The Face of Private Tutoring in Russia: evidence from online marketing by private tutors

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ABSTRACT Private tutoring is a common and worldwide phenomenon. However, there is a dearth of up-to-date research on private tutoring compared with that on institutional one-to-one teaching, which could be explained by challenges associated with data collection. This article proposes using publicly available online advertisements of private tutors as a method of acquiring data on private tutoring practices. It describes a two-stage study which employed this technique to investigate private tutoring practices in Moscow city. The first stage of the study looks at the subjects which are commonly offered for tuition in Moscow city, and the second part qualitatively analyses 32 profiles of top-ranking tutors in order to identify potential attributes of a ‘high-ranking’ tutor. The particular focus is made on the demographics and self-presentation style of private tutors in Moscow. The findings show that while the majority of tutoring services in Moscow seem to target school students preparing for the Unified State Examination, the most frequently offered subject is English for Speakers of Other Languages, possibly due to a larger target clientele (both school students and adult learners). Other findings include a difference in self-presentation style between two groups of private tutors: those who offer school-curriculum subjects, and those who tutor foreign languages.

Introduction
Private tutoring is both a common and worldwide phenomenon comparable in scale to institutional teaching (Dang & Rogers, 2008). As will be discussed later in this article, there is no consensus on the social and economic implications of private tutoring practices for individuals and societies at large; therefore more research is needed to learn more about the providers of this service (Silova & Bray, 2006; Southgate, 2009). The lack of research on pedagogy and background of private tutors could be explained partly by the challenges associated with data collection as private tutoring is an unregulated freelance activity. This article proposes using publicly available online classified advertisements of private tutors as a way of acquiring data on private tutoring practices.

In our technological age, many private tutors are establishing a presence by placing information about their services online. Along with placing advertisements on classified webpages, some tutors join ‘aggregator’ websites, designed specifically to assist private tutors in finding clients. These catalogue-style websites enable private individuals to create publicly accessible accounts that include descriptions of a tutor’s background and the prices that they set for their tutoring services. Potential students are able to search the website for a suitable tutor using one or several filtering parameters, such as subject, geographical location, price, etc. The websites charge a fee for their services that is either deducted from the class fee or paid by a tutor and/or a student. This article will use data from two such websites for quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Of particular interest are private tutoring dynamics in Russia: not only is Russia the largest country in the world, but it has also been undergoing a major transformation in its economic and
education sectors. The introduction of standardised examinations for students leaving high school is the most recent reform. The goal of this article is to contribute to the body of research on the international dynamics of private tutoring by identifying what are currently the most popular subjects offered for private tuition in Moscow and investigating the demographics and self-presentation of private tutors in Moscow. The findings of this research will be of interest to educational researchers as well as policy makers.

The article is organised as follows: the next section overviews prior research on private tutoring, its determinants, social and ethic issues associated with private tutoring practices and limitations of prior studies. The section following it considers private tutoring research in Russia and argues for the importance of conducting up-to-date studies. The article continues by describing the methodology and research design of this study, and concludes by presenting and discussing its findings.

A Broad Overview of Prior Research on One-to-one Tutoring

The focus and methodology of research on one-to-one tutoring have been determined to a large degree by whether such instruction takes place in institutional or private contexts. Tutoring within educational institutions such as schools and tertiary settings has mostly inspired observational studies that describe and analyse interactions during one-to-one sessions. The main goals of these studies are to describe the dynamics of different tutorials and to identify strategies employed by tutors and tutees that either help or hinder the learning process (Thonus, 2001; Weigle & Nelson, 2004; Nassaji, 2007; Zdrojkowski, 2007). Research on tutoring outside educational institutions, on the other hand, predominantly consists of survey and questionnaire studies asking school-aged children to report on their participation in private tutoring. The aim of the latter group of studies (henceforth referred to as ‘demographic studies’) seems to be to identify the demographics of students who use the services of private tutors, in order to establish whether there is a relationship between certain variables, such as students’ age, household income and school grades, and a household’s participation in private tutoring.

