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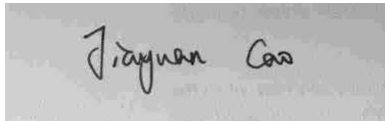
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**Does the Double Reduction Policy in China
threaten the motivation of teachers? An
investigation on the changing motivation of
professional teachers during the
implementation of Double Reduction Policy
in China.**



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When I completed my dissertation, countless memories flooded my mind, reminding me of numerous moments in Oxford and across the UK. For me, the greatest takeaway has been an attitude of "pursuing what is right despite knowing it might be impossible." This mindset has encouraged me to reflect on what is truly right, rather than focusing solely on personal benefits. Although it is likely that I will no longer engage in educational research, I will carry this attitude with me as I move forward.

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the impact of China's Double Reduction Policy (DRP) on the motivation of professional teachers. Implemented in 2021, the DRP aims to alleviate the academic burden of students by reducing homework and curbing private extracurricular tutoring. This study focuses on understanding how the policy affects teachers' motivation by employing a qualitative research design that includes small-scale studies, in which the use of semi-structured interviews with teachers from Suzhou as the main method of data collection. It is worth noting that this research might not represent the context in entire China since the research was conducted in Suzhou, a city often considered a leader in educational reform.

The theoretical framework for this study draws on Expectancy-valence Theory and Self-Determination Theory to analyze teachers' motivation. Expectancy-valence Theory explores how teachers' beliefs about the achievability and value of the DRP's goals influence their motivation, while Self-Determination Theory examines intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic motivational factors.

The findings reveal a complex picture of teachers' responses to the DRP. Teachers generally acknowledge the policy's noble objectives of reducing student stress and promoting holistic development. However, there is a notable difference in perceptions between urban and rural teachers. Urban teachers, who are often confronted with significant mental health issues among students, view the policy as necessary and beneficial. In contrast, rural teachers see the policy as misaligned with their primary challenges, such as inadequate resources and socio-economic hardships.

A significant challenge identified is the existing accountability policy, which ties teachers' professional evaluations to student performance. This creates a paradox where teachers feel pressured to produce good grades, conflicting with the DRP's objective to reduce academic workloads. Additionally, the lack of clear guidelines on homework

reduction and the disparity in resources between affluent and underprivileged schools further complicate the policy's implementation.

Despite these challenges, many teachers demonstrate a high level of intrinsic and altruistic motivation. They express a deep commitment to their students' development and often go above and beyond their official duties without additional compensation. This dedication is rooted in the belief that their role extends beyond imparting knowledge to shaping students' lives and futures.

The study also highlights the need for more comprehensive stakeholder engagement in policy implementation. It is suggested that teachers should be more involved in the policy-making process to provide valuable insights and foster a sense of ownership and commitment. Additionally, ongoing professional development and support for teachers are essential to help them adapt to new pedagogical demands.

List of Abbreviations

DRP	Double Reduction Policy
GOCCP	General Office of the Chinese Communist Party
GOSCPRC	General Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China
JPDOE	Jiangsu Provincial Department of Education
MOEPRC	Mistry of Education of the People's Republic of China

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

On July 24, 2021, the Chinese government promulgated the document entitled “Opinions on Further Reducing the Burden of Homework and Off-campus Training for Students in the Compulsory Education Stage.” Many researchers and policymakers alike believed that this directive heralds a transformative phase in the public service stratagems within the basic education system (Qian et al., 2024; Xue & Li, 2023). Widely acknowledged for its dual principal outcomes in elementary education, this mandate is colloquially referred to as the “Double Reduction” policy (DRP). The policy prohibits after-school tutoring interventions in formal education and seeks the mitigation of students’ academic workload (Dai, 2023; Xue & Li, 2023). Beyond its profound impact on the student body, the DRP is esteemed as a seminal and reformative educational decree that recalibrates the role of formal compulsory education vis-à-vis national prowess, citizenry welfare, and educational caliber, instituting augmented standards and requisites for educators and educational institutions (GOCCP& GOSCPRC, 2021; Li & He, 2023; Qian et al., 2024).

Reflecting on the nationwide advancements in DRP execution over the preceding two years, the pivotal role of educators as the principal labor force has been increasingly acknowledged (Song, 2022; Xie, 2021; Zheng, 2022). However, there appears to be a diminutive focus on the educators' personal sentiments, experiences or attitudes from the perspective of teachers throughout this enactment phase. For instance, beyond the obligatory tasks delineated within the DRP framework, additional expectations have been posited by educational institutions and academicians, mandating educators to embody roles as revolutionaries, researchers, moral exemplars, and collaborative counterparts, thereby enhancing the fulfillment of DRP's objectives (Hu & Zeng, 2023; Zhao & Bao, 2023). Consequently, this study seeks to illuminate the modifications in teachers’ motivations and garner insights into their professional emotions and

experiences.

Given the nascent nature of the DRP and the absence of extant research focusing on the alteration in educators' motivational dynamics under this policy, this investigation does not endeavor to establish a definitive, generalized or compelling correlation between DRP and teacher motivation. Rather, its aim is to procure a profound comprehension of the potential ramifications of DRP on educators to fill the research gap. Drawing upon literary sources and historical precedents of policy implementation, this inquiry maintains a critical stance regarding the enduring nature of teacher motivation within the DRP framework. The outcomes of this research may furnish empirical evidence for more structured future studies in this domain and enhance the policy's practical application, thus offering ample support for educators' efficacy through an exploration of their motivational experiences and sentiments.

1.2 The Profession of Teachers in China& Rational of this Research

The rise of neoliberalism in education globally has not only transformed its structure and management but also altered perceptions of the roles and responsibilities within the sector (Lerch et al., 2022). Teachers, facing heightened demands for professionalism and accountability, find themselves increasingly burdened (Williamson & Myhill, 2008). Despite this, their insights are frequently overlooked in educational reform discussions, leading to reforms that are too prescriptive and diminish their authoritative voices (Gozali et al., 2017). Influenced by the global trend and governmental intervention, teachers in China are increasingly facing the standardization of educational quality with the increase in requirement overt time, and within pressure to manage and enhance the organization of large-scale students (Gu, 2013). In addition, many researches have noted the education system is often lack of consideration on teacher-centred subjectivity, which often sacrifice teachers' mobility and development (Lo et al., 2012; Lyu et al., 2017). This situation is related to the high attrition rate in China, especially among beginner teachers (Liu, 2021; Zhu et al., 2020).

Hence, concerning the circumstances of teachers in China and the implementation of DRP, it is worth exploring the situation teachers are facing and how they perceive their experiences under DRP. Drawing on the theories of expectancy-valence and Self-determination theory, this research concentrates on teachers' own feelings about the DRP— what they think the goal of the DRP in practice, and whether they can be achieved; and how they perceive the goal of DRP align with the values of their profession-- intrinsically, extrinsically and altruistically (Alexander et al., 2020; Vroom, 1964). In addition, exploring teachers' attitudes in various previous educational policy in different regions could also contribute to the exploration of teachers' attitudes under DRP by analysing factors that might influence teachers' motivation. By examining the DRP and its impact on teacher motivation, this research was thought to be capable of providing critical insights into how the DRP affects educators, thereby not only profoundly laying the groundwork for more in-depth future research in this domain, but also possibly increasing the treatment of teachers in compulsory education stage.

1.3 Dissertation Outline

The structure of the dissertation is as follows. The second chapter reviews critically the literature on the DRP and the requirements on teachers. The DRP demands on teachers are critically examined against the backdrop of expectancy-valence theory and self-determination theory as a basis for analyzing teachers' motivation. The literature review also engages with previous education policies from both China and other countries and their impact on teachers, such as Performance Pay Policy in China and No Child Left Behind policy in US 2001.

Chapter three discusses the methodological framework of this study, encompassing the research aim and questions, design, population and sampling strategies, data analysis procedures, ethical considerations, limitations of the study, and the researcher's positionality and reflexivity.

Chapter four synthesizes the study's findings to address the research question, followed by the theoretical framework. This chapter also includes a summary of the study's limitations, and further implications for policy and research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The adoption of the Double Reduction Policy (DRP) in China represents a burgeoning area of inquiry. An examination of the limited existing literature on this policy, along with studies on similar educational reforms in China and other countries, is crucial for understanding the relationship between policy changes and teachers' motivation. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section elucidates the context of the DRP in China and the experiences of teachers based on existing literature. The second section introduces the theoretical framework adopted for this research, including expectancy and motivation theories, with a specific focus on teachers' perspectives on policy and their feelings through the practice of these policies as the main constructs of motivation. The third section examines the impact of educational policies globally on teachers' motivation throughout history and clarifies the specific educational context in China that might influence teachers' motivation under the implementation of these policies.

2.1 The DRP and its Requirements on Teachers

Launched by the Ministry of Education of China in 2021, the Double Reduction Policy (DRP) in China aims to reduce academic stress and improve education quality through various initiatives targeting schools, families, and the supplementary education sector (GOCCP & GOSCPRC, 2021). The policy aims are pursued by lightening the homework load, improving education quality, and regulating supplementary educational activities outside school, with support and funding allocated to schools and educators (GOCCP & GOSCPRC, 2021). The official reason for the policy is for the social concern such as social class immobility, rising educational costs, and parental anxiety centred in education children are receiving (Li & He, 2023; Qian et al., 2024; Xue & Li, 2023), as well as students' 24.6% prevalence rate of adolescent depression with a significant majority of elementary (95.5%) and middle school students (90.8%) do not get the recommended amount of sleep, and in 2020 (Hu, 2021). Hence, by

adopting these approaches, the policy emphasizes on addressing utilitarian and short-sighted educational views, and improving the wellbeing of students and family (Wu & Cao, 2024).

In public schools, the policy is centred in financing and training schools and teachers to offer in-school alternatives to extracurricular tutoring, and establishing departments dedicated to the policy's governance and oversight (GOCCP & GOSCPRC, 2021). It focuses on enhancing teaching quality, optimizing homework management, and improving after-class services to meet most student needs. The policy also seeks to restore order in the compulsory education system, reduce exam-focused learning, rejuvenate social and educational benefits, and lessen the educational burden on families. It mandates structured homework with strict time limits, ensuring tasks are meaningful and age-appropriate to foster individualized learning. Teachers play a crucial role by overseeing homework, providing remedial tutoring, and enhancing learning opportunities, aiming to minimize academic stress and tailor educational experiences to each student's needs. In addition, to reduce reliance on shadow education, the policy requires schools to expand extracurricular offerings in science, literature, sports, and arts. This initiative aims to provide diverse learning opportunities, address educational inequity, and internalize educational values within the school environment. The government has extended school hours to allow for a broader range of extracurricular courses, fostering holistic development and potentially reducing reliance on external tutoring services (GOCCP & GOSCPRC, 2021; Xue & Li, 2023). This comprehensive approach integrates curriculum and extracurricular learning, enhancing overall education quality.

In addition to giving instructions for formal public schools, the policy also emphasizes a holistic approach to education by fostering coordination among families, schools, and society (GOCCP & GOSCPRC, 2021; MOEPRC, 2021). The policy highlights the shared responsibilities of schools and parents in children's education, advocating for stronger communication and innovative collaboration. Schools are encouraged to

develop home-school education strategies to guide families in establishing productive schedules for students. The policy also suggests updating parenting approaches to reflect individual developmental patterns, urging parents to plan their children's futures rationally and create a harmonious family atmosphere. This includes paying attention to children's thoughts and emotions, establishing healthy communication, and supporting them in addressing concerns and overcoming challenges. Moreover, the policy also regulates and oversees off-campus educational activities by requiring provinces to conduct thorough inspections to ensure educational institutions meet set qualifications and regulatory compliance. The DRP mandates that subject-based extracurricular institutions cannot engage in capital operations and must register as non-profits, whereas non-subject-based institutions are categorized distinctly (sports, cultural arts, technology) with clear regulatory standards and approval processes (GOCCP & GOSCPRC, 2021). The policy introduces a quality measurement system for extracurricular content, strictly prohibiting excessive training, subject-based training by non-subject institutions, overseas courses, and any content that violates existing laws. Subject-based institutions must publicly display their teachers' qualifications to uphold standards.

Although the DRP listed a number of new instructions for education providers, it is worth noting that the intension of reducing the burden on students is not a new concept in China's education policy. Since 1955, various policies have endeavoured to address this issue, emphasizing the importance of maintaining physical health for both teachers and students and prioritizing ideological and holistic education (Xie, 2005). However, despite numerous efforts, each measure intended to reduce the burden has often led to an increased workload for students (Xie, 2005; Xiang, 2019). Economic growth demands and the need for a quality workforce after the Reform and Opening-up Policy created an education market by devolving administrative responsibility and power to local governments, leading to differentiated school quality and competition among students (Liu & Dunne, 2009). Additionally, the prevalence of shadow education since the 2010s has significantly influenced the educational landscape, creating disparities in

accessing educational resources based on family income and eroding social justice (Lu et al., 2023). Therefore, the history of burden reduction policy also raises curiosity on the actual impact of DRP on education and society (Guo, 2022; Song, 2022).

While the DRP offers promising solutions to social issues through specific activities and legislation, it has faced criticism for its lack of communication between stakeholders, especially teachers (Liang & Wang, 2023; Yu & Chen, 2023), and it has spoiled a series of challenges on teachers' workloads and professional styles. Teachers have experienced increased workloads and a shift toward more student-centred pedagogy (Yu & Yang, 2022). In classroom settings, teachers are expected to balance test-taking requirements with broader educational objectives (Zhou & Fu, 2021). They are encouraged to provide more comprehensive instruction to deepen students' understanding and place emphasis on high-quality assignments, developing clear strategies for enhancing homework and engaging in detailed reflection (Yang, 2021). For after-school programs, teachers are advised to improve their teaching and assessment abilities to better accommodate students' varied learning needs (Dai et al., 2022). To enhance instructional effectiveness, educational leaders should focus on improving teachers' assessment literacy, fostering critical thinking, and supporting ongoing professional development (Zhou & Fu, 2021).

As reflected on researches, empirical studies reveal an increase in teachers' working hours and workloads under the DRP. For instance, a study by Lu et al. (2022) involving over a thousand primary and secondary school teachers and parents in Jiangsu Province found that more than 70% of teachers reported increased working hours and workloads due to the DRP. Similarly, semi-structured interviews with 14 teachers across China conducted by Jin et al. (2023) indicated that additional working hours and workload primarily involved lesson planning, designing and grading homework, providing after-school services, communicating with parents, organizing activities, participating in teacher training, attending staff meetings, and writing reports. Qin and Li (2022) identified that heightened work intensity for teachers under the DRP results from

professional demands, school system requirements, maintaining social relationships, and participating in professional development.

