

# Exploring the Motivations, Internal Causes, and Development Suggestions of China's "Double Reduction" Education Policy

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**Abstract:** The proposal of the "double reduction" policy in 2021 has aroused widespread concern from all walks of life. While attacking the out-of-school education and counseling institutions with serious capital expansion, they also put forward long-term development suggestions and requirements for school education. Through sorting out the influence of off-campus teaching and supporting institutions on the development of education fairness in the development process, reviewing the relevant policies for reducing students' burdens, and exploring the root causes of the policy. Analyzing the implementation of the policy from two aspects: promoting and strengthening the fair development of quality education, and adjusting and improving the population structure is a necessary choice to solve the education of people's livelihood, and put forward new requirements for the development of school education, family education, and social education.

**Keywords:** the "Double Reduction" policy; equity in education; out-of-school training; public education system

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 Burden of Homework for Students in Compulsory Education and the Burden of Out-of-School Training (hereinafter referred to as the "Opinions"), which proposed that the level of school education should be effectively improved and out-of-school training should be regulated on a sustained basis, to effectively reduce the excessive homework burden and out-of-school training burden of students in compulsory education (hereinafter referred to as the "Double Reduction"). The "Double Reduction" policy is a direct attack on the pain point of reducing the burden of compulsory education students - the heavy burden of extracurricular training. The capitalization of the education and training market has changed extracurricular training from "non-essential" to "essential" in the continuous marketing and packaging, which has brought a heavy extracurricular burden and education costs to students and parents, and also brought some damage to the balanced development of the education system that has been established in China. This study will analyze the background and policy foundations of the "Double Reduction" policy, explore the underlying causes of the "Double Reduction" policy, and explore the new challenges faced by various social groups under the implementation of the policy, as well as the direction of the reform of the education system, for consideration.

## 1. Motivation for the "Double Reduction" policy

Since the establishment of China, the state has maintained a high degree of attention to the issue of student burden reduction and has introduced several burden reduction policies covering the transformation of the concept of education and the optimization of the educational structure. In the process of constantly adjusting and adapting to quality education, in recent years, the burden on students has shifted from the burden of coursework to the burden of extracurriculars <sup>[1]</sup>. Why is it more and more difficult to reduce the burden, the reality of the reason is attributed to the confusion of the educational positioning of the main body of education, the task of confusion, which led to more serious educational anxiety and the question of fairness in education.

### ***1.1. Shifting of responsibilities between home and school education***

Home and school collaboration has been widely recognized as an educational model, but focusing on the misalignment of family education and school education in recent years, family education "school", and school education "amplification" of the phenomenon is significant<sup>[2]</sup>. On the one hand, in school education the family education of the cross-border behavior is obvious, school education is targeted and professional, while family education is diffuse in daily interaction, the difference between the two led to the school education standing firm "favorable position". As the center of talent cultivation, the school has grasped the expectation of parents that they can "expect their children to be successful" and achieve a class leap, and "all for the service of school education" has become the center of parents' education. The family has become a replica of the school, and parents have taken on the tasks of assigning homework and supervising and counseling lessons that should have been undertaken by school teachers. As a result, family education passively assumes the responsibility of school education and becomes a "copy" of school education, resulting in the absence of its main task as family education. On the other hand, family education has no trust in school education and frequently interferes with and disapproves of the normal teaching arrangements and educational contents of schools. The reason for this is that school education, especially the compulsory education stage, should pay attention to the cultivation of students' comprehensive quality, but some parents are oriented to the scores and schools have educational differences. As a result, home-school collaboration is faced with the problem of mutual incomprehension and unequal status between home and school, and a serious crisis of responsibility has arisen from the mutual shifting of responsibilities between the two.

### ***1.2. Capital dumping by out-of-school tutoring organizations in disarray***

Extramural tutoring institutions' capital expansion makes the tutoring institutions and public schools produce unhealthy competition. On the one hand, the contradiction between the two is reflected in the struggle for teachers, in recent years, tutorial institutions with the profit motive have attracted a large number of excellent teachers, to a certain extent, also affecting the renewal and optimization of public school teachers. On the other hand, some of the teaching institutions affect the normal order of teaching, or even cause a waste of public school teaching resources. Institutions in the targeted subject tutoring following the school parallel teaching schedule organization of teaching activities, distracting students from the classroom attention, resulting in excessive reliance on extracurricular tutoring students do not pay attention to the situation of in-school teaching. For public schools, some of the training institutions ahead of time, over the outline of the teaching resulting in students' uneven foundation, so the teaching order is in chaos<sup>[3]</sup>. Students do not pay attention to, counseling institutions "dominate" to a certain extent, but also to the school teachers caused by "lying flat" psychological comfort and implied, more unfavorable to the school's educational governance and comprehensive improvement of the quality of education.

