

The Alienation and Return of Middle School Chinese Homework Under the Background of "Double Reduction"

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Abstract

As an important basic subject, Chinese teaching is facing various problems. Under the background of "Double Reduction", middle school Chinese homework is characterized by alienation: homework is uniformly assigned, lacking pertinence; homework is mechanically designed, lacking innovation; homework feedback is rigid, lacking flexibility. To improve the quality of middle school Chinese homework, the following strategies should be adopted: assign homework at different levels and teach students in accordance with their aptitude; design diversified assignments and teach through lively activities; improve the assignments feedback mechanism and facilitate two-way interaction between students and teachers.

Keywords

Middle School Chinese Homework; "Double Reduction"; Alienation; Return.

1. Introduction

The introduction of the "Double Reduction" policy is intended to reduce the learning burden of students, including alleviating students' homework stress. The original intention of Chinese homework is to improve students' ability to use Chinese language and cultivate students' humanistic qualities. In this process, students' subjectivity and initiative are crucial. Only when teachers appropriately design and arrange homework and students are really involved in the completion of homework, can middle school Chinese homework return to its original function, and middle school Chinese education return to its true value.

2. Interpretation of the Development Direction of Middle School Chinese Homework Under the Policy of "Double Reduction"

In July 2021, the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the General Office of the State Council issued "Opinions on Further Reducing the Burden of Students' Homework and Off-campus Training in Compulsory Education", which clearly pointed out that "reduce the total amount and duration of homework in an all-round way and reduce the burden of heavy homework on students".

As an important part of teaching, Chinese homework is an important factor affecting Chinese teaching. Optimizing the design of Chinese homework, improving students' interest in homework, and strengthening the awareness of homework effects can improve students' ability of autonomous learning and independent thinking, thus ensuring the overall improvement of students' Chinese ability, and achieving the goal of reducing burden and increasing efficiency. The purpose of "Double Reduction" is not to eliminate the burden of study, but to reduce the meaningless burden for students. It can provide students with individualized development and release their vitality. Subtracting students' passive learning and increasing students' initiative can make learning more meaningful. "According to the requirements of the

new curriculum, to realize the transformation of roles and to cultivate students' learning attitude, thinking ability, innovation consciousness and practical ability, the concept of education and teaching must turn to focus on students' learning and development. It is to change from teachers' teaching to students' learning. " [1]. In order to promote the new curriculum concept, implement the policy of "Double Reduction", and improve the quality of Chinese teaching, teachers need to innovate the design and arrangement of homework, so that students, who play the subjective role, can develop continuously in the process of learning. "Double Reduction" is a process of reducing quantity and increasing efficiency. Due to the development of subjective initiative, Students learn to take more responsibility for their learning. They gradually take learning as their own business rather than relying on the supervision of their teachers and parents.

Under the background of "Double Reduction", we should pay attention to the independence of middle school Chinese homework, and we can't regard Chinese homework as an accessory of Chinese teaching. As an integral part of Chinese teaching, Chinese homework is the continuation and supplement of Chinese classroom teaching, which can also further consolidate and strengthen students' knowledge based on the characteristics of Chinese subjects. The completion of Chinese homework is also important feedback from students on teaching, and the design of homework can be gradually improved by teachers on this basis. At the same time, middle school Chinese homework should be practical. "Chinese homework is more practical compared with assignments of other subjects, allowing students to deepen their understanding of knowledge through practical assignments; Chinese homework is easier to be connected with other subjects, giving full play to the advantages of interdisciplinary learning in Chinese." [2]. Chinese is a subject that is closely related to real life and has strong practicality. In Chinese classroom teaching, relevant practical experience can help students with situational imagination and immersion. "Lack of practicality results in a relatively simple form of Chinese homework and lack of richness in connotations, which are mainly manifested in the unrealistic setting of homework, students' lack of task-driven force and their limited Chinese ability development." [3]. It is necessary to give full play to the practicality of Chinese homework and maximize the function and role of it.

