

Implementation Status and Influence of After-School Services under the Background of “Double Reduction”

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Abstract: “Double Reduction” marks a turning point for the high-quality development of school education, with various regions putting a stop to after-school tutoring to cut off sources of pressure. Schools are strictly controlling the overall workload while optimizing assignment designs and promoting flexibility. “5+2” serves as a new focus for enhancing the quality and efficiency of schools, with each school developing unique after-school service courses to cater to students’ individual development needs. The combination of “Double Reduction” and “5+2” effectively “reduces” academic pressure on students, promotes their comprehensive development, and reinforces the core position of school education. However, it also gives rise to an “addition” effect, increasing parental anxiety over their children’s academic performance, intensifying mid-week study pressure on students, and demanding higher levels of self-management skills.

1. Introduction

“Double Reduction” reduces students’ academic pressure and creates more time and space for their individual development by reducing homework and after-school tutoring. Compulsory education spans nine years and plays a fundamental role in the entire education system, serving as the cornerstone of a modern national education system. Therefore, the nature of compulsory education and the cultivation of children and adolescents directly impact the quality of education in a country. Through the analysis of the connotation, implementation status, and impact of the “Double Reduction” policy, it is beneficial for relevant stakeholders such as schools and teachers to better understand the essence of the policy, accurately grasp the educational objectives in the stage of compulsory education, foster comprehensive development in individuals, implement the fundamental task of cultivating moral character, and enhance the teaching quality in the stage of compulsory education.

2. The Essence and Specific Implementation of “Double Reduction”

The “Double Reduction” policy is grounded in the fundamental task of cultivating moral character and focuses on the comprehensive and healthy development of students. The policy aims to reduce excessive academic homework, alleviate the burden of after-school tutoring, enrich students’ learning experience, and enhance the quality of education and teaching in schools.

In order to effectively implement the “Double Reduction” policy, various cities in Jiangsu Province have taken a series of measures to control the workload, provide after-school services, and carry out quality education in schools. These measures aim to enhance the curriculum content by “adding” valuable elements while “reducing” the teaching burden. Practical activities that promote students’ comprehensive abilities are introduced to enrich their campus life. The goal is to lighten the load without compromising responsibility or compromising the quality of education. For instance, in Tianning District in Changzhou City, the initiative of “Dual Logic Online and Triple Participation” and at Hanjiang Experimental School in Yangzhou City, the “Five Measures” program provides after-school services to support the successful implementation of the “Double Reduction” policy. These initiatives employ diverse activities to facilitate students’ holistic development.

Shanghai has proposed strict regulations to prohibit any form of standardized subject testing for grades one to three in all districts and regions. It also prohibits the implementation of comprehensive subject testing on a district-wide level for grades four to eight. If districts wish to conduct academic quality monitoring, it is limited to a maximum of one time per academic year, with only random sampling allowed. The proportion of students randomly selected for monitoring should not exceed 30% of the respective grade level [1]. By reducing regional exams, this initiative aims to alleviate the anxiety and pressure related to examinations for students, parents, and teachers, thereby reducing the academic workload and stress caused by exam results.

The province of Zhejiang has put forward a multi-faceted approach to alleviate students’ academic burden and promote their holistic development. By focusing on the five aspects of “homework, sleep, mobile phone usage, physical fitness, and reading materials”, the initiative aims to implement measures that involve “reducing excessive homework, increasing sleep duration, minimizing supplementary tutoring, promoting physical activity, and shifting the focus from rote memorization to practical application”. This initiative seeks to effectively reduce the pressure on students’ academic pursuits while prioritizing their overall well-being and healthy development.

Various cities in Hebei Province have explored and designed a system of “personalized homework” across multiple schools. In the city of Zunhua, a comprehensive resource library for after-school homework has been established for elementary and middle schools. The initiative aims to promote a diversified approach to homework, incorporating the modes of “foundation + consolidation, foundation + extension, foundation + adaptability, and foundation + uniqueness”. The types of homework encompass written assignments, creative activities, practical projects, and moral education exercises, emphasizing both foundational knowledge and comprehensive skills. The implementation pays special attention to differentiated learning levels and individualized characteristics, providing opportunities for different students to develop through varying assignments.

