

# The Issues of Overeducation The Analysis and Outlook of Double-reduction Policy

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## ABSTRACT

On July 24, the General Offices of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and The State Council issued a guideline on further reducing the burden of homework and off-campus training for students in compulsory education. It points out that strict regulations will be made on the approval of institutions' qualifications, listing and financing, teaching beyond the syllabus, education fees, school protection for minors, summer trusteeship, after-school services, and other aspects, and the supervision direction of off-campus training will be further clarified. We find that overeducation will bring great harm to families, students, and the education market. The high cost of after-school tuition has increased the burden on families and contributed to the decline in fertility rates in recent years. Therefore, the government hopes to slow down this phenomenon through the implementation of policies. However, in recent decades, similar policies have been unsatisfactory, and the policy distortion is extremely serious. Therefore, we list two solutions: to provide a reasonable compensation mechanism for the parties whose interests conflict with the implementation of the policy; the government set up a stricter regulator to monitor schools and the private education market. The effective implementation of policies can only be ensured by complementing each other's deficiencies.

**Keywords:** Education Reform, Policy, Double-reduction, Economy, Education Expenditure.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background

In recent years, China has released many policies to reduce the education burden. In July 2021, the General Offices of the CPC Central Committee and The State Council issued opinions on Further Reducing the Burden of Homework and Off-campus training for Students in Compulsory Education, which is referred to as the "double reduction" policy. In China, due to the elimination mechanism of higher education, parents let their children start all kinds of remedial courses at an early age. This will lead to a lot of social problems, such as the overburden of family education, increased rates of depression and suicide among teenagers, teenagers engaged in mafia-like criminal activities, and so on. Teenagers as the future of the country, these negative impacts will lead to social unrest and even shake the country. At the same time, it will also lead to uneven distribution of market resources, such as the large

market of after-school tutoring institutions. According to media Research, the K12 after-school tutoring market in China reached 483 billion yuan in 2019 and is expected to reach 571 billion yuan in 2021[1]. To make their children more competitive in exams, parents are choosing to go to after-school tutoring institutions to learn in advance, which has led to a surge in demand for after-school tutoring, and many tutoring institutions have made high profits at arbitrary prices. With the implementation of the national double reduction policy, the market value of educational institutions, especially after-school supplementary courses, has been halved, and many institutions like New Oriental, Usership, and so on have been greatly affected. To ensure the reasonable and fair distribution of resources, the Ministry of Education avoids class solidification caused by education, does not let the children of working-class families drop out of school, and cultivates a qualified labor force for the country. Ensure that overall educational output matches the development of the country's economic needs. This paper first expounds on

the harm of excessive education, then analyzes the advantages and disadvantages of the policy of reducing the burden of education, and finally puts forward feasible plans to avoid the distortion in the education reform.

### **1.2. Related research**

Some previous researches showed the educational issues in other regions, firstly, Lipscombe et al. proposed that the scope, types, and potential of extra-curricular tutoring in The UK need to be explored, the survey detailed below illuminates the extra-curricular dimension of ESD through an exploration of UK HE (higher education) practice. The authors used a mail-in questionnaire to document university interventions for after-school classes, and to gather views about both their value and the context of their use – and open questions, to gather views about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and barriers associated with extra-curricular ESD work. By analyzing a large amount of data sent to the heads of 140 higher education institutions listed by the UK government as having degree-awarding powers, they concluded that: Extracurricular activities are widely regarded as effective in the sustainable development of higher education, which can solve many problems that are considered to limit the sustainable development of higher education. But it can also bring about the bad effect of resource pressure. Extra-curricular intervention may play an important developmental and complementary role in curriculum reform [2]. To find the essence and the beginning of the over education, Pearson and Rao highlighted the role of both social and political forces in shaping early childhood education policy and practice in Hong Kong. The research introduced the history of early-childhood education in Hong Kong that had begun in the 1800s. Pearson and Rao explained that parents who worried about their children will not achieve later academic success unless they have enough formal numeracy and literacy skills, as well as discipline early on. Meanwhile, Pearson and Rao pointed out the future of early-childhood education that the financial support for early childhood education was minimal. To achieve the proposed reforms, there must be a financial commitment to teacher training and promotion of sensitivity towards the requirement, customs, and expectations of all stakeholders involved in this critical period of a child's development [3]. Besides, for some Arab countries, Nahsa broadly noted that some developing countries focused on expanding access to higher education. For example, Nahsa assessed the adequacy, efficiency, and equity of higher education in Lebanon in both the public and private sectors, while highlighting challenges that are specific to Lebanon. The Arab countries were being challenged as well for three main reasons: increase in the demand for higher education, the decreasing role and restricted the state's

