

Analysis of Distortions in the Implementation of the "Double Reduction" Policy

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Abstract: Since the promulgation of the "double reduction" policy, a number of policy distortions have arisen, which have greatly constrained the actual implementation of the policy. Therefore, active countermeasures should be taken to address these problems: reforming the promotion and evaluation systems, maintaining the main focus of school education, improving the financial guarantee mechanism for after-school services, and strengthening the governance of extracurricular training institutions, so as to enhance the effectiveness of the policy's implementation.

Keywords: "Double Reduction" Policy; Distortion; After-school Services; Out-of-School Training.

1. Foreword

In our daily lives, we can always find some policy distortions of "policies at the top and countermeasures at the bottom", which greatly affects the desired effect of policy implementation. The Opinions on Further Reducing the Burden of Homework for Students in Compulsory Education and the Burden of Off-Campus Training, issued by the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council in July 2021, can be regarded as a typical example. From the viewpoint of the implementation goal of the "double reduction" policy, it aims to reduce the burden on students in compulsory education in both on-campus and off-campus aspects: on-campus, comprehensively reducing the total amount and duration of homework, reducing the excessive burden of homework on students, improving the level of after-school services, and ensuring that students learn enough and learn well on-campus; off-campus, comprehensively regulating off-campus training behaviours, basically eliminating all kinds of chaotic phenomena of subject-based off-campus The various chaotic phenomena of training are basically eliminated, and the heat of out-of-school training is gradually cooling down.¹ From this, we can see that the original intention of the "double reduction" policy is to play the role of the main position of school education, reduce the learning pressure and burden of students in the stage of compulsory education, reduce educational anxiety, deepen the governance of off-campus training institutions, to create a good educational ecology, and to better educate and nurture talent. However, nearly two years after the promulgation of this policy, the actual implementation of the effect is not as satisfactory as it should be, and the distortion of the implementation of the "double reduction" policy deserves to be deeply reflected upon by all sectors of society.

2. Main Manifestations of Distortion in the Implementation of the "Double Reduction" Policy

2.1. Increasing Pressure Instead of Reducing Burden

The "Double Reduction" policy was implemented with the intention of easing the burden on students in compulsory education and further reducing their learning pressure. However, the promulgation of this policy has instead increased the pressure on teachers, students and parents. For one thing, the requirements on teachers' homework design and teaching ability have increased. In order to reduce the total amount and length of homework, teachers have to design homework carefully, think about the appropriateness of homework and accurately predict the length of time for homework completion, which puts a higher demand on teachers' ability and undoubtedly puts more pressure on them. Secondly, the demand on students' self-management and self-education ability has increased. With the reduction of the length and total amount of homework as well as the burden of out-of-school training, in order to improve their own standards, students are accordingly required to possess a certain degree of self-learning ability and self-control, and students are subject to greater mental pressure than before, which undoubtedly puts additional pressure on them. Thirdly, the demand on parents' ability to conduct family education has increased. The reduction of out-of-school training means that the time for students to return to their families has increased accordingly, and how to improve the quality of family education is a major challenge for parents, which undoubtedly puts additional pressure on them.

2.2. Reducing Quality Instead of Burden

To a certain extent, the "double reduction" policy, in the course of its implementation, has not only failed to reduce the burden on students, but has also led to a reduction in the quality of school education. On the one hand, three to six years of homework shall not exceed 60 minutes, language, mathematics and English three main subjects, an average of only 20 minutes of homework time per subject; junior high

school seven subjects 90 minutes, each homework up to 15 minutes,² which makes the homework of the comprehensiveness and completeness of the limitations of the homework, homework value is difficult to highlight, the learning effect is greatly reduced. On the other hand, some students, under the guise of the "Double Reduction" policy to reduce their burden, resist knowledge learning and extensive reading outside the school, and gradually develop bad study habits, leading to a reduction in the quality of learning.

2.3. After-school Services are Highly Controversial

In the implementation of the "double reduction" policy, after-school extended hours service has become a hot topic of general concern. The initial aim of this service was to develop students' special potential through various sports, aesthetic and creative activities arranged by schools, and at the same time to alleviate parents' inconvenience in picking up and dropping off their children at inconvenient times. However, the results of the programme have been controversial. In addition to unsatisfactory implementation by schools, some parents have complained about having to pay for after-school services, making it difficult to promote a high-quality and high-level after-school service system.

2.4. Training Institutions Still Exist

Under the "double reduction" policy, the first to suffer are subject-based off-site training organisations. After the introduction of the policy, some education and training institutions have actively adjusted and responded. For example, the relevant person in charge of New Oriental said: "We will not take up the national legal holidays and rest days, as well as summer and winter holidays for discipline-based training, and the direction of operation will also be transformed from discipline-based education training to quality education training."³ But there are also some training organisations that turn to policy loopholes, teaching subjects under the guise of "interest classes" and conducting subject-based training.

