Models of Trilingual Education in
Ethnic Minority Regions of China
Project

Briefing Paper No.12

Practice of Mongolian Nationality Schools in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region

Narisu

April 2013
Models of Trilingual Education in Ethnic Minority Regions of China Project
This research project offers a holistic and descriptive account of trilingualism and trilingual education in China. Policy changes have led to the introduction of English language teaching and learning in primary schools. These reforms pose particular challenges to communities in ethnic minority areas, where Putonghua often competes with the minority language, and English is often taught in under-resourced schools with teachers with the requisite training in short supply.

The project involves extensive and intensive research comprising investigations into school- and community-level practices, policies and perceptions relating to trilingualism in such key regions as Xinjiang, Yunnan, Inner Mongolia, Sichuan, Gansu, Guizhou, Guangxi, Qinghai, Jilin, Tibet and Guangdong. Using first-hand data collected from each region, the researchers examine language policies and curricula, as well as language allocation in the classroom and in the community, and analyse them in their specific historical, socio-political, demographical, economic, geographical and cultural contexts.

A distinctive feature of the project is its presentation of a new methodology and approach to researching such phenomena. This methodology encompasses policy analysis, community language profiles, as well as school-based field work in order to provide rich data that facilitates multilevel analysis of policy-in-context.

This series of Briefing Papers presents information about different aspects of the project.

Models of Trilingual Education in Ethnic Minority Regions of China Project Briefing Papers
Series Editors: Anwei Feng (University of Bangor), Bob Adamson (Hong Kong Institute of Education) and Yi Yayuan (Hong Kong Institute of Education)

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Practice of Mongolian Nationality Schools in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region

Research Context

Inner Mongolia, a long and narrow strip in the north of China, is one of the four autonomous communities (together with Ningxia, Xinjiang and Tibet) in China. The Mongolian Nationality is the 6th largest ethnic group in China now, and its population has been growing from 888,000 in the first census in 1953 to 4,240,000 in 2007. Almost 70% Mongolians in China live in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (IMAR), and the rest are spread through Xinjiang, Qinghai, Gansu, Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang provinces within the territory of China. Mongolian constitutes a dominant nationality in IMAR.

The numbers of Mongolian schools and students are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>School number</th>
<th>student number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>2188</td>
<td>447,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle school</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>248,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General High school</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>31,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational middle schools</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>22,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges with Mongolian system</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs in Mongolian system</td>
<td>Over 30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate &amp; master degree</td>
<td></td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four models of schools under the name of “Mongolian Nationality School”

- Model 1: Mongolian-dominated; almost all the enrollment of pupil and faculty and staff are Mongolians.
- Model 2: having two language instruction systems, Mongolian and Chinese, more bilingual environment.
- Model 3: Chinese instruction system with the main course of Mongolian language no matter what nationality the students are in the school.

- Model 4: distinguished from above three by only one language (nothing but Chinese).

An example of bilingual Mongolian Nationality School

Introduction to the school
70% of the school teachers are Mongolian
Curriculum in Mongolian
All subjects in the school are taught in Mongolian. This is the mathematics paper.
Honorary credential

Blackboard newspaper
Chinese language

Quotation from Chairman Mao
Research in Middle Schools in Inner Mongolia

Different types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textbook</th>
<th>Mongolian</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching language</td>
<td>Mongolian</td>
<td>Mongolian, Chinese</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Proportion of grades in Entrance Exam of Senior high school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td></td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongolian</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Proportion of grades in College Entrance Examination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongolian</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cases of English Competence in Trilingualism

Case one: Muqier (木其尔), Balinyouqidaban （巴林右旗大板）

1. Learning English from Grade Three
2. Learning from the very beginning in middle school (reason: many other students from other schools have not learnt before)
3. A trial class of Mongolian students in senior high school (tougher requirements )
4. Mark of English in College Entrance Exam =129
Case Two: Wuyou (乌尤)

1. Learning Chinese (Grade Three, aided by Mongolian)
2. No English learning in primary school
3. Learning English from Junior high school (Mongolian & English, English isn’t included in entrance exam to senior high school, most students give up)
4. Policy influence: 15% in college entrance exam
5. College: Mongolian class, learning from the ABC
6. Graduate study: failed in term exam (common phenomenon), CET 6 pressure

Case Three: Baojingying (包金英)

1. Mother tongue: Mongolian
2. Grade one – Grade Five: Mongolian
3. Grade Four–Grade Five (second time): Chinese
4. Learning English from Grade One in middle school
5. Grade one in middle school-college:
   - Trilingual competence:
     - Mongolian: very fluent in four skills
     - Chinese: very clumsy at the very beginning
     - English: the way of learning Chinese helps her a lot in her later English learning
     - Good in English learning—a good competence in learning language

Conclusion

1. A variety of requirements in middle school
2. Different levels of English competence for Mongolian students
3. Compared with Han students, fewer Mongolian students have good or satisfactory competence in English for various reasons (policies, economy, area, personal, etc.)
   - Mongolian education is still full of vigor.
   - A complete Mongolian educational system in IMAR theoretically makes it possible for Mongols to complete their education from primary to high school, even higher education. The system enables a Mongol to complete his or her
education. It is not unusual to meet with Mongolians with masters even doctorate degrees. Until 2009, there are 413 with Doctorate or master degree.

✓ With the dramatically development of China toward modernization, industrialization and globalization especially in the latest 2 decades, requirements for language education are changing from monolingual to bilingual and then trilingual. To meet the needs, Mongolian educational system has been moved forward. Traditional Mongolian Nationality Schools have been differential from one type to three under the name of Mongolian Nationality School.

✓ Finally, a growing number of students in Mongolian instruction system have fused into mainstream education at their college career.

✓ As to three languages, Mongolian, Chinese Han and English in Mongolian Nationality School, Mongolian is certainly learned by the peers in Type One and Type Two as the first language, taking over the first place on curriculum, having more than one class every school day. And Chinese Han, more than half of the sample schools arrange the same time with Mongolian, that is, the new generation Mongols are supposed to be educated as balanced bilinguals.

✓ The great movement on curriculum is in English. At first, English course have been changed from selected to required, involving in compulsory courses as primary level. And then the time starting learning English, after then, is shifted to earlier grade, from grade one at middle school a few years ago to grade three in majority of sample schools. Finally, although there is some sample schools with small enrollment without English education, there are some schools opening English class from grade one at primary school even at pre-school class. It is a reflection of imbalance between supply and demand.

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