ability and willingness to finance higher education, private provision playing a larger role in higher education. In the end, Nahsa gave some specific suggestions on public expenditure which should pay attention to those core public goods such as primary health care or education, and social protections, and complement the provision of social services supplied by the private sector, particularly given their large historic role in Lebanon [4]. Mingat looked at the main features of high-performing educational systems in various Asian educational economies over the last three decades. In comparison to other countries in the region, the educational strategy is unique. The emphasis placed on various stages of schooling, the choices taken in terms of quantity and quality of education, the schemes used to finance education at various levels, and the selection of school inputs in terms of efficiency and equity are all discussed. Mingat summed up the most important characteristics of developing countries and stated that the HPAEs' educational strategies should not be considered models to be limited by other countries [5].

For the specific educational issues that happened in mainland China, Hong et al. adopted the perspective of knowledge mobilization to assess the situation of education policymaking in China over the past 40 years. Three authors presented the characteristics of education policy-making and outlined the factors that contribute to improving policymaking. For further improvements, Hong et al. compared China with developed countries in terms of education policies. The authors came to the conclusion, which is China was good at summarizing and improving from former experience, but some people raise doubts and criticisms so that China still faces a huge challenge in education [6]. Besides, Xue and Fang explored the relationship between provincial high school entrance examination competition and students' extracurricular tutoring participation during compulsory education. Based on data from the China Family Panel Studies (CFPS) 2016 and provincial high school acceptance rates, Xue and Fang used the Hierarchical Linear Bernoulli Model. The study discovered that high school acceptance rate and occupational high school acceptance rate have no effect on students' extracurricular tutoring involvement rate during compulsory education. However, the high school admission rate has a considerable beneficial impact on kids' extracurricular tutoring participation rates, and there is a heterogeneous effect on students' extracurricular tutoring participation rates from families of various social classes. The higher the high school acceptance rate, the greater the probability of students from families with higher social strata participating in extracurricular tutoring [7]. Zheng et al. researched the impacts of overeducation, major mismatch, and return to higher education in China. Zheng et al. developed a novel approach to study overeducation by extracting

pre-match information from online recruitment platforms using word segmentation and dictionary building techniques. They apply this method to China. From the result, three authors found the effect of overeducation on payments varied significantly by college quality, city type, and the match of college major with industry. Graduates in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) or LEM (Law, Economics, and Management) from Key Universities are much less likely to be overeducated in the first place and enjoy a significant pay premium even when they are in the situation [8].

