Private Tutoring in Poland

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Although private tutoring existed before Poland’s political transition in 1989, it was not the subject of social debate. One reason for the lack of discussion was that communist politicians propagated an image of the school as an ideal institution that did not require any supplement. It was also assumed that no segment of the system could function ineffectively – especially the army, the police, and the education system. A debate on tutoring would have suggested that the school, a hallowed institution, was failing to meet externally established standards.

In addition to limiting debate about Polish schooling, communist administrations controlled schools using their own internal standards. According to the government, schools were to ensure a proper ‘socialist upbringing’. The development of independent thinking, or even competence in mathematics and geography were secondary issues. A debate over private tutoring would have eroded the communist myth of free and uniform education for everyone. In moments of crisis, communist authorities always declared that despite ‘perversions’, one fact was certain: the state has given the people an opportunity to complete school free of charge.

During the period of transformation, the private tutoring debate has assumed a only slightly larger dimension. Sociological and psychological studies are being conducted on this phenomenon, and they see private lessons and preparatory courses as a way to adapt to new systems and new realities. There is also a growing interest from the press, particularly local, daily newspapers about the causes and effects of private tutoring. While scholarly studies address social mechanisms underlying the growth and development of the market for private lessons and courses, the press is primarily concerned with the social inequalities to which this market gives rise.

However, few commentators have addressed either the gray zone consisting primarily of teachers and university staff giving private lessons or the potential for corruption arising from private lessons and preparatory courses, particularly when organized by higher education institutions. This appears to reflect the fact that public perception of how the law works has remained largely unchanged during the period of transformation. The approval level for the proposition that “all are equal before the law” (including the tax law) was fairly low, at 40 percent in 1988, but recorded a slight increase with the coming of the new social and political system in 1989, only to quickly return to the previous level (Koralewicz & Ziółkowski, 2003). For many Poles the new system resembled the old one in that it perpetuated unequal treatment of citizens, corruption, and the importance of connections and acquaintances. It was only natural that this pervasive disrespect for the rule of law would affect educational provision and the inherent dangers of private tutoring.

In their research on Poles’ strategy for coping with system changes, Giza-Poleszczuk, Marody and Rychard (1999) found that respondents placed a strategy of capital accumulation through education first (over 80 percent). Private tutoring, preparatory courses, private lessons, and sending children abroad were treated as primary strategies for building the family’s capital. According to the authors of that study, however, this strategy appeared exclusively in families...
where education capital was already high. Similar findings emerged from studies on changes in the mentality of Polish society (Koralewicz & Ziółkowski, 2003).

The ways that Poles dealt with the new social and political system can be thought of as a set of concentric circles. The first way was a short-term activity for personal benefit; the second was a long-term investment in personal and family resources; the third was a receptive and demanding orientation; and the fourth was helplessness, perceiving oneself as a victim of a specific person or institution and blaming impersonal, ruthless rules or fate. The second of these ways concerns adaptation consisting not of ad hoc efforts, but of long-term investment strategies that are designed to develop, maintain and/or multiply economic, social and cultural capital.

Empirical studies demonstrate that Poles are increasingly investing in cultural capital by improving their qualifications and making efforts to do the same for their children. The authors of these studies commonly argued that the fact that Poland had the strongest correlation between earnings and higher education/qualifications among all formerly communist countries was a reason for larger investments in education which would make Polish society more meritocratic. Certainly in terms of capital conversion (Bourdieu 1979), it may be said that many in the intelligentsia have managed to transform their social and cultural capital into economic capital by adapting to the conditions of the free market. This group comprises the largest number of parents of respondents to the survey reported in this chapter who declared that they took private lessons and/or participated in preparatory courses. This group also comprises a majority of the families who sent their children to private schools.1

The situation is different with respect to the teachers and academic staff who give private lessons and teach preparatory courses. The teachers in particular belong to what Koralewicz and Ziółkowski (2003) called the ‘rank-and-file’ intelligentsia who are employed in the public sector and are poorly paid. The majority of them are forced to look for additional sources of income, such as private lessons and preparatory courses. According to the Polish Central Statistical Office, the average gross monthly salary in the education sector corresponded to 90 percent of the average salary in the enterprise sector in 2004. The situation improved slightly in the first quarter of 2005, with the average gross monthly salary in the education sector increasing to 108 percent of that of the enterprise sector. The ratio of average gross monthly salary to minimum wage stood at 3.4, meaning that the average salary in the education sector corresponded to 340 percent of the minimum wage. These conditions, high demand for education and low paid educational professionals, promoted the market for private lessons and courses. The private tutoring market in turn led to unequal opportunities for access to education and qualifications.

