

Honours Project Report

A qualitative comparative study on the practical and
philosophical underpinnings of holistic education of mainstream
schools, tutorial centres and private tutorials of the primary level
in Hong Kong

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyse the pedagogical and philosophical practices of mainstream schools, tutorial centres and private tutorials by providing a comparison of their alignments to holistic education. The research will delve into the three institutions' practical pedagogies and philosophy of education to better illustrate how it brings forth holistic education in primary students in Hong Kong. As private tuition has gotten more popular over the years, it is vital to understand the rationale behind the phenomenon and allow educators to make corresponding changes for future learners. Open-ended interviews were done with participants to allow flexibility in answers, which may contribute significantly to the study. Holistic education is found to be present in mainstream schools since they have a higher focus on personal growth, as shown in their curriculum practice, whereas tutorial centres and private tutorials stress on academic excellence, rather than holistic growth of students. This paper studies the three institutions' values and how they cultivate learning in their respective educational environment.

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1. Introduction

Research background

Private fee-paying supplementary tutoring has recently become a trendy topic, where one can become a multimillionaire in the business (Zheng et al., 2018). Private companies offer tutoring services in venues outside of mainstream schools (Ipsos, 2019), provides a large range of private tutoring for students of different backgrounds in terms of class size and students' budget (e.g. one-on-one home tutoring, small group tutoring etc.), with around 2,051 private tutorial centres for primary students, and many more private home tutoring in Hong Kong. There have been public arguments stating that private tutors could damage students' ability on independent learning (Ho & Kwong, 2008), yet the demand for it stays high. In a survey done by Liu (2012), students of different abilities who partake in private tutoring have shown a significant improvement in their academic performance.

Another survey displayed a positive correlation between the amount of money spent on private tutoring and one's academic achievement (Lei, 2005), which we can then infer that parents have a high willingness to spend on their children's private tutoring. Even with a rapid increase in the average monthly tuition fee of primary school students from 2009 to 2019 (Ipsos, 2019), parents do not seem to hesitate to invest immensely in their children's private tutoring, which arouses researchers' interest in fathoming out the rationale behind this phenomenon. Is there a difference in philosophy or practice from tutorial centres or private tutors that can explain the underpinnings it provides students, in ways that mainstream schools cannot?

Although generally many tutorial centres and private tutors enhance students' academic abilities to a great extent, such as equipping students with problem solving skills, these forms of education ignore some important traits that holistic education offers: creativity, originality, exploration, intuition, and reflection (Harman & Rheingold, 1984), which are necessary skills students need to acquire to act accordingly in the world. As educators from the three institutions mentioned above have their own distinctive set of education philosophy, it is important to characterize their differences in values and measure their alignments with holistic education.

Research purpose

This study focuses on the practical pedagogies and philosophy of education of mainstream schools, tutorial centres, and private tutorials. Through literature review as a foundation of knowledge in the subject and interviews as a consolidation of understanding, a thorough comparative qualitative analysis will be conducted to examine the three educators' teaching experience and study its closeness to achieving holistic education.

The study is important to education for a few reasons. Firstly, many parents rely heavily on private tuition as they are not satisfied with the instructional help given in schools (Lawrence, 2012). Mainstream schools do not warrant students' and parents' trust, which could be a problematic phenomenon. Secondly, it is vital to study the gap between mainstream schools, tutorial centres, and private tutors to understand the change in education philosophy in the primary level in Hong Kong. In this study, the participants are limited to educators with at least two years of experience so that it can be made sure that they are familiar with their work nature and would be able to accurately articulate their knowledge and understanding on the subject.

Research questions

1. Do teachers from mainstream schools and private tutorial centres hold different values and attitudes in their teaching jobs that may explain the academic excellence with the help of private tutoring?
2. Are there differences in the teaching practices that mainstream schools should be employing in filling the gaps that private tutorial centres are able to fill?
3. Do the philosophical values private tuition teachers hold for education promote holistic learning?

As the inquirer in this study, it is crucial to be an active observer and self-reflect constantly to have an authentic experience (Mortari, 2015). Upon reflection of the interviews, the original research questions came to be repetitive and redundant, which did not adequately reflect the philosophical significance and vigour of the answers to the interview questions. Minor changes have been made to the research questions after further examination and reflection on the data collected from the interviews to better reflect the overall aims of the research project in a more satisfactory way, plus giving this study a greater purpose and importance to future studies. The changes are made below.

1. Based on tutorial centres' and private tutorials' teaching pedagogy, how can it explain the academic improvement shown in students who partake in additional tutorials outside of school?
2. What are the three institutions' values and philosophy of learning reflected from their teaching pedagogy and workplace environment?
3. How do the philosophical values and style of teaching pedagogy of the three institutions align with developing holistic learning?

2. Literature review

This study will begin the investigation with current theoretical knowledge and substantial findings of the topic to serve as an introduction before elaborating on the research. Prior similar researches will be shown below to explain the research gap, which will be filled by analysing my research results in the latter chapters. This chapter will give an introduction of education in Hong Kong, probable rationales of the high demand for additional tutorials, and application of holistic learning in the context of Hong Kong.

Introduction of education in Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, different modes of education are present to cater to all social classes. According to the Education Bureau, students are provided twelve years of free education in public school's primary and junior secondary sectors, with senior secondary education also provided free of charge since 2008 (Cited from EDB). With a financial relieve from the government, students in Hong Kong receive equal opportunities of receiving the basic level of education.

In the context of education, Biesta stated 'it matters what pupils and students learn and what they learn it for' (2009, p.39). He put forth the purpose of education in three functions – qualification, socialization, and subjectification. Qualification, is the act of knowledge consumption, making rational judgments in future professions. Socialization, is the immersion of a learner into the society socially, culturally and politically. Subjectification, is the individualization of a learner in a society. In Hong Kong, mainstream schooling qualifies for performing all three functions through providing the right environment and experiences for students to exhibit qualification, socialization, and subjectification. Tutorial centre teachers and private tutors only provide the bare minimum of qualification through increasing students' knowledge in their academic studies. Bray (1999) mentioned that private tuition has become the

major force of education comparable to mainstream schooling in terms of demand, transforming into a ‘shadow education system’ of the conventional system, meaning its existence is only possible with the presence of the mainstream schooling system. Nonetheless, private tuition has been getting increasingly popular among parents and children. It is found that almost 50% of primary students receive tutoring outside of their schools to advance their academic skills, with around 70% in upper secondary (Bray 2005).

