

# Exploration of dilemmas and paths in primary school after-school services from the ecosystem perspective

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**Abstract.** After-school services play a crucial role in implementing the "Double Reduction" policy, but practical implementation faces issues such as inadequate content, low participation, and incomplete systems. Addressing these dilemmas has become a key focus in education. This study aims to explore factors influencing the quality of primary school after-school services and propose feasible policy recommendations. Guided by ecosystem theory, the research involves observations of three after-school service scenarios and semi-structured interviews with teachers, parents, and students. It identifies problems including unbalanced program design, poor content quality, uneven effectiveness, insufficient resource collaboration, and weak supervision. Corresponding countermeasures are proposed from micro, meso, and macro levels based on the ecosystem perspective. The systematic analysis of after-school services enriches research perspectives in this field, and the recommendations provide valuable insights for promoting multi-stakeholder cooperation among schools, communities, and policymakers.

**Keywords:** ecosystem theory, after-school services, "Double Reduction" policy, home-school cooperation

## 1. Introduction

With the intensification of academic "involution", students' academic burden and pressure from off-campus training have been increasingly aggravated. To address this challenge, in 2021, the General Office of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council issued the *Opinions on Further Reducing the Burden of Homework and Off-Campus Training for Students in Compulsory Education* [1], launching the full-scale advancement of the "Double Reduction" initiative aimed at promoting educational equity. After-school services have thus become a key component of China's education reform. As early as 2017, the General Office of the Ministry of Education issued the *Guiding Opinions on Doing a Good Job in After-School Services for Primary and Secondary School Students* [2], explicitly designating primary and secondary schools as the main venues for after-school services and emphasizing the implementation of the "Double Reduction" policy through high-quality services. Local governments have actively responded by developing diverse after-school services covering homework tutoring, independent reading, sports activities, and extended training [3]. According to a survey by Gao Wei and other scholars on 83 primary and secondary schools in 25 districts and counties across 7 provinces including Hubei and Henan, after-school services have

basically achieved full coverage [4], with a higher popularity rate in urban areas than in towns and townships [5].

As an important people's livelihood project, after-school services refer to the care and diversified educational services provided by schools to students upon the entrustment of their guardians outside normal teaching hours. In the process of implementation, the after-school service policy embodies values such as educational equity, inclusiveness, and emphasis on students' individuality [6], which are highly consistent with the needs of students' all-round development. Studies have also shown that after-school services have achieved remarkable results in alleviating students' academic pressure and solving parents' childcare difficulties [7]. However, the rapid expansion of after-school services has exposed multiple dilemmas, which have been explored in depth from various dimensions in existing research. Previous studies have pointed out that the curriculum content is highly homogenized, making it difficult to meet students' individual needs and resulting in low participation enthusiasm and poor teaching effectiveness [8]; the collaboration between home and school is insufficient, with parents having limited understanding of after-school services and weak willingness to participate [9]; resource development relies excessively on schools, with insufficient introduction of high-quality external resources [10]; the management system is lacking, as after-school services are simply equated with ordinary curriculum management without a targeted guarantee system [11]. Existing research has discussed the dilemmas and improvement strategies of after-school services from the perspectives of resources, curriculum, content, environment, or the participation of relevant stakeholders. Nevertheless, most of these studies explore the current situation, problems, and countermeasures of primary school after-school services from a single perspective, lacking a systematic approach and failing to present a complete ecological picture of the issue.

The ecosystem theory emphasizes the interactive connections between individuals and multiple systems such as families, schools, and society [12], which is highly compatible with the complex ecological environment of after-school services and possesses unique explanatory power. Guided by this theory, this study systematically analyzes the dilemmas of primary school after-school services from the micro, meso, and macro levels and explores optimization paths. This not only enriches the theoretical system of after-school services but also provides operable solutions for improving the practice of after-school services, thereby promoting their high-quality development.

