Considerations on Reducing Course Load of Pupils Under the Background of New Curriculum Standards: A Case Study of LH Experimental Primary School

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Abstract. How to alleviate the heavy burden of pupils' schoolwork has long been a hot spot of the society. By taking LH experimental primary school as a case, this paper introduces the investigation content and analysis result of primary school pupils' heavy burden of schoolwork under the new curriculum standards after clarifying the publishing background and the definition of basic concept of the new curriculum standards and the relationship between the new curriculum standards and the schoolwork burden on the primary school students. Then, this article summarizes the reasons of the overburdening phenomenon of pupils in LH experimental primary school through analysis and puts forward some countermeasures to alleviate the schoolwork burden on pupils in this primary school in order to provide a valuable reference for alleviating the burden of pupils’ schoolwork under the new curriculum standards.

Introduction

How to alleviate the heavy burden of pupils' schoolwork has always been the focus of attention of all walks of life. Recalling the development of the primary education history in China, it has been 15 years since the new curriculum standards was carried out as the basic programmatic document of the national curriculum and the campaign of reducing the heavy burden on primary school students starts from then on [1]. In 2011, the new curriculum standards kept pace with the times and once again underwent a round of revision. However, the issue of the pupils' homework burden overloading was still the focus remain. In a sense, since the implementation of the new curriculum in 2001, the problem of overburdening of primary school students in China neither was alleviated, nor fundamentally solved. On the contrary, problem is becoming worse and worse. This obvious is not consist with the notion of "reflecting the basic requirements of knowledge and skills, processes and methods, emotions, attitudes and values of students in different stages of student", It even results in the unhealthy development trend of students’ life path choice and personal development due to the heavy academic burden in physical and mental growth stage [2]. With this background, under the current background of the new curriculum standards in China, We chose LH experimental primary school as a case, and systematically investigated the academic burden of primary school students in this school under the new curriculum standards in order to find out the reasons for pupils’ schoolwork overburdening and put forward some suggestions on alleviating the burden of pupils’ schoolwork under the new curriculum standards.

New Curriculum Standards and Pupils Schoolwork Burden

The new curriculum standards, which was introduced in the year 2001 and was revised again in the same year, emphasizes the need to innovate the teaching methods for primary school students, the need to break away from the traditional Didactic and "Duck-stuffing" type of teaching and vigorously
carry out the reform of reducing the schoolwork burden by focusing on the training of student observation ability, imagination ability, creative thinking ability, practical ability and memory ability [2]. Specifically, the links between implementation of the new curricula and the reduction of the burden on schoolwork students are as follows:

Firstly, from the perspective of students' thinking, the new curriculum standards emphasizes the importance of cultivating the initiative of primary school students and completely changing the "Duck-stuffing" teaching mode that existed in primary education in the past so that every primary school pupil can take the initiative to choose what they want to learn according to their interests, and delete those unnecessary contents of classroom teaching and after-school teaching activities, which will alleviate the pupils’ burden of schoolwork [3].

Second, from the aspect of student development, the new curriculum standards emphasizes the need to foster the overall coordination and unification of moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetics and labor education and to completely abandon the widespread "examination-oriented education" mode in traditional primary education and to change the wrong idea of taking examination scores as the standard of success or failure, to reduce the weight of examination scores in primary school education evaluation, and then to alleviate the burden of schoolwork. Gradually we should promote the three interlinked goals of the "knowledge and skills", "process and method", "emotional attitude and values". To assess the effectiveness of primary education

Third, from the point of teaching, the new curriculum standards emphasizes the teaching staff should give full play to their abilities in teaching to mobilize the interest of primary school students, develop their learning initiative and change the traditional primary school teaching belief of "textbook-only, teacher-only, desperately rote", and on this basis to alleviate the burden of schoolwork. Primary school students should understand that the most important thing in everyday learning is not only simple acceptance and storage of knowledge, but also is the self-exploration ability, which lays the foundation for the subsequent self-development.