The implementation of the DRP brought about sweeping changes aimed at increased the workloads of teachers, thus raises the necessity to explore how teachers have adapted to these changes. The changes were executed rapidly and with minimal consideration of the advice or preferences of professional educators. This approach mirrors the experiences in other jurisdictions undergoing performance-based reform efforts. Such a top-down implementation process has significant implications for teachers' motivation. The lack of involvement in the decision-making process, coupled with increased workloads and new pedagogical demands, has led to concerns about teachers' professional autonomy and job satisfaction. Under these crucial factors, exploring teachers' attitudes and motivation is necessary.

2.2 The Expectancy and Motivation Theory

To analyze teachers' motivation under the implementation of the DRP, this essay draws on two theories of motivation: the expectancy theory and motivation theory.

From the perspective of teachers, motivation illustrates their commitment to teaching and their willingness to remain in the profession. Specifically, Sinclair (2008) described motivation as the force of attraction, retention, and concentration that influences what draws individuals to the teaching field, the duration of their stay in initial teacher education programs and later in the teaching profession, and the level of their involvement in both their educational courses and their professional teaching careers. This aligns with Dörnyei and Ushioda's (2021) proposition that teachers' motivation includes the motivation to teach and the motivation to remain in the position. This results from a combination of various factors, including an interest in teaching, the dual impact of social factors, a commitment to the profession over time, and the presence of demotivating negative influences. Hence, the two theories adopted are the expectancy-

valence theory (Vroom, 1964), which refers to an individual's preference or attraction towards a particular outcome, and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Alexander et al., 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2020), which analyzes the construction of an individual's motivation when they serve in a specific career or position. The separation also aligns with Williams & Burden's (1997, as cited in Han & Yin, 2016) classification of motivation: initiating motivation, which relates to the reasons behind choosing to undertake an activity, and sustaining motivation, which involves the effort required to continue or persist in the activity. Therefore, in the context of DRP, the aspects of motivation are also acknowledged in this research.

To analyze teachers' initiating motivation under the implementation of the Double Reduction Policy (DRP), this essay adopts expectancy theory, which focuses on attitudes towards the content and purpose of the DRP and how these attitudes influence teachers' views on the profession. Expectancy-valence theory is based on the perception that human behavior within an organizational setting is mainly driven by conscious, rational, and goal-oriented actions. Behavioral choices are based on anticipated reward or outcome preferences (valences) and forward-looking estimations (expectancies) of the possibility of attaining these outcomes (Lawler, 1973; Vroom, 1964). Vroom (1964) introduced the concept of valence to describe the emotional value associated with particular outcomes, which can be positive or negative and influence whether a specific outcome can be achieved. Additionally, expectancy pertains to an individual's belief about the likelihood that their efforts will achieve the anticipated outcome. This encompasses the notion that one's exertion will yield a particular level of achievement, subsequently bringing about specific results (Vroom, 1964). In the development of expectancy theory, Lawler (1973) extended the process by involving the relationship between effort and reward, suggesting that people perceive more motivation if they believe that exerting effort will lead to successful performance, and that successful performance will lead to desirable rewards. Therefore, in the basic form of motivation and expectancy-valence, an individual's motivation (M) to take action is positively influenced by both the valence (perceived value) of the outcome and the expectancy

(perceived probability) of achieving that outcome (Heneman & Schwab, 1972; Lawler & Porter, 1967). Hence, expectancy-valence theory can help analyze changes in teachers' motivation based on their understanding of and belief in the achievability of the DRP's objectives.

Beyond the positive influence of expectancy and valence on motivation, it is crucial to note that an individual's expectancy and valence regarding a certain event and outcome are very subjective and influenced by their perceptions of the event and the values they align with. Feather (2021) pointed out that people's understanding of event values and outcomes is embedded in a "means-end structure" (p.2) or wider sociocultural context, and this understanding will, in turn, influence their expectations and valence regarding the achievement of goals and outcomes. Furthermore, people's preference for certain values, which will influence their valence regarding the outcome, is also an important factor. Individuals' subjective valuation of valence makes them sensitive to certain objectives and activities, leading to variable valence among different groups of people (Feather & Newton, 1982). Moreover, these two factors related to the generation of expectancy and valence, the original theory has also been further developed to analyze motivation related to management, organization, or specific settings (Ferris, 1977; Heneman & Schwab, 1972; Kominis & Emmanuel, 2007). However, considering that this research is more centered on motivation for a specific policy, the original theory is sufficient for this study.

Under the context of the DRP, expectancy theory can help analyse teachers' motivation on how teachers agree with the goals of the DRP and whether they perceive these goals as achievable. Drawing on current research on policy implementation in schools, several factors could influence teachers' motivation. The DRP suggests a more student-centred approach and aims to improve students' mental well-being. Teachers might view this goal as positive valence worth pursuing. However, some research indicates that teachers may find this goal unachievable given the high-stakes testing environment and societal pressures (Liang & Wang, 2023; Lu et al., 2022; Qin & Li, 2022).

Regarding the effort and reward in DRP implementation, teachers might feel motivated by the idea that changing teaching requirements could lead to better teaching quality, which in turn could improve students' well-being. However, whether teachers will align their personal goals with the DRP's goals remains debatable. Many studies highlight the importance of students' grades on teachers' salaries and rankings, suggesting that some teachers might perceive the DRP as an impediment to their own promotion (Jin et al., 2023; Lu et al., 2022). This perception could result in a negative valence, diminishing their motivation.

In addition, to analyse the sustaining motivation, this dissertation also adopts Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which could help analyze factors influencing teachers' motivation through the practice of DRP. SDT classifies motivation into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, that intrinsic motivation is associated with an individual's satisfaction, enjoyment and interest in teaching, both as an activity and as a profession, such as a passion for the subject being taught; extrinsic motivation refers to the perception of teaching as valuable and significant in terms of its societal impact and time or financial benefits (Alexander et al., 2020; Ryan& Deci, 2020; Zhang et al., 2019). In this structure, altruistic motivation is also engaged that illustrates that teachers' motivation could also be related to social responsiveness which is different from the elements of the profession that are inherent to the job itself, like salary or vacation time (Alexander et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2019). Through the application of SDT, most researches have acknowledged the leading role of intrinsic motivation for teachers' overall motivation especially their job satisfaction and recognition for career achievements and opportunities for development (Abós et al., 2018; Osman& Warner, 2020; Robbins& Coulter, 2012). Additionally, adequate administrative support, comfortable working conditions or sufficient teaching equipment, friendly collegialities, and pursuit for promotion are also strongly related to teachers' construction of intrinsic motivation (Abós et al., 2018; Bukhari et al., 2023; Thoonen et al., 2001; Van den Berghe et al, 2014).

In addition to classifying motivation as intrinsic or extrinsic, other approaches encourage exploring external factors contributing to teachers' motivation. Praver and Oga-Baldwin (2008) outlined a range of motivating factors, including indirect motivators such as autonomy, working relationships, self-actualization, and institutional support. Additionally, Dinham and Scott (2000) divided contextual factors into micro-contextual and macro-contextual influences. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2013) later reinterpreted these categories, referring to them as school-based extrinsic factors and factors at the systemic or societal level.

While teachers' motivation primarily stems from an intrinsic passion for teaching, many demotivating factors can negatively impact their motivation. Research consistently shows that teachers, compared to other professional groups, frequently encounter elevated professional stress and diminished motivation, contributing to high attrition rates, especially early in their careers, a pattern observed across various developed countries (Dinham & Scott, 2000; Han & Yin, 2016). For example, demotivation in teaching can emerge when negative factors counteract existing motivation, stemming from specific events, experiences, and environmental influences. This ultimately characterizes a demotivated teacher as someone who was previously enthusiastic but has subsequently lost interest for diverse reasons (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013). Challenges contributing to teacher demotivation include stress, restricted autonomy, low self-efficacy, low self-awareness, ambiguities in defining and implementing educational goals in society, inadequate career structures, ambiguous and conflicting role expectations, mastery of teaching technologies, continuous acquisition of new knowledge, limited opportunities for intellectual growth, student expansion, and negative student attitudes (Bess, 1977; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013; Kızıltepe, 2008). These factors collectively contribute to the concept of teacher demotivation, highlighting the difficulties educators face in maintaining their enthusiasm and commitment to teaching.

In addition to adopting these two theories as the theoretical framework for research, it

is worth noting that due to the fluidity of motivation over time and individual differences, these theories and this research is limited in its ability to provide a definitive and sustained analysis of how the DRP influences teachers' motivation. Instead, this research and its theories can only analyze teachers' motivation at a specific point in time. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are crucial for teachers' retention in their positions, and the degree to which each factor contributes to motivation varies across different circumstances and over time (Han & Yin, 2016). Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021) define motivation as a non-linear and dynamic factor that influences human behavior in magnitude and direction, including an individual's reasons for choice, persistence in maintaining the activity, and the vigor with which they engage in it. For instance, Sinclair's (2008) research noted that although prominent intrinsic motivation factors include engaging with children, intellectual stimulation, and self-assessment, teachers might value other factors, such as self-evaluation, authority and leadership, work-life balance, influence of others, and career transition more importantly over time as teachers progress in their careers, while factors like working with children, intellectual stimulation, and working conditions might decrease in significance. Moreover, recent research suggests a trend towards focusing on individual differences in the perception of motivation, indicating that individual and contextual differences are also significant in influencing their valuation of internal and external conditions of motivation, leading to changes in their willingness to teach and stay in the profession (Bukhari et al., 2023; Han & Yin, 2016; Slemp et al., 2020). Thus, motivation is a multifaceted and dynamic concept essential for driving and sustaining human behavior. Hence, given that teacher motivation under the DRP can be understood as the driving reasons and dedication rooted in an individual's inherent values, leading them to choose, continue, and dedicate themselves to teaching, this research captures teachers' attitudes during a specific time period. This understanding of motivation highlights its variability under various contextual factors.

2.3 The Impact of Educational Reform Policies on Teachers Motivation from Comparative Perspective

Given that the DRP is a relatively new policy and there is a lack of articles specifically focusing on its impact on teachers' motivation, this dissertation will refer to previous policies and relate them to the above theories to analyze the trend of educational policies on teachers' motivation. This section will first analyze cases in China and East Asia, followed by a global perspective on policy impacts on teachers' motivation. Subsequently, this dissertation will analyze the general trend of educational policies on teachers' motivation, with the specific context of Chinese culture on shaping teachers' attitudes and activities under policy implementation.

In the context of previous policies in China, burden-relief policies have been implemented numerous times throughout the history of China's educational reform. Since 2010, the theme of burden reduction has evolved to pursue a comprehensive and all-encompassing curriculum for students (Ye, 2024). These reforms focus on improving teaching methods, course design, materials, and reducing assessments and homework while ensuring students have time for after-school activities (Liu & Zhang, 2024; Ye, 2024). Despite the positive intentions of these policies, many teachers have reported negative motivation due to struggles in adjusting to new curriculum designs, enormous mental pressure due to accountability and promotion demands, and unreliable and untrustworthy assessments of their work and performance (Zhang, 2017). For example, while teachers generally agreed with the goal of burden reduction and were intrinsically or extrinsically motivated, many held negative opinions on how their work was assessed under this goal. The decrease in classroom autonomy also led to increased pressure on teachers to meet the requirements of the new policy (Han, 2006; Li et al., 2005; Ma, 2021). In comparison with the DRP, similar increases in requirements and workloads for teachers can be observed. However, the DRP also provides guidelines for industries outside schools, demonstrating a more resolute and systematic attitude toward addressing the concern of burden reduction. This comprehensive approach may also influence teachers' motivation under policy

implementation.

In addition, another education-related policy that has influenced teachers' motivation is the performance pay policy issued in 2009 (Qin et al., 2019). This policy aimed to motivate teachers by segmenting salary into positional salary, salary scale, performance salary, and allowances and subsidies, promoting rational distribution standards. However, Qin et al.'s (2019) research highlighted that many teachers are not motivated by the policy, with regional differences in satisfaction. Teachers working in urban areas or regions with better economic development tend to be more satisfied and motivated by the policy, while teachers from underprivileged regions and professional teachers are not. Related research suggests that one significant reason is that over-quantified data may decrease teachers' intrinsic motivation for teaching. This mismatch occurs when teachers try to align assessed criteria with the valuable content of teaching and unquantified activities (Han, 2006; Liu, 2012). Additionally, demotivating factors emerged in the performance pay policy implementation. Teachers need to put in extra effort to fill out forms for the policy, which not only increases their workloads but is also influenced by the transparency of schools' and governments' management. Many institutions do not operate according to standard procedures (Fan & Fu, 2011; Han & Yin, 2016). Meanwhile, some research noted that the performance pay policy does improve part of teachers' extrinsic motivation due to the increase in their salary and benefits (Liu, 2012; Wang, 2015). This nuanced impact suggests that while the policy has some positive effects, its overall implementation needs to address intrinsic motivation and workload management to be fully effective. In comparison with the above policy, although there are some datafication tasks for teachers to address in the DRP, the overall focus of the DRP remains on students. Therefore, the targeted policy recipients are different.

In terms of educational policies in East Asia, similar situations have affected teachers' motivation. In Japan, the Rainbow Plan reform implemented in 2002 significantly challenged teachers by imposing substantial workloads and increasing accountability

at individual, community, and national levels (Hooghart, 2006; Kimura & Iwata, 2007). Additionally, Japanese teachers exhibit resistance toward certain aspects of the decentralization policy, particularly the newly introduced two-semester system and school choice initiatives (Sakurai, 2016). However, they are more receptive to other decentralization policies directly tied to lesson study, such as small group activities, the use of PCs, and the inclusion of volunteer learning assistants in the classroom (Sakurai, 2016). In comparison, South Korea's neo-liberal educational reforms since 1995 have also significantly increased teachers' work burdens and the requirements for technical and professional skills. This has notably reduced teachers' intrinsic and altruistic motivation due to the additional demands placed on their work and teaching (Kim, 2004; So & Kang, 2014). These reforms have resulted in a similar pattern of increased workloads and pressures, negatively impacting teachers' motivation and overall job satisfaction.

