



The Impact of Double Reduction Policy on Compulsory Education in China

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Abstract. Recently, the Chinese government has implemented a “double reduction” policy to reduce the excessive quantity of compulsory education students’ homework and extracurricular training. Consequently, the double reduction policy will affect the subjects involved in the educational process to some extent. After implementing the policy, parents, students, and teachers will all be influenced. Currently, China government has popularized the compulsory education. But the imbalance of each region concerning about the education is still a question. This paper takes a deep look into these three subjects. The first main part of the paper discusses how the policy promotes the family relationship and children’s personalized development and analyzes the possible factors that contribute to parents’ irregularities and the strategies for parents to deal with the policy better. Then, this policy can provide a new insight to students and help them become better citizens. However, more research could be done on eliminating unnecessary competitions and decreasing the burden on students more effectively. The last part of the paper discusses how the double reduction policy helps teachers to build a close relationship with students and gain enough vocational respect. It reveals the teaching dilemma caused by the double reduction policy and suggestions as well. The researchers analyzed these three points through several data, surveys, and statistics to reveal a precise impact and provide suggestions to relative readers.

Keywords: “Double reduction” policy · Education anxiety · Involution

1 Introduction

In 1986, The Sixth National People’s Congress officially adopted the Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China. China implements nine-year compulsory education. By 2020, China comprehensively improved the quality of education, basically achieved balanced development within the region, and ensure that school-age children

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and adolescents receive good compulsory education. China's Double Reduction policy was launched on July 24, 2021. The full name of the "Double Reduction" policy is Opinions on Further Reducing the Burden of Homework and Off-campus Training for Students in Compulsory Education. On the one hand, the double reduction policy is essential in reducing the excessive quantity of compulsory education, students' homework, and off-campus training. On the other hand, the double reduction policy plays a critical role in developing students' all-around ability. In addition, family educational expenditure on off-campus subject training and parents' caring burden and the cost will also decrease.

Some researchers have discovered that it is common to see that education anxiety exists among parents because of the generalization of the educational involution. Then parents violate the policy out of compensatory psychology and still take their children to cram schools [1].

Another group worth noticing is the K12 students' group, representing the student group from kindergarten to twelfth grade. According to "The Current Impact of the Double Reduction Policy-In off-campus Training and K12 student Cases," these student groups tend to believe that their parents will not consider them a waste of money only through hard work. Unfortunately, this thought proves to bring damage to students both mentally and physically [2].

This paper will discuss the impact of the Double Reduction policy on three stakeholder groups in the compulsory system in China. The first main session will state how the policy promotes the family relationship and children's personalized development, how potential parental irregularities appear, and how parents accommodate the policy well. Then, from the student's side, the second main part will state problems through the ecological system theory, what changes brought by the Double Reduction policy and how students adjust their learning strategy under the double reduction policy and then give some policy optimization suggestions for suggestions students. As for teachers, the third part talks about what the policy brings about to the students during schooling time. Moreover, problems caused by the after-school custody are discussed, such as increasing teachers' working hours and worrying about physical and psychological health. Finally, some strategies for improving teachers' quality and policy optimization suggestions for teachers will be stated last.

2 The Impact of the Double Reduction Policy on Parents

2.1 Double Reduction Policy Promotes Family Relationships and Children's Personalized Development

According to the following authoritative investigation, China Education and Research Institute for Social Development published an effectiveness survey about the national "Double reduction" policy. Both surveys indicated that the "Double reduction" policy had been widely approved by the stakeholders, especially by principals and students, which are about 96.8% and 96%, respectively [3]. It demonstrates that the early implementation of the "Double Reduction" policy played a positive role in reducing compulsory education of students' homework and pressure. In addition, students gain more opportunities for their personalized development. According to the chronosystem from

the ecological system theory, apart from improving the literacy level of children, education also aims to help children to find what they are interested in, what they are really good at, and what they want to engage in throughout their whole life. Furthermore, it means that education can cultivate children to form a relatively correct ideology, guiding them to own happy life.

If the “Double Reduction” policy implements according to its ideal goals, it can result in the following two positive aspects. On the one side, the “Double Reduction” policy plays a significant role in regulating the after-school subject training market to decrease the unreasonable and high expenditure on extracurricular tutoring and reduce the unfair educational phenomenon. On the other side, more parent-child time can increase after students complete a reasonable quantity of homework. Furthermore, it helps to improve the quality of the parent-child relationship, strengthen the family’s cohesion and create a more harmonious family atmosphere, all of which can facilitate students’ healthy and psychological growth and enhance parents’ happiness level. Furthermore, it is an excellent opportunity for parents to dig up children’s potential. From the micro-system, children at their early ages are still developing their values and personalities. Moreover, most importantly, the personality formed during childhood will also affect their adult behavior. The intimate people around them, especially their parents, play a critical and decisive role in children’s comprehensive development. For example, parents’ positive responses can give their children a sense of security.

