Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Educational Innovation and Philosophical Inquiries
DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/11/20230739

Study on Status and Challenges of China's "Double-Reduction" Policy

Yunjing Ding[1,a,*]

[1]*Institute of Education, University College London, London, WC1E 6BT, United Kingdom*
a. yunjing.ding.20@ucl.ac.uk
**corresponding author*

Abstract: Along with the rapid development of the Chinese economy and growing competition for higher education under 21st-century education reforms, the "Double Reduction" (Shuang Jian) policy was recently introduced by the government authorities as a measure to effectively reduce the education-related burden on Chinese families. This education policy focused specifically on reducing the amount of off-campus tutoring and in-school workload as well as great attention to students' quality-oriented education. In addition, the paper will analyse the emerging challenges faced by this implementation of educational reform. On one hand, the government and educational institutions should shed light on the increasing burden on teachers and parents. On the other hand, the policy also gives rise to the potential deterioration of education equity through shadow education. By including relative research papers from wide interests, this analysis paper will take into consideration both qualitative and quantitative studies. The paper aims to discuss the background and status quo of the "Double Reduction" policy, focusing on the implications of the policy centred on the Chinese exam-oriented education environment and fierce competition in entrance examinations among Chinese schools.

Keywords: double reduction policy, shadow education, China, education reform, education policy analysis

1. Introduction

Recently, the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China issued the implementation of the Double-Reduction (DR) Policy in July 2021. Specifically, the policy published centers around the intervention of Compulsory Education regarding the reduction of homework burden and off-campus training for students [1]. The officially stated "Opinions" emphasized the importance of main school education, stressing greater regulation on off-campus training and tutoring institutions to achieve the aim of effectively alleviating the anxiety and stress of Chinese families. With the increasingly competitive educational environment, Chines parents in general also demonstrated a growing level of educational anxiety. As noted before the Double Reduction Policy, according to the study conducted by the Chinese Education Panel Survey (CEPS), more than 48% of elementary and middle school students participated in subject-based off-campus training and 50.8% of elementary and middle school students participated in non-subject-based off-campus training classes or had tutors [2]. Ultimately, the government aim to improve the overall educational environment and comprehensive development of Chine students under Compulsory Education.

© 2026 The Authors. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/11/20230739

To further investigate the effectiveness of the Double Reduction policy, this paper thinks about closing the influence of China's social background on the current impact of the policy, as well as the challenges throughout the educational reform. The paper identifies the persistent demand for off-campus tutoring and the new repercussions in tutoring institutions are taking under the challenging environment. With the purpose to identify existing challenges and potential implications of the policy, the paper will ultimately suggest the possible area for improvement and future directions.

2. Background of China's "Double-Reduction" Policy

2.1. Institutional Background

Under the influence of the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, China also comes to attention with the transition into significant urbanization and marketization. Followed by the Chinese open-up policy in 1978, China's educational policy development experienced a high level of constitutional conversion which allows it began to achieve ground in the education system around the world [3]. The opening and Cultural revolution not only imposed a mass impact on driving China into a socialist society but also reforming the traditional education system into the integration of marketization and privatization of the academic field. In 1986, the national initiative of Compulsory Education Law was enacted to bring a step forward in Chinese socioeconomic development with higher education participation and direct contribution to radical economic growth. The policy of higher education expansion has come out in 2012, which bring along the second wave of development of the Chinese education system. As documented by the Chinese Ministry of Education (2022), since the implementation of the higher education expansion policy, the rate of China's higher education enrolment has been increasing by 17.8% every year, reaching 42.7% by 2017 [4]. This structural shift in the political and economic environment has brought along transformation not only to the national schooling system but also the growth of private supplementary tutoring to support the intensified competition in the reformed Chinese College Entrance Examination system and competitive Senior High School Entrance exam.

2.2. Cultural Background

While the continuation of the Chinese Entrance Examination system for high school and higher education enrolment continues to contribute to the fierce competition among students, a special cultural environment is also constructed because of the intense exam-oriented education system. For instance, the stereotypical form of Chinese tiger parenting and the concept of Jiwa (baby chicks) that became prevalent in recent decades to describe school children that experience high pressure of learning through attending numerous academic and non-academic extracurricular activities as demanded by their parents [5]. In specific, this aggravated value of academic achievement expected by Chinese parents has then become recognized as a major influence on the prosperity of the off campus tutoring market. The competition not only exists on a micro level of age groups but has been expanding on a macro level among all ages of students and families from all backgrounds. As a result, this social phenomenon of "education involution" has formulated an overheated demand for additional tutoring outside the campus.

