A Review of the Research on the Burden Reduction in Primary and Secondary Education under the Background of "Double Reduction"

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Abstract

The problem of "reducing the burden" in primary and secondary schools has been concerned by the society. With the introduction of "the most strict order to reduce the burden", the "reducing the burden" in primary and secondary schools has become a social focus again. This paper analyzes the specific causes from two aspects of policy content and policy implementation at home and abroad. By reviewing and sorting out relevant literature on the policy of "burden reduction" in primary and secondary schools at home and abroad, it finds that the main problems and potential risks in the policy are as follows: Clear policy objectives may lead to implementation deviation, too many mandatory measures may lead to implementation rigidity, and lack of operability of policy measures may lead to policy distortion. Therefore, it is necessary to further improve the precision of policy objectives, realize the leap from "reducing the burden" to "improving the quality and efficiency", refine the specific measures of "reducing the burden" policy, strengthen the cooperation between various subjects, and work together to reduce the academic burden of students.

Keywords

Primary and Middle School Students; "Burden Reduction" Policy; Policy Implementation.

1. Introduction

In China, burden reduction is a persistent problem in basic education and a new focus increasingly paid attention to by the Party and the state based on the comprehensive consideration of the future development of the nation [1]. In July 1955, the Ministry of Education promulgated the new China’s first order, after our country almost every year is issued to a relief policy and decree, and from the "break five evaluation reform", "five management" to "Shuanglian", intensive education policy, while the policy target each are not identical, but to alleviate the workload of decision in every period have not changed, "Burden reduction", as a popular term, has always appeared in our vision, but the implementation effect is not satisfactory [2]. In order to fully implement the guiding principles of the 19th CPC National Congress and the Fifth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central Committee, continue to standardize off-campus training (both online and offline), and effectively reduce the burden of heavy homework and off-campus training for students in compulsory education, in July 2021, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and The General Office of the State Council issued Opinions on Further Reducing the Homework Burden and Off-campus Training Burden of Students in Compulsory Education (hereinafter referred to as the "double Reduction" policy) [3], which demonstrates the determination and strength of burden reduction and has aroused wide attention.

Reducing the heavy learning burden of primary and secondary school students is a difficult point in China’s compulsory education reform. Although China has been committed to reducing the heavy learning burden of students, but little effect, even more and more reduced, there is a
phenomenon of "reducing the burden in school, increasing the burden out of school", education anxiety is becoming more and more serious. In view of this, this paper reviews the process of burden reduction at home and abroad, analyzes the burden of primary and secondary school students’ homework and training institutions from two aspects, correctly understands the heavy workload of primary and secondary school students and its root causes, and rationally analyzes the research status of "double reduction".

2. The Domestic Research Status and Development Trend

Since the founding of the People’s Republic of China, the discussion of primary and middle school students’ academic burden has never stopped, in such an environment, work to reduce the financial burden of primary and middle school students also gradually expand from different levels, different angles, numerous scholars have done a lot of theoretical research and practical investigation. A total of 1023 literatures were obtained by searching the cnKI database with "double reduction" policy as the main topic and defining the subject as "secondary education" and "primary education". The analysis of the number of reading literature shows that the research literature presents an increasing trend. Similarly, a total of 6915 literatures were obtained through advanced retrieval with the themes of "burden reduction" and "education". In general, empirical studies on burden reduction in primary and secondary schools in China are still relatively scarce. The literature review is as follows:

2.1. Research on Policy Content

2.1.1. Student Homework Burden

In the current learning environment, the phenomenon of heavy homework burden of primary and secondary school students often occurs, but the core problem of "reducing the burden" has not been effectively solved, and the problem of heavy homework burden of primary and secondary school students has also aroused the concern of the whole society. In 2000, the Ministry of Education issued the "Urgent Notice on Reducing The Excessive Burden of Students in Primary Schools", with the purpose of reducing the burden of students' schoolwork. However, in recent years, the actual situation shows that the burden of students' schoolwork is still heavy, which has not achieved the ideal effect of "reducing burden" in parents' mind. After "reducing the burden" was put forward, the heat has not decreased, Chinese scholars have also done a lot of research work. Wanted peace in zhao-hui liu (2004) put forward the education policy of "burden" is the basic strategy of "reduction quality", it is the focus of easing the burden on students' intellectual education, improve students in moral education, sports, aesthetic education and labor education aspects of development, rather than blindly will only do "subtraction", they point out that the people for the concept of the "burden" to stay on the surface [4]. Lu Linyue (2007) pointed out in the comprehensive Dialectical Theory of "Burden Reduction" that students’ academic burden includes academic burden, psychological burden and economic burden, and he mainly emphasized the academic burden and psychological burden[5]. On this point, Chen Yuqing and Ma Wenjun share the same opinion. In their article "Getting out of the Mistake of Reducing The Burden "(2007), they pointed out that the burden of primary and secondary school students has become increasingly serious since the national college entrance examination was resumed in 1977. More courses, more homework, less sleep, and more after-school tutoring have become the common living conditions of primary and secondary school students. The heavy learning burden has seriously affected the physical and mental health of primary and secondary school students. Up to now, there are still misunderstandings in ideology or work [6]. Chen Shuangye and Ke Zheng (2013) introduced the discussion of mills's "personal troubles" and "public issues", and seldom distinguished them in previous studies and policies. In the real world, they understood the schoolwork burden of primary and secondary school students. Finally, they propose to turn the
"increase" and "decrease" debate of course load into a discussion of why student course work is needed and what we need students to gain from their course work experience in the present age [7].

Yang Qiliang (2013) put forward his own unique point of view: There have been many studies on excessive academic load, but few people pay attention to it. In fact, the academic load is not excessive, but the imbalance of academic quality evaluation [8]. Xiao Zhengde (2014) believes that at present, exam-oriented education and "sea of questions tactics" are becoming more and more intense, and students' homework burden is becoming heavier and heavier [9]. Ma Kaijian and Yang Chunfang (2015) also have unique views on burden reduction. Primary and secondary school students face the following three burdens at school: first, the burden of courses and homework; Second, the burden of thinking and understanding; Finally, the burden of examinations and rankings [10]. Wang Yuxun and Liu Jian (2018) analyzed the changes and trends of education burden reduction policies issued by the state since the reform and opening up, and analyzed the characteristics of education burden reduction policies at different stages [11].

In addition to the above theoretical studies on burden reduction, many scholars have also studied the newly proposed "double reduction" policy. Gu Mingyuan (2021) believes that reducing students' academic burden is an issue related to who and how to cultivate people, and it is also an issue of implementing the Party's education policy and cultivating people through virtue [12]. Zhou Xu and Guo Yufei (2022) found out the root causes of excessive workload of students through analysis, and believed that the breakthrough point of burden reduction is to improve teaching quality, create interesting classes and improve classroom efficiency [35]. Wang Jingjing, Zhou Danhua et al. (2022) analyzed the deep mechanism behind homework based on empirical research and analysis of primary and secondary school students' homework at home and abroad, and proposed five ways to optimize homework [36].

Therefore, it can be seen that scholars have been studying the causes behind the academic burden, and how to solve this contradiction and implement the reduction of the burden, no matter the previous "burden reduction" policy or the new "double reduction" policy. In addition to the above research theories on homework burden of primary and secondary school students, the "double reduction" policy issued this time on the other hand is to regulate extra-curricular training institutions.

2.1.2. Burden of Off-campus Training

Based on China's experience in governance of off-campus training institutions, as early as 2013, the Notice of The General Office of the Ministry of Education on carrying out the Activity of "Ten Thousand Mile Journey to Reduce The Burden" of Schools in compulsory Education (Ministry of Education, 2013) proposed to improve training management and promote industry self-discipline [13]. Subsequently, the state gradually increased the governance of off-campus training institutions. The "double reduction" policy to be issued in July 2021 will standardize off-campus training and reduce the homework and training burden of students in compulsory education as a major education and people's livelihood project. Hu Jieren and Li Liuxing (2021) argued in their research that the promulgations of the "double reduction" policy marked the beginning of the supervision of off-campus training institutions in China according to law. In particular, the restrictions on the number, training time and training price of off-campus training institutions and the prohibition of capitalization have been comprehensively developed in the whole country [14]. Xu Bingru and Yang Ying (2022) point out that after the "double reduction" policy is issued, the advertising of off-campus training institutions is first suspended, and the publicity and guidance of disciplinary training institutions is explicitly prohibited, while training institutions are faced with practical problems such as refund and capital turnover difficulties. Secondly, it is extremely difficult to transition from discipline
training to quality-oriented training [15]. Dong Shengzu (2021), director of the Private Education Research Institute of Shanghai Academy of Education Science, points out that many secondary and primary school after-school training institutions, driven by utilitarianism and capital, especially those without qualifications with a wide range of training institutions, pay attention to grades and carry out excessive discipline knowledge training activities for admission and examination. They not only increase the workload of students, but also increase the education cost of the whole society and disrupt the normal teaching order of primary and secondary schools [16].