In the global context of educational policy implementation, teachers' motivational responses vary significantly. One example is the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 in the United States. While the policy aimed at improving student performance and motivating staff, it had complex impacts on teachers' motivation (Finnigan & Gross, 2007; Hinnant-Crawford, 2016). Teachers' valence and expectancy changed over time and were strongly linked to morale, leading to a decline in motivation in low-performing schools (Finnigan & Gross, 2007). Initially, teachers might perceive intrinsic motivation, but its persistence is questionable, and extrinsic motivational factors do not significantly impact teachers' motivation (Finnigan & Gross, 2007; Hinnant-Crawford, 2016). Another educational policy issued in New York in 2011 evaluated teachers based on students' performance. Although teachers exhibited intrinsic and altruistic motivation for teaching, the unnecessary quantification of their work hindered their extrinsic motivation. Additionally, the lack of clear explanations about the policy content decreased their valence and expectancy due to insufficient understanding (Mintz & Kelly, 2021). Similarly, research on performance-based education policy in Canada revealed a decrease in teachers' motivation, showing

negative valence and expectancy because their educational goals differed from those set by the policy. Teachers believed that governmental goals were not related to teaching and learning (Leithwood et al., 2002). In the UK, the 1988 Education Reform Act and subsequent policies also challenged teachers' motivation due to a lack of resources and training support, decreased extrinsic motivation owing to societal attitudes towards professionals, and increased bureaucracy in management (Day et al., 2007; Scott et al., 1999). Overall, education policies related to accountability often lead to a decrease in teachers' motivation.

Besides analysing teachers' motivation under certain policies by examining factors that contribute to the construction of motivation, another significant criterion is the role of government and school management during the implementation process. Tension and animosity often mark teachers' evaluations due to disagreements over policies and the government's authoritarian and non-consultative methods of policy development and introduction into the provincial education system (Leithwood et al., 2002). In this context, school transformation may come to a halt after the restructuring phase because top management fails to empower teachers, having eroded their trust during the process (Johnson, 1986; Leithwood et al., 2002). Therefore, school leaders play a crucial role in restoring some of the teacher commitment to policy implementation that was lost due to the government's authoritarian approaches in initial restructuring and policy formulation (Seashore Louis & Robinson, 2012). This process of recovery, fitting within the concept of buffering, involves substituting the social legitimacy and trust that governments lost with legitimacy and trust derived from another source (Leithwood et al., 2002). However, since this essay does not specifically focus on the impact of policy management on teachers, this important factor will be deconstructed and discussed within the framework of valence, expectancy, and extrinsic motivation without considering it as a separate theme for discussion.

Beyond the factors that might contribute to teachers' motivation under policy implementation, it is also worth noting the cultural differences between China and other

countries regarding professional identity, beliefs about teaching, and class management (Grant et al., 2013; Meng et al., 2016). Beyond the need for strong professional skills, one of the most essential qualities sought in Chinese teachers is a strong work ethic (Liu & Meng, 2009). This entails a moral obligation to fully dedicate themselves to their students, including spending extra hours preparing lesson plans, grading homework, and utilizing lunch breaks to offer additional student support. Chinese teachers also care deeply about the well-being of all students, treating each student equally, grading assignments fairly, and maintaining positive relationships with both students and colleagues.

Influenced by Confucianism, the concept of “Ren” emphasizes lifelong self-cultivation and striving to become the most genuine, sincere, and humane person possible. This idea is prominent in Chinese education and places a strong emphasis on personal effort and consistent practice for personal and academic success, outweighing inherent ability or socioeconomic status (Klassen et al., 2008). Therefore, Chinese teachers are likely to adopt teaching methods that encourage diligent study habits, perseverance through challenges, continuous improvement, and a sense of responsibility for students’ ethical and academic growth (Grant et al., 2013; Klassen et al., 2008). Additionally, there is a long-standing tradition of teachers planning collaboratively and observing one another’s lessons in China. The management structure often places teachers of the same subject and grade level in one office, reflecting a culture that prioritizes collegiality over individualism (Stigler & Stevenson, 1991). In terms of lesson plans, Chinese teachers highly value textbooks and teachers’ manuals, organizing content based on different knowledge points and difficulties for students’ understanding, with less concern about autonomy compared to US teachers (Grant et al., 2013). Therefore, under the context of the DRP, Chinese teachers might respond differently to external factors that contribute to their motivation due to different cultural backgrounds and values. These cultural influences shape their perceptions and responses to policy changes, highlighting the importance of considering cultural context when analysing teachers' motivation.

Hence, drawing on the potential impact of the DRP on teachers' workloads, guided by insights from both theoretical frameworks and comparative educational policies, exploring teachers' motivation under this context is crucial. This comprehensive review, incorporated with expectancy-valence and self-determination theories, frames the research questions by identifying key factors influencing teachers' adaptation to policy changes, such as workload, professional autonomy, and intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. Additionally, discovering teachers' motivation within the particular context of Chinese culture could contribute to comparative educational policies and teaching. Consequently, the following methodology chapter will detail the research design and data collection methods employed to explore these aspects, ensuring an in-depth investigation of how the DRP affects teachers' motivation and professional experiences.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter begins by presenting an overview of the research aim and the research question. Following this, it details the research design and the methods employed in the study. Next, it explains the population and sampling procedure, and provides an outline of the research instruments, data analysis, ethical considerations, and the study's limitations. Lastly, it examines the researcher's positionality and reflexivity.

3.1 Research Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this research is to analyse Chinese teachers' experiences under the implementation of a recent educational policy named Double Reduction (DRP), especially whether DRP is influencing teachers' motivation for their profession. The study is framed by one central question:

Does the Double Reduction Policy in China threaten the motivation of teachers?

Based on the theoretical framework, the central question is also separated into two sub questions:

- What are teachers' views on the objectives of the DRP?
- Do teachers feel more motivated or less motivated to serve as teacher?

3.2 Qualitative Research Design

In order to explore teachers' experiences especially motivation under the implementation of DRP followed by the theoretical framework that provided in the literature review, this research adopts qualitative research design with semi-structured interview. All researches should employ the methodology that most effectively address and fulfil the research question and objectives (White, 2013). For this research, the purpose is centred in exploring and understanding teachers' feelings, experiences and reflections after the implementation of DRP and how the feelings and experiences reflect their changes in motivation. Therefore, adopting qualitative research through

semi-structured interview is sufficient for this research as it provides a significant opportunity to explore and theorize individual's in-depth perceptions about the social world, offering narrative data that illuminate the complexities of human experience (Miller & Glassner, 1997).

Philosophically, this research is associated with social constructivism that acknowledges multiple realities without single interpretive truth (Lee, 2012). Concerning that the social constructivism values the interaction between the inquirer and knowable, and knowledge is collectively generated to generate consensus on certain ideas (Lincoln et al., 2011; Pring, 2015), this research perceives semi-structured interview as a suitable approach that allows in-depth interaction and knowledge construction. Given that this research is more associated with constructivism, there are certain "objective realities" that are inevitable embedded, including those things located in the specific social context or cultures (Pring, 2015). For this research, these objective realities include the policy itself, and the culture of Confucianism as well as the moral requirements on teachers. However, how these objective realities mean to teachers varies, and this is also the reason to adopt qualitative research. In addition, concerning this research is related to policy and teachers, using qualitative research from a social constructivism aspect helps "liberate the teacher from the management control" by exploring the complexity and peculiarity of the situation through teachers' detailed experiences and feelings (Pring, 2015, p71).

In previous studies focused on policy, implementation, and pedagogy in China, qualitative research methods are frequently adopted (Deng et al., 2024; Li et al., 2022; Rowe et al., 2020). This research also employs qualitative methods for similar reasons. Specifically, qualitative research allows for an in-depth exploration of the overall status of policy implementation, tensions, and main challenges within a specific context. While research on motivation and teachers often employs quantitative methods (Bukhari et al., 2023; Lin et al., 2012; Ye et al., 2021), this study prioritizes the context of policy and implementation. Therefore, qualitative research is deemed more suitable

for this investigation.

3.3 Population and Sampling

The study focused on teachers' motivation after the implementation of the DRP. Therefore, the participants recruited for this study were in-service public schools' teachers. Given China's vastness and the exploratory nature of this research, which does not seek a definitive and persuasive answer to the research question, this study selected teachers working in Suzhou, a city in Jiangsu Province. Suzhou is one of the most developed cities in China and is frequently considered a leader in educational reform and development and it is often chosen as a pilot site for educational policies (JPDOE, 2016; Wei & Fan, 2000). This implies that teachers in Suzhou are more accustomed to adapting to educational policies and, therefore, may provide more unbiased opinions on the DRP. Furthermore, they are likely to possess a longitudinal awareness and perspective on the impact of the DRP, as well as how it influences their teaching and educational practices.

The snowball sampling is a recruitment method that starts with a few initial participants who meet the research criteria, who then refer additional participants, creating a growing chain of contacts until the desired sample size or data saturation is achieved (Parker et al., 2019). For this research, the recruitment criteria required teachers to have worked in the public school system for more than 5 years and not to have been retired or working in private schools. These criteria ensured that teachers had sufficient experience teaching in public schools, which represent the predominant management model. Additionally, five years of teaching is generally considered a benchmark indicating that teachers are accustomed to the work rhythm. This minimizes the influence of individual working attitudes on their perceptions of the policy. Therefore, I first contacted two participants who met the criteria and were willing to share their feelings on the policy. I then asked these initial participants for suggestions about other potential participants. Following their recommendations, I contacted the suggested

individuals via WeChat to seek their permission to participate in the study.

Given that the research promised the data would not be used for other purposes and strictly followed CUREC and BERA guidelines, some teachers considered the topic very sensitive due to certain political implications or were concerned about potential damage to their professional reputations due to the requirement of recording. Consequently, although I contacted 21 teachers for inquiries, only 8 agreed to participate in the entire research process.

3.4 Research Instruments

8 teachers were engaged in face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The interview questions were developed in three sectors: changes in teachers' motivation caused by their opinions on the goals of the DRP, changes in motivation due to their feelings in implementing the policy, and overall fluctuations in teachers' motivation after the DRP. The Likert chart was used as a reminder to encourage teachers to share their stories based on the related topics and their feelings.

Semi-structured interviews could also encourage interviewees to elaborate and develop topics of interest (Denscombe, 2010). By utilizing a semi-structured interview format guided by a set of predetermined topics, along with additional open-ended questions, this approach allows flexibility while adhering to the interview guide, preventing participants from veering off-topic or taking control of the conversation (Check & Schutt, 2017). Therefore, semi-structured interview allows the interviewer to probe deeper and engage in a back-and-forth dialogue and letting the interviewee clarify and elaborate on prepared questions (May, 2011). This approach also enables a more comprehensive understanding of the responses, offering the latitude to explore beyond initial answers and facilitating a richer and more nuanced collection of data (Check & Schutt, 2017; May, 2011). Given that this research explores personal experiences and attitudes toward policy, this interview format ensures participant comfort by allowing

them to skip specific questions or end the interview if needed (Cohen et al., 2018). Face-to-face interviews, as a synchronous communication method, can increase data validity by fostering an environment that encourages participant spontaneity. Additionally, this format enables the researcher to gather extra information through vocal tone, intonation, and body language (Opdenakker, 2006).

Given that all the participants are Chinese, I translated all the interview questions and related materials from English to Chinese to ensure their understanding. The data collection was conducted face-to-face, with all eight interviews taking place between March 2024 and April 2024, during the school term. The interviews lasted between 40 minutes to 1.5 hours, with the average interview time of 55mins. The interview times and locations were negotiated individually with each teacher to ensure flexibility. All interviews were conducted outside of their working hours, including weekends or after office hours on weekdays. The locations were chosen by the teachers and conducted outside of school settings, such as in cafés or their own homes. This approach was intended to help teachers detach from the specific school environment and their professional roles, allowing them to share their experiences purely as teachers. After each interview, I reflected on the interview questions and interview techniques, and the order and the content of interview questions are also slightly changed over time as improvement for interview quality.

3.5 Data Analysis

This research adopted thematic analysis as the approach for data analysis. Thematic analysis is a method or technique for identifying, analysing, and interpreting recurring patterns of meaning or themes within qualitative data (Clarke& Braun, 2017). Thematic analysis is considered as a method with theoretical flexibility, that involves practices of coding and theme development, have the capacity to capture both semantic and/or latent meanings, can orient to data both inductively or deductively (Braun& Clarke, 2023).

After conducting interviews with each participant, all the audiotapes were transcribed in detail. According to Norwell et al. (2017), coding starts with familiarizing with data. I read all the interview transcription thoroughly, and in the meantime, I also reviewed the literature review and highlighted potential content for deductive codes. The second step is to generate initial codes, and I extracted meaningful codes from interview inductively. Then, I reorganized the deductive codes from literature review and interview data, and generate the theme that could coverage the content with theoretically supported and are comprehensive by readers.

Given that this research is written in English, and all the interviews were conducted in Mandarin, with a mixture of dialect, which created the complexity of analysis. By acknowledging that confusions might occur in cross-language research due to the difficulties in interpreting the intended meanings of metaphor and terminology when analysing the translated content (Al-Amer er al., 2016), this research conducted most of the data analysis process in the original language of the interview to reduce the meaning loss in translating. After the process of defining and meaning of the themes, I translated the content into English, and conducted the report in English.

3.6 Ethical Consideration

Before data collection, I sought and obtained ethics clearance from Oxford's Central Research Ethics Committee (CUREC), as documented in Appendix 1. The study was designed in accordance with the ethical guidelines set forth by the British Educational Research Association. Throughout the study, I adhered to ethical principles including voluntary informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality.

3.6.1 Informed Consent & Voluntary Participation

In this research, the standard of informed consent and voluntary participation was strictly followed in this research. The informed consent is centred in "subject's right to freedom and self-determination" which respects and protects participants' "right to

weigh up the risks and benefits of being involved in a piece of research, and deciding for themselves whether to take part “(Cohen et al., 2011, p77, 78). This ensures that participants can withdraw from the study at any time with the knowledge they provided (Ciuk& Latusek, 2018). Therefore, for this research, after participants shown their interest for the topic, I provided the information of this research by sending participants information sheet, interview questions and the written consent form via WeChat. After reviewing this information, participants were given the opportunity to ask any questions about the study before deciding whether to participate. Since this research was conducted fact-to-face, I reassured participants’ willingness for the research and asked for signature on the consent form, which is included in Appendix 4.

