

“Double Reduction” and Education Equality in the Context of Globalization

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Abstract:

To adapt to the continuous development and changes, all countries in the world have carried out educational reforms based on the original educational policies. China has implemented the “Double Reduction” to better adapt to the development of globalization. This paper demonstrates the purpose and effect of the implementation of Double Reduction in China and discusses the impact of its implementation. This paper also gives reasonable suggestions for maximizing educational equality. It also points out that globalization can help the development of the education system in developing countries to some extent. Only by facing globalization and carrying out education reform can China promote education equity.

Keywords:

Double reduction
Education equality
Globalization

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, the increasingly prominent and accelerated growth of globalization has a greater impact on the economy, politics, and culture, which creates new opportunities for developing countries^[1]. New challenges also have been posed to countries all over the world. Due to the importance of education in shaping society, globalization is closely related to education, and global activities must also have a profound impact on education^[2]. Further put forward since globalization mainly includes cultural change and power shift, as a result, education is probably one of the areas that feel most of the consequences of globalization^[3]. As

a developing country undergoing rapid transformation, with the popularization and expansion of education, more people enjoy the right to education, however, education equity is facing unprecedented challenges. To adapt to continuous development and change, countries all over the world have made educational changes and reforms based on previous educational policies. China made efforts to promote the “Double Reduction” policy to solve the problems of educational inequalities and better adapt to the development trend of globalization. The focus of this paper is to analyze education equality on the policy reform of Double Reduction in China in the context of

globalization, the suggestions are also proposed in the paper.

2. Globalization and education equality

Globalization is a process that may affect any aspect of society and an individual's life, one of which is education. In the twentieth century, educational facilities in many developing countries grew due to the entry of Western institutions. The process was viewed as a valuable opportunity for people in developing countries to upgrade their skills and education ^[4]. Through the globalization of education, for example, the transfer of knowledge from Western countries to developing countries, the aim is to improve the skills and abilities of those who receive an education. Besides, globalization has had a profound impact on education at many different levels. The relationship between education and globalization can be examined as part of a sharper focus by examining some of its content rather than the whole phenomenon. Simultaneously, education problems emerge one after another in various countries. For example, the increasing number of tutorial institutions and private schools ^[5]. Education, both public and private, is good. Public education contributes to the economic well-being and social development of a community meanwhile private education serves individual interests in a competitive labor market. According to Tang and Tang, education is a public welfare undertaking, meaning that education should be in line with the public interests of the country and society ^[6]. The government, society, and schools should adopt various measures to ensure the commonweal nature of education. It cannot be neglected that the private off-campus programs may be successful in responding to some degree to the needs and interests of students, however, it leads to the over-capitalization of education.

In order to cope with the global education market competition in the 21st century, and occupy a more important position in the future global competition, countries around the world are constantly trying to develop educational reforms. Besides, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) loaded pressure on the education of countries through the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) data which reveals huge variations in the extent to which

countries succeed in developing knowledge and skills in key subject areas, and countries have to carry out education reform under the heavy pressure. In the PISA 2018 Results, four provinces and cities in China (Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang) ranked first in all three subjects (reading, mathematics, and science) among the 79 countries and regions ^[7]. However, it also reflects the problem of education equity in China behind these inspired data. According to the test results, the shortage of teachers in rural areas is more serious. The index of shortage of education staff in the four provinces and cities is 0.75, higher than the OECD average, with 0.44 for urban schools and 0.98 for rural schools respectively (an index of 1 is an extreme shortage). The imbalanced development in China between schools drew people's attention. The variation in reading performance between schools is 42.0%, China ranks 17th among the countries (regions) being surveyed, which is a country with high overall education quality but significant variation between schools.

3. Education equality in Double Reduction

Globalization has put forward higher requirements for the level and development of educational equity. Equality has long been a major goal of education around the world. Indeed, a quick keyword search on the Ministry of Education (MOE) homepage (as of April 2022), using the word string "education equality" returned no less than 7,063 results. According to Li *et al.* and Ilon, education equality is a basic demand of society at large for education, and equality of education attainment is positively associated with economic growth ^[8-9].