## 2. Research method

This study adopts a case study method, selecting S Primary School in D City, a southern province with early implementation of after-school services, as the research case. Through observational methods and semi-structured interviews, a multi-dimensional investigation of after-school services at S Primary School in Dongguan was conducted to collect first-hand research data. The specific implementation is as follows:

### 2.1. Implementation of field observations

The researchers conducted three field observations of after-school services at S Primary School, selecting scenarios including self-study classrooms, music classrooms, and playgrounds, covering three typical types of after-school services: academic, artistic, and outdoor activities. At the student level, the focus was on recording participation and interaction frequency; at the teacher level, the main observations included teaching methods, classroom management, and interaction guidance styles. Field notes were taken throughout the observations to identify practical problems in the operation of the services.

## 2.2. Selection of interviewees and data analysis

In-depth interviews were conducted with 13 stakeholders. To ensure the representativeness of the research subjects, interviewees with different backgrounds, experiences, and balanced gender ratios were selected. Specifically, the interviewees included: 6 students, selected through stratified random sampling with 2 participants from each grade (Grades 4 to 6), 3 males and 3 females; 3 parents, selected through paired sampling with 1 parent from each grade of the interviewed students; 3 teachers and 1 academic director, selected based on differences in curriculum types and experience, including a male teacher of cultural self-study (5 years of experience), a female teacher of music extension courses (2 years of experience), a male teacher of sports extension courses (4 years of experience), and 1 academic director. The interviews combined preset outlines with dynamic follow-up questions, covering core topics such as perceptions of the current situation of after-school services, discussions on existing problems, and solicitation of improvement suggestions.

After completing the above observations and interviews, the researchers analyzed the 13 interview transcripts and 3 observation notes using three-level coding. The specific process included three steps: first, the researchers screened the original data, eliminated invalid information, and extracted 34 initial concepts through open coding, such as "barriers to introducing external resources" and "perfunctory learning in quality-oriented courses"; second, through axial coding, they clustered the concepts into 3 main categories and 8 sub-categories based on semantic relevance and ecosystem levels; third, through selective coding, they extracted the core category of this study and the logical chain between the core category, main categories, and sub-categories. To ensure the accuracy of the collected data, triangulation was adopted through cross-validation of observations and interviews, as well as verification from students, teachers, and parents, to ensure the credibility and explanatory power of the research findings. All interviews and observations were recorded (audio and written) with informed consent, and confidentiality and anonymization were implemented.

## 2.3. Presentation of coding results

To clearly present the data analysis outcomes, based on the above three-level coding, the researchers extracted the core category of "ecological imbalance in primary school after-school services" from the interview and observation data, along with 3 main categories and 8 sub-categories from the ecosystem perspective. The specific results of the three-level coding are shown below (Table 1):

**Table 1.** Presentation of coding results

Core Category (Level 3)	Main Categories (Level 2)	Sub-categories (Level 1)	Initial Concepts (Partial Examples)
		Unbalanced Curriculum	Extension of subject education (D1)
		Design	Academic supplementary classes (A2)
Micro: Imbalanced Service	Insufficient Content		Lack of teaching training (C1)
Effectiveness	Quality		Scarcity of interest-based courses (B2)
		Inefficient Service	Difficulty in maintaining discipline (C2)
		Implementation	Lack of differentiated progress (C1)

Table 1. (continued)

Ecological Imbalance in Primary School After-School Services	Meso: Dilemmas in Resource Integration	Obstacles to Resource Introduction	Strict resource review (C3) Ambiguous division of powers and responsibilities (C1)
	Macro: Superficial Supervision and Evaluation	Insufficient Home-School Collaboration Ambiguous Policy Implementation Ineffective Evaluation and Supervision	Lack of connection mechanisms (A1) Unclear performance dimensions (D1) Inconsistent assessment methods (C2) Only collecting satisfaction (C1) No parental participation in evaluation (A2)

### 3. Dilemmas and causes of primary school after-school services

Based on the field observations and interview data of S Primary School mentioned above, the core category of "ecological imbalance in primary school after-school services" was extracted through three-level coding, which was further decomposed into problem dimensions at the micro, meso, and macro levels. The following will conduct an in-depth analysis of the dilemmas and causes of after-school services at S Primary School around these three levels, combined with specific data from the coding results.