Prior to the implementation of the "double reduction" policy, the proliferation of the private tutoring market in China has been persistently expanding with the massive growth of private educational agencies and institutions. The mode of conduct has often been recognized as a post-Confucius representation of emphasizing the importance of diligence and achievements, which promoted tutoring activities as supplementary resources available for students to account for personal development [6]. According to the national -wide survey documented by the China Institute for Educational Finance Research in 2019, the participation rate of shadow tutoring has reached 60.8%

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/11/20230739

in Northern China, similarly to the eastern area (38.1%), western areas (30.5%) and central areas (38%) until 2017. Notably, this participation rate also presented a significant disparity between urban students and students from rural areas, where the participation rate of urban students in supplementary tutoring (44.8%) exceeded twice the number of rural students (21.8%) [7]. With such a trend, the high expenditure and effort urban students give in off-campus tutoring also translated to a higher rate of enrolment compared to rural students in China, leading to attention from the government authorities to address the overwhelmed involution in the education system and capitalization of tutorial institutions to prevent further deterioration of educational inequality.

3. The Current Status of Double Reduction Policy

In advance of "double reduction" policy, China has become recognized as the largest private tutoring industry in the world [8]. Since the implementation of the "Double Reduction" policy in 2021, the measures have drawn attention specifically to schools in the compulsory education stages. Receiving high attention from the central government as well as the Ministry of Education, the policy implementation has been promoted simultaneously on and off-campus, vigorously regulating the burden of excessive homework for students within the compulsory education system, effectively reducing the burden of family education expenditures. According to the data from the Ministry of Education until May 2022, almost all listed institutions have withdrawn from the capital market, the total market share declined from ￥947.7 billion prior to 2021 to ￥112.8 billion at the end of 2021 [9].

3.1. Implications on Students and Parents

After the first year of policy implementation, the study conducted by the China Institute of Education and Social Development at Beijing Normal University (2022) reported the current effectiveness of the "Double Reduction" Policy on regulating the stress burden of students and parents with the following achievements [10]:

(1) Students' homework burden has been effectively reduced: 88% of teachers advisedly and consciously constrain the amount of homework; 75.3% of students also report that they feel less stressed than last semester, and most of the students, 83.4% in total, could finish their homework at school.

(2) The overall level of student satisfaction also increased: where 86.5% of students expressed satisfaction with the school life after policy implementation, with 90%, 88.1%, and 79.9% of 4th, 6th, and 8th-grade students respectively.

(3) Students' overall sleeping time has increased: 68.2% of parents perceived their children to have a significant increase in sleeping time, with an average of 9.3 hours in primary school, 8.8 hours in secondary school.

(4) Students' quality-based education has shown a positive trend: 75.5% of parents notice their children spending greater time on reading, sports, working and social related activities; among them, 28.2% of the parents believe the time spent on extracurricular activities has increased by more than 2 hours, 35.9% by 1-2 hours and 11.4% by less than 1 hour.

3.2. Implications on Tutoring Institutions

While the policy target directly on the tutoring institutions existing in the market, one year of implementation has allowed the related government authorities to put a high degree of control over the operation of Chinese tutoring institutions by 2022, it successfully diminished the number and stock prices of numerous market-oriented tutoring institutions. To operate, capitalized institutions are required to change the property of their company, which is to shift from profit-making enterprises to

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/11/20230739

non-profit organizations [11]. As the policy is immediately enforced upon promulgation, the effects are also instantaneous on the tutoring industry. As documented by the Ministry of Education until the beginning of 2022, the previously registered 124,00 offline tutoring institutions focusing on providing supplementary training for students from the compulsory education system has decreased sharply to 9,728 with a reduction rate of 92.14%; online off-campus tutoring institutions decreased from 263 to 34, with a reduced rate of 87.07%. The completion rate of converting from profit to non-profit organizations of the institutions has reached 100%. Various studies over the past year have studied the impact of the policy on the main firms in the industry, these include the Big Three, the New Oriental, TAL Education Group and Gaotu Techedu, which experienced a linear decrease of 800 billion RMB in the market value from their peak.