3.1. Equality in education is a basic human right

In 1946, the 9th General Conference of the International Bureau of Education included "equal access to secondary education" which was the earliest universal provision of educational equality. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 explicitly regards equality in education as a basic human right, providing the basis of international law for the establishment of equal rights in education. In China, there are also many laws on education. For

example, the Compulsory Education Law, Education Law, Vocational Education Law, Higher Education Law, and relevant supporting rules provide legal protection for the right to equal education. The right to educational equality includes equality of educational content, equality of educational opportunities, and equality of educational resources.

According to Sima, the unfairness of education results is the final embodiment of the unfairness of education starting point and education process^[10]. Chu addressed that in the framework of starting point equity, process equity, and result equity, the process, especially the result equity, should be taken as the focus, and the actual effect of educational equity should be paid attention to^[11]. Sometimes inequality can reach equity, for example, it is necessary to give more educational resources and opportunities to children in remote mountainous regions and who are raised in low socioeconomic status (SES) families. Therefore, the equality of compulsory education must be guaranteed^[12]. Wen further claimed that if equity can be achieved, it would also help to promote the implementation of equality^[13].

3.2. The promotion of Double Reduction

In the earlier 2017, based on the needs of China's social, economic, technological, and educational development, the China Education Innovation Institute of Beijing Normal University put forward the "5C model of core literacy in the 21st century," including Culture competency, Critical thinking, Creativity, Collaboration and Communication. However, the exam-oriented education and off-campus tutoring occupied children plenty of time, who did have not enough time to develop their potential and cultivate the core qualities of the 21st century. After all, what society needs is not students with high scores, but fully developed talents with the core literacy of the 21st century. Only by promoting students' all-around development and individual development can we cope with the fierce international competition, narrow the gap between Chinese students' literacy and that of developed countries, and better cope with the challenges brought by globalization.

Nowadays, China still seeks to choose the advanced talents that they really need from the college entrance examination to enhance international competitiveness.

Besides, there is a small number of students who are admitted to world-class universities in China every year. The students who are well-trained in the tutorial schools take more places and those who lack access to the tutorial schools miss the chances. What's more, the system picked out students who have received more high-quality education instead of their talent or creativity. Children who are immersed in scores, answering the questions, and training, may lack innovation and creativity abilities, which does not meet the national standards for talent selection.

The capitalization of education is more serious nowadays. Tutorial schools invest a lot to recruit excellent and highly experienced teachers in public schools, resulting in a serious loss of teachers in public schools. Parents and children need to afford the extra money to go to tutorial schools for excellent educational resources which they could have access to in public schools, it is considered capital kidnapping of education. Besides, seeking their interests, tutorial schools bring parents and students the anxiety of examinations and competitions and teach advanced knowledge that is beyond the teaching syllabus, seriously damaging the education ecology. Teachers and children suffer and struggle while capitalists enjoy the benefits of wealth, a situation that has drawn widespread criticism from society.

The college entrance examination has been essentially regarded as a competition with the same starting point and equal opportunities^[14]. However, the growing number of off-campus tutorial schools has greatly affected the equality of educational content, educational opportunities, and educational resources. To promote education equality and reach the result of education equity, on July 24, 2021, the MOE proposed the Opinions on Further Reducing the Burden of Homework and Off-Campus Training for Compulsory Education Students ("Double Reduction").

By the end of 2021, initial results had been achieved with the total volume and duration of operations under effective control. The proportion of students who complete written assignments within the prescribed time has increased from 46% to more than 90%. Additionally, 99.6% of parents reported that, following the implementation of the Double Reduction policy, teachers no longer assigned homework to parents or required

them to correct their children's homework. By March 2022, the number of off-campus tutorial institutions in disciplines under compulsory education had been reduced from 124,000 to 9,728 with a 92.14% reduction rate. The number of online off-campus training institutions was reduced from 263 to 34, with a reduced rate of 87.07%. All 25 listed companies have completed rectification and are no longer engaged in disciplinary tutoring for compulsory education.

On the day that the Double Reduction policy was put forward, the share price of New Oriental and TAL Education Group (TAL) in the United States (US) stock market slumped 54.22% to \$2.93 and 70.76% to \$6.00, respectively, much worse than expected^[15]. Besides, New Oriental laid off 60,000 workers, lost 80% of its revenue, and paid \$20 billion in educational refunds. Thus, Double Reduction had a great impact which has achieved the initial results of reducing the off-campus training.

