

A Study on the Implementation of the "Double Reduction" Policy in Rural Primary Schools: A Case Study of LA District

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the current state of the "Double Reduction" policy implementation in rural primary schools within the LA district. Through questionnaires and interviews, the research reveals a positive attitude towards the policy among local educational administrative departments. However, the implementation effectiveness is limited due to factors such as urban-rural disparities, unequal resource allocation, and traditional concepts. Key issues include incomplete school implementation, a teacher-centric focus on academic performance, parental anxiety, a singular evaluation method, and traditional societal views on employment. In response to these issues, the study proposes the following countermeasures: educational administrative departments should increase publicity, clarify implementation standards, and promote educational equity; schools should strengthen promotional guidance, improve teaching quality, and enhance communication between schools and families; the government needs to promote reforms in the examination and evaluation system and establish a diversified talent selection mechanism. Theoretically, this study provides insights for the implementation of educational policies. Practically, it offers experience for the implementation of the "Double Reduction" policy in the LA district and other rural areas, promoting balanced educational development between urban and rural areas.

KEYWORDS

"Double Reduction" policy; policy implementation; countermeasures research

1 Problem Statement

China's education system has made remarkable progress, but the academic pressure on students has also become increasingly prominent. To alleviate this pressure and improve the quality of education, the state has introduced the "Double Reduction" policy. With the advancement of this policy, primary and secondary schools across the country have begun to implement measures such as adjusting homework volume, shortening extracurricular tutoring time, and implementing after-school services. However, the implementation of the policy in rural areas faces numerous challenges. Due to factors such as uneven resource allocation and a weak teaching staff, the implementation of the "Double Reduction" policy in rural primary schools is not satisfactory. The execution of the "Double Reduction" policy in rural primary schools faces significant challenges due to deficiencies in teacher resources, facilities, and management models. Existing research indicates that the implementation of the "Double Reduction" policy presents conflicts between school policy execution and evaluation systems, conflicts between teachers' workload and professional development, conflicts between parents' explicit support and implicit concerns, and conflicts between students' relaxation and the pressure of academic advancement. This study will focus on rural primary schools in the LA district, conducting an in-depth analysis of the implementation of the "Double Reduction" policy in this area. Through questionnaires and interviews, this research will explore the problems encountered during policy implementation, analyze the gap between policy effects and reality, and propose practical and feasible countermeasures and suggestions. The aim is to reduce the academic burden on rural primary school students, narrow the urban-rural education gap, and promote educational equity and high-quality development.

2 Theoretical Framework

Collaborative governance theory emphasizes the resolution of intricate societal issues through multi-party cooperation. This theory posits that conventional, singular governance models are inadequate for addressing the increasingly complex political, economic, and cultural challenges of contemporary society. This governance paradigm transcends reliance on a single entity, instead fostering a diverse, dynamic governance network through the complementary strengths of various stakeholders.

This approach promotes more efficient and adaptable social governance. Through collaborative governance, diverse stakeholders can collectively design solutions, and engage in mutual oversight, feedback, and adjustment during implementation, thereby ensuring more effective policy enactment and execution. Overall, collaborative governance offers a novel perspective on modern social governance, advocating for the enhancement of governance efficacy and societal well-being through the concerted efforts of multiple actors.

3 Current Implementation Status of the "Double Reduction" Policy in Rural Primary Schools in LA District

3.1 Policy Implementation Attitude of Education Management Departments

In the LA district of Hangzhou, the management departments exhibit an attitude of active support and cautious implementation towards the "Double Reduction" policy in the compulsory education stage in rural areas. The interview results indicate that although the attitudes of education management personnel, teachers, and parents at different levels generally tend to support the policy, the practical difficulties encountered during the implementation process still significantly affect the effectiveness of the policy's implementation.

From the interviews with education bureau staff, the LA District Education Bureau supports the "Double Reduction" policy, believing that the policy helps to reduce students' academic burden, especially in rural areas, which helps to alleviate the social pressure brought about by excessive competition. However, there are still significant concerns and worries at the implementation level.

