

Implementation effect and optimization path of 'double reduction' policy-- qualitative research on the proposal of 'double reduction' in China's 'two sessions' based on nvivo

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Abstract: *The policy of 'double reduction' is an important measure taken by Chinese government in the field of compulsory education to reduce the burden of students and improve the efficiency of education governance, so as to achieve the goal of high-quality education development. The annual proposals of China's 'Two Sessions' have the advantages of being extensive, regular and normative. Taking the relevant proposals of the 'Two sessions' as the entry point, the implementation effect can be effectively analyzed under the background of national development and education reform. This paper collects and sorts out the questions and suggestions raised by the representatives of the 2022 Two Sessions regarding the governance of 'double reduction'. Through the use of nvivo12 analysis tool, it is found that the proposal of 'double reduction' policy is carried out around 7 aspects, and on this basis, the problems existing in each subject of the proposal and the next improvement measures are analyzed.*

Keywords: *Double reduction, Qualitative research, Two Sessions*

1. Introduction

Compulsory education, as a fundamental part of the educational ecology, is a matter of national development and the future of the nation, and its importance cannot be overstated. In July 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 on Students in Compulsory Education (hereinafter referred to as the 'double reduction'). The 'double reduction' policy, as an important policy tool to help reshape the education ecology and cultivate innovative talents, stands at the strategic height of achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, deepens the reform of compulsory education from the institutional mechanism, and makes joint efforts by linking various bodies inside and outside schools. This has achieved positive results in building a high-quality teaching and learning system, implementing the major task of cultivating moral character and promoting the all-round development and healthy growth of students.

The Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan of the National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China and Vision 2035 proposes to 'build a high-quality education system', and 'high-quality development' and 'high-quality talents' have become the key words for education reform and development in the new era. The key words for education reform and development in the new era are 'high-quality development' and 'high-quality talents', and education reform, especially at the compulsory education level, has entered the important stage. However, for a long time, problems such as overburdened students, overheated education and training institutions and the tendency of education to be utilitarian have seriously affected the results of China's education reform and development, and the undesirable culture of focusing only on rankings and scores in the field of education also reflects the inadequacy of China's education evaluation system. This is not conducive to the development of high quality education and the cultivation of high quality talents in China. In terms of the governance of the 'double reduction' phase, how can we take a national perspective on the current situation of the governance of the 'double reduction' and analyze the problems and shortcomings encountered in the process of policy implementation? Is it possible to break the status of only academics in the field of education give suggestions and analyze the effectiveness of the double reduction governance from the perspective of different fields? Since the policy was implemented in July last year, what are the areas where there are still more problems? By analyzing the proposals and motions of the National People's

Congress and the National People's Congress, this article attempts to summarize the effects of the 'double reduction' in the nine months since its implementation, while efficiently analyzing the shortcomings and loopholes in the implementation of the policy, which will help to complement existing studies.

2. Literature Review

In the nine months since the implementation of the 'double reduction' policy and the successful convening of the 2022 Two Sessions, there have been many academic studies on the 'double reduction' policy. Many of these studies have been conducted from a variety of perspectives, such as focusing on home-school linkages and improving parental anxiety caused by the theatre effect; using policy implementation models to focus on the impact of positive and negative attitudes of different actors in the process of implementing the 'double reduction' policy on the outcome of policy implementation; advocating for better treatment of teachers and reducing their burden, as well as innovative research on the development of certain disciplines, etc.

As the scope of the 'double reduction' policy is limited to the compulsory education stage and the subjects concerned are relatively fixed, the research on 'double reduction' based on the current policy has in fact been almost saturated, however, there are still many scholars who have approached the study from different entry points. For example, by monitoring and analyzing the trend and content of public opinion on the 'double reduction' policy and making recommendations accordingly, Xue Eryong (2021) and others emphasize that the government should continue to give prominence to the 'double reduction' work, make early preparations for possible public opinion and risks, and adjust the policy in a timely manner^[1]. Based on stakeholder theory, Xu Bingrue (2022) explores the way out of 'double reduction' by analyzing the game process among the subjects of compulsory education, which makes the relationship between multiple subjects clearer^[2]; Chen Ling (2022) and others focus on the online mobility of high-quality teachers and study the factors influencing teachers' intention to continuously participate in extracurricular online tutoring services from the perspective of expectation value theory^[3]; Guo Zhonghua (2022) and others analyze the relationship between 'double reduction' and high-quality development of education from the perspective of critical pedagogy^[4], etc.