The effectiveness of the management of off-campus training institutions is related to the implementation of the "double minus" policy. If this point is not thoroughly governed, subject training will not be "worthy of its name", and the goal of the "double reduction" policy will not really be achieved.

2.2. Research on Policy Implementation

Since the founding of the People’s Republic of China, the Ministry of Education has formulated several policies to "reduce the workload of students". Despite considerable efforts by education authorities from the central to local levels, from education experts to school leaders, the results reported by all parties so far have been generally unsatisfactory. No matter students, teachers or parents feel relieved by the call of "reducing the burden".

2.2.1. Policy Implementation Involving Complex Stakeholders

Liu Xiao Yan, Yang Tao (2003) through the primary and middle schools in Wuhan Jiangxia district part of teachers, students and parents will ease the burden to achieve quality education problem investigation, through the collection and analysis, surprisingly found that most parents, especially the junior middle school students parents do not want to burden [19]. Based on Herbert Simon’s bounded rationality hypothesis, Zhang Ling and Ge Xinbin (2019) attributed the reason for the policy limits of "burden reduction" to the limitations of the policy subject and the policy environment, defined the limits of government power and responsibility, and improved the overall quality of the subject [29]. Ping Siqing (2022) proposes that the "double reduction" policy is a systematic project involving multiple interest groups. Referring to Freeman’s definition of "stakeholders", she divides stakeholders into the following parts: Relevant government departments are key stakeholders, including schools, off-campus training institutions, students and parents, who are closely related to the implementation of the policy and are the main stakeholders, while new and old media and publishing industry are secondary stakeholders [27].

2.2.2. Reasons for Poor Policy Implementation and Analysis

The quality of the policy itself is the primary factor determining the effect of policy implementation. Whether a policy can be effectively implemented often depends on the scientific nature of the policy itself. When reflecting on poor policy implementation, one should first consider whether the policy itself is flawed. Xiao Yuanjun and Li Chunling (2007) believe that the distortion of the implementation of "burden reduction" policy is the main obstacle to the realization of burden reduction in primary and secondary schools. The main reasons for the distortion of the implementation of the "burden reduction" policy are the insufficiency of the policy itself, the restriction of the implementation environment, the game of interests in the implementation process, and the lack of supervision on the implementation [22]. Meng Chen and Li Wenxue (2013) found three reasons hindering policy implementation through their research on policy implementation: first, it is difficult to clarify policy objectives; Second, the restriction of policy environment; Third, ineffective policy supervision [24]. Meng Zhaohai (2014) analyzed the problems of low efficiency in China’s education reform from three aspects: first, the fragmented reform of "department separation"; Second, the peripheral reform of "avoiding serious problems and avoiding light ones"; Third, ritualized reform of "political
correctness". At the same time, it points out the impact on the implementation of the "burden reduction" policy and the way to achieve the reform [26]. Wang Zhonghua (2014) put forward that deviations in the implementation of education "burden reduction" policies are often caused by deviations in policy interpretation, selective implementation of policies, ineffective implementation and inadequate supervision in the implementation process. The influencing factors of the education "burden reduction" policy include social factors, the external environment of policy implementation, the quality of policy implementers, and whether the policy is perfect and reasonable [25]. Anna Ge (2006) pointed out in her article that it is difficult to implement the "burden reduction" policy for the following reasons: Imperfect human resource system; Serious defects of education evaluation system; The shortage and imbalance of educational resources; The teaching content is too much and too deep [20]. Chen Na (2006) believes that China's primary and secondary education also has a "bottom line", that is, relevant laws, red documents and relevant regulations passed by competent departments at all levels. If schools truly abide by the rules, the burden on students will not be too heavy [21]. Zhu Weiguo (2019) studied the implementation of the education "burden reduction" policy and found that the implementation effect of the "burden reduction" policy was not good mainly because of the following points: First, after the policy was promulgated, some grassroots education administrative departments and schools would cut the policy text, choose to implement or partially implement it, deliberately avoiding some policies; Second, the lack of real action and supervision mechanism to implement the policy of reducing the burden; Third, distorted implementation of policies [28]. Ni yahong, ma luting et al. (2018) pointed out that there are two reasons for the poor implementation of burden reduction policies for primary and secondary schools in China: different rational understandings held by educational stakeholders; Power operation mechanism to promote policy implementation is obstructed [39].