Given that I asked for voluntary informed consent at the beginning of the interview, Ciuk and Latusek (2018) noted that the one-off consent is often insufficient and continuous renegotiation is required about participants’ scope and nature of participation because researchers and participants may not always accurately assess the potential impact of the research on participants or participants may not fully understand what participation in the study involves at the beginning of the research. Therefore, in this research, I asked participants to review their consent at the end of the interview. Additionally, I reminded them to consider whether they were willing and certain to share stories that indirectly related to their schools and professions, besides their role as teachers, whenever such topics arose. Moreover, I also recontacted the participants two weeks after the interview to confirm their continued participation in the research and to ensure they were comfortable with the knowledge generated from their participation.

3.6.2 Anonymity& Confidentiality

The insurance of anonymity is an important aspect of ethical practice that the information provided by participants should not reveal participants’ identity (Cohen et al., 2011). In this research, I assured the participants that their involvement in the study would remain anonymous. In addition, Cohen et al. (2011) also noted that sometimes

the anonymity could not be assured because there is still likelihood for people to recognize participants or institutions when they combine data or support staff have access to incoming information. Therefore, in this research, in addition to anonymizing participants' names into numbers, their schools, wages, ages, specific working years, subjects they teach, and identities other than teacher were all anonymized.

In addition, participants' confidentiality is also ensured. The promise of confidentiality is to not revealing any participant information that could identify the individual or allow them to be traced (Cohen et al., 2011). For this research, cautions were taken for the storage of the data by uploading and storing it on the N: Drive of the university server with passwords, and the conversations through WeChat were also encrypted. After transcribing the audiotapes, I deleted the original audio from my device to prevent disclosure. In the data analysis, participants' information such as working years, schools they were working for, and other details were not used as criteria to further ensure participants' confidentiality. This approach also ensured that participants were identified as teachers rather than as distinct or specific individuals.

3.7 Research Limitation

One important limitation of this research is the small sample size of the interview. Although small sample size has its benefits for in-depth study and detailed analysis, which allows researchers to focus closely on the nuances and complexities within the sample, providing richer insights into the specific setting being examined, small sample size often lead to lack of generalizability (Etz& Arroyo, 2015). In addition, the adoption of snowball sampling might further exacerbate the deficiency in generalization due to the random sample collected (Parker et al., 2019). However, considering this research is conducted in a situation that lack of researches that are centred from the perspective of teachers after the specific policy of DRP with no research conducted for teachers' motivation for DRP, this research aims is not pursuing representativeness or generalization, but to conduct a preliminary exploration on teachers' feeling and their

situation, which means the small sample size will not have a strong impact on research purpose. In addition, in order to preserve participants' anonymity and confidentiality, teachers' schools, major, wages, professions and more will not be discussed and adopted as factors to classify teachers' experiences and attitudes, which means having bigger sample size will not improve the quality of data collected.

In addition to the issue of small sample size, the research context also led to certain difficulties for data collection and analysis. Participants were more or less reluctant to be recorded on certain topics of this interview, that one participant refused to be recorded for the entire process, while some participants were more willing to discuss certain topics when I stopped recording. Therefore, the ethical limitation prevented me from obtaining a complete and accurate transcript of the entire interview. To address the issue, I sought the teachers' consent to ask additional questions after the recording was turned off and recorded their responses as notes. Therefore, although obtaining accurate content was challenging for this research, these efforts helped capture the main attitudes and ideas useful for the analysis.

3.8 Researchers' Positionality and Reflexivity

Research is rarely be value neutral no matter how researches are designed (Greenbank, 2003; Holmes, 2020). Researchers' positionality, such as individual's worldview, the stance they take regarding a research task, considering its social and political context, and personal characteristics which could have direct, or indirect influence on research design, research conduct, and data interpretation (Berger, 2015; Holmes, 2020). Therefore, researchers are required to "identify, construct, critique, and articulate" their positionality as essential prerequisites for self-reflexivity (Holmes, 2020, p2).

For this research, my subjectivity influences the research in various ways. As an insider of the Chinese education system due to my educational experiences, I am familiar with the sociocultural context of teachers and compulsory education, which enables me to

formulate good follow-up questions about teachers' perceptions about their status in current situation, and how teachers negotiate their identity and capabilities in Chinese context. However, given that the insider position could bring benefits about asking more meaningful questions and perceive a more authentic and truthful image on participants, potential biases might be perceived because of the overly familiarity with the culture (Holmes, 2020). On the other hand, I did not have experience to serve as a teacher in compulsory education system, and I perceive myself as an outsider of the group of teachers. All the responses that describe their working content, and their illustration of their struggles are quite new to me, which resulted in the difficulties deciding which part is more important or worth following-up questions during the interview.

In addition, my education experiences of studying in UK also constituted my positionality, which influence my data collection. Given the ethical constraints mentioned, teachers were cautious during interviews. Despite my efforts to build rapport through ethical considerations and interview techniques, they tend to avoid discussing their truth actions or activities after DRP implementation. Therefore, more meaningful and in-depth data were actually collected from teachers that used to have personal contact, and they are more willing to share more information about the governmental context and the management of teachers under DRP.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

4.1 Teachers' Views on the Objectives of the DRP

Given that teachers in this research have distinct experiences under the two-year implementation of the DRP, all of them discussed their agreement on the policy's aim of reducing students' mental pressure, which they think is crucial for students and worth addressing. However, some teachers working in rural areas suggest that the objective of the DRP may not target the most crucial issues in education. According to expectance-valence theory, people's attitudes toward certain goals, especially whether the goals or purposes align with their personal beliefs and values, will influence their motivation to achieve those goals (Lawler, 1973; Vroom, 1964).

Most Chinese teachers in the sample perceive the DRP as an initiative by the Chinese government to address existing educational deficiencies, particularly the serious mental health issues faced by students in compulsory education. They recognize that while the policy might not be a perfect solution, it represents a significant step toward transmitting new and holistic educational concepts to schools and the public. Participants noted the extraordinary prevalence of mental health problems among students, the significant increase in delinquency, and the growing conflicts between teachers, parents, and students. These issues not only affect students and their families but also pose challenges for teachers, who are concerned that their interventions might inadvertently exacerbate students' mental health problems and family conflicts. The participants' observations align with previous research highlighting the prevalence of mental illness among students in compulsory education (Hu, 2021). Consequently, many teachers believe that the DRP aims to alleviate these issues by allowing students more control over their time.

For example, several teachers in this study discussed that after-school services and the restructuring of students' time schedules are beneficial not only in reducing mental

pressure but also in promoting a holistic development of character and habits. From the perspective of Teacher 5, she discussed her dissatisfaction about the previous arrangement before DRP and how DRP provide more scientific schedule:

For example, our morning reading sessions, which used to start at 6:40 AM, have changed. At that early hour, the students were still groggy and not fully awake, especially during morning reading. It was really quite pitiful to see them struggling. Now, with the later start time, students can arrive at school a bit later, and parents don't have to rush them as much. This gives the kids some time to adjust and wake up properly, allowing them to focus better on their studies.

In addition, Teacher 5 also discussed the changes in providing extracurricular tutoring, noting that it has adjusted the overall schedule of schools especially extending the length of breaks for students for relaxation:

In the past, during breaks, teachers often went to the classrooms to monitor or provide guidance to the students, doing various tasks as needed. However, some students felt overwhelmed and exhausted during these breaks. After the DRP, we make more efforts to ensure that students have time to rest during each break...The schedule is better managed now, schools are extended breaks in both the morning and afternoon, and students can engage in various activities. This ensures that they get sunlight and physical activity, which makes them happier... Students could also have time to socialize, which helps relieve stress and develop friendships. Some students might go out together for a bit to play ball, kick a shuttlecock, or jump rope...By giving this time back to the students, students have their own time to adjust and relax.

In addition to the improved time arrangements after the implementation of the Double Reduction Policy (DRP), many teachers suggest that the DRP has enabled schools and teachers to recognize existing teaching deficiencies and promote a more student-centered, long-term focus on students' development. This shift moves away from outdated teaching philosophies and pedagogies. The teachers' responses align with previous research on teachers' attitudes toward DRP goals, indicating that the policy could change pedagogies to better support students' holistic development (Liang & Wang, 2023; Lu et al., 2022). Based on her observations, Teacher 2 points out that many

teachers still adopt very mechanical teaching methods, heavily relying on intense drill practice and mechanical homework to improve students' academic performance. She believes that the implementation of the DRP aligns with her teaching style and views the restrictions on the workload of written homework as a means to help teachers focus more on cultivating students' creativity and transferable skills, rather than on meaningless repetition and memorization. Therefore, Teacher 2 perceives a positive valence towards the DRP due to her recognition of the policy's value, aligning with Feather and Newton's (1982) presumption that people's appreciation of the values embedded in an event is an important component of valence for an activity.

Innovation is key. For children, especially in elementary school, developing habits and critical thinking skills is more important than blindly drilling practice questions. So, improving teaching methods is crucial. You need to focus on the development of students' thinking abilities rather than just looking at short-term achievements. In elementary school, short-term gains can be made through drill practice, and you might see excellent scores like ninety-something percent. However, in the long run, relying on drilling doesn't promote sustainable development, especially when students go to high school or college.

Personally, I'm not a fan of the "sea of questions" approach. You know that if you just keep drilling questions, it can lead to a vicious cycle where you make more and more mistakes. I prefer to focus on training students' thinking abilities, their expression, and the reasoning behind their answers. Having a certain level of critical thinking is very important. For example, I advise against buying extra workbooks like "Memorization Experts" or "Math Experts," or anything that promotes excessive drilling. I tell students to simply focus on completing their school assignments seriously and efficiently.

In addition to agreeing with the goals of the DRP due to their intentional pursuit of a more scientific and long-term teaching schedule for students, many participants in underprivileged schools favor the policy because it provides extra time for teachers to govern and guide students. Teacher 8, who works in a public school that accepts children from families ineligible for citizen registration, highlighted the challenges faced by many rural schools. She noted that many children's parents work in primary

and secondary industries, leaving them with insufficient time to care for their children, which often leads to weak academic performance and behavioral misconduct. Therefore, these teachers see the policy as an opportunity to care for their students and to provide the governance that their parents cannot.

The students at my school come from various places, and their parents work long hours, often up to 12 hours a day. Most of these parents work in fields like spinning or hardware factories. Their children come to this city with their parents, life is quite tough for these kids. I have visited some of their homes, and the living conditions are generally poor... For these children, attending extracurricular tutoring classes is unrealistic due to the costs involved. (With the implementation of DRP), these kids can actually get more support academically, and this is also a way to support their parents because letting children stay at school also reduce safety hazards in comparison of letting kids stay at home alone.

From an academic perspective, teachers view the DRP as a potential remedial approach for addressing many students' academic misconduct. They believe that by reducing homework and having students complete their assignments at school, the policy can improve students' awareness of the importance of hard work and foster positive learning attitudes:

Honestly, we are reducing assignments because we are forced to. Assigning more work just isn't effective...It doesn't yield results, so we have to rely on classroom time to engage the students. This is especially true for our rural middle schools... I can only assign a half-hour's worth of physics homework, and even then, it doesn't always work because parents in rural areas don't take it as seriously. So, I now prefer to cover the material during class, work on exercises on the spot, and have the students complete the tasks immediately. Otherwise, they just take photos and search for answers with their phones and pretend to do the work at home. Parents can't control their phone usage, even if they want to.

In rural schools, the quality of weekend homework is especially poor. In contrast, city students generally have parents with higher educational backgrounds and a better cultural environment at home, so homework is more effective for them. But in rural areas, it's really challenging.

Based on the interview responses, it is worth noting that teachers in underprivileged

rural schools and urban schools perceive the goals of the DRP differently. Urban teachers strongly believe that addressing students' mental health issues is crucial, while teachers in rural underprivileged schools do not perceive the same level of concern regarding their students. Instead, these rural teachers believe that their students require more attention and guidance, making the 'double reduction' policy less suitable for their context. From a theoretical perspective, people's perception of the valence of an objective or goal is influenced by their understanding of the event within a specific social structure, which can vary among individuals (Feather, 2021). A similar situation occurred during the Rainbow Plan reform in Japan, where teachers agreed with certain parts of the policy but resisted others, and this resistance also impacted their teaching motivation (Hooghart, 2006; Sakurai, 2016).

Therefore, although rural teachers generally agree with the policy's aim and are willing to implement it, they do not support its entire content. They intrinsically believe that some aspects do not align with their perceptions and feel that the government should do more, especially to address issues in rural areas of China. The discrepancy in attitudes between teachers in comparatively privileged and underprivileged schools also occurred in the US after the implementation of the No Child Left Behind policy. Underprivileged teachers often held a more pessimistic view, believing that the situation in schools and education could not be improved after policy implementation, which might lead to a decrease in motivation over time (Finnigan & Gross, 2007; Hinnant-Crawford, 2016). Focusing on the goal of improving students' mental health in compulsory education, rural school teachers tend to attribute the root of the problem to a lack of belonging and confidence due to low academic performance. They believe that more support and opportunities should be given to students facing challenges or who have made mistakes, rather than neglecting them or considering them beyond help. This contrasts with the DRP's approach of reducing workloads:

If a student's foundation is weak, they should be allowed to strengthen it before moving up. The current situation is that many students struggle to catch up once they fall behind. Children are

pushed by their parents and teachers to advance from grade to grade, growing under constant pressure without the freedom to progress at their own pace. They don't have the time to reflect on or make up for previous gaps in their learning.

Often, after experiencing failure, children realize that studying is their responsibility. However, many children who want to learn when they reach higher grades find their foundation too weak to catch up. They have no opportunity to make up for it, and it's too late...It's like a production line where parts are just moved along.

But humans are not machines. This issue isn't caused by the children but by national policies. They don't need to score 100%, but they should at least reach 60% before advancing.

Experts might think that China doesn't need that many highly educated people and not everyone needs to go to university after nine-year compulsory education. However, there's a significant issue here. If a student doesn't do well in first and second grade, they lose their sense of value and purpose in learning. They don't know why they are studying, leading to depression. Many children in elementary and middle school feel depressed because they have no goals or motivation in their studies. Without a sense of value, meaning, or pursuit, it's natural for them to feel depressed, leading to the high rates of depression among middle school students who then become apathetic...We should allow students who want to learn have the opportunity to be helped. If they make a mistake, they should be given the chance to recover, not be denied a second chance. –Teacher 7

Teacher 7 is not alone; other participants in this research, including Teachers 1 and 8, also expressed similar sentiments. They feel that the DRP does not address the issues faced by rural schools. Moreover, they reported that the implementation of the DRP has even exacerbated misconduct and aversion to studying. Since extracurricular tuition is voluntary, many students with low academic performance use it as an excuse to avoid doing homework or to challenge teachers' authority at school. As Teacher 1 mentioned, this stems from their sense of meaninglessness in learning and education process. Thus, despite the general positive valence of the DRP, many rural teachers in this study claim that the policy embeds negative valence when it comes to rural or underprivileged students, a sentiment that rural teachers do not agree with.

