

An Analysis of Primary School Teachers' Participation in After-School Services under the “Double Reduction” Policy: A Perspective of “Responsibility, Rights and Benefits”

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Abstract:

The implementation of the “Double Reduction” policy and the development of after-school services have introduced new changes and expansions to the work of primary school teachers. The teaching duties and personal interests of teachers have come to the forefront of attention in the contemporary setting of reducing the burden on primary and secondary school students. This paper, from the perspective of the “responsibility, rights, and benefits” theory, analyses the current imbalance of “heavy responsibilities, limited rights, and scant benefits” faced by primary school teachers participating in after-school services. It proposes the establishment of a teacher management system centred on responsibility, addressing teachers’ stress issues through “assigning rights based on responsibilities” and “allocating benefits based on responsibilities.”

Keywords:

“Responsibility, Rights and Benefits” Theory, “Double Reduction” Policy, After-School Services, Primary School Teachers

1. Introduction

Since the introduction of the “Double Reduction” policy in 2021, primary school teachers across the country have actively responded, striving to alleviate the burdens on students and parents while meeting students’ diverse learning needs. Consequently, the quality of after-school services has significantly improved. However, primary school teachers face challenges related to responsibility, rights, and benefits during their participation in after-school services. These challenges impact the effectiveness

of after-school services, which are implemented primarily by teachers, in achieving educational outcomes. Addressing these practical issues promptly is crucial for further optimizing the reform of primary school after-school services and for sustaining and enhancing the quality of these services over the long term.

2. Methodology

2.1. Data collection

The formal implementation of this survey took place in September 2023. Following the principle of stratified sampling, this study selected over ten primary schools of varying levels within Guangzhou. These schools were chosen based on factors such as the opportunity for students to receive nine years of continuous quality education and the overall quality of the school district. The survey targeted a range of participants, including teachers from the selected primary schools, parents of students, and university students.

In the chosen primary schools, teachers were classified according to their years of service, positions, and subjects taught to study the current status of different types of teachers' participation in after-school services.

Using purposive sampling and snowball sampling methods, teachers, parents, and heads of extracurricular tutoring institutions from three selected primary schools were interviewed between September and December 2023. The sample size was determined based on the saturation of data, meaning that sampling continued until the information provided by respondents began to repeat and no new useful information was obtained.

2.2. Surveys

Data were collected using the Questionnaire Star software. The survey targeted primary school teachers, parents, and university students, utilizing a questionnaire to gather information on their participation and attitudes towards after-school services. The survey items were compiled into a table format, distributed, completed, collected, and then organized and analyzed. The results were presented using ratios and percentages to provide an objective and accurate understanding of the current situation and issues related to the implementation of after-school services under the "Double Reduction" policy, leading to specific recommendations and strategies.

2.3. Interviews

Primary school teachers, parents, and heads of extracurricular tutoring institutions were selected as interview subjects for qualitative analysis. Through interviews, the study aimed to gain a detailed understanding of the operational details of various aspects of after-school services under the "Double Reduction" policy. The interviews also helped identify the different needs of the research subjects and understand the nature of the issues within after-school services, thereby enabling the formulation of more specific and reliable recommendations and strategies.

2.4. Data analysis

The survey results were presented in tabular and ratio formats using SPSS, with attribution analysis conducted on the results. The interview data were coded and analyzed using Nvivo 11.0.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The Challenges Faced by Primary School Teachers in Providing After-School Services under the “Double Reduction” Policy

According to the “Responsibility, Rights, and Benefits” Theory in modern management, responsibility, rights, and benefits are crucial benchmarks for organisational management and for evaluation. Additionally, from an organisational development perspective, adhering to the principle of “unifying responsibility, rights, and benefits” is key to ensuring both the vitality and efficacy of the organisation and its members. This principle implies that, on the one hand, those who bear responsibility should also possess the corresponding authority and enjoy the associated benefits. On the other hand, members should have a clear understanding of their specific responsibilities, the scope of their authority, and the extent of their benefits.

Under the “Double Reduction” policy, teachers, as the primary organisers and designers of educational activities, play a critical role in after-school services. However, they face a series of real-world challenges that affect the quality of these services. Therefore, analysing the existing issues through the lens of the “Responsibility, Rights, and Benefits” Theory allows for a more comprehensive examination of the pressures of responsibility, the limitations of rights, and the guarantees of benefits that primary school teachers encounter in after-school services. This, in turn, is essential for effective teacher management and for ensuring the stable provision of high-quality after-school services.

3.1.1. Increased Responsibilities Adding to Teacher Burdens

According to the “Notice on Further Enhancing In-school After-school Services in Guangdong Province” issued by the Guangdong Provincial Department of Education and feedback from primary school teachers in Guangzhou (see Table 1), the increased demand for in-school after-school services has expanded teachers’ responsibilities compared to before the policy implementation, which is a significant reason for increased work pressure among teachers.

