

The Impact of the Double Reduction Policy on School Education

Lu Zhang *

College of Management, Gansu Agricultural University, Lanzhou, China

*Corresponding author: 965147292@stu.scau.edu.cn

Abstract. The excessive burden of students' homework is a drawback in the process of China's education development, and the state has enacted a series of policies for reducing students learning burden over the years. The "double reduction" policy to be introduced in 2021 is a crucial strategic choice for China's education on the path of high-quality development. For China's education to move forward, the "double reduction" policy in 2021 is essential. It introduces new standards for schools and teachers in compulsory education in terms of the quantity and quality of after-school programs, as well as teachers' participation in these programs. However, this policy inevitably increases the workload of teachers. This paper analyzes the impact of the "double reduction" policy on students, teachers, and schools from different perspectives and offers suggestions. The policy has effectively reduced the burden of students by banning out-of-school subject training, but at the same time, it has put higher demands on teachers' teaching, who have to design assignments carefully and set fewer, more precise and scientifically efficient assignments. The emergence of after-school services gives students more options for their time after school but also increases teachers' workload, requiring them to devote more time and energy after school.

Keywords: "Double reduction" policy; academic burden; after-school service.

1. Introduction

The main goal of education work is to support young people's healthy development, which necessitates the creation of a positive educational ecosystem. Entering the new era, the main contradiction of society has changed, and education will give more consideration to the significance of nurturing people. The implementation of moral education is the fundamental task, and high-quality development is the strategic theme. In terms of the division of functions in the education system itself, basic education is the root for children to get out of the home and learn skills, while higher education and vocational education are the ways for the young generation to pass to society and obtain a career. However, the enormous workload placed on kids by homework and extracurricular instruction in the fundamentals harms the educational ecosystem and gravely impairs their ability to grow into healthy adults. The General Offices of the Central Committee and the State Council jointly published Opinions on Further Reducing the Burden of Academic Work and Off-Campus Training at the Compulsory Education Stage (the "Double Reduction") in July 2021, proposing to deepen the governance of off-campus training programs and strengthen the primary role of school education. The main goal is to lessen the amount of homework and out-of-school training in the compulsory education sector. The purpose of this policy is to reduce the burden on students and to alleviate the overburdened families and the anxiety of education for all. Prior to this, out-of-school training, especially subject education training, was driven by other factors such as capital operations and developed gradually out of shape. Commercial education and training institutions turned to teach knowledge into a "commodity", and the commercialization of the education industry forced more and more students to overlearn and over-compete. The pressure of school work and heavy extracurricular studies put students under much pressure, which has much impact on their physical and mental health, which is contrary to the national advocacy of reducing the burden on students. The introduction of the "double reduction" policy has allowed more students to devote themselves to the school classroom. The policy has been in place for more than a year and has been discussed by various scholars and education experts, especially those from normal universities in China. For example, scholars have discussed the problems and solutions of after-school services in the context of "double reduction",

how to relieve parents' anxiety, and provided ideas and methods for homework design in the context of "double reduction". There is no denying that the implementation of the "double reduction" policy is both a problem and an opportunity for all educational courses. In order to provide helpful recommendations for school instruction under the double-reduction policy, this essay will study and discuss the effects of the double-reduction policy on several disciplines.

2. The Current Situation of School Education in China

Primary and middle school students in China have been facing a serious learning burden. Easing the workload for elementary and middle school students, returning time and freedom to students, and returning the initiative of development to students is not a new issue but an old topic to which national leaders and experts and scholars have always attached great importance. From the beginning of the founding of the country to the present, decades of burden reduction, but the result is that primary and secondary school students' school bags are getting heavier and heavier, and children are getting more and more tired; parents are spending more and more money, consuming more and more energy, and getting more and more anxious. At the same time, the development of many students is becoming more and more one-sided, and there is still a scarcity of all kinds of talents with a creative spirit and innovative ability that society needs and many teachers cannot find the real meaning in their busy and tiring work day after day and become burned out. The problem of students' academic burden and parents' educational burden plagues the government, schools and parents.

