

# *The Problems Encountered in the Implementation of the “Double Reduction” Policy and Suggestions*

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**Abstract:** China published the Opinions on Further Reducing the Students' Assignment Burden and the Off-Campus Training Burden in Compulsory Education in July 2021 in an effort to alleviate the academic burden of Chinese primary and secondary students. With the execution of the "Double Reduction" policy, however, numerous problems emerged. The school has cut the amount of homework provided to students, but parents will actively offer additional homework. On the surface, the number of after-school tutoring institutes has decreased, but these classes continue to proliferate covertly. This series of issues arises from the "Double Reduction" policy's disregard for parents' and children's needs to improve exam scores. We should take into account this demand by enhancing the education burden reduction policy further. This paper will use actual cases and empirical data to illustrate the problems that have occurred since the adoption of the "Double Reduction" policy, and give suggestion to improve the policy in combination with literature and the author's own ideas.

**Keywords:** “Double Reduction”, education burden reduction policy, examination-oriented education, after-school classes, homework

## 1. Introduction

In July 2021, China issued *The Opinions on Further Reducing the Student's Work Burden and the Off-Campus Training Burden in Compulsory Education* to reduce the study stress of Chinese primary and secondary students [1]. However, with the implementation of this "Double Reduction" policy, many problems surfaced. The pressure of learning in school has shifted to home, and the after-school cram classes are still rampant. It seems that the pressure on students has not decreased but, instead, has indeed increased. This phenomenon has aroused heated discussion in Chinese society.

Scholars have conducted a number of studies on the "Double Reduction Problem," including family anxiety caused by the policy, excessive academic pressure on the family caused by the policy, and how teachers should design homework to reduce students' after-class pressure. In previous studies, few studies have made an overall summary of the "Double Reduction Problem". So in this paper, the author will summarize some previous research results and show the problems encountered in the implementation of the "Double Reduction" policy from a more comprehensive perspective.

The author believes that such a social phenomenon has great research value. It reflects the current situation of China's education and the shortcomings of our country in reducing the burden of education. It is closely related to public policy, public management, and the quality of people's lives, as well as the interests of millions of parents, teachers, and students. Therefore, this paper is of great practical value. In this paper, the author will list the problems reflected in the implementation of the "Double Reduction" policy, and try to summarize suggestions to solve these problems according to relevant literature.

This paper will list two types of problems (the homework problem and the problem of after-school classes) arising from the implementation of the "Double Reduction" policy, and give relevant cases and data. After that, the author will give corresponding suggestions based on the information being collected and the author's own ideas.

The research on "Double Reduction" will help to remedy the policy defects caused by policy formulation mistakes and improper implementation, and further improve the theoretical system related to education burden reduction. This paper hopes to conduct targeted research on the negative impact of the "Double Reduction" policy, which will help educators to grasp the overall process of the implementation, find out the current problems in the implementation of the "Double Reduction" policy, and further promote the improvement of the policy.

## **2. Introduction of the "Double Reduction" Policy and Its Current Implementation Status**

The "Double Reduction" policy focuses primarily on two major factors. On the one hand, schools, the primary educational institutions, should implement reasonable workload controls. It is strictly prohibited to assign excessive homework or excessive homework under false pretenses. Also prohibited is asking parents to check and correct homework. In addition, schools and parents are required to strengthen student guidance. In addition to required schoolwork, schools and parents should require students to perform housework and engage in physical activity so that they can develop holistically. According to the policy, schools and parents should also assist students in avoiding addiction to electronic products.

Conversely, the after-school programs should be standardized. Specifically, advanced education is severely punished. It is strictly prohibited to profit from the education process, and it is also strictly prohibited to use national statutory holidays, rest days, winter and summer holidays for discipline training, so as to ensure the equality of students' education levels and to give them ample time to pursue their interests. Even online education and training are subject to stringent regulations. Classes held online shall conclude no later than 21:00 p.m. and shall not exceed 30 minutes in length. To ensure the autonomy of students' learning and thinking, it is prohibited to disseminate ideas such as "taking pictures of questions to search for answers," and the knowledge students acquire corresponds to their own age ranges.