Rationale behind the high demand for additional tuition

In Hong Kong, the Confucian culture values shine light on the philosophy of education (Cheng, 2004). The Confucianism ideology values the ‘effort for self-improvement rather than acceptance of in-born abilities and existing circumstances’ (Bray & Kwok, 2003). The Hong Kong education system hold in high regard for both learning and diligence, with outcome-based examinations often used as the protocol to mainstream schools, ingraining the significance of hard work into students’ mindset.

One of the most apparent reasoning to the high demand for additional tuition would be due to the low supply of places in higher education in Hong Kong, creating competitions among students (Fung, 2003). For example, Fung mentioned that over 150,000 students participated in the HKCEE and HKALE in 2009, but the merit-based university places could only cater up to 18% of the local students, with a prioritization on students with good academic grades, plus some places reserved for international students. Parents then progressively worry for their children’s education, resulting in paying for multiple tuitions for a peace of mind. Taking *King’s Glory Education* as an example, a renowned tutorial centre in Hong Kong, its website’s vision page says, ‘meet your child’s actual needs’ and ‘grasp exam skills in a short time’ (Cited from KGE). It illustrates their specialized teaching plan and focus on getting good exam grades, which is often what attracts parents. These private tuition institutions that are examination-oriented acquire their own set of pedagogic characteristics, such as approaching language courses with ‘formulas’ to tackle exam questions (Koh, 2014).

Besides nurturing students’ academic knowledge, some parents said that private tutors could also enhance children’s cultural capital. Cultural capital, as illustrated by Bourdieu (1984), is an economic and social capital that ‘can be saved, transmitted, invested and used to obtain other resources.’ Examination skills and knowledge passed on by tutors will be acquired as cultural capital that can be invested into future

occupational choices and obtain economical outcomes in the future when situated in professional workplaces (De Graaf et al., 2000). As some private tutor centres provide certificates for students' achievements, it could be served as cultural capital in gaining societal credentials with relevant certificates and degrees (Kwok, 2004), a form of education investment that fulfils the 'desire of betterment' (Rich & DeVitis, 1992), as most workplaces value credible references when reviewing potential employees.

Holistic education in Hong Kong's context

Hong Kong's meritocratic system has a high concern for achievement, judging one's ability through public examination results. However, even though academic grades seem to be of utmost importance to most parents, holistic education also has a certain level of influence to parents' choice of schooling for their children. In a research on parental preference on primary school selection in Hong Kong, it is found that the biggest criterion for most parents is the child's happiness, and that academic excellence is relative to the holistic development of the school (Chan & Yeung, 2017). The Education Commission (EC) of Hong Kong has stated in their reform proposal of the education system their aims of education for the 21st century:

To enable every person to attain all-round development in the domains of ethics, intellect, physique, social skills and aesthetics according to his/her own attributes so that he/she is capable of life-long learning, critical and exploratory thinking, innovating and adapting to change;... (2000, p. 30)

It is evident that Hong Kong's education philosophy strives for holistic education and intends to showcase that value in school curriculums. Holistic education can be defined in many ways: Rinke (1985) defines holistic education as "a functional moderm of education that focuses on teaching-learning strategies"; Hare (2010) defines holistic education as "an organization of beliefs and principles that share family resemblance". As this study focuses more on the broader spectrum of holism in education and the recognition of individuality through his/her educational experience, Miller's definition of holistic education has been chosen for this research, which states it as:

A philosophy of education based on the premise that each person finds identity, meaning, and purpose in life through connections to the community, to the natural world, and to spiritual values such as compassion and peace.

Holistic education aims to call forth from young people an intrinsic reverence for life and a passionate love of learning. (2000, par. 2)

This definition is particularly useful for my study as it recognizes the importance of being a part of the community and the natural world, developing spiritual values, and cultivating a passionate love of learning, which is helpful for the comparative analysis on the educational philosophy of the three institutions in the latter part of this paper. Many scholars recognize the benefits of holistic education, yet Hong Kong's recent education trends have shown to be stepping away from holism. This definition will be used as the basis of this study to investigate whether the three institutions have achieved a certain level of holistic education and remark on the differences in their philosophies that make up the contrast.

Research gap

With literature review, information on the education philosophies in Hong Kong can be extracted from past researches and data. What the literature review lacks is the investigation on tutorial centres' and private tutors' teaching pedagogies through authentic communication with the teachers, in addition to a qualitative comparison between how the philosophy of education of a mainstream schoolteacher, a tutorial centre teacher, and a private tutor respond to the needs of providing holistic education. Based on the research gap identified, a research is done to fill out the research gap. This study can close the research gaps and additionally delve into the topics more intimately through conducting personal interviews with a mainstream schoolteacher, a tutorial centre teacher, and a private tutor on their individual thoughts and experiences, which will then be further analysed with supporting sources in the discussion chapter. The research design of the study will be illustrated in the subsequent section.

3. Research design

This chapter will illustrate the design of the research through expounding the methodology in detail with information of the participants, collection of comparative and qualitative data, plus the application of transcription and content analysis for analysis of data.

Methodology

In this study, qualitative data was the primary source of data for data analysis in the later stage. As this study is based on people's attitudes and comments on the subject, quantitative data was not necessary. Qualitative data helps classify and interpret linguistic material to derive implicit and explicit meanings, which can be both subjective and social (Flick, 2013), and is helpful for this study to understand phenomena that are not illustrated on the surface level. Flick added that the reason why qualitative data is useful to education is because it helps to describe an event in greater detail, plus identifying the conditions with explanations or theories to substantiate the belief.

