



Analysis and Reflection on Chinese Education Under the Double Reduction Policy

Hongwei Guan¹(✉), Yutong Ma², and Jiaxin Xie³

¹ School of Agriculture, Southwest University, Chongqing 400799, China
hg562s@MissouriState.edu

² School of Foreign Languages, Beijing Information Science and Technology University,
Beijing 100192, China

³ School of Foreign Languages, Yunnan Finance and Economics University, Kunming 650031,
Yunnan, China

Abstract. The General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the General Office of the State Council issued “Opinions on Further Reducing the Burden of Students’ Homework and Off-Campus Training in Compulsory Education” (hereinafter referred to as “double reduction”) on July 24, 2021. This policy is a milestone in Chinese education reforms for improving the quality of school education and teaching. It also promotes the comprehensive and mental health of young people and benefits varied families with different living conditions. In order to implement the “double reduction” policy, the necessity and challenge faced by the newly issued policy will be discussed and analyzed in macro, meso and micro level in this paper respectively. The comparative cases study on previous reforms and other countries come to the forefront place, to help China draw an effective lesson and plan.

Keywords: Double reduction policy · Comparative case study · Family household · Private tutoring · Problems and countermeasures

1 Introduction

Burden reduction in China has always been a heated topic. Since the founding of the People’s Republic of China (China) in 1949, big changes in its society could be seen and China has developed greatly in economic and political these years. Under such circumstances, the reform of education has been started since 1996. But these years, the fast expansion of the scale of primary and secondary schools has brought real pressure to enter a higher school. More and more parents try every means to make their children learn ahead of time in order to get the first chance in the competition of entering a higher school, because they don’t want their children lose at the starting line. As a result of this, students’ burden become heavier and heavier than ever before. Chinese authorities have noticed this educational problem and published a series of policies to ease students’ burdens.

H. Guan, Y. Ma and J. Xie—Contributed equally.

© The Author(s) 2023

Z. Zhan et al. (Eds.): SEAA 2022, ASSEHR 675, pp. 463–471, 2023.

https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-494069-05-3_58

This paper will analysis the current research on comparative Education in the reforms' perspective. It is highly worthy to compare them in a chronological way at the national level in China. Since the establishment of this country, policy makers make every effort to create a better environment for education equity, efficiency and innovation. Meanwhile, the geographical advantages have taken by China is the location in Eastern Asia. The neighbor countries of China are Japan and Korea, which show a similarity in culture background and economic development.

Through the comparative study of "Double Reduction" Policy between China and South Korea, this paper comprehensively analyzes the influence of the two countries' policy on different dimensions and the existing practical problems. Taking the reform experience of South Korea's policy as a reference, this paper also summarizes the difficulties for the further development of China's current policy, points out the direction and provides feasible suggestions for the measures and policies supplements needed for further reform, so that its "Double Reduction" Policy can promote the road of burden reduction reform and promote the high-level development of education.

2 Double Reduction Policy

2.1 Social Background

China has the world's largest population of 1.4 billion people which accounts for 19.13% of the world's total population. In 2010, there were 111 million elderly people aged more than 65 (which is 8.2% of the total population), 19.3 million of whom were over the age of 80 [1, 2]. The senior population is expected to explode in 2050, with up to 400 million people aged 65 and above (26.9% of the total population) and 150 million people aged 80 [1, 2]. In 2020, the number of newborns in China was 12 million, which was 18% lower than that in 2019 and 33% lower than that in 2016 when the second child policy was just released. The number of newborns in 2020 has almost become the year with the lowest birth rate since the record of China's history [3].

To stimulate fertility rate and solve the problem of aging population, the Chinese government published 'three-child' policy in May 2021. Under this policy, the proportion of the school-age population will increase and the national education expenditure will be reduced if it is shared equally on everyone, which will probably affect the quality of education in China. Although the government has introduced the 'three-child' policy to slow down the process of aging population, most people still do not want to have children, because it costs a lot to raise a child in China, because most parents want their kids to get a head start in life and they will let their children to have lots of extracurricular classes. It is worth noting that the government issued a 'double reduction' policy in June of the same year, with the purpose of reducing the burden of excessive homework and off-campus tutoring for students undergoing compulsory education. This policy aims to reduce the burden on students, but to some extent, the policy has also played a positive role in boosting the 'three-child' policy.

2.2 The Publication of the 'Double Reduction' Policy

The publication of the 'Double Reduction Policy' elicited a strong reaction from society and the work of "double reduction" is a key component of the Party's education

strategy. It is critical for fulfilling life's main duty of nurturing people, enhancing the overall quality of school education and instruction, supporting the holistic and growth of young people. Following the government's announcement of the double reduction program, certain educational and training institutes declared their closure and entirely discontinued operations. Furthermore, several online training companies have begun to lay off workers. Education and training institutes are in difficult situations as a result of the double cut.

