When there is no shadow...

Article 26 Universal Declaration of Human Rights

(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

(3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.


About Shadow Education

The Comparative Education Research Centre-CERC had set up a Special Interest Group (SIG) in Shadow Education, this is a increasingly visible phenomenon both in Hong Kong and in many other parts of the world. The system of private supplementary tutoring is widely called Shadow Education because much of it mimics the mainstream.

Shadow Education is defined based in three parameters:

- supplementation: tutoring which covers subjects which are already covered in school, and excluding, for example, language classes for minority children whose families were anxious that new generations retained competence in languages not taught in mainstream schools.
- privateness: tutoring provided in exchange for a fee, as opposed to unpaid tutoring provided by families or community members or extra tutoring provided by teachers as part of their professional commitments and responsibilities.
- academic subjects: particularly languages, mathematics, and other examinable subjects, and excluding musical, artistic or sporting skills which are learned primarily for pleasure and/or for a more rounded form of personal development.

Shadow Education has far-reaching implications for the processes of schooling, for social inequalities, and for the lives of students, families and teachers.

Source: http://cerc.comparativist.org/special-interest-groups/shadow-education/about-shadow-education/

Far before mainstream schooling arose there had been a history of mentors, guru-and-disciples and specialist instructors. One-to-one and private mentoring has been a feature of all societies since recorded history. Advances in understandings of human rights have ensured that there is now a universal understanding of the fundamental importance of education. Thus, States, wishing to uphold their international moral obligations in regards to education will fund a mainstream education sector. Private tutoring predated the move by governments to formalise an investment in education and curriculum development. Private tutoring predated efforts by governments to raise teaching standards and align discussions of national economy productivity to the level of educational investment and funding.
Most nations have seen a rise in the parallel education system of private tutoring over time. In attempts to classify this growth the term ‘shadow education’ (private supplementary tutoring outside of school) has been applied by Mark Bray (Hong Kong University) and others to describe the private tutoring sector. Bray (2013) asserts that “the shadow system of extra lessons copies the regular schools and more significantly, as the curriculum changes in the schools the curriculum will change in the shadow, in the private tutoring.” Indeed, it is defined as such thus the term is applied in the context of academic studies.

In my experience and in the research I have conducted on tutoring businesses this expressed view of private tutoring from Prof Mark Bray is only partially true. There are three myths that arise from this statement each of which needs to be unpacked. These myths are listed in the text box below.


Myths in nomenclature: ‘shadow’ education

Myth 1 The analogy of the ‘shadow’

The most disturbing aspect of this nomenclature is that a shadow is dark and implicitly sinister. In spy novels there is talk of ‘shadowy characters’. If this term is meant to imply mirroring, then why use the term ‘shadow’? More satisfactory would be use of the terms ‘complementary’, ‘supplementary’, ‘parallel’ or ‘supportive’. All of these terms are conciliatory and inclusive whereas the term ‘shadow’ is not.

A shadow is intangible and has no independence from the tangible thing creating the shadow. This is absolutely the antithesis of supplementary tutoring. In Australia parents and schools report that tutoring works as a positive force in the lives of their child(ren). They report that tutoring works to remediate individual difficulties and to help meet the specific and individual needs of their child(ren).

Tutoring works best when it aligns what is done with the mainstream education, thus placing the interests of students foremost. The term ‘shadow’ does not imply an alliance between mainstream educators and tutors.

The term ‘shadow’ is inappropriate. This particular term is used by academics outside of the tutoring industry and appears to be used to engender alarm and fear amongst policy makers and government. It complicates rather than sheds light on the sector.

Myth 2 Private tutoring is reactive not proactive

Here the focus is on content not skills and abilities developed by teachers and by tutors. This is a very narrow conception of what happens in tutoring schools and in one-to-one private tutoring sessions. Many businesses have their own curricula – including global businesses such as Kumon and Kip McGrath Education Centres. When a business invests in creating intellectual capital this is for the benefit of students, mainstream schools and also for the nation in which such businesses trade.

