



The Impact of the "Double Reduction" Policy on the Mental Health of Adolescents

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Abstract. On May 21, 2021, the 19th meeting of the Central Committee for Comprehensively Deepening Reform considered and adopted the Opinions on Further Reducing the Burden of Homework and Off-Campus Training for Students at the Compulsory Education Stage. At this moment, the double reduction series of policies are officially introduced. The core of the double reduction policy is to reduce the academic pressure of the students concerned and focus on their psychological health development. This paper analyzes the policy itself in terms of the reasons for its implementation, its content and multi-dimensional impact. At the same time, it also focuses on the social environment, school level and family level to explain the impact of the policy on the psychological development of young people. Finally, based on the impact, this paper proposes strategies and solutions, mainly including reforming of the education system itself, promotion of pilot work and good cases, community-wide family education discussion, and after-school practice work. In previous studies, it has been generally accepted that the impact of mental health education on students under the "double reduction" policy is mainly due to parent-student relationship problems and students' self-management of time. In fact, this explanation does not take into account the synergy between society, schools, teachers, students, and parents. Therefore, in the context of the double reduction policy, it is crucial to study the mental health of adolescents and its related effects in a comprehensive and multidimensional manner.

Keywords: double reduction policy, adolescent, mental health, education

1 Introduction

On July 24, 2021, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council issued the "Opinions on Further Reducing the Burden of Homework and Off-Campus Training on Students in Compulsory Education" (hereinafter referred to as the "Double Reduction" Policy) [1]. The Double Reduction Policy aims to improve the quality of education and teaching by comprehensively reducing the total amount and length of homework, improving the level of after-school services, and regulating the behavior of out-of-school training. The policy is being explored on a pilot basis, with the hope of finding better ways to reduce the burden and extending it

to the whole country. So far, the double reduction policy has been implemented for nearly a year, and the policy has produced many effects in the process of practice. Based on the analysis of the policy, this article discusses the status of the impact on adolescent mental health through various environmental and intrinsic psychological aspects for adolescent growth.

Previously, the mental health problems of our young children and adolescents have not been given enough attention. The 2020 Mass Mental Health Insight Report shows that more than 30 million adolescents in China are suffering from depression. Reasons such as educational involution, poor parenting practices, and school bullying have been threatening the mental health of young children. The double reduction policy provides an opportunity for society to focus on the mental health of adolescents. Therefore, in the context of the double reduction policy, it is crucial to pay attention to the mental health of adolescents and to study its related effects.

2 Literature Review

China has started to reduce the burden of students, families and schools after the development of education has reached a certain stage and the pressure on students, families and schools has become more and more intense. There is a consensus in China about the priorities and difficulties after the implementation of the double reduction policy. In the process of policy implementation, there is also a certain understanding about the supporting measures.

First, Yang, Dachuan, and Li mentioned in "The Current Situation, Problems and Countermeasures for the Implementation of the 'Double Reduction' Policy in the County: A Survey on the Governance of 'Shadow Education' Institutions in X County, Yunnan Province" that the double reduction policy is mainly to solve the problem of excessive burden of students' schoolwork [2]. After the policy was implemented, the number of students participating in after-school tutoring decreased dramatically, and those who were still tutoring chose "non-institutionalized" after-school tutoring classes more often. At the same time, the cost of tutoring classes has increased significantly, up to 300% for elementary, middle, and high schools.

In "Application of 'Double Reduction' Policy: Focus, Difficulties and Suggestions", Zhou Hongyu and Qi Yanlei [3] point out that the issues of whether school education can increase in quality and effectiveness, whether out-of-school training can be treated both in terms of symptoms and root causes, whether parental anxiety can be effectively reduced, whether students' burden can be rapidly reduced, and whether evaluation orientation can be completely reversed are important and difficult tasks in the implementation of the double reduction policy.

In "Implement Positive Assessment and Focus on Students' Mental Health: Practice Research under the Double Reduction Policy", Meng Lingxi found that the double reduction policy has some impact on students' psychology [4]. Students' psychological problems are polarized: some of them actively participate in in-class interactions and complete their study tasks seriously, while others become worse in their study status and their grades drop significantly.