The National People's Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), as important political arenas for gathering public wisdom, reflecting public opinion and influencing people's livelihood, determine the future direction of national priorities. Both NPC deputies and CPPCC members have the right to make suggestions and criticisms in various fields, and even though NPC motions and CPPCC proposals are produced and handled differently, they are eventually fully discussed and sent to the relevant units for study and processing. By analyzing the proposals and motions of the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, this article attempts to summarize the effect of the 'double reduction' in the nine months since its implementation, and at the same time gain an efficient insight into the shortcomings and loopholes in the implementation of the policy, which will help to complement existing research and fill in the areas not covered by the proposals and motions.

3. Study Design

3.1. Research methodology and Sample presentation

3.1.1. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research method, using all materials from the text of the 2022 Two Sessions (CPPCC proposals, NPC motion texts and online news interviews, etc.), combined with a descriptive analysis of them, using the proposals, motions and related reports of the Two Sessions as the starting point, analyzing the proposals made by NPC deputies and CPPCC members in different fields on issues related to 'double reduction', analyzing the implementation of the policy since its implementation nine months ago, and summarizing the opinions and suggestions made by experts from different sectors and fields through visual analysis.

3.1.2. Research ideas

This study attempts to analyze the textual content of the proposals and motions related to the 'double reduction' of the CPPCC members and NPC deputies at the 2022 Two Sessions, using Nvivo 12 software to code the text of all proposals and motions at three levels and visualize the content of the nodes at each

level in a rectangular tree diagram.

3.2. Case selection and data collection

Table 1: Basic information about the cases in this paper's casebook (partial)

Serial number	People	Recommendations	Questions
1	Zhu Yongxin, Member of the Standing Committee and Deputy Secretary-General of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), Vice-Chairman of the Central Committee of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and President of the China Tao Xing Zhi Research Association	Appropriately increase the teacher establishment and strengthen teacher training, 'suggesting that the teacher establishment standards for primary and secondary schools should be adjusted, the teacher-student ratio in primary and secondary schools should be increased, and the total teacher establishment should be appropriately increased'.	Many frontline teachers are working longer hours than before the 'double reduction' policy, and teachers are working with greater responsibility, faster pace and heavier tasks, and generally report greater mental stress.
2	She Tak Chung, Member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and Director of the Hong Kong Federation of Fujian Associations	Further amend the nine-year compulsory education law, introduce relevant supporting legal policies, unify the exemption of fees for after-school services at the primary and secondary education levels nationwide, and replace them with central financial transfers and local financial subsidies to achieve the provision of free after-school services	Some parents think that it is unreasonable to charge fees at the primary and secondary levels, which are compulsory; some parents think that after-school service fees will add to the financial burden of parents; and some parents are concerned that some teachers may put the normal teaching content in class after school in order to earn service fees, thus affecting the normal teaching order.
3	Yu Minhong, member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and Chairman of New Oriental Education and Technology Group	All regions and departments should, in accordance with the spirit of the Opinions, co-ordinate the standardization of supervision, inspection, evaluation and assessment matters, and achieve a reduction of more than 50% in supervision, inspection, evaluation and assessment matters for primary and secondary schools and teachers on the existing basis, and standardize and streamline the filling of various reports.	School leaders, management and teachers have to take time out of their teaching schedules to attend or cooperate with a wide range of social work at all levels of government, and teaching and learning, the school's 'main business', sometimes takes a back seat, and many inspections are duplicated.
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39	Pi Jianlong, member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and Director of Beijing Jintai Law Firm	We should improve the top-level design of 'policy + law', promote special legislation on 'double reduction' and build a rule of law management mechanism. As soon as possible, special laws and regulations on 'double reduction' should be introduced, especially regulations on the supervision of out-of-school training institutions, to clarify issues such as the qualifications for setting up out-of-school training institutions and to raise the entry threshold for the industry.	The 'double reduction' policy lacks legislative support and is mostly flexible and short-term in nature
40	Qi Mei, NPC deputy and chief research curator of the Capital Museum	Museums should work with schools to develop relevant programmes to provide assistance in place for students to enjoy museum learning. Other public cultural services, meanwhile, can also bring their own strengths into play and interact with schools to provide richer social and educational resources for primary and secondary school students.	At present, students mainly come to the museum after school to learn, and most have not yet developed a systematic and regular out-of-school programme.
41	Wu Minglan, a teacher at the Experimental Primary School in Liupanshui, Guizhou Province, a member of the National People's Congress	It is recommended that teachers be reasonably remunerated for the extra work they do in the context of the 'double reduction' policy, and that a system of rewards and incentives be established for teachers based on the results of their work.	The implementation of the 'double reduction' policy has reduced the burden of homework on students and solved the problem of parents' difficulties in picking up their children. However, while the burden on parents and children has been reduced, the pressure on teachers has increased.