For other vectors in the economic system, Zhang and Wang studied the causes and countermeasures of deviation in the implementation of education burden reduction policies based on the perspective of stakeholders. The research adopts the research method of classified discussion to analyze the interests of the game between the participants (makers, participants, implementing agents, and implementing objects) of the education burden reduction policy. The conclusion is drawn that the conflict of interests among stakeholders in the implementation of the education burden reduction policy is the fundamental cause of policy deviation. Therefore, coordinating and balancing the interests of stakeholders is the fundamental way to solve the deviation of education burden reduction policy implementation. Eventually, the authors put forward four solutions: the first is to establish a reasonable interest expression mechanism, the second is to establish a practical interest compensation mechanism, the third is to establish a strict implementation supervision mechanism, and the fourth is to update the interests of stakeholders [9]. Also, Xie and Chu discussed the difficulties and causes of low efficiency in the implementation of education burden reduction policies from the perspective of sociological conflicts. The research is divided into three categories. The first category is from the perspective of political science, which analyzes the evolution trend and implementation of previous policies and points out the problems. The second is based on the economic perspective, using game theory analysis to reduce the behavior of burden subjects in difficult situations, such as conflicts between parents, school teachers and regulators, and schools. The third is from the perspective of education, which discusses how to reduce the burden from the perspective of teaching methods and contents. Finally, the author gives three ways to balance the conflict: from reducing the burden to increasing the education compensation for the disadvantaged groups; from policy burden reduction to system burden reduction; from a single evaluation standard to a diversified evaluation system [10].

### **1.3. Objective**

This paper lists the reasons for the implementation of the policy of educational burden reduction and the harm to the society as well as its advantages and disadvantages and defines in detail the implementation methods and the objects of the policy. We discover the causes of the distortion of the policy of reducing the educational burden in the recent ten years and give remedial measures and prospects for the future. Besides, the research mainly focuses on the problems in overeducation in China and analyzes the advantages and disadvantages of the double-reduction policy which is regarded as one solution to the overeducated problems.

## **2. THE ISSUES FROM OVEREDUCATION**

### **2.1. Student**

Overeducation does not mean good grades, which involves a wide range of instruction that students may not be able to absorb completely. It can lead to intellectual confusion. A large number of learning tasks will lead to low efficiency and a decrease in students' willingness to learn. Educators have long ignored learners' interests, talents, and personalities. Therefore, they have been passive, passive learning. They do not seek scientific learning methods and experience the joy of success and pursuit of satisfaction. They have no strong desire for knowledge. These are contrary to the purpose of education.

Besides, it damages students' physical and mental development. Studying for a competition can put a lot of pressure on them. These pressures will make them resist learning, and even have psychological problems such as weariness and depression.

Overeducation hinders children's normal interpersonal communication and affects the harmonious development of their personalities. When young children communicate with adults, they are prone to conflict with the adult world in many aspects such as concept and behavior. Overeducation makes these conflicts more intense and frequent.

### **2.2. Family**

Chinese parents have made family education their top priority in the face of the brutal elimination of higher education in China. However, parents often fail to grasp the correct way of education, resulting in overeducation. Family overeducation can be divided into four points: over-interference, overemphasis on early childhood education, over-expectation, and over-punishment. These behaviors will bring a lot of indelible harm to children.

The over-intervention can weaken children's ability to manage themselves because parents help them do too

many tasks that should be done by themselves. Over time, children will become dependent on their parents, become lazy and be unwilling to think independently to solve problems which will make their further study and future life efficiency extremely low.

Early education refers to the intellectual development of children in childhood, the purpose is to get ahead of other students in school. If properly handled, the child will gain the ability to excel his peers. However, excessive early education will only overdraw children's potential and cause psychological disorders. Children's childhood, namely primary and secondary school, should be encouraged to explore their interests and stick to them. The compulsory learning brought by excessive early education will destroy their potential. Early acceptance of future learning after the failure of the frustration will also bring great psychological trauma.

Excessive expectations and punishment will bring weariness and aggressive behavior to children. Because excessive expectations will bring long-term depression to children, will have resistance to parents' requirements, and thus negative learning. What's more, because parents' excessive punishment will form anti-social psychology, they will vent their discontent

through some extreme behaviors, such as trying to commit suicide or engaging in gangland behaviors, such as fighting. This is potentially a major hazard not only to families but also to the nation.