2.2.3. The Current Research Situation of "Shuangjian" Policy Implementation

Xu Chengyun, Lin Tong (2022), a questionnaire survey was conducted in 15 primary school teachers and students in jiangxi province, studies have shown that "Shuangjian" policy make the teachers' work time and pressure, while the students can complete the work better, learn more effectively, to spend more time to exercise, sleep and reading, Reduce the burden of extracurricular activities, enrich the weekend life. While the "double reduction" policy achieved initial results, it also brought new challenges to school education [30]. Xue Eryong (2022) points out that the implementation of the "double reduction" policy marks the beginning of the commonization of in-school education and out-of-school education, forming a pattern of collaborative governance, which will improve the quality and efficiency of school education, standardize the health of out-of-school education, and emphasize the education oriented and collaborative governance in implementation [31]. Ma Rui and Ji Xiaoting (2022) put forward the "double reduction" policy. In the past few months, all parties have taken active actions and achieved remarkable results. From the perspective of schools, in addition to homework publicity and rigid monitoring, after-class services and interest groups have also been added, and some pilot areas have also made many enlightening attempts [37].

3. Foreign Research Status and Development Trend

The problem of education is not only in our country, but also in the world is a very eye-catching problem, foreign scholars have studied the problem of overburden of primary and secondary school students for a long time.
3.1. Research on Policy Content

3.1.1. According to the Number of Weekly Class Hours

French primary and secondary school students have very little homework, and their study time is relatively short, and the school load is not heavy. Both French and our country's high schools have three years of schooling. But the difference is that their first year is a foundation year, and the courses are divided into basic courses, restricted electives and self-selected courses. The second and third years are divided into subjects, with different weekly class hours, but they are all in 30 class hours [32]. According to the general high school curriculum standards implemented in Japan in 1994, the high school adopts the credit system, and students can graduate with 80 credits [33].

3.1.2. From the Amount of Homework

Many countries limit the amount of homework students can do at school in order to reduce their study burden and ensure that they have enough free time for activities. In the UK, homework for children under the age of 12 is prohibited [31]. The French government has banned homework for primary school students since 1956 [31]. South Korea has taken a similar "Shuangjian" policy with China, announced in 1981, the new education reform, the teachers, parents not only give students extracurricular homework, and even with all the suspension, but after implementation, the allocation of education resources and didn't get a fair and just, but private tutors prices rising rapidly. It increases the economic burden of students' families [31]. In Turkey, homework was banned in schools since 1985 [31]. Homework for students aged 6-14 is prohibited in Spain [31].

3.1.3. From the Difficulty of the Curriculum

In "Education" (1861), The British scholar Spencer proposed that schools should set up courses reasonably for students, develop students' various abilities, encourage them to fully tap their potential, so that the heavy homework burden will not hinder their all-round development. In order to reduce the workload, the United States emphasizes multi-level teaching, in which students can choose different learning materials at several different levels, namely high, middle and low, and then teach in different classes. They advocate reducing the difficulty of teaching materials in terms of theoretical depth, logical rigor and customary skill [34]. At the same time, Harris Cooper found in his research on American students’ homework that moderate homework helps students improve their skills and good habits, and acquire more knowledge and independent learning ability [34].

3.2. Research on Policy Implementation

There are some lessons for us to learn from the implementation of "burden reduction" policies abroad.

Neighboring South Korea's education "roll-in" has been well known, in China's "double reduction" policy before landing, South Korea has already made a try. South Korea's "double reduction" policy not only means to reduce the burden of compulsory education, it also includes all policies about education chaos. From the perspective of the "double reduction" policy in South Korea, it can be found that it contains two aspects: firstly, it starts with the institutional reform, introducing the institutional reform policy of "equalization education" in the compulsory education stage; Secondly, starting from off-campus education, off-campus training institutions should be banned to maintain educational equity [37].

As a country with highly developed economy, the United States has developed the "After-school program" and explored for a hundred years. Some experiences can provide reference and reflection for China to improve after-school service level. This plan uninterrupted throughout the year, all aspects to get the full support of the state and society, rich contents, various forms and is not compulsory, and rarely charge, it not only solved the trouble back at home of parents,
also help improve the students’ bad behavior, make the students’ social and emotional skills improved, strengthen students’ sense of well-being, access and security [38].

