

Research on the Status of Preschool Children's Participation in Private Supplementary Tutoring

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ABSTRACT

Coordinating the governance of private supplementary tutoring for preschool children is an important issue in the field of education. A survey of 1,200 parents from 10 kindergartens in City X shows that the participation rate of private supplementary tutoring increases with the age of young children; art, foreign language, and dance are the most attended subjects in private supplementary tutoring; and parents of preschoolers have multiple motives for choosing private supplementary tutoring for their children, such as discovering interests, preparing for elementary school, and having insufficient educational capacity themselves.

KEYWORDS

Preschool children; Private supplementary tutoring; Situation

DOI: 10.47297/wspiedWSP2516-250011.20230702

1 Introduction

Private supplementary tutoring refers to training services provided to students by social educational institutions outside schools. At the primary and secondary school levels, Private supplementary tutoring is often based on the school curriculum and functions as a supplement to school education, and is therefore also known as "shadow education" (e.g. Dang & Rogers, 2008; Aurini et al., 2013; Zhang & Yamato, 2018). Although there are differences in the purpose, content and form of Private supplementary tutoring services at home and abroad, "private", "supplementary" and "remedial" are common features. (Bray&Liu 2015;Wright, Lee&Feng,2017)

In the stage of Early childhood education, Private supplementary tutoring has also entered a period of rapid growth in recent years. On the one hand, the content of extracurricular training for preschool children is becoming increasingly refined, including training of art, sports, social networking and academic subject. On the other hand, the Private supplementary tutoring for preschool children has expanded from offline to online. However, with the rapid rise of China's private tutoring market, some training institutions have also engaged in illegal operations such as false advertising, price fraud, unqualified qualifications, and safety accidents, which not only cause time and property losses to parents, interfere with the normal educational order of kindergartens, but also have a negative impact on the healthy growth of children.

A significant amount of research on shadow education has focused on the primary and secondary school levels, with the discussion revolving around the scale, nature and impact of shadow education (Bray, 2010). At the primary and secondary levels, students engaging in shadow education through one-on-one or differently sized learning groups (Bray & Lykins, 2012; Manzon & Areepattamannil, 2014). In terms of the demanding for shadow education, some scholars emphasize the influence of structural factors, such as the shortage of educational resources and quality differences between

schools(Yu & Ding. 2011), while some scholars explore it at the individual level, arguing that students participate in shadowing with different motives such as fostering strengths or compensating for weaknesses (Manzon & Areepattamannil, 2014). Although it has been found that parents in some parts of China involve their children in private training from kindergarten, this phenomenon has not yet been fully explored (Zhang,2020). Therefore, this study will investigate and analyze the characteristics of preschool children's participation in private tutoring in order to provide an in-depth understanding and standardization of shadow education at this stage.

2 Methodology

This study used a combination of questionnaire survey and interview methods to collect research data. Firstly, the stratified sampling method was used to select parents from 10 kindergartens in 6 administrative regions of X city. The project team developed an online questionnaire through the "Questionnaire Star" website, distributing a total of 2800 questionnaires and collecting 2007, with a response rate of 71.6%. There were three types of parent samples excluded from the questionnaires: those with short answer times (less than 180 seconds), those without filled in the name of the kindergarten, and those with less than 30 samples. As a consequence,a valid sample of 1200 questionnaires was obtained to form the research sample of this article.Secondly,the research group selected 2 kindergarten principals, 5 kindergarten teachers, and 5 parents from the sample kindergartens for face-to-face semi-structured interviews, focusing on understanding their understanding, attitude, and experience of children participating in extracurricular training. The interview results were used to supplement and explain the questionnaire survey results.

This study was based on the self-administered questionnaire "Survey on Preschool Children's Participation in Extracurricular Training (Interest) Classes", which was divided into three parts: basic family information, young children's participation in private tutoring and parents' perspectives, with a total of 22 questions.

3 Research Findings

(1) Hours of participation in private supplementary tutoring by preschool children

The survey showed that 64.4% of parents gave feedback that their children were participating in Private supplementary tutoring, and the participation rate in Private supplementary tutoring increased with the age of the children, with the participation rate in Private supplementary tutoring for the children in kindergarten year 3 reaching 85.4%.Descriptive statistics on the hours of participation in Private supplementary tutoring by preschoolers in the sample families show that 73.25% of the preschoolers participated in Private supplementary tutoring for less than 5 hours per week, 19.17% for 5-10 hours per week, and 7.58% for more than 10 hours per week.

Although most children participate in Private supplementary tutoring for less than five hours a week, these activities are usually arranged in the evening or on weekends after kindergarten, which inevitably squeezes children's rest time, and in turn affects their emotional state and behavior at school. In the interviews, the teachers interviewed gave feedback that "some children have to go to the special class immediately after leaving the kindergarten in the afternoon, and they have to do homework when they get home at 7:00 p.m., and the younger children have to do homework until 8:00 p.m. or 9:00 p.m., and they come to the kindergarten every day in a sleepless state, with a

bad mental state" (Teacher C), and that "some children have signed up for many classes, he comes to kindergarten instead as an emotional release and outburst, so it's a struggle to do our routines" (Teacher Y). Teachers interviewed believed that the excessive length of children's participation in Private supplementary tutoring and the overly stressful pace of life were likely to adversely affect their physical and mental health, but parents tended to pay more attention to the possible benefits of participating in Private supplementary tutoring and not enough attention to the resulting impact.

