

## Dilemma of and Suggestions on Implementation of “Double Reduction” Education Policy from the Perspective of Public Policy

Meng Xie

International City Community, Building 10 Unit2-1008, Shijiazhuang, 050000, China

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**Abstract:** Compulsory education is a basic part of national education, and has a fundamental position in the whole national education system. As a kind of basic public service, compulsory education has become the consensus of the educational circles and the society. Over the years, the basic education in China has been stuck in the trap of utilitarianism and shortsightedness, violating the public attribute of education and destroying the normal ecology of education, and the resulting academic anxiety seriously destroy the students’ sense of happiness. Therefore, from the perspective of public policy, the implementation of the “double reduction” education policy is of great significance to promote the reconstruction of the basic education public service system and governance system. Based on the perspective of public policy, the dilemma of the implementation of the “double reduction” education policy is analyzed and some suggestions are put forward in this paper.

### 1. Introduction

The “double reduction” policy of the Ministry of Education refers to the reduction of the students’ homework burden and off-campus tutoring burden in the stage of compulsory education<sup>[1]</sup>. This policy is a major measure to promote the healthy growth of the students, and also an important symbol to accelerate the reconstruction of the public education system and promote the development of the modern education governance system. However, due to the people’s inconsistent understanding of the implementation of the policy and also the prominent problems like the insufficient capacity of some schools, the orderly development of the “double reduction” work is now in some dilemmas. For the smoother implementation of the “double reduction” policy, some constructive suggestions are put forward in this paper.

### 2. Necessity of “double reduction” policy

As China’s education has been deeply influenced by exam-oriented education, many general knowledge, basic system and basic norms of education are seriously impacted and destroyed. For example, the values of education and view of educational achievements have been distorted, the education system and curriculum plan of basic education cannot be implemented, the students’ legal right to rest cannot be guaranteed, the educational laws and regulations cannot be observed, etc. As a result, the ecological environment of education has been seriously destroyed, and the healthy growth of the primary and secondary school students has been seriously affected.

On the one hand, the students have relatively heavy burden of homework, and the homework management is not perfect; on the other hand, the off-campus tutoring is overheating, and the problem of excessive and advanced training has not been fundamentally solved. The fees of some off-campus tutoring programs are high, and the risks of excessive capital inflows are huge. In recent years, the primary and secondary school students have too heavy burden of homework and off-campus tutoring, and the parents have too heavy burden of economy and energy, which often results in educational tragedies and psychological problems. According to the *Report on the Development of Mental Health in China (2019-2020)*<sup>[2]</sup>, the 2020 blue book on mental health published by Institute of Psychology, CAS, 95.5% of the primary school students, 90.8% of the junior middle school students and 84.1% of the senior high school students in China didn’t have

enough sleep. Meanwhile, detection rate of depression in adolescents was 24.6%. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct policy regulation, so as to promote the better development of education. The “double reduction” policy of the Ministry of Education refers to the reduction of the students’ homework burden and off-campus tutoring burden in the stage of compulsory education. It is of great necessity to carry out this policy.

### **3. Dilemma of the implementation of “double reduction” policy**

#### **3.1 Inconsistent understanding of “double reduction” policy by the society**

The effective implementation of a public policy cannot be separated from the support and participation of the public. In order to know about the public’s attitude to the “double reduction” policy, the Central Propaganda Department of the Communist Youth League and China youth Daily conducted a survey. According to the survey, after the implementation of the “double reduction” policy, although 72.7% of the surveyed parents say that the educational anxiety had been eased somehow, the “much eased” proportion is just 34.3%.<sup>[3]</sup> Most parents still have educational anxiety, and even 6.5% of the parents say they are more anxious. The investigation results of the State Statistics Bureau also show that 43.1% of the surveyed parents are worried about the “transformation from ground to the underground” of the curriculum-based off-campus tutoring, 37.8% of them worry that their children have no access to tutoring to improve their grades, and more than half of the parents take a wait-and-see approach to the curriculum-based off-campus tutoring. In addition, some schools have misunderstanding and no confidence in their understanding of and attitude towards “double reduction” and some even have a fluke mentality and knowingly commit mistakes.