#### 3.1. Micro level: imbalanced service effectiveness caused by cognitive biases of individuals

The micro level is the core circle closest to individuals in the ecosystem, mainly involving the interactive relationships between direct participants such as teachers, students, and parents. In the practice of after-school services at S Primary School, the dilemmas at this level are concentrated in unbalanced curriculum design, insufficient content quality, and differentiated service effectiveness. The root causes of these problems lie in the cognitive biases and demand mismatches of various subjects.

##### 3.1.1. Unbalanced curriculum design

In terms of curriculum proportion, the design of after-school services is dominated by basic care and academic remediation, with a time ratio of 4:1 between basic care/academic courses and quality-oriented extension courses. This structural arrangement is not an isolated case but reflects the cognitive tendency of schools, parents, and teachers towards after-school services. Under the inertia of exam-oriented education, all parties generally regard after-school services as an "extension of school education" rather than an independent educational link.

The cognitive bias at the school level is particularly prominent. As mentioned by the academic director of the school in the interview: "After-school services must first ensure that students complete their homework, which is what parents care most about". This positioning makes the curriculum design tilt towards academic courses, while quality-oriented extension courses become "ornaments" and are sometimes temporarily canceled due to exam review and other reasons.

Parents' cognition further reinforces this imbalance. In the interviews, many parents equated after-school services with "academic supplementary classes". For example, Parent A2 directly stated: "I send my child to after-school services hoping that the teacher can supervise him to finish his homework, and preferably help

him make up for weak knowledge points; quality-oriented courses are just for fun". This demand is particularly strong among parents of senior grades facing academic pressure. Parent A1 clearly expressed: "My child is about to enter junior high school; after-school services should focus more on studies. Improving grades is more important than anything else".

Teachers' curriculum design is also affected by this. Since school assessments pay more attention to students' homework completion rate and academic performance, most teachers unconsciously focus their energy on homework tutoring in after-school services, with relatively limited investment in quality-oriented courses. Teacher C2 mentioned: "No one monitors the progress of quality-oriented courses in after-school services, nor are they the focus of assessments. I don't prepare lessons as carefully as I do for regular classes". This cognitive bias leads to the marginalization of quality-oriented extension courses, making it difficult for them to play a role in cultivating students' interests and promoting their all-round development.

### 3.1.2. Poor content quality

The insufficient quality of after-school service content is essentially a mismatch between teachers' professional capabilities and students' diverse needs, and the core cause of this mismatch is the lack of specialized training. Although the after-school service courses at S Primary School cover multiple categories such as sports, music, and art, the depth and professionalism of the content are obviously insufficient, making it difficult to meet the increasingly diverse needs of students. For example, the go course is taught by a math teacher who has a hobby foundation but lacks systematic go teaching qualifications; the calligraphy course is taught by a Chinese teacher whose own calligraphy level only meets daily writing needs and cannot provide professional guidance.

A more prominent problem is the absence of specialized training for after-school services. The school's teacher training system mainly focuses on daily teaching, with almost no specialized training for after-school services. Teacher C1 mentioned in the interview: "The school organizes many teaching seminars on Chinese and math every semester, but never holds specialized training on after-school services. For the dance course I teach, many movement designs and classroom organization methods are learned through my own exploration, and sometimes I feel incompetent". According to the teacher's estimate, due to the lack of professional guidance, the time spent preparing for after-school services is more than 30% longer than that for regular courses, and it is still difficult to ensure the content quality.

The mismatch between students' needs and curriculum supply further highlights the quality problem. With the improvement of social requirements for comprehensive quality, students' expectations for after-school services have shifted from "simple relaxation" to "ability improvement", but the existing curriculum content is obviously lagging behind. For example, fifth-grade students generally have an interest in science and technology courses such as programming and robotics, but the school has not offered relevant courses due to the lack of professional teachers. This supply-demand imbalance leads to a gradual decrease in interest in after-school services among some students, and even the phenomenon of "passive participation".

### 3.1.3. Differentiated service effectiveness

The differentiation of after-school service effectiveness is the most intuitive dilemma at the micro level, mainly reflected in the learning experience and achievement presentation of students in different grades and with different academic foundations. This differentiation stems from the objective existence of class hour constraints and individual differences.