(2) Number of preschool children participating in private supplementary tutoring programs

Descriptive statistics on the number of children participating in Private supplementary tutoring programs during a semester found that 34.42% of the children participated in one Private supplementary tutoring program, 35.25% participated in two Private supplementary tutoring programs, 20.92% participated in three Private supplementary tutoring programs, 6.83% participated in four Private supplementary tutoring programs, 2% participated in five Private supplementary tutoring programs, and 0.58% participated in six Private supplementary tutoring. The descriptive statistics of children's participation in Private supplementary tutoring programs show that the top five training programs in terms of participation rate are "art" (50.5%), "foreign language" (47.5%), "dance" (41.8%), "Pinyin" (11.92%) and "Math" (9.17%).

Overall, most of the children (65.8%) participated in two or more extra-school training programs at the same time, and the children in kindergarten year 3 were characterized by a "large number of extra-school training programs with a heavy emphasis on disciplines", which was a greater cognitive burden than that borne by the children in other grades of kindergarten. This phenomenon is related to the commercialization of the concept of "bridging the gap between the early childhood and primary school" by Private supplementary tutoring institutions and the anxiety of parents during this period. [18] This is also supported by interviews with teachers, who illustrated some reasons as follows: "parents communicate with each other, and the institutions also promote that elementary school phonics can be learned quickly. In addition, we don't teach it in kindergarten, so the EYFS classes outside are booming" (Ms. Q).

(3) Decision-making styles of pre-school children's participation in private supplementary tutoring

An analysis of the sample families' decision-making styles for Private supplementary tutoring found that 70.08% of the parents would negotiate with their children to make decisions about Private supplementary tutoring, 16.25% of the families had their children mainly make decisions about Private supplementary tutoring, and only 13.67% of the families gave feedbacks that the parents mainly made decisions, but the democratic decision-making process could not avoid parent-child conflicts in participation in Private supplementary tutoring. The survey found that 16.33% of parents' feedback had conflicts with their children over Private supplementary tutoring.

Although the overall percentage of parent-child conflict feedback from parents in the questionnaire survey was not high, the interviews revealed a great variety of emotional pressures on young children in the process of participating in Private supplementary tutoring. The triggers of parent-child conflict described by parents were related to their children's attitudes towards participation in OST, their performance in classes, and their completion of homework. For example, "At the beginning, he was very motivated, but for a while he didn't want to go to class. I told him not to be enthusiastic for three minutes, and at this time I would ask him to persevere, and sometimes it was unpleasant" (Parent L),

"He was not attentive in class, and he kept on making small movements, and when he came back, he dawdled and didn't finish his homework, and for some time he had to punch in every time he did his homework, and then he had to go back to school. There was a time when he had to cry every time he clocked in his homework" (Parent M) and so on. It can be found that parents have high expectations for their children's adherence to and performance in extra-school training, but the physical and mental development of preschool children has large individual differences. Young children's attention, awareness of rules, and related literacy skills are still developing, so high educational expectations will aggravate young children's emotional stress on the one hand, and promote parents' educational anxiety on the other. These result in uncontrolled parental emotions and young children's dysfunctional behaviors, which will have adverse effects on parent-child relationships and family ecology. Parent-child relationship and family ecology will be adversely affected.

(4) Parents' motives for choosing private supplementary tutoring for their young children

By analyzing the survey data, parents' motives for choosing Private supplementary tutoring for their young children can be divided into three types. Among them, 42.6% of parents suggested that their purpose of choosing an Private supplementary tutoring program for their children was to discover their children's potential and interests, 35.5% of parents believed that they participated in Private supplementary tutoring in order to prepare their children for their future elementary school studies, and 21.9% of parents chose Private supplementary tutoring because they didn't have the time to be with their children or didn't have the ability to educate their children.

It can be found in the interviews that parents of preschoolers often have multiple motives for choosing Private supplementary tutoring for their children. For example, "I didn't have the conditions to develop my hobbies when I was young. Now that my living conditions are better than before, I want my child to try more training programs, so that I can find out my child's strengths and potentials earlier, and then cultivate them later on in a targeted way" (Parent H), and "A lot of parents and friends have told me that if my child doesn't learn pinyin or writing in kindergarten, he will not learn it in primary school. Many parents have told me that if my child does not learn pinyin or writing in kindergarten, he or she will not be able to keep up in elementary school, and this will affect his or her self-confidence. However, I am worried about teaching my child by myself, so I choose to enroll my child in a class" (Parent L). It can be seen that parents generally recognize the importance of pre-school education for children's development, and hope to discover and cultivate their children's potentials at an early stage, with a view to enhancing their competitiveness among their peers through their abilities and academic preparation.

4 Conclusion

In the survey sample of this study, more than half of the preschool children are participating in private supplementary tutoring, and the proportion and duration of young children's participation in private supplementary tutoring increases with age. This finding suggests that shadow education has shown a tendency to extend from the school-age stage to the preschool stage in the social context of economic development and increased competition in education.

The most popular private supplementary tutoring programs included both subject-based and non-subject-based training, which differed from the primary and secondary school levels where parents preferred subject-based training more. Most parents tend to make decisions about private supplementary tutoring together with their children, which reflects parents' respect for their

children's wishes, but parents and their children may also have conflicts over participation in private supplementary tutoring. Parents' motives for choosing private supplementary tutoring for their children were more diverse, reflecting the importance that parents place on the development of young children at the preschool level and their desire to promote the development of their children's abilities in a variety of areas, such as academics, arts, and sports.

Although parents' educational expectations are not to be blamed, too many private supplementary tutoring programs or too many hours of training may add to the burden of children's cognitive, emotional and physical development. If preschoolers' participation in private supplementary tutoring is not monitored, parents may make decisions that are not conducive to young children's development in a state of educational anxiety. In order to reduce the burden of private supplementary tutoring for young children, future education management policies need to focus on guiding parents' educational attitudes and strengthening the supervision of private supplementary tutoring institutions for preschool children.

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