



Opinions on Private Tutoring: Insights from School Teachers at ISC Level in South Kolkata

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DOI : <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15845313>

ARTICLE DETAILS

Research Paper

Accepted: 22-06-2025

Published: 10-07-2025

Keywords:

*ISC level, learning, private
tuition, students, school
teachers*

ABSTRACT

This study examines school teachers' views on the increasing trend of private tuition and its effects on formal education. Utilizing qualitative interviews and surveys with teachers from ISC-level schools in South Kolkata, the research examines school teachers' perspectives on private tutoring, including its perceived benefits and challenges, as well as its impact on students' academic motivation and classroom engagement. The study's findings show that while many teachers recognize that private tuition can enhance learning and provide individualized support, they also express concerns about issues such as inequality, over-reliance, and the potential erosion of trust in the formal education system. This research enhances the understanding of how teachers view the role of private tutoring within the broader educational context and underscores the necessity for policy measures addressing both educational quality and equity.



1.1 Introduction

In recent years, private tuition has increasingly emerged as a significant aspect of the educational landscape, often seen by parents and students as a means to achieve a competitive academic advantage. This alternative educational system prompts crucial inquiries regarding its effects on students, formal schooling, and the wider education system. While much focus has been placed on the viewpoints of students and parents, the opinions of teachers—those directly engaged in the formal education system—tend to receive less consideration. Gaining insights into teachers' perspectives is essential, as they observe the direct impact of private tutoring on student performance, involvement in class, and educational equity. This study aims to investigate school teachers' views on private tuition, revealing both the advantages and concerns to offer a comprehensive outlook on its influence on modern education. Thus, this work seeks to deepen the understanding of how educators view private tutoring's role within the larger educational framework and emphasize the necessity for policy initiatives that tackle issues of educational quality and equity.

Private tutoring has become a widespread educational phenomenon across many countries, driven by increasing academic competition, high-stakes examinations, and parental expectations for academic excellence. Often referred to as the "shadow education system", private tuition operates alongside formal schooling, offering students supplementary academic support outside regular classroom hours. While it is frequently regarded as a tool to boost academic performance and bridge learning gaps, its growing prevalence has sparked debates over its implications for educational equity, student well-being, and the perceived adequacy of school-based instruction. In this context, school teachers occupy a unique position. As the primary facilitators of formal education, their insights provide a critical lens through which the role and impact of private tuition can be assessed. Teachers are directly affected by students' engagement in private tutoring, whether through shifts in classroom dynamics, changes in student attitudes, or challenges in curriculum delivery. Yet, despite their central role in the education system, their views on private tutoring are often under-represented in academic discourse. This study aims to fill that gap by examining school teachers' perceptions of private tuition, exploring how they view its influence on student learning, classroom performance, and the broader education system. Understanding their perspectives can inform education policy, improve classroom strategies, and contribute to a more balanced approach to supporting student achievement.



1.2 Review of the Related Literature

Benz et al. (2025) used two longitudinal cohort studies to examine how shadow education relates to academic performance in Ireland and Germany. The study found that shadow education appears to be one strategy used by more privileged families to secure educational advantage. Alam and Forhad (2025) examined the effect of private tutoring on university admission and subsequent students' academic achievement at the university level. This study found that an informal education for admission greatly helps academic achievement. Also, students who benefit from informal schooling are more likely to achieve higher grades in subsequent programmes. Kim et al. (2025) focused on the increasing prevalence of private tutoring that has received minimal scholarly attention in the United States. It was concluded that the rapid rise in high-income families' demand for this form of private educational investment mimics phenomena observed in other spheres of education and family life, with potentially important implications for inequality in student outcomes. Tonyali et al. (2025) aimed to investigate why students who graduated from fine arts high schools in Turkey need shadow education. The work found that shadow education contributed to instrument, voice, and hearing training for 12 students, while it did not affect two students. Azmat et al. (2021) explored how managers of tuition academies describe the effectiveness of private tuition academies for students' creative and critical learning. Managers of tuition academies highlighted that private tuition academies had a strong and positive effect on students' achievement. Extra coaching methods used in academies may inhibit students' creative and critical skills.