Scope of Private Tutoring

Private tutoring is held to be a worldwide phenomenon, present in countries with different gross domestic product (GDP) levels. It appears to be especially prominent in Asian and some post-Soviet countries (see Dang & Rogers, 2008; Southgate, 2009; Silova, 2010, for discussion). However, the popularity of private tutoring spreads well beyond Eastern Europe and Asia. Southgate’s (2009) analysis of cross-national factors in ‘shadow education’ (a term commonly used to refer to private tutoring of school-aged students) surveyed 250,000 students from 36 countries, including 21 European states and the UK, Australia, Canada, Brazil and Uruguay, and found that private tutoring exists in all the surveyed nations, with the degree of school students’ participation ranging from 8% to 74%; Norway and Denmark exhibited the lowest participation rates and Greece and Turkey exhibited the highest. According to other estimates, however, the degree of participation might be even higher; Ireson and Rushforth (2005) contend that up to 90% of British school students turn to private tutoring at some point during their studies.

Determinants of Private Tutoring

An important step towards understanding any phenomenon, including private tutoring, is to identify contributing factors. Prior research has offered several predictors of a household’s likelihood to hire a private tutor (Bray & Kwok, 2003; Ireson & Rushforth, 2004; Dang, 2007; de Castro & de Guzman, 2012). Possibly the strongest predictor is the requirement placed on students by the educational system to take standardised examinations on completion of their secondary education. Several studies show that the closer high school students are to a standardised high-stakes assessment, the more likely they are to seek the services of private tutors (Ireson & Rushforth, 2004; Dang, 2007; Elbadawy et al, 2007; Buchmann et al, 2010). The above studies
observe that this trend is consistent across countries, regardless of their socio-economic situation, and they include, for example, the USA, Vietnam, Egypt and the UK.

Another determinant of private tutoring practices may be household income and number of school-aged children in the family: household income is positively correlated with private tutoring activities, while number of children is negatively correlated (Dang, 2007; Southgate, 2009). In other words, the higher the income of a household and the fewer children there are in the family, the more likely a household is to hire a private tutor.

Other factors that may influence the participation in shadow education include a household’s location (urban or rural) and the status of parental employment. Families living in urban areas and households with two working parents seem to employ private tutors more often than rural households or those with only a single gainfully employed parent (Tansel & Bircan, 2006).

On a larger scale, a country’s economy has been linked to the prevalence of private tutoring. Countries with competitive market economies and those in transition have been said to have higher levels of private tutoring than those with planned economies (Silova & Bray, 2006).

Social and Ethical Issues Associated with Private Tutoring

Demographic studies of private tutoring have raised the important debate about the effects of private tutoring on mass education and society in general. Some regard private tutoring as an unavoidable, but also positive, phenomenon occurring in market economies (Popa & Acedo, 2006; Kang, 2007). According to this view, households have the right to exercise their agency with regard to education, and participating in private instruction is one of the ways, along with attending private or selective schools, in which households can express their choice. Another argument in favour of private tutoring is that the availability of private tutor services provides families with a way to meet the remedial or enrichment needs of their children, which potentially increases the human capital of a nation (see Southgate, 2009, for discussion). On the other hand, there are concerns that shadow education may undermine the goal of mass education, which is to provide an equal opportunity to all children, regardless of their socio-economic status (see Dang & Rogers, 2008, for discussion). Private tutoring could therefore be viewed as a contributor to educational stratification and as a mechanism for maintaining inequality.

Other perceived threats posed by private tutoring include the masking of inadequacies in the government education system and the creation of conditions for corruption in educational institutions (Biswal, 1999). Anecdotal evidence suggests that a number of school teachers are engaging in fee-based tutoring of their own students, which inevitably leads to a conflict of interest (Dang & Rogers, 2008; Dawson, 2010).

Limitations of Prior Research

While prior studies discussed in the section above are undeniably important for initiating and developing a discussion about socio-economic effects of private tutoring, there are several limitations that warrant caution when generalising from their findings.