After obtaining the qualitative data, a comparative study was conducted. A comparative study involves the search for similarities and differences, in hopes to achieve greater awareness plus a broader understanding about the reality of the subjects (Khakpour, 2012), in this case comparing and contrasting the reality of mainstream schools, tutorial centres and private tutorials. Comparative studies are beneficial to evaluate the perspectives of the educators, so that the roles of the institutions can be more vividly represented with comparison. Researchers in comparative education hold a strong belief in the significance of the cultural and social contexts the subjects are in (Bray et al., 2006). This research took into account the Hong Kong context the three institutions are situated in while conducting the study to better understand the phenomenon.

Participants

The participants of this study were a mainstream schoolteacher, a tutorial centre teacher, and a private tutor in Hong Kong (See table 3.1). As the main criterion for participating in this study is to have a good familiarity with the job nature, all three participants were required to have at least two years of experience in the role of an educator. The three participants were recruited through educational contexts. All participation were voluntary, and the issues of confidentiality were clearly mentioned before the start of the interviews. Each participant was given an information sheet with the aim and potential risks of the research clearly stated, and have given their consent to participate in the study on the basis of anonymity. The following table shows the participants' relevant information to the study.

Table 3.1 – *Participants' personal information*

	Participant 1 – Mainstream schoolteacher	Participant 2 – Tutorial centre teacher	Participant 3 – Private tutor

Names	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C
Years of experience in role	2 years	3 years	5 years
Major teaching subject	English	English	English
Employment type	Full-time	Part-time	Freelance
Major in tertiary education	Education	Translation	Journalism

Data collection

To collect qualitative data, the method of interviewing was selected as the basis of data compilation. The purpose of interview is illustrated by Cohen et al (2011): in the context of life, it could evaluate a person in different aspects; test or develop hypotheses; gather data and sample interviewees' opinions and responses. Interviews are useful in a way that prompt follow-up questions in respondents for a deeper knowledge of the subject matter. Tuckman (1972) stated that interviews allow access to 'inside a person's head' through understanding their knowledge, values and attitudes. Interviews are also seen as an explanatory device when a conclusion is trying to be reached, or when hoping to validate a theory with substantial evidence (Kerlinger, 1970). As this study requires an in-depth understanding of the teachers' attitudes and values, conducting interviews would be a sufficient method to acquire data from participants.

The mode of interview was one-to-one semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. Interactional face-to-face exchanges of dialogue were needed to extract more useful information out of each respondent, also to make them feel more comfortable. Co-productions between the researcher and interviewees were created (Mason, 2002), constructing meanings through a flexible mode of interaction. It was chosen to be semi-structured with a set of pre-written questions, so that the interviews can flow as a conversation with spontaneous follow-up questions. The style was relatively informal, with no rigid answer format, performing 'conversations with a purpose' (Burgess, 1984). The use of open-ended questions achieved higher flexibility, also establishing rapport between the participants to have a more accurate assessment (Cohen et al., 2011). Funnelling questions were asked to start the interviews, followed up by probing questions to further analyze their first response, then narrowing down to more specific and favorable information (Cohen et al., 2011).

Some categorizing (biographical and thematic) questions were asked, such as questions related to their experiences in their specific roles, knowledge questions on the teaching pedagogies, and feeling questions about their attitudes and philosophical values toward their respective jobs (Spradley, 1979).

The interviews took place in educational settings (e.g. schools and libraries), with each interview lasting for 30 to 40 minutes. The interviews were all recorded for the purpose of transcription, which will be remained confidential.

Data analysis

In the data analysis stage, transcription was first carried out. The major data analysis approach was content analysis, that is the researcher's interpretive analysis of the qualitative data collected (Huma & Nayeem, 2017). Content analysis can analyze written and verbal communication messages, which was conducted after the interview e.g. studying the transcription (Cole, 1988). By utilizing content analysis, useful contents were filtered from the transcripts to make meaningful conclusions.

Krippendorff (1980) asserted that content analysis can provide new insights and relevant facts to an already-present phenomenon to further prove its validity and give a more condensed description. The data was analyzed in two ways: by individuals and by research questions. Cohen et al. (2011) expressed that those two ways can keep individual's coherence and integrity, also collate all the data to provide a collective data, efficiently conducting the data analysis process to answer the research questions. Patterns, relationships and possible comparisons were drawn more effectively with the help of grouping similar data together.

Over the course of five to six months, three major themes were identified from the data analysed in content analysis. The three themes will be further elaborated on in the proceeding chapter.

4. Results

Through content analysis, three major themes were identified after the transcription of the interviews that were each 30-40 minutes long. The three themes are the institutions' teaching pedagogies, the values and philosophy of learning, and the alignment with holistic learning. As the three recurring themes were found to be most prominent after the analysis, they will be examined in three sections in this chapter.

Tutorial centres' and private tutors' pedagogical approaches in teaching

Before studying the results of the interviews, a brief understanding of the nature of the three institutions is essential to explain the phenomena (See table 4.1). It is apparent that mainstream schools hold the biggest class size, with over 25 students in each class, whereas tutorial centres and private tutors often employ small class teaching with a maximum of 6 students. All three institutions base their teaching on EDB's curriculum and use it as a foundation.

Table 4.1 – *Nature of the three institutions*

	Mainstream schools	Tutorial centres	Private tutorials
Class size	25-30 students	4-6 students	1 student
Curriculum	EDB's curriculum		

Individualized teaching to students' specific needs

From the interviews, it is found that tutorial centre teachers and private tutors enjoy small class teaching and the abundance of time to prepare materials and lesson plans, which allow the teachers/tutors to cater to different individual cases of students with their own special needs.

We can also make individualised materials for students who have special needs in, for example help with specific grammar items. (Teacher B, tutorial centre teacher)

If my kid is weak with Present Continuous tense and it's going to come up on the exam, I would print out some worksheets online about tenses during that month. Or if it's about Christmas, then I'll just print out some vocabularies about Christmas or worksheets of the four skills on the topic of Christmas. (Teacher C, private tutor)

In tutorial centres and private tutorials, teachers can customise their teaching materials to suit children's needs, such as preparing worksheets on a certain tense for the upcoming exam, or something that the student is weak in. Learning schedules and topics are specifically planned for the child. Whereas in mainstream schools, where one teacher may be responsible for many big classes at the same time, they may not have enough manpower or time to cater to every each one of their students.