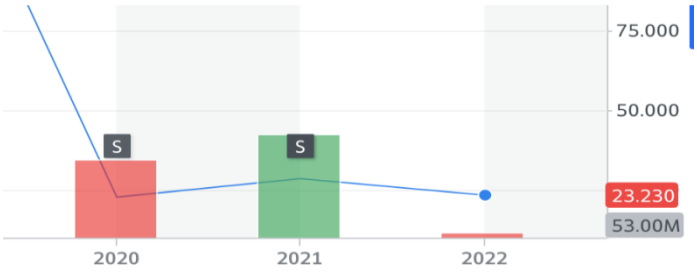


Figure 1: Changes in stock price and profit for New Oriental since 2020 [12].

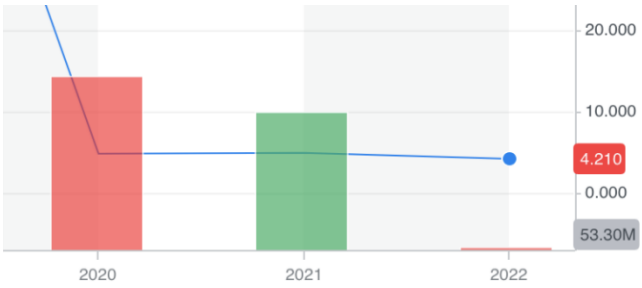


Figure 2: Changes in stock price and profit for TAL Education Group since 2020 [13].

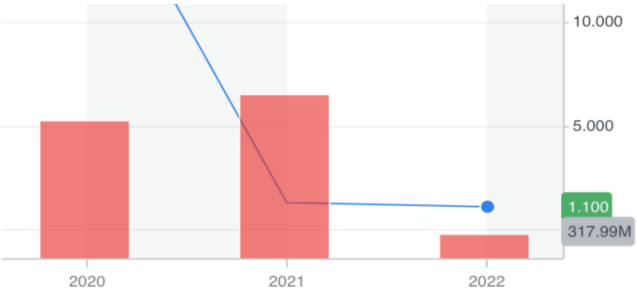


Figure 3: Changes in stock price and profit for Gaotu Techedu Inc since 2020 [14].

The figures above show the performance of New Oriental (NYSE: EDU), TAL Education (NYSE: TAL) and Gaotu Techedu Inc (NYSE: GOTU) on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) prior to the implementation of “double reduction” policy. Evidently, as shown in Figure 1, New Oriental as one of the largest tutoring institution in China, has been influenced the most since the policy implementation with a substantial loss; stock price and profit of TAL (Figure 2) and Gaotu (Figure 3) showed similar pattern but on a relatively lower scale. With the notable and significant drop in stock prices for the Big Three, companies in the same profession have all been impacted by the regulation

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/11/20230739

(Haoweilai Edu, Hailiang Edu, Hongen Edu, etc.), indicating an industry crisis for the off campus tutoring institutions. Triggered by the policy, most surviving institutions also started to shift their strategies according to the regulation. For example, as soon as the policy is taken into effect, New Oriental announced a change from K-12 educational counselling to quality-oriented education by setting up a "Quality Education Growth Centre" as the countermeasure towards the "Double Reduction" policy. Similarly, TAL Education turned towards the direction of college education, and vocational education while Gaotu left only 3 of the service centers, transforming its services to adult training such as National Civil Servant Examination tutoring, master's degree consultation and adult English tutoring.

3.3. Implications on Teachers and Schools

Apart from the supervision of institutions outside the compulsory education system, the implementation of the "double reduction" policy also shed light on the reorganization of the main school education field, surrounding the management of homework, after-school services and classroom teaching to promote integrated development on improving the quality and efficiency of on-campus education. Homework design continues to experience reform, where 17 provinces have provided policy-targeted homework guidelines, along with the "Guidelines for the Design of Subject Homework Systems" developed by the Ministry of Education. In addition, public schools from all provinces strive to provide after-school service activity programmes for students within compulsory education. According to the official data from the Ministry of Education, the after-school services in schools during 2021 have been under supervision with nearly full coverage, 91.7% of teachers participated in providing after-school services in support of more than 90% of students voluntarily participating in these services. In order to guarantee the availability of educational resources and faculty, the Ministry of Education further introduced 280,000 talents from the literary, sports, science and technology sectors to assist in the operation of after-school services.