First, there is a shortage of research on private tutoring. Wisker et al (2008) argue that one-to-one work with students is ‘relatively under-theorised and under-resourced’ (p. 5), and Grasha (2002) notes that the one-to-one educational context ‘has taken a backseat to the research on more traditional classroom and teacher-student interaction’ (p. 145). The paucity of studies looking at individual instruction may be partially explained by the difficulties in accessing one-to-one ‘classrooms’ to collect data. As Gaunt (2009) observes, ‘operating to a large extent behind closed doors, research access to the one-to-one teaching environment has been reported to be difficult’ (p. 2). What is more, a lot of tutoring is happening outside formal institutions, which makes it even less accessible for educational researchers (Silova, 2010).

Second, most studies looking at the private tutoring phenomenon have been concerned with school-aged students, which might be a further confounding factor in understanding the phenomenon and generalising from research findings. Defining private tutoring only as fee-based support in school curriculum subjects excludes tutoring to adult learners and might lead to inaccurate representation of the private tutoring field. For the purposes of this article, private
Private Tutoring in Russia

Private tutoring is defined as fee-based instruction provided by private individuals outside educational institutions. This definition includes the instruction of school-aged students as well as that of more mature learners.

Another limitation of prior studies is that most of the current demographic studies are based on survey data attained from tutees rather than from tutors. Silova and Bray (2006) argue that the main drivers of the private tutoring phenomenon are the providers of the service – that is, the tutors. They point out that ‘tutoring exists because the producers make it available and recommend students to take advantage of it’ (p. 80). Despite Silova and Bray’s (2006) call to pay more attention to the background and motivations of private tutors, researchers have been focusing on the customers of these services.

Finally, due to the challenges in data collection discussed above, some studies rely on data collected more than a decade prior to the analysis. For example, Southgate (2009) based her work on the data from a 2003 survey, Dang (2007) used the data from surveys conducted in 1992-1993 and 1997-1998, and Elbadawy et al (2007) analysed and presented data collected in 1998. Such a considerable gap between the collection and analysis of data calls into question the relevance of findings. Therefore, it can be concluded that there remains a need for more theoretical and empirical work on private tutoring in order to understand its impact in society and whether there is a need to develop guidelines for this practice.

Private Tutoring in Russia

As was discussed earlier, private tutoring is a worldwide phenomenon; however, its dynamics are likely to vary in different countries depending on the economic, educational and other contexts (Silova & Bray, 2006). It is therefore necessary to conduct country-specific studies in order to account for national variations.

Studies on private tutoring practices in Russia are extremely limited. The literature review for this article has identified only one study that reports Russia-specific data on private tutoring (Southgate, 2009). According to this survey (performed in 2003 among 15-year-old school students), 38% of the respondents indicated employing the services of private tutors for both remedial and enrichment purposes, which placed Russia in the ‘medium’ range of countries using private tutoring.

As valuable as Southgate’s analysis is, the limitation of her study is that it is based on the responses of a very specific demographic (15-year-old school students) and does not account for other age groups that could be participating in private tutoring. Moreover, in the time since the data collection for Southgate’s study took place, several important changes have occurred in Russia which could have altered the dynamics of shadow education.

First, Russia has undergone a reformation of its university admission system. Prior to the reform, universities were administering their own exams, designed and implemented by each university independently. Since 2009, university admission in Russia has been based on the results of standardised national exams (known as Unified State Exams, or USE), which are now used nationwide and are compulsory. This move has had drastic implications for the educational system and has already given rise to various services assisting in examination preparation (Prakhov & Yudkevich, 2012).

Second, the size of an average household of a school-aged student has decreased. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has experienced a drastic decrease (35%) in its fertility rate (Kohler & Kohler, 2002), and over the last two decades the total fertility rate (average number of children that would be born to a woman over her lifetime) of Russian women has decreased from 1.9 to 1.2 (Kohler & Kohler, 2002; Surinov & Zbarskaya, 2010), which suggests that a considerable number of school-aged children in Russia are now being raised in smaller households compared with their counterparts in 2003. This demographic change might be also affecting the nation’s participation in shadow education. Thus, it can be concluded that the research accounts about private tutoring in Russia are extremely scarce, are out of date, and thus invite further studies.
Methodology

Research Questions

This article aims to identify what are currently the most popular subjects for private tutoring in Moscow. The article also aspires to obtain information on the background of sought-after private tutors since private tutoring is an unregulated practice without endorsed professional standards and little is known about the providers of private tutoring services. These data are necessary to inform the debate on the effect of private tutoring on society and to provide relevant stakeholders, such as policy-makers or customers of private tutors, with information for effective decision-making.