In Beijing, it is emphasized that first grade students in elementary schools adhere to a “zero starting point” teaching approach. Schools are prohibited from organizing any form of segregation exams or admission tests and are forbidden from creating specialized or intensified classes. By upholding principles of educational equity and respecting the student’s agency, the aim is to focus on unleashing students’ developmental potential, enhancing the quality of classroom teaching, and improving students’ learning efficiency within the school.

The essence of the “double reduction” policy is to address and transform the distorted phenomenon of excessive academic pressure and excessive extracurricular tutoring in compulsory education. It reflects the national commitment to quality education and holistic development, aiming to prevent homework and extracurricular tutoring from becoming obstacles to students’ growth and educational progress. The policy entrusts schools with greater responsibility and authority in education, highlighting the leading role of school education. It demands active and personalized learning from students, encourages them to take ownership of their learning, and provides opportunities for schools to explore educational and instructional reforms, thus facilitating the emergence of a new educational

landscape. Currently, provinces and cities are exploring ways to enhance the quality of school education under the “double reduction” framework, promoting comprehensive student development and enhancing their overall quality. Many regions have developed systematic and comprehensive curriculum plans that also cater to individual needs. The design of top-level curriculum should be based on the needs of individuals, society, and international talent competition, with the involvement of curriculum specialists, educators, and educational authorities. This will enable the overall planning of an ideal curriculum system such as STEM courses, international understanding courses, innovation and entrepreneurship courses, etc[2], harmonizing subject learning with character cultivation, knowledge accumulation with skills enhancement, and general requirements with individual development, effectively achieving the goal of talent cultivation and moral education.

3. The “5+2” Response under “Double Reduction” Policy

The *Opinions on Further Reducing the Homework and After-School Tutoring Burden of Students in Compulsory Education* not only presents the requirements of “double reduction”, but also proposes corresponding measures to enhance the level of after-school services provided by schools, catering to the diversified needs of students. On one hand, the guarantee of after-school service time aims to balance students’ dismissal time with their parents’ work hours, ensuring that it does not start earlier than the normal local working hours. On the other hand, the assurance of resources in after-school services involves coordinating various educational resources within schools to meet students’ diverse developmental needs. Additionally, the quality of after-school services is ensured in order to promote students’ comprehensive development in areas such as science popularization and arts education. Moreover, the approaches and methods of after-school services are varied, including hiring retired outstanding teachers and developing online educational resources.

The Ministry of Education has put forward the “5+2” model for promoting after-school services, and various regions are comprehensively advancing the work of after-school services in compulsory education. Each school should tailor its approach and teach according to the local conditions, ensuring the effectiveness of after-school services [3].

In the first phase of the after-school services in various schools in Wuxi City, Xicheng, Jiangsu Province, the focus is placed on resolving the “homework management” challenge [4]. At Chongning Road Experimental Elementary School, personalized guidance by subject teachers is provided to students to complete written assignments on campus, replacing the traditional “communication notebook” between home and school. In the second phase, schools offer a wide range of courses and activities with an emphasis on enhancing students’ comprehensive literacy, resulting in many highlights. Among them, in Liangxi District, a combination of district-developed courses and existing school-based curriculum has yielded 43 types and 82 volumes of district-based textbooks. According to statistics, the district has currently provided after-school services in five categories, including artistic cultivation and physical fitness, offering more than 80 types of activities and organizing nearly 300 student clubs. In Nantong City, after-school services in primary and secondary schools at all grade levels are steadily progressing, offering diverse activities such as baseball instruction and introductory lessons on games like five-in-a-row. Through these rich and colorful after-school services, students are filled with curiosity and joy.

