

## Double Reduction Policy: The Preferences, Challenges, and Recommendations from the Perspectives of Stakeholder

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the implementation of China's Double Reduction Policy (DRP), which aims to reduce excessive academic pressure on students by limiting homework and off-campus tutoring. Although the policy is intended to promote educational equity and improve students' overall well-being, it has caused dissatisfaction among key stakeholders and continues to be debated regarding its effectiveness. Focusing on Bo Le city in Xinjiang, this study explores the preferences, challenges, and recommendations of students, teachers, parents, and school principals regarding the policy. It aims to address current gaps in the implementation of the policy. A qualitative case study design was employed, with data collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. Findings reveal that while students enjoy reduced stress and increased leisure time, teachers experience heavier workloads and longer working hours. School principals struggle with limited resources and uneven funding, while many parents remain anxious about their children's academic performance. The policy has also unintentionally widened educational disparities between urban and rural areas, as low-income families have fewer means to support their children's learning outside school. Based on these challenges, stakeholders provided constructive recommendations, such as increasing government support, offering professional development for teachers, and improving the quality and diversity of after-school programs. The study provides practical implications for policymakers to improve the effectiveness of the DRP and ensure it benefits all students equitably across different regions of China.

**Contribution/Originality:** This study is one of very few studies which have investigated the implementation and impacts of China's Double Reduction Policy (DRP) in Xinjiang by qualitative studies, whereas most existing research in this area has been quantitative. By focusing on the lived experiences and perspectives of students, teachers, parents, and school principals, this research provides a deeper understanding of the policy's effects on various stakeholders.

## 1. Introduction

In China, education has always been viewed as a very important cultural value since the rise of Confucianism and the early of imperial system. A few researchers discussed the influence of imperial examination system and the Confucius' views on education in China (Zhang et al., 2023; Zhou, 2022; Zhu, 2020). They state that these are among the contributing factors that cause most families in China to put high emphasis on academic performance. Most families in China believe that with good examination grades, their children may enter good universities and therefore, may have better opportunities in getting good jobs for a better future.

Due to this cultural value, school students in China were burdened with heavy workloads of homework and after-school tutoring. Off-campus tutoring and overloads of homework were pretty common and becoming a phenomenon in China (Li et al., 2022; Zhu, 2020). This phenomenon was deemed as detrimental to the students' mental health. Zhou (2022) and Li et al. (2022) state that pressures from overloads of homework and time spent studying has affected the students' mental health in a negative way (Li et al., 2022; Zhou, 2022). Besides, this academic culture has also led to educational inequality in society. Families with poor economic background cannot afford to bear the off-campus tuition fees (Wu, 2023; Yang et al., 2014). This research aims to explore the implementation of the Double Reduction Policy in China from the perspectives of students, parents, teachers, and school principals. Moreover, this research also aims to offer insights for further improvements of the policy. Therefore, it is hoped that the findings and results of this study will contribute significantly towards the enhancement of the policy in the future. It is also anticipated that this research will lay the foundations for future studies in relation to the impacts of changes in education policies and will significantly contribute to the improvement of educational strategies and policies not only in China but, globally.

In China, recently year, one of Education transformations issued by government is double reduction policy, this policy was announced on July 24, 2021. Following the implementation of this policy, a lot of parents are concern with their children academic performance. They are worried with the reduction of homework and restrictions of off-campus tutoring, their children academic performance is affected badly so they opt for private tutoring (Chen et al., 2022; Lu et al., 2023). However, not all families are able to afford the tuition fees for private tutoring. Due to this reason, children from low-income families may be left behind at school (Cui, 2022). There is no research have been done from the perspective for all stakeholders; therefore, this study will try to investigate the preference, the challenge, and the recommendation from the principal, teacher, parents, students. This research may assist the policymakers to understand what are lacking in the implementation of this policy, so that the policy can achieve its intended goals.