2.2 Factors Contributed to Parents’ Irregularities

However, with promoting the policy deeply and further, there is a phenomenon that increasingly parents as beneficiaries hold an ambivalent attitude towards the “Double Reduction” Policy because of the anxiety on education, and they even refuse the implementation of the policy. The latter violating behavior is called “Family Resistance”. And the manifestation of Family Resistance is that parents increase children’s studying burden by requiring them to take after-school subject training [4]. Moreover, the effectiveness survey about the national “Double reduction” policy also indicates that 16.5% of students still participate in after-school subject training [3]. Thus, the potential irregularities increased, raising the difficulty level of promoting the “Double Reduction” policy. And in this part, the paper discusses what and how those possible factors contribute to such phenomenon in detail.

Most parents, even those with a tertiary and higher education degree, will suffer a lack of confidence in their ability to lead their children to a correct and promising future. According to data collected from the Publicity Department of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Youth League and the Social Survey Center of the China Youth News, 73.2 percent of the 511,043 parents involved in the survey said that anxiety came from the lack of the ability to tutor their children well [5]. For example, some parents with low degrees of knowledge are worried that they cannot tutor children’s homework correctly; Some parents who are occupied with their work and have little extra time allocated to accompany their kids cannot balance their work and family. The aforementioned different conditions all can lead to the sense of parents’ education anxiety. Parents are anxious about children’s grades, whether their children can enter the next grade, whether they will be accepted to their dream school, and so on, which means that parents lose

control of children's future under so much uncertainty. Parents' desire for control as a fundamental human motive cannot be satisfied. So, parents purchase services as compensatory consumption to alleviate such negative emotions, such as investing the majority of family expenditure in children's extracurricular tutorials and one-on-one mentoring. However, according to a survey, the effect of extracurricular tuition is disappointing. There are three main subjects in Chinese compulsory education system, Chinese, mathematics, and English. Only the math extracurricular play a positive and influential role in children's grades, but the effect is negligible. At the same time, Chinese and English do not have apparent effects [5]. Study progress cannot be separated from extensive practice and long-term accumulation, which means that it cannot show immediate benefits. Moreover, an overload of after-class subject training occupies children's recreational time, which does harm to children's physical and mental health. Thus, parents are supposed to invest rationally and not follow the general tendency blindly.

There is another factor contributing to irregularities. Although taking their children to cram schools is parents' personal behavior, some still existing cram schools also provide a chance for parents to spend their money. After the "Double reduction" policy was launched, the number of cram schools has decreased drastically and the extracurricular subject training industry is becoming more standardized. However, the society witnessed a greater variety of tutoring forms have been developed, such as in the name of the domestic service, crowdfunding for the personal tutors. Such still existing cram schools have some new characteristics. Some cram schools are run very secretly. Therefore, the forms of tutoring become more variable. However, in this way, the quality of teachers, their professional level, and the regularity of teaching cannot be guaranteed. So it is easy for most parents, as ordinary people, to be deceived by some irregular contracts. Additionally, the effect of tutoring cannot be met.

2.3 Parents Form Correct Educational Concepts

It is essential to instruct parents to form correct educational concepts. Most Chinese parents are strict with their children and only focus on their children's scores rather than children's comprehensive development. Ignoring children's other requirements enables them to have resistant emotions toward the study. So, parents might listen to children's minds and respect their thoughts and feelings. Every child is good at different things, so parents might pay more attention to personalized development by digging up children's potential abilities and cultivating them.

Additionally, the "Double Reduction" policy enables parents to realize the importance of combining school and family in children's education. Parents also have a new consciousness that children who fall behind in their studies cannot wholly blame schools and teachers. A large part of the responsibility lies with the parents. It is necessary that it can also occur to parents that they could also improve themselves along with the students. Both knowledge reserve and educational concepts should keep pace with time. According to the micro-system, all relationships must be two-way during the process of children's development. Namely, adults influence children's responses and children's decisive biological and social properties. Their physiological attributes also influence adult behavior. So, parents can enhance communication with their children and guide them to cultivate their subjective initiative. Such positive motivation can enable children

themselves to study subjectively rather than being in a long-term negative state. This is an action that may effectively prevent students from having a resistant emotion toward studying. During such a process, children can find entertaining methods to learn. All in all, children's growth needs the two-way efforts of the children themselves and their parents.