**2.3. Education Institution**

As shown in Table 1, the net revenue of New Oriental increased about 500,000 thousand dollars from 2016 to 2020. Meanwhile, the educational programs and services contributed the greatest proportion of the increase, which implies that the investment or expenditure from parents and students were increasing from year to year. Besides, from the dramatic increase of income taxes, which is nearly 5,000 thousand dollars from 2019 to 2020, can be deduced that the income of New Oriental increased in a large amount as well. As shown in it, the realized gain from long-term investment did not appear until 2017, which was the first year that the New Oriental invested in Tencent. That also implies that the scale of New Oriental was increased that it could invest in other firms. All the data shows that the remedial classes, at least the New Oriental, were getting more and more prosperous and which means it would cost more on remedial classes for the parents.

**Table 1.** Revenue statements of New Oriental from 2016-2020 [11]

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Net revenues:					
Educational programs and services	1,309,339	1,608,954	2,165,152	2,785,254	3,230,378
Books and other services	169,009	190,555	282,278	311,237	348,304
Total net revenue	1,478,348	1,799,509	2,447,430	3,096,491	3,578,682
Provision to income taxes:					
Current	39,467	51,142	72,785	103,031	142,992
Deferred	1,936	518	13,337	17,317	8,630
Total	37,531	50,634	59,448	85,714	134,362
Realized gain from long-term investments		2,338	980	5,919	31,750

**3. SOLUTIONS**

**3.1. The Details and Explanations of Double-Reduction Policy**

The double reduction policy specifically refers to reducing the homework burden of children in an all-around way, and also reducing the burden of after-school training. The popular meaning is to reduce the burden of homework and reduce the burden of off-campus training, but mainly for primary and junior high school students [12].

The goal of the double reduction policy is to improve the quality and efficiency of on-campus services and standardize off-campus training. We should give full play to the role of schools as the main channel of education, intensify reform efforts, coordinate educational resources both inside and outside the school, coordinate the two periods of in-class and after-class, make an overall plan for school education and teaching arrangements, and comprehensively and systematically construct the school education ecology. We will improve the quality of in-school education services and raise the level of education in schools so that every student can learn well in school [13].

Enforce strict governance, comprehensively regulate off-campus training institutions, prevent disorderly expansion, and strictly investigate all kinds of training violations and activities that infringe on the interests of the public, to create an enabling environment for the all-around and healthy growth of students.

### *3.1.1. Double reduction policy 1: reduce the operating burden*

Ensure that no written homework is assigned for grades 1 and 2, that the average written homework time for grades 3 to 6 is no more than 60 minutes, and that the average written homework time for junior high school is no more than 90 minutes. Individual students who are unable to complete written assignments through efforts should also go to bed on time to ensure adequate sleep. Implement one "no homework Day" every week. Saturday and Sunday, winter and summer holidays, legal holidays should also control the time and amount of written homework, and guide students to arrange the progress of completing homework reasonably. Effectively improve students' learning efficiency through homework. It also explicitly forbids teachers from asking parents to correct homework or assigning homework in disguise.

### *3.1.2. Double reduction policy: reduce the burden of off-campus training*

Subject training time shall not conflict with primary and secondary school teaching time; the offline training shall be completed no later than 20:30, and the online training shall be completed no later than 21:00. Online training should pay attention to the protection of students' eyesight, each class should not exceed 30 minutes, and the interval between classes should not be less than 10 minutes. Explore the rational control of students' continuous online training time by using artificial intelligence technology. No school of compulsory education may, for any reason or in any form, organize students to make up lessons collectively during holidays and holidays, or organize or require students to attend training at training institutions outside the school.

## **3.2. Advantages and disadvantages**

The Haidian Investigation Team of the National Bureau of Statistics surveyed the impact of the double-reduction policy for the parents of students in the Haidian District, which received 841 valid questionnaires [14]. For advantages, family education expected expenditure dropped significantly. The survey shows that after the policy is implemented, 50.2% of parents expect a significant decline in family education expenditures, which represents there will be less 'investment' in remedial classes. Besides, the decrease in

the burden of homework and remedial classes for students allows them to have more exercise time, which will probably improve the health conditions and decrease the rate of myopia. For disadvantages, the one-to-one subject private tutoring might increase in the future, which also gives burden of expenditure to family education. In addition, 36.5% of parents in the survey worry that they do not have enough time or ability to help their children study. The burden of parents educating their children might increase.

