

# Research on the Actual Academic Burden of Primary School Students under the “Double Reduction” Policy——Qualitative Analysis Based on Nvivo12

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**Abstract:** Since the implementation of the “double reduction” policy, all localities have successively issued specific measures to reduce students’ academic burden. In this context, qualitative interviews were conducted to explore the actual academic burden of primary school students since the implementation of the policy. It was found that the “double reduction” policy had achieved some results. Students generally reduced the number of academic tasks, basically complied with the academic time in class, and had more opportunities to participate in diverse activities inside and outside class. However, there are still discounts on the implementation of the “double reduction” policy. Parents put obvious pressure on their children. Schools pay more attention to “quantity” than “quality” in the implementation of the policy, and there are differences in the phenomenon of inter-school burden reduction. Therefore, we should improve the theoretical basis of the double reduction policy and the construction of supervision and inspection mechanism in policy formulation and implementation; In terms of implementation, all parties should strengthen and enrich burden reduction measures, consolidate the results of burden reduction.

**Keywords:** “Double reduction” policy; Study burden; Elementary school students; Qualitative research

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## Introduction

In July 2021, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council issued the Opinions on Further Reducing the Homework Burden and Off-campus Training Burden of Students in the Compulsory Education Stage, requiring that students’ homework burden be reduced, and off-campus training institutions be standardize and strictly governed. Specific implementation plans have been introduced throughout the country to further consolidate the implementation of the “double reduction” policy. Judging from the implementation of hard indicators, the effect was still satisfactory. However, parents still have certain worries in addition to surprises. Since the competition of the inner-volume type still exists, parents will not let the child “lie flat”. When parents’ worries intervene in the implementation of the policy, what will be the sustained effect of the implementation of the “double reduction” policy? This requires empirical research. This research strives to interview primary school students, learn about their real state, and try to solve the common problems that exist, in order to ensure the efficient implementation of the “double reduction” policy.

## 1. Research methods and data acquisition

### 1.1 Research methods

Subject to geographical limitations, the study combines offline face-to-face communication, online phone calls and Wechat voice to obtain original data for interviewees in different regions. The grounded theory of Straussian style was adopted in this paper based on the obtained interview data. Grounded theory, as a substantive theory rooted in social reality and context, focuses on the data collected by researchers,<sup>[1]</sup>The research tries to extract valuable dimensions from students’ descriptions, so as to reflect the current changes of primary school students’ academic burden since the implementation of the “double reduction” policy as realistically and concretely as possible.

### 1.2 Access to information

The study interviewed 26 primary school students, taking into account factors such as age, grade, and region. The age range of respondents ranged from 7 to 12 years, with an average age of 10 years, and was distributed in grades 1 to 6. Among them, there are 2 first-year students, 6 second-graders, 3 third-graders, 6 fourth-graders, 7 fifth-graders, and 2 sixth-graders. 11 were from Yancheng, Jiangsu, 5 from Wuxi, Jiangsu, 2 from Lantian, Xi'an, and 1 each from Lianyungang, Jiangsu Nanjing, Jiangsu Suzhou, Jiangsu Suqian, Jiangsu Taizhou, Jiangsu Yangzhou, Shanxi Linfen, Sichuan Chengdu and Xi'an Lantian.<sup>[2]</sup>

## **2. The improvement of the academic burden of primary school students**

### **2.1 The amount of academic tasks has decreased**

Since the promulgation of the “double reduction” policy, schools and parents have responded positively. Compared with the promulgation of the policy, the amount of homework, the number of examinations, and extracurricular remedial work have decreased. In terms of homework and test volume, when compared with the academic tasks of the previous semester, in the context of the increase in grades, 10 students still felt that the amount of homework this semester had decreased, and 13 students said that the number of tests had decreased. In terms of extracurricular tuition, under the policy of forcibly prohibiting extracurricular tutoring in disciplines on weekends, 8 of the 26 respondents have canceled the extracurricular training in disciplines that they used to participate in daily, and some of them have turned to interest courses such as Go and piano lessons, and more students choose to rest and have fun on weekends. Therefore, it can be seen that under the promotion of the “double reduction” policy, the pressure of extracurricular tutoring has been decreased, and some students have more time to allocate independently. From the general reduction in the amount of homework, the number of examinations, and the participation of students in extracurricular tutoring, it can be seen that the school and parents have taken effective measures to reduce the academic burden of students.<sup>[3]</sup>

### **2.2 The academic time during the class is following the regulations**

The time spent by primary school pupils on school-assigned in-class academics is an important measure of their academic burden, mainly including the time spent in school and the time spent completing school-assigned homework. As far as the allocation of school time is concerned, the regular course time of students in public schools in the same school section is the same. Most students go to school 8 o'clock school, and in the case of the establishment of a delayed class, school is released at 5-6 o'clock. The students said, “I am very happy in school, and I feel that the school will soon be over.” reflecting the school class time in line with the law of students' physical and mental development. In terms of completing the homework assigned by the school, research found that only 1 fourth-grade student needs 2-3 hours to complete homework every day, significantly exceeding the requirements of the Ministry of Education. The rest of the students' homework completion time is compliant, and the achievement of this result depends on the implementation of after-school delay services. As far as the school's academic schedule in class is concerned, its distribution is basically in line with the regulations of the Ministry of Education and does not cause excessive burdens on students.