1.3 Objective

O₁: To gather school teachers' insights on students' growing preference for private tutoring at the ISC level in South Kolkata.

1.4 Research Question

RQ₁: What are the opinions of school teachers regarding students' growing preference for private tutoring at the ISC level in South Kolkata?

1.5 Methodology

In this study, a qualitative research design was employed in conjunction with the descriptive survey method. The data collection tool utilized for this study is an interview schedule developed by the researchers in consultation with subject experts. After a thorough review of existing literature, a set of 19



open-ended questions was created to elicit detailed and meaningful responses from participants. The researchers applied a purposive sampling technique with specific inclusion criteria, focusing on 25 school teachers teaching at ISC-level schools in South Kolkata. The data collection process involved interviewing teachers assigned to ISC-level classes in schools of South Kolkata. This was conducted by sending Google Forms for them to fill out and submit their responses. Segmenting techniques were then employed. The participating school teachers in the study had teaching experiences ranging from 6 to over 32 years, with 20–26 years being the most common range, as indicated by multiple responses. The average experience level was approximately 20-24 years, with several individuals exceeding 20 years of experience. The respondents teach a wide array of subjects, encompassing both humanities and sciences. Accounts, Commerce, and Business Studies are the most frequently taught subjects, as indicated by multiple responses. Geography, Bengali, English, Chemistry, Economics, and Computer Science also feature among the subjects taught. Several respondents teach multiple subjects, particularly in the fields of commerce and social sciences.

1.6 Findings

The findings reflect the perspectives of ISC-level school teachers in South Kolkata concerning the demand for private tutoring among students at the same level. This highlights ongoing challenges in schools to provide educational instruction that motivates students to seek extra tutoring. Certain subjects necessitate private tuition due to their complexity, while others do not, according to the teachers. Key factors driving the demand for private tutoring include peer pressure, parental expectations, and the need to keep pace with friends who are taking additional classes, as well as issues like weak foundational knowledge, lack of focus, and low confidence in specific subjects. Additionally, peer and parental pressure, psychological insecurity, and a desire for individualized attention contribute to this demand. Although schools aim to provide holistic and formal education, private tutoring is often preferred by students for its focused, informal, and personalized approach. Nevertheless, teachers express that private tuition isn't the "ultimate choice" for all, as some students excel in the classroom or do not require extra help beyond school. Therefore, according to the teachers, school education is crucial, as it offers systematic, structured learning and plays a vital role in a student's overall development. Thus, while private tuition can serve as a beneficial supplement, it should not undermine the significance of a strong school foundation.



1.7 Discussions

Mathematics, Physics, and Chemistry are commonly cited subjects for which students seek private tuition due to their analytical nature, complexity, and the demand for a deeper understanding. Accounts and Economics also feature prominently as they require extensive learning that is often new to students in higher grades. Within the humanities, subjects like Geography, Political Science, and Sociology are sought for thorough comprehension. Teachers suggest that the intricate nature of these subjects prompts the need for private tuition. However, most respondents agree that any subject can be mastered without additional tuition, provided students are disciplined, focused, and utilize the right approach by actively engaging in class and using resources like teachers and textbooks. Theoretical subjects, along with a supportive school environment, enable effective independent study without private tuition. Computer Science lends itself to self-learning via online platforms, while English can be grasped through reading and practice. Subjects such as History and vernacular languages are often seen as manageable without tuition due to their theoretical framework. Commerce and Business Studies are similarly regarded as feasible to study independently, given their primarily theoretical content.