Firstly, the policy’s “three clarifications” have established the crucial role of teachers in after-school services. From an administrative perspective, school administrators have designated teachers as the primary persons responsible for implementing the “5+2” after-school service model. Specific duties include managing basic services (i.e. Supervising students' self-study and assisting them with homework) and some enrichment courses during after-school hours, which can be seen as an extension of teachers’ regular duties. However, according to surveys and interviews, most teachers claimed that the participation in after-school services was an obligatory requirement. Moreover, at the institutional level, there are limited provisions for flexible work schedules. Consequently, teachers’ involvement in after-school services extends their working hours, which compromises the balance between work and life, which may lead to professional burnout, physical and mental fatigue, and psychological anxiety among teachers, undermining their enthusiasm and initiative.

Table 1. *Factors Reducing Teachers' Willingness to Participate in After-School Services.*

Option	Subtotal	Percentage
A. Insufficient remuneration subsidy	78	48.45%
B. Impact on lesson preparation and rest time	104	64.6%
C. Increased workload	94	58.39%
D. Difficulties in balancing family responsibilities	112	69.57%
E. Others	3	1.86%
Total valid responses	161	

Secondly, while the content of non-teaching duties for teachers has increased, internal responsibility management within schools remains unclear. The “Double Reduction” policy’s statement of “broaden after-school service channels” mandates that internal after-school services should be primary, supplemented by purchased services. Therefore, in such context, teachers need to adhere to principles of accountability to the school, parents, and students, acting as a bridge between parents and the school. This role requires teachers not only to cooperate in selecting and assessing external institutions to introduce quality social resources into the school but also to ensure student safety on campus and handle emergencies appropriately. As a result, the excessive amount of non-teaching work prevents teachers from focusing on improving teaching quality and hinders the development of harmonious teacher-student relationships, affecting the achievement of educational goals.

3.1.2. Limited Autonomy Hindering Teachers' Work Implementation

To implement the policy more efficiently, some administrators have opted for a “one-size-fits-all” approach, assigning after-school service tasks to in-school teachers. Consequently, teachers have become the primary direct managers and participants in after-school services. However, under the “student-centred” trend in education, students’ preferences and circumstances are prioritised over those of teachers, leading to the neglect of teachers’ autonomy and choice.

Firstly, primary school teachers have relatively few opportunities for training related to after-school services. Unlike routine classroom teaching and extracurricular tutoring, after-school services are organised by schools to provide a safe learning environment for students, aiming to alleviate academic pressure on students and reduce the burden on parents and extracurricular training. After-school services possess unique educational value that is difficult to replicate through conventional teaching. Therefore, participation in after-school services raises the personal competency requirements for primary school teachers.

In terms of regular teaching content, teachers need to continually master cutting-edge knowledge in basic subjects and diverse teaching skills. For after-school service content, teachers need to explore methods to reduce students' academic burden while maintaining the quality of their studies, and to learn how to conduct other quality education activities and select external institutions. In this context, teachers must proactively expand their skills to meet the new demands brought by after-school services.

On the other hand, surveys reveal that some primary school teachers do not understand the spirit of after-school services and the “Double Reduction” policy (as shown in Table 2), perceiving after-school services merely as an extension of the classroom, which leads to a misalignment of educational objectives.

According to the provisions of the “Teachers Law of the People's Republic of China,” primary school teachers urgently need to exercise their right to further training to enhance their abilities to shoulder the responsibility as key executors of after-school services. However, most schools have not yet established a systematic training system (as shown in Table 3), resulting in teachers being unable to exercise their rightful powers. This undermines the complementary relationship between rights and obligations and diminishes teachers’ motivation to fulfil their duties.

Table 2. *Awareness of Teachers Regarding Regulations and Requirements for Participation in After-School Services under the "Double Reduction" Policy.*

Option	Subtotal	Percentage
A. Very unaware	1	0.62%
B. Somewhat Unaware	0	0%
C. Neutral	16	9.94%
D. Somewhat Aware	30	18.63%
E. Very Aware	114	70.81%
Total valid responses	161	

Table 3. *Measures Implemented by Schools for Teacher Participation in After-School Services.*

Option	Subtotal	Percentage
A. Dedicated Management System	144	89.44%
B. Dedicated Incentive Measures	105	65.22%
C. Dedicated Training Meetings	83	51.55%
D. Dedicated Evaluation or Assessment Criteria	75	46.58%
E. Other	5	2.48%
Total valid responses	161	

Secondly, primary school teachers lack the right to choose their participation in after-school services. Survey results indicate that nearly 20% of teachers participate in after-school services under compulsory requirements from their schools (see Table 4), with most teachers involved to varying extents, typically for less than two hours per month. In such cases, after-school service work becomes a one-sided arrangement. Moreover, there is also a lack of platforms for teachers to express their opinions and suggestions, and some administrators rarely consider teachers’ feedback. Regarding the effectiveness of after-school services, teachers’ willingness significantly impacts the quality of these services and their sense of self-efficacy.

