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Introduction

- 1 Private tutoring is becoming a common phenomenon in Malaysia. In line with the work of Bray (1999), private tutoring is here defined as supplementary instruction outside the formal schooling system, and where a tutor teaches academic subjects for a fee. According to statistics from the Ministry of Education, in 2013 there were 3,107 registered private tutoring centers in Malaysia, with 3.2 percent of the total number of (primary and secondary) students enrolled and 11,967 teachers (MOE, 2013). However, official statistics are not available on those involved in tutoring services outside registered premises.
- 2 Unlike other countries where there have been attempts to ban private tutoring, Malaysian school teachers are allowed to tutor outside school hours to supplement their incomes (MOE, 2006). Previous studies have not focused on the perceptions of teachers on private tutoring. The data from questionnaires presented in this paper provide indications of the ways in which the teachers perceive the effectiveness of private tutoring in various respects. In addition to its focus on academic achievement, the paper also addresses learning strategies, confidence levels, and critical thinking.

Factors that drive private tutoring in Malaysia

- 3 Private tutoring is becoming a common practice in Malaysia. Kenayathulla (2012) examined data from the 2004–5 household expenditure survey, and found that 20.1 percent of households indicated expenditures on private tutoring. Tan (2011) surveyed 1,600 Form 1 students in eight schools in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur and found that 88.0 percent had received tutoring during their primary schooling.

- 4 Strong interest in private tutoring in Malaysia has partly been a response to the large class sizes that have resulted in less individualized attention by teachers. Many parents believe they have no choice but to send their children to private tutoring to better understand what is taught at school (*The Star*, 2005a, 2005b). Additionally, the emphasis on examinations encourages the growth of the tuition industry (Arshad, 2004). Cultural factors also contribute to spending on private tutoring. Embedded in the Confucian tradition, Malaysian Chinese parents greatly emphasized learning and academic performance (Agadjanian and Liew, 2006). In this case, they might view spending for tutoring as an additional investment for their children's academic success. In addition, the existence of affirmative-action policies that prioritize the Bumiputera ethnic group (Malay and indigenous) in educational opportunities contributes to Chinese and Indian parents investing more in private tutoring to ensure that their children excel in examinations to gain entry to local universities (Jelani and Tan, 2012).
- 5 There is a strong perception among parents and students in Malaysia that private tutoring is efficacious (*The Star*, 2005a, 2005b). In a survey conducted in 1991, about 82.2 percent of students responded that tutoring had allowed them to gain more knowledge, and 62.4 percent indicated that they obtained higher marks as a result of tutoring (Chew and Leong, 1995). However, tutoring might have wide variations in its effectiveness due to the differing natures of the students who attended these classes (Zhang *et al.*, 2013).

Methodology

- 6 Questionnaires were distributed to 2,833 teachers from three states in Peninsular Malaysia's the Central Region: 220 teachers in Perak, 2,073 teachers in Selangor, and 540 teachers in Wilayah Persekutuan. These questionnaires have been adapted from the research conducted by Bray and colleagues in Hong Kong (Bray, 2013). Stratified sampling was used to distribute the questionnaires to schools in all three states.

Empirical results

Table 1: Demographic information about teachers

	No.	%
Gender		
Female	2,056	73
Male	777	27
Race		
Malay	1,854	65
Chinese	550	19

Indian	387	14
Others	42	1
Location		
Rural	434	15
Urban	2,399	85
Total	2,833	

Table 2: Teachers' evaluations of the effectiveness of different types of private tutoring

Type of private tutoring	Percentage (%)				Mean
	No Effect (1)	Small Effect (2)	Medium Effect (3)	Large Effect (4)	
Private one-to-one	2	2	31	65	3.59
Small group	0	3	60	36	3.33
Lecture by tutors (live)	2	21	57	19	2.94
Lecture (video recording)	7	49	36	8	2.46
Internet tutoring	10	45	37	8	2.43

- 7 Table 1 represents the demographic information about the sample. Table 2 shows the teachers' perceptions of different types of private tutoring. Teachers in all three states perceived one-to-one tutoring to have a large effect. Similarly, small-group tutoring is considered to have a large effect. These types of tutoring are usually more costly and common among those from wealthier families. Internet-style tutoring and lecture-style tutoring either live, by a tutor, or by video recording, are considered to have a medium effect.

