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

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**A Framework for the Study of  
Policy Design and  
Implementation of Models of  
Trilingual Education**

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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.

*Models of Trilingual Education in Ethnic Minority Regions of China Project* Technical Papers Series Editors: Anwei Feng (University of Nottingham, Ningbo, China) and Bob Adamson (The Education University of Hong Kong)

This series of Technical Papers presents information about the research instruments used in this project.

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# **A Framework for the Study of Policy Design and Implementation of Models of Trilingual Education**

## **Introduction**

One of the key research questions driving the project is how the policy goals of trilingualism is being interpreted and realised in the People's Republic of China (PRC).

The project distinguished four distinct policy models of trilingual education (Adamson and Feng, 2014). The first model focuses strongly on the ethnic minority language. Typically, the nine years of compulsory education from Grade 1 in primary schools to Grade 3 in junior secondary schools is provided through the medium of the minority language. Chinese could be used as the medium of instruction for certain school subjects in late primary and secondary years. Chinese and English are taught as subjects in the curriculum. The second model is a balance between Chinese and the minority language. The balance is evident in terms not only of the medium of instruction but also of the ethnicity of the teachers and students. The third model often exists in two different forms. The first form is the reverse of the first model, i.e., Chinese is used as the primary medium instruction and the major ethnic minority language is taught as a subject to all students in the school, irrespective of their own ethnicity or mother tongue. The second form is found in many remote village schools in which one minority group dominates. In these schools, the minority language is used as the medium of instruction for the first two to three years with Chinese taught as a major school subject. Starting from Year 3 or Year 4, all school subjects are taught in Chinese. In both cases, English is taught as a school subject, with Chinese being used when necessary in those lessons. A fourth model is represented by schools that proclaim to be an ethnic minority language school but, in reality, do not use the minority language as the medium of instruction nor even teach it as school subject. Such schools also claimed to be bilingual, in the sense that Chinese and English are studied as languages in the curriculum and Chinese serves as the medium of instruction.

## **Factors Shaping the Trilingual Education Models**

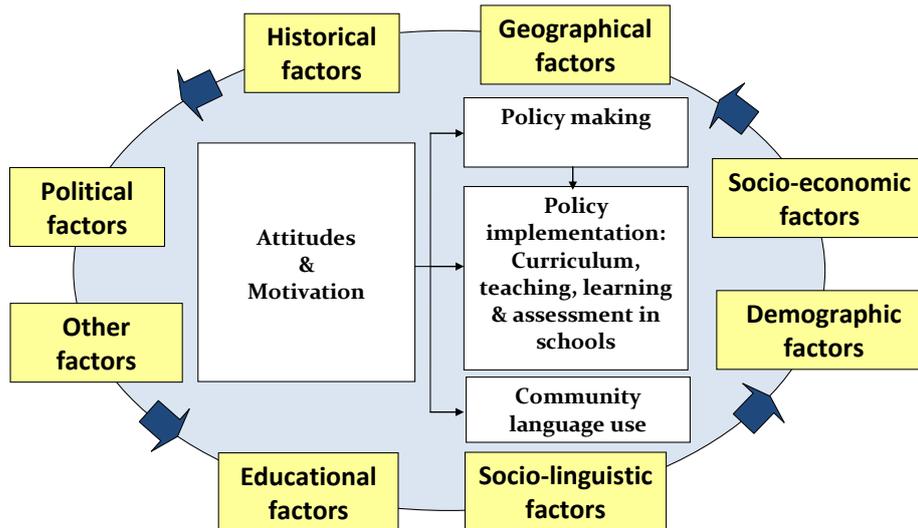
What factors shape and sustain the various models of trilingual education? This question denotes a particular view of education policy—that it emerges from, and forms part of broader contexts.

At the outset of the project, it was possible (on the basis of relevant literature) to identify key contextual factors that would likely play a role in shaping trilingual education policy. For instance, Fägerlind and Saha (1989) propose a triadic framework that positions education policy under the influence of socio-economic, socio-political and educational priorities.

Another relevant concept for the study is ethnolinguistic vitality, the strength of life force of a language within a community. Ethnolinguistic vitality is influenced by geographical, historical, demographic and socio-linguistic factors, in addition to socio-economic and socio-political factors (Landweer, 2000). Other factors, such as religion, are emerging from the first phase of the project.

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework for the study of models of trilingual education in the PRC.

