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Double Reduction Policy Framework, Shadow Education, Policy Implementation, English Language Learning, Educational Equity, China, Market Regulation

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Abstract

This article analyzes significant market and behavioral shifts in English-language learning in China following the 2021 "Double Reduction" policy. which was intended to alleviate academic pressure and educational inequality, the policy's stringent regulations on the for-profit tutoring sector have triggered a complex market reconfiguration. We utilize a mixed-methods secondary analysis of policy documents and quantitative market data. This study maps the contraction of the formal K-9 tutoring market and the parallel growth of private, offshore, and corporate training alternatives. Framed by Policy Implementation Theory and Shadow Education Theory, our analysis reveals a substantial "implementation gap" in which regulatory action has failed to eliminate demand. However, it has driven it underground and overseas instead. Regulatory gaps, technology enablers, and relentless parental demand were some of the key factors for this change. The results suggest that the policy has perversely worsened educational inequality, establishing a two-tiered system in which high-income families have access?to expensive, unregulated tutoring and low-income families do not. It is claimed that the proliferation of such a shadow market, which is more fragmented and opaque, has created a two-tier system for policy effectiveness and school equalization and has implications for the English language pedagogy in China.

Keywords: China; Double Reduction Policy Framework; Educational Equity; English Language Learning; Market Regulation; Policy Implementation; Shadow Education