4. Difficulty in Implementing Double Reduction Policy

4.1. The Meaning of the 'Double Reduction' Policy Between the Rich and the Poor

As mentioned above, the policy implementation assuredly regulated the capitalized market of shadow tutoring in China. However, a question to consider is whether the "double reduction" policy could diminish the demand of Chinese parents to consume shadow education on a practical level, especially in the education environment where private tutoring culture is deeply embedded in tradition. As proposed in Wu's paper, the implementation of the policy will no doubt limit the scale of former institutional habits by reducing its scale of operation, but the availability of after-school in-campus tutoring services might not be able to meet the parents' needs in terms of the pursuit of academic competitiveness [15]. In such an ambiguous state where competition on employment and education, higher-class families will continue to find alternative ways to admit to remedial education such as 1 on 1 private tutoring at home and 'live-in nannies' that cannot be monitored by the policy implementation [16]. Oppositely, families with relatively lower capital to invest in children's education will remain restricted by the policy with limited resources from the in-school tutoring services that might differ according to the unevenly distributed teacher quality. Therefore, it should be a bottom-line consideration of the government to assess the potential of the policy in increasing the gap between upper-class, middle-class, and lower-class families, more importantly, whether the policy would become a barrier for families from less advantaged backgrounds to achieve the same quality of education compared to the ones from the advantageous backgrounds. In addition, in terms of this distributive justice under the policy, Xue & Li's study also identified the parallel effect of expanding differences among different schools after the "Double Reduction" policy [17]. For high-

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/11/20230739

quality "key" schools or schools located in urban areas, education resources regarding teacher quality, teaching equipment, learning environment, and school management are much more advanced than the normal schools, rural schools, or small-sized schools. As a result, the problem of education equity could further deteriorate as schools with poor competence might be unable to keep up with the general policy measures to assist the students solely through on-campus activities.

4.2. Parental Anxiety Is Not Effectively Reduced

Despite alleviating students' academic burden has demonstrated significant achievement, many surveys on the effectiveness of the "Double Reduction" policy have indicated that the level of parental anxiety is persistently severe. According to relevant studies, 87% of parents surveyed said they would not give up their children's out-of-school discipline tutoring despite the policy implementation. On one hand, this is caused by the long-standing influence of the Chinese exam-oriented learning environment, coupled with insufficient evaluation reform in the examination and enrolment system that led parents to continue to regard off-campus tutoring as a "compulsory need". More importantly, the sudden shift of time proportion spends with parents also give rise to the issue where many parents believe that they lack the ability to tutor their children sufficiently, which leads to more anxiety about their children's education. On the other hand, as mentioned above, the disparity between families from different socioeconomic backgrounds continues to stimulate parental anxiety not only through financial pressure but also the perceived gap among some children that continue to receive additional assistance under the policy while others are being restricted.

4.3. Burden on Teachers Continue to Grow

Another issue that needs to be acknowledged under the current state of policy implementation is whether the conditions of teachers can effectively meet the expectations of the policy goal. According to the measures suggested by the policy, after-school service brings about much longer working hours for the teachers to do lesson preparation; learning activities and compressed working pressure that comes along with increasing responsibilities. At the same time, due to insufficient policy basis in the initial stage and incomplete assurance conditions available to teachers, many teachers were poorly paid or uncompensated while providing after-school services on a large scale. Parallelly, the Ministry of Education also indicated preparation to push the teachers' working hours even longer to meet the former demand for off-campus tutoring. As a result, the implementation of the "Double Reduction" policy is highly exposed to teachers' lack of work motivation to support the practical work. Accordingly, it is indicated that to effectively implement the "Double Reduction" policy, a range of supplementary measures should be developed and executed in a multifaceted way.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, the "Double Reduction" policy has assuredly brought along a wave of reform in the education sector. The scale of marketized tutoring institutions was largely eliminated, students' homework and academic stress were forcefully regulated with further promotion of quality-based education. However, under the current guidance of this national policy, the emerging impediments that came along with the policy should also be addressed to allow thorough transformation.

First, one of the most crucial issues to address is the persistent inequality existing under the policy, this includes inequality between rural and urban schools; high- and low-income families; key and normal schools. Relevant education departments should be more open to providing additional educational resources such as access to online learning resources and free materials for students that are in a less advantaged setting. In addition, the government should also balance these disparities by pushing forward measures such as teacher alternation or exchanges between and within schools to

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/11/20230739

guarantee a fair distribution of quality services among all students from all backgrounds. Meanwhile, the government should be conscious of the current absence of a comprehensive teacher assessment system that can help examine whether all schools are working as required or as expected under policy enforcement.

In addition, to resolve the tenacious parental anxiety, the relevant ministries could establish more educational popularization of the "Double Reduction" policy to provide greater awareness and the value essence of implementing the policy. This could be achieved by having more schools holding family workshops that allow parents and children to practice cooperative interaction for academic as well as leisure activities; the schools or local education authorities can collaborate to conduct lectures for parents as an opportunity to learn scientific ways to cultivate their children, but also act as a medium for the parents to share their anxieties so we can reflect on the solutions. If the level of anxiety can be alleviated and the substantial goal of the policy can also be communicated more effectively.

