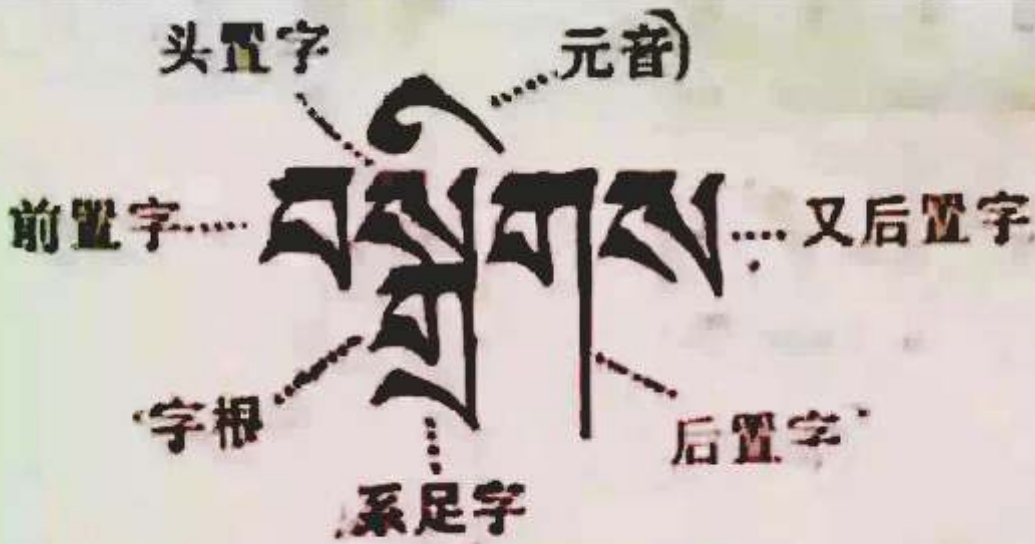


BILINGUAL EDUCATION POLICY IN TIBET



THE SYSTEMATIC REPLACEMENT OF TIBETAN LANGUAGE WITH MANDARIN CHINESE



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Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy

TIBETAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy is a registered non-governmental and a non-profit organization established in 1996 in Dharamsala in North India. TCHRD's mission is to monitor, research and document human rights situation in Tibet, and to advocate for human rights principles and democratic concepts in Tibet and in diaspora.

TCHRD conducts regular, systematic investigation of human rights situation in Tibet and monitors human rights policies of the People's Republic of China. Every year, TCHRD publishes annual report, thematic reports, and testimonies of victims of human rights violations, biweekly newsletters, press releases and briefings on human rights issues in Tibet. TCHRD maintains a political prisoners database that have been expanded into a full-fledged human rights documentation and archive resources.

TCHRD attends the UN Human Rights Council sessions as well as other regional, national and international conferences. Such participation is aimed at highlighting human rights situation in Tibet and lobbying and networking on the promotion and protection of human rights in Tibet. TCHRD actively engages with the UN human rights mechanisms and special procedures by submitting reports and cases of specific human rights violations in Tibet. TCHRD organizes workshops, talk series, public discussions and campaigns on human rights and democracy in the exile Tibetan community.

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Cover Photo: *A Tibetan word construction explained in Mandarin Chinese.*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
TIBETAN LANGUAGE	3
BACKGROUND ON TIBET	4
IMPACT OF THE DOMINANCE OF MANDARIN CHINESE	5
TIBETAN AUTONOMY	7
LINGUISTIC RIGHTS	14
HISTORY OF THE PRC'S MINORITY LANGUAGE POLICIES IN THE PRC	14
ANALYSIS OF PRC LAWS ON MINORITY LANGUAGE RIGHTS ..	22
LANGUAGE RIGHTS AS HUMAN RIGHTS.....	27
EDUCATION RIGHTS & POLICY	35
BACKGROUND ON PRC EDUCATION POLICIES AND PERCEPTIONS OF TIBETAN CULTURE	35
HISTORY OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION POLICY IN TIBET.....	38
BILINGUAL EDUCATION POLICY	58
FAILINGS OF THE BILINGUAL EDUCATION POLICY IN TIBET ..	63
PROS AND CONS OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION POLICY	70

ANALYSIS OF HUMAN RIGHTS TO LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION POLICY	73
FAILURE TO UPHOLD LAWS.....	73
RELIGIOUS AND ANTI-RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES ON BILINGUAL EDUCATION.....	77
RESISTANCES TO THE DISPLACEMENT OF THE TIBETAN LANGUAGE IN TIBET	79
EFFORTS TO INCLUDE TIBETAN IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM ..	79
CONFOUNDING ISSUES HINDERING PROMOTION OF TIBETAN LANGUAGE IN SCHOOLS	80
OBSTACLES TO BILINGUAL EDUCATION POLICY REFORM	81
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	83
CONCLUSION	85

INTRODUCTION

Language is an issue that reaches far and beyond politics. Language is the lifeblood of human cultures and the heart and centre of issues of education. Not only is language our most basic form of cultural education, it is laden with history, unique perspectives and interpretations of the world. It is our greatest accomplishment and defining characteristic. When we lose language we lose thousands of years of human history, the ability to express ourselves, and to the ability to understand the forces that created and shaped us.

“Language is the fundamental lifeline of a culture. It is the reservoir of identity and the most precious gem of a nationality – of a people.”¹Languages are more than simply a method of communication. They convey significant social and cultural behaviors and ways of thinking, such as interpreting human behavior, and connecting with our environment.²Without language, a culture is more likely to fade and even disappear.³

Despite the recognized importance of language diversity, languages are rapidly disappearing. Today, the median number of speakers of a language is 5,000-6,000 and there are fewer than 300 languages with more than one million native users”.⁴Just during the last century, approximately 400 languages have gone

1 Khenpo Tsultrim Lodro, <http://www.tibetpolicy.eu/an-urgent-call-for-the-protection-and-preservation-of-tibetan-language-by-khenpo-tsultrim-lodoe/>

2 Nuwer, R. “Languages: Why We Must Save Dying Tongues.” BBC Future. BBC, 6 June 2014. Available at: <<http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20140606-why-we-must-save-dying-languages>>.