Currently, one year has passed since the "Double Reduction" policy was implemented. Various schools across the nation have consistently promoted the improvement of the quality and efficiency of education in schools, significantly reducing the amount of homework assigned to students and effectively regulating the length of their studies. In addition, the disorder in after-school classes has been brought under control. The policy system has undergone continuous improvement. Together with relevant departments, the Ministry of Education has issued over 30 supporting documents to prevent the capitalization of extracurricular tutoring institutions. The Ministry of Education has also established a surveillance system and conducted secret visits during weekends, mid-autumn festival, national day, winter and summer vacations to prevent after-school training institutions from utilizing students' free time and vacation time for excessive learning.

However, the education burden of Chinese students has not been alleviated, and this has resulted in a number of issues: parents are now assigning additional homework to students in addition to the homework they receive from school, and after-school training institutions continue to thrive in secret. Due to the fact that the pressure of academic competition between students has not decreased, schools, parents, and students are under increased stress [2].

### **3. Problems in the Implementation of the "Double Reduction" Policy**

#### **3.1. Homework Problem**

Since the implementation of the "Double Reduction" policy, primary and secondary schools have made significant efforts to reduce the amount of students' homework, and have gradually limited students' homework with the following requirements: no homework written assignments shall be arranged in the first and second grades of primary school; the average time to complete the written assignments in the third to sixth grades of primary school shall not exceed 60 minutes; and the average time to complete the written assignments in the seventh through twelfth grades of primary school shall not exceed 90 minutes. These requirements appear to be quite exhaustive, but they disregard the initiative of parents and students.

The education system of China's primary and secondary schools is exam-centered, also known as exam-oriented education. All of the education and training that students receive in school is geared toward improving their performance on the exams that determine their progression (high school entrance examination, college entrance examination). Among them, homework is considered a crucial component. The purpose of homework is to help students retain the information presented in class, and it also serves as a test-like simulation. In China, it is commonly believed that the more homework a student completes, the higher his or her grade. This assertion is not without merit. There is a positive correlation between homework duration and students' grades, according to empirical research [3]. Undoubtedly, the reduction of parental responsibilities caused parental anxiety.

The burden reduction policy requires the school to strictly regulate the amount of homework assigned to students, which causes parents to worry about their children's ability to retain information. The school has designed a variety of "fancy homework" to improve the form and interest of homework. These assignments are intended to be "interesting," but they cannot always be relied upon to improve students' academic performance [4]. In order to ensure their children's competitiveness in the face of the pressure of college/high school entrance exams, parents must assign homework to their children. The provincial government of Guangzhou proposed a "no homework day," but upon implementation, it was discovered that some parents did not agree to cancel homework. Even if the school instituted a "no homework day," more than 45 percent of parents said they would still assign homework to their children on that day [5]. It appears that parents have a tendency to assign additional homework to their children when there is no homework or when the school assigns too little homework. Using a primary school in Guangxi Province as a case study, some scholars conducted a survey, and the results indicated that nearly 80% of parents would increase their children's homework under the "Double Reduction" policy [6].

#### **3.2. Problem of After-school Classes**

Importantly, the "Double Reduction" policy also reduces the burden of after-school classes on students. The policy clearly stipulates that after-school tutoring institutions must be strictly supervised, approved, their services standardized, and their supervision strengthened. The advertisements for after-school training programs disappeared immediately. It is now difficult to

find advertisements for after-school programs in public spaces and on social media. Numerous after-school training facilities filed for bankruptcy.

Extracurricular tutorial classes have gradually disappeared from the public eye. However, there is still a substantial market for after-school programs. Many after-school tutoring institutions disguise themselves as "summer camps," "restaurants," and "bookstores" in order to provide students with remedial instruction. If there is a strict censorship, after-school tutoring institutions will opt to offer online lessons to students. As a countermeasure to the policy that "after-school training institutions shall not conduct training on national statutory holidays, rest days, and winter/summer vacations," the training institutions have shifted their make-up class schedule to Monday through Friday evenings.