Analyzing the scope, structure, and impact of private tutoring in Poland, this chapter first discusses first who takes private lessons, in what subjects, and to what extent, and second who provides private tutoring and with what effect. Carried out by the Institute of Public Affairs, the study draws from both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data are derived from a survey conducted in December 2004 among first-year students of the law and pedagogy faculties at the state-run Universities of Warsaw and Bialystok.2 The study

1 Two percent of all students were enrolled in private schools in 2003, with the highest percentage (3.6 percent) attending upper secondary schools (Putkiewicz & Wilkomirksa 2004).

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 the Matura examination in Lithuania”, which was conducted by the Centre of Education Policy of Vilnius University in 2003.
collected data from 849 students, and the sample included respondents in high-demand programs\(^3\) (like law, 60.5 percent) and traditionally low-demand programs (like pedagogy, 39.5 percent).\(^4\) Qualitative data included document analysis of pedagogical students’ seminar papers and studies by the Centre for Civic Education on educational problems in Poland, as well as phone interviews with 65 private tutors who advertised in Polish newspapers.\(^5\) Important data were also collected from a web-based opinion poll on private tutoring organized by the Centre for Civic Education and a series of four group interviews with students and teachers on private tutoring (see Chapter 3 for a more detail on data collection and analysis). The quantitative data address only a section of the private tutoring phenomenon. This limitation results from the fact that only first-year students of state-run universities participated in the study. This study does not cover students of other universities, including private ones, or secondary school graduates who, for one reason or another, did not pursue higher education.

The Context: Polish Education in Transition

Indices that allow for comparison of multiple, often diverse countries are helpful for discussing private tutoring in Poland. As with many studies, the research done for this study needs additional context, like the facts provided below, to give substance to the numbers.

With a score of 0.84, Poland ranked 35\(^{th}\) out of 175 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI) in 2003, and 37\(^{th}\) in 2004 (Lewicka, 2005). Yet, of all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, Poland had made the most progress on the HDI. In 1990 Poland was the lowest among all countries in the region, and by 2004 had recorded a 0.47 point increase in its HDI score. However, Poland’s performance was less exemplary when judged against the Human Poverty Index (HPI),\(^6\) on which it ranked last among the 50 most developed countries due to its high unemployment (19.7 percent). The Technology Achievement Index (TAI), another created by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is believed to provide a good measure of a country’s education level. Of the 72 countries for which TAI scores were calculated in 2001, Poland ranked 29\(^{th}\) with a score of 0.407. The list was topped by Finland with a score of 0.704.

In 1998, Poland ranked ‘average’ on the Gini coefficient index, which measures disparity of income inequality (Lewicka, 2005). With a Gini coefficient of 31.6,\(^7\) Poland ranked behind not only the Scandinavian countries, Belgium, and Japan, but also Slovakia and Croatia. A 2003 UNDP report found that, despite considerable growth of its national income, Poland, apart from Indonesia and Sri Lanka, was the only country in which poverty expanded in the

\(^3\) The classification of law into high demand programs and of pedagogy into low-demand programs reflects the traditional opinion professed by the Polish academic community. High-demand programs are considered more difficult and/or providing qualifications of relatively high market value. There were seven candidates for each vacancy at the law faculties and five at the pedagogy faculties (data taken from the two universities’ 2004 entrance examinations).

\(^4\) The groups surveyed varied considerably with regard to the number of female and male students. Female students represented slightly less than 50 percent of the sample of law students from Warsaw University and slightly more than 50 percent from Białystok University. Women constituted a majority of pedagogy students.

\(^5\) Gazeta Wyborcza and Życie Warszawy.

