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'Tiger Parents' and the Tutor

The start of the academic year has again brought a boom to tuition with many tuition centres desperately recruiting staff to meet the growing demand. However, whilst tuition is growing there is a need to address issues that affect students and student performance. One such issue is that of high-pressure parenting.

The publication of Amy Chua's book 'Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother' has caused widespread debate about the approach and role of parents in the education of their children. In her book Chua, a university professor, recalls the strictness with which she raised her daughters. She says that when one came home with 96% on an exam she asked about the missing 4%. She would force her daughters to practise music or be left outside in the cold and placed relentless pressure on her children to succeed academically. She argues that her daughters are better for her strictness and application of 'Chinese' values.

A few years ago a father approached me to tutor his son. He said to me early in the conversation and within his son's hearing, 'And you can beat him if he does not listen to you'. I said that I would not beat him. The father reassured me that it really was okay and in fact he would encourage it. I repeated that I would not beat his son. The father shrugged and said that I was 'too soft' and that I did not understand how to properly tutor.

The tuition industry within Australia and overseas continues to grow at a rapid rate. Parents who value education fuel this growth. Many parents will say that a tutor can teach or mentor their children in a way that they themselves cannot. The relationship between some children and their parents is complex enough without the added overlay of stress around education. A crucial aspect of tuition is building a student's self-esteem, encouraging them and instilling within them a sense of self-belief. Sometimes when parental pressure is extremely high then otherwise capable students find themselves underperforming. Petrified of failure they avoid trying. Indeed the self-talk becomes quite negative.

A concern about "Tiger parents" from a tutor's perspective is how to manage parental expectations if they are unreasonable, whilst respecting the parent's right to have a philosophy of learning. At what point should a tutor refuse to tutor a student on account of unreasonable parental pressure? Of course, tutors can find this tough to answer because tuition has the additional aspect of providing a commercial incentive to tutors who take on students. Under such circumstances tutors have an obligation to address issues of stress and how it can undermine student performance. They may have to refuse to tutor if a parent's expectations are unreasonable. In this way they place educational interests above commercial interests. A failure to do so could compound the effects of stress on a student. Students who grow up with too much pressure can find they are constantly driven to prove themselves, always behaving from a feeling of unworthiness.

It is very important to remove the notion of culture from an understanding of how parents approach parenting. Parents all over the world value education regardless of culture. Moreover, in Australia tutoring is prevalent in the Chinese-Australian, Indian-Australian, Korean-Australian, Anglo-Australian and many other communities. It is not a feature of some communities over others. Some cultural groups may favour particular approaches to tuition over others but this is an open question. The issues arising from the high pressure approach of 'Tiger parents' and parental expectations needs to be treated on an individual basis rather than with a simple stereotyping of culture.

Mainstream educators and tutors should collaborate with parent groups to discuss the issues arising from different approaches to parenting and education so that the interests of all students can best be fostered

Mohan Dhall

CEO, Australian Tutoring Association (ATA)

Class Act to the Flood Rescue

Aleks Devic From: Sunday Herald Sun February 6th 2011, 12:00am

FRANK Benito yesterday scored brownie points with his girlfriend after he piggy-backed her more than 100m through flooded Dandenong streets so she could take her tutoring class.



Frank Benito carries girlfriend Vi Nguyen through flooded Dandenong streets. Picture: Ben Swinnerton Source: Herald Sun

Mr Benito and his girlfriend, Vi Nguyen, were told not to attend the lesson, but thought it was just the students trying to get out of school work.

"She had her bag and all her books, so I just said, 'Get on my back and I'll take you there,'" he said.

Mr Benito waited for the lesson to finish and, like a true gentleman, gave Ms Nguyen a piggy-back ride to the car.

India's Cram Schools Go Global - by Akanksha Awal from Beyondbrics

India's fast-growing "cram school industry" is expanding its horizons. Coaching companies are no longer limiting their ambitions to Indian educational establishments alone, but are now offering courses for US college admissions also.