3 Impacts of the Double Reduction Policy on Students

Since the beginning of this policy, the government has been keen on regulating the outside institutions and providing extra classes in school to help the students with their school work. These adjustments have significantly changed the student's life and have made changes both negatively and positively.

3.1 Exam-Oriented Learning Environment Before the Double Reduction Policy

After the establishment of the People's republic of China in 1949, people started to value education's importance. After nearly ten years of the cultural revolution, Gaokao re-appeared as the primary way to select between students to get higher education. With an elimination rate reaching nearly 20 percent, fierce competition has appeared since then [6]. Due to the impact of the chronosystem, the thoughts of the competition were passed on to generations. This greatly burdened the students and caused some to prepare for Gaokao even when they were still in primary school.

The micro-system also affected students, dramatically changing the education environment after Double Reduction. Under severe competition, involution appeared after students recognized higher education as a scarce resource. Due to the visible competition around their peers, they start to gain pressure from the environment and also from their parents. As a result, they were greatly influenced and forced to learn knowledge far ahead of their original grade from outside institutions only to ensure they would not fall behind others.

To make things worse, with the two-child policy and, later on, the three-child policy appeared, this situation escalated as the population grew increasingly. The pressure was given to the students and their parents. K-12 education gradually became an enormous business and started to cost a heavy financial burden for the parents. As for the students who need to spend all their time studying academic knowledge without proper rest, 67% of them failed to reach the required amount of rest [7]. Bit by bit, this situation turns out to be a problem as students begin to react negatively toward all the extra classes.

3.2 The Changes Brought by the Double Reduction Policy

Under the need to change the situation and break the negative impact of the micro-system, the policy aims to reduce the amount of homework significantly and eliminate outside academic institutions. This was meant to decrease the anxiety given to the students and limit the visible competition for students. As a result, they now can have more freedom in arranging their time and learn more practical skills. However, involution still occurs and unconsciously increases the anxiety of students.

However, can the involution be eliminated by eliminating outside academic institutions?

3.2.1 Benefits for Students from the Double Reduction Policy

The policy has been implemented for more than one year, and all the outside institutes have disappeared from the vision of the people. Analyzing the changes in schools shows clear indications of the positive sides.

To start with the extra-time class. After the disappearance of outside institutions, schools are asked to provide extra-time classes in school. This will be a free period for teachers to provide extra help, and students can voluntarily choose whether to attend. With the course, students can successfully finish their homework in school and won't panic if they meet with any difficulties when they are doing their homework.

Through a conversation with fourth-grade students who were impacted by this policy, many benefits were brought up. According to him, assignments such as previewing and dictations can now be done in school. This not only will decrease the burden on parents but also, under the supervision of teachers, students are now required to do such work correctly. In the long run, this action will be expected to increase the students' learning habits.

What's more, it is believed that students can better prepare for society and gradually learn to be qualified civilians. They now have the opportunity to plan their free time and learn practical skills. Instead of spending all their time between classes and struggling with math puzzles, they were now able to finish most of their school work in a reasonable time. With the rest of their time, schools start to arrange classes such as cooking, growing vegetables, and cleaning. These are the skills that may come in handy when they start their independent life. Therefore, under the Double Reduction Policy, students from China will be fully prepared when they enter society and can be guaranteed an independent life.

In addition, students can enjoy a good rest and stay healthy. By decreasing the amount of work, the government has been purposefully canceling the impact on students from the Micro-system. Students can stay away from contentious competitions and gain a good rest. This policy is meant to decrease the anxiety of the students and let them stay both physically and mentally healthy.

Lastly, this can also provide students with a new insight and let them discover their own interests. This policy will allow students to find a new way out and try out different things. With more time, it gives them an opportunity to practice more and "escape" from the world where exams and grades matter the most. Their personal interest will be respected, and they can start to pursue their passion in life.

3.2.2 Negative Effects Brought to Students Due to the Double Reduction Policy

Regardless, this policy still has its downsides and may sharpen the problem in an unexpected way.

To start with anxiety. Though this policy is meant initially to decrease pressure and stress for students, it will only make students struggle more when their peers' progress can't be easily seen. For example, many students attend the same cram class with their classmates to ensure they won't be left behind. However, once students all do their studying at home, they may start to be suspicious about falling behind schedule, leading

to further entanglement. This outcome will only increase innovation and may potentially cause a student to gain more pressure.

Secondly, the policy may lead to a lack of academic resources. When students meet with an academic question when they are out of school, there will be no extra teachers to help them. Especially if the student is preparing for a test, no additional help will cause a student to lose focus in their studies and cause adverse effects.