The educational goal of reducing the burden on students has existed in China for a long time. "Load reduction" has twice become a contentious subject in China's educational reform from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s and from the mid-1980s to the present [1]. In the earlier period, the majority of the academic pressure students experienced came from within the school, primarily as a result of the unreasonable educational structure's pressure for students to continue their education, and the scope of "load reduction" only applied to certain regions and schools. In the more recent period, however, the unprecedented development of education has resulted in a heavy workload for more complicated reasons. For instance, market variables and school choice are important. Statistics show that China has implemented 35 policies over the past 40 years to "ease the load" on elementary and secondary schools, including 11 specific policies and 24 associated policies [2]. Numerous policies show that the severe workload associated with education is neither new issue nor evidence of the enduring nature of the old issue. Although the content of the "load reduction" has increased in this period, it is mainly applied in schools and is limited to the amount of homework, exams, and competitions. In China, the academic burden on students has remained high in recent years, and from "compensating for the poor" to "cultivating excellence," in order to meet the demand for higher education, the functions of out-of-school training institutions have expanded, which has caused a disorganized growth in scale. China's K12 online education market reached 453.8 billion yuan in 2020, and there are 37.656 million online learners there.[3]. In the same period, the number of K12 students in school in China was 246 million (48,182,600 children in school, 156 million in compulsory education, and 41,630,200 in high school) [4] The number of online users reached more than 15% of the number of students in basic education [3]. Due to capital coercion, off-campus training institutions are increasing, interfering with the order of the national education system and damaging the education ecology. Academic pressure has also led to anxiety among parents of students who are stressed out. Rapid economic growth and the one-child situation have led to a shift in parental education from the traditional "laissez-faire" approach to a "carefully cultivated" approach, with competitive pressures moving forward, highlighted by the emphasis on their children's education. Off-campus training organizations recognize this shift, pushing "cultivating abilities" as a crucial requirement, raising parents' concerns about their children's future and further education, and introducing flawed educational notions and practices such as excessive comparison. According to data, for instance, elementary and secondary school students' families annually spend more than 10,000 RMB for each kid on education [5].

Compared with the previous policies of load reduction, one of the outstanding advantages of the "double reduction" policy is that it sees the key role of the classroom and the importance of improving the quality of teaching and learning to reduce the burden. The previous policies of reducing kids' burden did not pay sufficient attention to classroom teaching or only took "high-quality classroom teaching" as the goal or result of burden reduction; the "double reduction" policy, on the other hand, takes improving the quality of teaching as a significant way to reduce the burden and suggests a new idea of reducing the burden by "vigorously improving the quality of education and teaching, and ensuring that students receive adequate and quality education", emphasizing the optimization of teaching methods, teaching as much as possible and seeing to it that students fulfill the state's requirements for academic performance, so as to clear the obstacles for the promotion of the work of reducing the burden. The introduction of the "double reduction" policy also has different effects on different subjects.

3. Impact on Different Subjects

3.1 For students

The "double reduction" approach is intended to give pupils access to their regular growth time and space. For a long time, students in China have been under double pressure: the burden of homework in school and the burden of subject training outside school, which has caused serious academic anxiety, score anxiety and test anxiety. In recent years, the academic pressure on Chinese students has been increasing, and this has brought about many problems, especially in the physical and mental health of students. According to data released by the Ministry of Education, the overall myopia rate among children and adolescents nationwide will drop from 53.6% to 52.7% in 2018-2020 [6], the myopia rate has decreased under the intervention of myopia prevention and control efforts, but overall, the rate is still high, with the myopia rate among first-grade elementary school students as high as 14%. Other data shows that in China, the detection rate of depression in elementary school is about 10% and in junior high schools about 30% [7]. In addition, some parents blindly follow the herd, which increases the psychological burden of students, thus creating educational anxiety in the whole society. With the introduction of the "double reduction" policy, students' after-school time is no longer taken up by subject training, and they have more free time to do things they really like, so their academic burden is really reduced.