Current Situation and Reasons of Schoolwork Burdens of LH Experimental Primary School Students under the New Curriculum Standards

Design of Survey Interview Index

Through summarizing the current academic research on the homework burden and personal daily learning and teaching practice, combined with the requirements of the teaching and learning for pupils under the new curriculum standards, this paper chooses the total number of pupils’ homework (daily), pupils' extracurricular activities (daily), pupils' number of exams per semester, number of pupils' supplemental materials per semester and pupils' attitudes towards learning these five indicators to measure the schoolwork burdens among pupils in this school and we collected data by interviewing the target pupils.(Note: Due to the lack of cognitive ability, the Grade One or Grade Two students may not be able to answer the survey question clearly. Therefore, interviews were conducted with students from Grade Three to Grade Six in order to improve the scientificity of the data obtained). At last, sixty students were selected at random to conduct interviews to collect relevant data on LH experimental primary schoolwork burden.

Findings of the Survey

To see from the indicator ,total number of pupils’ homework (daily), the specific findings are as follows: First, from the time for the completion of pupils’ total assignments, 11 pupils indicated that they needed 30-45 minutes per day to complete after-school assignments, accounting for 18.3% of the total; 18 pupils said that they needed 46-90 minutes a day to complete after-school assignments, accounting for 30.0%; 31 pupils said they needed more than 90 minutes a day to complete after-school assignments, accounting for 18.4%. Secondly, from the subjective evaluation of the total amount of assignments after class arranged by the pupils in LH experimental primary school, 21 pupils indicated that the total amount of after-school assignments arranged by their teachers was "appropriate", accounting for 35.0% of the total; 32 pupils indicated that the total number of
after-hours assignments arranged by their teachers was "excessive", accounting for 53.3%; and 7 pupils indicated that the home-school assignments arranged by their teachers were "less" in general, accounting for 11.7%.

From the analysis of total hours of extra-curricular activities of primary school pupils in LH experimental primary school, 28 pupils indicated that their daily extra-curricular activities totaled 60 minutes and less, accounting for 46.7% of the total; 21 pupils said that their daily total hours of extra-curricular activities were in the interval 61-90 minutes, accounting for 35.0%; 9 pupils said their daily total hours of extra-curricular activities were between 91 minutes and 120 minutes, accounting for 15.0%; another pupils indicated that their daily total extracurricular activities were more than 120 minutes, accounting for 3.3%.

Seeing from the number of supplemental materials for primary school pupils, we can concludes the conclusions as follows: 6 pupils indicated that the number of secondary materials they own per semester is 3 or less, accounting for 10.0% of the total; 14 pupils indicated that they had 4-6 sets of supplementary materials each semester, accounting for 23.3%; 24 pupils indicated that they had 7-9 supplementary materials each semester, accounting for 40.0%; 16 primary school students indicated that they had more than 9 supplementary materials per semester, accounting for 26.7%. Second, according to the subjective evaluation of the number of supplementary materials (each semester) owned by LH experimental primary school pupils, 41 pupils indicated that the number of supplementary materials they own per semester was "excessive", accounting for 68.3% of the total; 10 pupils indicated that the number of supplementary materials they had per semester was "appropriate", accounting for 16.7%; 9 of the respondents said that they had "fewer teaching aids per semester", accounting for 15.0%.

**Reason Analysis**

First of all, the amount of schoolwork is too much. To reduce the burden on the schoolwork, especially to reduce the total amount of primary school assignments, and to promote targeted and focused homework exercises, are the focus of the new curriculum standards since the implementation of the target. However, from the survey, we can see that up to 51.7% of interviewed pupils still report that daily work completion despite the fact that under the new curriculum standards, is at least 90 minutes; 30.0% of the interviewed pupils also indicated that they need 46-90 minutes to complete the daily homework. In addition, on the subjective evaluation of the total homework assignments of their teachers after classwork, 53.8% of the interviewed pupils indicated that the class teachers arranged too much homework. As we all know, after the implementation of the new curriculum standards, the ministry of education immediately released the "emergency notice on reducing students' excessive burden in primary schools", advocating that primary school students should not spend more than 60 minutes in finishing daily homework, and after the revision of new curriculum standards in 2011, the ministry of education issued the "ten burden reduction" and other related documents and new rules again, proposing that primary school should not leave any homework. The new curriculum standards encourages pupils to work daily for no more than 60 minutes [4]. Therefore, it can be seen from the survey that the problem of too much homework has not been fundamentally alleviated. Moreover, students in primary school have not fully completed their physical and mental development yet. Excessive work load not only directly does harm to their recreational space, but also makes them pay too much attention to books and writings, thus threatening their healthy development, such as myopia, hump and other issues. Therefore, we can see that too much homework is an important reason for overburdening pupils' homework under the new curriculum standards.