Data Source

Given considerable challenges in accessing data on private tutoring, new methods of data collection are needed to shed light on the 'vast enterprise' of private individual teaching (Silova & Bray, 2006, p. 71). One such technique that could potentially provide current data on private tutoring practices involves drawing on publicly available information on tutor-listing websites. It needs to be noted that using tutor-listing websites as a data source for research purposes is not unproblematic, as relying on Internet profiles raises issues of data credibility - for instance, in assuring that tutors' profiles represent accurate information and correspond to reality. Given the nature of these data, it is critical not to assume that the information presented on the websites corresponds directly to real-life facts; instead, online profiles need to be viewed as self-presentation of individuals offering private tutoring services and seeking clients via specialised websites.

Once researchers acknowledge concerns about data authenticity and take them into account when interpreting and reporting the results, tutor-listing websites can serve as a valuable source of research data. The first advantage of these data is that drawing on the information provided by private tutors will allow data sources to be widened, as most of the published research to date has drawn on the survey replies of school-aged students. The second benefit is that this data collection will be unobtrusive and therefore methodologically advantageous. Using archival materials has been advocated over volunteer-based research, the benefits being a more representative sample and the absence of response bias (Hatch, 2002; Kraut et al, 2004).

Finally, this type of data would be inexpensive to collect and could make otherwise inaccessible information available for analysis; for instance, researchers could access up-to-date information on countries like Russia, which would increase our understanding of the dynamics and the scope of private tutoring.

In summary, one of the contributions of this article is to suggest that the use of Internet advertising as a data source for studying the phenomenon of private tutoring could offer an improvement upon prior research by extending the scope of data and ensuring that it is up to date.

Research Design

First, the study takes as its focus the content of the tuition and tries to answer the following question: What are currently the most common subjects offered for tutoring services in Moscow?

The data for the analysis were collected in December of 2011 and identified using what is currently the most popular web search engine in Russia – Yandex (LB.ua/Economics, 2011). The search for ‘repetitiv v Moskve’ (translation: ‘private tutors in Moscow’) was conducted in Russian. The results of the search suggested that there were several websites specialising in listing classified advertisements of private tutors. Two largest tutor-listing websites were selected for the analysis. The size of the websites was determined on the basis of the respective number of tutors that each of the websites listed.

In order to answer the first research question (identifying the most commonly offered subjects for tuition), the researcher used the summary of all the profiles on the two websites as both websites listed offered subjects and the corresponding number of tutors for each subject. The identification of the most popular subjects was performed using websites’ internal statistics. Following that, descriptive statistics were generated using a statistical tool, SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences).
Second, answering Silova and Bray’s (2006) call to study the providers of the tutoring services, the article seeks to answer the following research question: What are the attributes of the top-ranking tutors on the tutor-listing websites?

Identifying the criteria for tutor ranking on the websites was performed in two ways: first, the researcher analysed and compared the ranking criteria disclosed by each website on its ‘tutor information’ page. The analysis was performed using open-coding qualitative data managing software (Nvivo9). To further triangulate and extend the findings, the researcher conducted the demographic analysis of 32 profiles of the top-ranking tutors. The profiles were selected from eight most popular subjects and included the top four profiles for each category. The data about top-ranking private tutors was collected under four categories: tutor’s education; employment status; gender; and age. The data were entered into an Excel spreadsheet and further analysed.

The final focus of the analysis was looking at self-presentation of the top-ranking tutors. This focus is grounded in the idea that self-presentation is a crucial aspect of social behaviour and worthy of scientific investigation (Baumeister, 1982; Goffman, 1990). Tutors need to make a number of decisions regarding their self-disclosure and self-presentation. Even though the websites provide rough guidelines (e.g. ‘describe your education and working experience’), the decision on what information to include is ultimately up to the tutor. Tutors’ choice of disclosed details is unlikely to be accidental; private tutoring is a professional activity which involves a financial gain, and it is therefore in the tutors’ interest to make the best possible impression on potential customers, and the advertisements can be expected to reflect this interest. According to Goffman (1990), people are extremely conscious of the ‘impressions they convey to others which it is in their interest to convey’ (Goffman, 1990, p. 4). Therefore, the profiles of private tutors present us with an opportunity to analyse tutors’ choice of disclosure and which details about themselves to highlight.