Dalian Nanjin Experimental School incorporates the necessary core competencies for student development based on the original “Ten Arts” curriculum system. Efforts are made in the areas of “thinking, joy, culture, books, mathematics, health, science, holistic development, labor, and trust” to construct an after-school service curriculum with school-based characteristics [5]. In Putuo District of Shanghai, the focus is on enhancing the targeted and practical significance of after-school services. Some schools divide the after-school services into different time periods and themes: during the first

period, assistance is provided to complete homework and offer tutoring; during the second period, there is a focus on cultivating overall competence, organizing sports, arts, and science activities to promote students' comprehensive development; during the third period, personalized growth takes place, providing individual guidance to students facing learning difficulties or confusion.

The “5+2” approach, serving as a necessary means of “double reduction”, not only resolves the conflict between parents' work hours and their children's school dismissal time, but also meets the need for homework guidance for students. Additionally, the diversified and personalized course and activity offerings in after-school services provide a platform for the development of students' interests and hobbies. Consequently, there is a high level of support from parents for the “5+2” arrangement. However, there are also some concerns and uncertainties regarding the specific implementation and promotion of the “5+2” model, which need to be refined through practical experience to truly promote students' holistic development, enhance the quality of education, and achieve the goal of nurturing virtue and talent.

4. The Implementation and Consequential Effects of “Double Reduction” and the “5+2” Model

4.1. Direct Positive Effect

4.1.1. Reinforcement of the Dominant Role of School Education

School education, as a systematic, organized, and efficient educational activity, plays a dominant role in students' growth and development. However, in the current reality of large class sizes, there is often a lack of individual attention and personalized learning opportunities. Additionally, with the increasing competition in education in recent years, many parents rely on after-school tutoring classes to help their children foster strengths and circumvent weaknesses, placing excessive emphasis on these classes and leading to some teachers adopting a passive teaching approach, thereby affecting the quality of classroom teaching. “Double reduction” aims to allocate more time for students to be engaged in school activities, reinforcing the pivotal role of school education as the primary channel for student development. This also places higher demands on schools and teachers, calling for the pursuit of development from schools and quality from classrooms. Schools actively explore new systems of school management, curriculum structures, and talent development pathways, effectively promoting comprehensive and personalized student development, and fulfilling the fundamental mission of school education in cultivating individuals with moral values [6]. Classroom teaching is crucial for improving the quality of instruction and promoting student development. It should shift focus from what to teach to why we teach, from emphasizing common foundations to addressing individual needs, from subject-based logic to life-based logic, and expand the time and space for teaching [7]. Schools organize various activities, such as policy interpretation sessions and teaching training, to help teachers understand the essence and purpose of “double reduction”, promote teaching reforms and methodologies, improve classroom teaching activities, and enhance the effectiveness of classroom instruction.

4.1.2. “Reducing Weight” for Students' Schoolbags and “Reducing Burden” for Parents' Expenses

In the prevalent situation where after-school tutoring classes are flourishing, many parents enroll their children in multiple tutoring classes for the purpose of capitalizing on their strengths, personal development, or even for the sake of comparison. Consequently, students find themselves suffocating under the weight [8], enduring tremendous hardships, while parents bear significant financial burdens. The concept of “double reduction” not only aims to alleviate the workload on students but also provide respite for parents. By reducing standardized tutoring and allowing for more independent learning, students are encouraged to develop a personalized understanding of knowledge, thereby

enhancing their autonomy in learning. Through the reduction of repetitive assignments and workload, students gain more discretionary time that can be used for individualized development. Furthermore, this approach reduces parents' waiting time for tutoring and minimizes the financial expenses associated with tutoring, promoting more quality parent-child activities. Moreover, the "5+2" after-school services provided by schools can serve as supportive measures, enriching students' after-school lives and offering opportunities for personalized development.