FIIT-JEE, one of India's largest coaching centres, told beyondbrics that the company is planning a \$66.3m expansion to build a national chain of institutions that will offer preparation courses to a growing number of Indian students seeking admissions in US universities. The company recently sold a 4 per cent stake to QInvest – the investment arm of the Qatari royal family – for \$19.9m and is planning an \$883m IPO in November 2011.

FIIT-JEE, named after the country's most coveted engineering entrance examination – the IIT-JEE – currently trains around 30,000 students in 50 centres across India and the Middle-East.

In a nation where more than a million students vie for places at the country's prestigious engineering institutions, medical and management institutions, coaching schools are big businesses which train students to 'crack' entrance examinations. The competition is intense – with, for example, 470,000 applicants for 9,700 places at the engineering institutions and 1.5m applicants for 36,800 medical school places.

The \$2bn industry has recently witnessed a series of IPOs with other national chains raising millions of dollars. Projected to grow at 15 – 20 per cent annually, the industry has become a part and parcel of the lives of India's aspiring middle class.

While providers traditionally trained students for entrance examinations to India's top institutions, economic boom has brought on a change in the attitudes of the young who no longer want to pursue a strictly vocational path – particularly as the competition is excruciatingly tight – forcing them to explore opportunities abroad.

"Opportunities for high-quality undergraduate studies in pure sciences leading to a professional career are extremely limited in India" said D.K. Goel, the chairman of FIIT-JEE.

"Situation is worse for those wanting to pursue arts and humanities, commerce [accountancy and business] and law," he added, explaining that a lack of opportunity for 'laggard' students, who will fare better at US entrance examinations and get a field of their choice, prompted him to start the US college admissions' arm.

In 2009, there were 15,000 Indian undergraduate students at US colleges, around 15 per cent of the international roll.

Aspirants are encouraged to start early – four years in advance of the test date – by enrolling on integrated courses designed to complement the Indian schooling system. A typical course, with eight hours of coaching a week in addition to at least 25 hours at school, costs \$7700 over four years. The "coaching" includes training for aptitude tests as well as interview practice and scholarship applications.

As the country's higher education sector struggles to meet domestic demand, middle classes have taken to spending copious sums of money in coaching institutions and dedicated time required to get their kids admissions to schools and courses of their choice – either in India or abroad. The coaching centre bonanza is pushing domestic competition to universities abroad.

And so long as this struggle for places continues, the coaching centre bonanza will too.

Source: Akanksha Awal "India cram schools go global", <http://blogs.ft.com/beyond-brics/2011/02/09/india-cram-schools-go-global-awaiting-akanksha-adds/>; 09.02.2011

Publishers, Schools and On-Line Tuition

Publishers throughout the world have to address the issue of people turning to electronic media for their source of information. This means that there is a shift at present away from 'hard' copies to 'soft' copies.

Put another way, text-based resources are becoming the less favoured medium for gaining information and for learning. The increased use of laptops and networked computers enables students to access a huge amount of current information instantly. In response to this change the iBook was created by Apple that allows people to read electronic books, varying the size of the text on the reader.

Similarly, publishers such as Pearson, the world's largest educational publisher, and John Wiley and Sons (Jacaranda) are adjusting to the change by supplementing text-based resources with on-line portals that teachers and students can access. This allows for a creation of dynamic content which can be accessed simultaneously by multiple users. The creation of on-line content is far cheaper than the creation of text-based resources once the capital investment is made for a suitable and secure on-line platform. An issue, which has arisen for the publishers, is how such on-line content can be paid for.

Some publishers allow free access with the purchase of a text. Others are experimenting with a subscription-based approach.

A concern for publishers is that books will become redundant. The placing of Borders Australia into receivership in mid February may attest to this. However, another option for publishers is to diversify. Pearson have done just that by purchasing TutorVista, an on-line tuition

company based in Bangalore in India.

