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**Models of Trilingual Education in
Ethnic Minority Regions of China
Project**

Briefing Paper No.2

**Gannan Language Policy and
School Curriculum**

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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.

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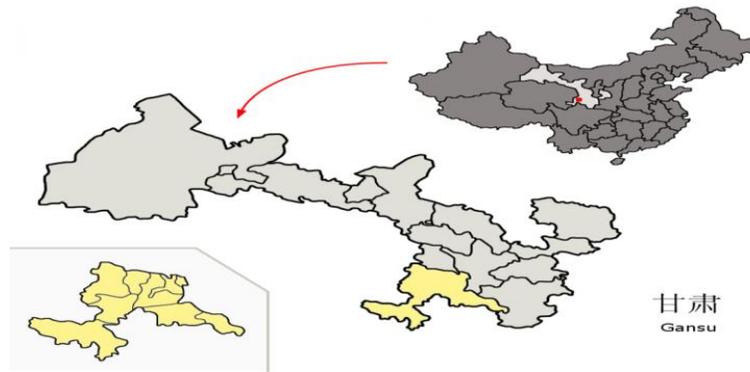
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Gannan Language Policy and School Curriculum

Context of the Program

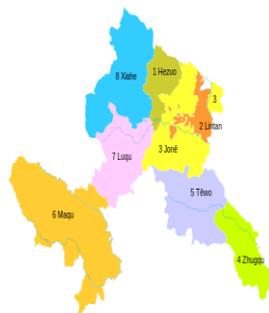
- The Ecological Environment
- The language policy
- The development of Bilingual Education
- The School Curriculum
- Analysis of the influential factors and conditions
- The development strategy

The Ecological Environment of Education in Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture



Population, Ethnic Groups, and Subdivisions

- Gannan is an autonomous prefecture in southern Gansu Province, China. It includes Xiahe and the Labrang Monastery, Luqu, Maqu, and other mostly Tibetan towns and villages. Gannan has an area of 40,898km² and its capital is Hezuo.
- Population: 689,132 inhabitants(population density:17.14 inhabitants per km²)
- Ethnic groups: Tibetan (51.44%), Han, Hui, Tu, Dongxiang, Manchu, Salar, etc.
- Subdivisions: 1 county level city, 7 counties



Document Review

Language Policy

- In 1948, on the eve of the liberation of Lanzhou, the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region government published “Instructions on the Current National Education Reform” and “Instructions on Secondary School Reform”, which prescribe respectively that minority primary schools can offer ethnic language courses and minority secondary schools can establish ethnic language classes
- In 1950, after an inspection of the educational status quo of the Hui primary schools in Lanzhou, and Linxia, etc., Gansu Education Department pointed out in a report that: “we should encourage the use of ethnic language and actively compile textbooks”. In the same year, Gansu government indicated that “minority schools should offer ethnic curriculum”.
- In 1980, Gannan government issued “Proposed Opinions on the Re-establishment of the Tibetan language” and “On the Development of National Education”. And in 1982, the Gannan government promulgated “Tentative Regulations of Primary and Secondary Schools in Gannan”, in which the eighth provision stipulated that: “The instructional language in Tibetan secondary and primary schools should mainly be Tibetan, and Chinese be offered from the fourth grade in parish schools. In regions inhabited by Tibetans where Chinese is commonly used, Tibetan and Chinese are both required; Tibetan middle schools should continue to offer the Tibetan course before the problems of teachers and teaching materials are solved”. For the first time, the bilingual education mode and teaching system of Gannan were defined in the form of legal provisions.
- In March, 2000, “Regulations on the Implementation of Compulsory Education in Gannan” were issued, in which Article 16 and 17 stipulated: “Primary and secondary schools that mainly recruit Tibetan students should practice bilingual teaching, making students learn Chinese well besides Tibetan, and actively promote foreign language learning”.
- In August, 2001, the Education Bureau of Gannan issued “Emergency Notice on the Establishment of Chinese Course and Subscription of Teaching Materials in Tibetan Primary Schools from Grade One”, which further strengthened the Chinese teaching in Tibetan schools.
- In 2001, the Education Bureau of Gannan issued “Notice on the Establishment of English Course in Primary Schools”. In 2004, it was enriched and supplemented, “to offer English Course step by step, and explore bilingual teaching model with more characteristics of the times and regional ethnic education.”
- In 2004, according to “Decision on the Implementation of the ‘Two Basics’, and Further Promotion of the Educational Development of Agricultural and Pastoral Areas”, the Gannan Bureau of Education explicitly presented the requirements that bilingual schools should strengthen Chinese teaching, vigorously promote the use of Mandarin Chinese, and effectively improve the Chinese level of Tibetan students.”