The "double reduction" policy's execution encourages the identification and development of children's and teenagers' potential. The "double reduction" policy enables students to free up their time and energy to engage in a variety of engaging academic and practical activities, discover and develop their own potential and talents, translate that potential into tangible skills, and use those skills to guide their professional decisions and career development.

3.2 For teachers and schools

The introduction of the "double reduction" is also a new challenge for school teachers. With the absence of out-of-school training programs, students will also be more dependent on schooling. In terms of curriculum design, teachers need to devote more time and energy to improving classroom efficiency. The "double reduction" policy specifies homework assignment norms, stipulating that first and second years of elementary school will not include any written homework assignments, third to sixth years of elementary school will not require more than 60 minutes on average to complete written homework, and first and second years of junior high school will not require more than 90 minutes. This requires that in terms of the after-school homework assignment, teachers should coordinate the balance, differences and integration of homework in different subjects. To truly reduce the academic burden for students, the quantity of homework should be reduced, but the quality of homework should be ensured. This means assigning limited, high-quality work that stimulates students' interest in learning and enhances their problem-solving skills. This requires teachers to improve the way of assigning homework, to ensure that the homework is small and precise, to set reasonable topics and

tasks, and to eliminate repetitive homework. Repetitive homework not only consumes much energy of students and parents but also consumes teachers' time to correct homework. Excessive, repetitive copying and repeated training not only create a heavy burden for students but also reduce students' interest in learning. Therefore, it is necessary to avoid repetitive homework assignments and optimize the layout of homework structure and improve the quality of homework assignments by combining students' knowledge, interests, and ability development levels. At the same time, it is true that the implementation of the "double reduction" also means that teachers have to take more responsibility: extended after-school service to achieve the "double reduction" policy is an essential measure to implement. After-school extended service can be divided into two categories: quality development classes, mainly referring to music, sports and art; the other category is personalized tutoring, which means that teachers have to teach according to individual differences and different students to provide different tutoring [8]. To efficiently lighten the load on students and parents, "double reduction" proposed full coverage of after-school services. Because of this, instructors' overall workdays are inevitably longer, and they must spend more time supervising and organizing students' extracurricular activities. The defence of teachers' rights requires more consideration and assistance from the government, schools, and society as a whole. The government and schools should also appropriately increase the subsidy rate for teachers' participation in after-school services. The labor law provides for a system of working hours in which employees work, on average, no more than eight hours per day and 44 hours per week, and the employer shall pay wages higher than the workers' wages for normal working hours [9]. Accordingly, schools are required to pay after-school service subsidies in accordance with overtime standards to protect teachers' legitimate labor rights and interests in order to respect the value of their labor.

In order for schools to strengthen their after-school programs following the implementation of the "double reduction," they need to optimize resources to meet the individualized, differentiated and practical learning needs of students so as to promote the development of students' personalities and improve their overall quality. In addition, it is necessary to communicate more with parents through parent-teacher conferences and other means to stimulate parents' enthusiasm to participate in education, to do a good job of home-school cooperation, and after school, to encourage parents to guide their children to complete their homework efficiently and with high quality, to develop good study habits, and also to carry out some parent-child activities with their children. Improving communication skills between home and school is a very important part of the process [10]. It is undeniable that parents are children's first teachers, and their home is their first school, so home education has an immeasurable role in the growth of children. The support and cooperation of parents are indispensable for school education to achieve good results. Teachers must establish and maintain good communication with parents to form a synergy in order to ultimately promote the growth of children. Regarding the "double reduction" policy, parents may not see their children's specific scores and reports of scores and ranking and do not have an intuitive understanding of their children's school performance and development, which requires teachers to provide feedback to parents through pictures, videos, activities, home visits and other means, from the child's character traits, behavioral habits, strengths and hobbies, to the performance of students at school. This requires teachers to provide feedback to parents through pictures, videos, activities, home visits, and more, so parents can have a better understanding of their children's performance, thus reducing and alleviating their anxiety. At the same time, teachers should focus on guiding parents to form a scientific, educational philosophy, giving them guidance and popularizing some scientific and practical family education methods that are easy to operate, helping them to shift more energy to cultivating a sound personality, establishing a harmonious parent-child relationship, understanding their children's personality characteristics, and stimulating their children's potential, and helping them to solve the problems of their children's growth and development.

