Shadow Education in Hong Kong: An insight From Local Private Tutors

Richard Ching Ho Cheng, Hong Kong Adventist College

Corresponding email address: richard.cheng@hkac.edu

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Richard Ching Ho Cheng, Hong Kong Adventist College, Hong Kong
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1580-8136

Abstract

Shadow education has remained a supportive role in many countries, and studies have shown that it has had both positive and negative impacts on students' academic performance. However, the views so far for private tutors have often been neglected by researchers. Private tutors are one of the important stakeholders in shadow education since they are the knowledge providers and facilitators in the classroom. Their opinions can help to show a more realistic picture of shadow education in Hong Kong. In this study, the focus is on investigating Hong Kong shadow education from private tutors' perspectives. There were 20 private tutors from local private tutorial centres participating in this study, and they were invited to individual interviews to express their ideas about shadow education in Hong Kong. Thematic analysis was used to organize and analyze the data in this study. The results showed that private tutors felt shadow education in Hong Kong is too 'materialistic,' and sometimes they felt lost when teaching because of the result-oriented atmosphere in the Hong Kong education system. Furthermore, social inequalities and washback were reported as well. This has further highlighted some of the negative impacts brought by shadow education.

Keywords: shadow education, private tutors, teaching and learning

The shadow education situation varies in different parts of the world. Due to differences in society, the mode of shadow education needs to be adjusted (Bray, 1999). The demand for shadow education in east Asian countries, such as South Korea, Japan and China, is high where they place high emphasis on academic achievement (Liu, 2012). For example, in China, around 55% of families from cities invest in extra classes (Xue & Ding, 2008). Another study carried out by Shen (2008), which indicated that among 827 grade 10 students in China's Gansu, Hunan and Jiangsu provinces, 75% of students needed to attend supplementary classes after school. In South Korea, the situation is similar where shadow education is known as 'hakwon,' and it consists of 10 to 15 students in a class (Kim, 2016). According to Kim (2016), the survey one educational expenditure for hakwon showed that around 7 million children in Korea attended hakwon, and among those children, there were 80.9% elementary school students, 70.6% junior students, and 50.7% senior students. As Kim (2016) further mentioned, hakwon can assist children by enhancing their academic results and their chances to enter a prestigious university. This is highly valued in Korean society, since they focus a lot on academic achievement. This can be shown by the Korean Program

for International Student Assessment (PISA) results, since they were one of the four countries for students' results in math, reading, and science abilities in 2000, 2003, 2006, 2009, and 2012 (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2013). Hence, shadow education is very competitive in Asian countries.

Shadow education is also valued in some Western countries. For example, according to Bray (2011), Scandinavian countries provide supplementary lessons for students who are not performing well in mainstream school lessons. Compared to some Asian countries, the function of shadow education is much clearer and less demanding. Therefore, in Western societies, shadow education aims to provide extra opportunities for students to review concepts and enhance their abilities, which is a positive way of using shadow education compared to examples in Asia. For Asian societies, shadow education activities tend to be more competitive than educational.

The present study investigates Hong Kong private tutors' opinions on private tutoring in Hong Kong. Since most of the studies in shadow education are related to mainstream school teachers and students, it is important to investigate private tutors' perspectives on shadow education. Through their first-hand experience, this can highlight trends and realities of Hong Kong shadow education.

Shadow Education in Hong Kong

Hong Kong parents understand that their children's results in public examinations will decide their future. Education can lead to success in Hong Kong, and this belief is widely shared by people in Hong Kong. Those who perform well in public examinations will have a higher chance of getting into a prestigious university, and eventually finding a better job (Bray, 2013). This issue is a cause of stress for parents and children in Hong Kong (Cheng, 2021), and shadow education have become more demanding over time (Davies & Guppy, 2010). Bray's study on secondary students' time spent on shadow education showed that the reason for Hong Kong students to take extra classes is due to the "no loser" principle (Bray, 2013, p. 12). According to Bray (2013), in Hong Kong, form six (grade 12) students tend to spend 4.76 hours per week in learning centres during the examination period in secondary schools. The results implied that because of the high competitiveness nature in Hong Kong society, students need to take more classes after school. The Hong Kong education system creates winners and losers, and students do not want to lose in this game (Bray, 2013). Therefore, parents help their children and are willing to invest in shadow education.