Secondly, when businesses detect issues they seek to address them. This is because the private sector demands accountability. In this regard private tutoring is proactive.

The private tutoring sector is also proactive in creating resources and materials used by teachers within mainstream classes. This is true of materials used to prepare for external exams and it is also true of the creation, purchase and use of resources in remediation, extension and for the day-to-day activities within classes.

Myth 3 Private tutoring copies mainstream education as a ‘shadow’

In Australia the first institutions in the education sector to experiment with, and use, computers were private tutoring
centres. The first organisations to experiment with the internet and with the use of mobile phone apps were private tutoring centres. The level of initiative and innovation shown by private tutoring centres that was copied by mainstream schools includes:

- The application of differentiation to the teaching
- The use of electronic databases for keeping student records
- The use of on-line parent portals for feedback and assessment
- The use of computers in teaching and learning
- The use of ‘smartboards’ and data projectors
- The application of accountability through parent feedback

In many ways the private sector experiments more widely and actually leads change rather than being reactive to change.

There is reference to the ‘shadow’ changes in response to curricular changes. It should be obvious to any informed observer of markets that any suppliers to markets will respond to changing needs within those markets. Whether this is, of itself, evidence of ‘shadow-like’ behaviour or rather creative enterprise assisting parents and educators to manage change is arguable.

A reference to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

In a recent video released by Mark Bray (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ds_ceQOq7KI at 35 seconds), he states that private tutoring acts counter to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. He quotes section 26 (1) reproduced in full above. Unfortunately the reference to this quote is problematic for several reasons:

1) The UDHR makes explicit reference to ‘elementary and fundamental stages’ of education. Many nations have taken this to mean that this applies to students aged to about 10 years but it may be extended further to the end of primary school.

Most tutoring does not take place when children are in primary school. An Australian survey conducted by the ATA found that parents first sought tutoring for their children at about age 11 at the youngest, unless there was a specific learning difficulty in which case the earlier the intervention the better.

2) If the quote was meant to be applied BEYOND the ‘elementary and fundamental stages’ of education as Bray does then, for consistency, the issue of cost should be applied also to other forms of education that also take place outside of this age range. Bray’s place of employment Hong Kong University (HKU) for example, charges astronomical fees for students as disclosed by its website. This is hardly fair. Indeed the fees at HKU according to the table found at this link: http://www.als.hku.hk/admission/intl/admission/admissionHK4 varies from US$5,263 annually upwards to over US$20,000 per year.

Thus, as a beneficiary of a user pays system it seems very inconsistent to criticise an industry that mirrors the institution that Bray himself works for. In respect of universities however, there is no choice – students have to pay university fees (including application fees) or they miss out. Thus, those with merit may not get access – thus breaching Art 26(2) of the UDHR. It would be interesting to hear Bray’s view of HKU and its charging of students. Presumably he is critical of that institution as well.

3) In quoting Article 26(1) Bray conveniently fails to quote Article 26(3). This too can be read in full above. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education they want for their children. Tutoring is a parent’s choice. It is a human right for parents to choose. This includes a choice between public or private education, religious or secular. It is also a reference to a parent’s choice to invest in tutoring or supplementary education.

Evidence suggests that as incomes rise then so too does the investment in tutoring. Thus, parents use their discretion to invest in tutoring.

In summary

Educational academics will characterise tutoring in such a way as to try and understand it. This is the right of academics. However, when academics use language that is not reflective of the practices that are the subject of their study and analysis, then erroneous conclusions can be drawn. There is a disjunct between the academic dialogue and the actual situation. Furthermore, characterisations that exacerbate misunderstanding need to be corrected. The next article titled ‘Regulating the shadow’ comes from the UNESCO website. In the photo the banner reads “Regulating the Shadow System”. This conference was convened by Mark Bray as stated below. Note that even though this was a regional event, the ATA was not invited to this event despite leading the way globally in terms of self regulation.