3 Nuwer, 2014

4 Burki, Rozi Khan.” Dying Languages; Special Focus on Ormuri” Pakistan Journal of Public Administration. December 2001; Volume 6. No. 2. Available at: <<http://www.khyber.org/publications/016-020/ormuri.shtml> >.

extinct.⁵ Additionally, it is estimated that 50 percent of the world's remaining 6,500 languages will be extinct by the end of this century.⁶

Language extinction results from a variety of external pressures including political, economic, religious, cultural or educational in conjunction with internal pressures such as a community's negative attitude towards its own language. A major factor influencing language extinction is pressure to participate in the global economy, which generally requires a quality education and fluency in at least one of the four most common spoken languages in the world: English, Spanish, French, and Mandarin Chinese. Urbanization and migration also lead to a "loss of traditional ways of life and a strong pressure to speak a dominant language that is – or is perceived to be – necessary for full civic participation and economic advancement".⁷

Historically, language extinctions have most often occurred as a result of domination by powerful groups who demand less powerful groups learn to speak the powerful group's languages. One common way of destroying a language is by replacing the less powerful community's mother tongue by the more powerful group's language in education, administration and mass communications. Once the powerful group's language becomes a necessity for survival in society, the less powerful language speakers migrate out of the region or learn to speak the more prominent language. In effect, new generations are not taught their mother tongues and the less powerful language becomes extinct.

TIBETAN LANGUAGE

One language at risk of extinction is Tibetan, the language spoken

5 (Nuwer, 2014)

6 *ibid.*

7 UNESCO. (1996). Universal Declaration on Linguistic Rights: World Conference on Linguistic Rights. Rep. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 9 June 1996. Web. <www.unesco.org/cpp/uk/declarations/linguistic.pdf>.

bymore than 8 million people living on the Tibetan Plateau and in the Himalayas. Tibetan is classified by linguists as a Tibeto-Burman language within the Sino-Tibetan family and has three main dialects: U-tsang, Kham, and Amdo representing the three main political-economic areas of Tibet.⁸ The Tibetan language is revered as one of the four oldest and greatest in volume and most original literatures of Asia, along with Sanskrit, Chinese, and Japanese literatures.⁹ Tibetan dates back to the 7th century when the Tibetan script was created from Sanskrit by Thonmi Sambhota.¹⁰ Later studies also revealed that the Tibetan written language used today evolved on the basis of reforming the Maer script.¹¹ The Maer script originated from the ancient Kingdom of Shang Shung, in Tibet's Ngari region, and was found on many rock paintings dating from more than 1000 B.C.E. Studies also discovered among the local populace single sheets and whole sets of printed materials with Maer script.

During the eighth century, "Buddhist texts written in Sanskrit were carried over the Himalayas, and were carefully translated into Tibetan by meditator scholars who had studied the true meaning of the teachings with Indian masters".¹² The first Sanskrit-Tibetan dictionary, known as the Mahavyutpatti, was written and published in the ninth century. Since then, thousands of Tibetan Buddhist religious texts written in the Tibetan language have been

8 "The Language of Tibet." Dharma Haven, 17 Dec. 2002. Available at: <<http://www.dharma-haven.org/tibetan/language.htm>>. Whitaker, Justin. "Tibetan Language: more than you imagined." Patheos, 25 Jan. 2013. Available at <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/americanbudhist/2013/01/tibetan-language-more-than-you-imagined.html>

9 Tournadre, N. (2003b). Statement presented to the round table on 'Teaching and learning Tibetan: the role of the Tibetan language in Tibet's future' for the Congressional Executive Commission on China. United States Congress. 108 Cong., 1st sess., 2003. Available at: <<http://www.cecc.gov/events/roundtables/teaching-and-learning-tibetan-the-role-of-the-tibetan-language-in-tibets-future>>.

10 Chhosphel, Samten. "'Thonmi Sambhota", Treasury of Lives, September 2010. Available at <http://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Tonmi-Sambhata/8342>

11 Badeng Nima (2008) The Choice of Languages in Tibetan School Education Revisited, Chinese Education & Society, 41:6, 50-60

12 "The Language of Tibet," 2002.

published.¹³The numerous renowned Tibetan writers, poets, and translators show Tibetans embrace learning new languages and preserving the Tibetan language and culture. The history of Tibetan lotsawas(English: translators) demonstrates a keen willingness to learn from other languages and cultures. For about 900 years since the beginning of the 7th century, Tibetans transmitted, preserved and translated the complete volumes of the Indian Buddhist canon that contained more than 5,000 texts and 73 million words.¹⁴

As Professor Minglang Zhou explains, “Tibetan is an immortal carrier of the extensive and deep Tibetan culture. It is the best media through which Tibetan culture, education, and economy can be developed, because Tibetan, with its special standing in the cultural psychology of the Tibetans, is an important symbol of its ethnic pride and a tool of thought”.¹⁵ Since Tibetan language is the main method of communicating and transmitting Tibetan culture, the continuation of Tibetan language is absolutely critical for cultural preservation and Tibetan identity.¹⁶Therefore, extinction of the Tibetan language will be consequential to global diversity and history.

BACKGROUND ON TIBET

Tibet is made up of the three regions of U-Tsang, Amdo, and Kham. Since the PRC’s invasion of Tibet in 1949 however, Tibet has been divided between five regions of the People’s Republic of China. U-Tsang and parts of Amdo and Kham lay within the Tibet

13 Zhou, M. [Maocao]. (2004). “The Use and Development Of Tibetan In China.” Minglang Zhou & Hongkai Sun, eds. *Language policy in the People’s Republic of China: Theory and practice since 1949*: 221-236. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

14 Raine, R. (2010). *The translator in Tibetan history: Identity and influence*. *Forum*, 8(2), 133-161.

15 Maocao Zhou, 2004.

16 Wangdu, K. (2011). “China’s minority education policy with reference to Tibet.” *Tibetan Review* 46.6: 19-23.

Autonomous Region (TAR), which has the greatest concentration of Tibetans of any region and makes up over half of the Tibetan population of the PRC. The remainder of Amdo makes up much of Qinghai Province and the western flank of Gansu Province. The remainder of Kham accounts for much of western Sichuan Province and a portion of northwestern Yunnan Province. Therefore, “the name ‘Tibet,’ as it is used in this report, indicates the whole of U-Tsang, Amdo, and Kham, not the TAR alone.

