

Analysis of Anxiety of Parents and Students after the Implementation of the Double Reduction Policy

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Abstract: The “double reduction” policy has been implemented since 2021 and has been in development for nearly two years. During these two years, many students and parents have undergone changes due to “double reduction”. This article helps more people understand the impact of the “double reduction” policy on primary and secondary school students, as well as their parents, and helps them understand why students and parents feel anxious about this policy. It aims to analyze the anxiety changes of primary and secondary school students, as well as their parents, after experiencing “double reduction”, and the data analyzed are all secondary resources. These second-hand materials are all from academic databases. After analyzing the literature, this article found that after experiencing the “double reduction” policy, the academic pressure of primary school students and the anxiety level of their parents have decreased to a certain extent. For junior high school students, their academic pressure has actually increased. The pressure on parents of junior high school students has also increased with the release of policies. The pressure of parents is reflected in different aspects, such as the future of children and the economy. For these conclusions, the suggestion of this article is that the country can promote policy development from four aspects. These four aspects are the government, schools, parents, and students. The government can collaborate with schools to provide free classes for parents, so that parents can better understand the role of the “double reduction” policy and avoid letting parents’ anxiety affect students’ mood.

Keywords: double reduction, parents’ anxiety, student pressure

1. Introduction

China’s education sector has advanced significantly since the reform and opening up, and there are now a lot more educational materials available than there formerly were. In 2020, there were 210,800 compulsory education schools in China, with 156 million students enrolled [1]. The primary school enrollment rate reached 99.96%, the middle school enrollment rate was 102.5%, and the nine-year compulsory education consolidation rate was 91.2% [1]. But with the progress of the times, more and more people are beginning to compete for educational resources during the compulsory education stage. People no longer worry about not attending school but start to worry about their children not being able to attend good schools. These vicious competitions have led to increasing academic pressure on students, which has brought negative effects on their families, schools, and society. The heavy academic burden has led to a decline in students’ physical and mental health, increasing the

economic and mental burden on parents. Young people are unwilling to have children because of the high cost of education, which has led to the decline of the birth rate [1].

In order to reduce the workload of students in compulsory education, the government has issued many policies to reduce their learning burden, but the effect is not significant because the policies cannot prevent the burden of off campus training from increasing. In order to reduce the amount of homework required for students enrolled in compulsory education and abolish all tutoring establishments, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council resolved to execute a “double reduction” program in 2021 [2]. The launch of this policy is mainly aimed at truly improving the level of school education, limiting the scale of subject based off campus training institutions, and then continuously regulating off campus training to reduce the burden on students. At the same time, this policy also aims to truly leverage the positive role of compulsory education in schools, allowing students to enjoy high-quality education within the school, in order to change the imbalance of existing educational resources.

However, there may still be parents and students experiencing anxiety due to “double reduction”. Although “double reduction” reduces the learning burden on students and the financial burden on families, there are still many parents who feel anxious because their children cannot access more high-quality educational resources, and students will also be under pressure from their peers. At the same time, the pressure on schools will also begin to increase. They need to adjust their teaching style to reduce students’ learning burden while also improving the teaching level of the school. More importantly, the government has begun to pay attention to the benefits of home school cooperation for students, and schools need to regain the trust of parents in the school’s educational level, as parents rely too much on off campus training institutions.

Based on the understanding of these situations, this article aims to analyze the changes in anxiety levels of parents and children after “double reduction” through literature analysis. The article first analyzes the changes in students and parents’ anxiety about “double reduction”. The research significance of this article is to enable more people to understand the “double reduction” and the changes brought about by this policy, and then provide suggestions for various social levels to reduce anxiety among parents and students.

2. Students’ Attitude Towards “Double Reduction”

2.1. Primary School Students’ Attitude Towards “Double Reduction”

Primary school students have two perspectives on “double reduction”. One side believes that “double reduction” has achieved real burden reduction because their homework has decreased, and the school’s extracurricular interest classes have also increased. At the same time, students have more independent rest time. Their workload has been reduced, the time required to complete homework has also been shortened, and their sleep time has increased. Meanwhile, their school has also offered more interesting courses for students to choose from. For example, badminton, gourd shreds, cooking skills. In some schools, the school even changed Math or Chinese classes to interest classes.

But some students believe that the “double reduction” still brings pressure to them, as the classmates and society around them are putting pressure on them. Society requires that only those with good grades can obtain better jobs, and students around them are also looking for different tutoring institutions to improve their learning abilities, entering classes with better grades, which has caused students to worry about their future.