Out-of-school tutoring institutions caused by the family education of the "involution" is also quite serious, directly leading to the students being trapped in the heavy burden of extracurricular. At the same time, the cost of investment in education has risen sharply, and with extreme reliance on extracurricular tutoring, parents also face a huge psychological and economic burden. The capital expansion of tutorial institutions has led to the internalization of education, which has completely distorted the concept of educational equity, not only increasing the educational burden on families but also squeezing the personal growth time that should be used for children's physical and mental health, making the development of the overall quality of the student a serious imbalance. Comprehensive development is the party and the country's expectations of future generations of the Chinese nation, but also the power of the great renaissance of the motherland, in the teaching aids under the influence of capital dumping, education "involution" has become a social problem that has to be solved.

### ***1.3. Serious internal attrition under the tripartite game***

Parents and students, schools, teaching and learning institutions in the three-way game, parents ignore the physical and mental health development of students, blindly chase after extracurricular tutoring, and constantly psychological internal attrition and the formation of more serious educational anxiety. Whether students in endless extracurricular tutoring improved, the academic community did not reach a unanimous view on this issue<sup>[4-8]</sup>, and some studies have emphasized that extracurricular tutoring for students' performance impacts the existence of obvious heterogeneity<sup>[9-10]</sup>. As far as school education is concerned, extracurricular tutoring has weakened the importance of school teaching to a certain extent

and eroded the bridge of trust between parents and schools.

General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out that "the happiness of the people is the greatest human right, and the Communist Party of China (CPC) has made the happiness of the people and the development of mankind the goal of its struggle since the day it was born". With the increasing severity of "involution" and the sharp rise in education investment, parents and students are bearing a heavier and heavier burden, and the ensuing high cost of education is also causing the cost of childbearing to soar, which is negatively affecting the improvement of China's demographic structure.

## **2. Internal factors in the implementation of the "Double Reduction" policy**

The deep-rooted reasons for the implementation of the "Double Reduction" policy can be analyzed from the perspective of promoting and strengthening the equitable development of quality education and regulating and improving the demographic structure, taking into account the development of China in recent years.

### ***2.1. Promoting the equitable development of quality education***

Education is the foundation of the country, and the cultivation of talents is directly related to social and economic construction and development. Since the early days of its birth, the CPC has paid great attention to the popularization of education, and in the century-long historical process of the CPC's leadership of the Chinese Revolution and socialist construction, it has always put educational equity at the top of the list of priorities for the development of education. Since the reform and opening up of China, the Party's strategy for the development of basic education has evolved from "literacy" to "universal education" to the promotion of balanced development of compulsory education. With the concept of "no child should suffer and no education should be poor" gradually taking root in people's minds, China has achieved remarkable results in popularizing education. Entering the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics construction stage, China's education undertakings to achieve significant development, in improving quality, promoting fairness, and other aspects of the effectiveness of the education popularization level to achieve a historic leap in education, the people's sense of access to education has been significantly strengthened<sup>[11]</sup>. In the process of obtaining achievements, the capital expansion of teaching and learning institutions has challenged the fairness of education and has also caused more thinking about the future of students and the future of the country. The phenomenon shows that in the process of building a modernized education governance system in China, there is still the problem of the lack of the attribute of public welfare in education and the solidification of education evaluation standards.

Emphasizing the public welfare attribute of education is the main line of a series of major initiatives taken by the Party Central Committee since 2018 targeting the development of education. Therefore, whether it is school education or off-campus educational tutoring organizations, education should not be regarded as a profit-seeking industry. "Adhere to the people first, and constantly meet the needs of the people for a better educational life", this is the "double reduction" for the education reform logic, is the party and the government to adhere to the public welfare of the education cause, efforts to reduce the family's education expenditure, to stop the profit-seeking education behavior, and to promote educational fairness. Promote educational fairness of the major initiatives<sup>[12]</sup>.

