

Demand and Value of After-School Service in Primary Schools Under the Background of “Double Reduction” Policy

Qiaohong Cheng*

Normal Education College, Longyan University, Longyan 364012, Fujian Province, China

*Corresponding author: Qiaohong Cheng, 1679037559@qq.com

Abstract: After-school service is an effective arrangement of time and space for students after school hours. Its demand and value are under the strong advocacy and implementation of national policies to establish a “people-oriented” concept while focusing on students’ development and pursuing educational equity.

Keywords: After-school service; Demand; Value

Publication date: November 2021; **Online publication:** November 30, 2021

1. Introduction

Education is about how people are cultivated and what kind of people they become from it. As the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the State Council, and other relevant departments attach importance to school education, deepen education reform, truly carry out “Five Education,” take school education as the main channel for building morality and cultivating people, shift the focus of school work to students, carry out after-school service, improve teaching methods, and implement the fundamental task of building morality and cultivating people, it is an important measure to implement the educational policy of the party and the state as well as promote an all-round development.

2. After-school service in primary schools under the background of “double reduction” policy

Based on the current social development and education reform, the analysis of after-school service in primary schools focuses on social development, changes in family structure, educational concepts, policy guidance, and quality of after-school service institutions.

2.1. Change in the policy system

With the deepening and development of basic education reform, the “3:30 dilemma” of urban primary and secondary schools has become the common concern of the society, education, and other circles. The response of the Ministry of Education to recommendation No. 3927 in the fourth session of the 12th National People’s Congress at the end of July 2016 clarified the reality of implementing school trusteeship. In February 2017, the Ministry of Education issued the *Guidance on After-School Service in Primary and Secondary Schools*, which specifies the concept, content, form, and funding source of after-school service in the form of documents. In July 2021, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council issued the *Opinions on Further Easing the Burden of Homework and Off-Campus Training on Students in the Compulsory Education Stage*, which stressed on the efforts that should

be made in terms of service time, quality, and channels to improve the level of after-school service and meet the diversified needs of students.

In recent years, the formulation and implementation of the burden reduction policy and the development of after-school activities in primary and secondary schools have become two important measures of basic education reform. Under the strong advocacy and implementation of national policies, cities and provinces have responded positively and formulated after-school service plans which are suitable based on local conditions; they include unified school planning, strict class review, parents' independent application, students' voluntary participation, and social collaborative participation. Detailed plans in terms of after-school service content, mode, personnel participation, security mechanism, and so on have been formulated as well. The "3:30 dilemma" of local schools has been alleviated.

2.2. Heavy academic burden on primary and middle school students

With the popularization of higher education, many parents are eager for their children's success; they send their children for early education and tuition. This promotes students' learning but places them in a situation that has too much academic pressure. Some teachers are driven by the pressure of enrollment indicators and incorrect educational ideas, thus assigning piles and piles of homework, which further aggravates students' academic burden to a certain extent. In the long run, not only do students suffer and parents feel helpless, but teachers are also under pressure.

In educational practice, the problem of heavy academic burden on primary and middle school students has a long history. The results of the 2018 survey report on the burden reduction of primary and secondary school students showed that the academic burden is generally too heavy in all grades; students lack sleep, and most of them attend extracurricular classes ^[1]. Other than the lack of sleep, they only have a short period of time for recreational and sports activities; they are given many types and a large amount of homework; in addition, there are many examination subjects with difficult contents, and students' make-up time continues to lengthen. In the long run, students' passion for learning would retreat, their innovation ability would stagnate, and it would be difficult to develop their comprehensive quality in an all-round way, thus threatening students' physical and mental health.

From 1949 to 2021, the Ministry of Education issued more than ten "burden reduction orders" in the form of special documents. There were also many documents on burden reduction by local education departments, with more than 100 policies related to burden reduction. Under such concern and attention, it is thought-provoking that this problem remains unsolved. Throughout the country, Beijing, Shanghai, and other cities have tried to put forward solutions to the problem; however, many attempts only remain in policy documents and have not been really implemented.

2.3. Transformation of the family education concept

Family is the first socializing place for children. As the basic paradigm of family education, parents participate in education reform in their unique way. The needs of families and parents constantly put forward new requirements for school education. Parents' understanding of education leads to a strong demand for children's after-school service.

With the acceleration of urbanization, family structure has changed to some extent. Different backgrounds, socio-economic status, and other factors have led to changes in parents' demand for education. The number of double working families in China is increasing. Parents are busy at work and have no time to dwell in their children's life, safety, health, learning, and development after school. Problems have also plagued most Chinese families; influenced by their own quality and living habits, the knowledge and experience of parents are unable to meet the needs of their children's development to a certain extent. In

the stage of compulsory education, the awareness of independent development among students is relatively weak and their dependence on their parents is strong. Parents' educational ideas, raising methods, and educational practice affect their children's learning behavior. Previously, due to the deviation of educational ideas, most parents would compete for high-quality resources, agree with mainstream social values, and unilaterally pursue the enrollment rate, thus prompting families to make individual choices, where parents place excessive emphasis on academic achievements and pressure their children in their studies. However, in recent years, parents have gradually deepened their understanding on education, where education is not only related to academic performance, but also a diverse development, affecting physical and mental health.