### 1.1. Research questions:

- i. What are the preferences towards the Double Reduction Policy among the students, teachers, parents, and school principals in Xin Jiang?
- ii. What are the challenges towards the Double Reduction Policy among the students, teachers, parents, and school principals in Xin Jiang?
- iii. What are the recommendations towards the Double Reduction Policy among the students, teachers, parents, and school principals in Xin Jiang?

## 2. Literature Review

This section provides a literature review that covers several main subtopics, namely the concept of double reduction policy, education inequality in China, urban and rural education. Next, the subtopics of the concept of double reduction policy.

### 2.1. The Concept of Double Reduction Policy

To enhance the quality of education in public schools, the government has implemented a series of new reforms. One key change requires public schools to offer extended services beyond regular class hours, including extracurricular clubs, sports, arts, and social activities. During these after-school sessions, teachers are expected to assist students with their homework but are prohibited from delivering formal subject instruction (Li et al., 2022). These policy changes have a positive impact on students' overall development. Not only students are more likely to finish their assignments within school hours, but they also have the opportunity to engage in a wider range of school-based activities. As a result, students can enjoy more meaningful family time at home, contributing to better work-life balance for both children and parents (Li et al., 2022; Zhou, 2022).

### 2.2. Education inequality in China

Educational inequality often reflects broader social disparities. It is not merely a result of a single educational stage, but a cumulative outcome rooted in unequal access from early education onward. Higher education inequality stems from earlier selection mechanisms—where families with more financial, cultural, or social capital ensure their children access elite primary and secondary schools, laying a foundation for future educational advantages. Each transition—such as from middle school to high school or high school to college—intensifies the divide, making early resource allocation a critical determinant of long-term opportunity (Guo, 2023).

### 2.3. Urban and Rural Education

The influence of the “double reduction” policy on educational quality differs between regions. In urban areas, the reduction of academic pressure allows school to place greater emphasis on quality instruction and the holistic development of students, which can lead to overall improvements in educational standards. In contrast, rural areas continue to face challenges such as limited resources and substandard educational infrastructure, highlighting the need for increased governmental funding and targeted support to raise the quality of education (Liu, 2024). Urban regions are generally receiving more investment in educational infrastructure than rural counterparts, reinforcing the disparity. To address this, the government should enhance financial support for rural education. Additionally, rural areas struggle with shortages and lower qualifications among teaching staff when compared to urban schools. Improving teacher quality in rural areas requires efforts to balance subject-specific staffing and support professional development.

### 2.4. Chinese Education System

Chinese education system emphasises high academic performance. Chinese society still strongly believes in Confucianism that put high values in education (Mok, 2006; Zhang et al., 2023). In addition to this, since the ancient time, examination has been considered very important. This happened due to the influence from the imperial examination system

that was considered as a means to improve ones' social class (Zhou, 2022; Zhu, 2020). During Han dynasty, achieving good grades in imperial examination was the only way to change social class and escape poverty.

During Han dynasty, the ruling government used the examination to appoint officials to govern the country. Scholars who passed the examination with colourful results were awarded with prestige, power, titles, and land. Their families would be benefited with prosperity for generations. Therefore, the cultural norm about people with high intellectual who come from low-income need to excel in examination persists today. This group believes in order for them to improve their social status of their families, they have to score higher at schools (Zhang et al., 2023). Being left behind academically at school is regarded as an embarrassment for their families. China's education system and value are greatly influenced by this tradition; high pressure to climb the social ladder through education (Zhou, 2022).

### 3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach which is the case study as a research design. Schoch (2020) defines case study research design as a "*...detailed and intensive analysis of a particular event, situation, organisation, or social unit*" (p. 245). Schoch (2020) further elaborated that case study research as an in-depth analysis of a current phenomenon in a real-life setting. This research design often employed in social science and human science studies to investigate complex issues with an aim to provide in-depth understanding towards the issues studied (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Case study as a design is best employed to investigate the existence of activity or reality that needs to be understood. According to Miles et al. (2014), a case may refer to an individual, a group of people, a social community, an organisation or even a nation.

