

# Teacher Burden Reduction from the Perspective of Work Intensification: An Analysis Based on the Policy Text

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**Abstract:** This research starts from the perspective of work intensification and comprehensively analyzes the manifestations of teacher work intensification in the burden reduction policies for teachers in primary and secondary schools in various provinces and cities in Mainland China. And explore ways to combat the intensive work of teachers, from the perspectives of reducing accountability pressure, weakening expressionism, clarifying the boundaries of internal and external affairs on campus, and clarifying the roles and responsibilities of teachers in the school. On this basis, this research attempts to put forward some suggestions for improving the burden reduction policy for primary and secondary school teachers, hoping to have a clearer understanding of the problem of burden reduction for primary and secondary school teachers.

**Keywords:** Work Intensification. Teacher Burden Reduction. Teacher Burden Reduction Policy

## 1. Introduction

From the perspective of educational research, teacher overburden is essentially a phenomenon incidental to the intensification of teacher work (Apple MW, 2013). Based on the superficial investigation, the overburden of teachers is a problem of extended working hours and increased workload, but in essence, the lack of meaning of work associated with time and content, and the weakening of work control make teachers feel "burdened". The deeper reasons for the "heavy". In the past, the research on teachers' workload and burden reduction in China mostly described the evaluation and reflection of superficial time and workload, but for the deep level, the continuous trend of intensification of teachers' work and the accompanying teacher's burden were overburdened. The problem is not discussed enough. In view of this, this research cuts from the perspective of work intensification, presenting the characterization of teacher work intensification that has been presented in the existing burden reduction policies, as well as the policy methods to combat work intensification and reduce the burden on teachers, and reflect on this basis The value and threshold of the policy, thereby promoting the in-depth research.

## 2. Intensification of Teacher Work and Its Confrontation

The concept of work intensiveness mainly describes the process in which, with the expansion of the scope of responsibility, professionals experience a state of what Larson calls "chronic overload." The application of the concept of work-intensive in teacher research can be traced back at least to the analysis of the teaching process by Apple, Ozga and Lawn in the 1980s. They analyzed how the work of teachers is restricted through the gradual intensive work process, especially in the three interrelated dimensions of time, workload and social relations. Early research on teacher work intensiveness focused on two aspects: teachers' working time and workload.

In recent years, with people's in-depth exploration of teachers' work in the context of educational reforms, work-intensive research has continued to deepen. Researchers have found that work intensiveness is manifested in at least three aspects. First, teachers have to "do more things in a shorter period of time. They continue to extend their working hours and become busier and have to complete more tasks in a shorter period of time." Too much work, so they feel pressure; secondly, from various external changes and requirements, teachers feel that they have lost their sense of control over their work, and thus they perceive the erosion of teachers' professionalism; thirdly, teachers The role

continues to expand, is required to assume more non-teaching responsibilities, and respond to more "dead limits"(Williamson, J. & Myhill, M.,2009).

The intensification of teacher work not only erodes the health of teachers at the individual level, but also breaks the balance between teachers' work and life; at the same time, in response to various external pressures, teachers' ability to respond to students and the overall quality of work will also decrease; from the perspective of teacher professionalism, intensification will make teachers more and more experience the process of de-professionalization. More importantly, at the system level, the intensification of work often leads teachers to feel that "we are required", and it is easy to form a negative sentiment and opinion about change. For those innovations that they think are useless or unsafe, They will ignore it, which also hinders the deepening of educational reform. Studies have shown that fighting the intensification of teachers' work means starting from the above aspects, reducing the pressure of accountability, and limiting the scope of teachers' roles and responsibilities; more importantly, enhancing teachers' sense of the meaning of various external innovations and changes In terms of their professional work, they should be given space to apply professional knowledge and make professional decisions. In an environment full of meaning, teachers are more likely to treat work in an active way and reduce the "work-intensive feeling" .

