

## **Strategic Adaptations of Middle-Class Families Under China's "Double Reduction" Policy: Implications for Educational Equity and Global Policy Ethics**

**Yikuan Yang**

*University of Bath, United Kingdom*

### **Abstract**

Within China's historically hyper-competitive educational landscape, private tutoring has functioned as a critical mechanism for middle-class advancement, with the industry reaching an estimated \$120 billion before being dramatically curtailed by the 2021 "Double Reduction" policy. This study investigates how urban middle-class families navigate this abrupt regulatory shift while attempting to balance deeply-held educational aspirations against new socioeconomic constraints—filling a crucial research gap on the unintended consequences of well-intentioned educational burden reduction policies.

The research employs a rigorous mixed-methods approach combining quantitative surveys (n=450) with junior high school students and parents across five major Chinese urban centers, in-depth qualitative interviews (n=60) exploring adaptive strategies, and longitudinal tracking of 30 families over 18 months to monitor evolving educational trajectories. This methodological triangulation captures both immediate responses and emerging adaptations to policy implementation, with all data collection following strict ethical protocols regarding informed consent and confidentiality.

Preliminary findings reveal paradoxical outcomes: middle-class families are developing sophisticated alternative educational strategies that circumvent policy intentions, including underground tutoring networks, digitally-mediated international educational resources, and intensified parental pedagogical involvement. Rather than eliminating educational inequality, the policy appears to be reconfiguring stratification mechanisms by disadvantaging families lacking the cultural capital and social networks necessary to navigate the transformed educational landscape.

Furthermore, we identify heightened tensions between state-sanctioned educational values emphasizing reduced academic pressure and middle-class aspirations for maintaining global competitiveness.

This research contributes significant insights into how educational reforms in rapidly developing economies interact with class dynamics and globalization pressures. The findings extend international discourse on educational ethics by illuminating fundamental tensions between collective educational equity and individual rights to educational advancement. Additionally, they provide valuable reference for policymakers in contexts as diverse as South Korea, Singapore, and India who seek to balance student wellbeing with educational quality while addressing the reproduction of socioeconomic disparities through education.

# 8th World Conference on Teaching and Education

06 – 08 June 2025

Cambridge, United Kingdom



WORLDCTE  
World Conference on  
TEACHING & EDUCATION

**Keywords:** Double Reduction Policy, educational inequality, middle-class strategies, cultural capital, shadow education, educational ethics, policy circumvention, educational globalization, class reproduction, educational reform