After the implementation of the policy, many researchers viewed that the policy has failed to meet the intended objectives and therefore, they suggested for more research to be conducted to provide in-depth insights into the implementation of the policy (Lu et al., 2023; Wei & Dong, 2024; Yang et al., 2023). With more research, the problems related to this issue can be unravelled to improve the implementation of this policy (Guo, 2023; Wei & Dong, 2024). In case study, the research should be real-life phenomenon that are deemed as complex and there is a lack of understanding towards the issues (phenomena) (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Schoch, 2020). This characteristic of case study suits this research as the Double Reduction Policy needs more insights. With in-depth understanding towards the policy and its implementation, it is hoped that this research may be able to provide suggestions on how to improve the implementation of this policy. Among the benefits from employing case study as a research design is that the outcome can be used to provide solutions to the existing real-life phenomena (Schoch, 2020).

The location was chosen in Bole City due to the scarcity of the research related to the Double Reduction Policy. Besides, this study chooses the target audience of secondary schools that are located in urban areas. This selection serves the conditions that support research data collection. In addition, this location was chosen to make the research easier to be conducted as the researcher of this study comes from this city. This is in line with Wiersma and Jurs (2009) who states that the main criteria in selecting a research site are (i) easy access, (ii) the site is rich in interesting methods related to samples and patterns, (iii) researchers can interact with laboratories and build good relationships.

The study totally has 18 informants, including 3 focus groups for students, parents, and teachers. For parents and teachers each group with 4 people and for student each group have 8 people. And for principal, researcher uses in-depth interviews, interviewing 2 principals. For the sampling choose, since this is a qualitative research, researcher did not set any specific number of students, parents, teacher and principal to interview. The students' age between 12 to 15 years old. The main reason for choosing the middle school students because they have experienced the longer schooling years than the primary students. Therefore, they might have faced various experiences on many educational policies including this Double Reduction Policy. This research aims to explore the preferences, challenges, and recommendations from the perspectives of students, parents, teachers, and school principals towards the Double Reduction Policy. According to [Wan Abdullah et al. \(2015\)](#) in-depth research requires a modest number of participants in order to acquire rich and informative data. [Patton\(2002\)](#) agrees with this because there are no specific rules governing the quantity of research participants or the number requested. This study utilizes a purposeful sample comprising four key stakeholder groups: students, parents, teachers, and school principals in Bo Le city, Xinjiang. These groups were selected because they were directly impacted by the Double Reduction Policy (DRP) and played distinct yet interconnected roles in the implementation and outcomes. One of the key advantages of purposive sampling is the flexibility, as it encompasses a wide variety of techniques suitable for qualitative research. These include methods such as homogeneous sampling, critical case sampling, expert sampling, and others, allowing researchers to select participants based on the specific needs and goals of the study ([Arghya Ray, 2012](#)).

The study relied on interviews to get insight into participants' perceptions and propose a double reduction approach. The interview was conducted via communication and dialogue face to face with the participants. Interview is the most prevalent data collection strategy in qualitative research ([Merriam & Tisdell, 2016](#)). So, after examining the questions, researcher conducted an interview session to better understand. This interview approach helped researcher to gather important information.

Data analysis was conducted through an open coding process. First, data were categorized and subcategorized by breaking down, examining, comparing, and conceptualizing. Finally, all categories were unified around a core category via selective coding, with the researcher using manual methods. The validation process was carried out by one expert, and the instrument was translated from Chinese to English. The interview sessions were conducted via voice conferencing, and the data were transcribed by the researcher in order to make the analysis process easier and more systematic. This was a manual analysis of data; no software was used. All participants in this study provided informed consent. Each participant was fully informed of the research objectives, procedures, and benefits. They were also made aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences, and the confidentiality of their responses were guaranteed.

#### 4. Findings

The data obtained was reported descriptively using themes and sub-themes emerging from three data collection methods implemented by the researcher. Researcher compiled the findings of this study by introducing the background of the study participants and followed by a report of research findings based on the objectives and research questions that have been determined.