3.2 Implementation Measures of the "Double Reduction" Policy

3.2.1 School Measures have adopted a series of targeted measures

Rural primary schools in the LA district first reduced the burden of extracurricular homework for students. Secondly, the schools strengthened the management of extracurricular training institutions and reduced the time students spent participating in off-campus training. In order to improve the quality of classroom teaching, schools have improved teaching methods to enhance classroom efficiency. In addition, schools have strengthened cooperation with parents to ensure that the implementation of the policy is supported by parents.

After the implementation of the "Double Reduction" policy in rural primary schools in the LA district, the homework burden of students has been significantly reduced, but there are still challenges in the implementation. Student questionnaire data show that 86.7% of first and second-grade students in primary schools have no homework at home, and the homework burden of lower grades has been effectively alleviated; 65.5% of upper-grade students can complete their homework within 1 hour, and the overall homework completion time has been significantly reduced compared to before, which is in line with the original intention of the policy.

3.2.2 Elementary School Teachers' Understanding and Attitudes Toward the "Double Reduction" Policy

Teachers' attitudes toward the policy's implementation are characterized by support coupled with noticeable anxiety. The teaching staff generally believes that reducing homework burdens benefits students' physical and mental health and promotes their overall development. However, they also face the dilemma of how to ensure students master knowledge without increasing their homework load.

The opinion of subject teacher A1 is quite representative: "We support the policy of reducing burdens, but in practical operation, I worry that the students will not learn things thoroughly. Especially for children with a poor foundation, after reducing the amount of homework, how to effectively improve their academic performance remains a major problem we face." (Excerpt from A1 interview record)

Although teachers support the "Double Reduction" policy from an educational theory perspective, they generally feel that ensuring students' learning outcomes without increasing homework load is a significant challenge when implementing it, especially among students with a weaker foundation.

3.3 Parents' Understanding and Attitudes toward the "Double Reduction" Policy

Parents' perceptions and attitudes toward the "Double Reduction" policy in rural elementary schools in the LA district present a coexistence of positivity and reservation. While the majority of parents acknowledge the policy's initial effectiveness in reducing the homework burden for lower-grade students, concerns remain regarding the policy's depth and comprehensiveness.

The sentiment of parent B1 is widely shared among the parent group: "Previously, my child would have to stay up late just to finish homework after school, which was heartbreaking to watch. Now, with a significant reduction in homework, my child has more time to rest and play. However, I worry that in rural areas, which already have a disparity in educational resources compared to urban areas, further reducing homework without consolidating knowledge will widen the gap with urban children. Whenever I think about this, my inner anxiety arises."

In summary, parents' perceptions and attitudes toward the "Double Reduction" policy in rural elementary schools in the LA district present a coexistence of positivity and reservation. While the majority of parents acknowledge the policy's

initial effectiveness in reducing the homework burden for lower-grade students, concerns remain regarding the policy's depth and comprehensiveness.

3.4 Students' Understanding and Attitudes toward the "Double Reduction" Policy

The survey revealed varying levels of student understanding regarding the "Double Reduction" policy. Students who experienced the policy's initial implementation and those in higher grades could articulate the policy's content, objectives, and associated measures. However, most lower-grade elementary students, due to their less developed cognitive abilities, had only heard of the "Double Reduction" policy and lacked a personal understanding of its content, goals, and specific actions. As beneficiaries of the "Double Reduction" policy, students' comprehension of the policy is crucial for their effective cooperation in its implementation.

4 Analysis of Problems and Causes of the "Double Reduction" Policy in Rural Primary Schools in LA District

4.1 Incomplete Implementation of School Policies

Despite the promulgation of the "Double Reduction" policy and its clear requirements and policy objectives, some schools have not fully implemented the policy in practice, leading to deviations in the policy implementation results. First, some schools circumvent policy requirements through disguised means. They may add "writing classes" and "reading classes" during after-school service hours.