Deep into profit-seeking education, the direct cause is the solidification of the evaluation standard of examination-based education. For many years China's compulsory education has been unable to get rid of the rigid influence of test-based education, and the competitive education system under the baton of the college entrance examination is still the main way to realize class mobility in our society<sup>[13]</sup>. It has been 29 years since 1993 when China implemented quality education for all, but due to the selection mechanism of "test-oriented utilitarianism" and the single evaluation criterion of promotion rate, "promotion rate" is still prevalent. The "Opinions" require that students be the focus of attention, and put forward the requirement for local party and government organs and departments to "strictly prohibit the issuance of promotion targets or unilaterally evaluating schools and teachers based on the promotion rate". It can be seen that the implementation of the policy for the comprehensive restoration of the education ecology, to ensure the healthy growth of every compulsory school-age student plays a key, enlightening role, but also to promote the fair and balanced development of education is a powerful initiative.

### ***2.2. Improving and regulating the population structure***

The results of China's seventh population census in 2021 showed that the degree of population aging

in China is deepening, the proportion of the working-age population is declining, and the traditional "demographic dividend" period is about to come to an end, and the working-age population will face the dilemma of a continuous increase in the burden of dependency<sup>[14]</sup>. China's population aging due the family planning and another previous policy impact, the direct cause is the reduction of the fertility rate, and with the development of scientific and technological progress the average life expectancy of the population to extended. From the perspective of development, the deeper reason for population aging is that the cost of childbearing has risen sharply, thereby subtly affecting the concept of marriage and parenthood. In the face of the problem of population aging in recent years, China has introduced the "two-child" and "three-child" policies, all of which are constantly promoting the fertility policy to promote population growth. However, if you want to raise the fertility level and optimize the population structure, you can't just rely on the opening of the three-child policy, you need to pay more attention to the process of talent cultivation from childbearing, parenting to education, to transform the demographic dividend into a talent dividend.

The implementation of the "double reduction" policy is most directly aimed at reducing the burden on families and lowering the cost of education. The policy strikes at the heart of easing the burden of education on families, targeting the two camps that provide the main educational resources - schools and out-of-school educational tutoring organizations - and both targeting the former involves "strictly forbidding parents to assign homework or assign homework in disguise", For the former, there are requirements to reduce the burden on schools, such as "strictly forbidding the assignment of homework to parents or in disguise" and "categorizing the total amount of homework", and for the latter, there are regulatory measures, such as "not allowing them to go public and raise funds" and "not occupying the national legal holidays", as well as measures to It also includes a variety of support and guarantee measures such as upgrading the level of after-school services and strengthening supporting governance<sup>[15]</sup>. Practically reducing the cost of education, easing the pressure of childbirth, and providing practical policy support for actively improving the demographic structure, regulating the pressure of population aging, and winning the battle of population defense.

### **3. Proposals for the implementation of the "Double Reduction" policy**

In the process of implementing the "double reduction" policy, it is necessary to consolidate the concept of collaborative parenting with the fundamental orientation of "all-round development of students", adhere to the main position of school education, and deepen the governance of out-of-school educational institutions, and this series of initiatives has put forward a new requirement of collaborative parenting and development of the tripartite educational platforms of the family, the school and the society.

#### ***3.1. School education - sticking to the main position of education***

Deepening the position and leading role of school education and the return of schools to the main position of education are the fundamental prerequisites for the collaborative education of families, schools, and communities. For compulsory education schools, schools should play a leading role in the growth and development of students and promote the development and progress of compulsory education. There are four main "improvements" in school education: the quality of classroom teaching, the quality of homework design, the quality of after-school services, and the quality of teacher development. Improving the quality of classroom learning and homework design is aimed at exploring effective measures to improve students' learning efficiency and reduce their workload. To improve the quality of after-school services, to expand the coverage of school education, and to appropriately extend the time of after-school services to effectively reduce the energy burden of after-school counseling for parents. And improve the quality of teacher development, and increase the training of teachers adapted to the development requirements of the new era, to "revitalize" from the source to promote the development of high-quality education chess games. Teachers' requirements should keep pace with the times, and "meritocracy" should not only be a criterion for judging students but also a criterion for judging the quality of teachers. Teachers with the correct educational philosophy in the daily teaching activities with students, and parents, a direct collision is the key link to alleviate educational anxiety, this collision itself can be in the gradual change of parents on the education process, education results, and education evaluation of the basic cognition, so as to promote the implementation of the "double reduction" concept.

To ensure the steady development and enhancement of school education, the relevant departments should introduce and implement relevant initiatives to promote the quality and balanced development of education, while giving due consideration to the social welfare of schools and teachers, and paying attention to the difficulties that exist in the provision of extracurricular services by schools. For example, due to the differences in regional development, localities need to work according to their conditions, to give full play to the advantages of technological empowerment, and maximize the use of educational

resources.