Accreditation developments

On July 18th the ATA Board ratified the use of Accredited Tutor as the partner who would assist in the roll out of an accreditation in the Australian market. The notion of accreditation has now been mooted for over 4 years and is widely seen as an essential component of responsible self-regulation where standards matter.

It is anticipated that in September or October of this year Accredited Tutor will launch its services with the approval of the ATA. This means that the ATA will recognise the accreditation as valid in this market.
Within Tuition

Regulating the ‘shadow’ – An update from UNESCO

Confronting the Growth of Shadow Education

The Policy Forum entitled “Regulating the Shadow Education System: Private Tutoring and Government Policies in Asia” took place on 8 and 9 April 2013 at the University of Hong Kong (HKU). The event was organized by HKU’s Comparative Education Research Centre (CERC) in partnership with UNESCO Bangkok and the Asian Development Bank. Private supplementary tutoring, widely known as shadow education because of the way in which it mimics regular schooling, has a long history in some parts of Asia but has greatly expanded in recent decades. In the Republic of Korea nearly 90% of elementary students receive some sort of shadow education, and in Hong Kong (China), about 72% of senior secondary students do so. Proportions are lower in other countries, but throughout the region “the shadow” is spreading and intensifying (Bray & Lykins, 2012)

Private tutoring can be beneficial when it facilitates children’s learning: and this learning may be a form of human capital for economic development. Yet tutoring can have a negative impact on schooling and the larger society. It imposes excessive burdens on students, and reduces the available time to develop non-cognitive skills. It especially undermines schooling in settings where regular teachers provide tutoring to their own students. Moreover, tutoring may maintain or exacerbate social inequalities since richer families can afford greater quantities and better qualities of tutoring. Given all the negative dimensions, shadow education has far-reaching implications for achieving the EFA goals.

An increasing number of governments have started to include shadow education in their official agendas. However, few have succeeded in effectively regulating the system. Clearer policies and more effective mechanisms are needed throughout the region to encourage the positive dimensions of shadow education and discourage the negative ones.

The Policy Forum brought together researchers, government personnel, practitioners and other stakeholders representing 16 jurisdictions. Drawing on empirical studies, conceptual studies and personal experience, researchers and practitioners compared the nature of policies on shadow education at different levels, discussed the contexts in which they have been devised, and evaluated the factors which underpin effectiveness in the regulatory and guiding systems. Such factors vary in different cultures. For instance, examination-oriented education systems contribute to the prevalence of shadow education in some jurisdictions, while the low quality of mainstream education seems to be a major factor in rural settings.

At the end of the Policy Forum, participants affirmed commitments to follow-up actions in their own spheres of influence. They agreed that more forums or workshops on this topic are desirable, at national and sub-national as well as regional levels. Further details are available at CERC website.


ATA Comment

Self-regulation is a viable model in Australia, New Zealand, USA, Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, Germany and now the UK. It seems that including self-regulation as policy option would cost least, be most simple and effective, especially if modelled on the ATA approach.
Finalisation of the Global Tutoring Association (GTA):
Journey to the United Kingdom and Greece

ATA CEO Mohan Dhall travelled to the UK and Greece in a trip jointly funded by the ATA and the peak tutoring body in Greece, the OEEFE. This trip was also coincident with a contact from James Croft in London. James Croft runs the Centre for Market Reform of Education and is the founder of The Tutors Association (TTA). The TTA is modelled on the ATA but is being tailored through industry consultation to reflect the particular needs of the UK market, characterised as it is by a very high level of one-to-one in-home tutoring. As it is in the interest of the ATA to develop and support other national associations, this trip was to assist in the development of the emerging TTA (UK) and to support and create alliances with TODER (Turkey), VNN (Germany), OEEFE (Greece) and SIFK (Cyprus). Each of these bodies severally and jointly approved of the idea of a global body as founded by, though independent of, the ATA.

