



Research on the Impact of the Double Reduction Policy on Educational Institutions and K-12 Students

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Abstract. The double reduction policy is still a trending topic in education policy in China right now. This research paper seeks to examine the impact of the “double reduction” policy on the out-of-school industry and K-12 students through qualitative analysis. Some statistics and recent news will also be collected as new strategies or new responses may emerge during the research process. The findings collected so far suggest that the double reduction policy has a great influence on both the after-school industry and K-12 schools. The tutoring industry has been adjusting its business scope one by one, with some companies developing new quality training businesses for extracurricular beneficial supplements and some choosing vocational education. Some institution personnel will also choose a more stable future direction, examining the editor to be a school teacher. On the other hand, according to current surveys, students in K-12 schools appear to be benefiting more, with less homework and more time outside of school. Students are able to develop physically and mentally simultaneously.

Keywords: Double Reduction Policy, Primary and Middle School Students, Off-school Education Industry.

1 Introduction

Since the 21st century, after-school tutoring (AST) institutions have been growing in China and almost everyone is surrounded by friends or classmates who attend AST. In foreign countries, tutorial institutions are known as “shadow education”. On July 24, 2021, the General Offices of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council issued the “Opinions on Further Reducing the Homework Burden and off-campus training Burden of Students in Compulsory Education” (hereinafter referred to as the “double reduction” policy) [1]. As it is named, the “double reduction” policy overall aims to reduce students’ homework burden and off-campus training burden. The reformation requires improving the quality of school education, regulating the management of out-of-school training institutions, reducing the burden on students and parents, and promoting “holistic education” (the integration of Moral, Intellectual, Physical, Aesthetic, and Labor Education) of students. The current studies among scholars on the double reduction has been more focused on discussing the impact of the double reduction on AST institutions and the double reduction on students. However, this study

in addition to exploring the impact of the “double reduction” on educational institutions and thus their choice of future direction, also explores the impact of the policy on K-12 students after the change in AST classes. To provide more comprehensive information for subsequent scholars to look into. Based on previous and current academic research on the topic, this paper discusses the phenomenon of double reduction in two blended ways, citing articles from China Knowledge Network and Google Scholar as well as some news reports.

2 The Impact of the “Double Reduction” Policy on AST Industries

2.1 AST Transformation — Quality Education/ Adult Education/ Cross Field Approach

The launch and implementation of the “double reduction” policy have triggered a dramatic change in the out-of-school tutoring industry, with many companies losing several percent of their stock prices. Companies in the after-school tutoring industry thus had to seek other ways to survive. Wang Junjie, director of the Department of Administration of the School of Public Administration of the China Institute of Labor Relations, applies several suggestions to the AST institutions: firstly, education and training institutions that focus on subject education can shift their teaching programs to quality education, adult education, vocational education, etc.; secondly, improving the quality of school education includes applying for excellent teachers so that the institution’s staff can apply for jobs in schools; thirdly, refiguring other professional areas in terms of applying for a career [2].

Quality Education. In February 1993, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the “Outline of China’s Education Reform and Development”, which proposed that “primary and secondary schools should shift from exam-oriented education to quality education, that is, by improving students’ ideological and moral, cultural and scientific, labor skills and physical and mental qualities, improving students’ ideological and moral, cultural and scientific, labor skills and physical and mental qualities, promoting students’ vivid and lively development, stimulating the unique characteristics of each individual, and improving the quality of the nation as a whole.”[3] Since then, China has been committed to promoting quality education in K-12 schools. However, the heavy workload after school and the non-stop tutoring sessions from weekdays to weekends have left students with insufficient time and energy to develop skills other than those required by the exams, such as arts and sports.

Tomorrow’s Advancing Life (TAL) company is one of the many large companies betting on quality education among the many education and training companies. The company’s founder, Zhang Bangxin, said that TAL’s business focus will change from curriculum training to quality training that develops children’s “lifelong ability to benefit”. Their decision to transform lies in the fact that quality education has ushered

in a new phase. Under the guidance of the policy and the changing concept of education, parents are not only concerned about their children's academic performance but also increasingly concerned about the development of their children's thinking, art, and other aspects [4]. In September 2021, one of the brands under TAL called Think Academy launched a new program, focusing on innovative quality education for children and youth aged 3-16. Adhering to the three educational philosophies of "stimulating interest, developing thinking, and cultivating ability", the brand has developed its own curriculum for four major categories: creative thinking, humanistic creation, science experiments, and programming. Through group, experiential and project-based classes, children are encouraged to think on their own and do hands-on work to develop the five basic skills of reading, logic, hands-on work, cooperation, and expression to promote students' individual development [5].