\(^6\) As the HDI is a ‘rough’ index with poor differentiation potential for the ends of the scale, a more specific index was introduced – Human Poverty Index – for differentiations within the richest and poorest countries

\(^7\) The following countries have the highest Gini indices: United States, Hong Kong, Singapore, Russia, Brazil, Nicaragua, Congo and Botswana.
1990s, with the number of people living below the minimum subsistence level increasing from 6 to 20 percent.

UNDP reports are an important but not exclusive source of indices for international comparisons. Reports from Transparency International rank countries according to the level of corruption, and position a country on the global corruption map. On the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) from 0 (maximum perceived corruption) to 10.0 (no perceived corruption), Poland scored 5.57 in 1996, 5.08 in 1997, 4.10 in 2000, and 3.60 in 2003. These figures demonstrate that Poland was perceived to be increasingly corrupt, and it was one of the few countries in which the CPI had deteriorated steadily (Dobrowolski, 2001; Lewicka, 2005). The CPI is important for the private tutoring comparisons made in this research. Private tutoring creates an environment susceptible to corruption, particularly if provided by teachers who double as private tutors for their regular students and by professors in universities tutees aspire to enter.

Equally important are indices measuring values, particularly of teachers. Regular values surveys have been conducted for years by sociologist Ronald Inglehart, who has explored values through two perspectives (Lewicka, 2005). One perspective is the type of recognized authority: traditional (mostly religious) versus secular and rational. The second perspective is concerned with materialistic values (survival) versus post-materialistic values (life quality). The higher the focus on wealth and economic security, the more materialistic the values are considered. Poland along with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, and Azerbaijan (other countries included in this edited volume) ranked among the countries most committed to materialistic values and traditional authority. A strong drive towards economic success, which is inherent in materialistic values, may lead to corruption in the countries where the means to achieving material success are relatively scarce (Skarżyńska, 2005).

International studies of the values of secondary school teachers have found that Polish teachers, like their colleagues from other Central and Eastern European countries, have more traditional, less individualistic, and less egalitarian value systems than Western teachers (Schwarz, 1994). Among the countries in the same category as Poland, Polish teachers demonstrated the highest commitment to conservative values and the lowest commitment to egalitarian values. These findings are confirmed by other research, which has found a fairly widespread tendency among teachers to distinguish between ‘talented’ and ‘untalented’ students. When asked by a journalist why parents seek private tutors, one teacher, who might be considered typical, replied: “It happens that when parents of a less talented child want to send him or her to a good school, they pay for extra lessons” (Rzeczpospolita Daily, 9 June 2005).

**Polish Educational Reform**

The Polish education system underwent major reform in 1999. The reform was intended to popularize secondary education, equalize educational opportunities, and improve the quality of teaching and education. These goals were to be addressed through the education system, school network, curriculum and personnel reforms, and the introduction of an external examination system. Specifically, the reforms in each area had the following characteristics:
• The reform reduced the duration of primary schooling to six years, followed by three years of lower secondary schooling and a further three compulsory years of upper secondary schooling. In effect, the reform made education mandatory until the age of 18.

• The reform led to closure of small schools that were described as expensive to run and poorly equipped in favor of large schools that were described as cheaper and better equipped.

• The curriculum reform was necessitated by two factors: the introduction of an integrated system of teaching in Grades 1-3 and of a block system of teaching in Grades 4-6 of primary school, as well as the establishment of lower secondary schools (gymnasiums). These changes led to the rapid growth of the market for school curricula and handbooks.

• It was assumed that all teachers would complete higher education in a relevant field of specialization by 2006. The reform also introduced four levels of teachers’ occupational hierarchy: intern teacher, contract teacher, nominated teacher, and diploma teacher. Salaries were to be differentiated accordingly.

• The reform introduced an external test for primary school in the last grade of primary school and an external examination for students in the last grade of lower secondary school. While the former was designed solely to test pupils’ skills, the latter was intended to provide information to be considered for selection of students for upper secondary school. A third examination, the *matura*, was introduced for students in the last grade of upper secondary school. In its reformed shape, the *matura* was intended to be the sole criterion for university admission. However, many universities and faculties decided that they would retain their own entrance examinations as part of the admission procedure.