Shadow education is a lucrative business sector in Hong Kong, for the reasons mentioned previously, many families spend money on shadow education. As a result, private tutors are being advertised as 'stars' or 'kings and queens' (Koh, 2016), and this industry has become a business rather than offered for educational purposes. Yung and Yuan (2020) also indicate that some of the students attend lessons because of the advertisements. Students believe that the appearance of teachers is important since it can motivate them in learning (Yung &Yuan, 2020). Therefore, in Hong Kong, shadow education is becoming a 'show' business.

As for the function of shadow education in Hong Kong, it is similar to others in other locations worldwide. One-on-one or small-group tutorial classes are common in Hong Kong, and usually current university students are the tutors for those classes (Yung, 2019). Some of the tutorial centres provide video-recorded lectures as well, and this kind of tutoring service is cheaper than face-to-face classes (Yung, 2019). This kind of teaching may also affect the quality of education since there is not enough interaction between teacher and students. This is one of the things that concerns scholars. Wang and Bray (2016) noted that private tutoring affects students' whole-person development, since those classes may only focus on exams. Furthermore, teaching quality in shadow education cannot be assured. Some of the classes are being taught by teachers without any professional training, such as current university students. Therefore, the effectiveness of shadow education in Hong Kong is being questioned (Zhan et al., 2013).

Social Inequalities in Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, shadow education can help students in their academic performance, but at the same time, it may raise social inequalities in society. Bray and Kwo (2014) mentioned there are four types of social inequalities that are caused by shadow education. Because of the education policy in Hong Kong, students in Hong Kong do not need to worry about gender difference, race and location, they can enjoy the same opportunities to receive education (Ho, 2010). This can be seen in Ho's study in 2010, which was about the quality and equality of Hong Kong basic education. By using the Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA) as the indicator, Hong Kong students received high scores in science, mathematics and reading among other countries (Ho, 2010). Instead of gender inequality, ethnic inequality and rural inequality, the concern from the society is on socio-economic inequalities. In Hong Kong, exam performance determines a student's future path. Students and their families are afraid of failure in public exams, such as the Hong Kong

Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE), so the trend in society is to invest in private tutoring lessons (Bray, 2013). They treat this as protection as it helps them to avoid failure in public exams. However, this may cause socioeconomic inequalities in Hong Kong. Due to the fact that people with more resources (i.e., money) may have more opportunities in receiving better quality of lessons and more lessons to help them (Zwier et al., 2020). According to Yung (2020), live-teaching classes and video-recorded classes charge differently, so this can further emphasis on socio-economic inequalities in shadow education in Hong Kong.

Social inequality has been further mentioned in Yung's research. According to Yung (2019), some of the students in Hong Kong may not be able to afford extra lessons since those lessons may bring financial burden for families. As a result, low-income families can only attend mainstream schools without the help of shadow education (Yung, 2019). This may lower the chances for students in low-income families to prepare and do well in public exams. In Hong Kong, there is even an extreme form of socio-economic inequality that is being referred to as 'diploma disease' (Zwier et al., 2020). Employers view educational diplomas as an essential part in the hiring process, and this has made students keen to apply for more certificates to secure a job. For high socioeconomic status families, they have more resources to achieve this, but for those coming from low-income families, they may not have the same opportunities (Zwier et al., 2020). As a result, this has created more social inequalities in Hong Kong.

Washback From Shadow Education

Another issue that shadow education brings to society is washback. In Hong Kong, exams are one of the essential keys to success (Bray, 2013), and this has meant that private tutorial centres focus on examination practice as their main curriculum. However, this has resulted in shadow education taking over the role of mainstream schools (Bray, 2013). In some of the studies in Hong Kong, scholars have reported that there is a washback effect from private tutorial schools to mainstream schools. Washback refers to the effects of teaching and learning process, and it can be frequently found that students perform well after taking extra classes (Cheng, 2021; Yung, 2020). According to Yung (2019), there is positive and negative washback in Hong Kong shadow education. For positive washback, students' impressions of private tutorial school and mainstream school are positive. Tutorial centres are places for students to catch up with their mainstream school's curriculum, whereas mainstream schools focus on holistic education (Yung, 2019). Therefore, shadow education

and mainstream education collaborate and complement each other. However, students may feel that private tutoring is more useful than mainstream schooling. The reason that they have this feeling is that private tutorial classes focus more on exam skills, and this is useful for students to get good marks in the exam (Yung &Yuan, 2020). Some students may even despise their mainstream school teachers (Zhan et al., 2013), since they feel that mainstream schooling cannot help them to achieve their goals. As a result, the relationship between shadow education and mainstream school education can become negative.