2.4. Mixed off-campus trusteeship institutions

Under the spontaneous mediation of the market, according to its scale, form, service content, and resource allocation, there are two types of off-campus trusteeship institution currently. The first is subject guidance institution, which is the earliest trusteeship mode; it provides targeted and high-quality subject guidance service according to the needs of parents, but with high fees. Parents choose these classes for utilitarian purposes, hoping to improve their children's performance through subject guidance. The second is homework counseling and caring institution, which provides simple homework guidance service while taking into account of care and pick-up services. Its cost is relatively low, and it is a good choice for parents.

It is not difficult to see that different after-school trusteeship institutions have different operation systems, mostly for the purpose of profit, the professional qualifications of employees are different, and the service quality as well as effect are mixed. In the context of the popularity of entering a better school, the educational contents of these off-campus trusteeship institutions are complex, and the teaching methods are mainly by indoctrination and repeated practice, violating the educational law and resulting in more pressure on students in addition to their schoolwork. At present, from the perspective of self-interest, many training institutions teach beyond the standard outline, seizing the source of students, impacting the school education order, and affecting the education and teaching activities in normal schools. This is unfavorable to the growth and development of students; it worries parents, the public, and other social groups, thus calling on public schools to provide after-school services.

3. Value of after-school service in primary schools under the background of “double reduction” policy

After-school service is an effective arrangement and utilization of primary school students' time after school. It is an important measure to implement the fundamental task of the party and the state, promote students' healthy and all-round development, as well as pursue educational fairness and justice. Excavating the value of primary school after-school service system is conducive to formulating and optimizing primary and secondary school after-school service policies in various regions, promoting the establishment and improvement of after-school service mechanism, integrating the needs of all walks of life, coordinating social resources, and promoting the formation of joint forces of after-school service.

In implementing the fundamental task of “building morality and cultivating people,” the new era has given primary schools a new social role and distinctive characteristics of the times. The practice of compulsory education has gradually changed from “teaching” to “educating people.” The development of after-school service has prompted schools to provide students with professional educational services and ensure their safety, solve the worries of parents in assuming care for their children, and render multiple professional roles to primary schools, such as publicity and service.

The starting point of education reform and development is to promote the development of students. The most direct beneficiaries of after-school service are students. Following the law of education and of students' physical and mental development, the development of after-school activities with diversified

forms and contents can reduce extracurricular learning burden and academic pressure to a certain extent, expand the areas of students' development, and promote a healthy and all-round development.

In pursuing educational equity, after-class service emphasizes on giving priority to the protection of groups in urgent need of service, including "left-behind" children and children of migrant workers in cities [2]. In terms of students' growth opportunities, the development of after-school service provides students with different services that are suitable for their own development and ensures that each child enjoys equal learning and growth opportunities after classes. With after-class service, schools would organize and carry out after-school activities, innovate service contents and forms, as well as provide high-quality educational services for students from families of vulnerable groups. By giving full play to their educational advantages, integrating the resources of communities, social groups, education and training institutions, and other institutions, as well as encouraging students to share resources and grow together, the gap in learning resources brought to students by economic differences would be narrowed to a certain extent.

Schools should construct the after-school service system according to their own characteristics, determine the position of the service system in the school education system, ensure that the after-school service is based on meeting the needs of all walks of life by emphasizing on a healthy and all-round development, and govern the connotation of the after-school service system in promoting educational equity.

Disclosure statement

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] 2018, Investigation Report on Burden Reduction of Middle and Primary School Students in 2018. Sina Corporation. <http://edu.sina.com.cn/I/2018-12-02/doc-ihmutuec5512040.shtml>
- [2] Ministry of Education, 2017, Guidance on Doing a Good Job in After-School Service for Primary and Middle School Students. Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/gzdt_gzdt/s5987/201703/t20170304_298204.html
- [3] Li L, 2020, A Case Study on the Implementation of After-School Service Policy in Primary Schools. Qufu Normal University, (06): 48-68.
- [4] Walter C, 2007, Quality Out-of-School Care in Aotearoa/New Zealand. *New Directions for Youth Development*, (06): 59-68.
- [5] Zimmerman M, Eisman A, 2018, Youth Empowerment Solutions: Evaluation of an After-School Program to Engage Middle School Students in Community Change. *Health Education & Behavior*, (1): 20-31.