4.2 Teachers' Views on the Implementation of DRP

In addition to their attitudes towards the goal of the DRP, participants also highlighted another important consideration: the goal of reducing students' mental issues by reducing workloads and extracurricular tuition is somewhat difficult to achieve at the present stage due to other interwoven policies that teachers still need to comply with. Therefore, although the goal of the DRP is crucial, teachers do not believe their efforts alone can achieve these goals, and they tend to unfollow the policy content in certain aspects. Previous research on motivation has also noted that a decrease in expectancy regarding the achievability of a particular goal will decrease motivation and performance at work (Lawler, 1973; Vroom, 1964).

According to participants' responses, one directly related policy is the teachers' accountability policy issued in 2009. This policy encompasses a wide range of responsibilities for teachers' professional titles, which are directly linked to their salary and benefits, with students' performance being one of the key factors (Qin et al., 2019). Although all participants have reached the highest level of professional title and no longer need to comply with the accountability policy to prove their teaching skills, they still believe the policy will influence both junior and professional teachers' attitudes and focus on students' grades. In the interview, Teacher 1 claims that from junior teachers to professional teachers, they have to work extremely hard for at least 15 years due to the policy, and students' performances are crucial for their accountability; otherwise, their salary will remain at a comparatively low level, and they will have no chance for promotion, facing a high risk of resignation. Meanwhile, Teacher 7 shares the same perception, believing that the demand for performance from teachers will inevitably place pressure on students:

Although the DRP is said "not being score-oriented", but, to be honest, this perspective may vary depending on the teacher's age group...For young teachers, no matter how the policy changes, as long as the school or higher authorities require teachers to produce good scores, teachers will inevitably demand good grades from students. Unless, when making policies, you don't require young

teachers to focus on student scores, right? If you require teachers to achieve good scores, they will naturally ask their students for good grades. Honestly, those who enter the teaching profession have a certain level of self-respect.

On the other hand, given that professional teachers such as some participants interviewed, do not need to treat students' grade as an indicator for promotion, teacher 5 points out that the public, especially parents will still treat students' grades as a mark for teachers' quality and performance:

When students' scores are published, parents will inevitably inquire about which class has the best scores. When choosing a class, a teacher with good scores is often considered the best. These scores are also used as a standard to evaluate a teacher's performance.

This focus on scores restricts teachers' thinking and has a significant impact on them.

In addition, many participants have noted that the pursuit of students' grades has become ingrained in school culture. Even when students' grades are no longer crucial for teachers, they still tend to view them as a mark or proof that their teaching pedagogy and skills are superior to those of other teachers:

They might feel that if their class doesn't perform as well as others, there will be a subconscious sense of losing face. This creates an underlying sense of competition among teachers...Some of our more open-minded principals might say that it's normal to have differences in average scores between classes due to varying student abilities. However, some teachers naturally have a strong competitive spirit and desire to excel. This competitive mindset is often more pronounced in veteran teachers who are used to competing. —teacher 5

Hence, given that teachers generally perceive the DRP should be implemented and proceed for the consideration of students' wellbeing, the accountability policy issued on teachers might prevent teachers to conduct DRP due to its contradiction with teachers' and policies' demand on students' performances and scores.

Beyond the tension between teachers and students, teachers also discuss how the high-stakes test culture influences school management. Teacher 2 points out that, although

there is a lack of focus on grades in primary school, comparisons of students' performances inevitably occur. This, in turn, pressures school administrators to be more concerned about teaching quality and students' academic achievements to maintain the school's reputation:

When students graduate from sixth grade and enter the first year of junior high school, they usually have a city-wide unified test within the first week. This test assesses the teaching quality of the elementary school. After the summer break, when they enter junior high school, they take this unified test, and all the data is collected and analyzed.

The results provide detailed insights, such as reading comprehension, with line graphs showing performance in various categories. Big data analysis is highly accurate, allowing you to see clearly whether a school is improving or declining, and how it ranks within the entire city.

Principals, although they come from a teaching background, face different pressures once they are in their administrative positions. They have to deal with comparisons between schools, competition, and the pursuit of honors, which adds to their burden.

Teachers' responses also align with previous research, indicating that the management teams of schools and the government play a crucial role in teachers' motivation by negotiating and buffering tensions during policy implementation (Johnson, 1986; Leithwood et al., 2002). In this study, while teachers acknowledged the impact of school administrators in helping them achieve the goals of the DRP, they did not express strong negative or positive feelings about the actions or authority of the administrators during the DRP implementation.

In addition to accountability policies on teachers, high-stakes tests such as Zhongkao and Gaokao are also significant factors that teachers believe could impede the achievement of the DRP. Many teachers report that although the DRP has specific aims that require both schools and parents to comply, it sometimes results in increased workloads or mental pressure for students after its implementation. Previous research on burden-reduction policies in China has similarly found that students' workloads tend

to increase following the implementation of such policies (Xie, 2005; Xiang, 2019). While some research analyzes this issue from a macrosystem perspective, linking it to China's economic development and the resulting competition among students and schools, participants in this study explain the phenomenon from a microsystem perspective. For example, Teacher 2 noted that parents sometimes feel insecure due to schools' reduction in workloads, leading many to seek extra support from hidden shadow education companies for tuition. Additionally, students' attendance in school's extracurricular courses also increases their overall study hours. Teacher 3 points out that due to the tight teaching schedule for the curriculum in junior high school, many teachers conduct lessons during students' self-study periods in extracurricular tuition and assign homework after after-class tutoring sessions, which actually breaks the regulation of DRP. Consequently, students end up with more to learn and more homework to do compared to their education before the DRP.

4.3 Teachers' Perceptions of DRP on Student Learning

In addition to teachers' perspectives on whether the goals align with their concerns and are achievable, all teachers in this research point out certain difficulties and limitations of the DRP they encountered in pursuing these goals, which they believe make the policy overly idealistic and impractical. Consequently, teachers argue that numerous challenges arise in targeting the primary policy goals. These challenges can be categorized as indirect factors (Praver & Oga-Baldwin, 2008) or demotivating factors (Dinham & Scott, 2000) that also contribute to elements influencing individuals' motivation for a goal and profession (Han & Yin, 2016).

One important aspect of the DRP is decreasing students' workloads. Teachers are not only required to reduce the amount of homework assigned to students but also to tailor different homework for students at varying levels of capability. While all teachers agree that it would be beneficial for students and parents if workloads could be decreased and homework could be customized based on individual capabilities, they find this

unrealistic. The perception of “homework loads being decreased” is highly subjective and can interfere with teachers’ daily teaching schedules. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2013) also propose that the ambiguity in defining teachers’ tasks and objectives is a significant demotivating factor that can diminish teachers’ enthusiasm and commitment to education. All teachers claim that the definition of homework and whether it is excessive is highly subjective, as there will always be some students who feel that the homework is too much, regardless of its design:

*Take a class with 50 students, for example. There are students with varying levels of performance, right? For instance, in a subject like math, the homework might be designed to take about 30 minutes. For the top students, it might only take 10 minutes. For average students, it might take 40 minutes. For struggling students, even one or two hours might not be enough to complete the assignment. —
teacher 3*

Moreover, participants discussed that the definition of “homework” is ambiguous, particularly regarding the boundary between unfinished classwork that students bring home and actual homework. Teacher 6 points out that people tend to classify all the work students bring home as homework, but the reality is different:

Some children will go home and catch up on tasks they didn't complete during the day, such as corrections or memorization. Many of these tasks might not be part of the assigned homework, but if they weren't finished during the day, they still need to be completed at home.

Teacher 3 further points out a recent policy that prevents the separation of students into different classes based on their academic performance when they enter primary or secondary schools. This policy aims to ensure educational equity and equal allocation of educational resources. However, this approach also hinders the effectiveness of the homework reduction policy:

In our current school system, many schools lack autonomy. They are required to have fair class assignments, meaning there are no special classes for top students. Instead, classes are balanced with a mix of high, average, and low-performing students. Previously, students in a class had similar levels, making it easier for teachers

to assign homework. Now, with differentiated assignments, it's quite challenging for a teacher to provide tiered explanations and homework within a single class. It sounds simple in theory, but it's very difficult to implement in practice.

Hence, when it comes to allocating homework based on students' academic levels, teachers pointed out that if homework varies according to students' capabilities, the daily review of homework in class will also differ. This approach would lead to diverse learning progress, which is impractical not only because teachers do not have sufficient time to provide personal tutoring for everyone, but also because it would exacerbate the learning gap and lead to inequalities between high-performing and low-performing students. Therefore, with the concern of "catering to all students" (Teacher 3), teachers tend to significantly decrease homework loads but allocate the same set of work to all students in the class.

Beyond practicing the homework reduction requirement in real-life cases, many teachers also mention the difficulties in testing and verifying whether homework is actually reduced as required. This further decreases the likelihood of reducing homework loads for students. The situation is similar to previous burden reduction policies in China, where there is a lack of trustworthy assessments to measure and provide feedback on teachers' work, which diminishes the perceived importance of the aims and reduces teachers' willingness and interest in pursuing the goal of burden reduction (Zhang, 2017):

Our school also has requirements for monitoring homework, right? But to be honest, it's often just a formality. For example, they might ask students to fill out a questionnaire. However, when students fill out these surveys under the teacher's watchful eye, the data collected is often inaccurate... These measures are merely superficial... Unless you monitor each student every day to see how long they actually spend on their homework, it's very difficult to get accurate data... I can say that 99% of schools in our city cannot achieve this level of oversight. Truly implementing such measures is extremely challenging. – teacher 3

When examining the provision of extracurricular tutoring, the main issues center

around a lack of resources and support given to schools to conduct these lessons. Participants in this research who work in regular public schools claim that the funding provided by the government for the development of extracurricular interest classes is very limited. The unreasonable course schedule tends to push schools and teachers to replace extracurricular interest classes with curricular-related tuitions. This situation aligns with the indirect factors outlined by Praver and Oga-Baldwin (2008), which suggest that a lack of institutional support for teachers' activities reduces their motivation to work toward specific goals.

Teacher 8 reveals a complex calculation regarding how funds are provided to public schools for organizing extracurricular activities. Schools charge 300 RMB per student for extracurricular tuition for the whole term, submitting all fees to the local Tax Bureau. The Tax Bureau then calculates the amount of money each school needs and provides the funds accordingly. Teacher 8 notes that if teachers participate in extracurricular tuition, they receive only 100 RMB per day for three hours of extra work, according to government instructions. Given that all pensions are provided to teachers, there are no additional funds for hiring, training teachers, or preparing other facilities. In addition, although the policy requires schools to provide habit-related extracurricular tutoring for one hour per day, all participants working in junior high schools pointed out that it is impossible for schools to achieve this goal. They noted that offering such a class once a week is already a significant achievement. Teacher 3 also claims that all junior high schools in this city could not achieve the policy requirement.

As a result, the courses provided to students are not professional lessons but rather activities arranged by teachers hired for other majors, such as physical exercises or paper cutting, or simply assigning students to do some reading on their own. A similar situation occurred in the UK with the 1988 Education Reform Act. Although requirements were given to teachers to accomplish, the support and resources provided were insufficient, leading to a decrease in teachers' motivation for teaching (Day et al., 2007; Scott et al., 1999). Hence, participants expressed complaints that the entire

arrangement of extracurricular tutoring is problematic, as they could not identify any benefits for either students or teachers in the process.:

There are activities, but honestly, I feel they are not very useful. Just think about it: 40 minutes a week. Our teachers aren't professionals in these extracurricular subjects, right? We are asked to lead clubs, but we're not specialists, and we don't have the proper equipment either. When we teach our own subjects, we're more comfortable, but when we're forced to teach something unfamiliar, it's like being pushed into a tough situation. Those 40 minutes can feel extremely long and hard to get through.

Forcing teachers to run these lessons is challenging, and since the students are not our regular students, it's chaotic. Take a cooking lesson, for example. If I wanted to bake a cake, would 40 minutes be enough? No, it wouldn't. To actually accomplish something meaningful, 40 minutes is simply not enough. So, these activities end up being superficial.

To be honest, the only thing that has been implemented relatively well is physical education, but even that isn't interest-based—it's included in the Zhongkao scores. Do students really enjoy this? Their bodies might get some rest, but they have to keep practicing the same activities to meet the standards. Frankly, many students would rather sit in the classroom and take Chinese or Math classes.

— teacher 7

In contrast to the frustrations expressed by Teachers 3, 7, and 8 regarding extracurricular management, participants working in privileged public schools report a slightly different situation. Teacher 6 mentions that their pension for participation in extracurricular tuition is 100 RMB per hour, which is twice as much as what teachers in regular public schools earn. Additionally, Teacher 6 notes that privileged schools often have more funding to hire professional teachers from other institutions for interest-related classes, offering a wider variety of choices for students. Hence, beyond the general deficiency in the provision of extracurricular interest-related tutoring, the disparities in funding between different schools are also worth researching.

4.4 Teachers' Perception of DRP on the Teaching Profession

In addition to the challenges faced in pursuing the policy and primary goals of the DRP, teachers also discussed the issues that arose after the policy's implementation, which have somehow influenced their extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation refers to the drive to engage in an activity or behavior due to external rewards or pressures, such as social status or financial rewards, rather than intrinsic satisfaction or personal interest (Alexander et al., 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2020).

In this research, teachers have become increasingly aware of the decline in their social status due to excessive demands from society and authorities to perform extra work not included in their official duties. Many participants specifically discussed the widespread social impact of the DRP, which has increased public engagement in monitoring the policy's implementation. Teachers are often targeted as the source of misconduct from the perspective of the public and parents. A similar situation occurred with the 1988 Education Reform Act, where teachers felt demotivated due to increasing social demands for professionalism, resulting in a decrease in extrinsic motivation (Scott et al., 1999). Participants strongly pointed out that although they have no agency in deciding what actions should be taken, they are bearing the consequences and negative reputations.