3. The Phenomenon of Alienation in the Current Middle School Chinese Homework

At present, there are still many problems in the design and arrangement of Chinese homework in middle schools. "The current homework situation has problems as follows: homework design is casual, lacking planning; homework design is utilitarian, lacking interest; homework design is based on teachers, lacking students' participation; homework is rigid and mechanically designed, lacking pertinence; the main form of homework is written work, listening, speaking and reading are less involved; content of homework is limited to the textbook and separate from the reality of life, lacking practicality; homework design is isolated from other subjects, lacking innovation; homework is oriented toward all students, lacking hierarchy; homework answers are fixed, lacking space for innovation and development." [4]. These problems are mainly manifested in three aspects: homework is uniformly assigned; homework is mechanically designed; home feedback is rigid and inflexible.

3.1. Homework Is Uniformly Assigned, Lacking Pertinence

3.1.1. Homework Design Lacks Pertinence

The most obvious manifestation of uniform homework is lack of pertinence in the design of it. Teachers usually attach importance to classroom teaching and despise homework arrangements, regarding homework as a form. In the process of designing and arranging

homework, teachers ignore students' specific learning situation and generally arrange homework. There is no distinction between the specific ability of students with the same homework, the role of homework cannot be fully exerted.

3.1.2. Lack of Pertinence for Students at All Levels

Homework can provide an objective reference for testing students' learning outcomes, and through this feedback, teachers can maximize their understanding of students' learning to better teach. Students' different mastery of the relevant content leads to different levels of difficulty for the same assignment for students at all levels. However, in the actual teaching process, teachers usually vaguely divide students due to lack of pertinence for students' learning situation, resulting in uniform arrangements of homework.

3.2. Homework Is Mechanically Designed, Lacking Innovation

3.2.1. Homework Design and Arrangement Lack Innovation

First, the form of homework lacks innovation. In traditional teaching, the exercises assigned by teachers are often similar with those attached to the textbooks and those in the main tutorial books in the market. Teachers do not develop and innovate the form of homework, resulting in students' lack of creative thinking. Second, the content of homework lacks innovation. In the process of Chinese teaching, teachers place the knowledge in the textbook in the most important position. Most of the homework is relevant to the content of textbook, and there is no innovation, which further leads to a low degree of homework innovation. Finally, students lack enthusiasm for innovation, and they pay less attention to the innovation in homework completion. Students are the principal part of homework completion, and innovation of homework is closely related to students. The creativity of students is directly linked to the improvement of innovation of homework itself, which requires teachers' correct guidance.

3.2.2. Homework Is Complex And Repetitive

Complex and repetitive homework currently has become a problem that cannot be ignored. With the development of society, parents, teachers and schools are extremely concerned about students' academic performance. Among the various and complex means and methods to improve students' academic performance, homework is the most important and direct way. For students with different learning conditions, to prevent the omission of relevant knowledge or inadequate revision, the phenomenon of "generality" often appears in the design of homework, resulting in a surge in the amount of homework assignments. At the same time, the application of different teaching auxiliary materials also increases the probability of repetition of homework content, resulting in complex and repetitive homework content.

3.2.3. Homework Is Rigid

The content of homework is often directly linked to, or even equated with that of exams, ignoring the independent function of homework. As a result, homework content is always rigidly confined to the so-called test points, lacking pioneering. Rigid homework cannot effectively stimulate students' initiative and positivity and reduce students' enthusiasm for learning in the long run. Moreover, it is easy for teachers to form an inherent impression in the process of arranging homework, so that they are unable to get inspiration for homework design.

3.3. Homework Feedback Is Rigid and Inflexible

3.3.1. Form of Homework Feedback Is Monotonous

Teachers have a fixed mode to refer to in marking and evaluating students' homework in most situations. Homework feedback, which occurs at the end of the teaching process, takes a relatively short time. Consequently, teachers often ignore the importance of homework feedback and even apply the existing ones directly. The form of homework feedback is monotonous, which is also reflected in the single feedback channel rather than a variety of

channels for interaction between students and teachers. Besides, the obvious difference between students with academic difficulties and those with excellent academic performance should also be taken into consideration in the interactive process.