Then, extracurricular activities time is not enough. It is the focus of the new curriculum standards since the implementation of the new curriculum standards. It can reduce the extracurricular burden and effectively increase the extracurricular activity time of primary school students and cultivate all-round development of "moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic and labor" pupils. However, from the survey, we can see that up to 46.7% of the interviewed pupils still indicated that every day, even under the new curriculum standards, the total time of extra-curricular activities per day is within 60 minutes, while only 3.3% students indicated that the daily extracurricular activities time is more than
120 minutes. Moreover, in the subjective assessment of the total amount of extracurricular activities of interviewed pupils in LH experimental primary school, the survey showed that up to 63.3% of the interviewed pupils indicated that they had very few extracurricular activities per day. After the implementation of the new curriculum standards, the ministry of education has targeted the primary and secondary school sports work supervision and evaluation index system (trial implementation) in response to the long time existence of extracurricular activities in primary schools in our country. It also stipulates that extracurricular sports activities exercise time at least 1 hour a day [5]. Therefore, we can see from the survey that the problem of extracurricular activities of pupils under the new curriculum standards has not been fundamentally alleviated. Moreover, the lack of extra hours of extra-curricular activities can lead to poor performance of pupils in their physical and mental development, which in turn adversely affects their future development of life. Therefore, it can be seen that the lack of extracurricular activities is an important reason for the heavy burden of schoolwork in the new curriculum standards.

And then, too many exams. By reducing the number of examinations, we can make a comprehensive assessment for primary school students to improve teaching effectiveness so as to change the long-existing bad teaching style and reduce the schoolwork burden. This is a new curriculum standards since the implementation of the focus. However, from the survey, we can see that even in the context of the new curriculum, there are still up to 86.7% of the interviewed pupils indicated that each of them takes more than 10 final exams every semester. Moreover, in the subjective evaluation of the total number of exams taken by each of LH experimental primary school interviewed pupils in their semester examinations, as many as 81.7% of the interviewed pupils indicated that they take excessive exams per semester. As we all know, after the implementation of the new curriculum standards, the ministry of education issued the relevant documents regarding the long-standing examination overdue in primary school education in our country, stipulating that primary school semesters should only organize one final exam and schools should strictly control the number of examinations. In reality, as a result of the teaching appraisal, job evaluation and other needs, often lead to heavy examination burden, like "unit test" and other forms of so-called teaching test. However, due to the lack of cognitive ability of primary school students, this long-standing atmosphere of examination can easily lead to the mistaken ideas of "only achievement theory" and "only expedition theory". While trying their best to study hard, produced the wrong idea of "for exams and learning". This will not only lead to the failure of the implementation of the new curriculum, but also lead to the misleading concept of student learning. Therefore, we can see that the heavy examinations burden is an important reason for pupils' homework overburdening under the new curriculum standards.

At last, too many teaching materials. “By adopting a variety of methods to carry out targeted teaching around textbooks and reducing the use of supplementary materials to alleviate the schoolwork burden” is the key point of releasing the implementation of the new curriculum standards. However, from the survey, we can see that up to 66.7% of the interviewed pupils still showed they had 7 or more supplementary materials for every semester in LH experimental primary school. Moreover, in the subjective assessment of the number of supplementary materials each semester held by LH experimental primary school pupils, the survey also showed that up to 68.3% of the interviewed pupils indicated that they had overdosed supplementary materials per semester. As we all know, after the implementation of the new curriculum standards, the ministry of education has promulgated the relevant documents concerning the long-term existence of supplementary teaching and auxiliary materials and the weakening of textbooks in primary education in our country. It not only prohibits the unified procurement of supplementary materials in schools, but also stipulates that primary education Must be implemented "a subject a supplement". However, in reality, teachers often wantonly recommend supplementary materials to primary school students because of the so-called teaching ability improvement, performance ranking and even personal interests. However, primary school students often buy a large amount of materials due to their low discrimination ability and sheep herd effect. Teaching materials, and cause their own schoolwork overburdened. Therefore, it
can be seen that excessive teaching and supplementary information is an important reason for over-burden of primary school students in the new curriculum standards.