In the interview, Teacher 1 shared an incident that occurred at her school, illustrating how the public perceives the teaching profession and how such perceptions influence teachers' work and social status. She discussed one rule of DRP that mandates the school gate not open before 7:30 AM to prevent students from arriving too early, with the local MOE monitoring the opening and closing times of the school gate. However, on a rainy morning, some parents sent their children earlier than allowed, and the children were not permitted to enter the school due to the policy. While the children were waiting in the rain, some media captured a photo, which sparked widespread criticism of the teachers. Teacher 1 pointed out that they are caught between the

authorities and the public. Despite having no power to decide certain matters, they are criticized and punished when negative feedback arises. Teacher 7 also commented on the challenging situation teachers are facing:

...there are so many such reports now, if something goes wrong, the blame will definitely fall on the teachers. Nowadays, the blame from parents, students, and leaders all gets pushed onto ordinary teachers. This negative trend is really damaging.

Particularly, the implementation of new policies demands that local schools and teachers adjust to the new requirements. However, teachers' improvements and attempts to implement certain initiatives often lead to parental dissatisfaction, which in turn results in criticism of the teachers:

If teachers follow previous routine, they don't get much attention because not many things change... However, if you try to improve or participate in certain initiatives, you easily become a target for criticism. It's normal to make some attempts and changes in the beginning, right? But often, parents don't understand and feel that things are inconsistent. If there's anything they're unhappy with, they'll immediately question the teacher about it. Because of this, many teachers have become more accepting and less inclined to make changes...

For example, teacher 3 reported the changes in school's entry and exit time of the DRP and how it influences teachers works. Teacher 3 noted that although it seems easy to implement the policy from people from the outside, teachers felt pressure in communication with parents. Some other participants also claim parental and family disagreement with the policy's intentions. This was particularly the case regarding students' health issues and the dissatisfaction with changes to the schedules:

Teachers often hear complaints from parents, and this is quite common. Especially when grandparents are the ones picking up and dropping off the children, it becomes even more challenging...These elderly caregivers, who should be enjoying a relaxing evening after a good meal, are instead picking up their grandchildren. This creates a lot of resentment...Sometimes, after-school tutoring sessions are signed up for by the parents, but the grandparents are the ones handling the pick-up and drop-off. This often leads to communication issues... We try to be understanding and patient with

parents, but elderly caregivers can sometimes have a short temper. Occasionally, they might argue with teachers at the school gate, leveraging their age. In such cases, we can only try to calm them down and explain that these policies are mandated.

When this policy was first implemented, there were always a few students in each class whose parents chose not to participate. We sent notices to parents, asking for volunteers, and if a parent chose not to participate, the school would inquire why and encourage them to reconsider. Nowadays, many parents don't place as much emphasis on academic performance. Some parents just want their children to be happy and don't care much about their grades. They have this attitude that as long as the child is happy, it's fine. Such parents may question the teacher's intentions in implementing certain policies or programs. —teacher 3

Regarding their decreasing social status due to public perception of their attitudes during the DRP, many teachers in this research also noted an increase in workload for tasks outside their teaching duties. This additional workload leads to dissatisfaction and prevents them from focusing on teaching and educating, intensifying the relationship between teachers and parents:

We're asked to promote everything...everything requires participation...even though it has nothing to do with us. For instance, at the beginning of the school year, there's always some insurance to promote. We used to have student accident insurance, which has been around for many years, but the price rises from 50 rmb to 100 or 150 yuan. But this year, they started pushing various other insurance plans, including one promoted by the city. However, nobody signed up for it because parents felt one insurance was enough...and we teachers have to pressure parents to promote it again. These tasks keep piling up, even though they have nothing to do with our actual teaching duties or education itself. It seems that because schools are easy to manage, government bodies and the city council often offload their initiatives onto us.

When the city aims for a "civilized city" status, the education sector is expected to contribute. This includes ensuring that both students and parents wear helmets while riding motorcycles. If a parent is found not wearing a helmet, the police can trace it back to the child's school, class, and grade. This information gets reported back to the school, which teachers has to address it...There are many

such societal tasks we are roped into. I just mentioned these two recent examples, but there are numerous others that we are expected to participate in.

Similarly, Teacher 1 mentioned feeling like volunteers, with everything related to students and families requiring contributions from teachers. This makes teachers extremely busy and always required to adapt to policy requirements, regardless of whether they agree with the policy. In Canada, the performance-based education policy received similar feedback from teachers, who felt demotivated because the goals set by policymakers were not necessarily related to education or teaching. Teachers had to tackle tasks they disapproved of, which significantly interfered with their motivation for the profession (Leithwood et al., 2002). Additionally, Teacher 8 shared a story from the COVID-19 pandemic, illustrating how teachers were forced to participate in data collection for the government, further exemplifying the pressures and additional duties placed on teachers beyond their primary teaching responsibilities.:

Why are tasks unrelated to teaching assigned to schools? These tasks take up teachers' time... During the COVID-19 pandemic, health monitoring and nucleic acid testing of students were handled by the school. This inevitably took up teachers' time and energy. I wore a white lab coat and helped with testing students and teachers every working day. This kind of work shouldn't fall under the responsibilities of teachers, but all schools and teachers had no choice but to take on this task.

Hence, the implementation of the DRP has significantly impacted teachers' extrinsic motivation, primarily due to increased social demands and additional non-teaching responsibilities. The decline in social status, public criticism, and excessive workload have created a challenging environment, leading to demotivation among teachers. This situation mirrors past educational reforms where heightened expectations and external pressures detracted from teachers' primary focus on education. Addressing these issues is crucial for maintaining teacher motivation and ensuring that educational policies do not inadvertently undermine the very professionals they aim to support.

4.5 The Offset of the DRP —Teaching and Witnessing the Growth of Students

Given that many participants have certain negative opinions about the goal of the DRP and their experiences during policy implementation, all participants still demonstrate a highly motivated commitment to educating and teaching, making them willing to continue in the teaching profession and devote themselves to their careers. All participants report their willingness to do extra work for students, even though in most cases, they do not receive any pension or rewards for it. According to the Self-Determination Theory of motivation, teachers' responses align with intrinsic and altruistic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to the drive to engage in an activity or profession for its own sake, due to the inherent satisfaction, enjoyment, or interest it brings. Altruistic motivation, on the other hand, refers to the drive to engage in an activity primarily out of concern for the well-being of others rather than for personal gain, characterized by social responsiveness, selflessness, and a desire to help, support, or improve the lives of others (Alexander et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2019).

From their perspective, being a teacher is not about salary and individual achievements, but about lifting students up to achieve their individual values. In Chinese culture, the altruistic dedication of teachers is often taken for granted as a part of traditional work ethics, aiming to help students gain academic achievements and create a lasting positive impact on their lives (Liu & Meng, 2009). Therefore, participants demonstrate a strong awareness of the importance of teachers for students and are willing to be the good teachers who can provide long-term positive benefits for their students:

The greater support comes from your beliefs and whether you truly want to be a good teacher. Are you just trying to perform your duties superficially, or are you deeply committed to each student's development? It's not just about rescuing a student but providing long-term supervision, planning, and guidance in their personal growth. Even though we may only spend two or three years with a student, education truly lasts a lifetime. If a student looks back and recalls their experiences in middle or elementary school—times when they faced challenges or strayed from the right path—the continuous interactions with their teacher can help them find their

direction. This guidance fosters a sense of possibility for further development and instills a belief in moving forward, which benefits them throughout their life. —teacher 5

In addition, participants also claim that not only do students benefit from a positive teacher-student relationship, but teachers themselves can also be intrinsically motivated. They gain satisfaction and a sense of worth from witnessing their students' growth, which they perceive as the most important motivation to stay in the profession. This, in turn, promotes their hard work and dedication to their careers:

You call this your job, you do to earn a salary or other benefits, but your life is also flowing through these days, right? How can you make your life meaningful? I believe I need to make my classes lively and satisfying to myself. This means I need to put in effort, right? When I see students engaged and enthusiastic in my classroom, and I feel very satisfied after class, it reflects the value of my own life. There should be a sense of happiness in this, and I certainly feel that happiness when I teach. This drives me to do my job well. Our work is just like that.

Therefore, based on the above belief, participants demonstrate their commitment to teaching in various ways. In both in-class and in-school settings, when students face higher pressure from high-stakes tests, teachers in this research show strong motivation to improve teaching quality and provide care to students, even when not required to do so. Compared to literature describing changes in teachers' motivation in other countries, Chinese teachers do not perceive dissatisfaction with policy demands or new requirements in teaching or education. This is because many additional efforts, such as improving pedagogy or engaging in collegial discussions, were already being made before the policy was released, driven by their natural belief that such actions could better promote students' grades (Grant et al., 2013; Klassen et al., 2008; Stigler & Stevenson, 1991).

In this research, when interviewing Teacher 7, she had with her the test papers and textbooks she brought home from school, planning to think about teaching methods after work. She discussed that although she sometimes felt incapable of educating

students due to her age, she is still trying to improve pedagogy and help students, even though there is no extra fee for this additional work.

Honestly, as a normal teacher, we just follow the directives from above... Educational research has become more demanding. We frequently discuss problems and push ourselves to delve deeper and engage in more discussions...we try to be selective and work together more often to find the best solutions...Teachers now have to continuously study and research. Sometimes, I feel like my brain can't keep up as I get older. Sitting down quietly to complete a test paper feels incredibly exhausting. In the past, we could lecture on exam papers without doing them ourselves first—now that's unthinkable because the questions are so challenging.

When I was younger, I felt confident in my teaching abilities. But as I get older, I feel like I'm becoming less effective. This feeling of inadequacy drives me to continuously improve myself, constantly re-evaluating and striving to get better. It's a cycle of self-criticism and effort to improve.

Meanwhile, Teacher 4 also shows her commitment to the profession by continuously improve teaching methods and skills upgrade through years to adapt to social development and acknowledging individual differences in teaching:

Although I've been teaching for 29 years, each group of students is different. From a professional standpoint, the students we face are living, dynamic individuals. Each cohort of students is unique because their parents and the environment they grew up in are different from those of the current students' parents...you need to use different methods to teach them. This places a demand on teachers to continually update their own ideas and learn about the current generation of students. You need to understand what these children are exposed to, how their parents were raised, and how this influences the way they are educated. You must keep learning...

For example, learning how to use WeChat for teaching, or incorporating useful content from TikTok. Nowadays, with the advent of AI, integrating it into our teaching practices provides even more avenues for enhancing education. Just recently, over the winter break, I started learning how to use Jianying for video editing...I film each student's presentation and then edit the videos to produce the best results. I've been learning new software like Jianying to achieve this. There are so many new things emerging all the time, so teachers need to keep learning continuously.

That's why I never use the same lesson plan every year. I handwrite my lesson plans anew each time, highlighting the key points in the textbooks and writing a new lesson plan by hand. I also update my PowerPoint presentations. Although we have pre-made slides, I modify them based on the specific needs of my current students.

In addition to their devotion to teaching, participants also show emotional care for students and use various approaches to support students' overall well-being and happiness. For example, Teacher 5 believes that all students are naturally good and that caring for their emotional and mental well-being is crucial for lifting students up and improving academic performances:

As a teacher, you need to observe a student's behavior and even their expressions. Sometimes you can tell from their eyes if they're having a bad day because they often carry their own pressures. Think about it: a well-adjusted student wouldn't be using foul language, showing violent tendencies, or displaying signs of depression. These behaviors usually indicate deeper issues, like problems at home with parents who argue frequently or don't provide support.

We need to understand that kids often have it tough. Their hearts are tender...Doing small things for them, like giving them a simple treat, can make a big difference. For example, we used to give out plain boiled eggs as snacks during breaks, and many kids wouldn't eat them and just threw them away. So, we collected the uneaten eggs, made them tastier by adding some seasoning, and then handed them out as rewards. We'd say, "Hey, whoever does well today, whether it's in reciting or writing, gets a reward." Even older kids appreciate this. They feel valued and cared for.

So, what's the key to being a teacher? It's about putting your heart into it. When you genuinely care for your students, you win their hearts. That's why so many kids stay in touch with their teachers. Sometimes they even think you understand them better than their own parents. Being with students is about connecting with them on a deeper level, not just superficially pushing academic knowledge.

For participants working with lower-grade students who face less pressure from high-stakes tests, teachers demonstrate their commitment by enriching students' perspectives and life experiences. They encourage and help students participate in various interest-related competitions and social practices. This reflects teachers' altruistic motivation,

as they are concerned with students' personal growth and are willing to work extra hours without additional rewards (Grant et al., 2013). For example, Teacher 4 shared her story about helping her students pursue a national English speech competition and supporting them to achieve good grades. Similarly, Teacher 2 organizes social practice events for her students, believing that this broader perspective on education cultivates students holistically by helping them engage with the world around them:

So, this approach isn't heavily reliant on textbooks. It's more about broadening and enhancing students' perspectives, expanding their horizons. In my understanding, this is an important part of home-school co-education.

There are many co-educational activities, including parent-child activities that take place both outside and inside the school. For example, we take children to museums or places like the granaries, where they can see how food is stored. These experiences help broaden their knowledge about how food is stored and managed in our city.

I took them to various places to accumulate life experiences and provided them with guidance after each activity. For example, we visited a traditional Chinese medicine hall, where they learned to make anti-mosquito sachets and crafts, and explored traditional Chinese culture. We also visited Old Street to experience its unique environment. We toured many places, using half a day each week for these activities.

During these activities, I observed the children's behavior. Some showed excellent teamwork and discipline. I recall one trip where we didn't allow students to bring money or snacks, and we managed everything collectively. At 10:30 AM, everyone bought a famous local pastry. One child didn't eat his, saying it was so delicious that he wanted to take it home and share it with his mother. Such touching moments were always praised back at school. Over time, these activities enhanced the students' abilities, social skills, and values, fostering a strong and positive class spirit. This method of integrating various resources and activities into teaching has proven very effective. Whenever I have resources, I explore different opportunities to engage the students in meaningful activities.

Hence, despite challenges and negative opinions about the DRP, teachers in this study show strong commitment to their profession, driven by intrinsic and altruistic

motivations. They willingly do extra work without additional rewards, focusing on academic excellence and holistic student development. Teachers emphasize emotional support and positive relationships, essential for student well-being and success. They engage in continuous professional development, adapting methods to meet students' needs. Their efforts to enrich students' perspectives through various activities and competitions highlight their dedication to personal growth. This multifaceted approach benefits students and brings intrinsic satisfaction to teachers, reinforcing their motivation to remain in the profession and make a lasting positive impact on students' lives.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This chapter summarizes the research findings and examines the study's limitations. It also discusses the policy implication of the DRP, and finally explores the implications of teachers' opinions for the sustainability of the DRP.

