

New Reflections on the Teaching Model of Dulangkou Middle School under the Background of the Double Reduction Policy

Yun Gao

Anglo-Chinese College, Fuzhou, Fujian, China

Abstract: *Against the backdrop of the dual-reduction policy, this paper rethinks the teaching model of Dulangkou Middle School, analyzing its strengths and limitations, such as its suitability for subjects, student disparity, and scope of application. By drawing on and referencing the Dulangkou teaching model, this paper offers some insights into exploring the transformation of classroom teaching models under new circumstances.*

Keywords: Double reduction policy, Dulangkou teaching model, New teaching model, Dulangkou Middle School.

1. Introduction

In 2021, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council issued the “Opinions on Further Reducing the Homework Burden and Off-campus Training Burden of Compulsory Education Students”, which pointed out that while comprehensively reducing the total amount and duration of homework and reducing the homework burden of students, the diverse needs of students should be met [1]. In this context, we review the reform model of Dulangkou Middle School implemented by Principal Cui Qisheng in 1997, analyze and evaluate the characteristics of the reform model, and explore its advantages and limitations, in order to generate some thoughts on the new exploration of classroom teaching models under the double reduction policy.

2. Dulangkou Middle School Teaching Model

Dulangkou Middle School is famous for its “10+35” or “0+45” classroom teaching model, which means that the teacher only speaks for 10 minutes or does not speak at all, and the rest of the time is for the students to speak [2]. The classroom does not adopt the rice paddy-style seating arrangement, but allows students to move around freely, dance, act, draw, etc., and there is no homework after class. Under this teaching model, the idea of “returning the classroom to students” and the shadow of “Socratic teaching method” are reflected, giving students full freedom and allowing them to mobilize their autonomy, enthusiasm and initiative in independent thinking.

2.1 Returning the Classroom to Students

In the Dulangkou Middle School model, students can engage in small group discussions, or they can have one student present while others ask questions. Of course, this requires students to prepare for the course before class so they can learn in class. To ensure this preparation phase, the entire class adopts a “learn before teach” model. Students complete their homework before class and bring their questions to class to be solved under the teacher’s guidance. Naturally, there is no homework after class. This creates a lively classroom atmosphere, active student participation, and a relaxed and

unburdened atmosphere after class. Since the majority of class time is student-centered and actively engaged, it aligns with Ms. Ye Lan’s philosophy of “giving the classroom back to the students.” Students are lively and engaged in class, yet relaxed and at ease after class. This relaxed and free-flowing teaching atmosphere fully respects students’ needs, fosters their initiative, and makes them the true masters of the classroom.

2.2 The Shadow of the Socratic Method

Dulangkou’s classroom teaching model also bears resemblance to the Socratic Method. Also known as the midwifery method, the Socratic Method comprises: irony, midwifery, induction, and definition. It emphasizes the importance of engaging students through constant questioning, leading to a deeper understanding of the problem and a pursuit of rational understanding. However, Socrates’s ability alone was limited. Even though he is considered one of the three greatest educators of ancient Greece, his influence alone was limited. Therefore, Dulangkou Middle School employs the “Little Teacher” teaching method, which pairs students with both strong and lesser-performing students. The strong students are instrumental in motivating the lesser-performing students. While one student is presenting, others can ask questions spontaneously. This creates a “Socrates-like” atmosphere, where multiple “Little Teachers” question the students. This improves student learning efficiency, allowing them to acquire knowledge through constant questioning, being questioned, and reflection. This fosters the development of their own thinking and fosters a reflective behavior and habit, promoting their continuous development. However, we must realize that students’ abilities are limited after all, and they are not as knowledgeable as Socrates. Therefore, students’ questions also have certain limitations. The guiding role of teachers in this link is particularly important.

3. The Real Dilemma of the “Dulangkou” Teaching Model

3.1 Appropriate Subject Questions

“10+35” or “0+45” teaching model employed by Dulangkou Middle School applies to all subjects, but its applicability to

all subjects warrants further investigation. It may be more suitable for subjects like Chinese, Ideology and Morality, and English, which require high oral expression and involve more value-based knowledge. However, science subjects like physics and chemistry, which have uniformly defined concepts and principles and represent valuable experience accumulated over the course of human history, are less effectively taught by teachers. Although Dulangkou Middle School utilizes a small-group inquiry approach in physics and mathematics classes—the teacher presents a problem, the group discusses it, and different students develop their own solutions—this seemingly “happy ending” poses numerous challenges. For example, if students are solely required to prepare for the lesson on their own, how can we guarantee that some students will be able to solve the problem, let alone develop diverse approaches and approaches? Furthermore, even if some students can solve the problem, how can we guarantee that the rest of the students will learn the solution? After all, students’ abilities are limited. Even if they learn and master problem-solving methods, their cognitive level is still imperfect and their ability to express themselves is limited. This discussion format is precisely the process of training their ability to express themselves. So how can we ensure that other students can effectively learn from it? This requires further discussion.

3.2 Student Disparity

The student questioning method adopted by Dulangkou Middle School undoubtedly unleashes student autonomy and creativity and enhances communication among students. However, in such a classroom, the students who love to ask questions may be only a few children who love to learn and express themselves. In addition, after receiving recognition from other classmates and encouragement from teachers, they will participate in discussions more actively and enthusiastically. However, the remaining children, due to their own personalities or other reasons, are not good at expressing themselves or do not like to express themselves. As a result, they do not participate in the discussion and gradually feel that they have fallen outside the classroom and become bystanders of the entire class. This has led to a widening gap between students, a trend in which the strong become stronger and the weak become weaker, and it also goes against the principle that true education is to provide each child with teaching that is suitable for their physical and mental development.