3 Analysis of the Double Reduction Policy

3.1 Reasons for implementing the policy

The "double reduction" policy is an exploration of equity and balanced development in education. Both at the national level and at the family level, people need a double reduction policy.

At the national level, first of all, out-of-school tutoring takes up too much of the family's disposable income, resulting in insufficient consumer demand for family reproduction. With too much consumption in the tertiary sector, there is insufficient consumer demand in the secondary and primary sectors [5]. Moreover, the birth rate has dropped significantly, and with the opening of the third child, there are few families willing to have children. Out-of-school tutoring takes up too many resources, not only in terms of income, of course, but also in terms of time. Excessive learning does not create more value.

At the same time, "shadow education" takes up too many social resources but does not provide better and more applicable talents. Instead of choosing jobs that create value for society, many graduates from top schools come back to teach at top institutions to earn money.

At the family level, there are economic reasons as well as reasons for the child's personal development. Too much invalid homework and lack of time suppress the development of children's creativity and interests. The boom in training classes and the high price of schoolhouses affects the disposable income of families.

Ultimately, this phenomenon reflects the varying levels of regional teacher qualifications and the wide variation in school teaching resources and management levels.

3.2 Policy content

From May 21, 2021, to March 2022, China's Central Committee for Comprehensively Deepening Reform, the Ministry of Education, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee, the State Council, the General Administration of Market Regulation and other agencies issued a total of 32 supporting documents, including various opinions, notices, management measures and so on.

Policy implementation is being promoted in eight main areas.

- Comprehensively reducing the total amount and length of homework and alleviating students' excessive homework burden
- Improving the level of after-school services in schools to meet the diversified needs of students
- Adhering to strict governance and comprehensively regulating the conduct of out-of-school training
- New arrangements for national competitions
- Vigorously improving the quality of education and teaching to ensure that students learn enough and learn well in school
- Strengthen supporting governance and enhance support and guarantee capacity

- Doing a solid job of pilot exploration to ensure that governance is steadily promoted
- Carefully organize and implement to ensure effective results

3.3 Policy implications

Impact in education. According to Ma Kaijian and other authors, the "double reduction policy" will have a positive impact on the concept of education and education ecology in China [6]. The "double reduction" policy reinforces the main role of school education, and thus has obvious implications for the reform of school education and teaching. The policy will encourage schools to improve the overall quality of school education and promote the reform of homework design, rather than simply mechanical homework to take up students' time. In-school after-school services are generated and better improved. Other social organizations, enterprises and social groups, as an extension of school education, have strengthened the exploration of the system and mode of students' holiday activities.

Impact in economics. In County X, for example, after the implementation of the "double reduction" policy, the SSAI institution in the figure transformed from a subject-based "shadow education" institution to a non-subject-based "shadow education" institution, and was the only "shadow education" institution that successfully transformed. It is also the only "shadow education" institution that has successfully transitioned. Moreover, the number of students and teachers is declining. At the same time, the number of students and teachers at the non-transformed subject-based shadow education institutions is the same, i.e., they are out of business. This indicates that institutional tutoring institutions have been greatly affected. This is conducive to reducing the burden on families and restructuring the distribution.

Table 1. X County Subject Class Shadow Education Fee Statistics [2]

Grade	Classes and Fees before and after the "Double Reduction"					
	Before the "Double Reduction"			After the "Double Reduction"		
	One-to-One Class per people	Small Class per people	Evening Auxiliary Class per people	One-to-One Class per people	Small Class per people	Evening Auxiliary Class per people
Senior High School	70 Yuan per Hour	—	—	120 Yuan per Hour	—	—
Junior High School	60 Yuan per Hour	—	—	100 Yuan per Hour	20000 Yuan per Year	—
Primary School	—	500 Yuan Per Mouth	500 Yuan Per Mouth	70 Yuan per Hour	24000 Yuan per Year	2000 Yuan Per Mouth

Note: The vacant part of the table means there is no class type

Additionally, the "double reduction" policy has resulted in the emergence of extremely expensive agreement classes and one-to-one classes at the primary level. The

price will influence people's choice to either stop tutoring or pay a much higher price. This can lead to a greater focus on schooling and after-school practice and interest development. Expensive prices can affect the income redistribution situation, promoting a narrowing of the social gap and reducing the gap between rich and poor. It may also lead to a more stable social class.