In the UK, Mohan met with the TTA in their London headquarters. The TTA was the initiative of the Centre for the Market Reform of Education (CMRE) and thus seeks market based solution to issues in education. It was their initiative that led to the formation of the TTA. Mohan reports three very significant developments. The first arose from the ideas of James Croft from TTA in the UK. James suggested that the GTA should look at policy from a framework of conducting a thorough literature review. From this stance James suggested that the GTA could be very proactive in creating policy documents based on proper research and thus better inform policy development in nations.

The second development arose by virtue of scanning the available models of accreditation. The VNN in Germany adopts an ISO 9000 approach that requires the auditing of its members. As such the VNN has only 30 members in a market of 4,000 enterprises. By contrast, the NTA adopt a face-to-face model that is labour intensive – similar to Pinnacle in Singapore (except that the Pinnacle model is for in-house purposes). The NTA model also has had very little overall traction given the size of the USA market.

In this light, the proposed Accreditation for the Australian national market looks very robust, scalable and also created in a manner likely to help it to be taken up by the market and thus lead to robust self-regulation standards.

A third development was that three national associations: Greek OEEFE, Cyprus Association and TODER (Turkey) all said they support the GTA and would join. Moreover, some businesses in Greece said that once the GTA was formed they would join as individual businesses. This implies that the setting up of a global body is widely sought, deemed relevant and should help the industry assist national associations to resist the tide of regulation.
Online Tuition – Successfully Navigating Through the Web

The success of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), primarily Coursera and edX, has renewed excitement for online education. The IBIS World Online Education Industry Report (2013) has found that:

- The industry is only at the tip of the iceberg, as currently, an overwhelming 70% of online education students are located in Australia’s major cities. The NBN will improve access to education for the estimated 2.5 million people living in outer-regional areas and beyond.
- Industry revenue is expected to grow at a compound annual rate of 9.4% over the five years through 2017-18 to reach $8.27 billion.
- Growth will be supported by the expansion of high-speed internet services, growing acceptance of online education.

However, it is important to understand that being online (where 80% of services is delivered online) is a ‘double edged sword’ – whilst there are huge benefits to be gained, there are also challenges unheard of in traditional tuition models. Here are five lessons Exam Success has learned from trial and error to assist you in your web presence:

1. What Are You Using the Web For?

This is an important consideration as it leads to the amount of work and funding that you’ll most likely put towards creating, operating and maintaining your web presence. There are 3 main types of usage using the analogy of property:

#1 House Essentially, you are using the web as a brochure to attract clients and to provide information.

#2 Fully-serviced Hotel You might use your online location to obtain tutoring clients, store client information and also deliver tuition online – essentially it is software and your competitive advantage. Therefore, it needs the capability to match your needs.

#3 Hybrid You may use a website to promote your services and then use licenced software (by another provider) to deliver the services.

Lesson Learnt: Exam Success.org put out an advertisement where tutors could sign up and promote themselves. While we had the infrastructure in place to allow this, a slight technical error meant that people couldn’t sign up. This was terrible for sign up conversions and user experience.

2. Conversion

‘Tech heads’ tend to use this term quite a bit. In short, it means setting up and organising your website so that when people go on they are led to a certain action e.g. signing up or contacting you. This is easier said than done as it relies on a number of things such as design, information architecture, flow of information, speed of website load etc… For example:

- A study at Amazon showed a 1% decrease in sales for every 0.1s decrease in response times (Kohavi and Longbotham 2007).
- There’s a rule of thumb in the conversion industry that the average web visitor will evaluate a web page for seven seconds before deciding to either become another ‘Bounce’, or ‘Engage the page and move to another step in the funnel’.

Lesson Learnt: Exam Success has trialled all 3 of the above and none is a set-and-forget situation. It is important to update content regularly so that Google knows that you are a live website. The fully serviced hotel may need a lot of funding and perhaps someone full time who can manage it.

3. Marketing

This is where the internet performs exceptionally well. Through online advertising such as Google Adwords and Facebook ads, you can do the following below in a very cost effective manner.