To ensure the diversity and completeness of the sample data, the proposals of the National People's Congress and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) in 2022 were selected for their operability and rationality, and the sample size and representativeness of the results were taken into consideration. At the same time, the sample size and representativeness of the results were taken into consideration, and cases involving other sensitive topics and those that were rather empty were removed. 42 cases were finally selected as the case pool for this paper, including 22 proposals from the National People's Congress, 19 proposals from the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and one proposal from the Democratic Progressive Party Central Committee. The table below shows some of the cases and their basic information. This study attempts to analyze the textual content of the proposals and motions related to the 'double reduction' of the CPPCC members and NPC deputies at the 2022 Two Sessions, using Nvivo 12 software to code the text of all proposals and motions at three levels and visualise the content of the nodes at each level in a rectangular tree diagram.

4. Research findings and analysis

4.1. Text analysis based on tertiary coding

Firstly, the relevant information was extracted according to the content of the proposals and motions, and coded sentence by sentence to form primary nodes; then the primary nodes were categorized to form secondary nodes, in which the basic concerns of the proposals related to 'double reduction' were initially revealed; then the secondary nodes were conceptualized and summarized, resulting in seven root nodes: 'School perspective', 'Parental perspective', 'Government perspective', 'Education and training enterprise perspective', 'Teacher perspective', 'Social participation perspective' and 'Vocational education perspective' (the coding results are shown in Table 2).

Table 2: Results of the coding of proposals and motions related to the 'double reduction'

Root Node	Total reference points	Secondary Nodes	Reference points		
School perspective	19	optimizing the examination assessment	4		
		Expanding the size and number of school	3		
		Incorporating after-school services into school teaching	6		
		Promoting quality in the curriculum	6		
Parental perspective	4	Improving parenting thinking	2		
		accompanying children scientifically	2		
		Cracking down on out-of-school training	11		
Government perspective	47	Reducing formalism	1		
		Changing exam-oriented education	2		
		Guiding teachers through transformation	3		
		Upgrading funding	6		
		Implementing departmental responsibilities	8		
		Increasing relevant publicity efforts	1		
		Applying legal policy safeguards	14		
		Opening channels for complaints	1		
		Education and training enterprise perspective	4	Developing Internet education and training	2
				Achieving industry self-regulation	2
Teacher perspective	45	Optimizing the evaluation system	1		
		Optimizing teacher deployment	18		
		Improving the treatment of teachers	21		
		Elevating penalties for non-compliance	1		
		Increasing the number of teachers	4		
Social participation perspective	24	Bringing in social resources	16		
		Engaging social forces	8		
		Stepping up advocacy efforts	1		
Vocational education perspective	17	Broadening the pathway to higher education	3		
		Promoting the exchange of students from general and vocational high schools	3		
		Blurring of the boundaries of the general and vocational education	1		
		Establishing a settlement policy for vocational education graduates	1		
		Raising the age of diversion	6		
		Establishing vocational education colleges	2		

The number of reference points represents the frequency of the nodes coded in the proposals and motions. Although there is no quantitative evidence to support that the higher the frequency, the higher the importance of the issue, but it can reflect that the relevant issues receive more attention and vice versa. According to the coding results, there are more relevant contents from the perspective of government, teachers and social participation, among which policy and legal protection, optimizing teacher deployment, improving teachers' treatment and utilizing social resources have received more attention. In the following section, I will visualize and analyze the content of the proposals and motions based on the Treemap formed by nivo12, using the subjects in the process of implementing the 'double reduction' policy and the representatives' fields as classification criteria.