Although these classes are different from formal extracurricular tutoring classes, they still involve dedicating extracurricular time to learning, which fails to fundamentally reduce the extracurricular burden. Second, the resource allocation and teacher workload in some schools are not well-matched. Due to the relatively scarce educational resources in rural areas, there are certain shortages in the number of teachers and teaching equipment, which forces teachers to use students' extracurricular time for tutoring.

4.2 Teachers Prioritize Student Performance

Although the "Double Reduction" policy explicitly states the need to reduce students' learning pressure, teachers' performance evaluations and career advancement systems are still related to students' exam scores. This leads teachers to adopt various methods to improve students' grades to ensure their teaching achievements are recognized, such as using non-core class time to provide tutoring for students with weak foundations, thereby improving student performance.

4.3 Parental anxiety remains unabated.

Rural children often begin their education at a disadvantage. Parents frequently worry about their children falling behind urban students in future academic pursuits and employment opportunities. Consequently, some parents exhibit an excessive focus on their children's examination results. Driven by this anxiety, they tend to allocate more of their children's weekend time to extracurricular tutoring and enrichment programs, which, in turn, exacerbates students' academic pressure.

4.4 Policy environment.

According to the theory of collaborative governance, the effective implementation of the "Double Reduction" policy depends not only on schools, teachers, and basic education departments but also on the broader social educational environment. Certain unfavorable policy environmental factors can also impede the effective implementation of the policy.

In the current educational environment, the evaluation of academic performance holds a dominant position. Particularly in rural areas, where high-quality educational resources are scarce, parents generally believe that their children's academic achievements directly determine their future prospects. The "entry ticket" for finding employment remains academic qualifications. Many parents believe that only through educational advancement can their children secure advantageous positions in the future job market. Therefore, the singularity of societal employment standards, especially the over-reliance on academic credentials, has failed to effectively alleviate the excessive demands on children's academic performance, becoming another constraint on the implementation of the "Double Reduction" policy in rural areas.

5 Analysis of the Implementation and Countermeasures of the "Double Reduction" Policy in Rural Primary Schools in LA District

5.1 Measures of the Education Management Department

5.1.1 Strengthen the Publicity and Implementation of "Double Reduction"

Increasing the publicity of the "Double Reduction" policy can enhance the public's understanding and interpretation of the policy, create a favorable public opinion atmosphere for the implementation of the policy, attract more people to participate in the implementation of the policy, and also better supervise the policy implementation process and promptly report problems. The basic education department of LA District can utilize the "Zheli After-School Service" platform and other local online resources to explain the policy content to parents, students, and teachers through online education, forums, lectures, and other forms, helping them to better understand and support the policy.

5.1.2 Clarify Policy Implementation Standards

In order to ensure that the "Double Reduction" policy can be effectively implemented in LA District, the education management department should formulate clear and specific implementation standards and flexibly adjust them according to the actual situation of different regions and different schools. For example, in the implementation of the policy, the education management department needs to formulate clear guiding standards for the amount of homework, the duration of extracurricular tutoring, and the management of off-campus training institutions. Through the guidance of these standards, schools and teachers can better understand the policy requirements and strictly implement them.

5.1.3 Intensifying the Promotion of High-Quality and Balanced Educational Development

In the process of advancing the "Double Reduction" policy, educational administrative departments should further strengthen the balanced development of educational resources, with a particular emphasis on bolstering support and investment in rural schools. Furthermore, educational administrative departments should encourage the flow of more high-quality educational resources to rural areas to elevate local educational standards. Specific measures include leveraging remote education platforms to facilitate the sharing of urban and rural educational resources, utilizing online teaching and tutoring to provide high-quality instructional resources to rural schools.

5.2 School Measures

5.2.1 Strengthen "Double Reduction" Policy Promotion and Guidance

Schools can adopt flexible promotion strategies to address parents' varying perceptions of the "Double Reduction" policy. Firstly, utilize channels such as parent-teacher conferences, village broadcasts, and bulletin boards to disseminate the key points and significance of the policy, thereby dispelling misunderstandings and resistance. Secondly, for remote villages, collaborate with village committees and parent representatives to conduct publicity campaigns, ensuring that policy information reaches every household.

