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CONSUMERS UNPROTECTED  
Tuition industry lacks regulation

I WAS surprised and relieved to see the article on Sunday ('Is your child's tutor qualified?').

I am the chief executive officer of the Australian Tutoring Association (ATA) and last year, while in Singapore, I met two large tuition companies here to speak about issues that the tuition industry could address.

These issues included:

- Tutor qualifications;
- Child protection;
- Truth in advertising; and
- Consumer protection.

Both businesses expressed interest in forming an association similar to the ATA. However, neither has acted despite both recognising serious issues in the industry.

In Australia, the ATA has given consumers a choice between those places offering accountable, honest and open tuition, and those that do not.

We do this by having members agree to abide by our code of conduct, which is available online to consumers and to which all members are accountable.

Why isn't there a tuition association in Singapore which benchmarks minimum standards for all tutors?

Why is the industry unregulated?

Who is most vulnerable?

A responsible industry has a representative body. It seems odd that in Singapore, where there is a real focus on education, the private sector is not called upon to demonstrate more initiative with regard to consumers.

The worst aspects of the sector in Australia are similar to those that occur here: Online tuition and the use of agents (in the case of tuition agencies that are not registered with the Ministry of Education).

I think serious questions should be asked about the tuition sector in Singapore, and all related businesses should be subject to greater consumer scrutiny until there is a representative body that is prepared to publicly call for minimum standards and work with the Government as well as consumer protection and educational bodies.

**Mohan Dhall**

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