IMPACT OF THE DOMINANCE OF MANDARIN CHINESE

Since the founding of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 and the subsequent invasion of Tibet in 1950 by the People’s Liberation Army, the dominance of the PRC’s primary language, Mandarin Chinese, has increasingly extended into both public and private sectors of Tibetan communities. The promotion of Mandarin Chinese as the official language in Mainland China at the county and higher government levels began in 1956 and has been adopted in the PRC’s most recent Constitution.¹⁷ Article 19 of the 1982 Constitution of PRC states, “The state promotes the nationwide use of Putonghua [Mandarin Chinese] (common speech based on Beijing pronunciation).”¹⁸ Due to China’s strong presence in the global economy, Mandarin Chinese has become essential in local, national, and international contexts. In effect, Mandarin Chinese is being promoted in commerce and education over minority languages, including Tibetan.¹⁹

Since the late 1990s, the promotion of Mandarin Chinese has been an important national agenda resulting in increased

17 Zhou, M. [Minglang] (1999). The official national language and language attitudes of three ethnic minority groups in China. *Language Problems and Language Planning*, 23(2), 157-174.

18 Wang, Yuxiang, & Phillion. (2009). “Minority language policy and practice in China: The need for multicultural education.” *International Journal of Multicultural Education* 11.1

19 Zhou, 2004.

marginalization of the Tibetan language.²⁰ A reason advanced in the PRC's discourse on the language issue is that economic power will increase along with the increasing number of Mandarin Chinese speakers. However, as the prevalence of Mandarin Chinese speakers increases, minority language speakers are increasingly denied political and socioeconomic opportunities to operate in their minority languages.²¹

Since Tibet is known as a rural and impoverished region with low levels of education, the PRC implemented educational policies in the TAR to improve literacy rates and access to education. Two of the most well known policies are the *sanbao* policy, which provides free food, clothing and lodging for children at school, and the *neidixiang ban* policy which provides for sending primary school graduates to inland secondary schools in 19 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities of China. Each of these educational policies includes Mandarin Chinese language as the primary language of instruction.²² For all practical purposes, this policy involves the dislocation of the best achievers of Tibetan primary school students to faraway Beijing and other cities, away from their home surroundings at a young age. In practice for almost a quarter century, this policy has tended to evoke what Gita Steiner-Khamsi and Ines Stolpe (2006, 165) call "horrific associations of cultural alienation and forced assimilation".²³

Speaking Mandarin Chinese guarantees not only better employment opportunities, but also "the option of entry into the identity of being Chinese".²⁴ Since Tibetans have one of the lowest

20 Wangdu, 2011

21 Ibid.

22 Postiglione, Zhiyong, & Jiao. (2004). "From ethnic segregation to impact integration: State schooling and identity construction for rural Tibetans." *Asian Ethnicity* 5.2: 195-217.

23 Gerard A. Postiglione (2009), *Dislocated Education: The Case of Tibet*, Comparative Education Review, Vol. 53, No. 4, The University of Chicago Press and Comparative and International Education Society. Available at https://www.academia.edu/12789155/Dislocated_Education_The_Case_of_Tibet

24 Wang, Yuxiang, & JoAnn Phillion, 2009.

education levels in the PRC, supporters of including Mandarin Chinese inschool curriculums within Tibet believe that learning Mandarin Chinese will expand employment opportunities thereby motivating students to stay in school.²⁵As a result, some Tibetans have accepted this idea that learning Chinese is the only way to improve their life by securing government jobs upon graduation.²⁶

The current policy of promoting Mandarin Chinese as the common national language is driven by PRC's assimilationist language policy. Part of PRC's state-building project, this policy aims to integrate minority cultures and identities with the dominant Chinese majority by promising progress and opportunity in return for safeguarding“national unityand harmonious society”.²⁷A combination of policies and practices has enabled “cultural assimilation, language loss, identity disarray, and social displacement”, as evidenced by a series of Tibetan language protests in 2010.²⁸

TIBETAN AUTONOMY

Autonomy is generally understood as the freedom to govern affairs of a region within certain limits. It is defined as “the legally entrenched power of communities to exercise public policy functions of a legislative, executive and/or judicial type independently of other sources of authority in the state, but subject to the overall legal order of the state”.²⁹Following the 17-point Agreement in 1951, China promised Tibetans self-rule including a separate provision on the “freedom [of Tibetan nationality] to develop their spoken

25 Postiglione, Zhiyong, & Jiao, 2004.

26 Wang, Yuxiang, & JoAnn Phillion, 2009.

27 Gulbahar H. Beckett and Gerard A. Postiglione (2013), China's assimilationist language policy: The impact on indigenous/minority literacy and social harmony.” Routledge.

28 Ibid.

29 Wolff, S. “Autonomy”. The Princeton Encyclopedia of Self-determination. Encyclopedia Princetoniensis. Available at: <<https://pesd.princeton.edu/?q=node/1>>

and written languages.”³⁰ In 1984, the Chinese government passed the Law on Regional National Autonomy, which “embodies the state’s full respect for and guarantee of the right of the minority nationalities to administer their internal affairs and its adherence to the principle of equality, unity and common prosperity for all its nationalities.”³¹ Tibet was divided into 13 autonomous areas that included the Tibet Autonomous Region, established in 1965, and 12 adjoining areas in neighbouring provinces.³² The degree of Tibetan autonomy has been a globally recognized issue for many years and has been documented widely by journalists and researchers. Three main factors are used to evaluate Tibetan people’s ability to govern affairs within Tibet and using the Tibetan Language: 1) population composition of Tibet, 2) power relations within Tibet, and 3) use of the Tibetan language in the public sector of Tibet.

