

The Dilemma and Path Exploration of Family Education under the Background of Double Reduction

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Abstract: Under the 'double reduction' policy, the importance of family education has become more prominent, but it faces several challenges: parents' misconceptions about education, a lack of awareness of the 'nurturing without teaching' approach, insufficient understanding of the policy, anxiety caused by educational competition, and a lack of skills in teaching improperly. To address these issues, it is necessary to change educational philosophies, understand the value of the policy, reduce internal competition and alleviate anxiety, establish a guidance service system for family education, and promote collaboration between families and schools in education. This initiative is crucial for advancing the scientific development of family education and supporting the implementation of the 'double reduction' policy.

Keywords: Double Reduction Policy; Family Education; Dilemma; Path Exploration; Home-School Collaboration.

1. Introduction

Since ancient times, the Chinese nation has placed a high value on family education. The family is the first school for children, and parents are their first teachers. Family education is the most important aspect of a child's development. It is the foundation of personal growth, often referred to as 'root education'. In recent years, a series of policies have been introduced to support the development and construction of family education. Notably, the 'Family Education Promotion Law of the People's Republic of China' (hereinafter referred to as the 'Family Education Promotion Law') was officially promulgated in 2022, providing legal protection for family education work[1]. On July 24, 2021, the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the General Office of the State Council issued the 'Opinions on Further Reducing the Burden of Homework and Off-Campus Training for Students in the Compulsory Education Stage' (hereinafter referred to as the 'Double Reduction' policy). This policy aims to effectively reduce the excessive extracurricular homework and off-campus training burden on students in the compulsory education stage, balance their studies and lives, and promote their all-round development. The implementation of the 'Double Reduction' policy has further highlighted the importance of family education. However, there are still some significant issues in the actual practice of family education that need to be addressed. Therefore, a thorough analysis of the challenges faced by family education under the 'Double Reduction' policy and the proposal of improvement strategies are of great significance for promoting the scientific and sustainable development of family education and ensuring the effective and smooth implementation of the 'Double Reduction' policy.

2. The Dilemma of Family Education under the Background of Double Reduction

(1) Cognitive level: parents' education cognition has a bias, and cognitive literacy is weak

The cognitive biases of parents during the implementation of the 'double reduction' policy need to be addressed from two

perspectives: their own educational philosophies and the deeply rooted traditional culture and existing talent development pathways in China. The imperial examination system, which has been the primary method of selecting talents for over 1,300 years, has subtly ingrained traditional educational values into the 'genetic makeup' of Chinese education. These traditional concepts are hard to change overnight, and parents' educational views are deeply influenced by traditional culture[2]. On one hand, the expectation for children to excel academically, rooted in the traditional Confucian belief that learning leads to officialdom, has become deeply ingrained, leading to a 'knowledge-first' educational philosophy among parents. On the other hand, Confucian education emphasizes that excellence in studies leads to a career in government, viewing education as a ladder for social mobility. This perspective has reinforced the role of education in social stratification. Parents understand that only through education can they achieve upward social mobility, but this path is fraught with difficulties and has a very low success rate. Therefore, parents strive to secure the best resources for their children, creating a competitive educational environment that further influences their views on education. The roots of culture are profound, and parents' educational views are deeply influenced by traditional culture. Parents recognize that only through education can they achieve social mobility, but the dual reduction policies implemented by the government, both in and out of school, have reduced students' homework and tutoring classes, causing parents to worry about their children's educational quality. This conflict has led to cognitive conflicts among parents.

(2) Ideological level: parents "raise but do not teach", the awareness of family education is weak

A survey on family education guidance reveals that 57.0% of primary and secondary school (kindergarten) class advisors and 62.6% of women's federations and community (village) family education guides report that parents' values in family education are skewed. Additionally, 67.5% of primary and secondary school (kindergarten) leaders have noted that during the process of conducting family education guidance, they encounter the issue of 'parents shifting educational responsibilities to schools and teachers' [3]. The Family

