

Challenges, Objectives, and Action Framework for Service Innovation in Primary and Secondary School Libraries under the “Double Reduction” Policy (Postprint)

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Abstract

As a major policy decision for deepening the reform of the education system and mechanisms, the “Double Reduction” policy presents new challenges to role fulfillment in primary and secondary school libraries, while also offering new opportunities for service innovation. Drawing on relevant policy documents and the current development status of libraries, this article systematically reviews the dilemmas confronted by primary and secondary school libraries in service philosophy, service space, service modes, and service content following the policy’s implementation, along with their objectives in enhancing student information literacy, addressing teachers’ instructional needs, and promoting home-school-library-community collaboration. Faced with these challenges and opportunities, service innovation in primary and secondary school libraries is imperative. This article proposes an action framework for service innovation that encompasses a dual-level structure, four dimensions, and five supporting pillars, recommending the exploration of embedded teaching services, ubiquitous platform services, personalized dynamic services, and diversified collaborative services across the four dimensions of service provider, service time-space, service recipients, and service methods, while concurrently providing safeguard support through five aspects: resources, institutions, technology, personnel, and evaluation, to ensure the effective implementation of service innovation.

Full Text

Introduction

The “Double Reduction” policy represents a crucial decision in deepening the reform of the educational system and mechanism, presenting both new challenges

for the functional roles of primary and secondary school libraries and fresh opportunities for service innovation. Drawing on relevant policy documents and the current state of library development, this article examines the dilemmas confronting primary and secondary school libraries in terms of service concepts, service spaces, service methods, and service content following the implementation of the “Double Reduction” policy. It further outlines their objectives in enhancing student information literacy, serving teachers’ instructional needs, and promoting collaboration among families, schools, libraries, and communities. Confronted with these challenges and opportunities, service innovation in primary and secondary school libraries has become imperative. This article proposes a comprehensive action framework for service innovation that encompasses dual levels, four dimensions, and five supporting pillars. The framework suggests exploring embedded teaching services, ubiquitous platform services, personalized dynamic services, and diversified collaborative services across the four dimensions of service subject, service space-time, service objects, and service methods. Simultaneously, it recommends providing support in terms of resources, systems, technology, talent, and evaluation to ensure the smooth implementation of service innovation.

1. Dilemmas in Primary and Secondary School Library Service Innovation under the “Double Reduction” Policy

1.1 Traditional Service Concepts Struggle to Adapt to Policy Requirements

The service concept serves as the guiding principle for library operations. The “Double Reduction” policy, which emphasizes student-centered approaches, should guide primary and secondary school libraries toward establishing a new consensus that prioritizes student needs. However, due to the overall underdevelopment of school libraries in China, most have not yet embraced this student-centered philosophy. Many remain satisfied with merely preserving their collections, focusing on whether books are properly maintained rather than on reader satisfaction. This traditional concept also leads to ambiguous role positioning for school libraries, with staff limited to custodial duties and work content restricted to maintaining borrowing registers. Such deeply entrenched conventional thinking directly conflicts with the “Double Reduction” policy’s requirements for school libraries to transition toward human-centered approaches and genuinely serve student development.

1.2 Static Service Methods Fail to Capture Dynamic Needs

The “Double Reduction” policy emphasizes students’ comprehensive and individualized development, requiring schools to dynamically grasp and adapt to students’ evolving needs. Research indicates that only when libraries understand readers’ core information resource needs can they effectively supply correspond-

ing services and achieve deep matching between supply and demand. However, primary and secondary school libraries still predominantly employ static service methods, creating a mismatch between supply and demand that struggles to generate lasting appeal. For instance, while many libraries have launched reading promotion activities and reading guidance, they often neglect interaction with readers during implementation, failing to stimulate audience enthusiasm and participation. Through field research, the authors found that library staff overemphasize serving students while neglecting teachers' needs, creating a one-sided service approach on top of the static service problem. Since primary and secondary school libraries' primary service targets are teachers and students on campus, they should purchase subject-specific teaching resources according to teachers' new demands under the "Double Reduction" policy. For students, factors such as age and grade level significantly influence their needs, requiring libraries to promptly grasp these changing demands to ensure effective resource utilization.