In order to analyse tutors’ self-presentation, the researcher performed an in-depth qualitative analysis of 12 profiles, which were coded in Nvivo9 (a software program for the management and analysis of qualitative data) for common themes using hermeneutic analysis techniques (Thomas, 2006). To establish the codes, an inductive approach was applied to develop categories based on the content of profiles; no pre-determined categories were used. Coding was refined as analysis progressed.

Findings

Number of Tutors on the Websites

The analysis of two popular websites that list classified advertisements of private tutors offering their services in Moscow City showed that private one-to-one instruction in Moscow seems to be both common and widespread. As can be seen from Table I, tutor-listing websites feature thousands of profiles of individuals registered as private tutors in Moscow City.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Number of tutors listed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://repetitors.info/">http://repetitors.info/</a></td>
<td>21,497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://repetitor-baza.ru/">http://repetitor-baza.ru/</a></td>
<td>8074</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table I. Number of tutors on two large tutor-listing websites (Moscow).

Even though one cannot state with confidence that the number of online profiles corresponds to the actual number of real-life individuals providing fee-based instruction, the findings from the tutor-listing websites are nevertheless significant as they point, at the very least, to the popularity of private tutoring services in Moscow. In addition, the actual number of tutors who engage in private instruction might be higher, as it is common for students to find tutors via personal referrals (Ireson & Rushforth, 2005); besides, tutors could be promoting their services through other media (billboards, noticeboards, etc.) than those analysed in this study.
Most Popular Subjects Offered for Private Tuition

In terms of the subjects offered for private tuition on the websites, three main categories emerged in the process of analysing the websites:

1. Tuition in curriculum subjects aimed at school-aged children;
2. Tuition in a foreign language aimed at both school-aged children and adult learners;
3. Tuition in non-curriculum subjects aimed at both school-aged children and adult learners (e.g. acting, drawing, music, psychology, programming, speech therapy).

The first two categories accounted for the majority of the tutorials offered (see Figure 1).

In terms of individual subjects, the most popular type of lesson offered for private tuition was ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), followed by tutorials in mathematics and the Russian language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website 1</th>
<th>Number of tutors listed (out of 21,497)</th>
<th>Website 2</th>
<th>Number of tutors listed (out of 8074)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English (language)</td>
<td>7705</td>
<td>English (language)</td>
<td>1811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>6474</td>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>1310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian (language)</td>
<td>2909</td>
<td>Russian (language)</td>
<td>558</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table II. The top THREE subjects offered on tutor-listing websites in Moscow.

In summary, while it does not seem feasible to accurately gauge the number of tutors in Moscow City, the content analysis of the classified advertisements offering private tutoring services suggests that there might be tens of thousands of people involved in private tutoring practices, which warrants further investigation.

What Makes a Tutor 'Top Ranking'?

A study of the phenomenon of private tutoring would not be complete without information about the providers of the tutoring services. Of particular interest are the individuals who receive a high ranking on the tutor-listing websites, as they potentially represent the most popular and sought-after tutors. It is therefore important to identify both the ranking criteria used by the websites and the self-presentation trends among top-ranking tutors as these can reveal underlying assumptions about desired qualities of private tutors in Russia. In order to address these questions, the author conducted a qualitative and demographic analysis of 32 top-ranking profiles on two tutor-listing websites. The criteria used by the websites and the results of the qualitative analysis of individual profiles are presented below.
Private Tutoring in Russia

Website Ranking Systems

Website /www.repetitors.info/ (referred to as 'Website A') ranks tutors on the basis of the websites' internal tests and the tutors' willingness to have a personal interview for verification purposes. The lowest 'certification' (the term used by the website) is awarded to tutors who have completed a 'pedagogic test' (a multiple-choice online test aimed to test tutors' methodological and pedagogic knowledge). In order to get the certification of the next level, after the completion of the pedagogic test, tutors are required to take an online 'subject knowledge test' designed to assess their knowledge in tutored subjects. The highest certification is awarded to those tutors who have successfully completed the first two requirements and have attended a personal interview with the website administration in order to present the original copies of their degrees, certification and work references for the verification purposes.