- Clearly track the successfulness of your marketing

If you are using the internet to collect and store personal information (like the ‘fully-serviced hotel’), remember that new privacy laws will come into effect in 2014. A requirement under these laws is notification of serious data breaches. For more information go to www.oaic.gov.au.
campaign and then tweak to increase its performance compared with traditional advertising where ‘one size fits all’.

- Flexibility with budgets and invest in high performing campaigns.
- Direct target of individuals with certain characteristics.

**Lesson Learnt:** Content (that is the stuff on your website) is king as it keeps visitors coming back. Have a plan to update your website with new content on a regular basis as this helps with SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) and your website ranking. This is ‘unpaid’ marketing with longer term results. For a quicker response rate, Google Adwords is usually a good option.

4. **Delivery of Tuition Services**

Full online delivery is replicating what you do in person in a physical location and doing that online. Exam Success had a client who received tuition services in person and we tried to transition online using 3rd party online software to deliver services. It didn’t work out and we reverted back to an in-person model in this instance mainly due to:

- Lack of appropriate infrastructure – internet connection issues even though the student was located in an outer metropolitan area meant that streaming of the tuition session was continually disrupted.
- Independence level and lack of face to face contact – the student needed an in-depth walkthrough on mathematical concepts. The lack of face to face contact meant that the effectiveness of doing this online was lower than in person.

**Lesson Learnt:** Trial what works best with the student to decide whether or not to commence online tuition and then invest in ongoing follow up with the parents/student to make sure they’re on track. For example, Exam Success sends reminder emails to students and parents on upcoming deadlines and checks-in on progress.

5. **Monetisation**

Although only a handful of course providers offer accreditation and an even smaller subset have found a way of monetising these courses, the advent of MOOCs has gotten the world’s greatest educators thinking about alternative delivery models (IBIS World 2013). Question is – where is the ‘value-add’ in tutors in the online world as there’s so much out there for free? Some examples:

- Examsuccess.com.au provides free English writing and reasoning videos on its YouTube channel and the paid item is its selective schools books.
- Tutorondemand.com provides 24/7 access to online lectures from VCE teachers for just $15.

**Lesson Learnt:** When you think about it ‘tutoring in person’ is a combination of activities that could be split into smaller parts such as: lecturing, quiz taking and correction, reading, etc…. There is an expectation on the web that things should be free – think about how you can adapt your model to work online.

The internet is making possible the delivery of tuition services to anywhere in the whole. It is rewarding when you can tutor someone in a rural town like Orange, NSW to prepare for their exam when this student otherwise would not have access simply due to location. The outcome a tutor provides for a student is to improve their learning and there is scope to provide this in new and exciting ways online.

*By Vi Nguyen*

Vi Nguyen is the founder of Exam Success Pty Ltd a small tuition and publishing company that now is completely online. We develop and sell content to help students prepare for selective schools exams in NSW and Victoria and have supplied to a number of libraries, schools, parents and tuition centres. Our aim is to make learning as simple and fun as possible. If you’d like a preview of our content or have any other queries, please don’t hesitate to get in touch with us at success@examsuccess.com.au or 0432 537 748. We love forming long-term relationships!

**References**

1. IBIS World Pty Ltd (2013) IBIS World Industry Report X0008 Online Education in Australia
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Notice of Australian Tutoring Association (ATA) Ltd
Annual General Meeting

To be held on
Wednesday 27th November 2013
10.30am – 11.30am
At the
ATA Head Office
6 College Street
Croydon, NSW 2132

AGM AGENDA

1 Welcome and Apologies
2 Correspondence
   2.1 Correspondence Received
   2.2 Business Arising from Correspondence
3 Reports
   3.1 Secretary’s Report
   3.2 Treasurer’s Report
   3.3 Business Arising from the Reports
4 General Business

Morning Tea

Use of the ATA logo - promote your peak body as it promotes you

The Australian Tutoring Association (ATA) is growing stronger each year. We have grown by 87 members since the year starting 1 September 2012. This represents growth of 22% year-on-year. As we grow more and more consumers are turning to us in order to get referrals for tutors. We direct them to our website, and where members have requested referrals we direct them accordingly if it is in the right geographical area and covers the subject required.

