



Paid Tutoring in Public Schools: Causes and Consequences

Under the RoA Law on General Education, an educational institution may deliver a paid supplementary general education program in accordance with the procedure stipulated by its by-law and by the legislation.¹

The paid tutoring practice or the activities of tutors are not new phenomena for Armenia's education system. However, over the years, they have spread and gradually covered a larger number of students receiving paid tutoring, which in turn is alarmingly indicative of problems related to education quality.

The RoA legislation permits paid supplementary education on school grounds only on the basis of an appropriate contract between the parent and the school. There is no legal regulation of paid private tutoring by the teachers, when it occurs outside the school territory. Furthermore, the legislation does not prohibit a subject teacher from carrying out paid tutoring for the students of the same class.

In this situation, there are or there emerge corruption risks, which are mostly due to the low quality of education, conflicts of interest, the lack of oversight, and a number of other problems.

Issues

The low quality of education fuels higher demand for paid education.

The spreading of private tutoring practices and the ensuing corruption risks are due to not only objective factors such as the parents' desire to deepen their children's knowledge, to secure their future employment, and to control their behavior, but also a number of issues related to the quality of education, including:

- The arduousness of the university admission exams relative to the school curriculum content;
- The inadequate quality of the high schools;²
- The inability of school to shape practical skills for performing assignments;
- The non-conformity of textbook content to the children's age-specific needs;
- The inadequate professional training of the teachers;³ and
- The flawed assessment process and the superficial assessment of student achievement.

One out of two high school students is receiving paid tutoring.⁴

A teacher has the opportunity of not fulfilling his or her duties fully, with the expectation of attracting the students for supplementary paid tutoring.

Although paid tutoring offered to the students *per se* is not negative, reprehensible, or bad-faith behavior, it is rather problematic from the viewpoint of conflicts of interest and other corruption risks. One of the most negative consequences of paid tutoring is the teacher's differentiated treatment of the students: a teacher is likely to treat favorably those students that are receiving extracurricular tutoring from such teacher. The teacher's ambiguous role affects teacher motivation and attitudes, leading to situations of conflicts of interest. A teacher may, in certain situations, view low student achievement as an additional income-earning opportunity.⁵ Under these circumstances, there is a probability of unfair low grading, as well as groundless demands of the students and other abuse.

No legal act presently prohibits a subject teacher from carrying out paid tutoring for the students of the same class.

The supplementary curriculum of schools overlaps with the general education curriculum taught as a part of compulsory schooling.

Despite the established prohibition, especially in elementary school, paid supplementary education is often organized for subjects that are included in the list of subjects for the current class (for instance, there are many supplementary classes for foreign languages, chess, and mathematics). Schools are finding a creative ways of circumventing this restriction: they name the English lessons "History of England," but in fact teach English. While contract-based supplementary paid classes are a legally-permitted means of generating extra-budgetary funds and additional revenues for the school, the provision, on school grounds, of an educational service that is provided by the school within the framework of the general public education curriculum, can lead to numerous unhealthy practices.

Contract-based supplementary paid education may be provided only for subjects not contained in the list of subjects for the current class syllabus.⁶

In the City of Yerevan, paid (contract-based) supplementary education is organized in only 10 schools,⁷ while in the regions, a contract with the school or teacher had been signed in only two of the 136 reviewed cases of private tutoring.⁸

Teachers are not interested in organizing supplementary paid tutoring on the basis of a lawful contractual relationship with the parents.

The remuneration expected by the teacher from the paid tutoring shrinks when there is a contract. The fee paid by the parent must then be credited to the school budget as an extra-budgetary item. Some of these proceeds must then finance the school's expenditures, which will naturally reduce the remuneration of the tutoring teacher. As a consequence, teachers conducting supplementary tutoring avoid contracts in order to not lose any part of their expected income.

Oversight of private tutoring is insufficient.

Although the State Education Inspectorate of the Education and Science Ministry has a wide range of powers,⁹ paid private tutoring largely lies beyond the scope of inspections. As a rule, inspections are based on documents provided by the school and the teaching staff, and relate to compliance with various procedures, but fail to address the most relevant issues of education quality and private tutoring.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are aimed at reducing the identified corruption risks.

THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SHOULD:

- Adopt a legislative prohibition of a subject teacher conducting paid private tutoring for his or her students, irrespective of where the classes are held (at home or in school);
- Adopt legislative sanctions for teachers, as well as school administration for:
 - ✓ Exerting any influence on students and/or parents with the aim of inciting them to participate in private tutoring;
 - ✓ Groundlessly raising the grades of students receiving private tutoring; and
 - ✓ Breaching the contract requirements.

THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA GOVERNMENT SHOULD:

- Ensure that the authorized governmental bodies properly oversee the conformity of paid supplementary school education programs with the requirements of legal acts, extending the inspections and the powers of the State Education Inspectorate to private tutoring, as well.

THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE SHOULD:

- Develop an ethics code for public school principals and teachers, including ethical rules on cases of conflicts of interest;
- Align the university admission exam assignment complexity with the public school textbook assignment complexity;
- Revise and reduce the maximum number of students per class;
- Revise textbook content and align it with child age specificities and the required practical skills;
- Develop teacher job descriptions, which will clearly outline the minimum requirements on teachers, the scope of their duties, the description of their work, and their main functions;
- Define clear criteria for assessment of student achievement and grading, including:
 - ✓ Develop alternative mechanisms for assessing student achievement;
 - ✓ Make the grading principles and practices utmost transparent for students and their parents; and
 - ✓ Develop the practice/culture of grade explanation and justification by the teacher;

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- Require high school teachers to ensure high educational achievements of students, whilst providing appropriate remuneration and counseling/methodological support; and
 - Implement mechanisms to motivate teachers to provide paid supplementary curriculum services (for instance, by increasing the teacher remuneration component of the fee for such services) and prevent the informal nature of such tutoring.

¹ Republic of Armenia Law on General Education, Articles 7 and 15.

² The relevance of this problem has been acknowledged, among others, by the Minister of Education and Science in a number of interviews. For instance, *Time to Break the Mold, according to Levon Mkrtchyan*, Aravot, 1 July 2016.

³ See also the 2014 Annual Report of the Human Rights Defender of the Republic of Armenia.

⁴ Data from the quantitative survey carried out in public schools (for details, see the Report on "Corruption Risk Assessment in General Education").

⁵ See also the 2014 Annual Report of the Human Rights Defender of the Republic of Armenia.

⁶ Republic of Armenia Government Decree 1496-N dated 4 November 2010.

⁷ Yerevan City Administration.

⁸ Data from the quantitative survey carried out in public schools (for details, see the Report on "Corruption Risk Assessment in General Education").

⁹ Republic of Armenia Government Decree 497-N dated 16 March 2006.

This policy brief is developed by Transparency International Anticorruption Center and Institute of Public Policy within the framework of USAID supported "Engaged Citizenry for Responsible Governance" project. The "Corruption risk assessment in the general education sector in Armenia" publication will be available on www.transparency.am

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