2.3 Financing Restrictions

The new policy also has a great impact on financing activities. Curriculum-based training institutes are not permitted to raise funds from the public, and capitalized operations are forbidden. Listed businesses, on the other hand, are prohibited from investing in curriculum-based training institutions through stock market financing and from purchasing the assets of curriculum-based training institutions through the issuance of shares or the payment of cash. According to the new policy, relevant central departments, local Party committees and governments at all levels should strengthen the management of off-campus training advertisements to ensure that mainstream media, new media, public places, various billboards and communities.

The stock prices of listed businesses in China's education and training industry have been declining as the education and training industry's control has been strengthened. According to Choice Data—Financial data platform under Oriental Fortune, the stock price of New Oriental in the United States fell by -54.22% in a single day after the new double reduction policy was implemented on July 23, 2021 [4]. In the next section of the paper, the analysis of similar policies in South Korea and China in mesosystem dimension, which gives a deeper view of 'burden alleviation' from policy making and implication in schools.

3 Mesosystem

3.1 Burden Alleviation in Asian Countries

3.1.1 South Korea

To meet the needs of rapid development with globalization and the demands of passing the school entrance examination, the private tutoring system plays the role of additional education in a parasitic statement with the formal system, which influences the mainstream education in an ineligible way [5].

The private tutoring systems have provoked "anxiety" and "insecurity" to the formal education system with the purpose of expanding market, which occupies a dramatic large portion in the national economic in South Korea and China. Mass schooling system and the efforts for an equal opportunity toward education policymaking to reach the ideal of equity must be informed by such research on educational movements, especially the burden alleviation, which has gradually come to the forefront of comparative studies.

To compare the divergent and similar aspects of education reforms applied in China and South Korea respectively, it is important to them to notice that they have some common problems, for example, low university enrollment and simplification of the curriculum system, particularly, the overwhelmed schoolwork burden. All of the problems refer to the issue of inequality and ineffectiveness in education.

In 1968, the Long-Term Comprehensive Education Program issued and executed in South Korea. On the idea of saving country with education, this practice built a talents training platform, and reserving talents for national development. At that time, the percentage of nationwide literacy was 80%, which witnessed a significant and efficient conduction of education reform. On the other hand, with the strong willing to gain the reputation in society, young generations were under the strain, regarding the fame and success as the evidence to prove their individual values. For students in South Korea, the pursuit of studying in elite campus became the main purpose to receive education.

The inadequacies and inequalities of formal education gave occasion dissatisfaction to students and their parents, who would rather take lessons after school in private tutoring schools (i.e., hagwon), more than staying at formal schools.

When the private tutoring measured new social ethos. There were three severe problems raised by shadow education in South Korea. First, in the vigorous development of private tutoring industry caused the heat of running civil-run institutions, which showed the intermingled quality and scale. Second, the shortage of qualified instructional resource had impact on the fee-paying private schools, which provoke the cost to hire qualified teachers and operate the schools rising dramatically.

The government had vowed to overhaul the chaos in education industry and the unbalance between formal schools and private tutoring schools in 1970s. The Ministry of Education (MOE) proposed the High School Equalization Policy (HSEP) in 1972, spanning the last three decades. The most important objectives were: (1) to set a rotation of qualified teachers from one school to another after several years; (2) to facilitate vocational education, which showed the variety of occupation development; (3) to diminish quality differences among high schools [6].

Admittedly, the measures above were used as the protectant toward the further involution of education system. Specialized schools and extra curriculum programs had aimed to offer optimal courses for each individual student. Therefore, it is important to develop each student's potential and talents to the maximum levels.

All achievements came after HSEP with Gifted Education in Korea. The students had suggested that their thinking skills, solving abilities, creativity and scientific attitudes were the elements which developed the most through the Gifted Education program. Since that, it is found the class at the HSEP is distinguished from other regular curriculum system [7].

On the contrary, due to the lack of diversity and teaching resource in the public school system, it was still another key mechanism that resulted in students' pursuit of private tutoring. Also, with a proposed expansion of the extra-curriculum to reform education system, private tutoring was formulated faster than conventional schools to meet the needs of people with multi-abilities. Until 2000s, the restrictive policies and regulations to shadow education ended with outstanding problems in South Korea such

as the gap between new emerging subjects and teaching techniques, and the demand towards exam-oriented education.