Adult Education / Vocational Education. GAOTU is another well-known company that focuses on curriculum AST before "double-reduction" came out. Unlike TAL, Gaotu decided to reform its business to include adult education and vocational education. "The China Education Modernization 2035" policy in 2019 puts forward eight basic concepts to promote education modernization, one of which proposes to focus more on lifelong learning. The policy aims to build a modern education system that serves lifelong learning for all, establish a new pattern of education governance with the participation of the whole society, and universalize high-quality preschool, higher education, and vocational education [6]. While promoting adult education can directly and effectively improve the quality of laborers, labor productivity, and economic benefits, vocational education can improve one's endogenous motivation and quality in each field which may later provide industries with more demand and high-quality talents [7]. According to the forecast by China Business Industry Research Institute, from 2016 to 2022, each year the size of China's adult education market is cascading, reaching 663.7 billion in 2016 while 2022 is forecast to reach 1,327.1 billion yuan [8]. Therefore, as more and more adults have a concept of lifelong learning and thus choose to devote themselves to learning again, Gaotu has chosen to step into the market of adult education and vocational education. Gaotu has already offered many adults education programs such as graduate school, finance and economics, public service, and study abroad [9]. Considering the different paces of adults' lives Gautao has launched a one-stop online learning platform that combines life and recorded lectures, thus making the lecture mode more in line with the public and more adaptable to the rhythm of adults' daily life [10].

Cross-Field Approach. New Oriental Education & Technology Group, known as one of the largest and most well-known AST education companies in China, aims to transform its business not only within the education field such as quality education, but also launched active exploration outside the education field. Just one month after the double reduction policy approach, New Oriental established the Quality Education Growth Center with the aim of changing the original exam-oriented education and the major subjects to quality education to cultivate students' reading, language, art, and

other aspects and follow the national call to promote the integration of moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education [11]. The growth center has set up six sections: the Academy of Chinese Studies and Reading, the Language and Business Literacy Academy, the Arts and Creativity Academy, the Nature Science and Creativity Space Academy, the Intellectual and Physical Sports Training Center, and the Quality Parenting Studying Center, in which to cultivate children's aesthetic ability, creativity, and imagination [12]. Gaotu Techedu (NYSE: GOTU), tried to develop its business into adult education, such as accounting, adult English, and national civil service training. Although its 2020 revenue was not high, it was a starting point for the company [13].

2.2 Promotion or Transformation of Teachers

In her article, Wang Ying argues that teachers in AST generally perceive school teachers as having a higher social status than they do regarding professional identity and that society, students, and parents also see them as less recognized [14]. Therefore, for those teachers who want to stay in the AST institutions while actively following the policy requirements for their own transformation and hiring senior master teachers in the field, they should also be in accordance with the concept of quality requirements for teacher skills training.

However, a staff member of the China Association of Private Education mentioned that training institution staff is in high demand in private K-12 schools [15]. For AST teachers wanting to recruit as teachers in schools, they should meet 3 major requirements for applying for a teacher's job as follows.

1. No matter which school section of the teacher recruitment examination, students are required to have the corresponding school section and curriculum teaching qualifications.
2. Age needs to be under 35 years old graduate students, PhD. and above curriculum in some areas can be relaxed to 40 years old.
3. The major studied at university and the professional position applied for must be similar or the same [16].

3 The Impact of the “Double Reduction” Policy on K-12 Students

3.1 Reduction of Students' School Workload

One of the implementation options of the double reduction policy is to focus on reducing the amount of homework in schools while strictly prohibiting the requirement of parents to check and correct homework. Murillo and Martínez-Garrido's research argued that the factor that impacts students' academic achievement does not relate to the amount of time students spend on doing homework, but that giving an appropriate amount of homework would help raise students' academic achievement [9]. Therefore, if the school does not exercise the students' ability by the quantity of homework but

adjusts the right content and the right amount of homework to exercise the students and improve the quality of homework, the students will be able to receive a less amount of homework but complete them more efficiently and allow some spare time for their own arrangements. With the current shortage of educational resources unevenly distributed, many schools in China usually have one teacher facing a configuration of 50 or 60 students in a classroom, making it challenging to take care of each and every student. However, correcting and checking students' homework is one of the teachers' responsibilities. Most parents are not professional educators and have different energy and time outside of work and different levels of literacy, so they will judge some questions with different standards, and thus it will not be fair. With less homework for each student today, teachers are under much less pressure to correct homework. This will not only make teachers more familiar with their students and give correct feedback in a timely manner but will also help teachers to adjust their teaching plans and assign more targeted homework by correcting students' homework and screening out unnecessary homework and exercises [17]. This also allows students to quickly know what they need to improve.