China and Japan have similar social background, which makes the experience and lessons of Japan’s "loose education" have great reference significance for China. Although it has changed from the previous education mode that emphasized knowledge transmission and rote memorization to the cultivation of new learning skills, such as survival ability, thinking ability and innovation ability, policy concept, policy implementation and policy guarantee have not been fully implemented. Public and private schools do not apply the same standards. The starting point of Japan’s implementation of "relaxed education" is very similar to our concept of "reducing the burden". However, due to the failure of the above aspects, we have come to the end of failure, which also makes us realize that education reform must be well thought out.

In order to solve the problem of reducing the burden, the former Soviet Union educators and teachers made a lot of bold and meaningful exploration, put forward and implemented some ideas and methods different from the traditional views and practices, in their primary and secondary schools also exist the problem of heavy burden of students, with the following characteristics: One is to train students' learning skills; Second, stimulate students' interest in learning; The third is to create a rich "intellectual background"; The fourth is optimized operations, some of the above content has been successful. The studies and opinions of educators and teachers in the former Soviet Union on reducing students' burden are of great value to us in broadening our vision and opening our thinking, and it is of great benefit to effectively reduce students' burden in order to solve the problem of excessive burden on students [33].

4. Literature Review

To sum up, although homework burden and off-campus training institutions seem to be levers to reduce workload, the influence behind them presents a complex mechanism. Students' homework and off-campus training institutions "Shuangjian" at the same time, parents and teachers class inevitably appear "building", this is the lack of practice class teachers of primary and secondary schools, after-school service resources, service content is not rich, the quality is uneven, parent-school cooperative mechanism has not yet formed, etc, the comprehensive development of primary and middle school students is hard to get, it is difficult to meet the requirements of high-quality learning, which has not been studied in depth by scholars. At present, empirical studies are scarce, and most of them focus on the research of policy content, which is different from the focus of foreign studies. The policy evaluation system is not perfect, and the tools used in the research are relatively single, and there is a lack of data analysis. Most of the literature is about the homework burden of each discipline, how homework involves, improving after-school service level of schools and the current situation of training institutions. In later research can optimize teaching structure around (teachers' job design ability weak, the improper evaluation, etc.), and how to introduce and cultivate the subject class teacher how to transform these topics, after-school training institutions to carry out, in this article, through combing to reduce the financial burden of primary and middle school students' academic literature both at home and abroad, provide theoretical and practical guidance for future research, Education reform still has a long way to go.

5. Development Trend

The "double reduction" policy simply means two points: one is to reduce the academic burden of students in compulsory education, and the other is to reduce the burden of students' training outside the school. The purpose is to make education return to its essence, form a virtuous circle and interactive education environment with family education as the basis, school education as
the cornerstone and social education as the supplement, and attract more high-quality talents for the country. At present, the development trend of the "double reduction" policy has the following two aspects:

5.1. **Reshape Education Ecology, Adjust Education Pattern**

Specification outside school training, strengthen the school education, schools should break the education orientation of "only score theory" and "only admission theory", to prevent the interference of outside school education system for the school normal education order, fully give play to the role of school education, to explore ideas and scientific management mechanism, realize the slow education, return the childhood to students, Make education shift from exam-oriented to quality-oriented.

5.2. **Return to Education Law, Adhere to the Public Welfare of Education**

"Four regression" is to return to common sense, reasonable "burden reduction" for primary and secondary school students, truly reflect the connotation construction, quality improvement in each student's learning results, to achieve true learning; Returning to the original duty, teachers explore new education methods, new models and new ideas under the policy of "double reduction", and adhere to the teacher ethics as the first standard of teacher quality evaluation; Return to the original aspiration, adhere to the correct political direction, promote the combination of professional knowledge education and ideological and political education, devote to training builders and successors; Return to the dream, promote the innovation of school education concept, organization and management, and strive to realize the dream of education power.

Basic education is not a business, but a public good that must be provided by the state. Education is not tied to capital. Both school education and off-campus training institutions must adhere to the public welfare nature of education, promote education fairness, and adhere to education as a cause of conscience. The implementation of the "double reduction" policy is an important measure taken by the Party and the government to uphold the non-profit nature of education, reduce family spending on education, stop education being driven by interests and promote education equity.

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