Factors Contributing to Private Tutoring in Poland
Poland's transformation and its recent education reforms have affected the scope and structure of private tutoring. Several factors should be considered when examining the motivation for private tutoring. First, the external test at the end of lower secondary school, introduced by the 1999 reform, controls access to upper secondary schools. Parental realization of the importance of this examination is usually manifest in looking for a test-preparation tutor for the child.

The changes to the upper secondary school *matura* examination have also promoted tutoring. From 2005, a new, external secondary school examination was required for university admissions. The *matura* examination was intended to replace university entrance examinations but, as mentioned above, a significant number of faculties decided to retain additional tests as part of the recruitment process. It is commonly believed that schools are incapable of preparing students for the new *matura* examination, particularly if its results are to be a decisive factor in university admission. Thus, students seek private tutoring for both the *matura* examination and preparatory courses for the individual university examinations.

A third reason for the rise in private tutoring is related to secondary schools striving to stay in the market. For many schools, it is of utmost importance to keep a high position in school rankings. Rankings are published on the internet, by local daily newspapers, and as supplements to national newspapers. They are calculated on the average performance of primary and lower secondary schools on external tests. They do not take into account value added, skills or knowledge. Positions in the rankings can be ensured only by results, and schools often demand much of their students and care little about teaching quality as long as
the students do well of the examinations. If the pupils fail to meet the school expectations, parents may decide to employ tutors. Quoting a participant in an internet discussion on private tutoring, it could be said that “private lessons and courses are intended to bridge the gap between students' capacities and the requirements of the school they attend or aspire to attend”.

The Minister of Education and Sport has been quoted as saying that only students at small rural schools do not take private tutoring (Rzeczpospolita Daily, 9 June 2005). In 2004, the Ministry organized a competition under the slogan ‘School Without Private Tutoring’ that was designed to find solutions to the private tutoring problem. However, the results of the competition announced in June 2005 were meager. Only about 0.5 percent of schools participated in the competition, and these were typically provincial institutions rather than ones with established reputations. The Rzeczpospolita Daily published an article discussing the results of the competition under the headline “They Don’t Want to Combat Private Tutoring”. One of the three awards went to a school from a small district town. The teachers at that school organized extra classes for both weak students as well as the most able students. Within a year, the number of students taking private tutoring declined from 44 percent to 26 percent.

However serious the competition, it provided a basis for determining the extent of the private tutoring phenomenon. According to the Ministry’s estimates, around 10 percent of primary and lower secondary school students take private tutoring, while in upper secondary schools this figure was said to be between 50 and 60 percent. While the figures for upper secondary and primary schools may be accurate, those for lower secondary schools appear to be significantly understated. Research on the extent of private tutoring in the first class of lower secondary school (gymnasium), conducted by the Institute of Public Affairs in 2000, found that 21 percent of students of the first class were taking private tutoring. In 2001, participation was found to be 18 percent (Konarzewski 2001, 2002). The research reported in this chapter sheds additional light on the scope, nature, and implications of private tutoring in Poland.

Findings: The Scope and Nature of Private Tutoring in Poland

The term private tutoring lessons or private lessons is used here to describe individual or group out-of-school lessons which are paid for by parents or the pupils themselves. Such lessons are aimed at supplementing school subjects. Additional lessons in foreign languages that are outside the school curriculum are not included in the term private tutoring lessons used here. Preparatory courses for entry examinations to universities and colleges, which are organized by various faculties or third parties and paid for by the pupil’s parents or the pupils themselves, constitute a distinct form of private tutoring activity. Based on the data from our quantitative and qualitative surveys, this section examines the general characteristics of private tutoring, the main factors underlying the demand for private tutoring, and the educational, social, and economic impact of private tutoring.

Private Tutoring Lessons

The scope of private tutoring lessons

Our study of first-year university students found that 49.8 percent of them took private lessons. The largest groups of students who took private lessons in secondary school were students of early education in Warsaw University and of law in both Warsaw and Białystok universities. Although the decision to take expensive private tutoring by future lawyers can be explained by the relative attractiveness of the law labor market and the competition for law
admissions, it is more difficult to account for the same percentage of teacher candidates who took private lessons and were planning to teach young children as a career. It might be explained by the fact that many candidates applying to the Faculty of Early Education also apply to other faculties. Further, many education students have to take the Polish and English entrance examination, possibly requiring more tutoring. Lastly, the relatively high number of students taking private lessons in this group could also be due to the fact that teacher candidates most frequently have lower secondary school achievement (see Table 12.1 for more detailed data on students taking private lessons and in how many subjects).