1. Population Composition’s Effect on Tibetan Language

A major factor impacting the linguistic ecology of a region is the relative concentration of the language speakers in that region. Regarding Tibet, usually “the greater percentage of Tibetans is found in a community the more Tibetan is used, even by a non-Tibetan population there.”³³ While Tibetans are the majority group in Tibet, more Chinese have been migrating into Tibet as a result of powerful propaganda by the Chinese government encouraging them to settle and “civilize” the minority communities. As more Chinese settle in Tibet, set up businesses, and input technology-requiring knowledge of Chinese language into the region, Tibetans have been compelled

30 “Seventeen-Point Plan for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet”. Dec. 1969. Council on Foreign Relations. Available at: <<http://www.cfr.org/tibet/seventeen-point-plan-peaceful-liberation-tibet/p16006>>

31 Law of the People’s Republic of China on Regional National Autonomy, Available at http://www.china.org.cn/government/laws/2007-04/13/content_1207139.htm

32 Davis, Michael. “Tibetan autonomy poses questions for Hong Kong”. South China Morning Post, 30 July 2013. Available at: <<http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1292872/tibetan-autonomy-poses-questions-hong-kong>>

33 Zhou, Minglang, and Hongkai Sun (2006). “Language Policy in the People’s Republic of China: Theory and Practice Since 1949”. Springer Science & Business Media

to learn Mandarin Chinese in order to interact and trade with the Chinese settlers.³⁴

Chinese migration also influenced the shift in language policies in schools.³⁵ With an increased Mandarin Chinese-speaking migrant population including children within Tibet, educators opposed to using educational resources in minority languages and bilingual programs have more power to promote the expansion of Mandarin Chinese into the school curriculum.³⁶ Therefore, migration of Mandarin Chinese-speaking people not only changed the demographic composition of the TAR and other Tibetan autonomous areas; it also changed the language and cultural composition of the region. Since Chinese are considered more skilled, educated, and economically powerful than Tibetans living in Tibet, their presence and language has slowly swayed the educational system within Tibet to become more Mandarin-centric than Tibetan-centric.

2. Power Relation's Effect on Tibetan Language

Power relations depend on the demographic composition and policies governing the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) cadres in Tibet. A 2004 research on Chinese migrants and their work in the Tibetan autonomous county of Labrang (Chinese: Xiahe) in Kanlho (Ch: Gannan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu Province, found that, “as in many other minority areas the percentage of so-called minority cadres in Xiahe has grown markedly since the 1960s due to conscious efforts to include minorities in the administration”.³⁷ The reasons behind increasing the number of minority cadres was to help “legitimise claims that minorities have autonomy and control their own autonomous areas, but also to ensure that local cadres are able to work as middlemen between

34 Maocao Zhou, 2004.

35 Hansen, M.H. (2004). “Dynamic Encounters – Being Han in a Minority Area.” *Frontier People: Han Settlers in Minority Areas of China*. London: C. Hurst & Co, 80-111.

36 Ibid.

37 Hansen, 2004.

the Party, higher levels of government, and the local minority population”.³⁸

While having a higher percentage of Tibetan cadres would seem to represent more power for the Tibetan people, Tibetans can only join the rank and file of CCP cadres if they meet requirements of the CCP and work as “middlemen” between the CCP and the local population. Furthermore, to be part of the CCP cadres, one must declare atheism, which equates to giving up one’s religion and culture. For example, local Tibetan cadres in Labrang “sometimes expressed what might best be described as a bad conscience about believing in Buddhism when, as one of them said, ‘As members of the Communist Party we are really not supposed to believe in religion or superstition’”.³⁹ Furthermore, minority cadres who were interviewed by the researchers explained, “while minorities possess the leadership positions in the government, it is often the Han [Chinese] cadres in officially lower positions who have the strongest say in policy and decision making processes”.⁴⁰ Research by professor Badeng Nima⁴¹ and writer Woesser⁴² found that local Chinese cadres often belittle efforts to educate Tibetan in their own language. Also, Tibetans fear that any expression of Tibetan cultural identity or advocating for Tibetan language education would be branded as ‘spittist’, the highest political crime.⁴³ Because assimilation into the CCP cadre system requires termination of Tibetan Buddhist practices (a significant component of Tibetan culture) and subordination to the Han Chinese cadres, the needs of the Tibetan community cannot be sufficiently represented by the Tibetan cadre members. Therefore, Tibetan cadre members truly do not have the power to advocate for the Tibetan community.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 Nima, B. (2008). The Choice of Languages in Tibetan School Education Revisited. Chinese Education & Society; Nov/Dec 2008, Vol. 41 Issue 6, p50

42 Woesser. “Are ‘Minority’ Languages Safe?” Radio Free Asia, 22 September 2010. Available at: <<http://www.rfa.org/english/commentaries/languages-09222010105909.html>>.

43 Ibid.

In January 2016, Tashi Wangchuk, a Tibetan language advocate, was arrested and charged for “inciting separatism”⁴⁴ in response to his advocacy work encouraging increased Tibetan language use within schools and government offices within Tibet, both of which are supposed to be guaranteed by the PRC’s Constitution that provides all minority nationalities the right to use and develop their own spoken and written languages.⁴⁵ By detaining Mr. Wangchuk, the Chinese authorities sent a message to Tibetan language advocates that if they advocate for greater use of the Tibetan language in Tibet, they too will be punished for “inciting separatism”.⁴⁶ These instances reveal that Tibetans have minimal avenues of advocating for educational and language policies that benefit Tibetan children and preserve the Tibetan language.



*Tashi Wangchuk has been in arbitrary detention since January 2016
for language activism*

44 “TCHRD calls for release of Tibetan language advocate Tashi Wangchuk from illegal detention”. TCHRD, 11 July 2016. Available at <<http://tchrd.org/tchrd-calls-for-release-of-tibetan-language-advocate-tashi-wangchuk-from-illegal-detention/>>

45 Wong, E. “China Charges Tibetan Education Advocate With Inciting Separatism”. New York Times, 30 March 2016. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/31/world/asia/china-tibet-tashi-wangchuk.html?_r=0>

46 TCHRD. Special Report on the Right to Education in Tibet. Dharamsala: Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, 2015. Print.