Table 4. *Mandatory Requirements by Schools for Teacher Participation in After-School Services.*

Option	Subtotal	Percentage
A.Yes	32	19.88%
B.No	129	80.12%
Total valid responses	161	

3.1.3. Insufficient Incentives Restricting Teachers’ Rights Protection

Following the introduction of the “Double Reduction” policy, in addition to the existing rights stipulated by the “Teacher’s Law of the People’s Republic of China,” the policy grants teachers several new rights. These include the right to participate in training mechanisms related to after-school services, the right to receive appropriate compensation for extended after-school supervision, the right to have after-school service hours included in performance appraisals, and the right to co-construct educational information platforms.

However, Survey results show that approximately 75% of primary school teachers consider “increased remuneration” a key factor in enhancing their willingness to

participate in after-school services (see Table 5), and around 50% are dissatisfied with the current economic compensation for after-school services. Although the “Double Reduction” policy and relevant local documents clearly state that teachers’ participation in after-school services should be properly compensated, several issues in policy implementation diminish teachers’ enthusiasm for such services:

Firstly, the current compensation for teachers participating in after-school services primarily consists of material rewards, but this coverage is not universal. Interviews with teachers from H Primary School in Yuexiu District, Guangzhou, reveal that basic after-school services are highly public-oriented, with minimal or no fees charged to students, resulting in no additional remuneration for teachers. The compensation fails to reflect the extended working hours and increased teaching demands placed on teachers. Secondly, the funding sources for after-school services are limited, mainly relying on government fiscal transfers and school support. Consequently, some districts with fewer educational resources cannot provide adequate compensation for teachers. Thirdly, the performance appraisal system for teachers involved in after-school services remains unclear, leading to a mismatch between individual teachers’ participation in after-school services and the remuneration they receive.

Additionally, the current evaluation system is inadequate, relying heavily on parental feedback. Some schools lack a comprehensive system for assessing and evaluating after-school service teachers, which hinders the improvement of teachers’ work and diminishes their motivation to participate in after-school services.

Table 5. *Factors Increasing Teachers’ Willingness to Participate in After-School Services.*

Option	Subtotal	Percentage
A. Increase or provide additional subsidies	121	75.16%
B. Increase opportunities for recognition (e.g., promotions)	62	38.51%
C. Enhance personal educational commitment	95	59.01%
D. Others	4	2.48%
Total valid responses	161	

Table 6. *Teachers’ Satisfaction with Current Economic Compensation for After-School Services.*

Option	Subtotal	Percentage
A. Very dissatisfied	6	3.73%
B. Somewhat dissatisfied	7	4.35%
C. Neutral	66	40.99%
D. Somewhat satisfied	55	34.16%
E. Very satisfied	27	16.77%
Total valid responses	161	

3.2. Insights and Pathways from the “Responsibility, Rights, and Benefits” Theory for Addressing Research Issues

Currently, primary school teachers face increased responsibilities, limited autonomy, and insufficient incentive, which has led to an imbalance in the “Responsibility, Rights, and Benefits” relationship. This imbalance undermines teachers’ enthusiasm and initiative in teaching, affecting the quality of after-school services. Therefore, it is essential to establish a “responsibility-centred” management system for teachers’ “Responsibility, Rights, and Benefits” to restore balance by determining rights and benefits based on responsibilities.

3.2.1. Responsibility-Centred Approach: Clarifying Teachers' Responsibilities and Enhancing Their Capacity

Only by clarifying teachers' responsibilities can corresponding rights and benefits be allocated. Thus, a "Responsibility, Rights, and Benefits" management system for teachers must be responsibility-centred. This involves firstly clarifying the boundaries of teachers' responsibilities, ensuring that the government, schools, third-party institutions, and teachers share the responsibilities of after-school services. Secondly, it is essential to strengthen teachers' sense of responsibility and enhance their capacity to bear responsibilities.

A. Clarifying Teachers' Responsibility Boundaries

Teachers, as the primary providers of after-school services, face the problem of endlessly extending responsibilities and excessive workload. Achieving the participation of multiple stakeholders in after-school services and clearly defining their responsibilities can alleviate teachers' "responsibility anxiety" and promote high-quality after-school service provision.

