

## **Exploration of Characteristics of Supplementary Private Tutoring in Elementary Schools of Ethiopia**

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### **Abstract**

This study was aimed at assessing the characteristics of extra supplementary tutoring in the upper primary schools of Ethiopia. To achieve this objective a cross-sectional survey research design was employed. Data were collected from upper primary school students, teachers, and school principals. Accordingly, four regions and one city administration were selected as sample regions by using simple random sampling method. Again from each region the capital town of each sample regions was selected as sample towns through purposive sampling technique. Then from each sample town three government and three private schools were selected by simple random sampling technique. Finally, from each selected sample schools 50 percent of the students and all the teachers and the principal of the school were taken by purposive sampling techniques. To collect data from sample students, teachers, and principals, questionnaires, interview, and focus group discussion were used. The result shows that three-fourth of the students received supplementary private tutoring, the amount of money paid for a single student per month is more than 300 Ethiopian Birr; students took more than one hours tutorial per week and they get tutorial on subjects such as Science, Mathematics and English; and students in supplementary private tutoring do activities that focus on revision of work already done.

**Key words:** Characteristics, supplementary tutoring, private tutoring, elementary school, Ethiopia.

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## **Background of the study**

In the context of globalization and ensuing competitive environment, there is an increasing demand for quality education in all countries since it is an essential for building an open, democratic society, for maintaining social cohesion in any country, and for improving the quality of life of citizens and residents (Iveta & Virginija, 2006). The formal educational systems in most countries are under huge pressure to utilize optimally the scarce available human and financial resources. The benefits of education can mean the difference between a high-paying job and consequent success or missed opportunities and a resultant failure in life. The high premium attached to education in the modern society has led to a stratification of individuals based on their educational backgrounds, thus creating a strong competitive environment within each individual country's educational system (Bray, 1999).

Parents in their attempt to provide their children with the best opportunities in life have resorted to extra class as Foondun (2002: 491) stated "a means of retaining a relative advantage for their children in the education race." Extra supplementary class is now an international phenomenon present in most countries alongside the formal educational system to various levels of sophistications. Extra classes involve additional instruction in core academic subjects, are usually given by children's regular teachers and normally take place within children's regular schools. They can therefore be seen as a private supplement to Ethiopian public schooling, and are related to but distinct from the phenomenon of private tutoring that is common elsewhere in Asia (Bray & Lykins, 2012; Dang & Rogers, 2007)

The issue of extra classes is not new. Globally, this trend is observed in both developed and developing countries. Trang (2002) summarizes reasons for this phenomenon; in the West, the boom in information technology has created pressure on the education sector to transform itself, and economic arguments emphasize the role of investment in education as cost-beneficial. In East Asia, extra classes are greatly influenced by: the Chinese cultural custom that emphasizes and values success and educational qualifications; the policy of having just one or two children in a family which has resulted in more investment in the individual child and placed higher expectations on the child; and the limitations of the education system itself. Similarly, Ha and Harpham (2005) added other reasons such as the transition to a market economy tends to substantially increase the amount of private tutoring in countries where it previously did not exist, and a typical school day is short, as is a typical academic year. Kim and Lee (2004) also stated that the other reason as the public education system in these countries is often regarded as inadequate.

There are good reasons why a private supplementary tutoring sector might emerge to complement the public and private schooling systems. Private tutoring can provide more individualized instruction than is possible in public schools, using a more flexible delivery mechanism. Private tutoring helps pupils to learn, and thus extends their human capital which can in turn contribute to economic development. It may also have valuable social functions, providing constructive opportunities for children and youth to interact with peers and others. Private tutoring also generates income for the tutors, and tutoring may assist mainstream teachers by helping pupils to understand lessons which otherwise might not have been understood (Bray & Kwok, 2003).

### **Statement of the problem**

Extra supplementary tutorial is a phenomenon which is common all over the world including Ethiopia. Even though there is no documented empirical evidence that is directly focused on extra supplementary tutorial practice in Ethiopia a study by the World Bank (2012: 79) on corruption in Ethiopian education sector indirectly made clear that "...poorly paid teachers supplement their income by 'extra supplementary tutoring' which is wide spread with 40% of school officials reporting it as a practice". This study indicates that extra supplementary tutoring exists in Ethiopian schools yet the empirical status of it is not well known clearly.