### **3. The Intensification of Teacher Work Reflected in the Teacher Burden Reduction Policy**

With the continuous advancement of China's education reform, we have adopted many reasonable management measures at the national and local levels to reduce uncertainty, limit costs, and promote selected mechanisms by implementing various control, accountability and standardization mechanisms. Educational priorities and results, these measures have made a significant contribution to the reconstruction of teaching (Smyth, J, etc.,2005). However, in this process, teachers' work has become more intensive. Their workload has continued to increase, their physical and mental well-being has diminished, and their willingness and ability to respond to various educational reform agendas have also shown a negative state. It is against this background that the Ministry of Education of China issued the "Opinions on Reducing the Burden of Primary and Secondary School Teachers and Further Creating a Good Environment for Education and Teaching" in December 2019. Since then, various localities have introduced relevant policies to reduce the workload of teachers and improve them. The professional well-being of the people can reduce the burden and increase the energy. Whether these policies aimed at reducing the burden on teachers are aligned with the source of teacher work intensiveness will affect the actual support of these policies to teachers in practice.

From a national perspective, policy documents such as the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council "Opinions on Comprehensively Deepening the Reform of the Building of the New Era Teacher Team" (January 2018), "Main Points of Work of the Teacher Work Department of the Ministry of Education in 2019" (February 2019) and other policy documents China has initially put forward the concept of effectively guaranteeing teachers' treatment and rights. After that, the "Opinions on Reducing the Burden of Primary and Secondary School Teachers and Further Creating a Good Environment for Education and Teaching" (December 2019) put forward 20 pragmatic measures to help reduce the burden on teachers. Important instructions and guidance. At the local level, governments and education departments in various parts of our country have also taken various measures to rectify the unreasonable workload of primary and secondary school teachers, and successively issued policies and checklists for reducing the burden on primary and secondary school teachers. Through these burden reduction lists, we can further analyze the characterization of the intensive work of teachers reflected in the policy text. Based on the "Several Opinions on Reducing the Burden of Primary and Secondary School Teachers and Further Creating a Good Environment for Education and Teaching", for example, excessive accountability pressure is manifested in "overall regulation, inspection, evaluation, and assessment items", and formal expressionism is expressed in "overall regulation and regulation". Streamline related report filling work", the extension of school responsibilities is represented by "coordinating and regulating social affairs into the campus", the extension of teacher responsibilities is represented by "strictly regulating the behavior of borrowing elementary and middle school teachers", and "effectively avoid arranging elementary and middle school teachers to participate in unrelated training activities "The weakening of institutional guarantees is characterized by "strengthening leadership, supervision and guidance."

#### **4. Ways to Combat the Intensification of Teacher Work in the Burden-reduction Policy**

##### ***4.1. Standardized assessment: reduce the accountability pressure caused by over-appraisal***

Labaree believes that more subjective criticism in educational activities and cumbersome teacher training programs will expose teachers to the narrow supervision and accountability measures they are trying to oppose. In this case, teachers need to adapt to a variety of personal and situational factors, these factors often lead to educational problems, making teachers feel alienated from the school. Therefore, the national education authority needs to focus on adopting reasonable management measures in the teacher burden reduction policy to reduce uncertainty, and promote the selection of education priorities by implementing various control, accountability and standardization mechanisms.

To combat the intensification of teacher work caused by over-evaluation, we can clean up and streamline the existing supervision, inspection, evaluation and evaluation items, so that teachers can concentrate on teaching and have enough time and energy to study teaching and prepare lessons. For example, the "List of Burden Reduction for Primary and Secondary School Teachers" issued by the Guangxi Autonomous Region emphasizes that "professional title review, annual assessment, excellent evaluation and professional skills competitions for primary and secondary school teachers must not be raised without authorization, and no cumbersome review procedures must be set up."

##### ***4.2. Streamlining procedures: reducing the burden on teachers caused by expressionism***

At present, the internal management of the education system has the drawbacks of simplification, formalization, and bureaucracy, which leads to the overlapping and random arrangement of various research, statistics, information collection and other activities. Therefore, how to improve quality and reduce quantity, standardize overall planning, and make teachers avoid multiple tasks is the focus of implementing the teacher burden reduction policy.