Finally, students who were used to having classes arranged may not be prepared for independent life. Before the policy, it was customary for a student to have a fully booked schedule that would not allow them to slack off or be addicted to games and such. However, the students now have plenty of time out of school, this may be beneficial for some students who can manage themselves well, but it also might be harmful to the kids who cannot manage themselves so well, for they might spend too much time on electronic games or other activities that not good for their health.

3.3 Recommendations for Changing and Adjusting

3.3.1 Students' Learning Strategy Under the Double Reduction Policy

By letting students learn practical skills and giving them more free time, it's clear that students will be expected to learn about independence. Though it may be a significant shift for most of the students, it is crucial for students to understand the need for time management and how to allocate their resources to make the most out of it. It's necessary to make changes before it gets too late. Students should know skills like this will also be important when they are at work or when they are living independently. Also, students may have to try and decrease all the imaginary pressure. Under the school normal class time and the extra-time class, students should have to learn and trust that their teachers have fully prepared them for all the upcoming exams and challenges and willingly diminish involution as it will be harmful themselves as well.

3.3.2 Policy Optimization Suggestions for Students

Since the beginning of this policy, visible changes have been made, and it has created many positive effects. However, the policy could still improve and potentially have a better outcome. To start with, the policy could consider leaving a few institutions open and only limiting the class a student can attend. Through this, students may not have too much burden and could have a place to go to when they meet with academic problems outside of school. This may also reduce anxiety as it tells students there will always be extra help provided when they are in need.

Adding to that, the government could also set strict regulations on private tutors. To stop innovation entirely, the policy should let all the students face equity instead of equality. Given the students, the same outcome is likely to eliminate students trying to escape from the policy by using the extra resource.

To conclude, the Double Reduction Policy will require the students to make an adjustment to fit in with the new society. Besides a few downsides brought by this policy, it overall has a good intention and can bring practical changes to individuals and improve China's education system.

4 The Effects on Teachers

The double reduction is aimed at helping students unload the burden on their academy. However, it exists a strong link between the teachers and the students. Since the government issued the double reduction, the teachers and the students were influenced directly. Xinhua News said, “Chinese authorities have introduced a set of guidelines to ease the burden of excessive homework and off-campus tutoring for students undergoing compulsory education.” on July 24, 2021 [8]. And the teachers will be influenced positively and negatively.

4.1 The Occupational Respect of Teachers

The double reduction policy asks explicitly the teachers to arrange flexible and personalized homework for students. In 2015, the average homework time for primary and secondary school students in China was about three hours. Compared to the requested time in the double reduction policy, it far exceeds. The double reduction policy asks that the average homework time for primary school students is about sixty minutes and for secondary school students is about ninety minutes [9]. The reason why Chinese students spend massive time on their homework is that teachers are not accustomed to arranging targeted homework for students. And the authorities use this policy to issue this problem. The homework time of the students is restricted, and the educators have to meet the political needs. The homework quality will be highly improved. With individuation involved, the homework will be more suitable for each student. But how it can individuation accomplished depends on the daily conversation between the teachers and students. In this way, educators will pay more attention to students. And it is one of the advantages of the double reduction policy.

The courses in China can be divided into two sorts, main subject and subsidiary subject. One sort is the course that will be examined in the College Entrance Examination. The other is the course aimed at broadening students’ horizons. In China, it is very common that the teachers teaching the main subject will occupy the courses which initially belonged to the subsidiary subject teachers. And the subsidiary teachers have a receptive attitude towards this stuff. However, the purpose of these courses is to arouse students’ interest and then cultivate their own hobbies to become all-rounded. And the double reduction policy conveys the idea that the time used to be occupied by piles of homework is supposed to be given back to the students. Students have to be all-rounded. And the courses will not be divided into two sorts anymore. The subsidiary courses are as vital as the main subject. Therefore, the teachers who teach the subsidiary courses will get more attention and enough respect.

4.2 The Teaching Dilemma in the Double Reduction Policy

Nevertheless, the double reduction is not entirely perfect. It has some problems as well. According to the report from the China Education Newspaper, after the implementation of the double reduction policy, after-school custody in primary schools has lasted for much longer, secondary schools have started self-study courses in the evening, and the campus resources have to open to students, teachers’ working hours have become

virtually longer [10]. With the policy proceeding deeper, it will cause a number of problems for teachers.