The washback effect on mainstream schools can be found in other places around the world. For example, in China, a study showed that students who were involved in private tutoring classes were less involved in mainstream school activities (Zhang & Bray, 2018). Students felt those school activities were too easy and felt they could not learn anything from them (Zhang & Bray, 2018). Some of the parents even trusted private tutors more than mainstream school teachers, since they believed private tutorial classes are more helpful and practical for their children in getting good exam results (Zhang & Bray, 2018). The effect of washback may affect the repetition of mainstream school programmes, since students and parents may not trust their school teachers anymore. Kobakhidze (2018) mentioned that students may skip classes and devote more time to private tutorial classes, since they feel that they can learn more through private tutoring. Backwash from shadow education has made students and parents think mainstream school is not that important. However, private tutoring is more important because it can show you ways of passing examinations (Bray, 1999). As a result, students may become only good at doing exams rather than developing their holistic abilities.

The Private Tutor Role in Hong Kong

According to Yung (2019), a private tutor is like an entertainer in the classroom. Being a private tutor in Hong Kong, one must pay attention to the enrolment numbers in their classes and they need to perform in class, for example, by making jokes to attract students to join their classes (Yung, 2019). As this has become a perception for a lot of private tutors who are working for large companies, they focus more on presentation and ways to attract students' attention rather than focusing on teaching (Koh, 2016). This has become a very interesting area to investigate, since there are few studies that investigate tutors' opinions on shadow education. After four years of teaching in a learning centre, Yung (2019) questioned himself about why students needed to read in order to learn English. They just needed to

learn examination skills in order to pass the exam (Yung, 2019). This impression is shared by other tutors and more insights about shadow education in Hong Kong from the perspectives of tutors are needed. Therefore, the research questions in this study focused on private tutors' opinions towards shadow education in Hong Kong.

1) How do local private tutors feel about Hong Kong shadow education?
2) What are some of the things that Hong Kong shadow education is lacking?

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach to investigate local private tutors' opinions towards shadow education. A qualitative approach is suitable for this topic, since it allows researchers to gather in-depth data from participants (Punch & Oancea, 2014).

20 local private tutors participated in this research, and at the time of the study, they were working at local private tutoring centres in Hong Kong. There are several types of shadow education in Hong Kong, and in this study, participants came from different kinds of private tutorial centres. Table 1 shows the participants' demographic information.

Table 1

Participants' Demographic Information

Participants (Pseudonyms)	Tutoring experience (years)	Types of shadow education
Alan	13	Franchise tutorial centre
Barry	5	Franchise tutorial centre
Betty	10	Franchise tutorial centre
Chris	6	Franchise tutorial centre
Matthew	7	Franchise tutorial centre
Larry	8	Small learning centre
Ricky	8	Small learning centre
Sam	15	Small learning centre
Eden	12	Small learning centre
Susan	10	Small learning centre
Chan	6	Freelancer (One-to-one)
Rita	7	Freelancer (One-to-one)

Monica	9	Freelancer (One-to-one)
Kevin	5	Freelancer (One-to-one)
Jeff	5	Freelancer (One-to-one)
Xavier	7	Secondary School tutor
Shen	10	Secondary School tutor
Sue	12	Secondary School tutor
Xu	6	Secondary School tutor
Li	9	Secondary School tutor

At the time of the study, all the participants taught secondary school students English, and they had five to 15 years' experience of being a private tutor. I used snowball sampling to recruit all the participants in this research. The research took place from January 2022 to April 2022. I sent invitation letters to five participants in late December, and they were able to pass my invitations to their colleagues who are also working as private tutors in Hong Kong. An invitation letter was sent to each participant, and all of them accepted the invitation. Before each interview, I made sure participants understood the potential risks and background of this research. They signed a consent form for this study. Each interview lasted 45 minutes to one hour, and it was conducted either through Zoom or face-to-face. Cantonese was used during the interview, and it was conducted informally. This allowed participants to express themselves during the interview (Gupta, 2022). I used an audio recorder during the interview, and permission was given by each participant. The interview sessions occurred for two months (i.e., January to early March), since some of the participants needed to rearrange their interview time because of work schedule.

I transcribed all of the interviews and sent back to the interviewee to check the accuracy of the response. All the personal information, such as names, has been codified, and the results of this study will not reveal any participant's identity or personal information. I used thematic analysis in this study using a six-step process. Those six steps are familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. According to Terry et al. (2017), thematic analysis allows researchers to show qualitative results to audiences. Below is a brief explanation of each step.