Developing country policymakers (including in Ethiopia) recognize that education is a key determinant of individual productivity and economy wide growth (Bajaj & Belinda, 2009). But their sector diagnoses and policy attention have focused on mainstream education and they rarely mention the emerging important education sector, the private tutoring industry.

Besides, during recent decades, private tutoring has grown to become a vast enterprise. It employs many thousands of people, consumes massive amounts of money, and demands huge amounts of time from both tutors and students (Ireson, 2004; Kirss, 2011; Dawson, 2010). However, few planners and policy makers have adequate data on private supplementary tutoring and in general; the implications of tutoring for education system and for social change are under-restricted and poorly understood.

In addition to the above points experience shows that in parallel to the formal education system in wide range of settings there is extra supplementary tutoring. However, extra supplementary tutoring system has received much less attention, even though it has major social and economic implications. Moreover, to the best

knowledge of the researchers there is little or no research conducted that shows the characteristics of extra supplementary tutoring in the country. Therefore, this study is a first attempt in this country to document systematically the general characteristics of extra supplementary tutoring, including its scale, cost, geographic spread, and subject matter.

### **Objectives of the study**

The general objective of this study is to assess the general characteristics of extra supplementary tutoring in Ethiopia. More specifically, the objectives of this study are to:

1. Assess the prevalence of extra supplementary tutoring in Ethiopia
2. Examine the extent of supplementary private tutoring in Ethiopia
3. Identify the subject matter that is most frequently given in the private tutoring
4. Investigate the average amount of money paid for a single student for a single subject

Realizing the above objectives would have a paramount importance for the education policy makers in Ethiopia to consider this significant system of education (private supplementary tutoring) but not addressed in the policy while formulating new policy or revising the existing policy of education. In addition, it also would help for curriculum designers and educational planners to consider the implication of private tutoring in developing their plan.

### **Design of the study**

To assess the characteristics of extra supplementary tutoring or private tutoring in the upper primary schools (grade 5-8) of Ethiopia a cross-sectional survey research design was employed. This research design is used because it is used to describe characteristics of extra supplementary tutoring in the elementary schools of Ethiopia. Moreover, this design is appropriate since the study is a national survey by taking representative samples.

#### *Sampling*

The population of this study is all the upper primary (grades 5-8) schools of Ethiopia. However, due to time and resource this research was conducted in some selected school found in the major town of the country. Accordingly, from the total regional states and city administrations of the country four regions (two from the relatively developed and two from the emerging regions) and one city administration were selected as sample regions by using simple random sampling technique. Again from each region the capital town of each sample region was selected as sample

towns through purposive sampling method. Then from each sample town three government and three private schools were selected by simple random sampling technique. Finally from each selected sample schools 50 percent of the students and all the teachers of the sample schools and the principal of the school were taken as sample of the study by purposive sampling technique. Moreover, one student from each section in the sample school was selected randomly for focus group discussion. Generally, a total of 13 government schools and 13 private schools were taken as a sample schools due to shortage of resource (finance) and shortage of time. The following table shows the sample region/towns and number of sample students, teachers and principals.

**Table 1***Study sample region and study participants*

Regions/ City administration	Number of sample students	Number of sample teachers	Number of sample principals
Amhara Region	198	71	6
Oromiya Region	192	97	6
Benishangul-Gumuz Region	136	56	4
Gambela Peoples' Region	82	58	4
Addis Ababa City Administration	258	88	6
Total	866	370	26

*Instruments of data collection*

To collect data from sample students, teachers, and school principals the following instrument were employed:

**Questionnaire**

In order to identify the characteristics of extra supplementary tutoring or private tutoring in Ethiopian upper primary schools, structured survey questionnaires were developed and administered to selected sample upper primary school students, and teachers. Different questionnaires were prepared for students and teachers. Generally, the questionnaires were designed in a way that would help the researchers extract detailed data about the current practice of private tutoring in Ethiopian upper primary schools. All the questionnaires were prepared in Amharic (local language) to easy communication and get relevant data from the sample respondents.