1.3 Single Service Spaces Limit Service Improvement

Service space constitutes the essential condition for improving library service levels. The "Double Reduction" policy demands simultaneous enhancement of classroom teaching quality and after-school services, emphasizing that students should learn effectively within school premises. Primary and secondary school libraries should thus become extension spaces for classroom education and primary venues for after-school services. However, most school libraries face two spatial utilization problems. First, influenced by the tradition of prioritizing collection over use, they emphasize collection space at the expense of service space, resulting in insufficient service areas. Second, they primarily rely on physical buildings to provide basic book lending services, neglecting virtual service space construction. Research on library resources in 100 primary and secondary schools in Guizhou found that many libraries only have collection spaces without necessary reading environments, and their layout and design are unreasonable. Such spatial limitations prevent school libraries from creating conducive learning environments. While some libraries in more developed regions have undertaken digital transformation, the overall lack of attention to service space makes virtual service space construction even more remote.

1.4 Limited Service Content Fails to Meet Diverse Needs

Service content serves as the objective carrier of library services. The "Double Reduction" policy requires schools to better meet students' diverse needs, particularly in after-school services where students with special needs, learning difficulties, or advanced abilities should receive differentiated content. However, due to limited collection resources, primary and secondary school libraries suffer from insufficient service content in several ways. First, they lack overall planning for service content, often failing to develop grade-specific service logic when designing programs, resulting in weak connections with students' developmental

stages. Second, the breadth of service content is inadequate, constrained not only by library resources but also by development plans and staffing. Third, service design reflects conservative thinking, with few librarians trained in design thinking and excessive concern for student safety at the expense of service effectiveness. These factors hinder the enrichment and extension of service content, making it difficult to meet readers' diverse needs.

2. Objectives for Primary and Secondary School Library Service Innovation under the “Double Reduction” Policy

2.1 Enhancing Student Information Literacy

Information literacy refers to an individual's ability to recognize when information is needed and to locate, evaluate, and effectively use the required information. In the information age, students' self-directed learning capabilities largely depend on their information literacy, and students with higher information literacy can independently utilize various information resources for autonomous learning and comprehensive development. There are multiple pathways to cultivate student information literacy, including school information technology courses and library user training. Research has shown that primary and secondary school libraries play a significant role in promoting student capability development, and high-quality library information literacy education can enhance student learning abilities. China's Ministry of Education has also clearly stipulated that school libraries are obligated to implement the Party's educational policies and guide students in mastering information retrieval and utilization knowledge and skills. In 2021, IFLA released the *School Library Manifesto*, emphasizing the role of school libraries in information literacy education. Against this backdrop, primary and secondary school libraries should actively respond to their new mission of enhancing student information literacy by fully utilizing their collections and spaces to explore diverse information literacy education courses and activities, such as library orientation for new students, information retrieval courses, and online education, thereby continuously strengthening students' information literacy and highlighting the importance of school libraries in information literacy education.

2.2 Serving Teachers' Instructional Needs

The “Double Reduction” policy's execution places greater responsibility on teachers, who face dual pressures of improving classroom quality while reducing student homework burdens. This demands that teachers continuously enhance their professional competence. As an important venue for school teaching and research, a vital component of school culture and curriculum resource construction, and a key platform for promoting teacher professional growth, primary and secondary school libraries must provide richer, higher-quality information resources to support teachers' changing instructional goals and models under the

“Double Reduction” policy. They must also meet teachers’ personalized needs in lesson preparation, teaching, and research. For teachers, the policy’s new requirements for education mean that school libraries should purchase diverse teaching resources according to their evolving needs, providing strong support for improving classroom teaching quality.