3. Use of Tibetan Language in the Public Sector

Mandarin Chinese is prevalent throughout the public sector of all minority nationalities areas in the PRC. Mandarin Chinese is the primary language for government documents, instructions for electrical appliances, within businesses, and schools.⁴⁷ Even though a law⁴⁸ requires “bilingual street signs and notice-boards in Tibetan and Mandarin Chinese, this regulation is not always respected in certain regions”.⁴⁹ Even in Lhasa, where the law is enforced, the billboards are very frequently written with Tibetan characters that are much smaller than Chinese letters. Furthermore, the billboards contain spelling mistakes in the Tibetan language whereas Mandarin Chinese is rarely written with spelling mistakes.⁵⁰

The pervasiveness of Mandarin Chinese in Tibet has had negative consequences on Tibetan language learning, maintenance, and use.⁵¹ Due to widespread job opportunities that require Mandarin Chinese fluency, some Tibetans believe that learning Chinese is the only way to improve their life by “getting government jobs after graduation”.⁵² It was found that “in Xiahe as in other ethnic minority areas profound knowledge of Chinese and some degree of education in a state school were often essential even when looking for local jobs as drivers, postmen and other local service jobs, and though this was a Tibetan area the working language within the administration was in practice mostly Chinese”.⁵³ Also, “with the development of tourism and increased trade, several Tibetan peasants interviewed found that a profound knowledge of Chinese

47 Tournadre, N. (2003a) “The Dynamics of Tibetan-Chinese Bilingualism. The current situation and future prospects.” *China Perspectives* 45 (2003).

48 “Tibet Autonomous Region’s Regulations on Tibetan Language unlikely to stop the growing influence of Chinese”. Phayul, 31 January 2003. Available at: <<http://www.phayul.com/news/tools/print.aspx?id=3713&t=1>>

49 Tournadre, 2003a.

50 Ibid.

51 Wang, Yuxiang, & JoAnn Phillion, 2009.

52 Ibid.

53 Hansen, 2004.

was essential to succeed in obtaining a more permanent attractive job outside agriculture”.⁵⁴It was also observed, “Formal Chinese state education was brought forward as one attractive option for eventually securing a job and income for children.”⁵⁵ In effect, young Tibetans do not see the value in learning and speaking Tibetan language if it will not “fill their stomachs”.⁵⁶By excluding Tibetan from the administrative spheres and giving Chinese a predominant position in government including the ability to make education policy decisions, and “by offering only a handful of professional openings based on a command of Tibetan,” the PRC has formulated the idea that Tibetan is a worthless language.⁵⁷



An illustration shows the destruction of Tibetan language by the County and Prefecture level education departments (2014)

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

56 Tournadre, 2003a.

57 Ibid.

LINGUISTIC RIGHTS

HISTORY OF THE PRC'S MINORITY LANGUAGE POLICIES IN THE PRC

The PRC's history shows a clear recognition of the importance of preserving the Tibetan language. Since the PRC's founding in 1949, the PRC has implemented numerous policies to guarantee that the Tibetan language will continue to be spoken, written, and developed.⁵⁸ But these policies were often not put into practice. However, since 1990s, the PRC has adopted a more assimilationist approach in managing and resolving the issues related to Tibetans and other so-called minority nationalities.

1949 COMMON PROGRAM:

Article 50 states "all nationalities within the boundaries of the People's Republic of China are equal."

Article 51 gives "minority nationalities the right to autonomy in their communities."

Article 53 declares, "all minority nationalities shall have freedom to develop their dialects and languages, to preserve or reform their traditions, customs and religious beliefs."

1949

The PRC's preliminary constitution, the Common Program,⁵⁹ was enacted shortly before the PRC was founded on 1 October 1949.

58 Maocao Zhou, 2004.

59 The Common Program of the Chinese People's Consultative Conference (Adopted by the First Plenary Session of the Chinese People's PCC on September 29, 1949 in Peking). Available at: < <http://www.e-chaupak.net/database/chicon/1949/1949e.pdf> >

1952

In 1952, to implement articles 50 through 53 of the Common Program, the “State Council passed ‘The Guidelines for Regional Autonomy for Minority Nationalities in the PRC’ and ‘The Decision on the Organization and Structure of Local Minority United Governments’”.⁶⁰ Both regulations included provisions on language rights for minority nationalities in administrative, judicial, and educational processes.⁶¹

1954

The PRC’s first official constitution of 1954 reintroduced Article 50, 51, and 53 of the Common Program in Article 2 of its General Principles.⁶² Article 2 provided that, “All power in the People’s Republic of China belongs to the people. The Organs through which the people exercise power are the National People’s Congress and the local people’s congresses at various levels. The National People’s Congress, the local people’s congresses and other organs of state practise democratic centralism.”⁶³ Article 71 of the 1954 Constitution also required that autonomous regions (provinces), prefectures, and counties adopt one or more languages commonly used in the local minority communities and Article 77 provided that “all minority nationalities had the right to use their native languages in courts, which had an obligation to provide interpreters, and that courts of law should conduct their business in languages commonly used in local minority communities.”⁶⁴ Furthermore, the 1954 constitution also guaranteed the right to use and develop minority languages in minority communities (Article 4) and required minority languages to be used in both the administrative

60 Minglang Zhou, 2004.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

63 Constitution of the People’s Republic of China (1954). Available at: <<http://e-chaupak.net/database/chicon/1954/1954bilingual.htm#b>>

64 Ibid.

process and the judicial process in autonomous areas (Articles 121 and 134).⁶⁵

1954 PRC CONSTITUTION:

Article 50 states, “all nationalities in the PRC are equal.”

Article 51 gives “minority nationalities the right to autonomy in their communities.”

Article 53 declares, “every minority nationality has the freedom to use and develop its language and writing system(s) and to maintain or reform its customs and religion”.

Article 4 promises the “right to use and develop minority languages in minority communities.”

Article 71 proclaims, “autonomous regions (provinces), prefectures, and counties should adopt one or more languages commonly used in the local minority communities.”

Article 77 states, “citizens of all minority nationalities had the right to use their native languages in courts, which had an obligation to provide interpreters, and that courts of law should conduct their business in languages commonly used in local minority communities.”

Articles 121 and 134 demands “minority languages be used in both the administrative process and judicial process in autonomous areas”.