### **Interview**

Semi-structured interview guide questions were prepared based on the review of literature for school principals on the practice of private tutoring. Interview was conducted with the school principal on the characteristics of extra supplementary tutoring or private tutoring in upper primary students.

### **Focus group discussion**

Focus group discussion guiding questions were prepared in advance and then students from different sections in the same school (when there are more than one sections) was selected for focus group discussion. One focus group discussion was conducted in one school.

### **Pilot testing of the instrument**

To maintain the validity and reliability of the instrument a pilot test was conducted by selecting one private and one government schools in Jimma town. After preparing the instruments it was given for two experts in education in Jimma University to check the validity of the items and comments were incorporated. Then the instruments were prepared and administered to sample school teachers and students and then the results were processed through SPSS. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was calculated to be (.79) which is regarded as strong correlation coefficient by Jackson (2009). Then the final instruments were administered to all sample students and teachers by the researchers and enough time was given for them to fill and return it.

### **Methods of data analysis**

The data collected were analyzed based on the nature of the data that is, the quantitative data collected were analyzed by using descriptive statistics such as by the use of frequency and percentage. On the other hand, qualitative data collected through the use of interview and focus group discussion were transcribed, coded based on themes and described qualitatively through the use of word narrations.

### **Results**

In this part, the quantitative and qualitative data collected through different means of data collection tools are presented. The quantitative data collected through the questionnaires are processed with SPSS analysis, summarized and presented in tables followed by brief description of the data. The data gathered through open-

ended items of the questionnaire, focus group discussions and interviews are presented qualitatively in narrative summary forms after quantitative data description. The result is presented pertaining to major research questions.

### Characteristics of extra supplementary tutoring Scale

To assess the proportion of students involved in supplementary private tutoring among upper primary school students of Ethiopia; sample students and teachers were asked whether they had ever participated in private supplementary tutoring or not and the result is presented below.

**Table 2**

*Scale of supplementary private tutoring*

Item	Student		Teacher	
	#	%	#	%
Have you ever participated in any form of supplementary private tutoring?	579	66.85	184	60.52
A. Yes	287	33.15	120	39.48
B. No				
Total	866	100	304	100
How many other students /teachers /in your class/school/ do you think participated in supplementary private tutoring?	244	27.5	94	32.4
A. Less than 5 students/teacher/	88	9.9	64	22.1
B. 6-10 students/teacher/	186	21.0	32	11.0
C. Greater than 10 students/teacher/	348	39.3	68	23.4
D. I do not know even one student/teacher/				
Total	866	97.7	258	

As it is presented in the above table, most of the sampled students 66.85 percent of them replied that they had participated in the private supplementary tutoring. Whereas, the rest 33.15 percent confirmed that they had no such experience. Similarly, the sample teachers were asked the same question to indicate whether they had participated in providing supplementary private tutoring or not and most (60.52%) of them replied that they had such an experience but the rest 39.40 percent indicated that they did not participate.

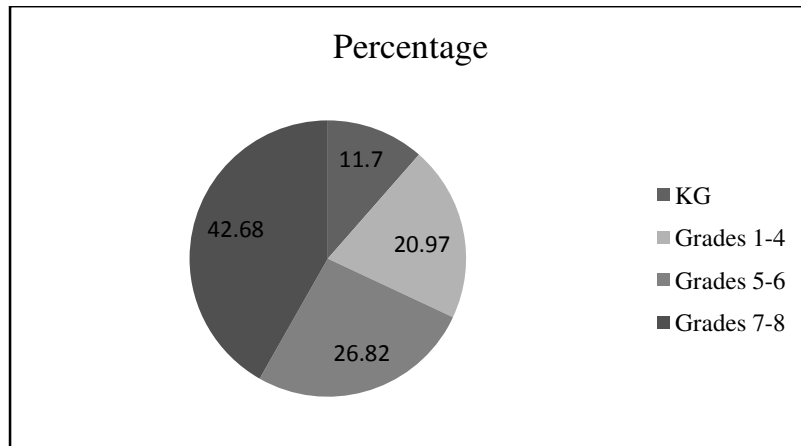
Likewise, the principals of the schools were interviewed on the practice of supplementary private tutoring in their schools. Accordingly, one of the principals stated that “Informally I know that there are some students and teachers who are