#### **3.2 Uneven distribution of regional high-quality education resources**

Due to the uneven distribution of regional high-quality education resources but unchanged competition situation for further education, it may take a long time to thoroughly solve this problem. The existence of the demand for further education results in the phenomena such as “taking undue advantage of loopholes”, “playing edge ball” and “invisible mutation training” in the promotion of the “double reduction” policy. In terms of the schools, it is mainly reflected in the individual phenomenon of group make-up classes by using after-school service hours; in terms of the off-campus tutoring institutions and the parents, it is reflected in the invisible mutation training taken by the “parents and society” after the implementation of the “double reduction” policy. In recent years, the off-campus tutoring industry has developed rapidly, and many listed companies in the education and training industry have emerged. The market not only meets the needs of the parents, but also proactively develops parents’ needs for education and training, creating education anxiety in the public. The “double reduction” policy limits the tutoring activities of the tutoring institutions, but after extracurricular tutoring reduced, the parents are also worried about their lack of ability to coach their children to improve their grades. The parents still have strong demand to send their children for off-campus tutoring. The strict crackdown on off-campus tutoring institutions may give rise to underground illegal training classes such as “private workshops” and “one-to-one courses”.<sup>[4]</sup>

#### **3.3 Imperfect after-school services**

The implementation of the “double reduction” policy can narrow the education gap through after-school services, but it is difficult to really guarantee education equity. The “after-school services” aim to solve the “15:30 problem” resulted from the inconsistency between home time of the primary and secondary school students and the parents’ off-work Time. From the perspective of public policy, the after-school services are mainly undertaken by schools which will be oriented to the families at all levels of the society, helping the families that cannot pick up their children for various reasons or are unable to coach their children to solve the problem of “parents being at work while school is over”, particularly for the two-earners families, migrant families and single parent

families, etc. The objects of after-school services are not fully covered, and some students are “forgotten”; there is prominent problem in after-school service funds, and some families with economic difficulties have trouble in paying the fees for after-school services; the after-school services are not so rich, and some after-school services are alienated into “group teaching or make-up classes”. These problems to some degree highlight the gap between the quality of after-school services of primary and secondary schools in regions, urban and rural areas and families.

#### **4. Suggestions on effective implementation of “double reduction” policy**

##### **4.1 Unified understanding and clear education essence of basic education**

Firstly, reduction of the students’ study burden is not only a practical problem, but also a cognitive problem. Behind the heavy burden of study burden is the deviation from educational purpose and the distortion of educational concept, which needs the coordination of the opposition and conflict among “social standard” and “human standard”, value rationality and instrumental rationality in the value orientation of educational purpose and the completion of the transformation of the view of talent from “being successful” to “being human” and “adaptation” to “transcendence”, the transformation of view of education from “utility” to “growth”, from “elite” to “popularization” and from “quality” to “fitness”, the transformation of view of study from “passive” to “active” and the transformation of view of competition from “excess” to “moderation”.

Secondly, follow the law to promote the overall healthy growth of the students. To reshape the good ecology of basic education, it is necessary to take the characteristics of basic education stage as the basis, follow the law of physical and mental development of students and scientifically formulate corresponding education standards such as growth standards, school standards, study standards and curriculum standards, etc. Therefore, it is of necessity to scientifically formulate the growth standards for children and adolescents, and make them become the natural and scientific basis for the growth of students, so that there are rules to follow, and the primary and secondary school students can be guided to actively study independently and grow up happily.