Nevertheless, some learners require personalized attention to grasp concepts and clarify doubts, which tuition can readily offer. Many students opt for tuition to enhance academic performance, prepare for exams, and reinforce classroom concepts. Parents may lack the time or expertise to assist their children, leading to a search for additional academic help. Factors influencing this include external pressures, challenges related to school, personal learning difficulties, and the demand for supplementary academic support. According to teachers, students frequently pursue private tuition after paying school fees, driven by peer or parental pressure, psychological insecurities, and a desire for tailored attention. Tuitions provide exam-focused instruction and better preparation, particularly within competitive education systems. Additionally, school schedules may limit opportunities for in-depth learning that tuition often facilitates. Availability of study materials is a significant consideration for students seeking private tuition. Tuition providers typically offer study aids, practice questions, and exam-focused resources, helping students grasp concepts more effectively, especially when school textbooks are complex or inadequate. These resources can also provide a competitive advantage by aligning with exam formats and simplifying challenging topics. However, some teachers believe the quality and utility of study materials can differ, with some viewing them as marketing tools rather than genuine aids for learning. While some teachers find these materials immensely helpful, others argue they are not as vital, particularly in educational contexts like ISC that prioritize understanding concepts over specific materials. Books alone,



as complements to school education, are often seen as inadequate for various reasons. They may deliver valuable content but lack interactivity, personalized feedback, and adaptability to individual learning styles, which teachers can provide. Books also fall short in offering practical applications, engagement, and real-world examples, nor can they address questions or stimulate discussions. Some students find books too rigid, favoring interactive learning methods offered by tuition centres that use modern tools like smart boards. Nevertheless, some assert that if utilized effectively, books can suffice for their learning needs.

Teaching methods in schools differ notably from those in private tuitions. Schools deliver structured education in larger classes with fixed syllabi and standardized lessons, whereas private tuitions usually feature smaller groups or individual sessions, allowing for more personalized and adaptable teaching directed at the student's necessities. Tutors can concentrate on specific areas of improvement and provide immediate feedback, which is often missing in school settings. Overall, schools provide a holistic, formal education, while private tuitions deliver a more focused and customized learning experience. All respondents concur that the clarity of teaching methods in private tuitions is generally high, primarily due to the personalized attention that students receive. Tutors can tailor their approach to individual needs, adjust their pace, and deliver targeted explanations, enhancing the learning process. Thus, private tuitions tend to be more comprehensible owing to their individualized strategies and supportive environments that encourage students to voice their uncertainties. According to educators, students commonly hesitate to ask questions for fear of appearing foolish or being judged by peers or teachers. With the rise of reliance on private tuition, students might not feel the need to seek clarification in school. Some attend private tutoring to improve their performance in competitive or board exams, preferring instructors who convey concepts more clearly. Thus, many turn to private tuitions for extra academic support and to match personal learning preferences. The widely held belief is that a student's achievement is not solely reliant on private tuition, but rather on a combination of factors, including school education, private tutoring, self-study, motivation, and parental support.

School education is vital, providing a structured and systematic approach to learning that significantly contributes to a student's overall development. While private tuition can act as a beneficial supplement, it should not overshadow the importance of a robust school foundation. Ultimately, a student's academic success is driven more by their commitment, skills, and effort rather than solely by the quality of tuition received. Thus, while private tutoring can be advantageous, it cannot substitute the foundational role of school education in a student's learning journey, as noted by educators. Students may encounter pressure



from peers or fall prey to aggressive marketing tactics by tuition centres. Challenges such as language barriers, unsuitable classroom settings, and high teacher-student ratios can urge students to seek additional assistance. Parents may compel their children towards branded tuition options with the expectation of enhanced outcomes, regardless of the child's capabilities. Numerous students pursue private tuition for concentrated exam preparation, to close educational gaps, and to bolster their academic performance, as indicated by teachers. Some prefer the autonomy of learning at their own pace, readily afforded through private tutoring. Others believe their school provides adequate support, feeling no necessity for private tuition. Conversely, some argue that a successful academic journey is contingent upon a mix of school education, private tutoring, self-study, motivation, and parental support.