4.2. Visual analysis

4.2.1. Subject as a classification criterion



Figure 1: Rectangular tree diagram of main categories and sub-categories

4.2.1.1. Government perspective

The rectangular tree diagram generated by nivo12 shows that more than a quarter of the delegates put forward suggestions from the government's perspective, which reveals that there are still shortcomings in our policy and legal protection as well as departmental linkage and financial investment. There is an urgent need to improve the dual top-level design of 'policy + law', especially the 'Regulations on the Management of Out-of-School Education and Training' and other policies and regulations that can help promote the regulation of out-of-school education and training institutions in accordance with the law, it is also necessary to design entry criteria and supervision methods according to the nature and type of institutions, and to strengthen the whole chain of supervision before, during and after the event. Some delegates also mentioned the need to implement a system of annual reports on the quality of education, with governments and schools at all levels regularly announcing the development of education to the community, in order to protect the public's right to information and evaluation. In addition, the delegates were also concerned about strengthening sectoral linkages, calling for the breaking down of geographical, hierarchical and sectoral barriers, the integration and sharing of teaching resources and the formation of joint mechanisms for education enforcement. In fact, all actors are affected by the government's macro-control in the process of the 'double reduction' policy reform, so government support is essential in order to make each of them work together to promote quality education development.

4.2.1.2. Teacher's perspective

More than a quarter of the delegates put forward proposals from the perspective of teachers, with the increased pressure on teachers after the 'double reduction' and the inadequate deployment of teachers to support the deepening of the reform being the unanimous view of the delegates. The more popular

proposals included suggesting that the relevant departments could introduce policies to reduce the burden on teachers and provide effective incentive protection through local financial subsidies for teachers' salaries and the establishment of incentive systems based on teachers' work achievements. At the same time, some other representatives proposed to reduce non-teaching teaching and research tasks such as supervision, inspection and evaluation, so that teachers can return to their teaching and education duties, have more time to study teaching content, improve teaching efficiency and quality, respond to the requirements of high-quality development, so that let the reduction of students' burden be truly achieved and effective. Optimizing teacher deployment is also a key concern for delegates, through teacher exchange and rotation, and the provision of quality online courses to achieve dual online and offline supply, promoting equity in education as well as quality and balanced development of education. As teachers are an important part of the 'double reduction' reform, it is important not to favor one over the other by focusing on the burden on students at the expense of the pressure on teachers. Today's policies to improve teachers' salaries and optimize their deployment have not kept pace with those in other areas, and the delegates' call for this comes at the right time.

4.2.1.3. Vocational education perspective

Vocational education, an area that has received less attention in existing studies, has been the focus of delegates' attention. For a long time, vocational education has not been given much attention as an important way to achieve talent diversion in basic education, which has further led to the educational problem of extreme competition brought about by students in compulsory education in order to advance to key high schools. In my view, without changing the examination as the baton of evaluation, changing the current situation of fierce competition in education can be started from the perspective of vocational education, broadening the path of further education beyond the general secondary school entrance examination, by breaking down institutional barriers, upgrading the status of vocational education, and opening up the channels of vocational education to achieve effective streaming of students. In the context of China's industrial upgrading and the transformation of the manufacturing industry to high-end, the market's demand for highly skilled personnel is getting higher and higher, while students graduating from ordinary universities may not be able to master these core technologies, which also pushes vocational education reform. In fact, during the writing of this article, the 34th meeting of the Standing Committee of the 13th National People's Congress on 20 April voted to adopt the newly revised Vocational Education Law, which has come into effect on 1 May 2022, making it clear for the first time that vocational education has the same importance as general education and specifying that the state encourages the development of a wide range of vocational education. Since then the recognition of vocational education will be steadily increased for some time. At the same time, some of the delegates in the recommendations also mentioned the need for a sound policy of exchange between general and vocational education, so that students have the opportunity to try it out several times and find a point of interest in their studies as well as their careers.