2.2. Junior High School Students’ Attitude Towards “Double Reduction”

Junior high school students generally believe that the “double reduction” policy will not reduce their burden. After the “double reduction”, the demand for further education has not changed, and the

recruitment system and educational evaluation mechanism have not been reformed, which means that the complexity of the original learning materials has not changed. In addition, the “double reduction” has reduced the number and duration of homework, and learners have less repetitive training and practical activities. They have not effectively mastered and stored appropriate schemas in long-term memory, occupying too many cognitive resources. This will lead to a high level of internal cognitive load [3]. Unreasonable teaching design and low teaching efficiency of teachers can also increase students’ academic burden. Unsuitable learning strategies increase students’ cognitive load (still using traditional learning methods), lack more cognitive resources to process elements of learning materials, and low learning efficiency [3].

In short, middle school students’ anxiety has not been reduced. Firstly, they need to learn more knowledge than elementary school, which can help them enter a good high school, continue their studies, and then enter a good university. This is basically a process that every Chinese student needs to go through. The “double reduction” has reduced their workload, but also increased their learning pressure. The college entrance examination has not yet been completely reformed, and students still need to spend more time and energy on their studies in order to be admitted to universities, because the admission standards of each university have not decreased, and the difficulty of the college entrance examination has not decreased. Secondly, knowledge in junior high school is much more difficult than in elementary school, and many students cannot keep up with the learning progress of other students after entering junior high school, which can also cause their anxiety. Finally, students in the compulsory education stage are sensitive and fragile in their hearts, and cannot conduct comprehensive and objective self-evaluation, which can easily lead to cognitive biases. So when “important others” give negative feedback, students’ self-acceptance level and academic self-efficacy will become lower, and their learning anxiety will become higher and higher, showing other negative emotions such as fear of interpersonal communication, lack of self-confidence, rejection of learning, and sense of shame [4]. Also, due to the increasing difficulty of the curriculum, many middle school students also become anxious about their learning progress. Many students actively inform their parents that they want to attend extracurricular tutoring classes, and even different students in each class recommend their tutoring institutions to others. But when tutoring institutions were abolished, many students began to become anxious because they relied too much on extracurricular tutoring classes and did not have their own learning methods, which was also a blow for them. Especially when children from poor families see children from wealthy families seeking private tutoring, this exacerbates their anxiety situation as they do not have the money to seek tutoring.

3. Parents’ Attitude Towards “Double Reduction”

3.1. Primary School Parents’ Attitude Towards “Double Reduction”

Two factors can be distinguished in terms of how primary school parents feel about the “double reduction” policy. On the one hand, the “double reduction” approach does not worry parents of elementary school pupils. The parents think that their concern won’t be triggered by the “double reduction” policy. They believe that “double reduction” can reduce students’ homework burden, improve children’s abilities, and more comprehensively adapt children to society. At the same time, “double reduction” can further stimulate the education aspect of families and can achieve joint education between schools and families for children.

On the contrary, some parents may also believe that “double reduction” has aroused their anxiety. Many parents are unwilling to have their children receive less high-quality educational resources than other students, so they will spend more time and money on extracurricular tutoring, such as private tutoring. “Double reduction” also emphasises family education, but for most families, they are dual worker families and do not have enough time and energy to accompany their children. There is no

doubt that home education brings parents tasks other than work, and they cannot refuse this task for the sake of their children's education. What's more, parents don't know how to complete the task of family education. For example, some parents can not understand the homework assigned to their children at school. They think it is a waste of time. There are also some parents who do not have enough time to accompany their children to complete school assignments that require parents and children to work together.

3.2. Junior High School Parents' Attitude Towards "Double Reduction"

Parents' worries about tutoring have changed after the "double reduction" policy was put in place from worrying about tutoring to worrying about no tutoring [4].

Most parents of middle school students rely too much on off campus training institutions, and when the "double reduction" policy is released, they are anxious. Some parents believe that although the "double reduction" policy has reduced their children's homework burden, the college entrance examination has not been truly reformed, so students will still face pressure from the college entrance examination.

For parents, home school cooperation and the reorganisation of training classes have caused anxiety. Parents' excessive dependence on training classes has led to the marginalisation of family education, which prevents them from investing a lot of time and energy into family education. Family education has become a collaborator of school education. Parents misunderstand that reducing burden is a way to reduce students' academic time and threaten the improvement of their academic level [5]. Schools need enrolment rates, students and parents need educational benefits, and the training market requires economic investment and profits [5]. The three have formed a close alliance relationship, continuously weakening the dominant position and ability of parents in their children's education, and also maximizing the external dependence of parents on their children's education [5].