1975

However, the revision of the constitution in 1975 witnessed the PRC’s hostile attitude towards the minority language rights. The revision coincided with the waning years of the Cultural Revolution decade that witnessed unprecedented destruction of Tibetan language, culture, and religion. In the revised 1975 constitution, Articles 71 and 77 of the 1954 constitution were deleted, while the minority language rights enshrined in Article 2 of the 1954 version were significantly reduced. The reduced 1975 constitution guaranteed national minorities only the freedom to use minority languages (Article 4), but stripped them of their freedom to develop their languages though all nationalities were still constitutionally equal”.⁶⁶ There was only one clause that provided for the freedom of

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Constitution of the People’s Republic of China (1975). Available at: < <http://www.e-chaupak.net/database/chicon/1975/1975e.htm#c> >

minority nationalities to use their own language, but no mention of the freedom to “preserve and reform their own customs and ways”.

1975 PRC CONSTITUTION:

Article 50 states, “all nationalities in the PRC are equal.”

Article 51 gives “minority nationalities the right to autonomy in their communities.”

Article 53 declares, “every minority nationality has the freedom to use and develop its language and writing system(s) and to maintain or reform its customs and religion.”

Article 4 guarantees the right to use and develop minority languages in minority communities.

Article 71 autonomous regions (provinces), prefectures, and counties should adopt one or more languages commonly used in the local minority communities.

Article 77 citizens of all ethnic groups had the right to use their native languages in courts, which had an obligation to provide interpreters, and that courts of law should conduct their business in languages commonly used in local minority communities.

Articles 121 and 134 require that minority languages be used in both the administrative process and judicial process in autonomous areas.

1978

The 1975 Constitution was amended again in 1978. In this version, the right of minority nationalities to use and develop their languages was once again enshrined and autonomous governments were required to use one or more languages commonly used in local minority communities.⁶⁷ However, this constitution did not reintroduce Article 77, which would have restored the right for of all minority nationalities to use their native languages in judicial and administrative sphere.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Minglang Zhou, 2004

⁶⁸ Ibid.

1978 PRC CONSTITUTION:

Article 4 guarantees the right to use and develop minority languages in minority communities.

Article 50 states, “all nationalities in the PRC are equal.”

Article 51 gives “minority nationalities the right to autonomy in their communities.”

Article 53 declares, “every minority nationality has the freedom to use and develop its language and writing system(s) and to maintain or reform its customs and religion.”

Article 71 autonomous regions (provinces), prefectures, and counties should adopt one or more languages commonly used in the local minority communities.

Article 77 citizens of all ethnic groups had the right to use their native languages in courts, which had an obligation to provide interpreters, and that courts of law should conduct their business in languages commonly used in local minority communities.

Articles 121 and 134 require that minority languages be used in both the administrative and judicial process in autonomous areas.

1982

In 1982, the PRC’s constitution was revised again. In this version, minority language rights continued to be protected as stated in the Common Program and the 1954 constitution (Articles 4, 121, and 134).⁶⁹ However, for the first time in the history of the PRC’s constitution, the 1982 constitution mandated the national promotion of Putonghua (Contemporary Standard Mandarin Chinese) (Article 19). This was the first instance that a constitutional amendment made a distinction between the national language, Mandarin Chinese, and minority languages, “a position that remains unchanged throughout the 1988, 1993, and 1999 constitutional amendments, and is actually further strengthened in the Law of the National Commonly Used Language and Script of the PRC passed by the National People’s Congress in 2000”.⁷⁰

69 Minglang Zhou, 2004

70 Ibid.

1982 PRC CONSTITUTION:

Article 4 guarantees the right to use and develop minority languages in minority communities.

Article 19 requires that Putonghua (Mandarin Chinese) be promoted nationally

Article 71 autonomous regions (provinces), prefectures, and counties should adopt one or more languages commonly used in the local minority communities.

Article 77 citizens of all ethnic groups had the right to use their native languages in courts, which had an obligation to provide interpreters, and that courts of law should conduct their business in languages commonly used in local minority communities.

Articles 121 and 134 require that minority languages be used in both the administrative process and judicial process in autonomous areas.

1984

In 1984, China revised “The Guidelines for Regional Autonomy for Minority Nationalities in the PRC” and “The Decision on the Organization and Structure of Local Minority United Governments, and incorporated them into a single law called “Regional Autonomy Law for Minority Nationalities of the PRC” that guaranteed minority nationalities the right to administer their internal affairs.⁷¹ Before the 1984 law, executive regulations and directives as well as specific laws and statutes on education and minority autonomy were used to implement minority rights.⁷² The “Regional Autonomy Law for Minority Nationalities” contains six provisions regarding minority language rights.

71 Ibid.

72 Sun, W.Z. and Gao, Z.X. (eds) (1996) *A Handbook of Education Laws of the People's Republic of China*. Beijing: Chinese Statistical Publishing House.

PRC REGIONAL AUTONOMY LAW FOR MINORITY NATIONALITIES:

Article 10 Autonomous governments should guarantee the freedom for local national minorities to use and develop their native languages and scripts...

Article 21 According to their own regional autonomous laws, autonomous government should use one or more locally common languages and scripts in their official business; they may choose the major minority nationality's language and script as the main ones when more than one are used.

Article 36 Schools mainly enrolling minority students should adopt textbooks in minority languages and scripts when available and use minority languages as the media of instruction; in upper grades in primary schools or in secondary schools Chinese courses should be offered and Putonghua should be used.

Article 47 Courts of law and offices of public prosecutors in autonomous areas should use the locally common language in their official business, guarantee citizens of all minority nationalities the right to use their native languages in law suits and trials, provide interpreters when the parties involved do not understand the locally common language, and adopt one or more locally common languages in legal documents according to actual needs.

Article 49 Autonomous governments should educate and encourage their officials of all ethnic origins to learn each other's languages and scripts. Officials of Han origin should learn the community's minority language(s) and script(s); officials of minority origin should learn their native language(s) and script(s) as well as Mandarin and Chinese script. Officials of autonomous governments who can proficiently use two or more locally common languages and scripts should be rewarded.