The study totally consisted of 18 informants, including 3 focus groups for students, parents, and teachers. For parents and teachers, each group with 4 people and for student each group consisted of 8 people. And for principal, researchers use in-depth interviews, interviewing 2 principals. Among the participants, 56% were female, and 44% were male. The age range varied: students were aged 12–15 years, parents were 28–45 years, and teachers and principals were 30–50 years. Most parents and teachers completed secondary education, while students were enrolled in grades 6 to 9. Teachers and principals experienced an average of 5 years working in schools, which provided valuable insights into the policy's educational implications.

#### 4.1. Diversified Learning

Researcher interviewed different people about their preferences on the double reduction policy. Diversified learning after class is very important for students. As a principal, they need to actively respond to policies and ensure their implementation. For example, Informant 1 principal stated:

*“Okay, I think the double reduction policy meets the diverse learning needs of students. The school has launched a variety of special courses such as reading, calligraphy, music, math Olympiad, basketball, etc.”*

In the interview principal think that the double reduction policy has brought benefits, meanwhile, it also takes challenge for stakeholder. For example, Informant 2 principal said that:

*“The double reduction policy has made children's extracurricular activities more colourful. The school has launched different interesting courses for children to choose from. At the same time, the school has also had more work and responsibilities. The teachers have a heavy workload, and as a principal, I also need to handle the school's management work.”*

#### 4.2. Adjust Teaching Methods

Teachers feel that after the policy is issued, they need to adjust their teaching methods and content. Whether this policy can be successful depends more on the full cooperation of stakeholders. For example, Informant 2 teacher said that:

*“Double reduction reduces the pressure on children and promotes all-round development. But whether it can be successful depends more on how the school can fill the gap left by extracurricular tutoring. This requires the full cooperation of students, parents and teachers, and requires efforts from each of us.”*

Some teachers have also adjusted their teaching methods to cooperate with the implementation of the policy. For example, Informant 3 teacher said that:

*“I try my best to reduce their burden while keeping their learning outcomes. To cope with the implementation of the double reduction policy, I have also made some adjustments to my teaching methods to ensure that every child can fully absorb knowledge in class. This will also encourage me to be more creative in class and make the atmosphere in the class more*



*active.”*

#### **4.3. Reduce Expenses and Keep Mental Health**

In the process of policy implementation, parents are not only care about their children's physical but also their mental health. For example, Informant 1 parents said that:

*“Well... I think this policy is really good for my child. My child has less homework and doesn't have much homework to do when he gets home. This not only makes him physically healthy, but also mentally healthy. As long as she is happy, we are satisfied.”*

Informant 3 parents also said that:

*“Well, my child's study burden has indeed been reduced. The number of classes has been reduced, but the after-school classes have become richer, and he is more energetic. We can also relax a little, and his grades have not been affected.”*

#### **4.4. Reduce Homework and Academic Stress**

Students have a positive attitude towards the double reduction policy, believing that not only can they have more extracurricular activities, but the amount of homework is also reduced. For example, Informant 3 student said that:

*“I think it's good. I have more time to do the things. I want to do. Like playing basketball with my friends. And I feel more relaxed every day. Before, I always worried about homework and tutoring after school, but now it's different”*

Informant 4 student said that:

*“I think it has lightened my burden to a certain extent. At the same time, I think the after-school classes are more enriched. We have added a drone course this year, which may be very new to me. I recently signed up for a drone competition and hope I can get a good score. In the class, my academic performance is also at a medium level, but I have learned a lot of new things, so I think it is worth it”*

#### **4.5. Limited Resources**

The challenge is that schools do not have enough professional teachers, and school facilities also need to be improved. Informant 1 principle said that:

*“We didn't have that many extracurricular activities before. After the double reduction, in order to respond to the policy, we lack teachers for interest classes. Some teachers need to teach interest classes after finishing their main courses, which increases their pressure and workload.”*

#### 4.6. Heavy Workload and Curriculum Coverage

The teacher's workload has increased significantly, and the teaching model needs to be adjusted to meet the needs of different students. For example, Informant 1 Teacher said that:

*"The impact is huge. Our workload has increased significantly. We need to pay more attention to the different characteristics of each student and make some adjustments to our teaching to meet the needs of each child. This is a big challenge for us because each student is different."*

And Informant 2 teacher said that:

*"The learning level of each child in the class is not the same. Some children have good grades, while some children sometimes cannot keep up with the teacher's progress. After school, I need to spend a lot of time answering questions for students with learning difficulties, and I also need to explain some advanced questions to students with good grades to satisfy their curiosity. This does increase the workload, but it is necessary"*

#### 4.7. Worry about Grades

As parents, they still care about their children's academic performance. Parents do not want schools to reduce academic pressure and ignore their children's further education. Informant 2 parent said that:

*"This actually increases my concerns. With this policy, my children no longer have after-school tutoring, and I worry that their grades may drop. Without these extra classes, it feels like a big change, and I'm not sure what long-term impact this will have on their academic performance."*

Informant 3 parent said that:

*"Although there are fewer homework assignments now, and the children seem to be relaxed on the surface, as parents we are still a little anxious and think that they should pay more attention to their studies and work hard to get into a good high school so that they can enter university in the future. I don't want my children to go to vocational schools. It's difficult to give them time to relax, but also to force them to achieve better academic results."*

#### 4.8. Self-Discipline

Students believe that this policy is challenging, especially because it requires a high degree of self-discipline and self-study ability. For example, Informant 1 Student said that:

*"For me, this policy has indeed brought some challenges, but it has also taught me how to learn on my own. In the past, teachers arranged a lot for us, but now I have to find ways to learn on my own."*



Informant 3 student said that:

*"I think it has a positive effect! Our study pressure is reduced, but it also means that we need to be more self-disciplined. If we are not proactive in studying, our grades may drop."*

#### **4.9. Government Support and More**

Recommended teachers can receive professional training and guidance. The government can provide some assistantship, such as funding and facilities. More contact and communication with stakeholders. for example, the Informant 1 principal said that:

*"I hope our teachers can get professional training. The teachers who teach the main subjects should give full play to their own advantages and actively participate in training and exchanges and learning between schools to improve the quality of classes and teaching level. Teachers of interest classes are encouraged to continue learning and obtain relevant qualification certificates."*

Informant 2 principal said that:

*"I hope the government will allocate more funds to schools, especially those in resource-poor areas, to improve facilities, hire more professional teachers, and provide the necessary resources for this policy."*

#### **4.10. Life-Work Balance and Give More Welfare**

The teacher suggested that they hope to have a work and life balance, and they don't want their life to be affected by work. Informant 3 Teacher said that:

*"I hope that my work and life can be balanced. I don't want to neglect my family because of work. I often receive messages from parents or students at night. If the matter is urgent, I have to deal with it. In this way, I have almost no private time."*

Informant 4 teacher said that:

*"The after-school classes were delayed, and I couldn't pick up my daughter on time. She finished school early. After the double reduction, I could only ask my mother to pick up my child and take care of my child. I couldn't get off work until 7:30PM at school. After get off work, I still had to cook for myself and supervise my daughter's homework. In fact, it was very tiring after a day. I hope that the school or relevant departments can consider the family needs of teachers, such as providing more flexible work arrangements, or making certain adjustments to the after-school service time, so that we can take care of both students and our own families."*

#### 4.11. Regulate private tutoring to ensure fair education

Parents found that some tutoring institutions still exist and the fees for private tutoring are very high. They cannot afford the expensive fees. It is suggested that the relevant departments can play a supervisory role. For example, Informant 1 parent said that:

*"I found that there are still students going to teachers' homes for extra lessons. I think this should be rectified. This is not what the policy advocates. It feels very contradictory."*

Informant 2 parent said that:

*"Yes, I am very worried about my child's grades, but private tutoring is too expensive now, especially after the double reduction, the price has doubled, and I can't afford it."*

#### 4.12. More resources and extracurricular activities

Students hope that the school can provide online course resources so that they can find solutions to problems more quickly. For example, Informant 4 student said that:

*"Well, I think the school could provide us with more resources, such as online tutoring, which would be very helpful. Sometimes, when I don't understand something in class, it's hard to do the homework at home alone. It would be great if there were online tutors who could help."*

Informant 2 student said that:

*"I would be happy if the teacher could provide some online review materials or websites. For example, I can study on my own at home on weekends instead of waiting until the next class. That would be very useful."*

### 5. Discussion

Through the findings of this study, principal, teacher, parents and students are supporting this policy. First, it can make student diversified learning from principal perspective, In order to meet the diverse learning needs of students, various special courses should be developed. The double reduction policy clearly requires: "Expand students' extracurricular learning space, carry out rich and colourful science, culture, art, labour, reading, interest groups and community activities" In these after-school services, teachers help and guide students in completing written homework assignments and cannot teach any courses (Li et al., 2022). So, this policy gives student a lot of time to explore what they really want to do and improve their interest.

From parents' perspective, they also agree that double reduction policy can reduce expenses and keep mental health. some of them pay lots of tutor fee on weekend, let their children study advance and get good grades. On the other hand, it also reduce their psychological burden, let them relax, and don't have to worry about extracurricular tutoring classes. They don't want to use grades to judge whether a student is excellent or not. Extracurricular tutoring is expensive and have contributed to a financial burden among the parents who choose the service. Furthermore, because of too much pressure

to handle from studying, school students' mental health may be affected ([Chen et al., 2022](#); [Cui, 2022](#); [Li et al., 2022](#)).

Students have different views on the double reduction. Among eight students, four students supported it, while the other four students opposed it. Some of them think policy can reduce homework and academic stress, homework can be completed in school, and there is time to take interest classes. The relationship with family is also closer. In fact, modern education policy has integrated globalisation, and the principles are to provide quality education to every child, incorporates flexibility in learning, and not to burden the students with schoolwork pressures ([Cui, 2022](#); [Niemi, 2021](#); [Zhou, 2022](#)). Teacher needs to provide help for students with learning difficulties. The schools adopt the incentive education evaluation mode to timely optimize and adjust according to the curriculum needs of the students to nurture high-quality school leaders and teachers.

The principal think that limited resources is the biggest problem for them, lack funding, skilled staff or extracurricular facilities. school need recruit more teachers and add facilities to meet the students' after-school needs. According to [Wei and Dong \(2024\)](#) also view that the implementation of Double Reduction Policy is problematic due to several reasons: differences in school facilities, unequal resources and fund to implement the policy.

Teachers have heavy workload and curriculum coverage, The working hour increased, and they need to supervise the children to complete their homework after class. While reducing the homework exercises for the children, we must ensure that the course content is not reduced. [Zhong and Park \(2023\)](#) discuss the effects of this policy towards teacher. The teachers now must work for longer working hours and face the pressure of high requirements in the teaching system.

Parents are still concerned about their grades. Although the burden on children has been reduced. They are worried that their children will not be able to get into high school. How can the double reduction guarantee the children's academic performance while reducing the burden. Chinese society still strongly believes in Confucianism that put high values in education ([Lu et al., 2023](#); [Mok, 2006](#)). Besides, since the ancient times, examination has been considered very important. This happened due to the influence from the imperial examination system that was considered as a means to improve ones' social class ([Zhou, 2022](#); [Zhu, 2020](#)). For some students, they usually rely on teachers or parents to guide them on how to study. Now they have more free time to arrange tasks. Some students rely on the guidance of parents or extracurricular tutors. Now without the help of tutor, they need to challenge themselves to solve problems independently and arrange their time reasonably. Actively committed to the implementation of extracurricular learning, effectively stimulating their interest in learning, cultivating their good learning habits and abilities, and then improving the self-discipline of primary school students' extracurricular reading ([Chen, 2023](#)).

Principal hope government can support school either fund or facilities, and teacher get more training. In order to implement the double reduction policy smoothly, schools need to arrange professional teachers to teach children. In areas with scarce resources, principal hope that the government can provide financial support and assign some professional teachers of interest courses to schools. Those who have more resources and fund may perform better and the other who are in sides opposite may be left behind.