Incorporation of alternative teaching styles and materials

A contrast can be found between mainstream schools and tutorial centres or private tutors in terms of their teaching styles and materials.

There is not a lot of material making as we reuse materials for the past few years, the curriculum doesn't change much. We get familiarized with the same school-based materials, same unit books, and teachers sometimes share PowerPoints they made. (Teacher A, mainstream schoolteacher)

In mainstream schools, most classes are conducted in lecture style where communication is limited, with a rigid curriculum and the reusing of teaching materials. However, tutorial centres and private tutorials seem to adopt alternative teaching styles and materials to assist teaching.

I also handle admin work and definitely prepare materials, which are for example, phonics cards, vocabulary cards, supplementary worksheets, etc. (Teacher B, tutorial centre teacher)

It's very flexible for me, I don't have much of a syllabus to follow. I would prep some games or role plays for my lessons, because I want them to work on their oral skills. (Teacher C, private tutor)

Table 4.2 – *Alternative teaching styles and materials in additional tutorials*

Tutorial centres	Phonics flashcards, vocabulary flashcards, scenario-setting, supplementary worksheets
Private tutors	Role-plays, games, conversations

As mentioned by Teacher B and Teacher C, additional tutorials often employ various teaching methods with the application of alternative materials to assist teaching (Table 4.2). Tutorial centres may create cards to teach phonics and vocabularies to students of a younger age, whereas private tutors may employ more interactive methods to teaching, such as using modes of games or role-plays to imitate language learning. Mainstream schools adopt a more traditional teaching style, through reusing same unit books and old PowerPoints, which can be seen as a more conventional style of teaching. Although mainstream schools may also provide supplementary materials, they rely primarily on traditional textbook-teaching. These tools that are commonly

used in tutorial centres and private tutorials are found to be effective in boosting academic excellence.

Tactical learning

In additional tutorials, especially tutorial centres, students are taught ‘tactics’ that could be useful for examinations or tests. These tactics could vary from meticulous steps in answering multiple choice questions, or specific wordings that could gain you higher marks. Tutorial centre teacher, Teacher B, extensively talked about the use of tips and tricks to answering tricky questions.

We teach them tactics/tricks, for example how to do well in multiple choice questions, how not to lose marks easily ... there are also a lot of past papers and mock papers that we would use at our institution ... the ideas become embedded in their heads with repetitive practice of the tricks we teach them.
(Teacher B, tutorial centre teacher)

Besides understanding the tips and tricks to tackling common questions, repetitiveness is also key. Students will then be given past papers and mock papers to repetitively practice the tricks taught to them, so they could get better marks in future school examinations.

The three institutions’ goals and objectives

Through studying the three educators’ teaching pedagogy closely, we can start to see a pattern and understand their differences in values and philosophy of education most prominently reflected in their workplace environments.

Building well-rounded students in mainstream schools

It can be understood that mainstream schoolteachers have a high regard for developing well-roundedness rather than purely pursue academic excellence in students. In mainstream schools, teachers focus on shaping students’ learning attitudes and values, and mold them into good models by teaching students different life skills (See table 4.3). Developing well-roundedness are done through good communication with parents on children’s progress, and recognizing more forms of learning and achievements, such as sports and arts.

My main goal is to have a positive impact on the kids I'm teaching, through shaping their values and learning attitudes ... Regular PTA meetings are conducted so parents could learn about their children's progress and make up-to-date adjustments ... We build well-rounded students by giving them classes that are not just academic-related, but also sports-related or arts-related.
(Teacher A, mainstream schoolteacher)

Teacher A also mentioned a particular trait that her school displays:

Another thing our school cares about is having good reputation for achievements, which is something our school tried to maintain. (Teacher A, mainstream schoolteacher)

Even though mainstream schools pay attention to their reputations, such as sports achievements, this can also be interpreted as an encouragement of other forms of learning. It is apparent that their utmost value and underlying philosophy of education is to enrich students' good values and nourish them into respectable future learners.

Table 4.3 – *Values and philosophy of education exhibited in mainstream schools*

	Institution goals for students	Institution goals for itself	Philosophy of education
Mainstream school teacher	Importance on shaping students' values and attitudes - Cultivating personal growth and relevant life skills	Better school reputation - Sports or arts achievements as statistical records	Building well-rounded students

High profit motive in exam-oriented tutorial centres

There are many proofs that tutorial centres do indeed improve students academically in getting better grades. However, tutorial centres are often profit-driven and do not have a strong philosophy for education.

Our centre is getting-good-grades oriented. It's not really to improve on students' general knowledge on the subject, but mostly skills on answering

questions related to that topics so they show improvements in their exams.
(Teacher B, tutorial centre teacher)

In addition, she added that the clientele is a priority in her tutorial centre:

One of our goals is to try to get more clients because it's definitely a business to earn money. So, we want to try to make the parents happy. With more clients, the boss will be happy... We use our students' academic achievements and records as marketing material to get the parents to put their trust in us as a tutorial centre. (Teacher B, tutorial centre teacher)

Tutorial centres' philosophy of education can be seen as exam-oriented, but its main incentive is to collect good statistics of students with satisfactory results to attract customers, customers being students and parents, so that the centre could make monetary profits (See table 4.4). With the nature of the operation of tutorial centres being so intensive and in-depth in developing exam skills, parents will be satisfied with the service, thus maintaining the survival of the industry.

Table 4.4 – *Values and philosophy of education exhibited in tutorial centres*

	Institution goals for students	Institution goals for itself	Philosophy of education
Tutorial centre teacher	Getting good grades - Exam-oriented ✕ General knowledge of the subject ⓘ How to answer exam questions	Attract more students/parents with satisfactory results - Compete with other tutorial centres - Students = Clients	Exam-oriented and high profit motive

Motivational learning by private tutors

Private tutors' main goal is commonly believed to be improving students' certain skills (e.g. English reading) as requested by their parents. According to the interview with a private tutor, Teacher C, she stated that even though complying with parents' needs is important, their philosophy of education in the classroom is often to increase students' intrinsic motivation in learning through private tutor's teaching (See table 4.5).

