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Multilingual Education in the World and the Experience of Introduction in Kazakhstan

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Abstract

The need for reflection and in-depth study of issues related to the multilingual policy, where the knowledge of the native language simultaneously stimulates knowledge and learning of other languages is obvious in the context of the dynamic changes taking place in Kazakhstan. Existing world models of multilingual education represent a wide range of forms, productive use of which depends on many factors (language situation, economic and social conditions, historical and cultural aspects and so on). There is no doubt that multilingual education programs conditioned by the logic of development of Kazakhstan and the process of international integration are in demand in the Kazakhstan's educational system. This is due to high academic motivation of students and practitioners conditioned by the desire to improve professional competence and competitiveness in the conditions of Kazakhstan's international integration. However, it should be noted that despite the measures taken for the implementation of multilingual education and the first positive results of the pilot models many issues related to the widespread introduction of multilingual education system in the country have not yet been resolved. The analysis of the languages functioning in Kazakhstan revealed the prerequisites for the formation of multilingual person. We defined language preferences of citizens, their value priorities, related to ongoing multilingual policy, the influence of non-native (studied) languages to their native languages by using sociolinguistic methods. All these measures have allowed seeing the prospects of strengthening and development of the state, Russian and English languages, effectiveness of the language policy and possible steps to resolve these problems.

Keywords: Language policy; identity; Language situation; Language modernisation; Multilingual education; Multilingualism, Trinity of languages

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1. Introduction

Implementation of multilingual education into the educational activity has become the subject of the world of both public discussions and scientific scholars. Multilingual education is known to have a lot of possibilities for teaching young generation to be a part of democratic societies, but it is not fully achieved. Activation and focus of scholars, linguists, methodologists on the implementation and development of the multilingual education is quite reasonable. There is a discourse on these issues and the need to be solved. Some scholars consider that issues relate to bilateral and multilingual education which is necessary to overcome, whereas the others discuss competence in two or more languages as an index of personal, social, cultural, economic and political significance.

Existing world models of multilingual education represent a wide range of forms, the productivity of which depends on many factors (language situation, economic and social conditions, historical and cultural aspects and so on).

Kazakhstan is going through a modernization and fundamental change in the public, government, education and economic foundations and needs experience of many countries in all spheres of human activities.

2. Theoretical Basis and Results

In fact, multilingual education is particularly relevant in the communities where two or more languages are widely used. The development of multilingual education began in Denmark, the Netherlands, Spain, Luxemburg, where most residents are French-speaking. It has also developed in the south of United States in locations with a large population of Spanish-speaking, in areas of Austria with a predominantly Croat population, and recently, in Switzerland. Today, this model is successfully operating in Latvia and Finland, where the quality of school education is the best in the world. As to the countries of the former Soviet Union, the model of multilingual education is being developed in Estonia, many Asian countries, Kazakhstan and in some Russian regions, where this practice is considered to be successful.

Some of these countries joined the European Higher Education Area (The Bologna Process) and represent fundamental changes in education system. Estonia's inclusion to the Bologna process in 2004 can be as a demonstrative sample of the development of multilingual growth. Today, 7 out of 34 higher schools in Estonia offer educational multilingual programmes in English and Russian languages, and these programmes are in a great demand (Housen, 1997).

In the Netherlands, 87 percent of the population is fluent in English. In spite of it, out of 1560 international programs 1543 are in English. In Denmark, the English language is a compulsory subject from the third grade of secondary school, and in the seventh grade, students take a national test in English. Moreover, there are many academic programs in English for students (Bhatia & Ritchie, 2008).

In Austria, more than 96 percent of schools offer in-depth study of foreign languages from the first grade. In Finland, many students participate in a course of secondary education, entirely in English. Sweden has further higher strides in multilingual education. Education of almost all the universities in Sweden is conducted in English only. German, English and French languages are recognized as official languages in Belgium and Luxembourg (Housen, 2002).

According to this fact, a third language is to be introduced in educational program. For instance, in Spain, Spanish and Basque are taught as separate subjects as well as the language of education in the elementary grades; third language, English is taught as a subject in kindergarten for children aged 4 (Cenoz, 1998).