From the time dimension, the single session of after-school services at the school is about 90 minutes, but the actual effective teaching time is seriously compressed. In lower-grade classrooms, teachers need to spend a lot of time maintaining discipline. Although discipline problems are less in higher grades, due to the increase in students' homework load, basic care courses are almost occupied by homework, and the actual teaching

time of quality-oriented extension courses is squeezed to less than 40 minutes, making it difficult to achieve the preset teaching goals.

From the perspective of individual differences, there are significant differences in students' knowledge foundations and interests. However, due to constraints on venues or manpower, the curriculum design of after-school services often adopts a unified teaching progress, lacking targeted hierarchical teaching. This "one-size-fits-all" service model makes it difficult for students with different foundations to obtain appropriate development, and the service effectiveness is naturally greatly reduced.

### 3.2. Meso level: resource integration constrained by collaboration barriers

The meso level is the intermediate circle connecting micro individuals and the macro environment in the ecosystem, mainly involving the interactive relationships between schools and families, communities, social institutions, and other subjects. In the practice of after-school services at S Primary School, the core dilemma at this level is the obstruction of introducing social resources, and the failure to effectively form a home-school-community collaboration network, leading to a single source of resource supply and making it difficult to meet the needs of high-quality development of after-school services. From the perspective of resource supply channels, the resources for after-school services at S Primary School are highly dependent on the school itself, with extremely low participation of external resources. Among the existing after-school service courses of the school, more than 90% of the content is independently developed by in-school teachers, and less than 10% of the courses involve external resources. The cooperative partners are mostly government public venues, with content mainly focusing on visits and explanations, lacking in-depth educational interaction, and there is no cooperation with enterprises or professional training institutions.

The direct reason for the obstruction of introducing external resources is the "high-threshold" access mechanism set by the school. Out of consideration for student safety and educational quality, as well as the ambiguity at the policy level, the school has formulated a strict review process for the introduction of external resources. It not only needs to go through the filing and approval of the Education Bureau but also the joint inspection of the school's Academic Affairs Office and Moral Education Office. Teacher C3 explained: "Schools have a special nature. No one can afford the responsibility if a safety incident occurs". Although this cautious attitude is reasonable, excessively strict reviews have discouraged many high-quality resources.

A deeper reason lies in the lack of cooperation mechanisms. On the one hand, the division of powers and responsibilities between the school and external resources is ambiguous, and there is a lack of clear cooperation agreements. For example, a community library once proposed to cooperate in carrying out "reading extension courses", but the cooperation failed to materialize due to issues such as the division of safety responsibilities and curriculum quality standards. On the other hand, there is a lack of sustainable guarantee mechanisms for resource introduction. The participation of external institutions is mostly public welfare in nature, lacking the motivation for long-term investment. The interviewed Teacher C1 revealed: "A friend who runs an art institution once wanted to provide guzheng courses for our school for free, but required the school to bear the cost of musical instrument maintenance. The school leaders refused on the grounds of tight funds".

In addition, insufficient home-school collaboration also restricts the effectiveness of resource integration. Among the parent group of S Primary School, there are many talents with professional expertise, but the school has not established an effective resource development mechanism. Parent A3, a member of the parent-teacher association, mentioned: "I am engaged in robot research and development. I once wanted to give a popular science course to the children, but I didn't know who to contact, and it didn't happen in the end".

From the perspective of ecosystem theory, the collaboration barriers at the meso level are essentially a manifestation of the imbalance of "powers, responsibilities, and interests" among various subjects: schools are overly cautious due to bearing main responsibilities, external resources have insufficient motivation to participate due to lack of guarantees, and parents find it difficult to effectively participate due to lack of channels. This imbalance leads to a "closed" characteristic of the after-school service resource ecosystem, making it difficult to form a diversified supply system of "in-school + external" and "professional + public welfare".

### 3.3. Macro level: superficial supervision caused by crude systems

The macro level is the outer circle in the ecosystem, mainly involving environmental factors such as policies and regulations, institutional frameworks, and social culture. In the practice of after-school services at S Primary School, the core dilemma at this level is the imperfection of the evaluation and supervision system. The crudeness of institutional design leads to superficial supervision, which is difficult to form effective constraints and guidance on the quality of after-school services.