Usually, parents tell me what aspects or skills their child is lacking in ... I think private tutorials do help in a way especially if they have questions that they don't dare ask in school. They won't feel embarrassed asking a stupid question, and this could in turn prompt them to ask more questions. Most private tutors conduct classes in homes where students feel more comfortable, so it gives them a comfortable space to be themselves. (Teacher C, private tutor)

Since private tutors mostly conduct their classes at the students' homes, it creates a 'safe space' for students to learn, thus expressing themselves more comfortably by asking more questions during 1-on-1 class time (e.g. personal weaknesses), something that is hard to do during big classes at school. The nature of private tutorials works in students' favour. Through that, students may intrinsically have a growing desire to learn and 'know' things as they feel more comfortable and confident with their private tutors.

Table 4.5 – *Values and philosophy of education exhibited by private tutors*

	Institution goals for students	Institution goals for itself	Philosophy of education
Private tutor	Improve on students' particular set of skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Catering towards parents' needs (E.g. Oral/Reading) 	Build confidence in students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing a comfortable space for learning (E.g. Home) - Allow easier expression of themselves (E.g. individual weaknesses) 	Developing intrinsic motivation in learning

The three institutions' alignment with holistic learning

As mentioned in my literature review, I will be using Ron Miller's three criteria of holistic learning to analyse the three institutions' alignment with holistic learning, which are 1) connecting to the community and natural world, 2) developing spiritual values, and 3) cultivating a love of learning.

Mainstream schools: Assimilation into society through shaping of values and learning attitudes

Mainstream schools engender holistic learning majorly through shaping students' values and learning attitudes, which are purposeful for their assimilation into society in the future.

School is essentially their second home. We as educators, are there to correct their everyday mistakes and turn them to be their better selves. These can all be done during lessons, during recess, or anytime there is communication between teachers and students, and there are often plenty. (Teacher A, mainstream schoolteacher)

In addition, relevant social and life skills are practiced in school activities:

Personal growth is highly valued, and that includes social skills, life skills, how to overcome obstacles in life. They do participate in activities related to social service, such as beach cleaning. (Teacher A, mainstream schoolteacher)

As mainstream schools often take the most time out of students' day, students spend a lot of time with their teachers. Mainstream schoolteachers ingrain the right mindsets in students through their daily behaviours and aim to turn students into better versions of themselves. Knowledge of social and life skills are also practiced through communication between students and teachers, plus the implementation of community service activities, which are useful tools for assimilation into the society.

Tutorial centres: Lacks meaningful learning and spiritual development

As tutorial centres solely aim to help students achieve good academic grades, they may neglect other forms of learning and spiritual development, lacking meaningful learning that aids personal growth.

Our tutorial centre just focuses on students' academic abilities and in getting better grades. We can't focus on teaching moral values or anything like that, simply because we have no time, no space and no context ... It's not really out of their true passion for the knowledge or the true understanding of the subject. A student is getting good grades because he or she was trained to do that, and not really because they understand the subject. (Teacher B, tutorial centre teacher)

The aspirations tutorial centre teachers have for students can be seen as majorly academical with a heavy focus on getting good grades. As class times are often short, parents often demand a high amount of content unpackaging in every single class, so there is no time, space, or context for other forms of learning e.g. spiritual values. Corrections by teachers that are outside the scope of academic learning are deemed unnecessary, especially by parents, so lesson contents are often strictly academic-related.

Private tutorials: Provoking interest and passion for learning through different means

To assist in students' learning, private tutors may employ ways to provoke their interest and love of learning for the subject as a mean to improve students' abilities.

I try to use different methods and topics that surround their daily life. I used the movie *Frozen* one time to explain concepts to a little girl ... I don't like preparing students for exams, it's mundane, I would much rather make the students love what they are learning. (Teacher C, private tutor)

Furthermore, she illustrated how her bonding experience with students bolstered their learning:

I always tell my kids, it's okay to make mistakes. Although these conversations may sound trivial, I actually create a relationship with them, and this is important because they can learn to trust you, and they would be more willing to express themselves in front of you. (Teacher C, private tutor)

The flexibility in teaching style allows the tutor to apply everyday life topics into discussions. Teaching methods are not rigid (e.g. Adoption of games), tutors may stimulate students' interest in learning the specific subject with methods that are not common in other learning settings. Moreover, private tutors can develop close and intimate relationships with students through 1-on-1 conversations, so students would be more willing to express themselves through mistakes and become more open-minded about learning with the help of a familiar tutor, which could in turn cultivate their passion for knowledge.

From the collected data, it is apparent that tutorial centres and private tutorials employ alternative methods that are effectual in delivering academic excellence through

providing individualized classes and using other language learning materials. It also reflects the differences in the three institutions' philosophy of education, along with their alignment with holistic learning. Mainstream schools focus on building well-rounded students to assist with assimilation into society, tutorial centres lack meaningful learning and are profit-driven, and private tutorials tend to promote motivational learning and provoke students' interest in the subject. In the following chapter, the results will be interpreted and backed up by sources from relevant researches to form a conclusive discussion.

5. Discussion

From the three themes identified in the results chapter, although this is a small study, the implications of the results could impact education substantially. There are also important takeaways to be established from this research project that will be elaborated on in this following chapter, which are the rationales behind tutorial centres' and private tutorials' achievement of academic excellence through their teaching pedagogies, the values and philosophy of education of the three institutions, and how the three institutions align with holistic learning.

Rationales behind how tutorial centres' and private tutorials' teaching pedagogy bring forth academic excellence

Tutorial centres and private tutorials have long been recognized by many parents as a way to help their children achieve academic excellence. From the interviews, it can be understood that the rationales behind the phenomenon are the employment of small class teaching, alternative teaching methods and materials, and tactical learning.