In other cases, the prototype of bilingual education programmes, all three languages may be used as a language of academic study. For example, based on trilingual programmes of Montreal, English-

speaking students learn different subjects in French and Hebrew in kindergarten. English is introduced as a third language from 4th grade and is used to study the arts and other academic subjects. In the European School of Luxembourg, students learn French, German, and Luxembourg (Hoffman, 1998).

The Luxembourg language is applied as a means of academic education, starting from pre-school education. The German language is introduced as a subject in the 1st grade, and then used as a means of academic study. At first, French is introduced as a main subject, and in the 2nd grade, French is used as the language of education.

Thus, the features of multilingual education programs vary greatly depending on the specific social, cultural and political situations.

Many countries of the Asia-Pacific region, which cover a territory of around 2300 different languages, according to UNESCO, widely implemented multilingual education. Some countries are more prone to the educational system in their native language, in which in the early grades are taught about a dozen other languages. Others are limited to a smaller number of languages and implement various pilot programs on the base of their native language.

Among Asian countries, Malaysia is one of the countries, which have a variety of multilingual education programs. Malaysia primarily focuses on the standardization of the Malaysian language (Bahasa Malaysia) and English is used as a language of globalisation to preserve many other local languages of the country.

Earlier, before independence, Malay, English, Mandarin and Tamil languages are conducted in secondary schools of Malaysia. However, after independence the Malay language became the official language, but English is granted the status of a second official language. It is important to note, that before adaptation of educational programs there were some difficulties. To improve language skills, mathematics and other exact subjects were taught in English (since 2009). It was concluded to attract English-speaking experts to achieve this objective. Not everyone agrees with this kind of innovations: some believe that the teaching of the exact subjects in English may adversely affect the Malay culture as a whole, while others were skeptical of the matched experts. In other words, today Malaysia faces a number of challenges.

3. Multilingual Education in Kazakhstan

Today, many experts are wondering about implementation of multilingual education in all spheres of human activity. There are a lot questions and thoughts about this imminent issue. Are multicultural education programs effective? Are they effective for students with different learning characteristics? Is it necessary to take into account the relationship between languages? Are there any restrictions to study three languages? Unfortunately, there are no exact answers for these questions.

Rapidly changing geopolitical and economic realities pose new challenges to Kazakhstani society. Multilingualism as a factor of globalisation and integration into the global community is one of the priorities of social development. Ambitious goals intended to capture all spheres of human activity. However, there are many issues related to the actual situation of the implementation of state programs. What model of multilingual education will be the most successful for Kazakhstan? Are there conditions for the conservation, development and strengthening of state and ethnic languages? What is the attitude of citizens of Kazakhstan, immigrants and ethnic minorities to the policy of trilinguism? These and other issues are very relevant, and require careful analysis and new research approaches.

Gaining independence in 1991, in historically short periods, Kazakhstan has managed to take strong positions on the international scene. This country has a number of objective and subjective factors. After the declaring the independence, Kazakhstan became a member- country of the United Nations and other international organizations, and became an initiator of the convening of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) - Asian analogue of the OSCE. Since then

Kazakhstan has actively involved in the activities of its organizations, such as UNESCO, UNICEF, ECOSOC, UNHCR and others. Kazakhstan began working with a number of major international organizations: International Monetary Fund (IMF), International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Kazakhstan is actively involved in the integration processes within the framework of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Central Asian Economic Union (CAPS), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Kazakhstan became the first Asian country to chair the OSCE.

In the context of the dynamic changes, taking place in Kazakhstan, it is crucial to comprehend and study depth the issues related to the multicultural policy, which requires the knowledge of native language and stimulates learning other languages. It should be noted that current language policy aimed at harmonious relations between the two communicative and demographically powerful Kazakh and Russian languages in all spheres, including education. Since Kazakhstan announced its independence, Nursultan Nazarbayev, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan has constantly been advocating a trilingual model. In his opinion, each person in Kazakhstan should strive to gain fluency in English, Russian, and Kazakh. President's proposal on new trilingual education is a step forward in the right direction to increase presence on the world stage. Principles of the national project "Trinity of Languages" determines the Kazakh language as state language, Russian language as the official language of the country, and English language as a language of international communication (Nazarbayev, 2007).