involved in receiving and providing supplementary private tutoring in my school.” Hence, though the magnitude is not clear both teachers and students of elementary schools in Ethiopia are involved in supplementary private tutoring.

Similarly, to see the proportion of students who participated in the supplementary private tutoring in the perspectives of students, sample students were inquired to show how many students they know in their class who participate in the supplementary private tutoring. The result in Table 2 revealed that 39.3 percent of the students confirmed that they did not know even one student. Whereas, 27.5 percent and 21.0 percent of the students indicated that they know 1-5 and greater than 10 students respectively.

Likewise, teachers were also asked how many teachers they know in their school who participate in supplementary private tutoring and 32.4 percent of the teachers know less than five teachers. On the other hand, a good number of respondents 23.4 percent of them confirmed that they do not know even one teacher.

To examine at what grade level students started to receive extra supplementary private tutoring, participant students were requested and their responses is presented in the figure below.



**Figure 1** The grade level at which students' receive extra supplementary tutorial

As it is seen in Figure 1, students who replied they have participated in supplementary private tutoring were asked to indicate at what grade level they have started the extra supplementary tutoring and the result shows that most (42.68%) confirmed that they have started when they are grade 7-8, while 26.82 percent and



20.97 percent indicated that they have started at grade 5-6 and at grade 1-4 respectively.

### Cost

One of the characteristics of supplementary private tutoring is cost; since supplementary private tutoring involves by tutors for financial gain. To help in estimation of the amount of expenditure each student pay for supplementary private tutoring and the extent to which these expenditures were a burden on household budget, students and teachers were asked their perception and the result is presented in the table below.

**Table 3**

*The amount of expenditure for supplementary private tutoring and its effect on family*

Item	Student		teacher	
	#	%	#	%
The amount of money (your) parents pay for the tutorial per month	114	13.7	20	7.3
A. Less than 100 Birr	184	22.7	100	36.5
B. 100-200 Birr	132	16.3	52	19
C. 200-300 Birr	382	47.1	98	35.8
D. Greater than 300 Birr				
<b>Total</b>	812	100	270	100
How big is financial commitment for (your) family?				
A. Very big	66	7.9	36	12.5
B. Relatively big, but not prohibitively expensive	156	18.7	80	27.8
C. It is simple	288	34.4	42	14.6
D. I do not know	336	39.0	98	34.0
<b>Total</b>	846	100	256	100

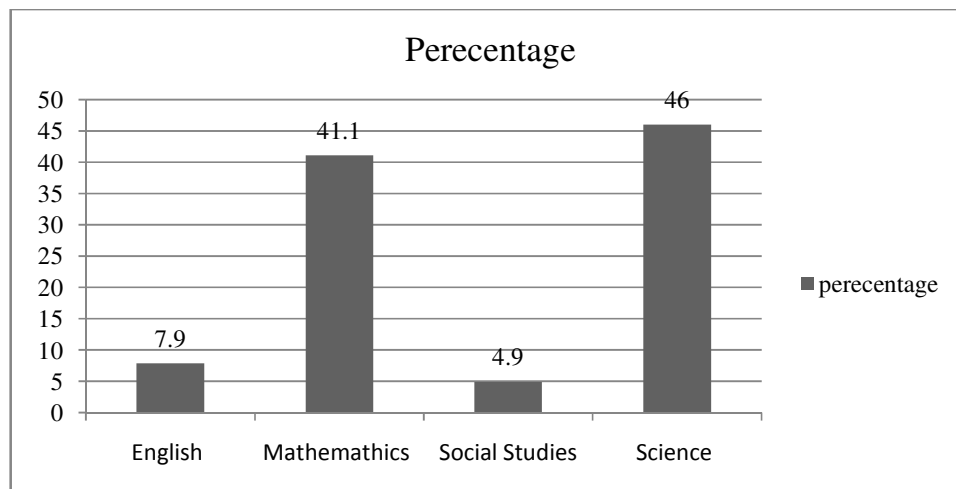
As it is indicated in the above table 47.1 percent of students affirmed that the amount of money their parents pay for supplementary private tutoring is greater than 300 Ethiopian birr (>\$15) per month whereas, a small proportion of students 13.7 percent replied that the amount is less than 100 Ethiopian Birr. Similarly, teachers were asked the amount of money they receive while they give tutorial for a single student and the result shows that 36.5 percent and 35.8 percent the teachers verify that they receive 100 up to 200 Ethiopian Birr and greater than 300 Ethiopian Birr respectively.