Lastly, another essential issue that needs to be addressed is the further regulation of private tutoring and the growing burden on teachers which continue to grow since the policy implementation. One way to settle this problem would be a wider partnership with higher education institutions such as colleges and universities to offer opportunities for students attending higher education to attend internships in primary and secondary public schools. By bringing together the comprehensive resources in the education sector, this proposed solution could be an effective way to benefit multi parties in the education sector. Teachers' work pressure from after-school tutoring services can be reassured through the help of the students that came from different major-specific backgrounds, the opportunity can also act as a practical work-based experience that could benefit their future developments in the professional field.

References

[1] *Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (2021) Opinions on Further Reducing the Burden of Homework and Off-Campus Training for Students in Compulsory Education. http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xxgk/moe_1777/moe_1778/202107/t20210724_546576.html.*

[2] *Wang W. (2021) How effective is the implementation of "double reduction" across the country? [J] http://ydah.china.com.cn/2021-10/26/content_41714096.html*

[3] *Li J. and Li J. (2019) Educational Policy Development in China in the 21st Century: A Multi-Flows Approach [J] Beijing International Review of Education, vol 1, no. 1, pp.196–220. doi:10.1163/25902547-00101014.*

[4] *Guo S. and Guo Y. (2018) Market Economy, Social Change, and Education Inequality in China [J] Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education. doi:10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.81.*

[5] *Li R. (2022) Analysis on the Chinese Anxiety of Involution from Jiwa with the Background of Globalization [J] Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research. doi:10.2991/assehr.k.211220.431.*

[6] *Bray M. and Lykins C. (2012) Shadow Education Private Supplementary Tutoring and Its Implications for Policy Makers in Asia [J]. https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/29777/shadow-education.pdf.*

[7] *Wei Y. (2019) China Education Finance Household Survey: Current Status of Chinese Household Education Expenditure - China Education Finance Policy Advisory Report (2015-2019). cpfd.cnki.com.cn. Available at: http://cpfd.cnki.com.cn/Article/CPFDTOTAL-BDZG201910001006.htm [Accessed 4 Nov. 2022].*

[8] *Liu Y., Wang R. and Chen Z. (2022) Regulating Private Tutoring: Family Responses to the Double-Reduction Policy in China [J] SSRN Electronic Journal. doi:10.2139/ssrn.4143464.*

[9] *Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (2022) "Double reduction" a year of remarkable results. http://wap.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/moe_2082/2021/2021_zl53/mtgc/202207/t20220726_648701.html.*

[10] *China Institute of Education and Social Development (2022) Beijing Normal University's China Institute of Education and Social Development held a symposium on the effectiveness of the "double reduction" survey. https://news.bnu.edu.cn/zx/zhxw/126713.htm.*

[11] *Lin X. (2021) Analysis of the Influence and Countermeasures of China's New Educational Policy "Double Reduction" [J] Atlantis Press. doi:10.2991/assehr.k.211220.141.*

[12] *Yahoo Finance (2022) New Oriental Education & Technology Group Inc. (EDU) Annual Stock Price Chart from 2020 to 2022, October. https://uk.finance.yahoo.com/quote/EDU.*

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/11/20230739

[13] *Yahoo Finance (2022) TAL Education Group (TAL) Annual Stock Price Chart from 2020 to 2022, October. https://uk.finance.yahoo.com/quote/TAL.*
[14] *Yahoo Finance (2022) Gaotu Techedu Inc. (GOTU) Annual Stock Price Chart from 2020 to 2022, October. https://uk.finance.yahoo.com/quote/GOTU/.*
[15] *Wu S. (2021) Thoughts on Double Alleviation Policy: A Background-based International Comparison of Shadow-education Policies [J] Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research. doi:10.2991/assehr.k.211220.464.*
[16] *Jin X. and Sun Y. (2022) Does Double Reduction Policy Decrease Educational Pressures on Chinese Family? Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research. doi:10.2991/assehr.k.220131.140.*
[17] *Xue Eryong, and Jian Li (2022) What Is the Value Essence of "Double Reduction" (Shuang Jian) Policy in China? A Policy Narrative Perspective, Educational Philosophy and Theory, pp. 1–10, Feb. 17, 10.1080/00131857.2022.2040481.*