Bangalore is one of the IT hubs of India. Pearson increased its stake in TutorVista to 76%. That company has about 10,000 paying students who access on-line tuition every month. Of course, this move is wise given that even mainstream schools are opting to shift towards on-line learning. A report late last year from Britain stated that BrightSpark Education, an Indian-based tuition company, was tutoring British primary school children at Ashmount Public School and 2 other state schools during the school day. A further seven schools also used the Indian tutors during regular classes.

In nations such as South Korea, Singapore and even emerging economies like Vietnam, the use of on-line tuition is rising. Publishers are wise to step into the on-line tuition space. Schools in Britain that use on-line tuition are showing that they are prepared to embrace change and bring the best education to their students if it cannot be provided for locally.

A concern for schools is that the outsourcing of tuition to low-cost offshore providers will reduce the need for locally trained teachers. However, schools everywhere are also struggling with how best to allocate limited funds. A concern for publishers is that schools will not need text-based resources. The commercial sector always creates opportunities and leads change. The educational publishers globally are setting the pace and realising the change. Schools would be wise to be open to working more closely with the private tuition market.

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ATA Code of Conduct in Vietnamese

The ATA Code of Conduct has been translated into Vietnamese, having already been translated into Korean and Chinese. The idea behind the translation is to better help parents in the Vietnamese community to understand their right when it comes to making decisions about tuition. The Code of Conduct, which was originally drafted in English, should be on display in members' offices and employees should be trained to understand the implications of the Code on their approach to tuition. Members are encouraged to read the Code of Conduct and know it well. It is available from the website (www.ata.edu.au) and is reviewed once annually. Any suggestions for change/improvement are most welcome and can be brought to the attention of ATA Board members.

Fame, Fortune for Web Tutors in Education - Crazy South Korea

For a teacher who never sees his students and instructs only online, South Korean Woo Hyeong-cheol makes a lot of money, \$4 million a year to be exact. Woo is not affiliated with any institution that is part of the official school system, but the 46-year-old math instructor is considered one of the best cram school tutors in education-obsessed South Korea, with his Web-based classes as well-known among test-taking teens as top-rated TV dramas.

“School teachers are concerned about creating moral people. We focus more on getting the students better grades in a short amount of time. That’s why we are needed and popular,” said Woo, who commands a salary higher than almost all of the top baseball players in the country’s professional league.

Woo is among a group of about a dozen instructors raking it in because they are thought to be the best at raising scores. The bulk of their income comes from online classes that are easily accessible in the world’s most-wired country, where more than 90 percent of households can receive high-speed Internet.

South Korean teens are often in the classroom for at least 10 to 12 hours a day, preparing for entrance exams that determine whether they will enter a top university, which in turn can lead to an elite career path and which can even make them a good catch when the time comes to get married.

Woo, dubbed “the shovel” for his threats to whack unruly teens with big metal objects, posts tutorials on the Internet, where they are accessed by about 50,000 paying subscribers.

He combines straight talk, humor, intimidation and most importantly, guidance on how to find correct answers to the difficult math section of entrance exams.

“I think I can trust him up until the big day,” one of his student said in an anonymous Internet posting.

Critics say the system is geared toward passing the entrance exams, which means students have few analytical skills. In exam subject such as English, students are much better at answering written questions about grammar than speaking the language.

“These late night classes ... can lead to various problems, including a lack of sleep that decreases the effectiveness of learning while raising issues of mental health,” said Woo Ok-yeong from Health Education Forum, a child advocacy group.

In her miniskirt, boots and fashionable tops, Rose Lee looks more like a university student, but she’s actually one of the country’s highest paid English teachers. Calling herself the “Queen of English” but who asked to be interviewed in Korean, Lee expects to make more than \$7 million a year mostly through online classes. She also works offline, which in the cram school trade means teaching students in a classroom.

“Due to the lack of resources in our country, parents have always felt that education was the best thing they could provide for their children,” Lee said through a translator. Lee has not had much time to enjoy her wealth and knows that her fortunes can easily change in a world where she is dependent on the approval of fickle teenagers.