- Familiarization: Familiarize the data, and try to mark down some general questions, ideas or themes from the interview data.

- Coding: Highlight ideas that appear in all the data. This can help researchers to see some common themes among the interview data.

- Generating themes: Based on the coding results, researchers will put down several related topics.

- Reviewing themes: This part will be to check whether the themes and data match, and it can also see whether the results can refer back to the research questions.

- Defining and naming themes: Define some of the concepts inside.

- Producing the report: Focus back on the general picture of this topic, and construct a detailed report.

The themes of this paper are based on the research questions, and the results are discussed in the following section.

Findings

The section presents the response of all participants in this research, and generally speaking, participants expressed that shadow education is needed in Hong Kong. However, responses from secondary school tutors indicated that the quality of shadow education needs to be improved.

Responses From Tutors at Large Franchise Tutorial Centres

All the interviewees mentioned that shadow education can provide more guidance to students who need help in their academic performance, and it provides a 'second chance' for them to learn those unfamiliar contexts at school. This result is somewhat similar to Yung's results in 2020, which mentioned shadow education being able to provide another opportunity for students to learn (Yung, 2020). However, some of the participants mentioned that providing another opportunity for students can be very stressful. There are several reasons put forward by tutors, for example, parents' expectations and job expectations:

> "Student's performance can affect my career path in this tutorial centre. We are competing with one another in this company. If you have more students in your class or apply for your lesson, you can earn more and have a better career path or even have your own team." (Extract from Chris's interview)

> "Sometimes parents may tell their children to apply for this tutor. Through gossiping,

they try their best to find the most suitable tutor for their children. Of course, at the end, the DSE result is everything, since most of the parents want their children to do well in the public exam." (Extract from Alan's interview)

The above extracts show shadow education in Hong Kong is result-oriented since students' exam results can affect a tutor's career in this industry. This can be observed from previous research studies. Shadow education in Hong Kong aims at getting good grades, and it tends to focus less on other ability developments (Koh, 2016; Yung, 2019).

Some of the tutors also mentioned that learning facilities for shadow education are not enough in Hong Kong. Basically, organizations rented a place inside a shopping mall or commercial building. It is difficult for those companies to survive if they do not have students. As a result, this has made a lot of tutorial centres only focus on getting good results rather than developing students' other academic abilities. One of the tutors used China as example:

"Hong Kong government can give us more resources, such as lower the rent, then we (teachers) can focus on developing other abilities for students" (Extract from Alan's interview)

There is also the idea that there is not enough training for private tutors in Hong Kong.

"Basically you just need a bachelor degree, of course it would be better if you have a master or even a doctorate degree, because your employer can put this in your advertisement. However, how many of us have teaching qualifications? Or any proper training for those who do not have teaching qualification? I can tell you, the quality of private tutors in Hong Kong is very inconsistent." (Extract from Betty's interview)

From the perspective of private tutors in franchise tutorial centres, working as a private tutor can be very stressful in Hong Kong because of the expectations from the parents and employers. The government could provide more resources and training opportunities for tutors, or even set a minimum requirement for those who would like to become a private tutor in licensed tutorial centres.

Responses From Tutors at Small Learning Centres

Small learning centres are mostly located in shopping malls. They do not have any resources, such as curriculum designers, so basically, they photocopy exercises from books which are purchased at local bookstores. When they were asked about their impression about shadow education in Hong Kong, they provided very positive responses.

"Education can change their (families/children) lives." (Extract from Susan's interview)

"We can see the differences after taking extra tutorial classes." (Extract from Eden's interview)

Most of the participants mentioned the quality of shadow education is inconsistent in Hong Kong, and parents tend to switch tutors.

"You do not need to have a degree to become a private tutor in Hong Kong, so the teaching quality can be very different in the shadow education field. Most of the parents in Hong Kong are impatient, so they will switch very quickly." (Extract from Eden's interview)

"If you have a PGDE (Postgraduate diploma of education), you will not stay here (tutorial centre). You will go to primary school or secondary school where you can earn more and have a stable salary. Being a private tutor, you do not need to have a lot of training. You can just learn while you are working (teaching)." (Extract from Sam's interview)

Basically tutors mentioned private tutors also need more training in order to maintain the quality of education, and this is lacking in Hong Kong context.