From the perspective of policy implementation, although the relevant documents issued by the D Municipal Education Bureau put forward principled requirements for the assessment and evaluation of after-school services, the provisions are relatively vague and lack operable detailed rules. For example, the document requires "schools to formulate assessment methods in combination with actual conditions, reflecting factors such as workload and work performance", but does not clarify "how to quantify workload" and "what dimensions are included in work performance", resulting in varied assessment methods and inconsistent standards among schools.

The evaluation and supervision system of S Primary School is a direct manifestation of this policy crudeness. The school's assessment method is formulated independently by the Academic Affairs Office, mainly including two parts: first, "teaching achievement assessment", focusing on the year-end exhibition; second, "student satisfaction scoring", collecting students' satisfaction evaluations of teachers through year-end questionnaires. This assessment method seems comprehensive but actually has serious flaws: first, the teaching achievement assessment standards ignore individual progress and are difficult to reflect teachers' actual investment. This "result-oriented" assessment makes teachers more inclined to focus on cultivating students with good foundations while neglecting tutoring for underachievers. Second, student satisfaction scoring has obvious subjective biases. Lower-grade students' scores are mostly affected by "whether the teacher is strict", while higher-grade students pay more attention to "whether the course is relaxed", which has a weak correlation with teaching quality. The interviewed Teacher C1 said helplessly: "I strictly require homework quality, but my satisfaction score is much lower than that of teachers who let students move freely in class. This is very unfair".

The absence of parents in evaluation and supervision further weakens the supervision effectiveness. In the after-school service evaluation system of S Primary School, parents have almost no channels for participation, and can only understand the service situation through students' oral accounts or occasional open days. Due to the lack of visual presentation of most after-school service outcomes, parents find it difficult to accurately judge the service quality. Parent A2 said in the interview: "My child said the go course is fun, but I have no idea what he learned, and I can't put forward suggestions to the school". This information asymmetry makes it difficult for parents to play a supervisory role, and schools cannot optimize curriculum design based on parents' feedback.

The superficiality of supervision and evaluation ultimately leads to insufficient attention paid by teachers to after-school services. Since the assessment results have a low correlation with professional title evaluation

and selection of excellent teachers, most teachers regard after-school services as an "additional burden" and lack the motivation for active innovation. The interviewed Teacher C3 admitted: "Anyway, the assessment is just a formality. There is no need to spend too much energy designing courses; just teach according to the old way". This mentality directly leads to the long-term solidification of after-school service content, making it difficult to adapt to changes in students' needs.

From the perspective of ecosystem theory, the crudeness of institutions at the macro level is essentially a double lack of "constraint mechanisms" and "incentive mechanisms": there are no clear standards to constrain the behaviors of schools and teachers, nor effective incentives to guide all parties to take the initiative to improve. This institutional environment makes after-school services fall into a vicious circle of "low quality—low recognition—even less attention", making it difficult to break through development bottlenecks.

## **4. Optimization paths of primary school after-school services from the ecosystem perspective**

In response to the aforementioned problems such as unbalanced after-school service design, insufficient content quality, obstructed resource introduction, and lack of supervision and evaluation, this study proposes systematic optimization paths from the micro, meso, and macro levels based on the ecosystem theory, aiming to build a multi-stakeholder collaborative and dynamically balanced after-school service ecosystem.

### **4.1. Micro level: reshape individual cognition and improve service effectiveness**

The micro level focuses on optimizing the cognition and behaviors of subjects such as teachers, students, and parents. By balancing curriculum design, strengthening teacher team building, and scientifically planning class hours, the core contradiction of insufficient service effectiveness is addressed.

#### **4.1.1. Balance curriculum design and deepen the concept of all-round education**

In response to the imbalanced structure between basic care and quality-oriented extension courses mentioned in the interviews, schools need to reconstruct the curriculum system guided by the concept of "promoting all-round development through five aspects of education". The proportion of quality-oriented extension courses can be increased to about 50%, and hierarchical design can be carried out according to students' age characteristics: lower grades focus on interest enlightenment such as art and sports to alleviate the problem of "difficulty in managing classroom discipline in lower grades"; higher grades add courses such as scientific and technological practice and career experience to respond to students' demand of "being interested in programming and robotics courses but not having them offered".