Table 3 indicates the responses to the question whether the costs of tutoring were a burden to the students' families or not. As it is indicated 39 percent and 34.4 percent affirmed that they do not know the burden of the expenditure for the family and it is simple respectively. Whereas a relatively a small proportion of respondents 7.9 percent revealed that the burden is very big. Likewise teachers were also requested to estimate the extent of burden on students parent the amount of money they pay for supplementary private tutoring. The result shows that 34 percent and 27 percent of the teachers indicated that they do not have information about the burden and it is relatively big, but not prohibitively expensive respectively.

On the other hand, school principals were also interviewed on this issue and they confirmed that it is a burden for the parent. For instance, one of the principals described that "I heard from the parents that the amount of money they pay for supplementary tutoring is becoming a burden for them and they will not continue paying for supplementary private tutoring".

### Subject

Supplementary private tutoring refers to the support given for students on the academic subjects taught in mainstream schools, such as languages and mathematics. The focus does not include extra-curricular subjects such as soccer. It also excludes religious studies (e.g. through Sunday school) where they are not part of school mainstream curricula. To identify on which subjects students get tutorial, students were asked and the result is presented in Figure 2 below.



**Figure 2** The subjects in which students received supplementary private tutoring

Figure 2 shows the number of students having a tutor in different academic subjects of the curriculum areas. As it is seen most students had tutoring in science 46 percent and 41.1 percent in mathematics and 7.9 percent in English. Likewise, teachers were asked the subject matter they give supplementary private tutorial, like students most (40%) of the respondent revealed that they give on science subjects followed by 29 percent in Mathematics. Similarly, one of the school principal supported in his interview that “students usually take supplementary private tutoring on subjects that students think as hard subjects such as Science and Mathematics”.

On the other hand, both students and teachers were asked the type of activities students do in their extra supplementary tutoring and their response is presented in the following table.

**Table 4**

*Response to the question: “What work is usually covered during private tutoring?”*

Response category	Student		Teacher	
	#	%	#	%
A. Studying the textbook	148	17.5	128	44.8
B. Studying other supplementary works	160	18.9	46	16.1
C. Doing Exercise and homework	62	7.3	52	18.2
D. Revision of work already done	320	37.8	58	20.3
E. Coverage of the syllabus/new work	156	18.4	2	0.7
Total	846	100	286	100

As it is seen in the above table, both students and teachers were requested what work is usually covered during private teaching and their response indicated that revision of work already done (37.8%), studying other supplementary works (18.9%), coverage of the syllabus/new work (18.4%), and studying the textbook (17.5%). Similarly, sample respondent teachers were asked the same question and their response revealed that studying the textbook (44.8%), revision of work already done (20.3%), doing exercise and homework (18.2%), and studying other supplementary works (16.1%).

Correspondingly, students during their focus group discussion made clear that they do a lot of activities in the supplementary private tutoring. For instance, one of the female students stated that “In my supplementary private tutoring I usually focus on working the homework and revising of the lesson that I learned in the normal class”.

### Intensity

Regarding the amount of time students spent in taking supplementary private tutoring per week students and teachers were asked and the result is presented in the table below.