Responses From Freelancers

Freelancers are those who work as a part-time tutor, and they usually get paid hourly. Their responses about their impression towards shadow education in Hong Kong are more related to the flexibility of shadow education. They mentioned parents and students can arrange the most suitable time for them to have their lessons, and they can choose to have their lesson at home or even at a restaurant, such as McDonald's. Recently, they can even choose a Zoom lesson or face-to-face lesson.

"A very obvious feature in Hong Kong shadow education is flexibility. In Hong Kong, it is very convenient for both students and teachers, so they can choose the mode of their lessons." (Extract from Monica's interview)

"Some students like Zoom lessons, since it will be more convenient for them. Of course, they need to turn on their camera, so I will know whether they are still paying attention." (Extract from Kevin's interview)

As for what is lacking in Hong Kong shadow education, this group of participants did not provide a lot of ideas related to this. This is just their part-time job, and they just want to make money from this. Therefore, they do not have a lot of opinions about what is lacking in Hong Kong shadow education.

Responses From Secondary School Tutors

In Hong Kong, some of the schools may have extra funding to hire someone as tutors to conduct extra classes after school. Those teachers are like private tutors in mainstream schools. Some of them work full-time, and they need to perform administrative duties as well. They mentioned that these types of private tutorial classes are much better than the tutorial classes provided by private institutions since they can work closely with the mainstream school teachers.

"Those students who attend my tutorial class are referred to by their class teachers, since they must have not performed well in certain subjects, such as English. That's why they need extra help. I can have more insight about that student or even that group of students, and help them according to their needs. I think this is one of the advantages that we have." (Extract from Xavier's interview)

This is a very interesting idea. Since secondary school tutors may not need to face a student's parents after class, the class teachers are like parents as they check the progress and quality of shadow education at school. Compared to other types of shadow education, most of them need to communicate with parents in order to gain trust and help students.

As for what is lacking in Hong Kong shadow education, secondary school tutors express several opinions about tutors. As a tutor, they feel they are not the same as teachers. They do not have the same salary and even status in society. Second, some of them

mentioned that tutors can only focus on exam preparation since this is the main goal for students. Tutors do not have the same autonomy as teachers in mainstream schools.

> "Tutors and teachers are different. Teachers have more benefits than us." (Extract from Sue's interview)

> "Once I tried to teach something other than school curriculum, I was asked to see the Panel and explain why I did such a thing." (Extract from Xu's interview)

Overall, secondary school tutors believed that private tutors do not have autonomy in teaching and their status and salary are different from mainstream school teachers.

Discussion

The findings showed that shadow education in Hong Kong can help to provide more opportunities for students to prepare their academic studies. Most of the private tutors in this research indicated that extra lessons allow students to revise, review and interpret the concepts again. By doing this, they can continue to compete with their peers at schools. In Hong Kong, the demand for shadow education is rising since the academic standard is higher than in the past. According to the Census and Statistics Department (2016), in the past decade, 80% of the population aged 15 and above have attended secondary and higher education in Hong Kong. Therefore, students in Hong Kong need shadow education to assist them in performing well in public examinations. Parents will even switch tutors at a rapid pace since they want immediate success rather than learning knowledge. This result has been highlighted by Yung and Bray's studies about shadow education in Hong Kong. However, social inequalities can also be observed. More opportunities mean more money needs to be spent on extra lessons in Hong Kong. Big-brand private tutorial centres in Hong Kong provide different charges for face-to-face lectures and recorded lectures. If you are willing to pay more money, you will be able to see and interact with tutors. However, if you are on a budget, you can only watch videos. This is one of the examples of social inequalities caused by shadow education in Hong Kong.

In Yung and Yuan's (2020) study, they mentioned an 'exam expert-star-teacher' as the identity of private tutors in Hong Kong, and in this study, the tutors further confirm this concept. According to Yung and Yuan (2020), a tutor's role is to help students to get good grades in exams, so most of the private tutorial centres are exam-oriented. In this study, tutors expressed the opinion that exams are the first priority in their lessons, since a student's

academic results may affect their job opportunities. Parents may want to switch tutors if they notice any deterioration in their children's exam results. However, more than just 'exam expert-star-teacher,' local small private tutorial centres need to babysit those students as well. Some small local centres sometimes need to become childcare centers, because many parents in Hong Kong have long working hours. A learning centre is a safe shelter for students to stay out of trouble and study at the same time. As a result, this has made some of the learning centres survive in the Hong Kong private tutoring industry. Private tutors do not only provide expert exam preparation, they also provide a parental role for students.