### ***3.2. Family education - returning to the original heart of education***

Family education is the starting point and foundation for the healthy development of children and adolescents, with unique advantages and irreplaceability in character education<sup>[16]</sup>. Its fundamental task is to establish morality, respect the law of physical and mental development of minors and individual differences, follow the laws of family education, and implement the scientific concept of family education.

The "double reduction" policy for family education puts forward the requirements of "returning to the essence of family education, focusing on the personalized development of children", and the "Opinions" especially point out that parents should "establish a scientific concept of child-rearing, and rationally determine the expectations of children's growth. "This shows that the key to family education is to clarify the nature of education, emphasizing that parents should strive to get out of the cognitive misconceptions in the process of education to alleviate educational anxiety in the true sense of the word. In family education, on the one hand, the intrinsic motivation requires parents to actively change the concept of education, return to the original heart of family education, and understand the essence of "comprehensive development of students" from a general perspective, but also from an individualized, personalized perspective to provide "comprehensive development of students". Family education options from an individualized and personalized point of view, so that the effect of education highlights the individual characteristics<sup>[17]</sup>. On the other hand, the external guidance led by government departments to establish a family education guidance service system, guiding parents to form an equal career concept, the scientific concept of parenting and correct interpretation of the "double reduction" policy, etc., to alleviate educational anxiety from the ideological consciousness, and to promote the overall enhancement of parents' family education quality. The significance of family education guidance is to enable parents to clarify the meaning of family education and to deepen the importance of school education in the overall development of students, thereby promoting family education in parallel with school and social education, and avoiding the situation in which "the burden is reduced inside the school, but increased outside the school".

### ***3.3. Social education***

Social education is one of the three pillars of education and is an important supplement to and deepening of family and school education, including not only the paid education of tutoring organizations but also the macro-social context of the political, economic, cultural, and other elements of education as an institutional environment. First of all, it is necessary to focus on clear, that "double reduction" is not a rejection of social services education, targeting the excessive capitalization of off-campus training institutions. Based on this out-of-school training institutions return to the public welfare attribute to ensure its long-term development of the core elements, standardized services, strictly avoid the profit-oriented thinking of capital expansion in the development of training institutions. Under the premise of adhering to the attributes of public welfare, off-campus training institutions want to realize a smooth transition, the first task is to clarify its role: "a useful supplement to school education. Secondly, strictly define the scope of training, parents choose to discipline class out-of-school training has a variety of motivations, such as after-school care, daily tutoring motivation caused by the demand can be absorbed by the after-school service, and the future development of preparation and other rigid demand has always existed, so the discipline class out-of-school training institutions can be in the enhancement of quality education, to promote the future development of the students to seek reasonable and standardized development<sup>[18]</sup>.

Social education should play a full role in coordinating the process of human education, to "governance" and "dredging" both hands. On the one hand, the governance of standardized out-of-school training institutions should establish perfect audit standards, strengthen the professionalism and independence of social organizations, and resolutely strict governance, to avoid "vested" tutoring institutions' "comeback". On the other hand, it is also necessary to fully tap the use of social resources, and actively tap the power of social education resources such as public museums, youth out-of-school activities, and other social resources, collaborative efforts to help "double reduction", build a good ecology of education, give full play to the expansion of social education educational power, and promote the benign development of social education.

## **4. Conclusion**

Education bears the important mission of cultivating talents who are committed to social construction

and contributing to the development of national science and technology and has an important position in the process of China's modernization and construction. The "double reduction" policy was formally proposed on July 24, 2021, but China's initiatives to promote the fair development of education and the construction of the education public service system go far beyond this. Behind the "double reduction" policy, there are also deep considerations to regulate the demographic structure of our country, reduce the pressure of childbirth, and alleviate the pressure of the aging population. Therefore, ensuring the implementation of the "double reduction" policy is also a particularly important and critical part of the policy. For families, schools, and other social groups, we are not only the object of the policy and are affected by the implementation of the policy, but we are also the main body of the policy that participates in and influences the process of policy decision-making, implementation, and supervision, and we are the main driving force for the implementation and realization of the policy. We are not only the object of the policy, but also the subject of the policy. The implementation of the "double reduction" needs to bring into play the core strengths to jointly promote the construction of a modernized education system, ensure educational equity and high-quality development of education, and realize a strong education nation. In addition to adhering to the government's leading role, comprehensive and systematic deployment, clarifying departmental responsibilities, carrying out special governance, and establishing a regulatory mechanism, it is more necessary for every member of society to participate in the implementation of the concept of the double reduction to realize the double reduction in the true sense of the word.

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