These disparities are common factors that cause educational inequality (Cui, 2022; Liu et al., 2023; Lu et al., 2023).

Teachers also have their own life. Some teachers are married and need to take care of their families and be responsible for various school affairs. Among the challenges they face, they also mentioned that they work too long. They hope to have a balance between life and work and hope that the remuneration for after-school classes can be increased. Their wages remain the same even though now they must carry more responsibilities. Liu et al. (2023) state that after the policy has been implemented, the teachers had to stay for 11 hours at school. After-school service requires the teachers to stay longer than before the implementation of the policy as the service must be managed by schools and this has burdened the teachers (Liu et al., 2023; Zhong & Park, 2023).

Parents want to regulate private tutoring to ensure fair education. Illegal tutoring institutions still exist, and they charge high fees. Some teachers even give private tutoring to children at home. Such places are relatively secretive. Parents hope that law enforcement agencies can play a supervisory role, punish illegal places, and make education transparent and fair. Small workshop training institutions or 1V1vip services still exist. It is possible to increase the financial burden of parents. At the same time, it is also necessary to make it clear that we should implement curriculum standards, implement curriculum plans, and deepen curriculum reform is to ensure that the basic academic standards of school education will not be lowered (Cui, 2022). Lastly, from the student perspective, they hope to have various extracurricular activities and do not focus on examination-oriented. Schools should offer more interest classes to meet the needs of different children. Students hope that teachers and parents will not blindly pursue grades and change their mindset. Students who are good at studying are not necessarily excellent in all aspects.

## 6. Conclusion

The Double Reduction Policy was enacted to ease the academic strain on school children and reduce dependence on external tutoring, aiming instead to cultivate more balanced and holistic student growth. The study found widespread endorsement of the policy's goals across stakeholder groups. Principals highlighted the enrichment of student life through expanded extracurricular programming—including clubs, arts, and physical activities—which helped shift the focus from grades to diverse forms of learning. Teachers acknowledged the positive shift towards encouraging student autonomy and reducing repetitive, exam-focused instruction. Parents, for their part, were appreciative of the financial relief and improved well-being of their children, although many still expressed concern about academic competitiveness in high-stakes environments. Student opinions varied: while some enjoyed the reduced pressure and greater freedom, others felt burdened by the increased time spent in school and underwhelmed by the quality of after-school services.

Nonetheless, the study also revealed several challenges in the practical application of the policy. Principals reported difficulties such as limited funding, lack of professional staff for after-school programs, and unequal distribution of resources. Teachers described increased responsibilities and extended working hours, often without sufficient remuneration or institutional support, leading to dissatisfaction and fatigue. Despite reduced expenditures, many other parents remained anxious about their children's academic futures, reflecting enduring societal emphasis on examination performance.

Students, especially those who were previously supported by private tutoring, struggled to adapt to the demands of self-guided learning and time management, revealing gaps in readiness for independent study.

Practically, this study invites educators, parents, and policymakers to reassess conventional definitions of academic success. Schools should prioritize the development of creativity, problem-solving, and emotional intelligence alongside academic skills. Teachers are encouraged to adapt their instructional strategies, offer personalized support to learners with difficulties, and cultivate a classroom environment that promotes curiosity and student agency. At the same time, parents should embrace a more holistic view of their children's growth, supporting self-confidence, autonomy, and diverse talents.

In summary, the Double Reduction Policy holds promise for fostering a more equitable and student-centred educational landscape. However, its success depends on long-term commitment, inclusive collaboration, and the willingness to challenge deep-rooted academic traditions. By integrating structural reforms with cultural shifts, the DRP can become a meaningful force in transforming China's basic education system.

### **Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate**

This study fully complied with established ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. Prior to participation, all informants provided informed consent after being clearly informed about the nature and purpose of the study. Anonymity and confidentiality of their responses were assured throughout the process. Participants were also made aware that the research posed minimal risk and that they had the right to withdraw at any point without any negative consequences.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest related to this work. No potential conflicts exist concerning the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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