

## Analyzing the Oppressive Dynamics of Private Tutoring System in Bangladesh

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### Abstract

This analytical study explores the oppressive dynamics of private tutoring system in Bangladesh based on the Freirean assumption of “oppressed/oppressor” relationship. The results indicate that private tutoring becomes a system of oppression where the “oppressed/oppressor” relationship has been and is being occurred. Based on the results, the study characterizes the students as the “oppressed” and the private tutoring (itself)/tutors as the “oppressor”. The study also find that the forces of globalization deeply impacts on the “oppressed/oppressor” relationship of private tutoring system. The study suggests that practicing Freirean literacy method (“conscientization” and “dialogue”) in the formal schooling is a perfect way to liberate the students from private tutoring oppression.

**Key words:** Private tutoring; Oppressed; Oppressor; Banking model; Neo-liberal globalization

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### INTRODUCTION

The private tutoring, widely known as shadow education, has dramatically increased in Bangladesh like many other countries (Mahmud & Bray, 2017). In this system, students receive extra lessons with additional fees

before or after schooling at their home, or in teacher’s residence, or in coaching centers. It is now continuing as parallel of the country’s mainstream education system. It is alarming that, in the recent decades, private tutoring becomes a system of oppression in Bangladesh. I argued that “oppressed/ oppressor” relationship has been and is being occurred in the private tutoring process, where the students seem to be the “oppressed” and the private tutoring (itself)/tutors seem to be the “oppressor”. In this case, I have heavily been inspired by Freirean concept of “oppressed/oppressor” relationship. In the oppressive dynamics, both the “oppressor” and the “oppressed” are diminished in their humanity. I argue, following Paulo Freire, that liberating the oppressed through education is the key condition in the development of human being. In this paper, however, I incorporated my thinking, assumptions, beliefs, and experiences with the Freirean assumptions on education to deepen understanding about the power dynamics of private tutoring in Bangladesh.

### 1. METHODOLOGY

The present study is analytical and qualitative in nature. Data for this study have been collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data have been used from my live experiences. The secondary data have been collected from different books, journals, and working papers.

### 2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Freire’s (1970) assumptions on education pointed out that educational process are never neutral. It can either be an instrument of domination (pedagogy of the oppressor) or an instrument of liberation (pedagogy of the oppressed). Compared to the Freire’s (1970) assumptions, private tutoring seems to be an “imperfect” example of the instrument of domination. I found private tutoring style is similar to the “banking” model of education what Freire

(1970) considered as the practice of domination. I also assure that “banking” model of education is not student-centered. In this model, the private tutors play their role as the “oppressor”, while the students seem to be as the “oppressed”. I would like to borrow Freire’s (1970) writing in this case, the “oppressed” and the “oppressor” seemed to be divided by class. In simple terms, the oppressed (students) are “have not”, while the oppressors (private tutors) are “haves” (Yang, 2016).

Most surprisingly, education becomes an “act of depositing” in private tutoring practices. The private tutors treat the students as empty bank account, where the tutors deposit information and the students patiently receive. Based on my own experiences, I argue that the students are considered as “passive consumer” (hooks, 1994) in this process. The students feel boring as tutors only talk from beginning to end of the class and they just listen without contributing anything in the class. The private tutoring system encourages only the tutors choice/freedom, while the students are completely deprived. Hale (2007) recognized that knowledge is produced, negotiated, transformed and realized in the interaction between the teacher, the learner, and the knowledge itself, which corresponds to Freire’s “practice of freedom” that emphasizes on interaction between the students and teachers. In the private tutoring system, however, the students are not treated as co-creator of knowledge and their critical thinking and questioning are not encouraged so that they can broke the existing oppressor/oppressed relationship. As a classroom teacher, I experienced that the teacher also learns from the students, not just the students from the teacher. If the students are considered to be the sources of knowledge, then they should be independent.

Why the private tutoring style is “dysfunctional” like the banking model of education? I argue that the main purpose of the private tutoring is to achieve high score in the examination. Therefore, it engages students with learning and memorizing activities on a short number of questions and answers according to the special suggestions with little understanding of what is being memorized. The students who engaged with private tutoring finally can realize its reflection, when they become stuck in higher studies or research. Many of them get certificate with high score in the final exams, but they can’t able to qualify even in the university admission test. Therefore, I would like to criticize the banking model as it is irrelevant to the current situation. I clearly argue that, in the current competitive world, those who have critical and creative thinking will survive.