3. Reasons for Distortions in the Implementation of the "Double Reduction" Policy

3.1. Secondary and Higher Education Examinations Make it Difficult to Eradicate Teaching to the Test

As the saying goes, the examination is the baton of education, the inherent selective admission system has not changed, the students' demand for further studies has not changed, then the social demand for education will not change. At present, the scores on the report card are still a key factor in determining whether a student can pursue further studies. As a result, against the background of the "double reduction" policy of reducing homework and out-of-school training, parents are highly concerned about the actual learning situation of their students, and they hire live-in teachers at high prices, thus adding to the burden of education on their families. Schools, in order to raise the promotion rate, will also allow teachers to secretly adjust the content of after-school services to the curriculum, thus deviating from the original intention of implementing the "double reduction" policy.

3.2. Restrictions on the Measurement of Students' Learning Outcomes Make it Difficult to Ensure the Quality of School Education.

In order to promote the implementation of the "double reduction" policy, the Ministry of Education issued the Circular on Strengthening Examination Management in Compulsory Education Schools. The notice clearly "significantly reduce the number of exams", "schools and classes shall not organise weekly, monthly, unit exams and other types of exams, and shall not organise exams in disguise in the name of tests, quizzes, time-limited exercises, research on the learning situation, etc.",⁴ making the the number of exams to be greatly reduced. As an important means of measuring students, the most direct role of the examination is to reflect the learning status of students, feedback on student learning results. So that teachers targeted to adjust the pace of teaching, improve the quality of teaching, but also help students to understand their own shortcomings, targeted to improve. In the "double reduction" policy, the examination is reduced, the students' learning effect is difficult to be measured effectively, and the effectiveness of the teacher's teaching is also difficult to be clear. Teachers and students do not have a good grasp of the interaction between teaching and learning, and it is difficult to ensure the quality of education in the long run.

3.3. Inadequate Financial Security System Makes the After-school Service Ineffective

When the extended after-school service was first introduced, most people held a positive attitude, but as this service has been implemented with frequent problems, doubts have emerged. After-school service requires parents to pay a certain amount of money, and under the long-term influence of the idea of "free compulsory education", no tuition and miscellaneous fees for compulsory education has become a social consensus, some parents are dissatisfied with this. The inadequacy of the financial guarantee mechanism for after-school services, coupled with the "selective" compliance of some schools with the after-school services policy, has made after-school services ineffective.

3.4. Incomplete Government Regulation Has Led to Irregularities in Out-of-School Training Institutions

After a period of effort, the "double reduction" programme has achieved better results to a certain extent, with large-scale off-school training institutions gradually transforming. However, there are limitations in the government's supervision of off-campus training organisations in academic subjects, making it difficult to cover all aspects, which makes it difficult for some academic training organisations to continue to exist, seriously jeopardising the fairness of the education ecosystem. In order to avoid the policy risk, some institutions or individuals have changed from "above ground" to "underground" and from "offline" to "online". In order to avoid policy risks, institutions or individuals have shifted from "aboveground" to "underground" and from "offline" to "online", gradually giving rise to "one-on-one" remedial classes, "group" counselling and other small-scale remedial classes, which are difficult to detect and dispose of. Under such circumstances, it is difficult to distinguish between the

reality and the reality of off-campus training institutions, and some unscrupulous elements have taken advantage of the opportunity to use education for profiteering, exacerbating the undesirable social climate.

4. Countermeasures to Distortions in The Implementation of the "Double Reduction" Policy

4.1. Reform of the Promotion and Evaluation Systems

In order to fundamentally reverse the tendency of teaching to the test and break the "points-only theory", it is necessary to start from the existing talent selection system and reform the promotion system. First, optimise the content of the examination, adhere to the five education and evaluation. The current college entrance examination focuses on knowledge assessment, the examination method is also based on written paper and pencil test, it is difficult to highlight the quality of education to promote the all-round development of human beings. Therefore, the existing examination content should be fully optimised and the evaluation content should be improved accordingly. In addition to the "intellectual" examination, according to the students' usual behavioural performance, the moral level, sports ability, aesthetic sensibility, labour spirit reflected in the design of a unified evaluation standard to be quantified. After quantification, they will be converted into regular grades, which will be included in the total score of the middle and high school entrance exams together with the intellectual education grades. By appropriately lowering the weight of intellectual achievement, students' anxiety about intellectual achievement is reduced. Secondly, improve the vocational education system to cultivate great national craftsmen. The secondary school examination is the key to the first diversion in life, and if the examination is unsatisfactory, it means that students may have to study in vocational schools. At present, students and their parents are not optimistic about vocational schools, and they always feel that vocational schools are inferior to general schools, which creates the nervousness of "going to a vocational school if you can't do well in the exams, and having no chance to get into a good university". In fact, this reflects the deep-rooted prejudice against vocational education in society at large. The Ministry of Education can do a good job of strategic planning to promote the construction of specialised high-level vocational universities, to create a path for vocational school students to further their studies, and to train students to become the artisanal talents needed by the country. In this way, the pressure on students to pursue higher education can be eased to a certain extent, thus reducing the pressure on all parties to pursue higher education.