4. Conclusion

After the "double reduction", the educational needs originally undertaken by the education and training institutions are transferred to the school, and most of the students' and parents' concerns have all been returned to the school, which is beneficial for students to reduce the burden, so students have sufficient after-school time to develop their interests, and parents' anxiety can also be relieved. In addition, without the intervention of off-campus training institutions, school teachers are able to grasp the learning situation better and give appropriate guidance to students.

Admittedly, the implementation of a policy is not perfect, and the policy also shows some problems. A survey shows that among various activities of after-school service, the rate of completion of homework, independent reading and teacher lectures the highest proportion of 87.8%, 74.8% and 70.1%, respectively, and the rate of participation in sports, art, outreach training, interest groups and other forms of activities less than 60%. The after-school service form is relatively single, and the situation of low service quality also appears. In order to cope with higher inspection of government agencies, some schools use extended service time to teach a normal classroom, which means students have to take an extra class. Besides, some out-of-school training institutions have changed their names, claiming to be non-disciplinary training, but the real training content is still discipline-based training, and some training institutions have developed "one-to-one" tutoring in students' homes. These violations have escalated the difficulty of market supervision. The workload of schoolteachers and staff has also increased significantly due to after-school extended-hours services and other related issues that have arisen. The implementation of the "double reduction" policy has increased the pressure on schoolteachers and increased their workload, which has allowed them to expand their recruitment and attract some teachers who used to teach in training institutions to teach in public schools. The implementation of any policy is not always smooth; with the courage to face the problem and constantly optimize the adjustment of the solution, the policy can be better implemented.

References

- [1] Xiang Xianming, A Historical Perspective of China's Two Rounds of Burden Reduction Education Reform in the Past 70 Years, *Journal of East China Normal University (Education Science Edition)* 2019,5.
- [2] Wang Yuxun and Liu Jian, "Analysis of the change and direction of policies for reducing the burden of primary and secondary schools in the past 40 years of reform and opening up, *Educational Theory and Practice*, 2018, 31.
- [3] Iimedia Research 2020 China K12 Online Education Industry Research Report. Iimedia Future Education Industry Research Centre. 2021, Jan. 21. Retrieved from: <https://www.iimedia.cn/c400/76621.html>.
- [4] Ministry of Education. National Education Development Statistics Bulletin 2020. 2021, Aug. 27. Retrieved from: http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_sjzl/sjzl_fztjgb/202108/t20210827_555004.html.
- [5] Wei Yi, In-school or out-of-school: A study of family education expenditure in China, *Journal of East China Normal University (Education Science Edition)*, 2020,5.
- [6] Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. Introducing the comprehensive prevention and control of myopia among children and adolescents by relevant departments since August 2018. Press Conference 2021. Retrieved from: http://www.moe.gov.cn/fbh/live/2021/53799/yc/202110/t20211026_574978.html.
- [7] Fu Xiaolan, Zhang Kan, and Chen Xuefeng, *Mental Health Blue Book: China National Mental Health Development Report (2019-2020)*. Beijing: Social Science Literature Press, 2021: 143-163.
- [8] Zhang Weiping, Fu Weidong, Li Wei, et al. Can after-school services in primary and secondary schools promote educational equity: An analysis based on survey data from 32 counties (districts) in six provinces (autonomous regions) in the east, central and west. *China Education*, 2021 (11): 16-23.
- [9] China Government Network. Labor Law of the People's Republic of China. 2005, Aug.31. Retrieved from: http://www.gov.cn/banshi/2005-08/31/content_74649.htm, [2021-12-29].
- [10] Huang Chong, Wang Zhiwei. Whether parents support reducing the burden of extracurricular training and homework? *China Youth Daily*, 2021-09-16.