Stakeholders, including the government, schools, and third-party institutions, need to participate in the after-school service provision process. On the one hand, the government and schools should share the main responsibilities of logistical support during the implementation of after-school services, including setting reasonable workloads for teachers, ensuring student safety, and selecting and introducing third-party institutions to supplement after-school services. This avoids the dual responsibility of teachers being both the main content providers and logistical supporters of after-school services. On the other hand, selected third-party institutions can provide some after-school service content, alleviating the content provision burden on teachers and promoting the diversification and high-quality development of after-school services.

B. Enhancing Teachers' Capacity to Bear Responsibilities

The introduction of after-school services has increased the responsibilities of teachers, who may struggle to grasp the significance of these services and balance the additional workload with their personal lives. To address this, the government and schools must conduct targeted, systematic training that focuses on after-school services. This training should improve teachers' understanding of the importance of after-school services while enhancing their professional skills and time management abilities, enabling them to adapt to and effectively assume their new responsibilities.

3.2.2. Determining Rights Based on Responsibilities: Balancing the Relationship between Teachers' Responsibilities and Rights

To ensure that teachers fulfil their established responsibilities, it is essential to allocate corresponding rights and balance the relationship between responsibilities and rights. This approach effectively implements the principle of "determining rights based on responsibilities" and empowers teachers.

On the one hand, teachers, as the core implementers of after-school service content, direct supervisors of students, and key links between home and school, bear significant responsibilities. It is crucial to protect teachers' existing rights while appropriately expanding their decision-making power, autonomy, and voice in after-school service work to enhance their participation and efficiency:

Decision-Making Power in After-School Service Plans: Allowing teachers to participate in decision-making can avoid situations where administrative leaders dominate, making after-school services more practical and adaptable to actual needs.

Autonomy in Arranging After-School Service Content: Granting teachers more autonomy to develop beneficial after-school service content can better meet students' personalised and diverse learning needs.

Rights in Selecting and Supervising Third-Party Institutions: Ensuring teachers' rights to provide suggestions and supervision and to participate in the construction of educational information platforms can leverage teachers' expertise and promote high-quality after-school services.

Rights to Maintain Personal Interests: Protecting teachers' rights to participate in relevant after-school service training mechanisms, receive due compensation for extended after-school services, and have after-school service hours included in performance appraisals.

On the other hand, while expanding teachers' rights, it is also important to maintain a balance between responsibilities and rights. This can be achieved by leveraging digital technologies to enhance after-school service management, improve supervision and evaluation mechanisms, and prevent the misuse or abuse of teachers' rights. For example, digital management through real-time classroom monitoring and rapid communication allows schools and parents to supervise and evaluate after-school services effectively.

3.2.3. Determining Benefits Based on Responsibilities: Balancing Teachers' Responsibilities and Benefits

An increase in responsibilities without a corresponding expansion of benefits disrupts the balance of teachers' "Responsibility, Rights, and Benefits" relationship. Unilateral demands for "selfless dedication" can reduce teachers' willingness to teach and cause professional burnout. Therefore, it is essential to balance the relationship between responsibilities and benefits by "determining benefits based on responsibilities."

Improving the Evaluation System and Emphasising Benefit Distribution: Enhancing the evaluation system for teachers' participation in after-school services by considering both "quantity" and "quality" will ensure transparency in their workload and work quality, thereby protecting their rights. Additionally, establishing a fair reward distribution and management mechanism based on teachers' performance in after-school services will ensure equitable benefits, safeguarding teachers' rights.

Emphasising Material and Psychological Incentives to Improve Teachers' Welfare: On the material level, after-school service subsidies must be implemented, including this work in workload and performance appraisals, and considering it as a criterion for professional title evaluations to improve teachers' welfare. On the psychological level, schools should foster a positive working environment, provide mental support during emergencies, and enhance teachers' sense of well-being. Recognising and rewarding outstanding teachers involved in after-school services can also increase their sense of achievement and work enthusiasm.

4. Conclusions

Currently, after-school services in primary schools in China are in the initial stages of reform. Teachers, as the main providers of after-school service content, are a critical focus for research aimed at optimising these reforms and deserve greater attention and support. The imbalance of “heavy responsibilities, limited rights, and insufficient benefits” is a significant factor affecting teachers’ motivation to participate in after-school services and the efficiency of related management.

Therefore, in further reforming after-school services in primary schools, it is essential to follow the principle of unifying “Responsibility, Rights, and Benefits.” Adjusting the balance among these three elements will help reduce teachers’ responsibilities, empower them, and ensure their benefits. This approach will better enable primary school teachers to assume, implement, and fulfil their responsibilities, while gaining the necessary rights and enjoying appropriate benefits. Ultimately, this will enhance teachers’ motivation to participate in after-school services and improve the scientific nature and effectiveness of humanistic care and management.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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