3.3 Scope of Application

The success of Dulangkou Middle School’s reforms is unique. Located in a rural area with a weak faculty and facing the risk of closure and merger, Principal Cui, drawing on his own experience, took a drastic step to reform the school. Facing challenges with teachers’ limited knowledge and experience, and insufficient teaching, Principal Cui decided to empower students to learn independently. This led to the development of a unique classroom model that has become a sensation and a focal point. Under the baton of the national college entrance examination, this reform has become a truly remarkable achievement. However, is its applicability to other regions? Further exploration is needed.

4. New Thoughts on the Teaching Model of Dulangkou Middle School

The teaching model developed by Dulangkou Middle School undoubtedly has unique value in enhancing students’ expressiveness and creativity. For example, it cultivates students’ ability to express themselves and collaborate, and has an irreplaceable impact on their physical and mental development. However, we must recognize that this model appears to align with the current “double reduction” policy, which advocates reducing homework and alleviating burdens, while leaving students ample time to express themselves and meet their needs for multifaceted development. However, in reality, students’ academic burden is not as easy and enjoyable as it appears. With the baton of the college entrance examination underway, how can their grades be guaranteed? Is this due to changes in their teaching model, or are there other factors at play? In the context of the “double reduction” policy, it is worth exploring the details and using this opportunity to develop a teaching model that is suitable for students, truly conducive to their growth, and less burdensome.

4.1 The Effectiveness of the Dulangkou Teaching Reform Model Under the Background of the Double Reduction Policy

The teaching model implemented by Dulangkou Middle School seems to be in line with the double reduction policy, which reduces the amount of homework and reduces the burden on students. However, when we explore the story behind it, we find that the school provides students with 5.5 or 6 days of supplementary classes during the summer vacation [3]. It is worth considering whether the school’s achievement of ranking fourth in the county is due to the reform of the local teaching model or due to the summer supplementary classes. In addition, although students no longer have after-school homework, the pre-class preparation has undoubtedly replaced the burden of after-school homework. It seems that this burden has not been reduced, but increased. Because students have to complete a larger amount of learning tasks by themselves, their homework load has not really been reduced, and the burden has not been reduced. In order to pay attention to the summer supplementary classes, Dulangkou students not only have to make more efforts to adapt to the new teaching model during normal teaching time, but also have to work hard for college entrance examination results during the summer vacation.

4.2 New Exploration of Teaching Reform Models under the Double Reduction Policy

What kind of teaching model is needed now to increase children’s activities, reduce their burden, and simultaneously meet the needs of students and parents under the baton of the college entrance examination? It is worth considering. The teaching reform model of Dulangkou Middle School certainly provides us with many references. Its zero homework and no books need to be taken home, lively classroom atmosphere, and active student participation fully mobilize their enthusiasm for active participation in class. Based on this, we

use this as an opportunity to explore several new teaching models based on the teaching model of Dulangkou Middle School under the dual reduction policy for reference.

First, in addition to required subjects, the proportion of elective courses should be increased. These courses can be offered at fixed times, with students attending classes at their designated locations. These courses should be taught using the “Dulangkou Middle School” model. Elective courses are chosen based on students’ interests and hobbies, are not difficult, and are both relevant to students’ lives and inseparable from the course content. Courses such as economic literacy and civic morality are taught through student discussions. Similarly, no homework is assigned after class, but there is some pre-class preparation, which students can do by researching. Since these courses are designed to address the workload, the learning content is open to discussion, focusing on student self-reflection and avoiding fixed concepts or principles. Second, under the current pressure of the college entrance examination, students must master the content of compulsory subjects such as Chinese, mathematics, and English. However, different teaching methods can be adopted for different subjects. For example, Chinese and English focus on expression, and can be taught using the Dulangkou Middle School model. There is no need for extensive homework after class, and a large amount of knowledge is digested and resolved through student discussion. Due to the unique nature of the subject, which emphasizes oral communication in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, the Dulangkou Middle School teaching model not only increases student interest, cultivates their expressive and collaborative skills, fully develops their academic autonomy, fosters active classroom participation, and fosters a love of learning. Other subjects, such as mathematics and physics, follow a traditional classroom model, with teachers teaching and students learning, and assigning homework after class to consolidate their learning. This reduces the overall workload and, in some classes, fully mobilizes students’ participation. Furthermore, when implementing the Dulangkou teaching model, teachers must pay close attention to students who are less vocal and encourage them to participate in class. Teaching is for every child, requiring teachers to exercise their educational ingenuity and help those who are “onlookers” engage in the classroom. Finally, while the Dulangkou teaching model has its unique historical roots and limitations, other regions or schools cannot replicate it. However, they can adapt it to local conditions and develop teaching models that suit their specific characteristics. For example, in terms of teacher allocation, teachers of courses using traditional teaching models must undergo special training to strengthen their learning of subject knowledge and improve their teaching ability; for subjects using the Dulangkou teaching model, special training is provided to teach them how to effectively guide and encourage students under this teaching model, helping children to continuously increase their knowledge in self-study while also continuously improving their own inquiry ability, cooperation ability, and expression ability.

References

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