3.1.2 China

China has put forward a number of policies for burden reduction in the face of the excessive academic pressure on primary and secondary school students since 1964, but its effect had a waving trend of “burden reduction – overburden – re-burden reduction”. Similarly, South Korea also implemented a double reduction policy in order to reduce the pressure caused by entering a higher school in the 1970s. Therefore, China has once again introduced a double reduction policy in order to reduce students’ burden.

In the formulation of national education policies, the varied debates on South Korea inspire China’s policy implementation. To toil on the way to release the burden from students, parents and teachers, China is facing several problems as (1) the gap between new emerging subjects and teaching resources; (2) the shorter schooling time with the higher pressure on students to absorb knowledge; (3) the lack of regulation in private tutoring market.

To meet the goal of ensuring the public interest, it is strictly prohibited to operate the after-school institutions that lack permits and have safety hazards. For some tutoring firms, to teach compulsory school subjects should go non-profit. And the government has banned all tutoring related to the core school syllabus during vacations and weekends, which are the prime hours for such companies.

In the dimension of providing the additionality to the mainstream education system, the tutoring companies are not the “Mirror” nor the “Shadow” of the public school curriculum. It is encouraged to shift the after-school class from cram session, which teaches ahead of the teaching syllabus, to the extension as more STEAM courses will be applied in public schools [8]. The implement of this measure will make multiplicity of the education system, and create affluent extracurricular activities for students to develop their abilities for facing the challenges from the future.

4 Microsystem

The microcosmic system includes the main places and characters of children in the process of education, and further discusses the concrete influence and changes of students, households and teachers under the policy reform.

4.1 The Impact on Students

The double reduction policy effectively lightens the students’ homework burden and allows them more time to return to themselves. According to the National “Double Reduction” Effect Survey Report in 2022, 75.3% of students feel that the workload is reduced compared with the previous semester, and 83.4% of students can complete all or most of their homework in school [9]. Similarly, South Korea tried to reduce students’ burden by implementing “Levelized Education” and forbidding extracurricular tutoring, but the effect was not obvious. The inability to ease the burden on students is mainly

related to the similar educational selection systems in China and South Korea. Focusing only on scores has always been the source of pressure for parents and students under the examination selection system. Scores determine the quality of further education and the direction of the vertical flow of the social stratum. Therefore, although the double reduction policy has reduced the homework burden of students, students still do not fully relieve their psychological pressure of students due to personal wishes, competition and social pressure. This pressure forces students to increase their academic burden again, which is also the reason for the repetitive process of burden reduction reform in China.

Although the double reduction policy can effectively reduce the schoolwork burden of students, focusing only on scores of examine system is still a stumbling block in the process of reducing students' burden. Quality education and a more comprehensive student evaluation system will be the starting point for solving the fundamental problem.

4.2 The Impact on Household

With the improvement of people's demand for education, the pressure on family education is growing. According to the Survey Report on Chinese Parents' Education Anxiety Index, "Children's education" has become the most anxious problem. Over 70% of parents think that education expenditure accounts for more than 40% of family income, and nearly 70% of parents support extracurricular training [10]. The competition under the examination system is no longer limited to the comparison of students' scores but expanded to the educational resources. The most typical form is extracurricular tutoring. The double-reduction policy directly prohibits extracurricular training, prevents the development trend of capitalization and commercialization of the education industry, and reduces parents' anxiety and blind educational expenditure. Likewise, South Korea also put forward relevant policies to prohibit "Shadow Education" to decrease the economic investment in tutoring. However, the one-size-fits-all policy has not led to the withdrawal of extracurricular tutoring from the market. On the contrary, the school could not meet the household demand for education in time, resulting in an imbalance between supply and demand. In that case, extracurricular tutoring developed more covertly, bringing a heavier financial burden to the household.

In addition, the economic burden of educational investment on the household is the main reason for the low fertility rate in China and South Korea. China's double reduction policy was introduced immediately after the two-child and three-child policies and took the pain points of the fertility policy as the access point, effectively reducing their economic burden on education, thereby promoting the implementation of the fertility policy.

The prohibition of extracurricular tutoring not only reduces the education investment in the household, but also promotes the development of private education. It is also the key to overcoming the low fertility rate and furthering the development of fertility policy.

4.3 The Impact on Teachers

The double reduction policy refocuses the main battlefield of education in schools. However, with the increasing trend of teachers' overall pressure year by year, the double

reduction policy puts forward stricter requirements for teachers' professional quality and capability, resulting in more pressure on teachers [11].

Firstly, the double reduction policy strengthens teachers' evaluation of homework, which is conducive to teachers knowing students' studying and avoiding the heavy burden of "sea tactics." However, Xie finds that teachers mainly focus on "quantity," but pay less attention to "quality" now in homework evaluation [12]. Therefore, it puts forward higher requirements for teachers to improve the teaching quality and efficiency through the evaluation of homework.