4 Impact of Policy Rollout on Adolescent Mental Health

4.1 Wider-social-environment-level impact

After the implementation of the "double reduction" program on July 19, many provinces across the country began to take measures to issue various primary and secondary education guidelines to echo the policy.

Shaanxi Province, for example, took the lead in issuing "Opinions on Strengthening the School Mental Health Education Teacher Team" after the "double reduction" policy was promulgated [7]. The policy level clearly requires: full-time and part-time teachers should receive at least 30 and 12 hours of mental health education training each year; tilt the declaration of senior titles for mental health teachers; and tilt in funding support, scientific research project awards. At the social level, more attention is paid to the development of children's mental health, and it is rigidly implemented in the form of policies.

4.2 School-and-teacher-level impact

With the implementation of the double reduction, teachers are tested even more. Meng Lingxi has found that the psychological changes in students due to the double reduction policy require teachers to make timely adjustments to help children develop better [4]. The school will pay more attention to the psychology of the students and provide professional psychologists to help them. The double reduction policy has a strong impact.

At the same time, the pressure on schools and teachers is increasing. In the current social structure, "examination and promotion" is still the only and best way for most children. Schools are still under pressure to advance, but they also have to improve the quality of teaching. This is a big test for schools.

4.3 Family-level impact

In recent years, the incidence of psychological and behavioral problems and the prevalence of mental disorders among children and adolescents in China have gradually increased. According to the China Youth Development Report released by the China Youth Research Center and the International Liaison Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League, about 30 million children and adolescents under the age of 17 in China are suffering from various emotional disorders and behavioral problems, and child and adolescent psychological and behavioral problems have become an important public health issue.

After the double reduction, according to the survey, children's symptoms of depressive states decreased by 78.6% [8]. This is mainly attributed to the reduction in academic burden due to the reduction or even disallowance of extracurricular homework, the increase in time spent with parents due to the shift to home education, and the significant reduction in test anxiety due to the disallowance of tests or the ban on ranking. The initial effect of the "double reduction" has already been seen.

Parents' anxiety symptoms increased significantly after the "double reduction," with studies showing an increase of about 12.8% [9]. This is mainly because more parents are turning to homeschooling, and the balance between family and work is not easy. Parents are more worried about their children's lack of access to quality education resources, and about their children's lack of economic and social status due to the "general vocational diversion" and their choice of vocational education. Parents lack guidance on the experience of home education.

5 Related Strategies and Solutions

The education system should continue to deepen its reform. Use all kinds of measures to promote the balanced development of educational resources to ensure that high-quality educational resources benefit every child in a balanced way [10]; broaden the track by running vocational education and steadily developing vocational undergraduate education, so that more children can develop their own specialties and shine in the field of the industry they love.

Strengthen pilot work and promote excellent cases. Schools face new problems and challenges and need better learning objects. By increasing the pace and exploring excellent pilots, we can find ways to better suit most schools and reduce the stress and confusion of schools and teachers. This is necessary for the double reduction policy to spread.

A community-wide increase in the discussion of home education and a lesson in home education for parents. Parents are inevitably anxious when faced with a new situation. In the new situation, parents who are worried about their children's future growth may also need better education and psychological counseling.

The state and society need to take on the work of after-school practice. Parents need to balance work and family education work, and the task is also very heavy. The state and society need to share the work of after-school social practice for students to reduce the burden for parents and improve literacy for students.

6 Conclusion

The "double reduction" is not just a matter for the education system. Children are related to their parents, and parents are related to society. Education has always been a major issue related to the country's livelihood and is a field highly related to the needs of the country and the people. The whole society should take care of education, so that children can improve their abilities in their thirst for knowledge, instead of spending a lot of time on "brushing up" and undergoing intense and long training.

The double reduction policy allows education to return to its essence, so that children can develop in all aspects of moral, intellectual, physical, social and aesthetic development, and build a strong body and a tough spirit; parents have enough time to devote to family education, so that children can be accompanied and cared for, creating a harmonious family and social atmosphere.

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