2.3 Promoting Home-School-Library-Community Linkage

The “Double Reduction” policy is a systematic and social undertaking involving multiple stakeholders, requiring collaboration among families, schools, and other institutions to succeed. Home-school-library-community collaboration aligns with the policy’s overall approach of “organizing special governance actions to form effective work synergy” and creating a “three-in-one education framework” among families, schools, and society. As essential components of schools, primary and secondary school libraries are obligated to participate in and improve home-school-library-community coordination mechanisms to advance collaborative education communities. To promote this community building, school libraries should actively involve parents and students—who currently play a “marginal role” in library development and decision-making—by establishing parent schools or online family education guidance platforms and promoting the construction of community family education guidance centers. Additionally, school libraries should actively cooperate with various libraries and relevant units in their communities, leveraging the cooperative nature emphasized in the *IFLA School Library Manifesto*, which calls for involving “the entire school community and beyond,” including senior administrators, other librarians, information professionals, and community groups. Through multi-party collaboration, school libraries can extend their service scope from within the library to other school spaces and even students’ homes, making learning accessible anytime and anywhere and truly achieving comprehensive education.

3. An Action Framework for Primary and Secondary School Library Service Innovation under the “Double Reduction” Policy

The “Double Reduction” policy has brought challenges to primary and secondary school libraries, which face difficulties in service concepts, methods, spaces, and content. However, it also provides new opportunities, offering direction for enhancing student information literacy, serving teaching needs, and promoting home-school-library-community linkage. Faced with these challenges and opportunities, service innovation in primary and secondary school libraries has become imperative. This article constructs an action framework for service innovation that encompasses dual levels, four dimensions, and five supporting pillars. The framework’s core consists of four action dimensions for service innovation: subject, space-time, objects, and methods. The outer layer comprises

five supporting pillars emphasizing resources, systems, technology, talent, and evaluation. Content systems and support systems complement each other—only with solid foundational support can service content continuously innovate, and innovative service content can further drive the strengthening of basic support systems.

[Figure 1: see original paper] Action Framework for Primary and Secondary School Library Service Innovation under the “Double Reduction” Policy

3.1 Subject Dimension: Embedded Teaching Services

Primary and secondary school libraries are not only supportive facilities for school education and teaching but also integral components of the basic education system. Embedded teaching services aim to better serve students and enhance their capabilities by embedding resources and various service forms into classroom teaching and combining library knowledge services with classroom instruction. Based on the interactive relationship between school libraries and classrooms, embedded teaching services can be divided into forward embedding and reverse embedding. Forward embedding involves librarians, after thorough communication with teachers, bringing the library into the curriculum by providing subject knowledge resources or directly participating in classroom teaching under the teacher’s guidance, thereby promoting knowledge expansion during instruction and improving learning efficiency and effectiveness. Reverse embedding transforms teachers from service recipients into service providers, placing some teaching tasks within the library service framework and encouraging students to consciously and competently utilize the library in future learning. For embedded teaching services, student feedback is crucial—librarians and teachers can distribute satisfaction surveys to understand student attitudes and suggestions regarding instruction and library services, then adjust existing services accordingly. Evaluating the effectiveness of embedded teaching services helps teachers improve weak points in their current teaching methods and enables school libraries to further optimize information literacy education.

3.2 Space-Time Dimension: Ubiquitous Platform Services

The “Double Reduction” policy places higher demands on teachers’ instructional levels and students’ self-directed learning abilities, leading to evolving expectations for school libraries. To meet these demands, libraries must break through temporal and spatial limitations and build platforms that provide services anytime and anywhere. The ubiquitous service philosophy holds that library services can permeate all environments and are everywhere. From the space-time dimension, primary and secondary school libraries can provide ubiquitous platform services to deliver innovative services across time and space.