The double reduction policy also emphasizes the function of after-school services. 85.8% of students in China participate in after-school services, of which over 70% participate in after-school services five days a week [9]. Similarly, South Korea has also implemented the "After-school activities", which aim to eliminate regional differences in educational opportunities and quality. After-school services timely satisfy the demands of household education and ensure the equity of education under the prohibition of extracurricular tutoring.

However, teachers, as the main force of after-school service, the extension of working hours takes up the time of teachers' curriculum design and creation, significantly increasing their pressure. In addition, after-school services also include homework instruction that requires teachers' professional knowledge, as well as art, sports, and moral education activities. Teachers' multiple characters ask for their comprehensive professional knowledge and profound professional qualifications to ensure the expansibility of after-school service and the quality of education. The double reduction policy unconsciously puts forward higher requirements for teachers' work, professional qualifications, and capability. With the increasing pressure on teachers, the government needs to introduce incentive policies or welfare benefits for teachers to maintain teachers' professional satisfaction to improve the quality of education.

5 Conclusion

China's burden reduction process is long and tortuous. Education reform is often influenced by politics and the demands of national development in different historical periods. This paper compares the educational reform in South Korea and analyzes the difficulties and reasons that China will face after implementing the double reduction. The double reduction policy restricts the further development of the capitalization and commercialization of the education industry and reduces the educational burden on households. However, it puts forward bigger challenges to the education system in the improvement of education quality and equity. Under the examination system and people's pursuit of the vertical flow of social stratum, people's anxiety about education always exists, and students' pressure is still heavy. In addition, with the extension of teachers' school time and the demands of multiple characters, people put more stringent requirements on teachers' curriculum design, teaching professional capability, and professional qualifications. Maintaining teachers' professional satisfaction and improving their comprehensive capabilities will become another problem. In addition, the shortage of teachers' resources, the unbalanced distribution of educational resources, and the education expenditure under the two-child and three-child policies may further aggravate the social class differentiation, which is not conducive to the development of education equity. Therefore, the

government should introduce policy support and improve the evaluation system of students' comprehensive quality, starting from different system dimensions, to ensure the dual purpose of reducing the burden and improving quality.

References

1. Chen, F., & Liu, G. (2009). Population aging in China. *International handbook of population aging* (pp. 157–172). Springer.
2. Zeng, Y. (2012). Towards deeper research and better policy for healthy aging—using the unique data of Chinese longitudinal healthy longevity survey. *China Economic Journal*, *5*, 131–149.
3. Fang, E. F., Scheibye-Knudsen, M., Jahn, H. J., et al. (2015). A research agenda for aging in China in the 21st century. *Aging Research Reviews*, *24*, 197–205.
4. Choice Data. (2022). Financial data platform under Oriental Fortune. Choice.eastmoney.com. Retrieved April 21, 2022, from <http://choice.eastmoney.com/Product/DataCenter>
5. Dawson, W. (2010). Private tutoring and mass schooling in East Asia: Reflections of inequality in Japan, South Korea, and Cambodia. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, *11*(1), 14–24.
6. Byun, S. (2010). Does policy matter in shadow education spending? Revisiting the effects of the high school equalization policy in South Korea. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, *11*(1), 83–96.
7. Lee, S. H., & Choi, S. I. (2015). Comprehensive review of research publications on gifted education in Korea: 2003–2012. *Journal of Gifted/Talented Education. The Korean Society for the Gifted*.
8. Riley, S. (2022). What is STEAM Education? *The Institute for Arts Integration and STEAM*. Retrieved April 21, 2022, from <https://artsintegration.com/what-is-steam-education-in-k-12-schools/>
9. The double reduction policy issued by the national survey report on the effectiveness of reduction has been widely endorsed - China Social Sciences Network (2022). *Ex.cssn.cn*. Retrieved April 21, 2022, from http://ex.cssn.cn/zx/bwyc/202203/t20220304_5396974.shtml
10. Chinese parents' educational anxiety index report: growth troubles are no longer exclusive to children. (2022). *Edu.sina.com.cn*. Retrieved April 21, 2022, from <http://edu.sina.com.cn/zxx/2018-09-18/doc-ihkhfqns4070541.shtml>
11. Xu, X. H. (2017). A comparative and empirical study of three surveys on teachers' professional stress. *Shanghai Research on Education*, 65–67.
12. Xie, J., & Qian, J. (2022). How to optimize homework evaluation under the background of “double reduction” policy. *Journal of Educational Science of Hunan Normal University*, 60–64.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