Moreover, the private tutoring disrupts the formal schooling, allows corruption to breed, creates social inequalities, increases economic burden of parents, and deprives students of their recreation time. Moreover, private tutoring creates overwhelming workloads for the students and ethically weakens the teaching professionalism. Under the name of private tutoring,

dangerous trade and immoral activities are going on in the whole country. It is acknowledged that private tutoring is annihilating students and decreasing the standard of educational. Therefore, the private tutoring model should be leveled as “dysfunctional”.

The “oppressor/oppressed” relationship in private tutoring could be analyzed from the different angels with incorporating some of my personal experiences. I was first introduced with private tutoring phenomenon, when I was studying at secondary level. As I remember, most of my class-fellows took private lessons from the teachers of English and Mathematics. I was one of the students who didn’t receive private tutoring. Therefore, the teachers who engaged with private tutoring disliked me. One day the mathematics teacher was stripping the students for not doing homework. Although I brought my homework on that day, I was whipped by him. In fact, I was oppressed by this teacher only for not joining private tutoring with him. He just practiced his power upon me.

When I was studied at higher secondary level, I experienced with oppression again because of the private tutoring culture in our education process. During this period, a mindset was grown that the students must take extra lessons, if they want a better outcome in the final examination. I found at least two reasons in this regard. Firstly, science-related subjects such as Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, and Biology were comparatively complex. The teachers who had expertise on these subjects were more involved in private tutoring at their home instead of regular teaching in classrooms. On one hand, the college did not have regular classes, on the other hand, it would not have been possible to understand the complex issues of these particular subjects without any help of the teachers. As a result, students were forced to go to the teachers home for taking private lessons.

Secondly, teachers motivated the students through different techniques to receive tuition from them. It is notable that there were total 200 numbers of practical experiments in higher secondary level. Among my classmates who received extra lessons privately with additional fees from the teachers, they could get the full number in the practical part of the final exam. On the contrary, those who did not take private tuition were deprived with low grade. As a result, many students were forced to take private lessons in the prospect of a full number of practical experiments. Because of the financial crisis, I could not able to take private lessons from my college teachers. Therefore, I found my teachers as oppressor who gave me low grades in the exams. It heavily affected my undergraduate admission. I fall behind in the admission test, because the candidates were selected by adding the number obtained in the admission test with the number obtained in the higher secondary level examination.

However, it is proved that the private tutoring model should be leveled as “dysfunctional” and “oppressive” like

the banking model of education that Freire (1970) analyzed in his book “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” Compared to the Freire’s assumptions, I found myself as the “imperfect” example of the “oppressed” in private tutoring process.

Bangladesh, like all other countries, can never ignore the global impact on its education system (Ashraf, 2018). The philosophy of neo-liberal globalization is that “the market is more efficient than the state”. Based on this philosophy, a market-oriented society is being created in Bangladesh that promotes education as a privately-purchased service (Mahmud & Bray, 2017), develops an incredibly strong product culture and transforms the citizens as suitable consumer. Under the sheltering of this neo-liberal society, the private tutoring market has dramatically expanded in the country. Apple (2007), however, argued that the market transformed education into a commodity or a product. In Bangladesh, private tutoring treats the education as dispensing “fast food” or “wrapping products”.

The biggest assumption I am making that the forces of globalization deeply impacts on the “oppressed/oppressor” relationship of private tutoring system. As I mentioned that education is declared as one of the fundamental rights in the constitution of Bangladesh. In addition, our educational philosophy supports that “education should never be considered as a product”. However, because of the influences of market-driven economic forces, educational objectives have increasingly shifted from philanthropy to profit-maximization. The neo-liberal forces motivate both teachers (oppressor) and students (oppressed) to be engaged in selling and buying “education” in a hidden market place under the name of private tutoring. Based on my experiences, I found that market-oriented society creates such conditions so that students (oppressed) are forced to take private lessons from the teachers (oppressor).

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## CONCLUSION

The patterns of private tutoring are different in different culture (Bray, 2006), but its pedagogical aspect is almost similar in all context. The freedom of education is absolutely unfamiliar in Bangladesh. I argue that the “oppressive/oppressor” relationship should be challenged in the educational process. I strongly argue that the

appropriate pedagogical approach can foster educational environments that will protect students from the so called oppressive culture of private tutoring. It could be pointed out that the Bangladesh government is seriously trying to regulate the private practice of education outside the classroom by formulating various legal measures. However, these initiatives have not been effective in controlling the rapid spread of private tutoring. However, Freire’s literacy method can be introduced in classroom practices in the formal schools to liberate the students from private tutoring oppression. Practicing “conscientization” and “dialogue” in formal classrooms is a perfect way to transform oppressive structures by engaging students who have been oppressed.

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