### **2.3 Activities inside and outside the classroom tend to diversify**

Of the 26 interviewees interviewed, 23 mentioned the various activities carried out by their schools, which shows that the school is striving to create a variety of practical activities to enhance the fun of school life and promote the all-around development of students. On the one hand, the proportion of school activity courses has increased. During the interview, three interviewees all mentioned that their schools have carried out special courses, such as football classes, pottery classes, calligraphy classes, etc. Some schools make full use of the after-school postponement class to carry out a variety of activities. On the other hand, schools organize diverse practical activities after class, with multiple respondents sharing extracurricular activities that they find interesting, of which, 22 interviewees mentioned that the school will regularly carry out sports meetings to enhance students' physical fitness, which will allow them to challenge themselves and build friendships while exercising. The spring and autumn excursion activities that entered nature, art festivals to enhance aesthetic power, recess cleaning to exercise labor ability, unique flea markets, and parent open days are also mentioned. It can be seen that the activities carried out by the school cover a wide range of contents, which helps to enhance the fun of learning and life.

## **3. The problems of the academic burden of primary school students**

### **3.1 The implementation of the burden reduction policy is not in place**

In the interview, it was found that the implementation of the burden reduction policy was not in place, mainly reflected in the fact that the amount of on-campus exams generally did not meet the policy requirements and the phenomenon of off-campus disciplinary tutoring still existed. As far as the school is concerned, 17 interviewees said that more than one test was conducted this semester, 5 interviewees experienced a weekly exam, 5 interviewees experienced a monthly exam, and 1 interviewee even experienced 20 exams, and students expressed dissatisfaction with this. Behind the excessive frequency of examinations is that the construction of

the educational evaluation system is still not sound enough so teachers must rely on test scores to evaluate students, and the one-sided evaluation system will greatly deepen the academic burden on students. Outside the school, there are still 4 interviewees who do not follow the requirements and participate in subject tuition on weekends. Students are transferred to “underground” tuition institutions, which shows that there is still illegal tuition for off-campus training institutions. It can be seen that there is still a long way to go in the complete implementation of the “double reduction” policy inside and outside the school.

## **4. The problems of the academic burden of primary school students**

### **4.1 The pressure exerted by parents in the process of reducing the burden is increasing**

After the implementation of the “double reduction” policy, the main source of the academic burden of some primary and secondary school students was the requirements and expectations of parents. On the one hand, the majority of parents don’t hesitate to spend a lot of time and money to help their children run earlier. Some parents even employ social tutors to help students complete their schoolwork, relying on mechanical topic training to improve children’s performance in the short term, which leads to the lack of children’s sleep time. On the other hand, subjective psychological stress plays an important role. Parents feel anxious and worried when they find that the school arrangements change. To make matters worse, this anxiety will shift to children.

### **4.2 There are inter school differences in the implementation of the double reduction policy**

The main supervision mechanism for the implementation of the double reduction policy is undoubtedly the schools, but the school running level of primary and secondary schools in various parts of China is quite different. There are many differences between the north and the south, as well as urban and rural areas. What’s more, the schools are divided into ordinary schools and key schools.<sup>[2]</sup>In the course of our interviews, we found that there were obvious differences in the implementation of the double reduction policy between schools, such as the Wuxi Normal Affiliated Primary School in Jiangsu Province, which is located in the southern Jiangsu region. Key schools such as Wuxi Jinqiao Bilingual Experimental School usually strictly implement teaching plans by the class schedule, and when asked whether the main course teacher will squeeze out some secondary courses, the answers are “definitely not” or “absolutely not”.

## **5. Countermeasures and suggestions**

### **5.1 Strengthen academic research and lay the theoretical foundation for the double reduction policy**

Establishing and improving the theoretical research mechanism of the science of the double reduction policy is the premise of policy implementation, which requires researchers to seriously reflect on the existing burden reduction policy, and then take scientific theory as the guide, scientifically formulating the double reduction policy in accordance with the scientific research results, and adopting correct scientific research methods such as combining qualitative analysis and quantitative analysis.<sup>[3]</sup>

### **5.2 Improve supervision mechanisms to ensure that the requirements for burden reduction are in place**

First of all, it is necessary to supervise the construction of the team at a professional level, improving the coordination and cooperation of various departments. Secondly, it is necessary to regularly evaluate the results of the burden reduction and disclose the results, playing the role of supervision by the whole public. What’s more, we must be good at using the powerful channel of the Network, putting the results on the Internet. Finally, it is necessary to establish an evaluation team composed of experts and scholars, design a reasonable reward and punishment system, and criticize and punish those who are not in place.

### **5.3 Consolidate the results of burden reduction and strengthen the enrichment of burden reduction measures**

This study shows that after the implementation of the double reduction policy, the number of examinations and homework in schools has been significantly controlled, but students’ actual academic burden failed to be truly achieved. The form of homework should be innovated to improve the efficiency of the operation instead. Teachers should select the homework questions carefully and realistically, reducing the repetitive mechanical memory of homework and ensuring that assignments are diversified. Schools should establish a scientific evaluation system that is conducive to the all-around development of students. Thus, students can have a clear understanding of their development. The evaluation system becomes an effective means of promoting students’ growth, rather than a burden in the process of growth.

### **5.4 Improve the quality of learning by reducing burdens and increasing efficiency at the same time**

The burden reduction aims to improve the quality, “Students can get more space for free development and cultivate creative spirit and practical ability by improving the quality of learning.”Firstly, classroom teaching is the key to efficiency, which is an important way for students to acquire knowledge and grasp classroom knowledge based on interest. What’s more, improving teacher literacy

is the focus of efficiency. Schools need to enrich the ways and forms of teacher development, encourage outstanding teachers to share teaching experiences, and strengthen learning and exchanges among teachers. At the same time, improving the guarantee of school management efficiency is important too. Thirdly, schools need to reasonably arrange students' learning and activity time in school, helping students form good habits. Finally, it is necessary to rationally coordinate the curriculum system, establish a curriculum teaching and research group, start from the actual situation of students, optimize the course structure, and give play to its educational value.

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