Unlike Website A, website /repetitor-baza.ru/ (hereafter referred to as 'Website B') bases its ranking system on: (1) tutors’ education (degree in progress, completed degree, post-graduate qualifications); (2) perceived relevance of tutors’ education (the degree of relatedness to the subject tutored); and (3) prior teaching experience. Website B assigns tutors a score on each of the three scales, which are combined to represent a total score used by Website B’s internal ranking system. Unlike Website A’s approach, no verification procedure or tests are required by Website B’s administration.

The ranking systems on both websites also appear to be influenced by students’ comments. On both websites the students are invited to leave feedback on the classes that they have had with a particular tutor. The more positive feedback a tutor receives from different websites users, the higher this tutor seems to be ranked on the websites. It remains unclear whether tutors can influence their ranking by paying the websites directly to place their profiles higher.

In order to triangulate and extend the findings about the background of top-ranking private teachers who choose to place their profiles on the tutor-listing websites, the researcher further performed a demographic analysis of 32 profiles aggregated from the top three results in what emerged as eight most popular subjects on both websites: ESOL, Russian language, literature studies, maths, physics, geography, history, IT.

The results showed that just over half (18 out of 32) of the top-ranking tutors hold a PhD degree in their related subjects, four hold two bachelor’s degrees and 10 tutors hold a single bachelor’s degree (see Figure 2).

![Figure 2. Qualifications of private tutors.](image)

In terms of employment status, there were equal numbers of tutors who describe themselves as private tutors and who describe themselves as teaching at universities. Two tutors out of the 32 identified themselves as school teachers (see Figure 3).

Out of 32 top-ranking tutors, 20 were female, and the majority were between 40 and 60 years old (see Figure 4).
Thematic Analysis of Individual Profiles

From the 32 profiles, 12 were randomly selected and subjected to an in-depth qualitative analysis, performed inductively by coding profiles for themes in NVivo9. The analysis revealed that the tutors of Russian, mathematics, literature studies, physics, history, IT and geography (henceforth referred to as Group 1) and ESOL tutors (henceforth referred to as Group 2) differed in two ways: (1) in targeted student demographics; and (2) in self-presentation style.

Group 1 tutors mostly targeted school students and had a strong emphasis on preparation for high-stakes exams. The majority of the profiles cited test scores of tutors’ previous students and explicitly assured parents that the tutors were capable of helping tutees to achieve a desired test score on USE.

In contrast, Group 2 in the analysed sample targeted a wider range of students (from preschool students to adult learners) and referred to a variety of goals (passing exams and job interviews, being able to communicate while travelling, personal development). As with the profiles of Group 1 tutors, Group 2 tutors cited achievements of their previous students - for example, gaining employment with international companies, being accepted into international universities and obtaining various international certifications.
In terms of the communication and self-representation style, Group 2 tutors appear to employ a greater number of rapport-building linguistic devices, such as using positive emotional language and acknowledging potential difficulties that the students might have, than Group 1 tutors employed. As a result, Group 2 profiles appear more interpersonal and warm than those of Group 1, whose pages are dominated by such themes as obtaining measurable results and overcoming academic challenges.

Conclusions and Discussion

Subjects Offered for Private Tuition

The content analysis of the tutor-listing websites revealed that ESOL, mathematics and the Russian language are the most commonly offered types of lessons. Drawing on the principle of supply and demand (Fisher, 2007), this finding seems to indicate that these subjects are the most sought after among individual learners in Russia, which could be explained in several different ways: first, individual learners could be intrinsically motivated to learn the subjects above and could be looking for the instructional support not otherwise available to them. This reason seems unlikely, especially if we consider that mathematics and the Russian language are among the priority subjects taught in Russian schools. A more feasible reason therefore seems to be that this high demand on private instruction in these subjects is driven by other factors, such as the desire of students and their parents to achieve better results on the USE, which determine students’ chances to gain a place in tertiary educational institutions. This explanation would correlate with the results of other studies looking at the drivers for private tutoring (Ireson & Rushforth, 2005; Safarzyńska, 2013).

