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Whether the "Double Reduction" Policy Reduces Parents' Anxiety Over their Kids Future: A Qualitative Research from China

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Abstract

This qualitative research aims to explore whether parents' education anxiety has been alleviated under the background of China's "double reduction" policy and the current involution of education in China. In 2021, China issued a "double reduction" education policy aiming to reduce the burden of homework and off-campus training for students in the compulsory education stage, thereby alleviating parents' anxiety about education, education investment, and easing the involution of education in Chinese society. So far, the policy has been in place for more than a year. When a new education policy is implemented, it may receive doubts, criticisms, and support from the public, but its results will gradually become apparent over time. In other words, it is of educational practical significance to study whether the "double reduction" education policy, which has been implemented for more than a year, alleviates parents' educational anxiety to a certain extent and improves the current situation of China's education involution to a certain extent. Based on the results, the authors summarize some suggestions.

Keywords: Double Reduction Policy, Education Investment, Educational Anxiety, Education Involution, Compulsory Education

Introduction

Educational policies should serve the development of national education and meet people's ever-increasing demands and desires for education (Vasilescu et al., 2010). With China's reform and opening up and rapid economic development in the 21st century, people's living standards have gradually improved (Chen et al., 2013). More and more parents are paying attention to the future development of their children, especially their academic performance. The People's Republic of China has a large population and a deep foundation of traditional culture. Under the influence of the "imperial examination system" for thousands of years, Chinese students and parents have an "obsession" with "academic performance", that is, "the harder you study, the better you will be in your academic performance, the more successful you will be in the future", Although García-Martínez et al (2021) argued that a person's success depends on many factors, like emotional intelligence, ability, academic performance,

habits, physical health, leadership and so on. In addition, some parents' bad psychology, such as comparing one's children with other children's children, blindly comparing, showing off and so on, also contributes to the flames. With the support of this social background and traditional educational concepts, the phenomenon of educational introversion has become more and more serious. Good grades, but the family students who have no money may have to give up their studies, or rely on scholarships, grants, loans, etc. to continue their studies; children with poor grades but rich families do not study hard in school, and their grades improve after participating in extracurricular tutoring; families with poor grades and no money can only be gradually eliminated. In other words, when students take advantage of compulsory education opportunities, they also rely on economic strength to seize additional educational resources. The Chinese government has introduced the "double reduction" policy, which aims to comprehensively reduce the schoolwork burden and extracurricular tutoring of students in the compulsory education stage, prevent the capitalization of education, and save unnecessary educational investment for parents to the greatest extent, thereby easing parental education. anxiety and family economic pressure to achieve the purpose of returning to the essence of education (Drummet et al., 2003). When the new policy is implemented, it will generally receive more discussion, doubt, support, opposition and so on. With the advancement of the policy and the implementation of relevant departments, it is worth paying attention to the changes brought about by the relevant subjects of the policy, such as parents, students, teachers, schools and so on, and the pros and cons of the policy are also worth studying.

Literature Review

Zaleski (1996) noted that the anxiety is a common emotion that refers to worry or uneasiness about potential future threats. When people feel anxious, they may have physical symptoms such as a racing heart, shortness of breath, numbness in their hands and feet, or headaches (Roth et al., 2002). Anxiety can be a natural, healthy response, but it can become a mental health problem if it affects your life excessively or inappropriately (Skelley et al., 2020). Educational anxiety refers to the feelings of uneasiness, worry, and anxiety that parents feel in the process of educating their children. This emotion often arises from concerns about one's educational abilities, methods, or prospects for the child, especially academic performance, which is closely related to prospects (Covington, 2000). Educational anxiety may affect parents' educational efficiency, mental health, and emotional state. Educational anxiety may come from many aspects, such as internal pressure, parental expectations, and requirements; bad educational psychology and so on. External pressure, the outstanding academic performance of children of the same generation; the investment of other families in children's education, etc. Parents suffering from educational anxiety may seek some help, such as by sending their children to better off-campus tutoring institutions, hiring tutors for their children, and buying houses in school districts with loans. These practices provide a hotbed for capital to intervene in education, or for hot money to flow into the education sector, thereby accelerating educational involution.