A membership-based organisation is strong when reputation is strong. Reputation arises from word-of-mouth communication between clients who are satisfied with the standard of service provided.

A strong Code of Conduct that is widely promoted by members is essential to articulating best practise standards. Members are expected to have the Code on display and for parents to know that they have rights arising under the Code. Moreover, where relevant on account of employment, members who employ staff are expected to train their staff in the Code. In this way the values and expectations of the Code can be imbued.

The ATA Board lobbies on behalf of membership in order to provide an effective voice for tutors. We have written recently to both sides of politics seeking meetings and have had a favourable response from the incoming Coalition government. It is our intention to raise the profile of tutors over time in the national education dialogue. Essentially we would like to have tutors seen as supplementary and integral to a dynamic educational system that is flexible enough to meet the diverse needs of students.

The ATA Board is requesting that members use the ATA logo. We would like you to emphasise that you are members of the peak body. In so doing you are telling parents that they have a clear choice: use an ethical and accountable tutor or take your chances with a person or business not prepared to be accountable.

The logo can be sent to members in different forms for different platforms – electronic and print. If you have a website we would like out logo to be displayed on the site. People clicking on the logo can then be directed to the ATA website.
ATA Code of Conduct Supplement – On-line members

The ATA Board has now integrated the feedback from members in regards to the widely disseminated draft in the September Newsletter. The final supplement to the Code has been ratified by the Board and will now be integrated into the Code in its next iteration in the new year. The exact wording of the new supplement is in the box below.

Changing the ATA Code is done from time-to-time in response to needs arising within the market and amongst ATA members.

Annually the Code is up for review. ATA members are always welcome to scrutinise any aspect of the ATA Code and raise issues or questions for the ATA Board. In this way we keep the ATA Code strong, relevant and dynamic.

6.1 The listing of details in regards to tutor qualifications and experience

ATA members shall list the minimum qualifications that all tutors have. This includes for example a university degree in the area they are teaching and their relevant teaching experience. The words “available upon request” are not acceptable for ATA members.

6.2 Plagiarism

All ATA member websites must declare that they shall NEVER engage in plagiarism. This includes that they must declare that they will NOT do student’s assignments or any other academic work for the student.

6.3 Child Protection

For any text-based on-line tutoring a record detailing the contents of each communication must be kept and made available to parents regularly and also any time upon request.

For any video and/or audio-based on-line tutoring and live streamed sessions be it on computer, mobile device, tablet or other technology the tutor MUST make sure that all interactions are appropriate, safe and secure.

The tutor shall request that an adult be present or within hearing range during the tutoring and should also be free to observe, and be present for, each session.

6.4 Disclosure

6.4.1 On-line tutors and tutoring companies must disclose the location (suburb and nation) of the tutor.
6.4.2 Tutors must honestly disclose their qualifications and experience.
6.4.3 Tutors must honestly disclose their knowledge of the local curriculum used by the student.
6.4.4 Tutors shall be background checked by relevant local authorities.
News

Australia

Lobbying

There has been widespread consolidation in the Australian market, with the ATA gaining traction as the peak body. Correspondence has been received from the incoming Education Minister Chris Pyne, seeking a meeting with the ATA. The ATA Board is lobbying on behalf of members for the reintroduction of a tutoring voucher scheme that gives parents choice in regards to finding a tutor. Of course such a scheme is premised on the idea that such vouchers be allocated to the families of children as literacy and/or numeracy risk as identified by NAPLAN.

ATA Membership

ATA membership has grown again with August recording 21 new members – an equal second monthly record of new members. This means that the ATA now has 473 members and its goal of 475 members should be reached well before the goal of 30th September.

Accreditation

As reported elsewhere in this newsletter, the accreditation has been approved by the ATA Board following a period of wide consultation with ATA members. Accreditation will be optional but it is in the interest of ATA members to distinguish themselves in the market by taking it on.