Small class teaching allows teachers to create meaningful and quality conversations with students individually as there are less students to cater to. Teacher B stated that they make 'individualised materials' that helps students tackle their specific weaknesses in the subject, which can only be made possible with small-class teaching. Davies (2003) asserted that small class teaching not only gives students more individual time with the teacher, it also reduces incidences of unproductive class time, such as disturbances or classroom management issues. In mainstream schools where there are more than 20 students in a classroom, many problems may occur at the same time, making it difficult for teachers to cater to individual needs. Therefore, whole-class approaches may have to be implemented to increase class productivity in mainstream schools. By reducing the class size and increasing the proportion of

teachers and students, more effort can be put into each student, increasing their personal abilities and allowing more time to be invested in every student (Tang & Wu, 2013). Smith et al. (2001) found out that there is a positive correlation between the amount of teacher-student interaction and students' test scores, which illustrates how small class teaching could bring rise to academic excellence through having a more intensive and individualized learning environment.

Another justification is the utilisation of alternative teaching styles and materials. Mainstream schools mostly employ lecture-style teaching, where the teacher mostly speaks in an authoritative manner with students listening. It is said that lecture-style textbook-based teachings are efficient as it requires less time to plan and attend to different teaching strategies (Kauchak & Eggen, 1988). In tutorial centres and private tutorials however, teaching through games, role-plays, flashcards, etc., are often utilised to improve students' achievements. Lee (1979) stated that teaching methods like games are effective enablers for young students to learn languages naturally instead of grasping different rules consciously. They can often immediately speak the correct form in the context of a game, and can allow students to acquire new inputs rapidly as it can lower young learners' anxiety (Richard-Amato, 1988). Other forms of learning, such as the use of flashcards, was also proven to be effective in teaching vocabulary comprehension through serving as a visual aid to increase attention span and expand vocabulary banks (Titin & Venska, 2018), which is an important tool in many language exams.

In addition, tutorial centres employ a teaching method that involves the learning of 'tactics', where students use tricks and tactics to answer exam questions, which are not commonly taught in mainstream schools. In many exams around the world, like the CSAT, they encourage different kinds of skillsets, such as memorization skills to tackle multiple choices (Kim, 2004). These test-taking skills, that are not taught in mainstream schools, ensure high accuracy and the completion of tests or exams under limited time. Tutorial centres in Hong Kong offer courses related to exam skills, such as "extensive examination preparation courses", "mock exam courses", etc. (Zheng et al., 2018). Past papers and mock papers are also extensively used in tutorial centres to familiarize students with relevant tricks and tactics practiced in the centre, so that they can become adept with the terminologies and the style used commonly in exams (Du Boulay, 2011).

Values and philosophy of education reflected in the three institutions

Despite the common goal of improving students' academic abilities, the three institutions exhibit different set of values and philosophy of education reflected in their teaching pedagogies and workplace environments. Mainstream schools are found to have a high regard for promoting character development; tutorial centres are found to be more profit-driven and exam-oriented; and private tutorials are found to be keen believers in developing students' sense of achievements (See table 5.1).

Mainstream schools' philosophy of education is greatly emphasized on character development. A survey found that almost 98% of schools have school-wide approaches of character development, through means of day-to-day operations (e.g. assemblies) and extra-curricular activities (Marshall et al., 2017). With the various activities students encounter at school, multiple aspects of character development can be cultivated into well-roundedness, such as useful traits of leadership, self-esteem, or even achievements related to sports and arts. Mills, a lecturer in education, described school as a place to shape students' social identities as schools provide programmes that influences how they think and choose (2016), making students better human beings and their actions predictable. In addition, mainstream schools encourage the building of parent-teacher relationships for benefits of the child, as the establishing of shared beliefs can be positive to children's schooling and adaptation to a school (Clarke et al., 2009). As teacher A stated, mainstream schoolteachers focus on 'teaching students how to grow as a person', the implementations of character development in mainstream schools can illustrate their firm belief in the importance of character building through strengthening well-roundedness in students.

Tutorial centres, are mostly profit-driven and exam-oriented in their philosophy of education. Although tutorial centres do improve students' academic abilities significantly, it is hard to omit the fact that it is still a booming industry that has a strong motive to make profits. Liu (2010) believed that tutorial centres have turned education into a 'commodity', slowly disregarding the moral values of education. One of the Hong Kong tutors mentioned "I care about my performance in the tutorial centre because I regard my students as customers." (Tseng, 1998). As it is completely voluntary for students to go to tutorial centres, tutorial centres would be seen as a service provider, hoping to maintain good flow of students to enhance profit-making. The key ingredient to tutorial centres' service are examinations (Popa, 2003). Without examinations, majority of parents and students would not have a reason to attend additional tutorial classes. Therefore, exam-oriented courses are provided to attract parents, and this is done through vigorous marketing and advertising of the centre's academic success through leaflets, posters, etc. (Bray, 1999). This reflects tutorial

centres' low regard for educational philosophies as they dominantly serve for monetary purposes.

Private tutorials have a different approach in teaching: Private tutors value students' sense of achievement and philosophize accomplishment through self-efficacy. Through providing a comfortable space for learning, students become more open and confident with expressing oneself. Weaker learners can keep up with their school peers' progress through private tutoring at home, and that in turn cultivates into a sense of achievement (Bray & Lykins, 2012), a feeling of success from getting additional help. Pajares & Britner (2006) expressed that private tutoring brings forth self-efficacy, which is useful in helping learners set personal goals. They also added that students' self-efficacy are developed through social persuasion, which is the continuous moral and academic feedback/support given to students by their private tutors. Through developing self-efficacy, students will become more intrinsically motivated to learn, exhibiting traits of a positive learner, thus getting closer to achieving success.

Table 5.1 – *Description of the three institutions' values and philosophy of education*

Mainstream schools	Tutorial centres	Private tutorials
Promote character development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation of well-rounded activities 	Profit-driven <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Booming industry - Students are clients Exam-oriented <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exams are the key ingredient to tutorial centres' service 	Developing sense of achievement and self-efficacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Positive learning environment and social persuasion

Holistic learning in mainstream schools, tutorial centres, and private tutorials

Using Ron Miller's definition of holistic education (2000), it can be deduced that mainstream schools hold a high regard for holistic learning, tutorial centres have a low regard for holistic learning, and private tutorials do somewhat hold regard for holistic learning.