Kazakh and Russian languages are functioning in educational institutions at all levels. Kazakh is native language of instruction in schools, colleges and higher institutions. Moreover, Kazakh language is taught as an official language in all educational institutions, regardless of the language of teaching. Russian language is taught as a native in educational institutions with Russian language teaching, and as a compulsory school subject in all educational institutions.

Multilingual education programme is being implemented on a pilot basis in special schools for gifted children since 2007. It involves in depth study of applying Kazakh, Russian and English languages and teaching of humanities and mathematic cycles in English. Currently, there are 33 schools with three languages teaching in Kazakhstan.

The number of secondary schools focused on trilingual education is growing every year. In 2011-2012, there were 67 polylingual schools with three languages teaching, compared to 2012-2013 amounted to 90. Among them 29 Kazakh-Turkish schools, 11 Nazarbayev Intellectual schools, 33 schools for gifted children, and others. The number of students in these schools account for 20,461 students.

To develop multilingual education in Kazakhstan, a special gradual action plan to September of 2016 was developed by Ministry of Education and Science. In this regard, English is taught in all comprehensive schools from the first grade in 2013-2014.

It is obvious that the effectiveness of multilingual education in Kazakhstan is directly related to the improvement of skills and proficiency of the teaching staff, organization of the purposeful training for teachers abroad, efforts to attract international scholars, adoption of the newest pedagogical technologies in teaching, development of the integrated education programmes, and enhancement of interactive telecommunication.

The State Program of Education Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011 – 2020 is an organizational basis for implementation multilingual education. Since 2005, the Republic of Kazakhstan has adopted several official documents in education sphere. These are namely the State Program of Education Development for 2005-2010, the State Program of Technical and Vocational Education Development for 2008-2012, **"Children of Kazakhstan" Program for 2007 – 2011** and **"Balapan" Preschool Education Program for 2010-2014**, "Bolashak" International Scholarship

Program. Owing to these programmes, the number of preparing English speaking teachers for secondary, technical and vocational education, and higher education is increasing. More than 20, 000 Kazakhstani citizens are studying abroad to date. Around 3000 recipients of the Bolashak International Scholarship of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan are studying in 27 countries of the world.

“Bolashak” International Program is one of the most interesting, promising, and potentially enduring developments in multilingual education in Kazakhstan in the last decades. Popular participation of teachers in “Bolashak” International Scholarship Program clearly opened spaces for the practice of multilingual education. In this case, many of Kazakhstani universities started a new project of multilingual education. Since September 1, 2012, many polylingual departments have been opened in 32 higher education institutions in the Republic of Kazakhstan which amount to more than 5000 learners.

Moreover, higher institutions in Kazakhstan towards the development of multilingual education opened the Centers for Multilingual Education to create normative and educational-methodological aids; to elaborate precise programme for multilingual education; to give lectures and conduct practical classes in multilingual groups; to organize gradual introduction to multilingual education in special subjects of natural, scientific, technical, humanitarian directions; to improve the professional skills and proficiency of the teaching staff of universities in three languages.

4. Conclusion

Today the Republic of Kazakhstan is a multilingual, multicultural, and multiethnic country. Current economic, political, social changes in Kazakhstan have generated the necessity of implementation of multilingual education. The legal and conceptual basis of multilingual education is reflected in state documents, which are directed for improving and realising the language policy in Kazakhstan.

According to State Program of Education development in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020, 100 percent of high school graduates must know the Kazakh language, 90 percent of the population are required to know Russian, and 20 percent must know English.

The programmes of multilingual education are in demand in Kazakhstan system of education because of the academic motivation of teachers and students to enhance professional competence and competitiveness in the conditions of the international integration of Kazakhstan.

At the same time, it should be noted that, despite the undertaken measures for realisation of multilingual education and the first positive results of pilot models, many questions connected with universal system introduction of multilingual education in the country for the present have not found any solution yet.

The main and fundamental decision of the issue is a choice of optimum model of multilingual education for Kazakhstan. This model is considered to be reasonable from a position of preservation, development and strengthening of languages.

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