Figure 1—Conceptual framework



To conduct the research into the factors that shape and sustain the various models of trilingual education, a range of methodological tools were adopted.

A suite of research tools as shown in Table 1 were designed. A typical study of each single school would include:

- focus group interviews with 3-6 community leaders
- 2-3 interviews with regional and local education officials
- 1-3 interviews with school principal, deputy and other school leaders
- focus group interviews with 5-10 teachers
- focus group interviews with approximately 10 students
- 3-5 interviews with former students
- focus group interviews with approximately 10 parents
- documentary analysis of policy papers, syllabuses, timetables, learning resources and curriculum materials
- 5-10 lesson observations
- questionnaire surveys focusing on language attitudes and views of trilingual education among 60-100 students, 20-30 teachers including headteachers and deputies.
- field notes (e.g. observations of the school buildings and wall decorations, of languages used in the school outside of the classroom and of language use in the community).

These tools are described in detail in other Technical Papers in this series.

*Table 1 – Methods to study factors that shape and sustain the models of trilingual education*

<b>Paradigm</b>	<b>Instrument</b>	<b>Focus</b>
Qualitative	Semi-structured interview with head-teachers and teachers (focus groups or individuals)	Perceptions of and attitudes to trilingualism and each language, and their experiences implementing trilingual education models
	Semi-structured interview with policy makers (for individuals)	Perceptions of & attitudes to trilingualism and each language, and their experiences in policy making and implementation of trilingual education policy
	Semi-structured interview with parents (focus group or individuals)	Attitudes to different languages, their knowledge of what is going on in schools and their experiences of their children’s trilingual education
	Semi-structured interview with pupils (focus group or individuals)	Attitudes and experiences in using and learning languages in a trilingual education context
	School observation	Language environment: notice boards, signs, pictures, etc.; languages used by staff, pupils, etc.; the role and distribution of languages, as shown in curriculum documents
	Classroom observation	languages used by teacher and pupils, for classroom instruction and activities
	Ethnographic study	To study the language environment in a minority community
Quantitative	Teacher Questionnaire	Teacher’s perceptions of current practice, views of language use and views concerning language education
	Parent Questionnaire	Parents’ knowledge of current practice and views of language use and language education
	Student Questionnaire	Students’ attitude to current practice and views of language use and language education
	Subjective vitality survey	Ethnolinguistic vitality of a minority language
Other (Archival)	Objective vitality study	Ethnolinguistic vitality of a minority language by collecting data through archives, mass media, official documents, etc.

