem-solving and fast feedback in the English language". Participant students agreed that shadow education supports them to strengthen and get better their learning, promotes competition among them, motivates students towards learning, do exam-oriented learning, get clarification and immediate feedback to take care of personally to the weaker students, and increases their success rate in SLC and 12 class exams and finally develop confidence in them.

## **CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION**

This study was intended to explore teachers' and students' attitudes towards shadow education in teaching and learning by employing narrative inquiry. The study unveils participants' both positive and negative attitudes toward the benefits and problems of shadow education in ELT as tutoring and coaching are indispensable

activities in the teaching and learning process. Moreover, both teachers and students are found to believe that shadow education provides supplementary input for mainstream schooling and their English language competency and proficiency to obtain better grades in the exams. The immediate support and feedback from the teachers help the students improve learning achievement through exam-oriented learning to get success in the completion of schooling, as well as university entrance and ultimately chances of gaining government employment. It also supports the learners to develop self-confidence among them. Moreover, poor uncaring classroom pedagogy, parental pressures, lack of learner-centred teaching in community schools, the desire of passing the exam with high grades are the main reasons behind receiving private tutoring. It offers extra financial income to the teachers who have low salaries in schools. Similarly, there are negative consequences of private tutoring such as lack of student attention during classroom hours and attending fewer classes during the regular teaching hours. Therefore, the study can contribute to reforming the existing educational system of school education improving students' proficiency in English. Additionally, it may raise awareness to minimize the bad effects of shadow education in Nepal providing some insights to the secondary-level English language teachers and students.

The policymakers in the education system need to take this matter seriously and create the schooling phenomenon such that once students enrol at a school; neither they nor their parents need to worry about their academics. To improve the ELT situation by promptly addressing difficulties, policymakers must be serious. To reduce students' dependency on shadow schooling, the government should improve instruction in community schools by improving the quality of education. Besides this, the concerned authorities of the government should pay serious attention to regulating shadow education for systematic improvement in teaching and learning in community schools in Nepal.

Since the study is based on only four participants to examine their attitudes towards shadow education, it may have limited applicability. Therefore, the findings of this study cannot be generalized throughout the country. A further large-scale study in this area may explore rich information by incorporating the views and attitudes involving all the stakeholders using various tools such as questionnaires and focus group discussions. Moreover, ethnographic or phenomenological procedures can also be used to explore the comprehensive picture of shadow education in Nepal.

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