Countermeasures on Reducing Study Load of LH Primary School Students under the Background of New Curriculum Standards

Total Amount of Homework should be Rationalized

Homework plays an important role in consolidating, understanding and using knowledge, admittedly. However, excessive homework can only be counterproductive. Especially for pupils whose body and mind are at a fast developing stage, excess homework is not only useless but also harmful. Therefore, in the new curriculum standards background, primary school teachers should take the initiative to update the teaching concept, while reducing the amount of homework should pay attention to optimizing homework design, homework design focuses on both knowledge consolidation and knowledge transfer. For example, while reducing the total number of pupils' assignments, we designed a variety of assignments that meet the needs of different people. This will enable students to learn from all sources in order, thereby stimulating their enthusiasm in learning and at the same time effectively reducing their study load.

Increase the Extracurricular Activities Time of Students

Adequate and appropriate extracurricular activities not only will not damage the normal teaching effect, but also be indispensable for pupils who are in a period of rapid physical and mental development. Therefore, under the background of the new curriculum standards, primary school teachers should take the initiative to adapt to the new curriculum standards concept and focus on improving classroom efficiency in order to enable primary school students to fully and fully absorb knowledge in the classroom and leave more extracurricular activities for primary school students activity time. The key to improving teacher's classroom efficiency in a targeted manner is the teacher. Therefore, primary school teachers can take the initiative to participate in on-the-job training to receive re-education, to learn the education philosophy and method respected by the new curriculum standards, to constantly adjust teaching methods, ensure classroom quality, give full play to primary school students' enthusiasm in learning and ensure classroom efficiency. In addition, primary school principals and other management also can invite local famous teachers to school teaching, in order to improve teaching efficiency, thereby increasing student extracurricular activities time.

Gradually Reduce the Number of Exams

The test is only a universal measure of test results and student absorption, but it is not an absolute single measure. The new curriculum standards promote teachers to take non-traditional means to test the teaching achievement and the degree of student evaluation. Therefore, under the background of the new curriculum standards reform, primary school teachers should take the initiative to adapt to the new teaching law and change the wrong concept of "the test is the only evaluation tool" in the traditional concept. By setting up a comprehensive, pluralistic and dynamic assessment mechanism, for example, hall oral test, peer assessment and other forms of assessment of the teaching achievements of students in order to change the teaching evaluation concept, and promote the teaching evaluation of a wide range of science. This can also reverse the erroneous notion of "the only test hero" on the mind of primary school students, so as to effectively alleviate the erroneous study attitude of desperately studying and examinations, and ultimately reducing the schoolwork burden on pupils.

Reduce the Use of Supplementary Materials

Teaching guidance material for the teaching work and primary school learning does have some help, but also by the "law of things must be" the law of the limit, excessive teaching counseling materials will only be counterproductive. Therefore, the new curriculum standards further advocates teachers to exert their own abilities and conduct targeted teaching around the core teaching materials in order
to reduce the burden of students while improving teaching effectiveness. However, from the perspective of practical teaching in primary schools, it is necessary to rely on the joint efforts of four different actors: government, teachers, schools and parents under the background of the new curriculum standards. First of all, the government should standardize the market of supplementary education, set up a market system of supplementary education, and prohibit schools from recommending or even purchasing supplementary education for primary school pupils. Second, primary school teachers should change traditional teaching ideas and adapt themselves to the new curriculum standards education concept. It is forbidden to encourage pupils to purchase a large amount of supplementary materials in order to improve their academic performance so as to increase the workload of primary school students. Thirdly, schools should strictly regulate teachers and prohibit them from recommending supplementary books to pupils through various channels. Finally, parents should establish a correct concept of education, abandon the misunderstanding of "misgivings in the study of the book" concept of education, but should focus on the learning characteristics of their students, the selection of appropriate supplementary to reduce the burden of study load.

Summary

Under the background of the new curriculum standards reform, primary education should continue to exert the spirit of reform and innovation. Primary school teachers should adapt more actively to the teaching plan of new curricula and use more classroom time to guide students to think and study actively. In addition, the formation of correct attitude towards learning can not be separated from parents’ and schools’ help. Parents should spend more time cultivating their children's autonomy in their spare time so that they can be more self-reliant. Schools should consider reforming the assessment mechanisms of teachers’ work, such as assessing teachers' teaching achievements by examining students' autonomy and initiative, thereby strengthening the incentives for teachers so as to eventually help reducing pupils’ study load.

References