- The abovementioned policies and regulations formulated by the two levels of government define the specific requirements of the implementation of bilingual education, ensure the development direction, and promote the healthy and steady development of bilingual education in Gannan.

Procedures

Development of bilingual education in Gannan has gone through three stages:

- ◆ The Start-up stage
- ◆ The Frustration stage
- ◆ The Restoration stage

The Start-up Stage (1950-1966):

The country enacted a series of policies and laws, and clarified the relationship between Chinese and minority languages, highlighting the status of ethnic languages.

In Gannan, the Tibetan language education is promoted in primary schools, with learning and using Tibetan as its main purpose and Chinese an essential supplement.

The Frustration Stage (1966-1976):

The bilingual education in Gannan suffered a series of setbacks, going from the early golden period into the valley; Tibetan language course was cancelled in school education.

The Restoration Stage (after 1977):

The teaching of ethnic language was resumed, and the relationship between Chinese and Tibetan was gradually made clear to educators. Tibetan secondary schools were founded in all the counties of Gannan, and bilingual education was extended to secondary schools from primary schools. At the same time, the two bilingual teaching models, that is the “Tibetan-centered” model and the “Chinese-centered” model were worked out. Besides, some national colleges in and outside of Gansu offered the Tibetan language and literature major, forming the bilingual education system from primary schools to universities. Bilingual learners have been increasing, and the importance of learning Chinese has become increasingly prominent after 2000.

The School Curriculum

- As Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture was established in 1953, until then the corresponding educational management organization came to existence. Therefore, the following part begins with this period.
- In August, 1953, approved by the Ministry of Education, schools in Xiahe, Zhuoni and other counties of Gannan adjusted the curriculum and offered Tibetan language course. At that time the more mature bilingual educational pattern had not taken shape, and it was based on the common curriculum plans that minority languages were taught.

- In May, 1953, the Education Department of Gansu asked for instructions from the Ministry of Education about Lintan Primary School's cancelling of English course and offering of Tibetan course, the Ministry of Education instructed that "schools for nationalities should offer courses of ethnic languages, and gradually adopt ethnic languages as the teaching language when the conditions are mature".
- In 1955, the Tibetan language course was established in schools of pastoral and semi-agricultural & semi-pastoral areas.
- In the same year, the Education Department of Gansu reported to the Ministry of Education about the Chinese language teaching materials and situations, "except for Mongolia and Kazakh primary and secondary schools, others mainly adopt Chinese as the teaching language", "in Tibetan schools, Tibetan language course is offered 2-3 periods per week".
- In 1963, the Tibetan language course was offered in 120 schools in areas inhabited by Tibetans in Gannan, and the number of students learning Tibetans reached 4024. From 1963 to 1964, with the rapid development of education, Tibetan language teachers were extremely scarce. Among 624 primary schools teachers, only 66 were Tibetan teachers.
- From the 50s, Tibetan language course had been established as a main course in pastoral and agricultural schools, and was adopted as the instructional language in pure pastoral areas, with Chinese added in the third grade.
- In semi-pastoral and semi-agricultural schools, bilingualism was adopted, and both Chinese students and other nationalities were encouraged to learn Tibetan. At this time, the two models ("Tibetan-centered" and "Chinese-centered") put forward in the 80s began to take shape.
- During the 10 years of the "Cultural Revolution", ethnic education was severely damaged and Tibetan language course was canceled in schools. Due to the challenge of Chinese, abandoning and cutting school became a universal phenomenon among pastoral Tibetan students. Consequently, the overall teaching quality went downhill.
- In 1980, Tibetan language course was reestablished in ethnic primary and secondary schools, with Tibetan as the instructional language before the third grade and Chinese offered in the 4th grade. From 1981, the Tibetan language textbook cooperatively compiled by the 5 provinces (Tibet, Qinghai, Gansu, Yunnan, Sichuan) was used in succession in Gannan.
- Till 1993, there were 7 Tibetan secondary schools in Gannan. The 2 models (Tibetan-centered and Chinese-centered) were implemented in these schools to a certain degree.
- In July, 1988, the State Education Commission held the five-province education seminar in Gannan, of which the education experiences and practices were affirmed and praised. Since then, the bilingual education in Gannan gradually moved into a standardized and orderly development.