Education Promotion Law clearly states that parents are responsible for their children's moral character, values, physical and mental health, and learning habits[4]. However, in practice, some parents believe they only need to provide their children with living and economic support, while the responsibility of educating their children into well-rounded individuals should be left to education experts '—— schools and teachers. This has led to parents becoming 'hands-off' in their children's education, causing family education to become disconnected from its educational purpose. After the implementation of the 'double reduction' policy, the focus of education has shifted to enhancing students' physical and mental health and overall quality, requiring cooperation between families and schools to promote the all-round development of students' knowledge, abilities, and qualities, providing a significant opportunity for family education to return to its core role of nurturing individuals[5]. However, in educational practice, many parents believe that as long as they manage their children's material life well and provide them with money, it is sufficient. Rousseau once said, "Family education is one of the most important responsibilities of parents." However, many parents have a weak sense of family education, often leaving the responsibility to schools and relying on educational experts to educate their children. They also tend to outsource excessive academic pressure to training institutions. Parents are the first teachers of their children's daily lives, guiding their words and actions. No matter how good the school education is, if family education does not keep up, it will only lead to children losing these positive learning outcomes due to bad habits at home[6]. Parents should change this irresponsible attitude, recognize the importance of family education in their children's growth, and help their children grow better through effective family education.

(3) Policy level: Parents have insufficient understanding of the "double reduction" policy, and the sense of school cooperation is weak

Under the 'double reduction' policy, parents' views on education have become polarized: some believe that children's education is solely the responsibility of schools and teachers, and they can afford to let go; others feel that schools' educational programs are insufficient and thus rely heavily on after-school training institutions[7]. In family education, responsibilities that should be handled by schools have been shifted to parents. Previously, schools assessed and guided students through homework and exams, but now parents must take a more active role in their children's learning and development to ensure they adapt to the new educational environment. The implementation of the double reduction policy has reduced the time schools spend on after-school tutoring and training, leading many parents to worry that their children are not learning enough at school. Parents' views on after-school services are also limited; some believe that paying for these services means the teacher will take full responsibility, overlooking the need for home-school collaboration in fostering students' growth. Some parents fail to recognize that after-school services offer a diverse curriculum that helps cultivate students' interests, develop their talents, broaden their horizons, and promote their all-round development, while also easing the financial burden on parents. Additionally, the amount of homework assigned by schools is often excessive and of poor quality, failing to meet students' needs for development. The evaluation system is overly reliant on exams, which do not provide a

comprehensive assessment of students' development, leading to a decline in children's confidence. Therefore, many parents began to question the school's examination system and evaluation methods, unwilling to cooperate with the school to complete the relevant tasks, and there was a "crisis" of trust between home and school.

(4) Value level: Education is in serious internal competition, and parents' education anxiety increases

Educational resources are objectively scarce, so when parents see other parents working hard for their children's education, they feel they are not doing enough. Consequently, they reluctantly join the 'involution' trend, competing for time and grades, which continuously increases the pressure on themselves and their children, gradually amplifying anxiety[7]. After the 'double reduction' policy was implemented, some online media, to attract traffic and attention, have exaggerated and distorted the policy, maliciously piecing together content out of context, and using sensational headlines to grab public attention. These misleading messages all point to the fact that competition is more intense and educational resources are scarcer under the 'double reduction' policy. These motivational articles 'once again put parents under a tight spell, 'creating unnecessary educational anxiety. Some parents also experience academic anxiety, primarily manifested in their anxiety about their children's homework and exam results. This anxiety arises from the uncertainty of their children's learning process and outcomes due to the reduction in homework and exam frequency after the 'double reduction' policy. Parents also worry about insufficient tutoring sessions and poor tutoring effectiveness, which stems from their fear of educational lag, 'the pressure of educational burden' in the educational process, and concerns about 'educational incompetence' in educational outcomes [7].