At the same time, when parents feel anxious about the abolition of tutoring institutions, various hidden and mutated illegal training behaviours such as "high-end tutoring", "home teachers", and "crowdfunding private teaching" have spread and spread, bringing heavier economic burdens to parents [4]. According to the market situation, tutoring usually costs over 1000 yuan per class, and a class only lasts for two hours. These prices are not a small expense even for middle-class families, and they are even unaffordable for less affluent families. One of the purposes of the "double reduction" policy is to reduce the financial burden on parents. Unexpectedly, after the implementation of the policy, the financial burden on parents has actually increased. Parents of junior high school students may also worry about affecting their children's learning for their own reasons. Due to their lack of a strong educational foundation and high wealth, many parents are unable to make significant educational investments in their kids, which makes it challenging for them to support their kids in future academic competitions. This can cause anxiety for parents who want to improve their social class through education [6].

4. Recommendation

The "double reduction" policy appears to have increased pupils' and parents' anxiety levels rather than reducing it. Before and after the "double reduction" strategy, researchers looked at how and what factors were influencing mental health difficulties among students enrolled in compulsory education. They used electronic questionnaires to conduct two surveys of 28398 middle school students and middle school students, and they discovered that the total level of despair and anxiety dramatically dropped after the "double reduction" program [7]. In order to alleviate the anxiety of students and parents, the author believes that changes should start from the following aspects.

4.1. Government

First, the government can construct a top-down propaganda system. The relevant departments should ensure that the media does a good job of online and offline publicity, guide society to form a culture of paying attention to “double reduction”, and help parents establish correct educational concepts [8]. Secondly, to stimulate the role of the community, relevant administrative departments should widely organise the community to carry out parental ideological work. By having community parent exchange meetings, community volunteer propaganda teams, and community theory preaching groups personally explain “double reduction” and its related plans to parents at home, parents can have a more comprehensive and detailed understanding of “double reduction” [8].

4.2. Schools

Schools can use the educational resources provided by the school to provide free classes for parents, guide them to better understand the “double reduction” policy and the importance of “double reduction”, and actively cooperate with the school for home school joint education to reduce anxiety. Schools should also modernise their approach to education and thoroughly foster morality, intellect, physical fitness, and labor. Second, teachers should think of their students as the major source of education while developing their teaching strategies [9]. Thirdly, teachers need to enhance the design of homework and how it is created.

4.3. Parents

Parents need to set an example for their children, as they can also perceive their parents’ anxiety. Parents need to actively participate in the classes offered by the school to understand the “double reduction” policy and how to participate in their children’s educational activities, in order to avoid causing anxiety to their children. Parents also need to respect their children’s wishes and hobbies, and creating a good and loving family environment can also help alleviate the pressure on parents and children. In modern times, many parents love their children based on their own likes, dislikes, and emotions, imposing unrealised ideals on their children and demanding that they follow their own ideas [10].

4.4. Student

Students also need to understand the “double reduction” policy and understand its purpose. They can use their spare time to explore their hobbies or improve their self-control and self-discipline. At the same time, they also need to understand parents’ anxiety emotions, rather than arguing with them. Students should first learn to have a correct understanding of themselves and not overly care about external evaluations. Students should also learn to view exams and evaluations correctly, and not just pursue high scores while neglecting the essence of learning [4].

5. Conclusions

In general, through analysis, it was found that although the pressure on students and parents has decreased, their fundamental pressure has not been reduced. Next, the research will analyse what causes the changes in anxiety. For example, students may face pressure from peers, parents, and society. Parents will also be under pressure from the economy and school. For primary school students, most of them still believe that the “double reduction” policy has reduced their burden, as their workload has been truly reduced, and correspondingly, the number of interesting classes on campus has also increased significantly. In Guangzhou, the vast majority of primary schools have implemented the 430 policies. The 430 policy means that the school has changed from 4.30 pm to

5.30 pm. Students need to take extra classes, which are used to learn extracurricular knowledge and mainly focus on playing. The “double reduction” policy has been implemented. However, for middle school students, the “double reduction” policy has invisibly increased their academic burden. The middle school and college entrance exams have become controllers of social division, and countless students need to compete for scarce admission opportunities to obtain one of the keys to success. However, not all junior high school students can quickly adapt to their identity changes and learning difficulties during their junior high school years.

The anxiety situation of parents has not been alleviated due to the “double reduction” policy. But for parents of junior high school students, the policy has increased their anxiety. Student academic achievement is the biggest influence factor of parents’ anxiety. The Chinese concept emphasises the importance of family. For most Chinese parents, their children’s grades are more important than anything else. As long as it is good for children’s grades, they will do their best to achieve this method. Obviously, for them, extracurricular cram school is a good way. Therefore, after the implementation of “double reduction”, parents’ anxiety level was even higher than before the implementation of the policy. Parents not only need to spend more time looking for home teachers, but also spend more money to improve their children’s academic performance. These investments in education can also put pressure on parents whose families are not wealthy.

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