Shadow education in Hong Kong has been a very popular topic among students and parents, but there is also a concern about the teaching quality among private tutors. In this study, some of the senior tutors (those with more than 10 years' tutoring experience) mentioned that the quality of teaching in different learning centres can be very different. Some of the teachers in big-brand tutorial centres are like pop stars (Koh, 2016; Yung, 2019), but they do not really teach students. It seems that they are using their charisma to give some very inspiring presentations to students. Yung (2019) mentioned in his autobiographical narrative, the aim for those extra lessons is to boost their students' exam performance, and it did not really help student's language abilities. As a result, a lot of tutors in this research point out that government authority may need to set some standards for shadow education in Hong Kong. For example, the government can consider holding some shadow education workshops to help local private tutorial centres and train new tutors in this industry. In Hong Kong, only some of the big-brand private tutorial centres, such as Eye Level, provide training to new and inexperienced teachers, but others, such as part-time or freelancers, do not have anyone to help them. The Hong Kong government can start some workshops for tutors to participate, so that they can learn more about how to properly teach their students. By doing this, it can help to maintain the standard of Hong Kong shadow education.

As for the autonomy of shadow education in Hong Kong, this has become a topic that is worth discussing. Bray (2013) mentioned shadows appear under the light, and it is a metaphor to represent shadow education and mainstream schools. However, the current situation is changing. Yung (2020) noted a washback effect in shadow education in which students may not treat mainstream school education seriously since they feel that private tutorial school is more practical for them. Therefore, one may ask a question: will shadow education take over the spotlight of mainstream school education? In this research, some of the tutors still indicated that they need to follow the mainstream school curriculum, but in some local small learning centres, they are willing to add something extra in their teaching.

For example, some of the learning centres will promote fun and innovative ways of learning English, such as through debates and dramas. It seems that the autonomy of shadow education has slightly increased compared to the past. Moreover, research suggests that shadow education that only focuses on exam preparation may not be good for students (Cheng, 2021; Kim, 2016; Yung, 2019; Zhang, 2014). New tutors may want to think of other ways to help students to do well in their academic performance. As a result, there is a demand for change in the autonomy of shadow education in Hong Kong.

Conclusion

This study investigated Hong Kong shadow education from a tutor's perspective, and the results showed that tutors expressed their concern about the quality of shadow education in Hong Kong. As other research studies have shown, shadow education focuses more on exam preparation rather than other aspects of learning (Wang &Bray, 2016; Yung, 2019). There is a move towards adding new ideas in shadow education teaching rather than focusing on examination skills. Although only a small number of tutors reported the use of innovative methods, it is still essential in this field. A potential topic for shadow education researchers to investigate is whether an 'eclipse' (i.e., shadow education suppressing mainstream school) may happen in the future. An 'eclipse' refers to a light object covered by another object, and it an astronomical phenomenon. However, in this paper, the results show that students seem to pay more attention to shadow education than mainstream schooling. As a result, there may be a chance that private tutoring can somehow become more important than mainstream schooling.

As for the impression of shadow education in Hong Kong, most of the tutors expressed the opinion that it has provided a second chance for students to revise and review concepts they learnt at school. However, social inequalities also appeared. If students would like to learn more and interact with tutors in big-brand tutorial centres, they needed to pay more money. So, shadow education can cause social inequalities in society (Zwier et al., 2020), and those who have more money can find more resources for their children. In Hong Kong, parents are willing to spend a lot of money in helping their children to perform well in their public exams (Cheng, 2021). As a result, this kind of social inequality can easily be identified in Hong Kong.

Future research may focus on several ideas in shadow education in Hong Kong. In this research, the main focus was on private tutors only, and it would be very interesting to compare different stakeholders' opinions on Hong Kong shadow education. Furthermore,

whether shadow education will overshadow mainstream school education, and whether the concept of an eclipse may happen in Hong Kong society. In other regions, such as India and Africa, researchers showed some signs that private tutoring has become as important as formal schooling (Gupta, 2022), and in Hong Kong, a washback effect showed that students believe private tutorial classes are more practical than mainstream school classes (Yung 2020). As a result, researchers can focus on whether shadow education will have the power to overshadow mainstream school education in the future.

Notes on the Contributor

Richard Cheng has been an educator in Hong Kong for ten years. He is currently an Assistant Professor at Hong Kong Adventist College. His research interests include English Language Education, shadow education, and task-based language teaching.

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