In terms of physical services, school libraries should extend service hours based on reader needs, such as opening during weekends and holidays to maximize library access. They should also expand book circulation spaces by develop-

ing branch libraries where conditions permit and adopting open-shelf borrowing as the primary model. Additionally, libraries can learn from excellent existing cases. For example, the library of Peking University Affiliated Elementary School, which won the 2022 IFLA Marketing Award, launched a “Light Up the Library” project based on students’ special needs, creating a ubiquitous reading environment through class book corners, open book corridors, and reading pavilions. Changjun Bilingual Experimental Middle School in Changsha, a first-prize winner of Hunan Province’s first primary and secondary school reading excellence case award, developed a gamified information literacy education innovation activity with reading as the learning theme.

In virtual services, the policy proposes strengthening and optimizing online learning services by providing free, high-quality thematic educational resources and learning materials covering all grades and subjects. As campus resource centers, school libraries can offer online services through network service platforms, creating virtual learning spaces where services are accessible anytime. These platforms can take various forms, including official websites, mobile reading apps developed by the library itself, and social media like WeChat and microblogs, all of which break temporal and spatial constraints.

3.3 Object Dimension: Personalized Dynamic Services

Reader needs are influenced by age, grade level, and individual developmental stages. Personalized dynamic services primarily refer to services based on both group and individual reader needs, organically integrating the library’s service system with readers’ personalized requirements. When serving teachers and students—their main service objects—primary and secondary school libraries should design services according to teachers’ subjects and students’ grade levels while continuously refining these services to address diverse needs influenced by age, family background, and other factors.

School libraries can establish long-term interactive channels with readers by setting up communication desks within the library or school and using online consultation channels to promptly grasp changing needs. They can also collect and preserve readers’ borrowing and activity participation information or distribute surveys to dynamically observe demand changes through big data analysis. For instance, through big data analysis, a school library might discover that some male students are interested in science activities. By developing corresponding programs, the library not only meets these students’ needs but also revitalizes its science collection and improves resource utilization rates.

3.4 Method Dimension: Diversified Collaborative Services

The “Double Reduction” policy has returned responsibility for after-school services to schools, proposing the rational use of off-campus resources and improvement of home-school-society coordination mechanisms to advance collaborative education communities. The *IFLA School Library Manifesto* also emphasizes

that school libraries should cooperate extensively with other libraries, information experts, and communities. Recognizing that they are not isolated within the public culture and education service system, primary and secondary school libraries can provide diversified collaborative services to accelerate service innovation through resource and activity co-construction and sharing.

Diversified collaborative services include both multiple collaborative institutions and diverse collaborative content. School libraries can establish interlibrary loan or even universal borrowing relationships with other libraries in their region, extending readers' access from one library to an entire area. They can also conduct interlibrary exchanges to learn from other libraries' service experiences, particularly children's libraries, and cooperatively explore reading service activities to enrich after-school service content and forms. Additionally, school libraries can partner with youth centers and other after-school service venues that have adjusted their curricula and suspended academic training programs, instead developing interest cultivation and social practice services. By leveraging these institutions' talent, space, and facilities, school libraries can offer diverse services such as student clubs and interest courses.

3.5 Five Supporting Pillars for Service Innovation

Multimedia Resource Guarantee: Resources are the foundation of library services. The “Double Reduction” policy has given students more diverse information resource needs and ample reading time. Primary and secondary school libraries should continuously enrich their collections to form a diversified multimedia resource guarantee system. When building collection systems, they should emphasize acquiring multimedia resources, including not only physical books but also e-books, digital resources, and other information materials that complement each other. School libraries should develop multimedia resource systems tailored to their specific circumstances, allocating limited funds effectively to maximize satisfaction of teacher and student needs.