3.3. Equality or new inequality?

To a certain extent, the Double Reduction alleviates the problems of education involution and education equity brought by off-campus tutorial schools. However, it may result in new inequality.

On the one hand, a large number of teachers from tutorial schools lost their jobs due to the Double Reduction policy which caused increasing pressure in the education job market. According to Shen *et al.*, every new government in Korea has made reducing after-school tutoring a top priority of education reform. However, it leads to increased dissatisfaction with the school system among parents and students and further results in the increasing number of private tutors. Confucianism has shaped East Asians' emphasis on education, believing that academic achievement is the first step to personal success and social and economic prosperity^[16]. The high-SES families seek opportunities in private tutoring since it is much more expensive than the class teaching in tutorial schools whereas the children who were raised in low-SES families often lack access to quality educational resources. Li further stated that urban students with higher family income and education levels tend to choose private tutoring more than rural students with lower family income and education levels, which favors wealthier parents who can afford the best private tutoring^[17]. Thus, the Double

Reduction put lower SES families at a disadvantage which caused new inequalities.

On the other hand, it caused Chinese families to pay more attention to public education, according to the 2022 "Compulsory Education Curriculum Standards" released by the Ministry of Education earlier this month. It also emphasized guiding students to learn through multiple channels. Only relying on classroom learning is far from enough, home and school have to provide a lot of extracurricular reading materials for children, thus, learning is more dependent on family education. To some extent, the Double Reduction eliminated mediocre children and parents who did not pay attention to education.

Lee argued that Korea's educational equalization policy has failed to achieve its goals of improving educational equity. Education equality and equity are not absolute, but China still has faith in promoting children's education equality and reaching the ultimate goal of education equity^[18].

4. Suggestions

Based on the discussions, the suggestions are as follows:

(1) Strive to narrow the gap between schools: Eliminate the so-called "poor schools" and gradually cancel key schools and demonstration schools.

(2) Reduce regional disparities in educational resources: Currently, the most important and effective means to narrow and alleviate educational differences is to increase financial support for low-level students, especially from low-SES families, and strengthen the responsibility of middle and lower-level students in school education.

(3) Based on the differences between urban and rural areas: Fully implementing the teacher rotation in schools and across the country can solve the problem of uneven distribution of teacher resources, and further raise the salaries of teachers in rural areas,

As Barber and Mourshed analyzed in the report, higher salaries seem to have led to an increase in the quality of people becoming teachers^[19]. Teachers gradually move towards balance, the teacher rotation system breaks down school boundaries, and good teachers are no longer fixed in key schools. Concurrently, the

rising salary of teachers can promote their enthusiasm for the rotation program.

5. Conclusion

China is a developing country with unbalanced regional development. The good PISA results of the four provinces and cities can not represent all regions in China. Besides, although tutoring schools may have contributed to the Chinese students' excellent performance in PISA, we do not know if Chinese students can keep the record without tutoring schools. But one thing we can be sure that China is making a great effort for every Chinese student to cope with the changing world.

In the 2022 Compulsory Education Curriculum Standards, the requirements for students' ability and the setting of exam difficulty would increase rather than decrease even under the Double Reduction policy. Therefore, how to obtain higher ability in more limited learning time and balance the relationship between the two has become a top priority. Take language subjects

as an example. Both Chinese and English language subjects emphasized the core literacy of language ability and application. Gradually increasing the requirement of students' reading skills and literacy. Simply searching for answers from the text has been unable to cope with future exams, it requires examinees more in-depth search and understanding of the text, such as the logical relation, and discourse understanding, among others, which is similar to the PISA assessment of reading literacy (access and retrieve, integrate and interpret, reflect and evaluate)^[20].

Globalization can help developing countries to some extent with the development of the education system. Due to the impact of globalization, abandoning educational change and reform is unprecedented. However, because education is now more directly influenced by globalization, there is even greater need to enhance problem-solving and critical thinking skills to adapt to a rapidly changing world. In summary, in the context of globalization, only by confronting these challenges and implementing educational reforms can we promote educational equity and succeed on a global scale.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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