**Table 5**

*Response to the question: "How many hours you took tutorial per week?"*

Response category	Student		Teacher	
	#	%	#	%
A. Up to 1 hour a week	170	20.6	136	47.9
B. 1-2 hours a week	250	30.3	74	26.1
C. Up to 3 hours a weeks	178	19.1	52	18.3
D. More than 3 hours a week	224	24.0	20	7.0
Total	822	100	282	100

As indicated in the above table students confirmed that 1-2 hours a week (30.3%), more than 3 hours a week (24%), up to 1 hour a week (20.6%), and up to 3 hours a week (19.1%). On the other hand, the sampled teachers verified that most teachers (47.9%) reported that they spent up to 1 hour per week in providing supplementary private tutoring. From this data it is clear that many students (73.4%) spent more than 1 hour a week. Similarly, students were asked in their focus group discussion about the amount of time they spent in receiving supplementary tutoring and one of the student described that "I mostly spent on the average 2-3 hours per week in supplementary private tutoring".

### Discussion

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers would like to discuss the general characteristics of supplementary private tutoring in upper primary schools of Ethiopia. Like any other countries, for most students in Ethiopia, education neither begins nor ends with schooling. The majority (66.85%) of surveyed school students received supplementary private tutoring in addition to learning in mainstream schools. Similarly, teachers of the upper primary school also confirmed that they are also involved in providing supplementary private tutoring. The result also shows that students who participated in supplementary private tutoring started this program when they are grade 7-8. This finding is similar with the study of different scholars on different countries at different time. For instance, Lee (1996) in his survey at Hong Kong revealed that about 34.4 percent of middle secondary school students received supplementary private tutoring. Aggrawal (1998) revealed that 39.2 percent were receiving tutoring. Japan (1995) about 59.5 percent of junior high school students attended tutorial schools.

These examples give prominence to different societies, as the phenomenon has been particularly strong there for a long time. However, tutoring is growing in other parts of the world, including Africa, North America and Europe.

One of the characteristics of supplementary private tutoring is cost; related to this issue the findings of this study revealed that most of the students and the teachers indicated that per month the amount of money paid for a single student is more than 300 Ethiopian Birr (\$15). This amount of money is relatively very high in Ethiopian context but when we see it in relation to other countries experience it is very small. For instance, a study by Bray (2011) revealed that in different countries such as in Belgium (€33), France (€30.50), and Ireland (€30) per hour for tutoring plus the cost of transportation for the tutor. This result clearly indicates that the cost of tutoring to students and their families depends on the type of tutoring received and the reputations of the providers. As one might expect, one-to-one tutoring is generally more costly than tutoring in groups, which in turn is more costly than tutoring in large classes.

Likewise, the result also indicated that whether the cost the family pays for the tutoring is a burden for the family or not is not known by the respondent students it might be because the students may not know its effect on the household. This result is also congruent with the teachers' response that reveals they do not have information about the burden and it is relatively big, but not prohibitively expensive respectively. However, in different countries the amount of money parents pay for the students' supplementary private tutorial is becoming a burden for the family. For instance in Hong Kong a study by Lee (1996) revealed that most of the parents confirmed to the question what is your view on the statement that "Private tutoring is a financial burden to you and your family"? They responded it by saying agree that indicates it is really a burden to the household.

Regarding the intensity of supplementary private tutoring, while there is a discrepancy in the reported intensity of private tutoring use among students the majority of teachers and students replied that they took more than one hours tutorial per week. This result is congruent with Bray and Iveta (2006) the results of which shows that there is variations in intensity in the number of hours per week however, most of the respondent students spent 1–2 hours per week with a private tutor, while some spent less and others spent more.