Information Technology Guarantee: Modern information technology development and rising economic standards have increased expectations for school library service quality. Primary and secondary school libraries must emphasize information construction and utilize digital and smart methods to better serve readers. This includes: (1) improving online service platform construction, such as school library websites, regional library cloud platforms, and comprehensive information management applications; (2) increasing investment in digital equipment like self-service borrowing machines, touch-screen inquiry terminals, and RFID readers to enhance library appeal and provide new knowledge experiences; and (3) actively introducing network databases, including commercial databases and free platforms like the National Smart Education Public Service Platform, to ensure dynamic resource updates and effective participation in primary and secondary education digital transformation.

Comprehensive Institutional Guarantee: Institutions provide the basis

for library services. The “Double Reduction” policy represents a significant institutional reform in primary and secondary education, and school libraries must adapt through institutional construction that standardizes and encourages service innovation. Institutional guarantees include both strategic planning and external legal environments. For strategic planning, school libraries must: (1) emphasize top-level design by aligning with international policies and guidelines and conducting localized planning suitable for China’s specific context; and (2) advance specific institutional development, including establishing mechanisms for enhancing library management personnel capabilities, information literacy training systems, scientific evaluation and incentive mechanisms, and relevant laws and regulations. In terms of external legal frameworks, the state should clarify various systems within legal frameworks, ensuring school libraries operate according to laws and regulations.

Professional Talent Guarantee: Librarians are the soul of libraries. To meet reader needs and effectively promote quality services under the “Double Reduction” policy, school libraries must strengthen in-service training and improve overall staff quality. Information-age librarians need not only solid library science knowledge but also high-level information literacy and skills. Primary and secondary school libraries should implement strict professional qualification systems, prioritizing high-level specialized talent. Drawing on international “dual professional qualification” systems, school librarians should possess both librarian professional qualifications and teaching credentials. Libraries should also enhance librarians’ professional identity—only with strong career recognition can they maintain proper service attitudes and prioritize meeting reader needs. Promoting commemorative days like National School Librarian Day can bring social recognition and spiritual strength to the professional community.

Scientific Evaluation Guarantee: The “Double Reduction” policy aims to improve school education quality and enhance parents’ sense of happiness and security. Service evaluation can effectively monitor and improve primary and secondary school library service quality. Evaluation work includes establishing service indicators, formulating detailed rules and implementation plans, and conducting assessments. School libraries should develop evaluation indicator systems based on the *Primary and Secondary School Library Evaluation Standards* while considering actual conditions. They should form dedicated service evaluation teams, incorporate evaluation work content and effectiveness into performance assessments, and conduct evaluations based on expert assessment combined with teacher and student feedback through questionnaires and analysis of pre- and post-activity data. Scientific and reasonable evaluation can provide specific direction for library services, enabling steady quality improvement.

4. Conclusion

The “Double Reduction” policy has brought new challenges to primary and secondary school libraries, requiring them to break through traditional service concepts and practices, examine existing service activities and models, and seek new explorations and transformations. By leveraging their advantages in resources, space, and talent, school libraries will play an increasingly important role in education and become indispensable components of primary and secondary education.

Abstract

The “Double Reduction” policy, as a crucial decision in deepening the reform of the educational system and mechanism, presents new challenges for the functional roles of primary and secondary school libraries while providing fresh opportunities for service innovation. Based on relevant policy documents and the current state of library development, this article examines the dilemmas faced by primary and secondary school libraries in service concepts, service spaces, service methods, and service content following the policy’s implementation. It outlines their objectives in enhancing student information literacy, serving teachers’ instructional needs, and promoting collaboration among families, schools, libraries, and communities. Confronted with these challenges and opportunities, service innovation has become imperative. This article proposes a comprehensive action framework covering dual levels, four dimensions, and five supporting pillars. The framework suggests exploring embedded teaching services, ubiquitous platform services, personalized dynamic services, and diversified collaborative services across the dimensions of service subject, service space-time, service objects, and service methods. Simultaneously, it recommends providing support in terms of resources, systems, technology, talent, and evaluation to ensure smooth implementation of service innovation.

Keywords: “Double Reduction” policy; primary and secondary school library; library service; service innovation

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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