Table 1. Field of Study and Location vs. Tutoring, Poland (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field of study &amp; location</th>
<th>Number of subjects</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law, Warsaw</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law, Białystok</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General pedagogy, Warsaw</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General pedagogy, Białystok</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early education, Warsaw</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early education, Białystok</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ² = 56.7, df = 15, p < 0.001, C = 0.25

Consumers

Individual level analyses determined a relationship between the taking of private lessons and position in the social structure in terms of the socio-economic status (SES) of the respondents’ families (Table 2).9 A low family SES encompassed 8.7 percent of all students surveyed, while medium SES accounted for 56.3 percent, and a high family SES 35 percent. These figures provide a picture of a common phenomenon in Poland: a low percentage of university students come from families with low SES. Students whose families were characterized as having a low SES took private lessons less frequently (35.1 percent) than their peers from families with a medium SES (46.7 percent) and much less frequently than their peers from families with a self-reported high SES (58.7 percent).

Table 2. Socio-Economic Status and Private Lessons, Poland (Percentage Distributions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-Economic Status (SES)</th>
<th>Number of Subjects</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low SES</td>
<td>64.9</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium SES</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High SES</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>37.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ²=19.1, df=6, p<0.001, C=0.15

As expected, and based on the analyses of the costs of tutoring, a relatively strong relationship was found between the taking of private lessons and the evaluation of family financial standing (Table 12.3). Students who evaluated their family’s financial situation as bad or very bad were twice as likely to declare that they did not take private lessons compared to those who evaluated their family’s financial situation as very good. In addition to parents’

9 The respondents’ family education index was calculated based on the respondents’ declaration of the level of their parents’ education. Based these data, the total SES rate for the student’s family was calculated, determined by the sum of mother’s and father’s education indices.
education, family financial situation is the main variable determining the use of private tutoring. However, the relation between private tutoring and parents’ education is less pronounced than of that between private tutoring and a family’s financial situation. From interviews with teachers and the web-based opinion poll it was clear that well-educated parents are often able to help their children “in filling the gap between what have they learned at school and what they need to learn” without paying for private tutoring.

Table 3. Family’s Economic Standing vs. Private Lessons, Poland (Percentage Distribution)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family’s Economic Standing</th>
<th>Number of Subjects</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>68.3</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Bad</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2 = 45.8$, df=12, p<0.001, C=0.23

However, a converse effect should also be kept in mind, namely that better educated parents are more likely to change their consumption patterns and give up other family needs to pay for private tutoring if the need arises. The authors of the 1998 UNDP Report raised the importance of this variable, which can be defined as an inclination to choose educational spending over other expenses in the process of upbringing. Parents’ relatively high education can therefore be a factor both favorable and unfavorable to private tutoring.

Lastly, there is one main factor preventing the use of expensive private tutoring – poverty. When asked why they did not use private tutoring, one-fourth of the respondents said that it was too expensive. This was confirmed by an analysis of the opinions of students surveyed on private tutoring. An analysis of a relationship between an opinion expressed on private tutoring and the affluence of the family of origin yielded a strong positive relationship. The lower the assessment of the economic standing of the family of origin, the more likely respondents were to view private lessons as a driving factor behind the growing costs of education. Private tutoring appeared to be too expensive even for respondents who considered the financial situation of their families to be within the national average.

Providers

Teachers are the main providers of private lessons. Almost one-third of the respondents were tutored by teachers from other schools. However, one in ten respondents were tutored by their own teachers and eight percent of the students were taught by other teachers from the same school. The second-largest group comprised university teachers (nearly 31 percent), and the

10 To indicate what the respondents thought about private tutoring, they were asked to take a position on 28
statements. A cluster analysis was used to analyze the feedback. Four groups of opinions were distinguished using cluster analysis: (1) Private lessons are a source of additional income for teachers, (2) Private lessons are a factor driving up the cost of education, (3) Private lessons are a way of getting prepared for university entrance examinations, and (4) Private lessons are a way of compensating for the school’s inefficiency.

