

UNESCO RESEARCH SEMINAR SERIES

Social equity & language policies

Abstract

Language policies, if implemented effectively, can enable marginalized groups to fully engage in the social and political life of mainstream society and enjoy educational and economic benefits. Poorly conceived and ineffectively implemented policies, on the other hand, could exacerbate their marginalization and deprivation.

Based on a study of trilingual education policies for minority groups in China, this presentation identifies the potential benefits of the policies as well as major tensions that have arisen when the policy is implemented. Although recent efforts by the state to maintain political stability have produced language policies that strive to promote minority languages so that minority groups can maintain their culture and identity, tensions have arisen as the state also makes efforts to promote national cohesion through the promotion of standard Chinese. Meanwhile English has attained prestigious status because of the China's desire to play a prominent role in international affairs, and English has become an important subject even in primary schools, placing a logistical strain on ethnic minority schools in rural areas.

This presentation identifies some of the models of trilingualism that have emerged in the different regions of China and the implications they have for social equity.

Speaker

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