A notable observation made is that extensive teacher-student ratios often hinder teachers from addressing every student's doubt, suggesting smaller classes could mitigate the need for private tuition. Key feedback emphasized that schools struggle to deliver individualized attention because of large classes, rigid curricula, and a focus on examination outcomes, prompting students to seek private tuition for personalized aid. A few respondents noted that although schools aim to provide student support, the flexible environment found in private tutoring centres allows students to progress at their own pace. Responses highlighted that offering individual care within expansive classrooms is challenging, and some students may require additional focused guidance, which private tuition can deliver. Teachers have pointed out potential inequity, where students unable to afford private tuition may lag, leading to disparities in educational outcomes. Schools strive to perform well; however, the combination of larger class sizes and the necessity for personalized attention frequently drives students to pursue private tutoring. Some believe that it is untrue that private tuition guarantees a deeper understanding or enhances the learning experience more than school education. A shared perspective is that although private tuition allows for tailored support and can meet specific student needs, it does not invariably equate to a deeper understanding for all students. Many responses highlighted that the effectiveness of both private tutoring and school education hinges on factors like teaching style, student engagement, and instructor quality. While some argue private tuition can be more engaging and thorough due to its individualized format, others note that school classes benefit from structured curricula, peer collaborative learning, and extracurricular growth opportunities. A few participants pointed out that private tutors can customize the learning journey through one-on-one sessions, a dynamic harder to replicate in larger school environments. Ultimately, the effectiveness of both school education and private tuition is heavily reliant on the instructor's commitment and capability to engage students.



Thus, while private tuition can sometimes provide a more tailored and engaging learning experience, it does not necessarily surpass the advantages of school education, as outcomes greatly depend on teaching methodologies and student-teacher interactions in both domains. Several respondents opined that private tuition is not intrinsically more effective than school-based instruction. Some noted that while private tuition frequently emphasizes exam preparation and offers personalized assistance, school teachers also utilize effective pedagogical strategies. A few suggested that if private tuition were significantly more effective, every student would achieve superior academic results, implying that it is not a universal remedy. Many recognized that private tuition provides advantages such as tailored attention, flexible pacing, and customized teaching techniques, which can support students needing additional guidance or focused learning. Nonetheless, it is acknowledged that private tuition is not the 'definitive choice' for every student. Certain learners flourish in a classroom atmosphere or require no further tutoring beyond school. The efficacy of private tuition thus relies on the student's individual learning style, tutor competence, and distinct educational objectives. Consequently, while private tuition can furnish more personalized and adaptable learning experiences, it is not unequivocally more efficient for every learner, nor is it invariably the optimal route for all, as noted by school educators. The literature reviewed has centred around academic performance concerning private tutoring, the phenomenon of shadow education, the impact of private tutoring, familial income associated with tutoring demand, and the effectiveness of private tuition. In contrast, the current research focuses exclusively on obtaining perspectives from school teachers regarding students' interest in private tuition.

1.8 Conclusion

Students frequently seek tuition due to outside influences like peer pressure and parental expectations, challenges within schools such as ineffective teaching and busy schedules, and personal learning difficulties, including weak fundamentals, lack of focus, or low self-esteem. Tuition provides individual attention, resolves doubts, reinforces what is learned in class, and aids in exam preparation, particularly when parents cannot provide academic support. According to school teachers, the demand for private tuition arises from limited classroom time, the necessity for tailored learning experiences, and the stress of competitive exams. Additional assistance from private tutors, as expressed by educators, offers students concentrated attention, customized learning strategies, and the means to fill knowledge gaps that are often not adequately addressed in formal instruction.



1.9 Acknowledgment

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all those who were involved as a part of our research for their invaluable guidance, continuous support, and encouragement throughout this research. We would also like to thank our family and peers for their support and encouragement during this endeavour.

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