3.3.2. Students' Thinking Pattern Is Fixed

Firstly, the form of homework is too traditional and fixed, which limits the innovation of students' feedback. Students follow a rigid pattern to finish their homework rather than innovating new forms of feedback. Secondly, students' repulsion of doing homework also exacerbates the rigidity of homework feedback. Students have a wide range of subjects to learn and a large amount of homework to finish and they are so overwhelmed by the tasks required. Because of the heavy homework burden, students have stronger repulsion for homework. As a result, they will lose confidence in homework feedback.

3.3.3. Teachers Do Not Value Homework Feedback Enough

The specific learning situation of each student can be directly and completely reflected through homework. But in the actual process of teaching, teachers tend to ignore homework feedback and the individual differences of students, and solve the problems exposed in homework feedback in general terms. However, the arrangement and feedback of homework should be a two-way interaction between students and teachers. Only when the two-way interaction forms a positive and flowing closed loop can teachers understand the specific learning situation of students through homework feedback. And students can also self-examine and introspect to find and fill in the gaps. Only if teachers start to pay more attention to homework feedback can they further strengthen students' awareness of the importance of homework feedback.

4. Ways to Return the Original Functions of Middle School Chinese Homework

"In order to build an efficient classroom, many teachers have started to readjust their teaching strategies, carefully design students' classwork and homework and clarify the relevant requirements for homework assignments to ensure that what they have designed can consolidate students' knowledge and help students find and fill in the gaps in the specific progress of classroom teaching and students' knowledge absorption. Over the course of Chinese teaching reform in middle schools, the arrangement of Chinese homework will directly affect students' interest in learning and the quality of classroom teaching." [5] Based on the above problems, we can formulate the following strategies to improve the quality of middle school Chinese homework.

4.1. Assign Homework at Different Levels and Teach Students in Accordance with Their Aptitude

According to the specific learning conditions of different students, the hierarchical design of middle school Chinese homework is helpful to tackle the problem of "one size fits all" in homework design and arrangement. Students can have access to different types of homework options based on their own learning needs. The purpose of enriching and opening the homework list is to arrange homework reasonably for students at all levels, so that students can complete the homework based on their own ability and can enhance their capabilities through relevant training. It is an important manifestation of educational equity to give consideration to all students and help every student achieve balanced development.

4.1.1. Basic Assignments

In the design and arrangement of assignments, basic assignments are aimed at consolidating students' basic knowledge to ensure their follow-up deep learning and development rather than at repeated practice of prerequisite knowledge. For example, before studying *Wolves*, a story written by Pu Songling, a reasonable preview task can be arranged so that students can

find out the uncommon words in the article and understand them with the help of relevant learning tools and the context of the article. This can not only help students retain the meaning of words, but also help to cultivate students' ability to solve basic problems.

4.1.2. Development Assignments

On the premise of mastering the prerequisite knowledge, students should be allowed to analyze information and solve problems through further understanding, absorption, induction and reasoning, so as to meet the higher learning needs of relative students. Development assignments are conducive to the development of students' thinking and vision, and can enhance students' interest in autonomous learning. For example, when teaching the article *Wolves* mentioned above, teachers can ask students to discuss about the truth behind the story. This requires students to grasp the core clues of the article after analyzing the plots of the story and summarize the main idea of the article. Besides, it's also an opportunity to guide students' emotional attitudes and values.

4.1.3. Group Assignments

Group assignments enables students to share what they have learned with others and to improve their communication as well as teamwork skills. Team collaboration also requires students to put the knowledge they have learned into practice. For example, after teaching the article *Wolves*, teachers can ask students to find partners to do role plays together concerning the main plots of the story. The final presentation in groups can not only stimulate the students' enthusiasm to participate, but also enrich the feedback forms of assignments.

4.2. Design Diversified Homework and Teach Through Lively Activities

Both the form and content of homework should not be confined to one mode. Students should be given opportunities to have fun while doing their homework.

4.2.1. Practical Assignments

Chinese learning is inseparable with our real life, and it is also an important way of exploring life. Practical assignments enable students to understand and experience life with multiple senses. During the process, students can combine learning and life-experiencing together and enhance their understanding of the beauty of life through different practice methods. Case in point, when learning *A Waterfall of Purple Wisteria Vines*, an article written by Zong Pu, students can be asked to look for wisteria in their neighborhoods and take pictures of the flowers. By doing this, students can not only be guided to observe the details and discover the beauty in life by recording the attractive things around them, but also to integrate what they have learned with real life and cultivate their literacy skills.