3.2 Enhancing Students' Mental Health

The "Inter-annual evolution of adolescent mental health in 2009 and 2020" shows that the detection rate of depression among adolescents in 2020 is similar to the probability 10 years ago, with 24.6% of depression detection and 7.4% of major depression. Moreover, depression increases with age, with about 10% of high school students being severely depressed. Besides, the study also found that sleep deprivation among teenagers is becoming increasingly severe: 95.5% of elementary school students have less than 10 hours of sleep, 90.8% of middle school students have less than 9 hours of sleep, and 84.1% of high school students have less than 8 hours of sleep. Research shows that the lower the level of depression among teens, the higher the quality of sleep. To maintain mental health, adolescents need to adjust factors such as interpersonal relationships, lifestyle habits, and personal psychological literacy levels [18]. Thus, without the AST classes and with the reduction of school work, it can motivate students to participate in more activities and develop different hobbies, thus adjusting their psychological state and not going to school early in the morning and going to bed late after homework as before, gradually consuming their physical and psychological condition. In this way, depression levels will gradually decrease and students will sleep better and better. In the long run, students will be better able to absorb knowledge in a healthy physical and mental state. To cultivate students with healthy physical and mental development, family education plays an important role. The "double reduction" policy pushed many parents to realize that they should return their focus from "exam-oriented" back to "people-oriented" and "quality education." Liu claimed that "The Double Reduction Policy was not only to reduce the pressure on students' studies but also to change the concept of cultivating talents." [9] The reduction in schoolwork generated by the policy and the increase in spare time means that parents now have more responsibility to organize their children's extra time.

4 Discussion

The “double reduction” policy, which bans off-campus tutoring, was designed to reduce the burden on students and eliminate the “in-school, out-of-school tutoring” phenomenon that pressures students in both directions. The ban on tutorials forces students to devote themselves to school because they will no longer have the opportunity to relearn what they learned in an outside school, such as in an institution [19]. Despite the ban on AST, most K-12 schools still follow a single assessment method with paper-and-pencil test-taking, which is not compatible with the orientation of quality education. In this case, if the test evaluation method is not changed, the dissolution of out-of-school cram schools will shift the pressure of students’ competition from cram schools to the school curriculum and increase in-school involution [20]. As mentioned earlier, the imbalance of educational resources today makes it impossible for teachers to take care of every student. Extra-curricular classes generally meet the needs of two groups of students: those who are behind in their studies and cannot catch up with the class, who cannot fully understand the content in class and cannot receive timely and targeted instruction from the teacher in class, and who need targeted instruction after class. The other category is for students who are excellent learners in the classroom and are no longer satisfied with what is being taught in the classroom, so extracurricular tutoring can help them master more knowledge, preview, or learn what will be taught later [11]. This means that while students are given less homework, more free time, and less competition and pressure from outside training, they are required to improve their self-learning and mastery of control. The goal of the double reduction policy is to put the center of instruction back in the school and to push students to stay on top of their teachers’ classes and comply with the tasks assigned in class. This will to some extent contribute to the elimination of the mentality that some students can slip out of school and make up for it during out-of-school tutoring, and will reduce the common occurrence of students deserting class and making up work.

Teachers in schools are more likely to optimize and adjust their classroom programs and pace based on the assessment of students’ overall and individual abilities. For students who may not be able to keep up in the classroom, teachers can provide after-school study sessions and tailor the tutoring to each student. It is recommended that schools reduce the ratio of teachers to students in the classroom so that teachers have enough time and energy to work with each student. Meanwhile, teachers need to have more communication and interaction with students in order to understand each other. Only when teachers know their students well enough can they help them to the best of their ability. Parents need to help their children organize their free time effectively and wisely, whether it’s time for school review, time to stimulate interest in art or sports, activities to increase family bonding or time for self-organization.

5 Conclusion

This policy of double reduction is decisive and resolute and is very good from the point of view of its aim to reduce the burden on students. Many educational institutions have

already decided on their new path whether to keep their business in the way of education such as quality education, adult education, and vocational education, or spread their field toward interdisciplinary business, such as live internet services. Another path that many education institutions choose is to apply to become a teacher in schools to have a guaranteed job and salary. For the students, it is necessary to reduce the pressure and thus promote overall development, whereas it involves the effort of students themselves, parents, and teachers in school together. For the time being, it seems that educational institutions and students themselves, as well as school teachers and parents, are primed to try to change in response to the policy's call. As national policies are designed to achieve collective prosperity, this policy will have a better and more profound impact on the Chinese education sector. Given the relatively short period of time since the policy was issued, it remains to be seen whether the selection of educational institutions is developing effective and whether school teachers and students, and parents are as effective as hoped in preparing children. Future research will continue to monitor the effectiveness of the institutions' new programs and the alignment of school instruction with students' knowledge acquisition.

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