Supplementary private tutoring refers to the support given for students on the academic subjects taught in mainstream schools, such as languages and mathematics. The focus does not include extra-curricular subjects such as soccer. It also excludes

religious studies (e.g. through Sunday school) where they are not part of school mainstream curricula. The results of this study made clear that students take tutorial in different academic subjects of the curriculum areas but most of them get tutoring in science, mathematics and in English. This finding is consistent with many researches all over the world that shows the subjects most in demand for private supplementary tutoring are those that are most necessary for advancement in the education systems that correspond to international patterns (i.e., the subjects needed for educational and socio-economic advancement). This usually includes mathematics, the national language, and an international language such as English (Ireson & Rushforth, 2011). On the other hand, geography and history are usually not among the top choices for private tutoring in other education contexts which is also the case in this context. Similarly, surveys in Luxembourg, Latvia, Cyprus, Germany, Austria, Portugal, Romania, and Hungary showed that mathematics was also the most popular subject in those countries (Mischo & Haag, 2002).

One of the results observed in this study was the type of work usually covered during private tutoring and the findings show that students do in supplementary private tutoring revision of work already done, studying other supplementary works, coverage of the syllabus/new work, and studying the textbook. The current literature on supplementary private tutoring prevails that in addition to straightforward repetition of school subjects, it incorporates elaborations and supplements of various kinds. To attract clients, private tutors differentiate themselves from the school sector through their teaching approaches and content (Dawson, 2010). Supplementary private tutoring may also alter the sequence of instruction. Thus, although the metaphor of the shadow implies that the private tutoring follows the regular system, some tutors offer “learning in advance”, where some tutors teach students for two months during the vacation before the beginning of the academic year, and during the school year also keep ahead of the school curriculum (Lee et al., 2004).

## **Conclusions**

Given the background of the above findings, the researchers make the following conclusions:

Supplementary private tutoring is substantial in its scale in Ethiopia. From the total students three out of four students and teachers participate in receiving and providing supplementary private tutoring respectively.

In Ethiopian context the amount of money parents pay for their children is relatively big so that it is becoming a burden for them and probably they may not continue for doing so in the near future.

Upper primary school students in Ethiopia are taking more than one additional hour for supplementary private tutoring per week in addition to the formal schooling.

Upper primary school students in Ethiopia receive extra supplementary private tutoring on the subject they think they are difficult to understand such as Science and Mathematics. Besides in their supplementary private tutoring program students replicate daytime schooling and to compensate for insufficiency in daytime lessons.

Private tuition classes are wide spread and growing phenomenon in Ethiopia especially among the students who take national examinations.

## **Recommendations**

In light of the findings of this study, the researchers would like to make some recommendations:

Policy makers are advised to pay more attention to the incidence of private tutoring. From economic perspective, private tutoring involves equity and efficiency considerations, which in turn establish what stance should policy makers take towards tutoring. Such a process requires a comprehensive analysis incorporating, among others, rates of return to private tutoring; cost effectiveness of private tutoring and the potential over generational transmission of income inequality through inequality of current private tutoring opportunities. Therefore, more and in-depth academic research in this area of interest is essential. Equity considerations are arguably a priority as household income is found in the current study as a positive significant deriving force of both private tutoring decision and expenditure.

Public awareness rising about the nature, scale, and implications of private tutoring for the mainstream education system: One reason for the escalating practice of private tutoring is public unawareness about its scale and negative effects on the mainstream education system. It is important that major education stakeholders (e.g., parents, teachers, and school administrators) and education policy-makers (e.g., Ministry and government officials) are better aware of the potential threats that

private tutoring has for the education system. Given that private tutoring has begun to substitute classroom instruction for many students in Ethiopia, the question is – why do you need public schools when you have private tutors? While few doubt the indispensable value of mainstream education, it is important that major education stakeholders realize the negative impact of private tutoring on schools.

From the policy-making and planning perspective, the issue of private tutoring can no longer be ignored. Given its unprecedented scale and impact on the formal education system, private tutoring deserves much more attention than it has been given thus far in Ethiopia. Although any decision regarding private tutoring is likely to involve politics, it is important to ensure that it is developed in deliberation with the major education stakeholders and based on a thorough examination of the existing data, a systematic evaluation of available policy options, and careful assessment of potential policy outcomes. It is crucial that not only the symptoms but also the causes of private tutoring are addressed in order to alleviate the adverse effects on mainstream education and society at large.

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