(5) Practical level: parents "teach improperly", education ability is insufficient

In the study on parents' learning abilities in the 'Blue Book of Children: China Children Development Report (2023)', parents primarily acquire knowledge and skills for family education through online searches (58.4%), seeking advice from experienced colleagues, friends, or relatives (55.8%), and watching online lectures and courses (41.5%) [8]. This indicates that after the 'double reduction' policy was introduced, parents still mainly rely on informal channels to gain professional knowledge and skills. Parenting education has not developed sufficiently, leading to insufficient family education capabilities among parents and a certain degree of blindness in fulfilling their responsibilities. The inadequacies in parents' family education capabilities are mainly reflected in two areas: parenting methods and communication skills. In terms of parenting methods, there is a lack of scientific approaches, often resulting in indulgence or authoritarianism. Children raised under inappropriate parenting methods are more likely to develop negative personalities and psychological issues. Regarding communication skills, there is a lack of effective techniques to bridge the gap in values between parents and children due to different backgrounds and social experiences, leading to a sense of estrangement and reduced family intimacy. Both improper parenting methods and a lack of communication skills contradict the 'double reduction' policy, causing problems such as poor cooperation between home and school and strained parent-child relationships, thereby undermining the effectiveness of the policy.

3. Exploring the Path of Family Education under the Background of Double Reduction

(1) Change parents' educational concept and improve their educational cognitive quality

Before the implementation of the 'double reduction' policy, parents were rushing to enroll their children in tutoring classes, leading to the emergence of kindergarten-to-primary school transition classes. To ensure their children didn't fall behind at the starting line, parents began competing from kindergarten, even starting prenatal education, which placed excessive pressure on children and led to a dislike for learning. Quintilian said, "Do not let children develop a dislike for learning before they can love it; make the initial education an enjoyable experience." The 'double reduction' policy has made parents realize the importance of fostering children's comprehensive qualities and innovative abilities through diverse educational methods, promoting their all-round development. From a policy perspective, the emphasis on high-quality and balanced compulsory education means that the difficulty level will decrease during the primary school stage, to the point where there is no room for competition, ensuring that children aged 6-15 are not reduced to exam machines. Therefore, parents need to change their mindset, allowing children to return to everyday life, spending time feeling, experiencing, and thinking, connecting with the real world, to identify true academic stars, and to help children break free from the rigid patterns of competition, returning to their natural talents and interests. This requires parents to follow the laws of children's physical and mental development and respect their nature. In daily life, parents should set a good example, not just demanding that children study while neglecting their own education, but creating a positive learning environment for their children. Parents are the earliest teachers of their children's daily lives, and no matter how good the school education is, if family education does not keep up, it will only lead children to lose these good learning outcomes due to the influence of bad habits at home. Parents should change this irresponsible concept and pay attention to the influence of family education on children's growth. Through good family education, children can grow up better.

(2) Understand the policy requirements and values, and return to the true nature of education

The state has prioritized the 'double reduction' initiative as a key livelihood project, integrating its outcomes into the quality evaluation of compulsory education at both county and school levels to ensure the implementation and effectiveness of the 'double reduction' policy. Parents should not reject or resist the 'double reduction' policy; instead, they need to understand it correctly and grasp the true intentions behind the national policy. Firstly, parents must understand the requirements of the 'double reduction' policy. The policy aims to promote children's development rather than undermine their competitiveness. Parents should actively support the efforts of schools and teachers to help children better adapt to the policy's requirements. Secondly, parents should recognize the value of the 'double reduction' policy. Its primary goal is to reduce the homework burden on students in compulsory education, strengthen the role of schools as the main educational platform, and improve the governance of educational training institutions. The policy requires schools and teachers to focus on students' 'quality education and

individual development, fostering their innovative spirit and practical skills. This approach helps students better meet societal demands. Additionally, the policy reduces students' academic pressure and promotes their physical and mental health. Finally, parents should regularly communicate with schools and teachers to ensure a correct understanding and correction of their perceptions of the 'double reduction' policy.

(3) To break the real constraints of education involution and dissolve parents' educational anxiety