### **Policy Design and the Implementation of Trilingual Education Models**

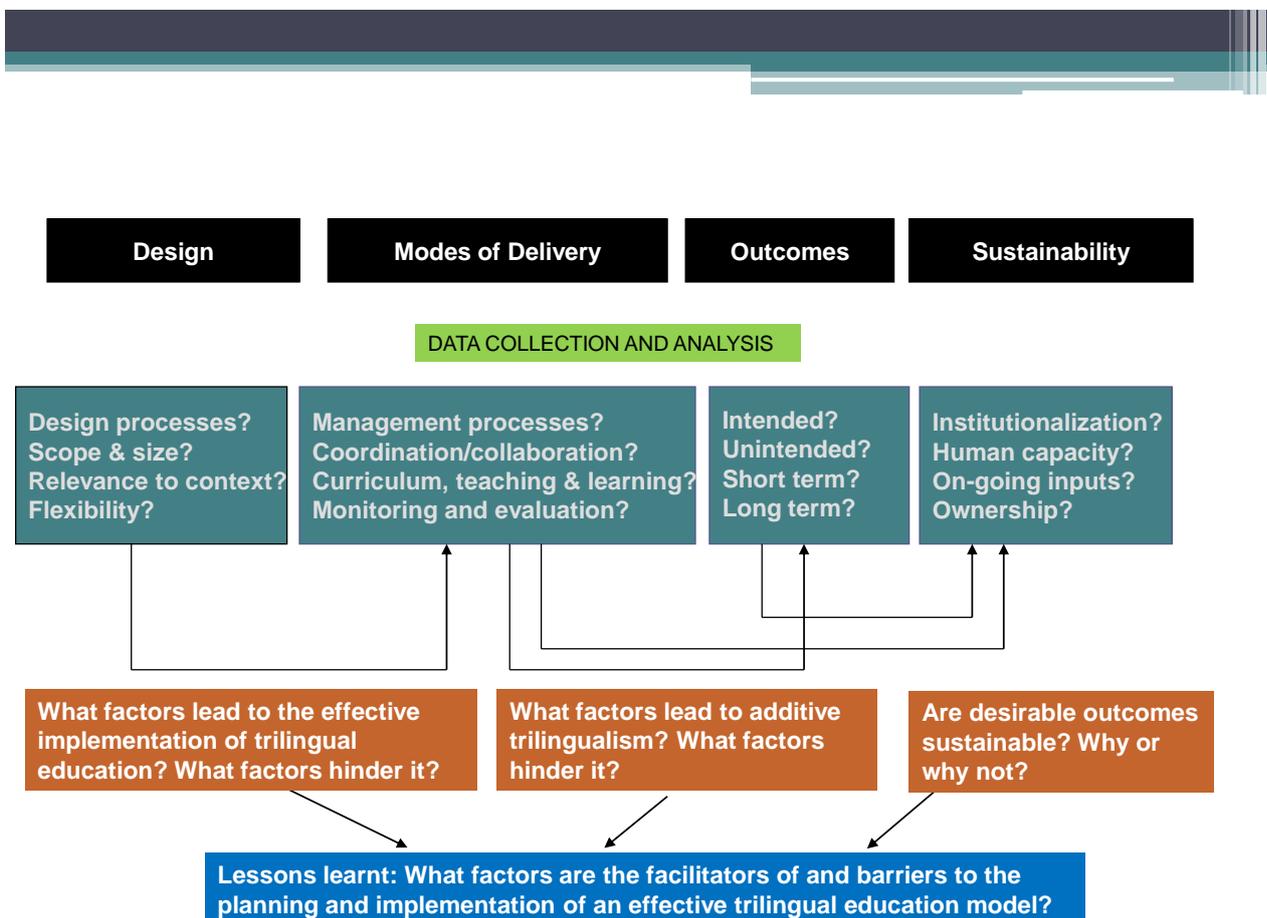
To facilitate the analysis of some of the factors influencing the models of trilingual education, the research conceptualised the models in terms of **policy making** and **implementation**. (This aspect of the research is set within the broader contextual factors that are explored using the range of research instruments listed in Table 1.)

A framework was adapted from the one created by Adamson and Morris (2007). The framework (Figure 2) focuses on the factors influencing four specific aspects of policy planning and implementation: the **Design** [设计], the **Modes of Delivery** [实践方式], the **Outcomes** [结果], and the **Sustainability** [可持续性] of the desirable impacts of the policy. These four aspects were derived from the critical dimensions of policy making set out by Elmore and Sykes (1992). They suggested that analysis should focus on the nature of policy, the sources or origins of the policy, the forms of action and the impact of the policy. In

creating the framework in Figure 1, the nature of policy and its sources or origins are combined under the umbrella term “Design”. Modes of Delivery covers the forms of action dimension, and includes both the policy actions and the management of those actions. The impact dimension was divided into two parts: the intended and unintended outcomes that are apparent, and the sustainability of positive outcomes.

Although the framework, on the surface, appears to adopt a rational, fidelity approach, in which the different stages of policy making and implementation follow a linear sequence, this is not the intention. Policy making and implementation is a complex, iterative process that can involve multiple levels of interpretation, appropriation and adaptations, with the communication flow being multi-directional rather than a top-down (from policy makers to policy implementers) process. The idea behind the framework is to provide focal points for the researchers as they look at the various settlements that have been reached at the time of the investigative study, and as they seek to understand the phenomena that they encounter.

*Figure 2—Analytical framework*



### **Design**

The probing questions in this area help to investigate the factors that influence policy-making. They focus on the people involved in policy-making, the ways in which decisions were made, the nature of the policy and the flexibility of the policy:

*What were the design processes? Were there any consultations with stakeholders? Who was involved? Who were the major decision-makers? What factors influenced these processes?*

设计过程是什么？有否与利益相关方进行磋商？都有哪些相关人员参与磋商？谁是主要的决策者？是什么因素影响了这些过程？

*What was the size and scope of the policy? What were the goals? What factors influenced these decisions?*

政策的规模和范围是什么？政策的目标是什么？是什么因素影响了这些决定呢？

*How relevant was the policy to the specific context under study? What factors affected the relevance?*

相关政策的具体情况的研究是如何呢？是什么因素影响的相关性？

*How flexible were the components of the policy? Why were they flexible/inflexible?*

政策的组建有多灵活？为什么它们灵活/不灵活？

The answers to these questions can then be considered from an evaluative perspective, when the modes of delivery are studied. The key questions for the evaluation are:

*What factors lead to the effective implementation of trilingual education? What factors hinder it?*

是什么因素促进了三语教育的有效实施？是什么因素阻碍了三语教育的实施？

These questions will draw out contextual factors that encourage or discourage the promotion of effective trilingual education.