First of all, the after-school custody asks teachers to help students to finish their homework on campus. The new official figures show that China has 10.57 million teachers and 158million students, which means one teacher needs to tutor 15 students. In the urban area, this number is more likely to be more prominent [11]. It reveals a problem that one teacher is not enough to tutor students. In fact, each class in China has an average of 40 to 50 students. Undoubtedly, each student would have various questions that need to be figured out. Teachers cannot take care of each student. If they want, they will take massive time. This would lead to more pressure on teachers. To a certain extent, this kind of problem is contrary to the education fairness advocated by the double reduction policy. And teachers' health should be concerned as well. Teachers need to prepare for the class, mark the assignments, and write the teaching plan. Now they also need to help students do their homework after school, which undoubtedly increases mental and physical pressure on teachers.

Moreover, after the implementation of the “double reduction” policy, in order to ensure children's sleep time, many places postponed the morning class time of primary and secondary school students, but teachers should not be late for work because some parents will take early work due to work. When children are sent to school, as long as there are students who arrive at school early, teachers must not be late. The school has added after-school services. Teachers must not only help students with homework, check and fill vacancies for students, but also organize colorful activities in addition to preparing lessons, teaching and researching, correcting homework, and communicating with parents. After the “double reduction,” many media recorded the “teacher's day” in various ways, and many teachers worked more than 12 h a day [12]. The double reduction policy also asks a teacher to monitor the self-study courses during teachers' rest time. To some degree, teachers would sacrifice their own time to teach students. Just like we mentioned above, teachers are always immersed in their teaching tasks. Their available time is precious. Therefore, this movement would arouse the negative emotion in the teachers, which is likely to have an adverse impact on teaching quality.

4.3 Teaching Suggestions to Teachers

4.3.1 Improve the Quality of Teachers

The double reduction policy has strict requirements for teachers. As a consequence, teachers have to adjust themselves to build a harmonious relationship with the double reduction policy.

Firstly, innovation in teaching becomes much more significant. With the increase in the student's time in school, teachers can only use innovative teaching methods to realize the diversity of school education, which would make students willing to stay in school and improve their efficiency. Teachers could start from the details, like changing the way of teaching and learning, which means using some efficient and interesting teaching tools and platforms.

In addition, another suggestion to teachers is to coordinate their professional roles and personal life. The implementation has lengthened the working hours of teachers, and

the conflict between professional roles and personal life will become more prominent, which has an utmost impact on teachers' work status, motivation, and career expectations. Teachers had better not only ensure the completion of their own work but also took their family and personal life into account.

4.3.2 Policy Optimization Suggestions for Teachers

After the double reduction policy, teachers' working hours are extended by nearly 2 h, which is equivalent to an increase of a quarter or a fifth of their working hours. As the workload increases, the wages should also increase as well. Or we can think about it from another angle. Teachers' working hours extension also means the problem of supply and demand imbalance. Appropriately supplementing the teacher posts is also a good solution. For instance, some retired teachers could be rehired to help students to finish their after-school homework.

Another suggestion is that social forces could participate in after-school services to reduce the extra burden on teachers. After-school services include arranging for students to finish their homework in school, reading independently, doing sports, learning art and science, taking part in labor practice positively, and so on. This arrangement could not only be accomplished in school but also can be finished on off-campus sites. These arrangements ask schools to cooperate with social resources, like museums, universities, art galleries, and so on.

In conclusion, the double reduction policy requires the teachers to innovate and adjust their own position between the heavy work and their personal life. At the same time, the students need to change as well. The supply and demand imbalance should be removed, and then all educational resources should be applied to improve the education system in China.

5 Conclusion

This paper illustrates the current impact of the double reduction policy on parents, students, and teachers. For one thing, the double reduction policy makes parents attach importance to cultivating their children and digging up their potential. Moreover, students could finish their homework more efficiently, and they would have more chances to become qualified citizens with plans and practical skills. But the policy will lead to a problem that students would be concerned about the involution between their peers. As for the teachers, the double reduction policy would build up a closer relationship between teachers and students, and the subsidiary teachers can get more attention due to the course optimization. Turning to the other side, the burden on teachers increased virtually, and their work could not meet each student's needs. This paper also comes up with some tentative suggestions. Maybe this advice is not mature enough, but it still aims at promoting the improvement of the double reduction policy. Parents could focus more on children's comprehensive competence and dig their personal potential. Students are supposed to become independent gradually, and the policy maker should make adjustments to private tutoring. Eventually, teachers should innovate the teaching methods and balance their work and personal life. The government could expand enrollment to

remove the imbalance between supply and demand. With these incomplete and tentative suggestions, the double reduction policy will be optimized and more helpful. The research aims at revealing the precise influence on readers. Additionally, future research should be devoted to the impact on the off-campus training industry, which should be investigated in the future.

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