4.2.1.4. Social participation perspective

The social participation angle includes the use of social resources and the inclusion of social forces, which correspond to the introduction of third parties to join the after-school service through government participation and the attraction of volunteers and other living forces to join the after-school service to alleviate the pressure of other entities. In the perspective of using social resources, many delegates believe that the government and schools have much to offer. After the pressure of after-school tuition is reduced, how to bring in quality social resources to enrich after-school services for students is a key issue for the government and schools to consider. Some delegates believe that schools around the world can be encouraged to make full use of local museums, libraries and other social resources to enrich after-school services by incorporating traditional culture. This will not only reduce the burden on parents and avoid spending a lot of time and money on after-school training, but will also relieve the pressure on teachers and prevent the pressure previously borne by after-school training institutions from being transferred to schools. In addition to relieving the pressure on teachers and avoiding the transfer of all the pressure on students previously borne by extra-curricular training institutions to teachers, it can also revitalize some of the non-academic extra-curricular training institutions and lead to a healthy transformation of the educational business. In summary, the delegates' suggestions for social participation to help the 'double reduction' reform will effectively build a new pattern of school-led and collaborative education under the premise of government policy and funding. As of this writing, local governments have already taken action, for example, the Education Department of Shandong Province has issued the Notice on Further Standardizing the Involvement of Third Parties in After-school Services, which regulates the types of third-party organizations and evaluation criteria to improve the single channel, lack of content and poor quality of after-school services, and is dedicated to meeting the diverse development

of students and enhancing the effectiveness of after-school services.

4.2.1.5. School perspective

Just as the role of government is for teachers, so too is the role of schools in providing support to assist teachers in their teaching, rather than placing additional burdens on them in an administrative way, and this became the general consensus among delegates. From the school perspective, the delegates' suggestions focused on school-led and teacher-implemented measures such as classroom quality improvement, in addition to the construction of new and expanded public compulsory schools to provide space for the promotion of quality and balanced development of compulsory education. A certain number of delegates suggested reducing the pressure burden on teachers from the school perspective, especially the negative impact of form-filling and various formalistic meetings on teachers' energy for teaching and research.

4.2.1.6. Parental perspective

According to the collation of relevant proposals, it was found that there were fewer proposals and motions from the parents' perspective, and only two representatives proposed to improve the conceptual thinking of parenting and accompanying children scientifically from the parents' perspective. In fact, in compulsory education, where the age limit for students is below 16, parents can play a significant and far-reaching role in all aspects of a student's development. In the absence of any change in the use of examinations as a baton for evaluating educational outcomes, parents should be an important target for breaking down the idea of focusing on their children's scores rather than on their children's overall development. At the same time, parents' support is also needed to ensure that vocational education can be positively responded to when laws and regulations are enacted. Therefore, in terms of publicity and guidance, more efforts should be made to reshape the standards of education and lay the foundation for the next stages of reform.

4.2.1.7. Education and training enterprise perspective

As an important part of the 'double reduction' education reform, the crackdown on education and training institutions has achieved more significant results. In addition to actively transforming the development of Internet-based education, promoting the 'learn first, pay later' model, and organically combining service and supervision, there are also suggestions from delegates to gradually achieve Industry self-regulation, play a leading role in industry associations, strengthen self-management, and take the initiative to assume social responsibility.