- In 1995, the Gannan Education Bureau developed the “Gannan Full-time Tibetan Primary and Junior High School Lesson Plan of Nine-year compulsory Education”.
- From 2004, English course was gradually offered in Tibetan primary and secondary schools.

Table 1: Gannan Full-time Tibetan Primary and Junior High School Lesson Plan of Nine-year compulsory Education (Tibetan-centred)

	Primary school						Secondary school			Total Lessons		
	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	1 st year	2 nd year	3 rd year	Primary lessons	Secondary lessons	Nine-year lessons
Tibetan	12	10	8	8	7	6	6	6	6	1734	600	2334
Chinese		3	8	6	6	6	6	5	6	986	566	1552
English												

Table 2. Gannan Full-time Tibetan Primary and Junior High School Lesson Plan of Nine-year compulsory Education (Chinese-centred)

	Primary school						Secondary school			Total Lessons		
	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	1 st year	2 nd year	3 rd year	Primary lessons	Secondary lessons	Nine-year lessons
Tibetan		3	7	6	6	6	6	6	6	952	600	1552
Chinese	9	9	9	8	7	7	6	5	5	1666	534	2200
English												

Table 3. Gannan Full-time Tibetan Senior High School Lesson Plan (Tibetan-centred)

	1 st year	2 nd year	3 rd year	Total lessons	Comparison with non-Tibetan high schools
Tibetan	4	5	5	426	+34
Chinese	4	5	5	426	+34

Table 4. Gannan Full-time Tibetan Senior High School Lesson Plan (Chinese-centred)

	1 st year	2 nd year	3 rd year	Total lessons	Comparison with non-Tibetan high schools
Tibetan	4	5	5	426	+426
Chinese	4	4	5	392	The same

Project Outcomes

✓ **The Two Models of Bilingual Teaching:**

➤ Tibetan-centred:

The model is mainly adopted by schools in pure Tibetan regions. Except for the teaching language (Tibetan), the teaching objectives are basically consistent with common Chinese schools. Generally, the students' actual Chinese level cannot fulfill the objective requirement.

Tibetan and Chinese language courses are both offered, with the learning and using of Tibetan as the main purpose and Chinese simply a language course. And Tibetan should be adopted as the instructional language for all subjects. Chinese is only offered from the fourth grade, 4-5 periods a week, with Tibetan reduced accordingly.

➤ Chinese-centred:

The model is adopted by schools in Tibetan-Han regions or townships where Chinese is commonly used. The teaching objectives are basically in consistent with other common schools except for one more course (Tibetan). Generally, the students' actual Tibetan level cannot fulfill the objective requirement

Table 5. Curriculum requirements

	Graduation from primary school	Graduation from junior high school	Graduation from senior high school
Chinese	Lower primary school level	Higher primary school level	Junior high school level
Other courses	Higher primary school level	Junior high school level	Senior high school level

In 2001, the Education Bureau of Gannan issued “Notice on the Establishment of Primary English Course”, which was enriched and supplemented later in 2004. From then on, the term “trilingual teaching” has been frequently used. However, as English is still not included in the teaching plan, there is no uniform requirement regarding curriculum, classes, teachers, and teaching materials, etc; English classes vary from school to school in Gannan.

✓ **The Trilingual Teaching Model:**

- The three coexisting English teaching models in ethnic minority areas:
 - ◆ General model: Model 1 is the same as that used in non-minority area schools, English is offered not only as a compulsory course, but also as a major subject;
 - ◆ Chinese-centered model: Model 2: Tibetan language course is offered separately, with English course as a required but minor subject;
 - ◆ Tibetan-centered model: Model 3: Chinese language course is offered separately, with English as a compulsory but minor subject.

✓ **Analysis of the Influential Factors and Conditions of Gannan Trilingual Education**

- National and local ethnic policy and language policy;
- Population structure (population migration, population quality);
- Geographical and economic biological environment;
- Language attitudes;
- Educational resources (teachers, teaching materials, etc).

✓ **The Development Strategy of Gannan Trilingual Education**

- Revise bilingual education program & teaching plan and develop trilingual education program & teaching plan
- Cultivate and train trilingual teachers
- Expenditure for trilingual education
- Construction of trilingual textbooks
- Improve the cultural environment for trilingual education and integrate educational resources

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