Article 53 Autonomous governments should . . . encourage officials and masses of all ethnic groups to respect each other's languages and scripts.

The 1984 law on regional national autonomy, along with the PRC's constitution and other national laws and statutes, "clearly specified the domains where minority languages and Putonghua should be used as well as citizens and officials who should learn minority languages and Putonghua".⁷³

1995

Article 12 of the Chinese Education law of 1995 also provides minority nationalities the choice to study in their own language by stating, "schools or other educational institutions which mainly

73 Minglang Zhou, 2004.

consist of students from minority nationalities may use in education the language of the respective nationality or the native language commonly adopted in that region.⁷⁴

2000

Article 8 of the Law on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language of 2000 provides that “the spoken and written languages of the ethnic peoples shall be used in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Constitution, the Law on Regional National Autonomy and other laws.”⁷⁵

PRC’s National legislation and Constitutional provisions on Minority Language Rights and their bearing on the CCP’s Policies

The legislation enacted at the national level regarding minority language rights forms the legal foundation of all local lawmaking.⁷⁶ Language rights of minority nationalities, which are listed in the PRC’s Constitution, “are ultimately the test for the legitimacy of the executive directives issued by the government and the CCP”.⁷⁷ Therefore, “in the PRC’s half-century history, the government and CCP’s directives and regulations have been eventually, though not timely, considered explicitly or implicitly erroneous when they come in fundamental conflict with the PRC Constitution.”⁷⁸

For example, the 1958 language policy was criticised and finally abandoned in 1979 because that policy violated the PRC’s constitution. However, “the CCP often plays a role above the

74 Education Law of the People’s Republic of China (1995), Available at <http://www.china.org.cn/english/education/184669.htm>

75 Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language (Order of the President No.37), Available at http://www.gov.cn/english/laws/2005-09/19/content_64906.htm

76 Minglang Zhou, 2004.

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid.

constitution, and though the CCP virtually drafted the constitution and controlled the legislature that passed it, the CCP's policies apparently must adhere to the constitution to some degree for legitimacy".⁷⁹

ANALYSIS OF PRC LAWS ON MINORITY LANGUAGE RIGHTS

While Article 4 of the 1982 constitution (the right to use and develop minority languages in minority communities) appears to be a generous promise to minority communities such that it provides a "total legal recognition of minority language rights", the vast majority of the PRC's laws only state that minority languages should be used in official domains, such as in local government business, judicial processes, and in public schools. However, even though Article 12 of the Chinese Education law of 1995 states, "schools and other educational institutions primarily for 'minority' nationalities may use the spoken or written language in common use among ethnic group or in the locality as the language of instruction," this implies that minority language use in schools is a choice, not a mandate. In effect, minority language use and development can be arbitrarily applied depending on the decisions of the respective governing body.

Although in theory Tibetans' right to govern their own educational and cultural affairs is protected under Chapter 3, Section 6, Article 119 of the PRC's constitution and article 12 of the Chinese Education law of 1995 encourages the use of minority languages in schools, these rights do not exist in practice.⁸⁰ Article 4(4) of the Constitution of the PRC promises that "all nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages

79 Ibid.

80 TCHRD. Special Report on the Right to Education in Tibet. Dharamsala: Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, 2015. Print.

and to preserve or reform their own folkways or customs”.⁸¹

When human rights, individual rights, and collective/group rights are concerned, however, the PRC’s laws on minority language rights deviate from the mainstream international practices in two significant ways. First, though the PRC is a signatory of nearly 20 international treaties on human rights, no connection is explicitly made between human rights and minority language rights in any of these laws. The PRC government began to make a connection between its concept of basic human rights (right to subsist, right to socioeconomic development, and right to education) and its laws only in the 1990s, after it was internationally pressed.⁸²In this connection, minority rights and minority language rights stated in the PRC Constitution and other legislations are viewed as the PRC’s recognition and protection of human rights in its minority communities.⁸³

Second, the PRC’s laws do not consider minority language rights as individual rights, except for Article 134 of the 1982 constitution, which appears to do so by stating “citizens of all nationalities have the right to use their native languages in courts”.⁸⁴However, when implemented in the PRC’s law on autonomy, this right of citizens is converted into a duty on the courts of laws and offices of public prosecutors to “guarantee citizens of all national minorities the right to use their native languages in lawsuits and trials” (see Article 47 in quotation in Section 3.1). The same legal discourse can be found in all of the PRC’s legislation with an aspect on minority language rights, such as “Education Law of the PRC” and “Law on Compulsory Education”.

Third, a 2001 amendment to the law on regional national

81 Ibid.

82 Minglang Zhou, 2004.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid.

autonomy represented a major shift in PRC's classroom language policy. The amendment requires the teaching of Mandarin Chinese either in the early or late years in primary schools in minority communities, rather than the late years in primary schools or in middle schools.⁸⁵ Article 37 of the revised autonomy law stipulates: "Beginning in the lower or senior grades of primary school, Han language and literature courses should be taught to popularize the common language used throughout the country and the use of Han Chinese characters."⁸⁶The revised law requires minority officials to learn Mandarin Chinese.

Fourth, a common language law called the PRC National Commonly-Used Language and Script Law was passed in 2000 and has been in force since 2001. The new language law provides more areas for the use of Mandarin Chinese in government and education of minority communities. The Chinese government stated that it "regulates the behavior of social communication, for instance, the expressions, wording and writing involved in government operations, mass communication and on public occasions."⁸⁷The introduction of national common language law is aimed at educating minority students as Mandarin Chinese users "while allowing the transitional and/or supplementary use of minority languages."⁸⁸Article 5 of the law is political in nature as it reads: "Use of the common national

85 National People's Congress. (2001). *QuanguoRenminDaibiaoDahuiChangwu Weiyuanhui-GuanyuXiugai 'ZhonghuaRenminGongheguoMinzuQuyuzijifa' de jue ding* [The National People's Congress General Affairs Committee's decision concerning the amendment of 'The Law on Regional Autonomy for Minority Nationalities in the People's Republic of China']. *QuanguoRenminDaibiaoDahuiChangwuWeiyuanhuiGongbao* [National People's Congress General Affairs Committee Notices] 2001 (2), 121-148.

