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Factors Affecting the Fairness of China's Tutoring After the Implantation of 'Double Reduction' Policy

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Abstract: Chinese government introduced the “double reduction” policy, advocating the elimination of exams and written assignments for the first and second graders of primary school and closing down numerous extracurricular tutoring institutions to reduce the burden of students in primary school and middle school. The “double reduction” policy has reduced students’ homework time and regulated the chaotic proliferation of inadequately qualified tutoring institutions in the market. However, the “double reduction” has not narrowed the disparities caused by extracurricular tutoring. This paper demonstrates how family background and teacher attention influence the distribution of educational opportunities. This paper suggests that society can enhance education equity by respecting children’s desire for free development, enabling teachers to provide personalized instruction to meet student needs.

Keywords: “Double reduction” policy; Tutor; Fairness

1. Introduction

The Chinese government issued a policy to regulate extracurricular tutoring, alleviating the homework burden on elementary school students, reducing the load of participation in extracurricular tutoring, and promoting educational equity (“People’s Daily,” 2021). According to Xie (2022), after the policy was implemented, 70% of students and 87.5% of parents supported continuing participation in tutoring. Despite the downsizing in the scale and quantity of tutoring institutions, parents, to chase better educational opportunities for their children, have resorted to various means to continue tutoring, such as hiring private tutors at double prices (“China Youth Daily,” 2021). This has shifted the educational pressure onto individual families, further increasing the educational costs of each family. It has amplified parental financial stress and exacerbated the academic disparities among children. This paper addresses how family and teachers’ attention influence the distribution of educational opportunities after the “double reduction” implementation.

2. The issue

2.1 The gap between parents

Society’s pressure has shifted onto individual households, leading to increased educational resource disparities caused by differences in family resources. Hultberg et al. (2021) indicate that children from families capable of tutoring their children by themselves or hiring expensive private tutors can achieve better academic results. In contrast, children need financial means or parental presence to afford expensive extracurricular tutoring, resulting in the loss of numerous educational resources and opportunities.

2.2 Uneven distribution of teacher attention

The increasing disparities in student academic performance pose challenges for educators. The limited attention resource of a teacher prevents the provision of personalized instruction to all students in a classroom, catering to their distinct needs.

3. Factors that hinder educational equity

3.1 Family Economic and Educational resources

Family economic status has led to uneven distribution of educational resources beyond school education through tutoring. To Chinese parents, the most critical mission for their children is to gain admission to a reputable university. Driven by this goal, after the introduction of the “double reduction” policy, 70.0% of students and 87.5% of parents support continued participation in tutoring (Xie, 2022). The “double reduction” has exacerbated disparities among students. Xie (2022) indicates that wealthier families can afford higher-quality tutoring classes.

Given the inherent inequality in resources possessed by different families, the educational opportunities available to children become even more disparate. Bourdieu (1977) argues that cultural capital includes familiarity with prevailing societal culture, particularly the adept-

ness in understanding and employing sophisticated language. Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds have significant disadvantage against students from wealthy culture capital family. Differences in families' emphasis on education and economic status contribute to disparities in family learning environments. Xie (2022) indicates that children from more economically advantaged families have access to a more excellent array of societal educational resources from an early age. To reduce the impact of the difference in family resources, schools should further adjust admission criteria to create a more equitable environment for children from disadvantaged family backgrounds. Parents should shift from holding misconceptions about education and instead foster diverse abilities in their children. Allocating the time spent on tutoring to cultivating hobbies could benefit the child's development (Xie, 2022).

3.2 Teachers attention

Not only are educational opportunities unfairly distributed among children in society, but also within classrooms. The uneven allocation of teacher attention further exacerbates the unfair distribution of educational resources. There are many benefits to teachers paying close attention to students. Students who receive high attention from teachers have better academic performance and higher confidence (Saputri & Hasibuan, 2022). Teachers are more likely to identify their issues and provide targeted instruction to help them improve their academic performance. However, the attention resources of teachers are limited. Georges et al. (2011) indicate that teachers cannot attend to every student in a classroom. Teachers tend to focus more on students with lower grades, reducing teacher attention to other students. Teachers should make an effort to attend to each student. They should assign tasks tailored to students to enhance task efficiency and devise distinct instructional strategies based on students' needs. Such personalized approaches aid students in mastering the subjects.

The "double reduction" policy also helps schools enhance their standards in structure and methodology. This elevation ensures that socioeconomically disadvantaged students with limited access to supplementary resources can attain a high-quality education. In the domain of Chinese culture education, Wang (2023) proposes a homework management strategy involving categorizing reading materials into seven types, utilizing word-based, holistic perception-based, and rhetorical technique-based approaches. Customized assignments are assigned to students of diverse proficiency levels. This method meets students' requirements for identifying and addressing knowledge gaps through homework and alleviates their homework load. The detailed categorization of assignments and the tailored assignment of tasks based on individual student circumstances reflect the school and teachers' optimization of instructional approaches, enabling children of varying proficiency levels and diverse family backgrounds to be situated within an equitable environment, thereby attaining high-quality educational outcomes.

4. Conclusion

The "double reduction" aims to regulate educational institutions and alleviate students' homework burden. Socio-economic constraints paradoxically exacerbate the disparities among students from diverse family backgrounds. Simultaneously, these disparities further result in uneven distribution of teacher attention, leading to differentiation in the allocation of on-campus teaching resources. Although the "double reduction" policy widens the gap between students from on-campus and off-campus educational settings, it concurrently enhances the quality of education within schools, augmenting the potential for students to receive high-quality education. Parents should alter their perspective on education, reduce tutoring, and enable children to attain educational advantages through their efforts. Teachers should tailor personalized learning plans for students and pay attention to each learner. Through the collaborative efforts of parents and teachers, the original policy intentions of "double reduction" can be realized, thereby promoting educational equity in tutoring.

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