“I guess the parties will have to come after my retirement.”

Adapted from: Jon Herskovitz and Christine Kim, “Fame, fortune for Web tutors in education-crazy South Korea”,

Source: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2009/07/02/us-korea-education-tech-lifeidUSTRE5612SI20090702?pageNumber=2; 02.07.09;> (Editing by Miral Fahmy)

TOO Much Pressure!

The Family Court has had to deal recently with an issue relating to pressure on school-aged children. In the matter, the court held that a father was being too obsessively strict with his daughters. A factor was his approach to his 11 and 13-year-old daughters' education. According to a Daily Telegraph report the father was focused on the education of his daughters to the point of obsession. From a tutor's perspective any parent or guardian who displays sign of obsession, being motivated by the results of tuition rather than the processes, should be counseled on the effect of their actions on the child.

Sometimes when tutors or parents are focused on results then the child gets lost. A coaching approach to education can often have a particular goal in mind such as entry into a selective school or a private school or university course. It is appropriate to set academic goals and also for tutors to be accountable for the academic growth of their students. However, it is also appropriate to keep the best interests of the student foremost. This means that outcomes must be appropriate for the student and the circumstances. Too much stress can undermine academic performance and erode a student's feeling of self-worth. They can start to define themselves by what they do (performance) rather than who they are. Tutors would do well to keep this in mind.

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A father obsessed with his children's education has been banned from making parenting decisions because he was too strict.

The father of three pushed his two daughters to do homework above their academic level and tutored them in the hope of winning private school scholarships.

The girls, aged 13 and 11, had to write reports on their daily movements and read them to their father over the phone each evening.

The Federal Magistrates Court, sitting in Melbourne, ruled the father was "rigid and obsessive" in his parenting.

His demands were driven by a desire for his children to have the best education because he came from an impoverished background in Vietnam, court documents showed. The 49-year-old's behaviour became the subject of court scrutiny when his estranged wife sought sole parental responsibility for the girls and a nine-year-old son.

The father pleaded for shared responsibility, saying he just wanted what was best for his children, but the mother said his demands were a source of constant conflict.

The girls had refused for more than a year to spend time with him to avoid the pressure he placed on them, the court was told. The woman was granted sole parental responsibility and the father was ordered to have counselling.

Source: 'Obsessed Dad drove kids away' from <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/obsessed-dad-drove-kids-away/story-fn6bmg6l-1225990635143>, Daily Telegraph 19.01.2011

National Broadband Network (NBN) and On-Line Tuition

The advent of the internet allows tuition to take place from remote locations. It has been noted that English primary schools, public and private are making use of online tuition by accessing tutors from India. These tutors can be paid at a fraction of the cost of local labour and therefore are an attractive low-cost option for schools seeking specialised in-class support.

A good example of the effect of on-line tuition on a market that both value education and has high speed internet connectivity is that of South Korea. In South Korea the tuition market in 2008 was worth US\$16.33 billion dollars. It is estimated that 75% of students in South Korea do some form of after school or out-of-school tuition. Whilst much of the tuition takes place in so called 'cram schools' increasingly students are turning to on-line tutors. With high speed internet connections and a lower price, on-line tuition is a cost effective option for students.

In Australia the National Broadband Network (NBN) is currently being rolled out and trialled in a number of different geographical areas. The NBN should increase internet connection speeds and allow for clearer real time transmissions. This, coupled with a national curriculum may make it viable to have a domestic internet-based tuition option. In the article titled "Fame, fortune for Web tutors in education-crazy South Korea" the benefits for on-line tutors can be seen.

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Phone 02 9704 5724

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Contacting Us

For contributions and comments

please email the ATA mdhall@ata.edu.au

or mlopez@ata.edu.au

Alternatively, mail us at:

Australian Tutoring Association (ATA) Ltd.

PO Box 256, Croydon NSW 2132

Phone 02 9704 5724 or Mobile 0408 619 714

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