To combat the problem of intensification of teacher work caused by expressionism, the teacher burden reduction lists of various provinces and cities basically point out this formalism in the education system, and a number of measures have been taken to solve such problems. For example, Jiangxi Province stipulates that "the inspection and assessment of class teacher work, teaching plan making, homework correction, teacher home visits, etc. must be realistic and eliminate formalism"; Zhejiang Province "generally simplify the evaluation process and reduce the amount of materials provided by teachers" in the reform of independent evaluation of teacher titles; The education system in Heping District of Tianjin advocates streamlining the format and content of meetings to achieve "multiple meetings in one".

##### ***4.3. Clear the space: clarify the boundaries of affairs inside and outside the campus***

One of the key influencing factors of work intensification proposed by Galton and MacBeath is the increasing pressure on teachers to "do more in a shorter period of time." On the one hand, this pressure is mainly caused by external sources, which are largely beyond the teacher's own control. On the other hand, teachers are required to do more work with an expanded scope, variety and nature, such as more administrative tasks. Social responsibilities and activities, more pressing deadlines. Therefore, to reduce the problem of teacher work intensity, it is necessary to make efforts both inside and outside the school. Under the premise of clearing the boundaries of internal and external affairs, help teachers reduce the corresponding work affairs, improve the quality of school management and education, and achieve precise reduction of burdens.

For school affairs, it mainly involves all kinds of education and publicity, knowledge popularization, etc. For example, Jiangxi Province's burden reduction measures stipulate that "it is strictly forbidden to request schools or teachers to suspend classes in various names"; for external affairs, Qingdao City, Shandong Province requires the "Notice" to reduce the burden Strictly control external factors that interfere with school education and teaching; the "Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region Primary and Secondary School Teachers' Burden Reduction List" also requires that "neighborhood communities are strictly prohibited from arranging primary and secondary schools and teachers to frequently participate in community construction activities".

#### 4.4. Restricted areas: clarify the roles and responsibilities of teachers in the school

According to Gardner and Williamson's research, the most common reasons for the intensification of teachers' work are longer working hours, expanding teaching roles, and the most significant increase in non-teaching tasks. This may not only have a negative impact on the individual teachers, but may also affect their teaching performance. Therefore, the teacher burden reduction lists of various provinces and cities systematically regulate the teaching and non-teaching affairs of teachers, aiming to create a good education and teaching environment by reducing or eliminating various administrative and community affairs, and clarify the roles and responsibilities of teachers in the school. Make teachers feel at ease and comfort from educating people.

In terms of pedagogical affairs, Jiangxi Province stipulates that schools should "scientific and rationally approve the workload of teachers at all levels and types of primary and secondary schools, and establish and improve the incentive mechanism for teachers to exceed workload. Regarding non-teaching matters, provinces such as Jiangxi and Guangxi require not to force primary and secondary school teachers to conduct information statistics, and not to require teachers to fill in poverty alleviation forms repeatedly; Guizhou's burden reduction policy states that "frontline teachers must not be arranged to participate in logistic affairs such as canteen management and dormitory inspections" Wait. These measures can reduce the administrative workload of teachers to a certain extent and standardize administrative enforcement.

### 5. Suggestion

The intensification of teacher work will seriously affect the improvement of education quality. Therefore, we must vigorously promote the work of reducing the burden of primary and secondary school teachers, and liberate teachers from tasks and burdens that are not related to teaching and educating, so that teachers can have a sense of happiness in their posts. , A sense of accomplishment in career and a sense of honor in society.

Therefore, through the issue of teacher work intensiveness, this article attempts to put forward three suggestions for the specific text content of the current teacher burden reduction policy in my country: First, more standardize the working hours of teachers; second, more clarify the internal and external pressures of teachers Source; Third, pay more attention to teachers' resistance and passive resistance to the trend of work intensification. All in all, in response to these obvious shortcomings in the current process of teacher work intensification, the state, local governments, education departments, and primary and secondary schools should develop, implement, and improve methods and measures to combat teacher work intensification and make them effective. It is implemented in the education and teaching practice, so as to gradually realize the effectiveness of the implementation of the all-round, full-coverage, and full-process promotion of the teacher's burden reduction policy.

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