5.2.2 Enhance Teacher Teaching Quality

Schools can leverage regional educational resources to strengthen teacher training and professional development, particularly under the new curriculum reform. This includes assisting teachers in transforming traditional teaching concepts and improving the quality of education and teaching. Establish cooperative relationships with educational research institutions and universities in Hangzhou and surrounding areas, and invite outstanding teachers and educational experts to conduct regular training to enhance the overall quality of teachers. Schools can also guide teachers to utilize limited resources to provide education tailored to individual students' needs by organizing small-class teaching and interest groups, helping students learn happily and reducing the burden of mechanical extracurricular homework.

5.2.3 Enhance Home-School Communication to Alleviate Parental Anxiety

Rural parents commonly experience anxiety regarding their children's academic performance and future prospects, particularly following the implementation of the "Double Reduction" policy. Some parents are concerned that a decline in educational quality will negatively impact their children's competitiveness. Consequently, rural primary schools in the LA district should intensify communication with parents to mitigate their anxieties. Schools can employ various methods, including regular parent-teacher conferences, home visits, and telephone communication. Furthermore, they can utilize

face-to-face policy briefings and psychological counseling to assist parents in developing a scientific approach to child-rearing.

5.3 Governmental Measures

5.3.1 Alleviating Academic Pressure

In the rural areas of the Los Angeles (LA) region, academic pressure frequently constitutes a significant factor contributing to the heavy academic burden experienced by both students and their parents. To mitigate this issue, the government should implement effective measures to reform the existing admission system, gradually reducing the overreliance on academic performance and examination-oriented education. Instead, there should be a shift towards greater emphasis on the holistic development of students' competencies. The government can progressively introduce and expand the weight of comprehensive quality assessments, considering not only students' scores in the admission process but also their interests, talents, and social practice experiences.

5.3.2 Constructing a Diversified Talent Selection System

To ensure the smooth implementation of the "Double Reduction" policy in rural areas, the government should also establish a more just and equitable talent selection system. Firstly, talent selection should not solely rely on academic qualifications. It should incorporate skills certificates, professional qualification certifications, work experience, and project outcomes into the evaluation process, thereby assessing talent from multiple dimensions. Secondly, simulated work scenario tests should be established, allowing applicants to engage in practical operations, with industry experts evaluating their ability to solve practical problems and their innovative thinking capabilities.

6 Conclusion and Prospect

This study aimed to investigate the implementation status and existing issues of the "Double Reduction" policy in the primary education stage of compulsory education in rural areas of LA district, and to propose corresponding countermeasures.

6.1 Conclusion

In the rural areas of LA district, there are some problems in the implementation of the "Double Reduction" policy: some schools do not implement it effectively, and there is a lack of unified standards; teachers are still oriented towards academic performance, and teaching and evaluation methods have not fully adapted to the new requirements; parents have high expectations for academic advancement and grades, and their anxiety has not been alleviated; the traditional education evaluation methods are singular, and the concept of social employment is deeply rooted, which affects the implementation of the policy.

In order to improve the effect of policy implementation, the following measures need to be taken: the education management department should increase publicity efforts, clarify the implementation standards, promote the balanced development of education, and focus on supporting rural schools; schools need to strengthen policy publicity, improve teaching quality, transform educational concepts, strengthen communication between schools and families, and alleviate parental anxiety; the government should promote the reform of the academic advancement evaluation system, reduce the reliance on scores, establish a diversified talent selection mechanism, and promote the effective implementation of the "Double Reduction" policy.

6.2 Prospect

Although the implementation of the "Double Reduction" policy in the primary school stage of LA district in Hangzhou faces many challenges, as long as the government, schools, and all sectors of society work together to optimize the path of policy implementation and strengthen resource allocation, it will eventually be able to achieve educational equity, promote the all-round development of students, and contribute to the long-term development of China's education.