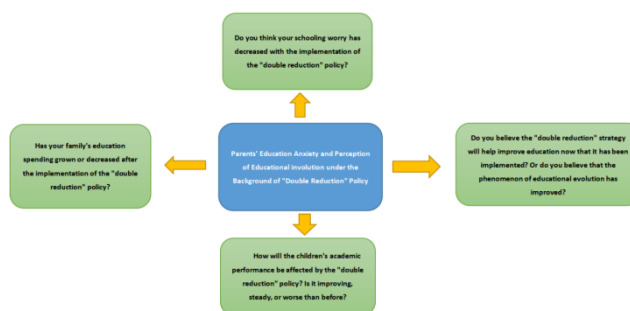
The development of education is inseparable from funds like running water. The subjects related to education investment, such as the country, society, schools, educational institutions, parents, and students, also have different connotations. High-level education input subjects mainly include the state and society, and mainly refer to the financial and material input made by the state or society in education (Jiang et al., 2020). This includes providing funding, facilities, and resources for educational institutions, as well as paying

teachers and other educators. Educational investment is crucial to promoting the quality of education and improving education levels, and the level of educational investment can vary greatly in different countries and regions. The educational input of schools and educational institutions is not the same. Their educational investment mainly includes teaching students, imparting knowledge, providing academic performance training, and conducting knowledge consolidation exercises (Matthews et al., 2011). But the biggest difference between the two is whether to charge. In the stage of compulsory education, schools are generally free of charge, but educational institutions mostly collect education fees from parents as a means of profit. "Parental investment in education" refers to the contribution that parents make in helping their children learn and develop. This can include spending time learning and practicing with the child, providing learning resources and assistance to the child, and paying for learning and development, which may include purchasing learning materials, attending training sessions or activities, hiring a tutor or other private educational services, and providing children with computers, tablets, or other learning tools. as well as keeping in touch with your child's school and teachers, etc. Parental investment in education is critical to helping children succeed and is closely related to children's educational level and achievement. Parental investment in education can help children obtain better educational resources and opportunities, but it may also lead to educational inequality (Schneider et al., 2018). As a result, in many countries, governments and other organizations work to alleviate educational inequalities through, among other things, providing public education services and funding.

The General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the General Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China issued the "Opinions on Further Reducing the Homework Burden of Compulsory Education Students and the Burden of Off-Campus Training," in 2021, requiring all regions and departments to conscientiously implement it in light of actual conditions (hereinafter referred to as the "Double Reduction" Policy). The "Double Reduction" Policy is a new education policy proposed in response to the current situation of China's education revolution and parental education anxiety. It aims to reduce the learning pressure for students in the compulsory education stage and reduce the burden of off-campus training; reduce the cost of extracurricular training for parents and ease the pressure on family education; and prevent a large amount of hot money from flowing into education and the capitalization of education, which will affect the national education system. When the "double reduction" policy was launched, it received attention and evaluation from all walks of life. Most parents It is believed that a new policy cannot change the current educational anxiety and involution in China, i.e., the traditional educational philosophy and educational methods are unlikely to change immediately because of the new policy. However, as time goes by, parents There is a new understanding of the "double reduction" policy.

Methodology

Interviewees for this qualitative study were three mothers and two father (2 male and 3 females). Their children come from a Chinese public secondary school. A standard quantitative questionnaire and a 1.5-hour Zoom interview were both required of the participant at the relevant times (including 15 minutes of relaxation). The figure below shows the interview's details.



In general, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews on topics such as parents' anxiety about educational investments, children's academic performance, and self-education anxiety evaluation, starting from the following four questions: The interview procedure took place over a period of 1.5 hours. The interview questions were in line with the academic principles of scientific research, and the interviewees' confidentiality was kept.

Findings

Table1

Sample Demographics (N = 5)

Items	Name	Gender	Work Styles	Education Level	Annual household income (RMB)	Part-Time (PT) or Full-Time (FT)
	Sample1	Male	Government Staff	Undergraduate	140,000	FT
Details	Sample2	Female	Teacher	Undergraduate	250,000	FT
	Sample3	Male	Merchant	High school	190,000	FT
	Sample4	Female	Doctor	PhD	490,000	FT
	Sample5	Female	Merchant	Undergraduate	320,000	FT

The above chart shows that, in addition to one relatively low education, the majority of the education qualifications in the sample are above the bachelor's degree level. Their careers are reliable, as are their incomes, which average nearly RMB280,000. All families have only one child.