4.1.3. Promoting Students' Physical and Mental Well-Being and Holistic Development

The education provided by schools is a systematic activity aimed at fostering students' development in terms of knowledge, abilities, and character. The positive impact of education should enable students to have enjoyable experiences and find joy in learning. "Double reduction" liberates students from frequent after-school tutoring, granting them meaningful weekends and vacations, which transforms their exhausted state of learning. Students are now able to integrate their studies with their interests and hobbies, thus experiencing the delight of learning. This approach eradicates the misconception that learning is a burden or a forced action, dispelling students' restless and oppressive mentality during the learning process. Schools' emphasis and reinforcement of physical exercise, labor education, and other educational aspects enrich the learning content and formats, benefiting the synergistic development of the five aspects of education (intellectual, moral, physical, artistic, and labor). It promotes healthier learning and facilitates comprehensive, personalized growth for students.

4.2. Consequential Effects

4.2.1. Increased Parents' Psychological and Counseling Pressure

The cancellation of after-school tutoring has led to increased concerns among parents regarding their children's academic performance. Despite the reduction in time and stress for both themselves and their children, parents find themselves in a state of dilemma, confusion, and uncertainty. They worry that their children may fall behind in their studies without the additional support. Furthermore, some parents express that as long as the examination and selection systems remain unchanged, they dare not relax their efforts. With the removal of after-school tutoring, parents must now assume the responsibility of providing academic guidance themselves. This additional duty brings about pressures in terms of time and energy, often requiring parents to first learn and practice the material before assisting their children.

4.2.2. Increased Students' Study Pressure in the Middle of the Week

Top-down measures have been implemented to prevent after-school tutoring from encroaching on national statutory holidays, rest days, and winter/summer vacations. Some after-school tutoring programs have converted their holiday courses into online courses from Monday to Friday. As a result, students' learning tasks have been squeezed into the middle of the week. After completing their school classes, students are required to receive online tutoring and complete corresponding assignments at home. Consequently, the study workload during the week has become even heavier. This not only disrupts students' rest and jeopardizes their physical well-being but also hinders their concentration and efficiency in attending classes the next day. It undermines the intended goal of "double reduction" by not only failing to reduce after-school tutoring but also increasing the duration of in-school learning for students.

4.2.3. The Imperative Enhancement of Students' Ability to Manage Their Leisure Time

The increase in students' free time calls for a crucial issue to be addressed: how to scientifically allocate and manage this time. In the past, the authority to determine how students spent their

weekends and holidays mainly lay in the hands of parents and tutoring centers, resulting in a lack of autonomous control over their leisure time for many students. Under the “double reduction” policy, some parents have assigned a substantial amount of learning tasks to their children during holidays, which clearly goes against the original intention of “double reduction”. On the other hand, some students tend to prioritize activities such as watching television and playing games on weekends, which also deviates from the purpose of “double reduction”. Therefore, students’ ability to allocate their leisure time properly, while simultaneously balancing their academic and recreational activities, has become a new challenge that impacts their learning and overall development.

5. Conclusions

Education is an endeavor that promotes holistic development in students’ physical and mental aspects. It aims to change the prevailing trend of seeking instant results, with “reducing burden” being a sustained battle in educational development. The pivotal turning point in this battle is the policy of “double reduction”, which focuses on lightening the load of assignments and after-school tutoring, ultimately fostering the healthy development of both students and education as a whole. School education serves as the core of the entire education system, and its implementation significantly influences the quality of education. “Double reduction” strives to reposition education within the school setting by regulating after-school tutoring, simultaneously placing higher demands on the quality of school education. After-school services play a critical role in the current development of school education. These services not only need to ensure disciplinary learning but also foster students’ comprehensive development and enhance their overall competence. Therefore, the key focus for schools is to contemplate and explore how to enhance the quality of after-school services, meeting the developmental needs of the students. The process of student learning and development should be proactive and individualized. Students should learn to autonomously arrange their studies and lives, effectively allocating their leisure time. Consequently, guiding students to develop self-management skills is a shared responsibility among teachers, parents, and the students themselves.

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