Table 3: Teachers' perception of the effectiveness of tutoring in large classes

	Percentage (%)					Mean
	Never (1)	Seldom (2)	Sometimes (3)	Often (4)	Always (5)	
Tutoring helps students to raise exam scores	0	3	39	43	15	3.70

Tutoring improves students' ability	0	4	41	42	13	3.62
Tutoring focuses on exams	0	3	21	50	26	4.00
Tutoring provides exam tips	0	4	28	45	23	3.87
Tutoring provides exam drills	0	3	26	46	24	3.91
Tutoring helps to build students' confidence	1	6	36	37	20	3.70
Tutoring helps students to develop learning strategies	1	8	35	40	16	3.63
Tutoring promotes students' critical thinking	3	15	36	31	15	3.40
Tutoring helps students to cover material that is not covered in class	2	9	35	37	17	3.59

- 8 Table 3 shows the perceptions of teachers on the effectiveness of private tutoring (large classes or tuition centers) in various regards. Teachers perceive tutoring in tuition centers to be *often* helpful in raising exam scores, improving students' ability, providing exam tips and exam drills. Teachers perceive that tutoring often or always focuses on exams. Teachers also perceive that private tutoring often helps build students' self-confidence, develop learning strategies, promote students' critical thinking and encourage students to cover material that has not been covered in class.

Table 4: Teachers' perceptions of their contribution as "teachers"

	Percentage%				Mean
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
I am making a positive educational difference in the lives of my students	0	2	76	23	3.20
I am able to help even the most unmotivated students learn	0	7	73	20	3.12
I am successful in helping the students in my class learn	0	2	73	25	3.22
I am able to make students follow my instructions	0	2	68	30	3.28

- 9 Table 4 shows that teachers perceive that they are making positive contributions in students' learning. Teachers agree that they are able to make a positive educational difference in the lives of their students, able to help even the most unmotivated

students learn, are successful in helping students learn, and are able to persuade students to follow their instructions.

Table 5: Teachers' perceptions of their accessibility to students

	Percentage (%)					Mean
	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always	
Students are willing to ask me when they have difficulties in learning.	0	4	32	45	18	3.77
When students are not able to catch up, I am willing to provide free after-class lessons.	2	6	36	41	15	3.63
For students who are interested in the subject I am teaching, I am willing to provide free after-class lessons.	3	6	34	40	18	3.64

- 10 Table 5 shows the teachers' perceptions of whether they are willing to provide additional classes for students who need extra coaching. Teachers perceive that students are often willing to ask when they encounter difficulties. Teachers perceive that they are often willing to provide free after-class lessons for those students who are not able to catch up and those who are interested.
- 11 The findings of this study show that teachers consider themselves as positively contributing to students' learning. In addition, mainstream schoolteachers are willing to supervise students who need extra coaching. Teachers also perceive that students are willing to approach them when they encounter difficulties. The findings of this research imply that the frequency of tutoring does not mean that society does not trust schooling. Students are still willing to ask their teachers, and teachers are willing to help their students. But teachers consider tutoring as a supplement to mainstream schooling that can help students to excel in the examinations.



- 12 Overall, the data suggests that that the frequency of tutoring does not mean that society does not trust schooling. Teachers perceive themselves as contributing positively to students' learning. Findings also show that teachers perceive tutoring to often or always focus on exams. With respect to academic performance, the majority of the teachers agree that tutoring often helps students to raise their examination scores, improve students' ability, and provide examination drills. Although private tutoring explicitly aims to improve school grades and students' performance, this study also analyzed teachers' perception of the effectiveness of private tutoring in other aspects. The results indicate that private tutoring often develops learning strategies, builds students' self-confidence, and promotes students' critical thinking.

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ABSTRACTS

This paper examines teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of private tutoring in Malaysia. Drawing on survey data from Perak, Selangor, and Wilayah Persekutuan, the findings suggest that teachers perceive tutoring to be effective both in increasing academic performances and also in other respects such as developing learning strategies, confidence levels, and critical thinking. However, the data suggests that the frequency of tutoring does not mean that society does not trust schooling. Teachers perceive that they are making positive contributions

in students' learning, such as making a positive educational difference in the lives of their students and helping even the most unmotivated students learn.

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Geographical index: Malaisie

Keywords: private tuition, shadow education, educational system, confucianism, cultural tradition

Mots-clés: cours particulier, éducation parallèle, confucianisme, système éducatif, tradition culturelle

Palabras claves: clases particulares, educación paralela, confucianismo, sistema educativo, tradición cultural