11 In the lower secondary school and in junior years of the upper secondary school, 30 percent of tutors are teachers who provide regular school instruction to their tutees.
third-largest group included students and persons other than teachers or university instructors (21 percent).

The pattern of teachers giving private lessons to their students, instruction by teachers from the same school, and the relatively large number of university professors who have private students may be viewed as the dark side of private tutoring in Poland, because situations like these are prone to corruption. It is highly probable that the phenomenon of taking private lessons with university professors and staff stems from a tradition of building contacts and relationships. University professors and staff may feel obliged to provide their tutees with assistance which is not entirely disinterested. The more widespread corruption becomes, the more educators engage in it, the stronger the incentive to behave in a corrupt manner. This is one of the most serious threats caused by the growth of private tutoring.

**Academic subjects**

Among the most popular subjects for extra instruction were the subjects tested on university entrance examinations: history, foreign languages, Polish, and political science (Figure 12.1). The list also included logic, as there were questions concerning logic on the entrance examination for law studies at Warsaw University. Concerning other subjects, it was unclear whether the extra instruction was only in “support” of the everyday school learning process, preparation for the school leaving examination, or whether the respondents took entrance examinations in those subjects. Mathematics appeared to be the only subject in the upper secondary school-leaving examination that did not factor in the entrance examination for any of the faculties under consideration.12

**Figure 1. Subjects in Which Respondents Reported Taking Private Tutoring Lessons, Poland**

![Subjects](image)

*Note: Respondents could select more than one answer.*

**Reasons for taking private lessons**

We asked students about their main purposes for taking private lessons. Nearly 52 percent of the respondents reported that they took private lessons to prepare themselves for examinations. A quarter of respondents used private lessons as an opportunity to fill gaps in

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12 It should be added that Polish students continue to have difficulties with mathematics. This is the subject in which more than 10 percent of students failed their upper secondary school leaving examination in 2005, even though it was not a mandatory subject (*Rzeczpospolita Daily*, 28 June 2005).
what they learned at school, and 39 percent to check whether they properly understood the material learned at school. As many as 40 percent of the tutees thought the knowledge acquired at school was discontinuous, incomplete, and in need of supplementation by private lessons. Only a small percentage of respondents claimed that they took private lessons because of their parents’ wishes (2.2 percent), or because of social pressures (1.9 percent). These findings disprove the belief that private tutoring is a matter of peer pressure and/or is forced on students by overzealous parents.

*Group size and cost of private lessons*
While individual (one-on-one) student lessons predominated (66.3 percent), as many as 22.4 percent of private lessons were given to groups of over five students. According to the tutors, the main reason for large group sizes was to take advantage of economies of scale. Another reason is the limited availability of tutors, particularly in small towns.

The costs of private tutoring lessons were estimated based upon the telephone survey on costs and upon feedback from respondents on the frequency of private lessons and the length of time spent on instruction with a tutor. The calculations are based on the assumption that private lessons were taken throughout the school year (i.e., over 38 weeks), for two hours per week, at the hourly rate of PLN30 (US$8.83, €7.21). The resulting cost of private lessons was PLN 2,280 (US$670.73, €548.34) per year, which corresponded to 12 percent of an average gross yearly salary in the enterprise sector. This was the annual cost of private tutoring for 50 percent of the students surveyed. For those who took four hours per week (20.5 percent of the students surveyed), the annual cost was equal to 24 percent of gross yearly salary.

*Perceived impact of private lessons*
Among students who claimed that they took private lessons before the school-leaving examination, the vast majority believed that this instruction was helpful. For instance, 40 percent believed that tutoring helped a “little bit,” and 48 percent believed that private tutoring helped them “significantly.” The situation was similar in the case of university entrance examinations: 35 percent stated that private lessons helped them a “little bit” and 48 percent “significantly.” These percentages of effectiveness, however, must be seen as opinions from students who passed their examinations and were admitted to the university, and not from all tutees.