Indeed, Russian Educational Ministry documents state that the Russian language and mathematics are two compulsory subjects for students finishing Russian middle and high schools. Given that the results of the USE determine which university students will be accepted for further studies, it becomes clear why students and parents are willing to invest extra time and money into exam preparation in these compulsory subjects.

However, training for exams alone does not explain the popularity of ESOL tuition as, unlike maths and Russian, English is not a compulsory subject and is required by a smaller number of tertiary institutions. It is curious, therefore, that ESOL is the most commonly offered subject for individual learners. This qualitative analysis reveals that, unlike other subjects that tend to focus on remedial instruction for school-aged children, ESOL advertisements tend to target adult learners, especially those working in business and service-providing sectors. This trend could be explained by the dramatic transformation in the economic and social systems in the former soviet bloc. New workplaces discourse and requirements for doing business in the global economy are placing additional demands on the current generation of workers (Aslund, 2002; Bandelj, 2011). An ability to demonstrate fluency in a foreign language (mainly English) has become an important job requirement in former Soviet countries, and has created a demand and resulting supply of language-teaching services for adult professionals (Eddy, 2007). This has resulted in a growing demand on English-learning services.

Demographics of Private Tutors in Moscow

Although the limited scope of this article and the self-reported data do not allow definite conclusions to be drawn, the results of the demographic analysis seem to suggest that there could be a considerable number of qualified academic and professional teaching staff in Moscow City choosing to supplement their income by providing private tuition. This trend might be indicative of financial and remuneration challenges faced by the Russian education sector that have been previously discussed by other researchers (e.g. Kniazev, 2002; Smolentseva, 2003). Additionally, the fact that a considerable number of top-ranking tutors (15 out of 32) reported operating only as private tutors without any institutional affiliation suggests that private tutoring in Moscow might be perceived as providing sufficient income or more desirable work conditions than affiliation with educational institutions offers.
**Tutors’ Self-representation**

It is noteworthy that in the analysed dataset the tutors did not seem to invite future students to actively participate in the decision-making process regarding the content or the style of their future lessons; instead, the tutors indicated that they were prepared to make individual adjustments to the pace of instruction and the sequence of a pre-determined curriculum, and expected students’ compliance. In other words, tutors seemed to have a clear vision of the content they needed to transmit to their learners and the method that they found effective. This style is consistent with the findings of previous research on Russian pedagogic style, which was described as traditional and teacher-led (Guseva & Sosnowski, 1997; Hufton & Elliott, 2000), with students expecting teachers to provide a fixed framework for their studies (Kirpotin, 1999).

**Limitations**

It is important to note some limitations of this study. First of all, the analysis was done by an individual researcher and hence it is subject to an individual bias, which is hard to avoid in the interpretative qualitative paradigm (King & Horrocks, 2010). Another limitation was the relatively low dataset (32 profiles for the demographic analysis and 12 profiles for the qualitative analysis), which limits the generalisability of the findings.

**Contribution of this Research**

This study aims to provide up-to-date information on the commonly offered subjects for private tuition as well as the perceived attributes of ‘top-ranking’ private tutors in Moscow based on the advertisements of private tutors. The findings might be used for country-specific investigations as well as for cross-country educational research. Another contribution of this article is in employing a new data-collection technique: accessing data on private tutors using online advertisements placed by private tutors. The article has also addressed the gap identified by Silova and Bray (2006), who call for extending current research and for studying private tutors rather than tutees. Finally, this research contributes to the global conversation on private tutoring. In an age in which education is often seen as a ticket to a better future, and with private tutoring being widespread, it is important to consider the dynamics of private tutoring in different countries.

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LB.ua/Economics (2011) Yandex vlozhit $15 mln v amerikanskiy poiskovik.


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