### **Modes of Delivery**

This section looks at how the policy is implemented at the grassroots level, and how it is managed and monitored:

*What management processes have put in place to implement the policy? What factors influence the choices made?*

需要怎样的管理流程来实施政策的落实到位？哪些因素会影响所做的选择？

*How has the policy implementation been coordinated? What forms of collaboration existed among the different stakeholders? What factors influence the choices made?*

政策的实施如何进行协调呢？在不同利益体之间存在着什么形式的合作？哪些因素会影响所做的选择？

*How is the curriculum organised? What teaching and learning activities are used to implement the policy? What factors influence the choices made?*

课程是如何组织的？使用什么样的教学和学习活动实施的政策呢？哪些因素会影响所做的选择？

*How is the policy implementation monitored and evaluated? What factors influence the choices made?*

怎样监管，监测和评估政策是如何实施的？哪些因素会影响所做的选择？

The answers to these questions can then be analysed in terms of the contribution the pedagogical arrangements and the policy implementation management make to achieving desirable outcomes. Key facilitating and hindering factors can also be uncovered.

### **Outcomes**

This part is concerned with both intended outcomes (those which were stated as aims of the policy) and unintended outcomes (those which had not been planned or foreseen—they could be positive or negative outcomes).

*Have the intended outcomes been achieved? To what extent have they contributed to additive trilingualism? What factors have affected the success or failure of these outcomes in achieving additive trilingualism?*

预期的结果已经达到了吗？他们在何种程度上促进了三语能力的培养？什么因素影响了三语教育成果的成功或失败？

*What unintended outcomes have occurred? To what extent have they contributed to additive trilingualism? What factors have affected the success or failure of these outcomes in achieving additive trilingualism?*

有什么未意想不到的结果发生？他们在何种程度上促进了三语能力的培养？什么因素影响了三语能力培养过程中三语教育成果的成功或失败？

*Have the intended and unintended outcomes had a short term or long term impact? What factors have influenced the short-term nature or long-term nature of the outcomes?*

预期和非预期的结果是否有短期或长期的影响？是什么因素影响了成果短期性或持续性的？

The factors identified in this part (particularly the answers to the latter two questions) lead on to issues of sustainability.

### **Sustainability**

The sustainability of desirable policy impact is important, otherwise the impact fades away quickly. The questions in this section explore some of the factors that facilitate or hinder sustainability.

*To what extent have practices that bring about additive trilingualism become institutionalized (i.e. embedded in daily work and systems)? What factors have affected the success or failure of institutionalization?*

在何种程度上三语教育的做法成为制度化（即嵌入在日常工作和成为体系）？什么因素影响了制度化的成功或失败呢？

*To what extent has the human capacity to bring about additive trilingualism been developed (e.g. through on-going professional teacher development, staff recruitment, community awareness training)? What factors have affected the success or failure of human capacity building?*

人力资源在何种程度上促进了三语现象（例如，通过持续的专业教师专业发展，人员招聘，社区意识培训）？是什么因素影响了人力资源能力建设的成功或失败？

*What have been the on-going inputs of resources (financial, teaching and learning materials, hardware and software, etc.)? What factors have affected the success or failure of such inputs to sustain desirable outcomes?*

有哪些持续投入的资源（资金，教学和学习材料，硬件，软件等）？是什么因素影响这种投入，以维持投入的想法结果的成功或是失败？

*To what extent have different stakeholders assumed ownership of the policy? What factors have affected the degree of ownership assumed by different stakeholders?*

不同的利益相关者对政策承担所有权的推断达到什么程度？是什么因素影响由不同的利益相关者承担所有权的程度？

Taken overall, these probing questions (together with follow-up questions on any relevant matters arising) can show the contextual factors that influence the design, implementation, outcomes and sustainability of the trilingual education models. The framework allows for the four aspects to be studied individually and collectively (to see the interconnectedness between the design, implementation, outcomes and sustainability).

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