Table2

Sample's thinking about family education expenditure

Items	Details
Details	Sample1 In fact, for our family, the annual income is not very high. After the introduction of the "double reduction" policy, my children's extracurricular tutoring class went bankrupt, and we also stopped extracurricular tutoring. In the past, we spent at least 20,000 yuan a year to enroll our children in extracurricular tutoring classes, but now we don't have to. We let the child learn the piano and develop her hobbies.
	Sample2 This policy has had a big impact on me and my children. The teacher's workload has increased, but my children have less time to study. I myself am a teacher, my husband and I are teachers, we have the ability to tutor children, usually the cost in this area is not much.
	Sample3 My education level is relatively low, and I am usually busy. I hired a full-time tutor to help my child with his studies, especially math and English. The "double reduction" policy has little impact on our family, and I only hope that my children's academic performance is getting better and better.
	Sample4 I am currently a university teacher, professor. Our university has affiliated schools, they have strong teachers and tuition fees are not expensive. The "double reduction" policy has little impact on our family's education expenditure. In addition, the child has learning confusion, and my husband and I can be tutored.
	Sample5 The "double reduction" policy has little impact on our home education expenditure, and we mainly invest more money in the development of children's interests. She loves curling and skiing, and we focus on developing her strengths. In addition, we sent her to a professional educational institution to study Olympiad before, but she didn't like it.

Based on the above interview keywords, it is not difficult to find that most of the samples have a neutral opinion on whether the "double reduction" policy has affected the investment of family education funds. In other words, they believe that the "double reduction" policy has not affected family education expenditure to a certain extent, that is, for children's education expenditure, what should be spent must not be saved, and what should not be spent will not be spent.

Table3

Sample's thinking about educational anxiety and involution

Items	Details
	Sample1 parents' educational anxiety is not only the nature of parents, but also caused by the social environment. If you want to gain a foothold in society and find a good job, you must have the same or higher education as others, so that it is possible to succeed in the fierce competition. So I get anxious.
Details	Sample2 Not very anxious, the child excelled academically under our guidance. But the current society is involuted, and everyone needs to pay attention to it, which is not a good phenomenon.
	Sample3 The educational involution made me constantly feel that my child was unsuccessful, and every time the test results came out I was a little sad, but I rarely criticized him.
	Sample4 Educational involution is normal, and educational anxiety is not very serious. I feel that I worked hard when I was young, and I felt very fortunate that I had won a better learning environment and conditions for my children with my own efforts.
	Sample5 We want our children to grow up happy, have a hobby of their own, and academic performance does not require an A+. But I have to say that at present, the education in society is quite serious, and everyone is working hard.

In addition, when it came to whether the "double reduction" policy alleviated parents' educational anxiety and improved the social environment of education involvement, most of the samples were opposed. Sample 1 pointed out that parents' educational anxiety is not only the nature of parents, but also caused by the social environment. If you want to gain a foothold in society and find a good job, you must have the same or higher education as others, so that it is possible to succeed in the fierce competition. Besides, other samples also point out the important role of parents in the education of involution and children's education, that is, parents should lay the foundation for their children's growth as much as possible. Another point worth mentioning is that Sample 5 is more respectful of children's personality and hobby development, even if they see the current situation of educational involution and general educational anxiety.

Disucssion & Conclusion

In general, as Le et al (2019) noted that parents want their children to have good academic performance, a healthy body, a positive attitude towards life, and unique interests. However, because of the involution of education in society, educational anxiety has always existed, and most parents have to passively pressure their children to a certain extent, and even ignore their children's normal needs and hobbies (Grusec, 2020). Normal educational anxiety and the phenomenon of educational involution are conducive to the development of society and national education, and once it exceeds the normal range, it will be counterproductive. The study highlights some teaching and learning recommendations. Parents should adjust their mentality, not blindly compare, and show off their children, and other people's children; Guide children to develop good study habits promptly; and have a positive attitude towards

academic difficulties. Teachers should do a good job in home-school cooperation, and communicate more with parents about students' performance in school; Hold regular parent-teacher meetings to alleviate parents' anxiety about education. In addition, the state should guide the public to establish a correct concept of learning and employment, so that everyone can achieve success in learning and not blindly compare, thus producing blind involution and serious internal friction.

The research is based on China's "double reduction policy" and the present state of education involution. The research findings contribute to updating the impact of China's "double reduction policy" and expanding worldwide education policy discussions. This study analysed the literature on educational policy, educational anxiety, educational introversion, teaching, and learning in a limited scope, leaving space for scholars in allied domains to be acknowledged. The background has always flowed through the core of the investigated "double reduction policy" and its link with educational anxiety, and larger-scale quantitative work will be pursued on this basis in the near future.

Declaration of Interest Statement

There is no conflict interest

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