Since 2005, a series of education burden reduction policies have led to the formation and growth of market-oriented, large-scale extracurricular tutoring institutions in China. Despite the fact that the burden reduction policy issued at the time regulated the extracurricular tutoring behavior of schools and teachers, the competition for examinations became increasingly intense, and students and parents were unable to meet their examination needs in schools, so they were forced to seek assistance from extracurricular tutoring institutions. A follow-up survey of 8021 students confirmed that shadow education can significantly improve the academic performance of students [7]. Under the "Double Reduction" policy, after-school training institutions are able to maintain a market because parents and students genuinely believe that participation in after-school training will improve their academic performance, as opposed to merely being attracted by publicity and advertising of these institutions.

#### **4. Suggestion on Education Burden Reduction Policy**

Teachers assign less homework, while parents assign more; tutoring institutions are suppressed on the surface and flood in secret; these issues are a result of the "Double Reduction" policy that disregards parents' concerns regarding their children's academic performance. Currently, both the employment market and the prevailing viewpoint in China believe that academic credentials are the best evidence for evaluating a student [8]. If the school's instruction cannot meet the parents' expectations for their children's grades, it will be contrary to their needs.

As a matter of fact, both students and parents wish to lessen their educational load and improve their academic performance. However, the core concept of the current "Double Reduction" policy is to improve the overall quality of students by improving the quality of classes in school, making them more interested in learning in the classroom, better absorbing knowledge, and reducing the amount of homework after class so that students have sufficient time to pursue their own interests and hobbies. The issue is that the overall caliber of students could be enhanced, but their grades have not changed. In the context of an education focused on exams, some parents believe that test scores are the most important aspect of education. According to research, approximately 79% of respondents believe that, as a result of the Double Reduction policy, parents will exert more effort to find alternative means for students to improve their academic performance [9]. If you want to effectively implement the "Double Reduction" policy and reduce the burden on students, you must also place importance on the ability to improve grades in school.

Exam-focused education has been criticized for many years because it requires students to immerse themselves in exercises, practice repeatedly, and devote a great deal of time to exam preparation, which unquestionably places students under a great deal of stress [10]. Repetition of the same type of exercises not only consumes a great deal of free time, reduces the efficiency of learning, but may also tire out students [11]. However, this is not the only method of exam preparation. We can also study for the examination and improve our scores in an engaging manner. People disregard the needs of parents and students to improve their test scores at present. There is

little discussion in the educational community about how to better and more interestingly prepare for exams and improve students' test scores [12], which forces teachers to employ ineffective and outmoded teaching strategies [13]. The issue has not been resolved.

The author believes that policymakers should face up to the demands of parents and students to improve their academic performance, call on the educational community to investigate the topic of "how to improve the scores in a more interesting and efficient way," and then develop and implement educational burden reduction policies after reaching a more mature result, so as to truly meet the needs of parents and students for educational burden reduction.

## 5. Conclusion

During the implementation of the "Double Reduction" policy, an excessive amount of school-related learning pressure was transferred to families, and the problem of after-school cram schools was not fundamentally resolved. We must continue to implement new complementary policies and enhance the "double reduction". It is a very difficult task to lessen the burden of students. The existing education system must be fundamentally reformed, and we must exert greater effort in the future.

This paper contains several limitations. As a non-education major, it is difficult for me to avoid theoretical or research depth deficiencies when conducting problem-solving research. The "Double Reduction Problems" discussed in this paper are only a subset of them; it is extremely challenging to summarize them in their entirety. In the future, we will be able to use additional professional theories to explain and analyze the "Double Reduction Problem" from a more in-depth standpoint. The "Double Reduction Problem" can be summarized in a more comprehensive manner if we adopt additional data to support research and expand the scope of our research.

This paper examines the "Double Reduction Problem" from a macro perspective in an effort to inform the readership of the issues caused by the "Double Reduction" policy. At the same time, the author presented his own suggestion, with the hope that more people will consider it and enhance the education burden reduction policy.

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