4.2.2.1. Classification by field of representation

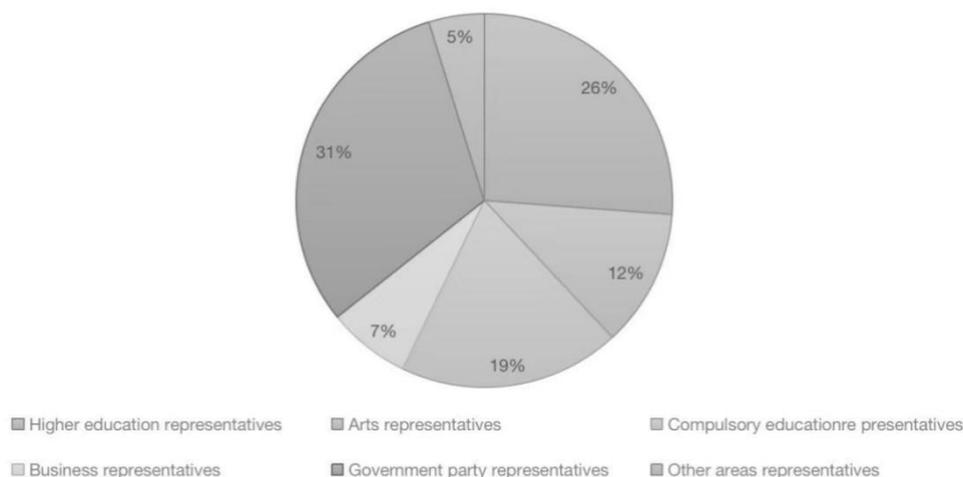


Figure 2: Proportional distribution of representative areas

An analysis of the delegates' fields shows that the relevant delegates are mainly located in three fields: government party (this suggests that these representatives are making recommendations based on their status as government officials or party members), higher education and compulsory education. The fact that the representatives from the government and parties generally made proposals in multiple areas, rather than focusing on one or a few areas, is a direct reflection of the general concern of the government

party representatives for the relevant areas. Although many of the proposals still have issues such as the need for further refinement, they have provided a way forward for subsequent reforms in the relevant areas. The proportion of higher education representatives in the education sector and those from the compulsory education was less than 50%, with university teachers, as experts in the field of education, being in a better position to provide more far-sighted advice on basic education, especially compulsory education, by considering the needs of higher education. In fact, during the coding process, it is found that the suggestions of the representatives from compulsory education generally focused on the most important areas of the 'double reduction' reform, such as focusing on the teachers' perspective and increasing the introduction of social resources. The importance attached to their proposals is therefore extremely necessary and should be the main basis for subsequent measures. Delegates from the arts sector generally focused on how to enrich the content of after-school services and made reasonable suggestions from their respective fields in terms of introducing social resources and promoting Chinese fine traditional culture, which also provides a direction for promoting the fine traditional culture and developing public cultural services.

5. Research Outlook

After a comprehensive analysis of the proposals and motions of the Two Sessions, the basic subjects and opinions have been more fully focused and discussed, especially from the perspectives of policy and law, teachers and social participation, and a wider consensus has been formed. Based on these conclusions, the following section will propose recommendations for the subsequent 'double reduction' education governance reform from several perspectives that are more meaningful and have more room for improvement.

5.1. Promoting cross-district sharing of teaching resources

Due to the broad scope of the Two Sessions, some of the proposals lack the value to be widely promoted, especially the construction of after-school services based on local characteristics, which are difficult to be replicated in other regions due to geographical and resource constraints, so the vigorous promotion of online education and the introduction of third-party after-school services through government support are measures that should be implemented as soon as possible, which can improve the imbalance of educational resources between regions in the short term, provide high-quality after-school services for students in compulsory education in underdeveloped areas, and reduce the pressure on teachers.

5.2. Break the ranking orientation of examination scores

With the exception of the vocational education reform, the other 'double reduction' related policies do not in essence change the pressure on schools, students and parents who are involved in the 'double reduction' due to the orientation of examination rankings. The relevant stakeholders seem to have formed a consensus to reduce the burden of primary and secondary school students, but once the rules are not observed by a small number of people, the balance that has been maintained is in danger of being broken, and in addition to this there will be all sorts of subject-based tuition classes hidden in the shadows, which will inevitably result in more effort and money being spent by some parents.

5.3. Promoting re-employment of unemployed employees

The follow-up of the employees of out-of-school training institutions is not perfect, as a large number of employees lost their jobs overnight due to the 'double reduction', and the relevant departments have not yet formed a concerted effort to absorb the surplus of unemployed people in the human resources market due to the withdrawal of capital from teaching and training institutions. Reform is bound to come at a price, but how to achieve a soft landing for subject-based training institutions in compulsory education, and whether the relevant employees can be transformed in an orderly manner are issues that still need to be resolved, and how to make the relevant interests properly dealt with from a policy perspective should receive further attention.

5.4. Strengthening policy and legal guidance support

With the successful conclusion of the National People's Congress, the proposals of the delegates have

been gradually implemented, such as the reform of the law on vocational education and the introduction of local regulations on the introduction of third-party participation in after-school services, which represent significant progress in a number of areas of the 'double reduction' policy. However, there is still a long way to go before the relevant policies are fully implemented, and the deep-rooted educational philosophy involved cannot be changed overnight, so the 'double reduction' reform will have a long way to go. It is hoped that the best proposals will be adopted and implemented in the 2022 Two Sessions, and that multiple measures will be taken to form a synergy in society, laying a solid foundation for the provision of talent backup for the high-quality development of innovation in China.

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