*Educational, Social, and Economic Implications*
Given that this research is the first of its kind in Poland, it cannot definitively state whether private tutoring is growing or receding. It can, however, draw two conclusions about the current state of private tutoring in Poland. First, private lessons and courses contribute to increasing social inequalities in education; and second, private tutoring is a corruption-prone activity.

*Private tutoring and social inequalities in education*
This study demonstrates that students from better-educated families were much more frequent users of private lessons and preparatory courses. Specifically, it found that the positive relationship between using private tutoring and parental education was weaker than the positive relationship between tutoring and families’ economic standing. Many respondents claimed that private tutoring was just too expensive, even for those respondents who assessed their family’s economic situation as average. In this way, private tutoring contributes to educational inequalities, particularly in rural areas where nearly 20 percent of people are unemployed and the poverty margin is increasing.

*Private tutoring as a corruption-prone environment*
Private lessons and preparatory courses represent a threat to the educational function of schools. About 10 percent of respondents were provided private lessons by their own schoolteachers. Nearly as many respondents took private lessons from teachers who did not teach their classes but who were employed at the same school. In total 30 percent of the respondents took private lessons from university college teachers, usually employed by universities into which the student was trying to enroll. This made nearly half of those taking private lessons that, in our estimation, were involved in a situation susceptible to corruption.

Conclusions and Recommendations
Private lessons and preparatory courses are informal, yet important elements of the Polish education system. The research provides a basis on which to formulate a number of important conclusions and recommendations. Above all, the problem of private tutoring should not be underestimated. Only one-third of Polish first-year university students took no private tutoring while preparing for secondary school leaving and university entrance examinations. These calculations validate the estimates from the Ministry of Education and Sport, and give support to the campaign “School without Private Tutoring.”

While private tutoring has some advantages (e.g., creating jobs, providing earning opportunities for poorly paid teachers, increasing human capital, and constructively occupying children while their parents work), the exacerbation of educational inequality caused by private tutoring, coupled with its corruption-prone nature, and its link to school system effectiveness are reasons why steps have to be taken to curb private tutoring. Based on the findings presented here, the following policy options may be recommended:

- **Initiate a national debate on the subject**
The debate should primarily focus on the weaknesses of the education system that have given rise of private tutoring. Allowing private tutoring to continue means approving of the school system’s ineffectiveness. Many educational stakeholders should take part in the debate, including teachers, parents (particularly parents councils and associations), university staff (particularly those from teacher training colleges), non-governmental organizations, and educational authorities at the local and national levels. As a part of this debate, the position of the Ministry of Education and Sport on private lessons and preparatory courses should be made public.

- **Create a private tutoring “barometer”**
A regular survey of public opinion on private support for the school system (“the barometer of private tutoring”) would be helpful in conducting a debate on private lessons and courses and in keeping this phenomenon in check. Local surveys of the barometer type are already underway in a number of municipalities throughout Poland. At a school level, the barometer survey is conducted by the Centre for Civic Education, a non-governmental organization committed to addressing the problems of education in Poland. We support the continuation and expansion of these efforts.

- **Reduce the demand for private tutoring**
The uneven coexistence of public school and private tutoring could be improved if “robust bureaucratic school systems” are given up in favor of “schools as core social centers” and/or “schools as focused learning organizations.” According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2001), these two school systems are characterized by

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strong quality and equity features. Such schools are high status community institutions providing protection against social fragmentation. The schools would be characterized by such features as softening the sharp divisions between primary, secondary, and higher levels; the re-emergence of all-age schools; and reducing the examinations on which private tutoring has flourished. Yet a change in this direction would have to be supported by teachers, many of whom favor the existence of the dual system of school and private instruction. In more immediate way, local authorities should provide schools with additional funds for compensatory and optional classes, including those preparing for university entrance examinations, especially when these examinations continue to exist on top of the *matura*.

- **Regulate the nature of private tutoring**
  The Ministry should issue a clear ban on teachers providing private tutoring to their own pupils in mainstream schools. Additionally, better monitoring and taxing of private tutoring is recommended, with the hope that increased revenues would be used to help disadvantaged students compete for university admissions. Lastly, universities should work on regulating the quality of preparatory courses and on making their admissions procedures as fair as possible.

**References**


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