To alleviate parents' educational anxiety, it is essential to help them adopt new educational concepts and discard narrow-minded views on education. While parents' educational philosophies are generally moving towards a more scientific direction, their weak ability to discern information and lack of understanding or misinterpretation of the 'double reduction' policy (a policy aimed at reducing the burden of homework and after-school tutoring) are significant factors contributing to parental anxiety[9]. Additionally, the complex nature of adolescents' physical and mental development poses practical challenges for parents in raising their children. Therefore, the government should provide scientific guidance from multiple angles to assist parents in transforming their educational perspectives and fostering a more rational and democratic approach to education, which is a direct way to ease parental anxiety. Educational administrative departments should organize official self-media platforms, such as WeChat public accounts (e.g., 'Weian Education', Provincial Department of Education, Municipal Bureau of Education), to release relevant short videos and scientific knowledge, conveying accurate educational messages to parents. This helps prevent parents from being misled by incorrect interpretations of the 'double reduction' policy and aids them in correctly understanding its purpose and impact. In terms of public opinion guidance, news media should take responsibility for students and society, maintaining objectivity in policy interpretation and playing a positive guiding role [10]. Social organizations or associations can regularly invite experts to give lectures and provide on-site consultations, engaging in discussions with parents to impart parenting knowledge. This ensures that parents have a solid foundation in educational theory, understand their responsibilities in educating their children, enhance their educational literacy and skills, recognize the underlying reasons behind children's behaviors, make informed decisions, and thus reduce their anxiety in parenting.

(4) We will build a family education guidance service system and improve our educational capacity

Under the 'double reduction' policy, the family education guidance service system should serve educational, collaborative, and optimization functions. It can optimize the management process of family education and promote the participation of the entire society, achieving collaborative education among families, schools, and society, and promoting the all-round development of students[11]. To ensure the efficient and orderly conduct of family education guidance services, the government should manage comprehensively, encouraging various social organizations and service institutions to participate. By updating the concepts of family education guidance services, improving service standards, optimizing personalized services, enhancing service relevance, clarifying management institutions, and ensuring the effective promotion and implementation of family education guidance services at the grassroots level, standardized operations can be achieved[12].

In terms of service content, through methods such as questionnaires and parent meetings, understand the expectations of parents at different age stages for their children and the requirements of schools and communities. Based on the actual needs of parents, develop educational plans, design teaching activities, provide targeted family education guidance, and address practical issues. Families, schools, and communities should establish effective communication mechanisms, regularly hold parent meetings and community activities, and understand the actual performance of students and the actual needs of parents.

(5) Promote home-school cooperation and promote home-school collaborative education

Home-school cooperation plays a crucial role in promoting educational equity and enhancing educational quality. In the context of the 'double reduction' policy, it has become an effective approach to improve family education. On one hand, parents and schools should foster a cooperative mindset and consensus. Both parties should clearly define educational goals and philosophies and share the responsibility for nurturing students. Schools can organize parent meetings and seminars to exchange educational philosophies and methods with parents, while also introducing the school's teaching features and resources. Parents should actively participate in school activities, building trust with teachers and the school, and enhancing the promotion and guidance of family education. On the other hand, effective communication platforms should be established between home and school. Regular face-to-face interactions are necessary to timely understand students' performance at school and their learning at home. Schools can use parent meetings and class WeChat groups to promptly inform parents about the school's educational policies and students' academic progress, and invite parents to provide feedback and suggestions. Parents should also proactively communicate with the school, providing timely updates on their children's learning at home and collaborating to find better ways to support their children's growth. Additionally, schools can offer personalized learning plans tailored to students' interests, strengths, and learning abilities, setting up teaching plans and evaluation standards accordingly. Through home-school cooperation, a strong bridge is built between school learning and family education, achieving the sharing and optimization of educational resources.

4. Conclusion

The implementation of the 'double reduction' policy not only reshapes the educational ecosystem but also calls for family education to return to its core purpose of nurturing individuals. As the noise of after-school tutoring fades, the foundational role of family education becomes increasingly evident — it is no longer just a 'second classroom' for imparting knowledge, but a 'soil of life' that nurtures children's character, habits, and values. To address the current challenges in family education, parents, schools, and society must work together: parents need to let go of their anxiety, shift from a focus on scores to holistic development, and discover their children's talents and passions through companionship; schools should build a stronger bridge of

collaboration between home and school, allowing educational philosophies to be integrated through interaction rather than a simple transfer of responsibilities; society needs to foster a relaxed and enriching environment for family education with rational public opinion and professional guidance.

The essence of education is not about 'rolling out' standardized 'success,' but about nurturing each child to become a unique individual. When family education truly focuses on 'nurturing people' rather than 'boosting scores,' and when parents and children grow through reduced burdens, the 'double reduction' policy can truly take root, allowing education to return to its true purpose and foster a more vibrant future.

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