Academia Literaria and WSABE

ATA Member Academia Literaria was nominated as a finalist for the Western Sydney Awards for Business Excellence (WSABE). Though they did not win a prize, this type of nomination is testimony to Academia Literaria’s approach to its business model that places the interest of students foremost. This is very notable in the context of the age of the business and that the business has experienced sustained growth while catered effectively to the needs of a wide range of students.

Our congratulations go to them.

Offshore/global news

United Kingdom

There has been an enormous volume of news coming from the UK on account of the effort of TTA in establishing an industry-based tutoring association for launch in October. The unprecedented interest in private tutoring has been reflected in the following news items in the mainstream media:


Judith Burns, “Private tutors boost grammar chances, suggests survey” from BBC at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-23547666

The Economist in Britain reported that the use of private tutors may be closing the level of income inequality between rich and poor.: Global tutoring business, Kumon was credited for assisting in allowing access to private tutoring through it use of classes. http://www.economist.com/news/britain/21583707-private-education-becoming-more-egalitarian-premium-economy/print

On August 3rd BBC Radio ran this excellent overview of the tutoring industry in Britain. It runs for 29 minutes and look as the nature of the industry, the improvements it can make to students and the need for accountability and benchmarks.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b037jn8b/Teacher_Versus_Tutor/

Turkey

Our correspondent in Turkey reports that international lobbying may have had a very positive effect on the mooted closure of the tutoring centres called dershanes. She says, “…dershanes will be open for the coming year but that they are trying to make them fade away for the year after that. Since they are not causing trouble for these two terms, it is probably better not to remind them of the issue (through any Press Releases) for the time being. I also observed a change in most big dershane chains. Most of them are tending to open courses on other exams rather than university or high school exams. Exams for some government professions like teachers, officers etc. We call them KPSS exams. Also exams like GMAT (for the Turkish version, it is called ALES) etc. courses are opening up.

There is obviously a change coming up, but I am not sure how it will play out yet. In addition, there is a change for high school entrance requirements. We used to have an exam called SBS. Now that exam is cancelled and they will apply some sort of standardized and government-controlled system instead. What they proposed (and is being executed for the coming year) is that some of the exams that students already take throughout the year will be standardized and controlled on a city-level. So the students will be placed accordingly. I am personally not fully informed about the system, so this is all I grasp from it for now”.
Churn in the Australian Market

An assessment of membership data over the past year had shown that despite our massive growth of 22%, 88 businesses that had been members left the industry and thus ceased their membership.

This actually indicates that our net growth has been 22%. Our gross growth taking into account those businesses that have left the market is 165 new businesses. Thus it has been a rather more spectacular 45% growth over the past year. We cannot however stop businesses from leaving the industry. For various reasons businesses sometimes close, down-scale or change.

We note however that there has been some consolidation in the Australian market over the past 3 years, with larger businesses sustained experiencing growth.

It is to be expected that in any industry where the predominant business model is that centred on the micro-SME scale, there will be churn. This is because in the private tutoring market it takes a while to build a reputation and to get the benefit of positive word-of-mouth reports between parents. Moreover, one-person enterprises can be subject to change based on the personality of the owner and their changing needs and goals.

The Office, in contacting members and hearing about different matters facing tutors notes that there has been some spectacular growth amongst some ATA member business. In one case we were told that business had grown so fast that the need for formalised administration was required. The difficulty was that in managing the needs of 80 students and 8 contractors left little time for anything else.

Management Training

As we grow and as the industry becomes more mature new issues arise and come to the attention of the ATA Board. An interesting issue that has arisen is whether there is a need for the ATA to take on a management consulting role and/or whether to offer management training specifically tailored to the industry. An assessment of the Australian Institute of Management (AIM) website reveals that peak bodies can create and develop management training courses that are of relevance to members.

Whilst the creation of management training or the development of management training courses is not ATA policy at present, the ATA Board is always open to new ideas and to methods by which we can develop in a way that provides members more of the things they would like.