4.2.2. Family-engaging Assignments

As an essential environment for students to study and live in, home is as important as school in terms of learning. To some extent, we can even say it is the first place where students gain knowledge. And parents, as primary educators of children in a family, can exert a subtle, profound and long-lasting influence on the learners. Based on this fact, some appropriately designed family-engaging homework can encourage students and parents to take part together and help to establish a harmonious parent-child relationship. And the necessity of this type of assignments can be fully reflected in the process of learning *The Sight of Father's Back*, an essay written by Zhu Ziqing. Students can be guided to perceive how much time and energy their parents have invested to bring them up through asking them to compare their parents' looks in the past and present. Parents are also advised to provide their children with some information about their own youth so that they are involved in the process of their children's homework completion.

4.2.3. Interdisciplinary Assignments

Students have more core subjects to study than before in middle schools. While these different disciplines have their own characteristics, they are not completely irrelevant with each other. Middle school Chinese teachers can design and arrange interdisciplinary assignments to help students integrate the knowledge of different subjects they have learned, thus forming an associative knowledge network, which is conducive to cultivating students' innovative thinking and comprehensive abilities. For instance, when teaching Ode to the Yellow River, a poem written by Guang Weiran, teachers can assign students tasks to search for information related to the history of the Yellow River and organize the data in chronological order. They can also ask students to mark the source and main tributaries of the Yellow River on the map. In this way, different disciplines of Chinese, history and geography are brought together, and students can have a good command of them all.

4.2.4. Reading Assignments

"Chinese reading assignments have always been a very important topic in the Chinese education field. And it is of great significance to students' improvement of reading ability and to their habit formation. Moreover, it can contribute to students' individualized development." [6] Reading is an important way of cultivating students' comprehension skills. By the time they reach secondary school, students will already have developed a certain degree of independent learning and reading abilities. On this basis, an appropriate amount of reading assignments can add to students' store of knowledge, broaden their horizons, and cultivate their spirituality. For example, when teaching Jane Eyre, Chinese teachers can hold a book reading meeting to allow students to share their understanding of the spiritual theme in Jane Eyre.

4.3. Improve the Assignments Feedback Mechanism and Facilitate Two-Way Interaction Between Students and Teachers

4.3.1. Teachers and Students Should Work Together to Better the Homework Designing and Grading System

Homework is an important way for teachers to check students' learning performance and for students to test their own knowledge, and the process of homework feedback is an important part of teacher-student interaction. Teachers and students are linked closely together in the whole process of design, arrangement and completion of homework. When teachers assign homework, students can point out the problems they find. In this way, teachers can adjust and optimize the homework according to the actual situation. For example, in the procedure of designing some flexible assignments, such as essays, teachers should find out the popular social issues and understand students' interests in advance and adjust the essay topic selection according to the requirements of the students so as to provide students with multiple choices. In terms of grading the essays, teachers can also introduce the method of PeerMark, allowing students to evaluate each other. In this way, students can have a more comprehensive view of the areas that need to be improved in their articles according to their teacher's evaluation and the opinions of their classmates. As a result, students can know and make up their weaknesses to improve their quality of learning.

4.3.2. Teachers Should Improve Teaching Quality Via Homework Management

Homework is a significant part in teaching for teachers to master students' learning performance. Teachers should mark the homework in time after students hand in their homework to get knowledge of how students have learnt, thereby adjusting their teaching plan according to students' weak points in the follow-up teaching process and improving their teaching efficiency. The scientific management of homework by teachers can maximize the feedback function of homework and help teacher to design and arrange homework more

appropriately. As a result, students can achieve better results while doing a less amount of homework.

5. Conclusion

Overall, under the background of "Double Reduction", the reform and innovation of middle school Chinese homework is vital and necessary. We should tackle the problem of the alienation in middle school Chinese homework to evoke its intrinsic nature and improve its quality.

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