To a high extent, mainstream schools promote holistic learning (See figure 5.1). Mainstream schools provide students with knowledge of life and social skills for future assimilation into society. With relevant knowledge provided in their day-to-day

operation, learners learn to function and survive in new contexts that they have to inevitably face once they graduate from schooling (Harasim, 2012). Classes such as life education are implemented by the EDB into school's curriculums to hope that it could educate students to cope with adversity and nurture good outlooks on life (Legislative Council, 2018), which promotes immersion and connection with the community and natural world. Teacher A mentioned that schools serve as students' 'second home', and is a place where they can learn to be their better selves. They believe that they have a duty in promoting students' moral and spiritual development (White et al., 2017), which encourages children to acquire a moral compass on how to demonstrate positive traits. In addition, mainstream schools exhibit low restraint on the definition of learning by welcoming many forms to build well-rounded students. Davidson & Goldberg (2009) mentioned that schools allow the "sharing of ideas and learning from a worldwide community", so students can experience different outcomes of learning. The education reform proposal by the Education Commission (2000) also stated that they hope to focus on all-round development. Students of different abilities will then be reinforced to exceed their maximum potential on their strong suit, which could then cultivate a love of learning.

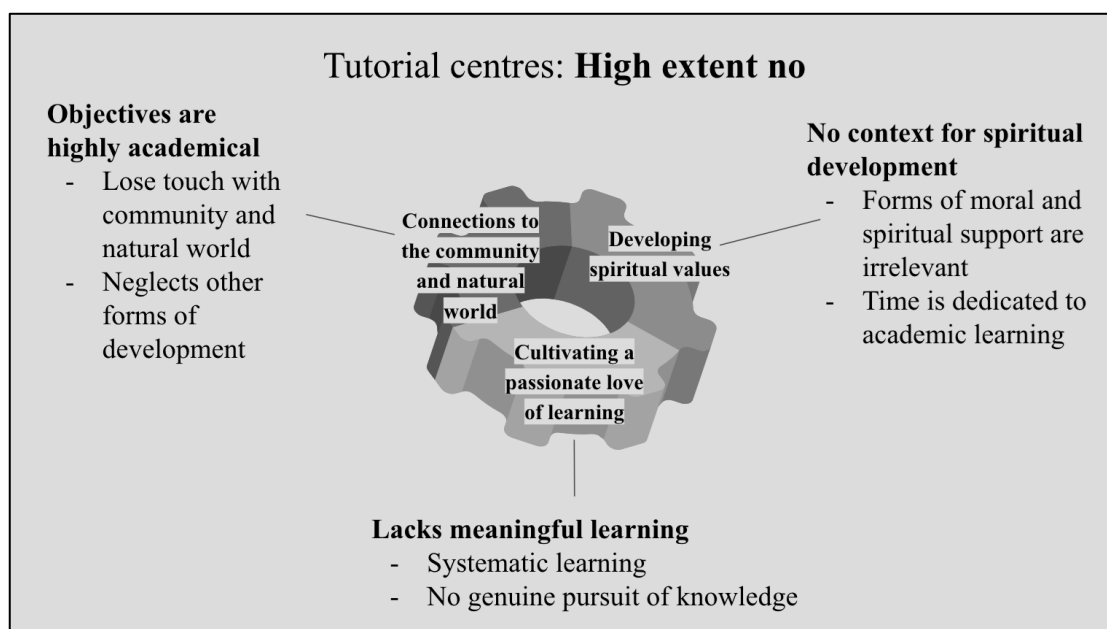
Figure 5.1 – *Holistic learning reflected in mainstream schools*



To a high extent, tutorial centres do not promote holistic learning (See figure 5.2). Bray (1999) put forth that tutorial centres only seek to improve students' performance in the school-taught subjects, such as English and Mathematics. With the highly intensified classes on academic knowledge, other forms of learning would be

neglected. Students lose touch with the community and natural world as they are often brainwashed by the knowledge acquired from tutorial centres. A research done by Bray showed that students spend at least 8 hours a week on additional tutorials during exam periods (2013), which may shift students' focus heavily onto academical aspects. When tutorial centre teachers employ other ways of teaching that involve spiritual development (e.g. expression of oneself), parents often find it 'time-consuming and ineffective' (Ho, 2010), so tutorial centre teachers normally resort back to ways of tactical learning or exam papers drilling. There are often no context and no time for moral and spiritual support, as it defeats the purpose of attending a tutorial centre. Moreover, tutorial centre teaching lacks meaningful learning. Hussein (1987) pointed out that tutoring creates a great lack of interest for learning. The systematic approaches of teaching exhibited in tutorial centres could lower students' passion for learning as it is mostly focused on passing examinations. As teacher B said, students do not 'improve on their general knowledge on the subject', but mostly skills on how to gain marks in exams. Tutorial centres ignore whole-person development and focuses on skills to do well in exams, so students may lose a genuine pursuit of knowledge (Liu, 2010), and that does not align with the bringing forth of holistic education.

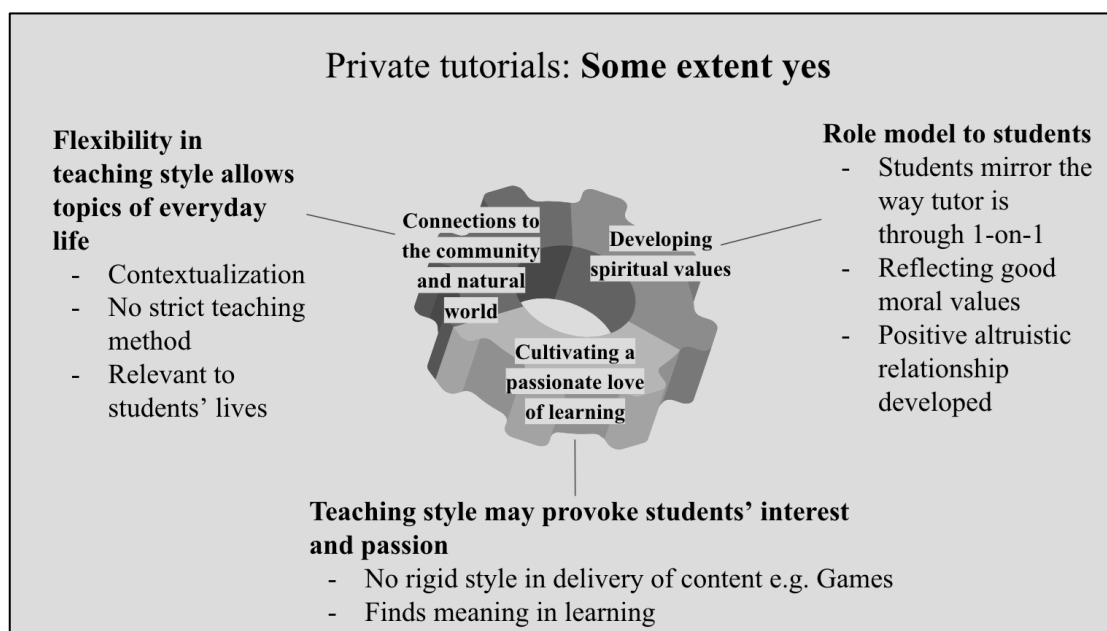
Figure 5.2 – *Holistic learning reflected in tutorial centres*