## **4. TREND ANALYSIS**

### **4.1. Future Development**

The era of double reduction in education will inevitably affect the development trend of Chinese education. In the micro view, students' individuality and creativity will be encouraged and nurtured. Schools will have more courses that go out of campus and carry out the social practice. As the most important channel for education to promote social equity and intergenerational circulation, relevant training has no big policy risk in the short term. Competition in quality training may be further strengthened in the future.

In the macro view, education will transition to non-profit and eventually become a pure free public product. The mistake of early stratification of education will be gradually corrected. Thanks to the power of the Internet, more excellent educational resources will be made available to the whole public for free to solve the problems of regional disparities and the structural shortage of educational resources. In the long run, capitalizing and commercializing tendencies of colleges and universities may be suppressed.

Transformation cannot be achieved overnight, but from an overall perspective, social development has entered a new era, and the demand for talent has also undergone great changes. Creative, diverse, and personalized talents will have more advantages in the future, and the development of the education industry will eventually adapt to the direction of social progress.

### **4.2. Remedial actions**

In July 1955, the Ministry of Education issued the first policy to reduce the burden of The People's Republic of China - "Instructions on Reducing the Excessive Burden of Primary and Secondary School Students", the national has issued nine policies to reduce the burden, but the effect is not obvious. As the content of the school curriculum has become simpler, the average score has become higher, leading to higher standards for admission. As a result, student workloads have increased, not decreased, and parents have become more anxious. The main reason for policy distortion is the conflict of interests between the implementation of

the policy and the economy. Therefore, remedial measures should also start from resolving conflicts of interest.

Teachers and schools, as the main body of education, have suffered most of the impact of the policy. With the decrease of workload, teachers' salaries will be exploited, resulting in a large number of teachers being unemployed or underemployed. They will try to earn more money by giving private lessons. However, the high pricing makes the tuition fees unaffordable for poor families, and educational equity is broken. This greatly contradicts the original intention of the education pressure reduction policy. Therefore, state organs need to establish reasonable compensation mechanisms, such as establishing minimum wage standards to guarantee the interests of teachers or improving teachers' social welfare, such as pension and medical security. For schools, the improvement of enrollment conditions will increase the difficulty of enrollment. The government needs to ensure that schools have enough funds for normal operation and increase subsidies to schools.

It is important to establish stricter regulatory authorities. As the phenomenon of private teaching by teachers is rampant in China, the government needs to warn schools to strictly check this behavior and ensure that every student receives equal educational opportunities. The school needs to establish and improve the teacher evaluation mechanism, teaching quality evaluation system and performance evaluation methods, and other supporting measures to provide a guarantee for the prohibition of paid tutoring. And it needs to be explicitly stated in employment contracts that paid tutoring is prohibited. Many schools now make a profit by offering a fee-paying course or buying a large number of books. The administrative department of education needs to set up a telephone and a report box. Any phenomenon of charging fees, the school needs to be criticized, cancel all honorary qualifications, and investigate the responsibility of school leaders.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This research aimed to analyze and prospect the problems brought about by educational competition and the policy of double reduction. Based on a quantitative and qualitative analysis of problems arising from overeducation in many aspects, it can be concluded that there are many negative problems with overeducation. And in the research of the double reduction policy, the results indicate that this policy can greatly improve the current educational problems. But at the same time, this policy also has some loopholes, many places need to be improved. The study clearly shows that our country is attaching more importance to the development of quality education for children, but it also shows that China's education system needs major reform. To better

understand the implications of these results, future studies could address that in the following decades of the double reduction era, new problems faced by China's education council and relevant measures can be implemented.

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