At last, multivariate evaluation should be formed to fundamentally change the exam orientation in the society. For individuals, it is necessary to abandon the evaluation system of “degree first”, consistently enrich the means of social screening and educational functions, and not take education background especially the first degree as the sole standard to defining talent and employment screening. For schools, it is necessary to abandon the evaluation criteria of “key schools” and “demonstration schools”, weaken the concept output of key and non-key schools and demonstration and non-demonstration schools, and change the “focus on key” to “focus on characteristics”.

##### **4.2 Improvement of balanced and high-quality development system of compulsory education**

To implement the “double reduction” policy, it is necessary improve the balanced and high-quality development system of compulsory education, give full play to the effect of regional high-quality educational resources, and promote the high-quality and balanced development of compulsory education. First, improve the “two-way” flow mechanism for teachers in urban and rural compulsory education, deeply promote exchanges and rotations between teachers and principals within counties (districts), and implement the teacher employment system and principal tenure system, to effectively solve the problem of unbalanced faculty among schools. Second, innovate the mode of school running by means of inter-school alliance, group development, running school in groups within school district, cluster development of quality schools and so on; build platforms for inter-school exchange and cooperation, to realize the sharing of high-quality education resources, mutual assistance in education and teaching and gather the curriculum resources of the schools within the school district and group. Third, strengthen governance of weak schools and select appropriate administrators and excellent teacher teams while building and transforming the hardware such as school premises, facilities and equipment, teaching appliance, etc., to achieve a high-level balance of education in the region.<sup>[5]</sup>

### **4.3 Empowering primary and secondary schools, to provide students with quality after-school services**

The implementation of the “double reduction” policy and the effective promotion of after-school services can safeguard the right of education of the children from low income families, make up for the widening educational inequality caused by off-campus education expenditure, and narrow education gap that “the strong get stronger, and the weak get weaker” caused by the gap in family income.

After-school services have unique missions. Firstly, it helps the students complete their homework at school, reducing their burden of homework and helps the students with spare capacity to cultivate more interests and hobbies. Secondly, it helps the parents solve the difficulty of being unable to pick up the students at time when the children are after school in the afternoon. If the classroom teaching is taken as the “first class”, then the after-school services can be regarded as the “second class”. Doing well in the “first class” is the specialty of the schools, while there are many new challenge different from the daily education and teaching for the schools to do a good job in the “second class”. To make the primary and secondary schools become the main channel of after-school services, the schools need to establish special “leading group for after-school services work” to make a study, with the principal as the team leader and the participation of other departments of the schools. The leading group members should be able to have both division of labor and cooperation. The “leading group for after-school services work” needs to formulate scientific and reasonable homework assignment quantity control and quality improvement criteria and evaluation methods, implementation plans and evaluation methods for interest groups and community activities, safety precautions and emergency plans, peak-time staggering and flexible school leaving management methods, evaluation criteria for service quality of faculty and staff and the system of introducing high-quality education resources outside the school, etc.

### **4.4 Strict crackdown on underground training institutions and guidance on the parents to set up scientific view of education**

The “double reduction” policy is a mandatory norm to prevent the barbaric growth and continuous growth of the off-campus tutoring industry. The fundamental way to solve the too heavy study burden is to break the blind trust in academic competition. At present, induced by the media and training institutions coerced by capital, most parents endlessly put the children into various off-campus training classes, which is nothing short of an “arms race” in education. On the one hand, this significantly increases the education expenditure of the family and the economic pressure of parents; on the other hand, too much off-campus tutoring deprives the children of time for free growth, which is not good for their healthy growth. Meanwhile, we should also recognize the rationality of appropriate extracurricular tutoring to some degree. What the “double reduction” policy opposes is the “excessive education” dominated by training institutions and coerced by capital market. To fundamentally solve this problem, on the one hand, we need to get tough with underground illegal training industry and strictly investigate training in advance, “private training workshops” and other illegal training phenomena; on the other hand, we need to change the parents’ traditional concept and set up scientific view of education by means of consensus propaganda and through parents and schools.

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