5.1 Summary of the Findings

The findings of this research on the impact of China's Double Reduction Policy (DRP) on teachers' motivation present a multifaceted picture that reflects both the challenges and strengths inherent in the policy's implementation. The DRP aims to alleviate the mental pressures on students by reducing their academic workload and extracurricular tutoring, but its reception among teachers varies significantly based on their experiences and contexts.

From the outset, teachers generally acknowledge the noble objectives of the DRP, recognizing the importance of addressing students' mental health and overall well-being. This appreciation aligns with the expectancy-valence theory, which posits that people's motivation is influenced by their perception of the value and attainability of specific goals. Teachers agree that reducing students' stress and promoting holistic development are crucial. However, there is a discernible split in opinions, particularly between urban and rural educators. Urban teachers, who face significant issues related to students' mental health, view the policy as a necessary intervention. Conversely, rural teachers often see the policy as misaligned with their primary challenges, which include inadequate resources and support for students who face socio-economic hardships.

The implementation of the DRP has brought to light several critical challenges that affect teachers' motivation. One significant issue is the existing accountability policy, which ties teachers' professional evaluations and promotions to their students' academic

performance. This policy creates a paradox where teachers are pressured to produce good grades, which conflicts with the DRP's objective to reduce academic workloads. Young teachers, in particular, feel the strain as they balance the demands of achieving high student performance with adhering to the new policy guidelines. The ingrained culture of high-stakes testing in China further exacerbates this issue, as schools, parents, and students continue to prioritize exam results.

The DRP's requirement to reduce homework and tailor it to individual student needs presents another layer of complexity. Teachers find it challenging to manage differentiated assignments within the constraints of large class sizes and limited resources. This issue is compounded by the lack of clear guidelines on what constitutes excessive homework, leading to subjective interpretations and inconsistent practices across schools. Additionally, the policy's aim to provide extracurricular tutoring is hindered by insufficient funding and support, particularly in underprivileged schools. This disparity highlights the broader issue of resource allocation in China's education system, where more affluent schools can offer a wider range of extracurricular activities, while rural schools struggle to meet even basic requirements.

Additionally, the study reveals a common sentiment among teachers about the public's perception of their profession. The DRP's impact on teachers' social status and workload also merits attention. The policy has increased public scrutiny and expectations, often placing teachers in the crossfire of parental dissatisfaction and administrative demands, which make teachers feel demotivated. This situation mirrors previous educational reforms in other countries, where heightened social and professional expectations led to decreased teacher motivation and job satisfaction. Teachers report feeling overwhelmed by additional non-teaching responsibilities, such as managing extracurricular activities and complying with bureaucratic requirements, which detracts from their primary focus on education.

Despite these challenges, teachers exhibit a remarkable degree of intrinsic and altruistic

motivation. Many educators express a deep commitment to their students' development, often going above and beyond their official duties without additional compensation. This dedication is rooted in a belief that their role as teachers is not just about imparting knowledge, but also about shaping students' lives and futures. Teachers derive significant satisfaction from witnessing their students' growth and success, which reinforces their motivation to continue in the profession despite external pressures.

Teachers' responses also underscore the importance of emotional and psychological support for students. They emphasize the need to build strong, positive relationships with students, providing guidance and care that extends beyond academic instruction. This approach is particularly evident in teachers' efforts to engage students in various extracurricular activities and social practices, which they believe are essential for holistic development. By fostering a supportive and nurturing environment, teachers help students develop critical life skills and a sense of belonging, which are crucial for their overall well-being.

5.2 Limitations of the Study

This study concentrated on teachers' perspectives on their motivation under the implementation of the DRP in China. Relying solely on teachers' self-determined viewpoints could cause bias. Hence, the research could have been more comprehensive by including insights from other stakeholders, such as school leaders, students, parents, and government agencies, or engaging with multiple data sources to achieve a more balanced perspective. Additionally, using a larger sample size would have enhanced the study's generalizability.

5.3 Implication of the Research for the Sustainability of the DRP

Based on the findings, several implications emerge that can enhance the effectiveness of the Double Reduction Policy (DRP) and support teachers' motivation.

The discrepancy in resources and support between privileged and underprivileged schools is a significant concern. Equitable resources should be allocated to all schools to ensure they can effectively implement the policy. Providing sufficient funding and support for extracurricular activities is crucial, especially for underprivileged schools that struggle to meet the policy's requirements. This can involve targeted financial aid, professional development programs for teachers, and infrastructure improvements. By levelling the playing field, all students, regardless of their socio-economic background, can benefit from the policy, and teachers can feel more supported and motivated in their roles.

Secondly, the high-stakes testing culture and accountability policies currently in place conflict with the DRP's objectives of reducing student workload and stress. This contradiction should be addressed by promoting a more holistic assessment that includes student well-being and development rather than purely focusing on academic performance, which can align the teachers' responsibilities with the DRP's goals. This change would reduce the pressure on teachers to prioritize test scores over student well-being, thereby improving their intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction.

Thirdly, the study highlights the need for more comprehensive stakeholder engagement in policy implementation. Teachers, as the primary implementers of the DRP, should be more involved in the policy-making process. This involvement can provide valuable insights into practical challenges and foster a sense of ownership and commitment among teachers. Including feedback from school leaders, students, parents, and government agencies can lead to a more balanced and practical policy that addresses the needs and concerns of all parties involved.

5.4 Implication for Further Research

Based on the findings of this study, several implications for further research arise that

can help deepen our understanding of the DRP and its impact on teacher motivation.

Firstly, future research should consider a more comprehensive approach by including a diverse range of stakeholders. While this study focused primarily on teachers, gathering perspectives from school leaders, students, parents, and government agencies could provide a more holistic view of the policy's impact. Understanding how these different groups perceive the DRP and its effects can help identify areas where the policy is successful and where it may need adjustments. This inclusive approach can also highlight how various stakeholders interact and influence each other's experiences and perceptions.

Secondly, expanding the geographical scope of the research can yield more generalizable results. This study focused on teachers in Suzhou, a relatively developed city in China. Future studies should include participants from various regions, including rural and underprivileged areas, to capture a wider range of experiences and challenges. Comparing findings across different contexts can reveal regional disparities in the policy's implementation and effectiveness, guiding more tailored policy interventions.

Additionally, future research should explore the interplay between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in the context of educational policies. This study highlighted the complex relationship between these motivational factors, but more detailed examinations are needed to understand how different policies and support mechanisms can enhance both types of motivation. Experimental or quasi-experimental designs could be employed to test specific interventions aimed at boosting intrinsic motivation while maintaining or improving extrinsic motivation.

Moreover, further studies should delve into the cultural factors that influence teacher motivation and policy implementation. Understanding how cultural values and norms shape teachers' responses to policies can inform more culturally sensitive and effective policy design. Comparative studies between China and other countries with different

educational and cultural contexts can provide valuable insights into how cultural factors interact with policy impacts.

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Appendix:

Appendix A: CUREC Approval Letter

SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES
INTERDIVISIONAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
DEPARTMENTAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Department of Education
15 Norham Gardens, Oxford OX2 6PY
student.curec@education.ox.ac.uk; staff.curec@education.ox.ac.uk



Jiayuan Cao
Department of Education, Social Sciences Division
University of Oxford

27 February 2024

Dear Jiayuan,

Research ethics approval

Research title: Does the Double Reduction Policy in China threaten the motivation of teachers? An investigation on the changing motivation of professional teachers during the implementation of Double Reduction Policy in China.

Research ethics reference: EDUC_C1A_24_069

The above application has been considered on behalf of the Education Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC) in accordance with the University's procedures for ethical approval of all research involving human participants.

I am pleased to confirm that, on the basis of the information provided to the DREC, ethics approval has now been granted for this study.

Please note the following:

Personal data: It is the responsibility of the PI to ensure that all personal data collected during the project is managed in accordance with the University's [guidance and legal requirements](#).

In-person activities: Any data collection involving in-person interactions with participants must have an up-to-date fieldwork risk assessment in place; further guidance is available from the Safety Office's [website](#).

Amendments: Please notify the committee if you intend to make any amendments to the information in your ethics application as submitted at date of this approval, as all changes must receive ethical approval prior to implementation. The amendment form is available on the [SSH IDREC webpage](#).

We welcome feedback on your experience of the ethical review process and suggestions for improvement. Please email any comments to staff.curec@education.ox.ac.uk / student.curec@education.ox.ac.uk or ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely,

DREC Dr Jenny A. Wynn

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JAWynn'.

Cc. David Johnson

Appendix B: Participants Information Sheet (English)

University of Oxford
Department of Education
15 Norham Gardens
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general.enquires@education.ox.ac.uk www.education.ox.ac.uk
Director: David Johnson
Researcher: Jiayuan Cao



[The Changing Motivation of Teachers in China during the Double Reduction Policy in China]

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Central University Research Ethics Committee Approval Reference: **[EDUC_C1A_24_069]**

1. Introductory paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part.

2. Why is this research being conducted?

The Double Reduction Policy (DRP) is a recent educational reform introduced in China that aims to reduce the academic pressure and tutoring expenses for students and families. There have been some attempts to evaluate the outcomes of the policy, but scarce attention has been given to its effects on teachers.

Given the crucial role teachers play in policy implementation and curriculum, this research will investigate how the DRP affects the experiences of teachers, with a specific focus on teacher motivation.

The study aims to uncover whether the DRP has led to a transformation in teachers' roles, expectations, and satisfaction, among other factors that might contribute to teachers' motivation in their work. The research will contribute to the literature on teacher motivation and education policy, as well as provide practical implications for improving teacher support and quality under the DRP. The research will also benefit teachers, students, parents, and policymakers, by enhancing their understanding of the challenges and opportunities of the DRP, and by offering suggestions for optimizing its implementation and evaluation.

3. Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been identified as a potential participant for this study due to your status as a professional teacher actively engaged in China's compulsory education system. The selection criteria for participants include having at least 5 years of teaching experience in a public school within the compulsory education sector. This specific criterion was chosen to ensure that participants have substantial experience and insight into the educational system, particularly in the context of the Double Reduction Policy.

4. Do I have to take part?

No, it is up to you to decide whether to take part. You can withdraw yourself from the research, without giving a reason, by advising me of this decision. The deadline by which you can withdraw any information you have contributed to the research is two weeks after the interview. If you decide to withdraw from the study, your data will be destroyed immediately.↵

5. What will happen to me if I take part in the research? ↵

The research will take place in person in Suzhou, China, specifically in public places rather than schools. You will be informed about the exact location and what to expect upon arrival. Before participation, you will receive an informed consent document and a detailed information sheet via email or WeChat. These documents will outline the purpose of the research, your involvement and rights, including withdrawal. You need to sign the informed consent if you agree to take part in the research. The consent form will be saved electronically.↵

For the interview, each session will last approximately one hour. The activity involves one-to-one, semi-structured interviews, focusing on your experiences and feelings about the Double Reduction Policy. The questioning style aims to encourage the sharing of stories and insights. With your consent, interviews will be audio-recorded using the "Voice Memos" app for accurate record-keeping. The total duration of the research will be distinct from the interview duration, and you are required to participate only once for the one-hour interview. You can ask to pause or stop the interview at any time. There are no follow-up sessions planned for this research.↵

6. What are the possible disadvantages and risks in taking part?↵

Participants might feel uncomfortable speaking freely about their personal experiences and opinions regarding the Double Reduction Policy. There is a potential risk of distress from revealing personal information and concerns about breaches of confidentiality. ↵

To mitigate these risks, participants' anonymity will be preserved through the use of pseudonyms, and no personal information that could identify individuals will be included in the dissertation. Furthermore, interviews will be conducted in public areas outside of schools, and questions about their positions or the schools where they work will not be asked. Therefore, participants' experiences and stories will not represent any specific conditions or schools; their experiences will be viewed solely as reflections of the teaching profession. Participants will also have the opportunity to review and approve the use of their quotations in the research. Additionally, acknowledging the demanding schedules of teachers, interviews will be limited to one hour to minimize inconvenience. Participants are free to change the subject or terminate the conversation at any point during the interview.↵

7. Are there any benefits in taking part?↵

There will be no direct or personal benefit to you from participating in this research. However, your involvement will contribute valuable insights into the impact of the Double Reduction Policy on teachers' motivation in China. This research aims to enhance understanding in this area, which could lead to more informed educational policies and practices in the future, indirectly benefiting the educational community. Your participation is crucial in providing a deeper understanding of this policy's effects on educators.↵

8. What information will be collected and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research objectives? ↵

In this research, the information collected will include your experiences and views on the Double Reduction Policy. This data is essential to better understand its impact on teacher motivation in China, thereby addressing the research objectives. Types of data collected will involve transcripts of audio recordings of interviews and possibly written notes.⁴⁴

The researcher and the supervisor will have access to this data. Identifiable data, including consent forms, will be stored on N: Drive on university server, for more than 3 years in line with university policies and legal requirements. Non-identifiable research data will be retained for 3 of years following publication or public release of the research.⁴⁴

9. Will the research be published? Could I be identified from any publications or other research outputs?⁴⁴

The findings from the research will be written up in a dissertation. While the research may be published, participants will not be directly identifiable from any outputs. Pseudonymization will be used, where participant names are replaced with pseudonyms. You will be asked for permission to use direct quotations in the research outputs, but these will be used without identifying you to maintain confidentiality. This approach ensures that while valuable insights are shared through publication, the privacy and anonymity of participants are carefully preserved.⁴⁴

10. Data Protection⁴⁴

The University of Oxford is the data controller with respect to your personal data, and as such will determine how your personal data is used in the research. The University will process your personal data for the purpose of the research outlined above. Research is a task that is performed in the public interest. Further information about your rights with respect to your personal data is available from the University's Information Compliance web site at <https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/individual-rights>.⁴⁴

11. Who has reviewed this research?⁴⁴

This research has received ethics approval from a subcommittee of the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee. (Ethics reference: [EDUC_C1A_24_069]).⁴⁴

*Include details of any other reviews, e.g. from a local ethics committee if the research is taking place overseas.*⁴⁴

12. Who do I contact if I have a concern about the research or I wish to complain? ⁴⁴

If you have a concern about any aspect of this research, please contact Jiayuan Cao jiayuan.cao@sant.ox.ac.uk or David Johnson david.johnson@education.ox.ac.uk, and we will do our best to answer your query. We will acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how it will be dealt with. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford who will seek to resolve the matter as soon as possible:⁴⁴

The Chair, Social Sciences & Humanities Interdivisional Research Ethics Committee; ↓
Email: ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk; Address: Research Services, University of Oxford, Boundary Brook House, Churchill Drive, Headington, Oxford OX3 7GB⁴⁴