To a certain extent, private tutors exhibit holistic learning in their teaching (See figure 5.3). As private tutors are mostly flexible in their teaching, they often utilize everyday topics in their teaching to create relevance for students to relate to. Rivet & Krajcik

(2008) suggested that contextualization, that is the use of situations or events that occur outside of classrooms as a means of education, is a great way to motivate and guide concepts to students. The use of real world problems and examples could personally create meaning for students, which provides them knowledge of the community and natural world in an indirect way, such as using children movies or daily life topics as examples to assist learning, as mentioned by teacher C (The use of the movie *Frozen*). This could also provoke students' interest and passion for learning through finding meaning in what they learn. Foondun (2002) illustrates tutors as someone unconstrained by the labelling of the school system, and someone who could provide students with self-confidence and meaning in learning through giving maximum attention individually. Through individualization, students are able to find joy in learning through the flexible ways of a private tutor's teaching, such as games. Games with rules and structures are a common method in private tutorials, and it is said to provide learners enjoyment and pleasure, where they have voluntary passionate involvement in learning (Prensky, 2011). Another approach private tutors put forward holistic learning is through being role models to students. The close and intimate relationship between the tutor and student is often altruistic in nature, and through the closeness of the relationship, private tutors are able to comment on students' moral attitudes and disciplinary knowledge in class (Ho, 2010). For example, student's tone of speaking or personality can be corrected by private tutor during 1-on-1 sessions. Bell (2007) mentioned that students often mirror the way teachers are through close relationships, and so a student could mimic the moral values private tutors have reflected on him/her, and through that cultivate good values and spiritual development. That being said, every private tutor must first acquire good moral values for it to be transferred to students holistically.

Figure 5.3 – *Holistic learning reflected in private tutorials*



In this chapter, supporting claims from scholars filled the research gap of my research sufficiently by substantiating claims and findings from my interviews. The discussion displays significant evidence that backed up the interviewees' claims on their particular roles in the institutions, showing that small-class teaching with the application of alternative teaching materials in tutorial centres and private tutorials are proven to bring forth academic excellence; secondly, each institution carries a different set of values and philosophy of education, showing a noteworthy discussion that mainstream schools promote well-roundedness, tutorial centres are mostly profit-driven, and private tutorials encourage motivational learning; lastly, illustrating how each specific teaching role promotes holistic learning, with mainstream schools being the most aligned with providing holistic education. This chapter will be followed by a concluding chapter of the research paper, along with limitations that were factored in my study.

6. Conclusion

With the rise in demand for additional tutorials, it grasps educators' attention in studying the trend and rationale behind such phenomenon. As Lawrence (2012) mentioned, many parents rely on additional tutorials for help as they are not satisfied with mainstream schooling, which is an interesting finding that should be studied into. The aim of the research is to analyse the teaching pedagogy and philosophy of education of tutorial centres and private tutors to understand the rise in popularity of the 'shadow education system'. The bigger aim of the research is to investigate the

three institutions align with providing holistic education, which is important to all learners as holistic education aims to transform every person into the finest and best versions of themselves (Forbes, 2003). This research provides a more in-depth understanding of the nature of mainstream schools, tutorial centres, and private tutors through conducting interviews with educators, and filling in the research gap from the findings by analysing it with further supporting claims from scholars.

Undoubtedly, tutorial centres and private tutorials bring forth academic excellence with individualized teaching. However, the three institutions exhibited differences in goals and objectives that reflect their philosophy of learning, which may align with or disrupt holistic learning. Mainstream schools focus on building well-rounded students and accent on the shaping of students' moral values holistically, through teaching students how to survive in new contexts and the worldwide community. Tutorial centres lack meaningful learning, and are commonly exam-oriented with a profit-driven motive, which neglect other aspects of personal growth and holistic development one must acquire before immersing into the society. Private tutors, come closer to providing holistic learning by serving as role models and motivators who provide students with the necessary academic and spiritual support.

To conclude, holistic learning is crucial to learners for the immersion into the society, development of spiritual values, and the cultivation of love of learning, which are greatly reflected in the practice of mainstream schools, and somewhat reflected in private tutorials. Due to the nature of tutorial centres, holistic learning may not be as easily put forth as their objectives are different. Nonetheless, educators are obligated to provide students good moral values for personal growth and the passion to become lifelong learners that promote a sense of a whole person connected with his/her surrounding environment (Miller, 2004). Therefore, it is essential to address the gaps found in different teaching approaches, and reform learning to cultivate holistic learners.

Although the participant group in this research project is small, there are some very important findings of data and themes that may influence education and how educators in different education settings view their own philosophy of education and holistic teaching. In future research, acquiring a bigger participant group could prove very useful to add to these themes and perhaps influence schools' policies and mission statements, also regarding how future educators can be trained. A more comprehensive research could also be done if students' opinions on the three institutions were sought out as well with relevant personal experiences as support,

providing more in-depth information of the participants to back up claims (Ho, 2006). However, there are still some valuable ideas and findings that can be identified from this study and serve as a reflection for future work. The next step would be to conduct a bigger research project, and perhaps it could modify how 1-on-1 tutorials and tutorial centres approach education, becoming more in-line with the holistic mainstream education.

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