At the same time, it is necessary to strengthen the value cognition of after-school services among all parties. Schools can systematically explain the educational functions of after-school services through parent schools and teacher training. By organizing "after-school service achievement exhibitions" to intuitively present the effects of quality-oriented education through students' works and activity videos, the parents' cognition that "quality-oriented courses are not important" is reversed, and the problem of curriculum imbalance at the micro level is solved from the root.

#### **4.1.2. Strengthen teacher team building and improve the quality of service supply**

To resolve the contradiction between teachers' capabilities and students' needs and address issues such as high time costs for lesson preparation, schools need to build a teacher optimization mechanism of "hierarchical training + diversified introduction". Schools should incorporate specialized training for after-school services into the teacher development system and carry out thematic training on interdisciplinary teaching methods and

curriculum design every semester. For example, cooperation with universities can be carried out to design "STEAM education capability improvement courses" to solve the problem of "insufficient professional capabilities when math teachers teach go courses and Chinese teachers teach calligraphy courses"; an "after-school service innovation fund" can be established to provide financial support for teachers who develop characteristic courses, encouraging teachers to take the initiative to optimize curriculum content and improve the current situation of "insufficient depth of quality-oriented course content".

#### 4.1.3. Scientifically plan class hours to achieve targeted services

Optimizing after-school service hours needs to balance efficiency and quality. In response to the problem that effective after-school service time is squeezed by homework time, a "flexible segmented system" can be adopted, dividing the 90-minute service time into three modules: homework tutoring, interest extension, and personalized guidance; to address the problem of differentiated student foundations and interests, students can be divided into "basic consolidation groups" and "ability improvement groups" according to their academic foundations, with teachers providing targeted tutoring respectively, avoiding the crude "one-size-fits-all" model and improving the pertinence of after-school services.

At the same time, a dynamic adjustment mechanism should be established. The rationality of curriculum hours should be regularly evaluated through student questionnaires and parent feedback. For popular courses, the number of class hours can be increased or multiple sessions can be offered; for courses with low participation, the content should be optimized or deleted in a timely manner. Through the above dynamic adjustments, more students can obtain targeted services.

### 4.2. Meso level: break collaboration barriers and integrate diversified resources

The meso level focuses on building collaboration mechanisms between schools, families, and society. By developing social resources, activating parental forces, and standardizing resource access, an open and shared service ecosystem is constructed.

#### 4.2.1. Expand social resources and build a collaborative education network

In response to the problem of obstructed introduction of external resources, schools need to establish a linkage mechanism of "government leadership, school main body, and social participation". Education departments can compile a *Catalogue of Social Resources for After-School Services*, selecting high-quality institutions such as science and technology museums, museums, and enterprises, clarifying cooperation content and safety norms, and breaking the barrier of "strict access review for external resources". To address the lack of external resources, existing experiences can be learned from to establish an "after-school service resource coordination team", which is composed of community workers and school teachers to sort out local talents and venue resources and develop "community classrooms". For example, retired teachers can be invited to offer calligraphy courses to make up for the shortage of "single in-school resources and insufficient introduction of external resources".

#### 4.2.2. Activate parental resources and build a home-school co-education model

The development of parental resources needs to shift from "passive participation" to "active empowerment". Schools can establish a "parental resource database", understand parents' occupations and expertise through questionnaire surveys, and form volunteer teams such as "scientific guidance groups" by category. For example, engineer parents can be invited to give lectures on "introduction to robot programming", and doctor parents can be organized to carry out "first-aid knowledge training" to solve the problem of "idle professional resources of parents and insufficient home-school collaboration".

At the same time, the parental participation mechanism should be improved. "Parent Open Days" can be set up to invite parents to observe after-school services; a "parent evaluation committee" can be established to

allow parents to participate in curriculum design and quality supervision, responding to parents' higher expectations for curriculum design.

#### 4.2.3. Standardize resource access and ensure service safety and quality

To solve the problem of introducing external resources, the key is to address the issue of powers and responsibilities among various subjects, avoiding schools rejecting external resources due to fear of taking responsibility. From this perspective, an access mechanism with "clear standards and standardized processes" needs to be established. Education departments can formulate the *Standards for Access of External Resources to After-School Services*, clarifying qualification requirements, curriculum review processes, and the division of safety responsibilities, relieving schools of worries about introducing external resources.