13. Further Information and Contact Details ⁴⁴

You should give the participant a contact point for further information. This can be your name, address and telephone number or that of another researcher in the team. If this is a supervised-student project, the student and supervisor should discuss whether to include the student's contact details as well as those of the student's supervisor. The use of personal phone numbers and email addresses should be avoided. ↵

If you would like to discuss the research with someone beforehand (or if you have questions afterwards), please contact: ↵

Jiayuan Cao↓
Department of Education↓
OX2 6DQ↓
+44 1865 274024↓
general.enquires@education.ox.ac.uk www.education.ox.ac.uk ↵

Appendix C: Participants Information Sheet (Chinese)

牛津大学
教育部
15 Norham Gardens
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OX2 6DQ
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general.enquires@education.ox.ac.uk www.education.ox.ac.uk
主任: 大卫·约翰逊
研究员: 曹佳媛



[中国教师在双减政策期间动机的变化]

参与者信息表

中央大学研究伦理委员会审批参考: [EDUC_C1A_24_069]

1. 简介

您被邀请参加一个研究项目。在您决定是否参加之前，了解研究的目的是非常重要的。请花时间仔细阅读以下信息，并在需要时与他人讨论。如果有什么不清楚的地方，或者您希望获得更多信息，请向我们提问。请花时间决定是否愿意参加。

2. 为什么进行这项研究？

双减政策（DRP）是中国近期引入的一项教育改革，旨在减轻学生及家庭的学术压力和补习费用。虽然已有一些尝试评估该政策的成效，但关于其对教师影响的关注却很少。

考虑到教师在政策实施和课程中扮演的关键角色，本研究将调查 DRP 对教师经验的影响，特别关注教师动机。

本研究旨在揭示 DRP 是否导致教师角色、期望和满意度等因素的转变，这些因素可能会对教师工作动机产生影响。研究将为教师动机和教育政策文献做出贡献，同时为在 DRP 下改善教师支持和质量提供实际意义。研究还将通过增强教师、学生、家长和政策制定者对 DRP 挑战和机会的理解，并提供优化其实施和评估的建议，为他们带来好处。

3. 为什么我被邀请参加？

由于您作为一名在中国义务教育体系中积极从事教学工作的专业教师，您被识别为这项研究的潜在参与者。参与者的选择标准包括在义务教育领域的公立学校中至少有 5 年的教学经验。选择这一具体标准是为了确保参与者对教育系统有着丰富的经验和洞察力，特别是在双减政策的背景下。

4. 我必须参加吗？

不，是否参加由您决定。您可以通过告知我您的决定来退出研究，无需给出理由。您可以在面试后两周内撤回您贡献给研究的任何信息。如果您决定退出研究，您的数据将立即被销毁。

5. 如果我参与研究，将会发生什么？

研究将在中国苏州市面对面进行，具体地点是在公共场所而非学校。您将被告知确切的地点以及到达后可以预期的事情。在参与之前，您将通过电子邮件或微信收到一份知情同意书和一份

详细的信息表。这些文件将概述研究的目的、您的参与和权利，包括退出权利。如果您同意参加研究，您需要签署知情同意书。同意书将以电子形式保存。

对于访谈，每次会议将持续大约一个小时。活动包括一对一的半结构化访谈，重点是您对双减政策的经验和感受。提问风格旨在鼓励分享故事和见解。经您同意，访谈将使用“语音备忘录”应用进行音频录制，以准确记录。研究的总持续时间与访谈持续时间不同，您只需参加一次为期一小时的访谈。您可以随时要求暂停或停止访谈。这项研究没有计划跟进会议。

6. 参与其中可能有什么不利之处和风险？

参与者在自由谈论他们关于双减政策的个人经历和意见时，可能会感到不舒服。透露个人信息和担心保密性被破坏存在潜在的困扰风险。

为了减少这些风险，将通过使用化名来保护参与者的匿名性，且论文中不会包含任何可能识别个人身份的个人信息。此外，访谈将在学校外的公共区域进行，不会询问他们的职位或他们工作的学校。因此，参与者的经历和故事不会代表任何特定的条件或学校；他们的经历将仅被视为对教师职业的反应。参与者还将有机会审阅并批准在研究中使用他们的引语。此外，考虑到教师繁忙的日程，访谈将限制在一小时内，以尽量减少不便。参与者在访谈期间随时可以更换话题或终止对话。

7. 参与其中有什么好处？

参与这项研究对您本人将没有直接或个人的好处。然而，您的参与将为研究中国双减政策对教师动机影响提供宝贵的见解。这项研究旨在增强这一领域的理解，未来可能促使更加明智的教育政策和实践，间接地惠及教育界。您的参与对于深入了解这一政策对教育工作者的影响至关重要。

8. 将收集哪些信息，以及为什么收集这些信息对实现研究目标有关？

在这项研究中，收集的信息将包括您对双减政策的经验和观点。这些数据对于更好地理解其对中国教师动机的影响至关重要，从而解决研究目标。收集的数据类型将包括访谈的音频录音转录文本和可能的书面笔记。

研究员和指导教师将能够访问这些数据。可识别数据，包括同意书，将存储在大学服务器的 N: Drive 上，根据大学政策和法律要求存储超过 3 年。非识别研究数据将在研究发布或公开发布后保留 3 年。

9. 研究结果会被发布吗？我能从任何出版物或其他研究成果中被识别出来吗？

研究结果将被撰写成论文。虽然研究可能会被发布，但参与者不会从任何成果中被直接识别出来。将使用化名，即用化名替换参与者的名字。您将被要求允许在研究成果中使用直接引语，但这些将在不识别您的情况下使用，以保持保密。这种方法确保在通过出版分享宝贵见解的同时，仔细保护参与者的隐私和匿名。

10. 数据保护

牛津大学是您个人数据的数据控制者，因此将决定如何在研究中使用您的个人数据。大学将出于上述研究目的处理您的个人数据。研究是一项在公共利益中执行的任务。有关您个人数据权利的进一步信息，请访问大学的信息合规网站：<https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/individual-rights>。

11. 谁审查了这项研究？

这项研究已获得牛津大学中央大学研究伦理委员会的一个子委员会的伦理批准。（伦理参考：EDUC_C1A_24_069）。

12. 如果我对研究有疑虑或想要投诉，我该联系谁？

如果您对这项研究的任何方面有疑虑，请联系曹佳媛 jiayuan.cao@sant.ox.ac.uk 或大卫·约翰逊 david.johnson@education.ox.ac.uk，我们将尽力回答您的问题。我们将在 10 个工作日内确认您的关切，并告知您处理方式。如果您仍然不满意或希望正式投诉，请联系牛津大学研究伦理委员会主席，他们将尽快解决问题：

研究伦理委员会主席，社会科学与人文学科跨学科研究伦理委员会；电子邮件：ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk；地址：牛津大学研究服务部，Boundary Brook House, Churchill Drive, Headington, Oxford OX3 7GB

13. 更多信息和联系方式

如果您希望事先（或之后有问题时）讨论研究，请联系：

曹佳媛
教育部
OX2 6DQ
+44 1865 274024
general.enquires@education.ox.ac.uk www.education.ox.ac.uk

Appendix D: Interview Questions (English)

Interview guide:

[Basic Information]

1. How many years have you taught in public schools for compulsory education?
2. What majors do you teach?

↵

[Perceptions of the goal of DRP]

1. As a teacher, what is your opinion on the policy?
2. As a teacher who have taught for years, are there any differences between the DRP and previous burden-relief policies?
3. How do you perceive the long-term impacts of the DRP in education?
4. Do you feel motivated at work to achieve the goal of DRP?
5. How might the policy shape your future career as a teacher in the long run?

↵

[the Impact of DRP on Work]

1. How is your daily routine after the implementation of DRP?
2. Are there any additional requirements given for teachers after DRP? Concerning teaching, home school relationship, collegiality, et al...
3. Do you receive any support in resources and funds to help you meet the goal by schools or the government?
4. Have you observed any shifts in the school's professional culture or staff morale since the implementation of the policy?
5. Do you think you need to balance the policy's requirements with your own teaching philosophy and style?
6. Has the Double Reduction Policy impacted your work-life balance? If so, how?
7. What do you think is the main driving force for you to stay in the profession of teacher, before and after the implementation of DRP?

↵

[the impact of DRP on Motivation]

1. Has the DRP increased your motivation to serve as a teacher? Say why?
2. Has the DRP decreased your motivation to serve as a teacher? Say why?
3. Please complete the scales below

Because of the DRP	1	2	3	4	5
I feel more motivated to teach	↵	↵	↵	↵	↵
My workload has decreased	↵	↵	↵	↵	↵
I have more free time as a teacher	↵	↵	↵	↵	↵
The curriculum is less demanding	↵	↵	↵	↵	↵
I have fewer professional meetings with parents	↵	↵	↵	↵	↵

(1: strongly agree; 2: agree; 3: neutral; 4: disagree; 5: strongly disagree)

↵

Appendix E: Interview Questions (Chinese)

[基本信息]

1. 您在义务教育公立学校教了多少年书？
2. 您教授哪些专业？

[对双减政策目标的看法]

1. 作为一名教师，您对这项政策有什么看法？
2. 作为一名多年教龄的教师，您认为双减政策与以往的减负政策有什么不同？
3. 您如何看待双减政策对教育的长期影响？
4. 您在工作中感到有动力实现双减政策的目标吗？
5. 您认为这项政策将如何长期影响您作为教师的职业生涯？

[双减政策对工作的影响]

1. 双减政策实施后，您日常工作的改变是否影响您对实现双减政策目标的动力？
2. 双减政策后，对教师有没有新增的要求？涉及教学、家校关系、同事间的合作等方面…
3. 学校或政府是否为您提供了达成目标所需的资源和资金支持？
4. 自政策实施以来，您是否观察到学校专业文化或员工士气的变化？
5. 您认为需要在政策要求与您个人的教学哲学及风格之间找到平衡吗？
6. 双减政策是否影响了您的工作与生活平衡？如果有，是如何影响的？
7. 在双减政策实施前后，您认为是什么驱动力让您留在教师这一职业？

[双减政策对动机的影响]

1. 双减政策是否增加了您作为教师的动力？请说明原因。
2. 双减政策是否降低了您作为教师的动力？请说明原因。
3. 请完成下面的量表

因为双减政策	1	2	3	4	5
我感觉更有动力去教书					
我的工作量减少了					
作为教师我有更多的空闲时间					
课程要求变得不那么严格					
我与家长的专业会议减少了					

(1: 非常同意; 2: 同意; 3: 中立; 4: 不同意; 5: 非常不同意)

Appendix F: Teachers Consent Form (English)

University of Oxford
 Department of Education
 15 Cowley Road
 Oxford
 OX2 6DQ
 +44 1865 274024
general.enquires@education.ox.ac.uk www.education.ox.ac.uk
 Director: David Johnson
 Researcher: Jiayuan Cao



Consent to take part in [An investigation on the changing motivation of professional teachers in China during the implementation of Double Reduction Policy in China.]

Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) approval reference: **EDUC_C1A_24_069**

Purpose of Study: This study aims to investigate how the Double Reduction Policy impact various factors that might influence teacher's motivational changes, including challenges and opportunities presented by the policy. By delving into how these factors affect their enthusiasm, commitment, and overall job satisfaction, the research intends to provide a nuanced understanding of the policy's impact on the intrinsic and extrinsic motivational dynamics within the teaching profession in China.

	Please initial each box if you agree with the statement
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above research. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any point within two weeks after being interviewed, without giving any reason.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand who will have access to personal data provided, how the data will be stored and what will happen to the data at the end of the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand the extent to which I could be identifiable from any publications.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I consent to being audio recorded.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand how audio recording will be used in research outputs.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to the use of quotations in research outputs if I am not identifiable.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I give permission for you to contact me again to clarify information.	<input type="checkbox"/>

I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to take part.	<input type="checkbox"/>

_____ Name of participant	<u>dd / mm / yyyy</u> Date	_____ Signature
_____ Name of person taking consent	<u>dd / mm / yyyy</u> Date ¹	_____ Signature ↓

¹ To be signed and dated in the presence of the participant. Once this has been signed by both parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form. The original signed and dated consent form should be kept with the project's main documents, which must be kept in a secure location.

Appendix G: Teachers Consent Form (Chinese)

牛津大学
教育部
15 Nuffield Gardens
Oxford
OX2 6DQ
+44 1865 274024
general.enquires@education.ox.ac.uk www.education.ox.ac.uk
主任: 大卫·约翰逊
研究员: 曹佳媛



同意参与[中国双减政策实施期间专业教师动机变化的调查研究]

中央大学研究伦理委员会 (CUREC) 批准参考编号: EDUC_C1A_24_069

研究目的: 本研究旨在探究双减政策如何影响可能影响教师动机变化的各种因素, 包括该政策提出的挑战和机遇。通过深入了解这些因素如何影响他们的热情、承诺和整体工作满意度, 研究意在提供该政策对中国教学专业内在和外在动机动态影响的细致理解。

	请在每个框内打勾, 如果您同意声明:
我确认我已阅读并理解上述研究的信息说明书版本 EDUC_C1A_24_069, 日期_____。我有机会考虑这些信息、提出问题并得到满意的答复。	<input type="checkbox"/>
我理解我的参与是自愿的, 我可以在接受采访后的两周内随时退出, 无需给出任何理由。	<input type="checkbox"/>
我了解谁将能够访问我提供的个人数据, 数据将如何存储, 以及项目结束时数据将如何处理。	<input type="checkbox"/>
我了解我可能在何种程度上从出版物中被识别。	<input type="checkbox"/>
我同意被音频录制。	<input type="checkbox"/>
我了解音频录制将如何在研究中使用。	<input type="checkbox"/>
如果我不可识别, 我同意在研究成果中使用引用。	<input type="checkbox"/>
我授权您可以再次联系我以便澄清信息。	<input type="checkbox"/>
我明白如何提出疑问或进行投诉。	<input type="checkbox"/>
我同意参与此项研究。	<input type="checkbox"/>

	dd / mm / yyyy	
参与者姓名	日期	签字
	dd / mm / yyyy	
同意参与的参与者姓名	日期 ¹	签字

¹ 需在参与者在场的情况下签字并注明日期。一旦双方都签署了本表格，参与者应收到一份已签名和日期的参与者同意表的副本。原始的已签名和日期的同意表应与项目的主要文件一起保存，并必须存放在一个安全的地点。

Template written consent form, version 4.2, November 2022