4.2. Maintaining the Main Focus of School Education

Under the impact of the "double reduction" policy, homework and examinations have been drastically reduced. In order to ensure that students can learn enough and learn well in school, to effectively improve the quality of school education, and to ensure that the "double reduction" policy reduces the burden and does not reduce the quality of school education, it is necessary for teachers, students and schools to make concerted efforts to improve the quality of school education. The quality of school education must be enhanced

by the concerted efforts of teachers, students and schools. Firstly, teachers should strengthen their lifelong learning ability, optimise the design of students' limited homework, and test students' learning effectiveness in various ways. Secondly, students should adopt a positive and optimistic attitude towards the "double reduction" policy, so as to correct their learning attitude and make their study and life more enjoyable. Thirdly, schools should hold regular seminars on the implementation of the "Double Reduction" policy, and formulate corresponding rules and regulations to ensure the implementation of the policy, such as institutionalising after-school services, so as to make the "Double Reduction" policy really come to fruition.

4.3. Improving the Financial Guarantee Mechanism for After-School Services

The school's after-school service is designed to effectively address the problem of parents' difficulties in picking up and dropping off students at the compulsory school level as a result of their early release from school. It is committed to using after-school time to broaden students' horizons on this basis, and to promote students' personality development and all-round development. In order for after-school services to truly achieve the desired effect of the "double reduction" policy, certain measures must be taken to promote them. On the one hand, the Government must further improve the financial guarantee mechanism for after-school services and upgrade the level of services. The Government should, in the light of local economic strength and financial conditions, set up special funds for after-school service subsidies in areas with the conditions to implement the "double reduction" policy, and systematically tilt financial allocations towards after-school service protection for the compulsory education stage. The Government's main role in funding after-school services is being further developed. On the other hand, the content of school services can be further broadened through the exploration and use of resources outside the school. Emphasis should be placed on the use of parental resources, organising parent-child reading activities or inviting parents to serve as volunteers in relevant activities. In this way, not only can the service content be enriched, but also can let parents really participate in education, and promote home-school co-education⁵.

4.4. Strengthening the Governance of Off-Campus Training Institutions

Training institutions repeatedly prohibited, a variety of hidden advertising undoubtedly exacerbated the social level of educational anxiety, so that the tendency of utilitarianism in education has not been effectively curbed, "double reduction" policy is expected to achieve a good educational ecology is difficult to achieve. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the governance of off-campus training institutions. First, we should strengthen all-round supervision, establish a long-term normalised supervision mechanism, and prepare to win the battle of "delisting" the compulsory education stage discipline-based training institutions; second, we should innovate the supervision mode, focus on the use of big data for intelligent supervision, and incorporate off-campus training institutions into the information database, so as to comprehensively enhance the effectiveness of the supervision of off-campus training institutions; third, we should bring into play the power of the masses, and establish a community-wide network of off-campus training institutions. To bring

into play the power of the masses, establish a society-wide supervision network, establish appropriate incentive mechanisms, and mobilise the enthusiasm and initiative of the whole society in citizen supervision; Fourth, to increase the punishment of non-compliant off-campus training institutions, incorporate them into the management of the social credit system, and include the operation of illegal training institutions and their practitioners in the list of executives with broken credit. In short, the unregulated operation of off-school training institutions is a major obstacle to the implementation of the "double reduction" policy. The Government should pay attention to guiding the transformation of off-campus training institutions, encouraging subject-based training organisations to actively transform into quality education, family education, adult education, elderly education and other areas. At the same time, it is necessary to provide good guidance for the re-employment of staff of extramural training institutions, and to carry out public service job-seeking seminars and special job fairs for teachers and trainers, so as to help them re-employ themselves smoothly.

5. Conclusion

The "Double Reduction" policy is an education policy promulgated by the state to reduce the burden of homework and out-of-school training for students in compulsory education. It is committed to "reducing the burden" for students, promoting the healthy growth of students, and providing education to the satisfaction of the people. However, the problem of policy distortion that has arisen in the course of actual implementation must be taken seriously. We should actively seek ways to solve this problem, and all sectors of society should make corresponding efforts, so that the

"double reduction" policy can reduce the burden on students, while at the same time improving the quality and effectiveness of school education, and enhancing the public's satisfaction and happiness index.

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