At the school level, "third-party evaluation" can be introduced to conduct dynamic monitoring of resources. For example, professional evaluation institutions can be introduced through bidding to score resources from dimensions such as curriculum content, teacher quality, and safety management, and qualified ones can be included in a "white list" for schools to choose independently. At the same time, a risk early warning mechanism should be established to promptly terminate cooperation with institutions that have problems during the cooperation process, ensuring service quality and student safety.

### 4.3. Macro level: improve institutional design and strengthen supervision effectiveness

The macro level focuses on optimizing policies, regulations, and institutional frameworks. By improving the evaluation system, strengthening incentive mechanisms, and promoting multi-stakeholder governance, institutional guarantees are provided for after-school services.

#### 4.3.1. Improve the evaluation and supervision system and optimize the assessment mechanism

Improving the evaluation system needs to address the problems of "ambiguous standards" and "emphasizing results over processes". Education departments should formulate the *Indicators for Evaluating the Quality of After-School Services*, refining performance dimensions and assessment standards to solve the problem of "varied assessment mechanisms among schools". To address the result-oriented evaluation methods, information platforms can be introduced to record process data of students' participation in after-school services, such as classroom performance and homework completion, combined with year-end evaluations to comprehensively assess students' growth. This makes the evaluation not only stay at the level of "satisfaction", enhances the sense of experience of after-school service teachers, and alleviates their sense of unfairness towards evaluation results.

#### 4.3.2. Strengthen teacher incentives and stimulate intrinsic motivation

To address the problem of teachers regarding after-school services as an "additional burden" for fear that assessment results are irrelevant to professional titles, it is necessary to improve teachers' participation enthusiasm through dual material and spiritual incentives. At the material level, financial departments can set up special subsidies, increase the standard of class fees for after-school services, ensure timely payment, incorporate after-school service performance into professional title evaluation and selection of excellent teachers, and give commendations and promotion preferences to outstanding teachers; at the spiritual level, "after-school service innovation case competitions" can be held regularly, and excellent cases can be promoted within the school or even the region, with rewards given to teachers to stimulate their enthusiasm for innovation. Through the above dual incentives, teachers' sense of gain in participating in after-school services is improved, and the high-quality development of after-school services is promoted by enhancing intrinsic motivation.

#### 4.3.3. Promote multi-stakeholder governance and build a collaborative supervision network

In response to the problem of single service evaluation and parents' inability to participate in evaluation, a diversified evaluation system should be constructed. Parents, community representatives, and professionals should be encouraged to participate in evaluation, forming a three-dimensional feedback mechanism of "student self-evaluation + parent evaluation + social supervision", so that parents have the right to know and evaluate curriculum content design, meeting their higher expectations for after-school services.

Education departments should strengthen overall guidance and establish a regional linkage mechanism. Regular experience exchanges should be organized to promote excellent cases, solving the problem of "varied assessment mechanisms among schools" found in the interviews; special supervision teams should be set up to interview and rectify schools that fail to implement the policies effectively, strengthening the supervision of "formalistic evaluation and assessment". At the same time, policy innovation should be promoted, such as exploring an "after-school service credit system", incorporating students' participation into comprehensive quality evaluation, and improving students' attention to and participation in after-school services.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the social ecosystem theory, this study conducts a case study on after-school services at S Primary School in D City. It finds that at the micro level, there are problems such as curriculum imbalance and insufficient teacher resources caused by cognitive biases; at the meso level, schools face difficulties in collaborating with social resources and obstructed introduction of external resources; at the macro level, the evaluation and supervision system is crude, with ambiguous assessment standards and insufficient parental participation. To address these issues, targeted optimization strategies such as curriculum reconstruction, teacher team strengthening, resource integration, and institutional improvement are proposed. This study provides a new framework and research perspective for after-school service research to a certain extent, and also offers relevant ideas for solving practical problems in primary school after-school services, providing certain references for relevant departments and institutions. Due to the adoption of the case study method, the sample size of this study is limited. Future research can adopt a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods to provide more sufficient evidence for related research, thereby offering stronger support for the high-quality development of primary school after-school services.

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