86 Congressional-Executive Commission on China, "Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law of the People's Republic of China (Chinese and English Text)", Available at <http://www.cecc.gov/resources/legal-provisions/regional-ethnic-autonomy-law-of-the-peoples-republic-of-china-amended>

87 Law to Improve Speaking and Writing, China.org, 11 February 2000, Available at <http://www.china.org.cn/english/2000/Nov/3458.htm>

88 Zhou, M. (2013). "Historical review of the PRC's minority/indigenous language policy and practice." In Gulbahar H. Beckett and Gerard A. Postiglione (Eds.), *China's assimilationist language policy: The impact on indigenous/minority literacy and social harmony.* Routledge.

language must be of benefit to state sovereignty and dignity of the nationalities, be of benefit to national unity and unity of the nationalities, and be of benefit to the construction of socialist material and spiritual civilisations.” The model promoted by the new law gave a major push to the implementation of the so-called bilingual education policy that has had adverse effects on school enrolment and dropout rates in Tibetan areas⁸⁹ and the insidious replacement of Tibetan medium education with Chinese.⁹⁰

Similarly, a section called ‘Raising education quality of ethnic minorities’ in PRC’s national plan for medium and long-term education reform and development called Outline of China’s National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020) assures that “minority peoples’ right to be educated in native languages shall be respected and ensured.” But this assurance was preceded by the declaration that “no effort shall be spared to advance bilingual teaching, open Chinese language classes in every school, and popularize the national common language and writing system [Putonghua/standard Mandarin].”⁹¹

Conclusions about the gap between minority language policy and practice

The gaps between minority language policy and practice demonstrate that minority language rights become meaningless when they are seen as detrimental to national stability and national unity. Furthermore, because minority language rights are group

89 Gelek, L. (2009). Anthropological field survey on basic education development among Machu Tibetan nomads. In M. Zhou, & A. M. (Eds.), *Affirmative action in China and the U.S.: A dialogue on inequality and minority education* (pp. 119-126). New York: Palgrave Macmillan

90 Bilingual Education with Chinese Characteristics: China replacing Tibetan textbooks with Chinese, TCHRD, 21 June 2016, Available at <http://tchrd.org/bilingual-education-with-chinese-characteristics-china-replacing-tibetan-textbooks-with-chinese/>

91 OUTLINE OF CHINA’S NATIONAL PLAN FOR MEDIUM- AND LONG-TERM EDUCATION REFORM AND DEVELOPMENT (2010–2020) 17th Communist Party of China National Congress, 2010. Available at <http://uil.unesco.org/fileadmin/keydocuments/LifelongLearning/en/china-2010-abstract-lll-strategy.pdf>

rights, it is less possible that minority students' requests for their home language rights will be granted. Moreover, the uniform curriculum and under-representation and misrepresentation of minority knowledge, culture, and language in elementary school textbooks demonstrate the hegemonic control over minority language, culture, and knowledge and the imposition of dominant ideology, language, culture, and knowledge on minority students.

Therefore, in resistance to the replacement of Tibetan language and culture in schools with Mandarin Chinese and Chinese culture, some minority parents enroll their children in educational programs at mosques and temples in order to provide them with a more relevant education to their culture and daily lives.⁹²The high dropout and illiteracy rates among minority populations, viewed as a form of resistance against Han-centric uniform curriculum, are "a result of few role models and little representation of minority language, culture, and knowledge".⁹³

Since the mid-1990s, the PRC government has adopted an assimilationist approach to resolving issues related to minority nationalities by speeding up economic development and ignoring the nationality question.⁹⁴A combination of law, policies and practices, implemented by the Chinese government, has led to the steady and insidious encroachment of autonomy entitled to minority nationalities in the PRC's constitution and regional national autonomy. The erosion and emasculation of regional national autonomy law contributed to serious socio-economic and political issues in minority communities, with some observers identifying the issue of linguistic and cultural uncertainty, a result of the PRC's monolingual education policy, as one of the major

92 Wang, Yuxiang, & JoAnn Phillion, 2009.

93 Ibid.

94 Trace Foundation [TraceFoundation]. (April 16, 2010). Minglang Zhou: Linguistic Diversity and Language Harmony in Contemporary China [Video File]. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mlww3HMzVZU>

contributing factors to the outbreak of major protests across Tibet and Xinjiang in 2008.⁹⁵

LANGUAGE RIGHTS AS HUMAN RIGHTS

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that human rights are “rights inherent to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status”. Further, everyone is equally entitled to human rights without discrimination and that “these rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible”.⁹⁶ Although there is no global government to guarantee the rights of the world’s citizens, the UN explains the human rights that should be universally protected “are often expressed and guaranteed by law, in the forms of treaties, customary international law, general principles and other sources of international law”.⁹⁷ With this in mind, a controversial question naturally surfaces: are language rights universal human rights?

In comparison with other human rights issues, this question of whether language rights are universal human rights is relatively new, as having only “emerged as crucial and prominent” topic for debate by the international community in the 1960s.⁹⁸ This question has arisen as a result of the inherent ambiguity in international human rights covenants concerning language rights. The UDHR encourages toleration of language rights, but in its later declarations the UN “gives overt permission to such rights to indigenous peoples”.⁹⁹ However, since there is no explicit declaration of language rights as universal human rights the issue is still up for debate.

95 *Supra* note 85.

96 Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Pages/WhatAreHumanRights.aspx>

97 *Ibid.*

98 Minglang Zhou, 2004.

99 *Ibid.*

Arguments in support of language rights as universal human rights come from the concept of negative rights, meaning the “rights to impose on the state only a duty of abstention, not a duty to act”.¹⁰⁰ Defining universal human rights in this way “requires, at best, non-discrimination and, at worst, toleration of minority language rights”.¹⁰¹ The positive aspect of this definition is that it prohibits states from discriminating against people on the basis of speaking a minority language.

On the other hand, “arguments against language rights as universal human rights are usually based on the concept of universal human rights as claim rights, which are considered claims being advanced against others (individuals or institutions) for particular liberties, goods, or services”.¹⁰² Claim rights are positive rights, which means they impose on the state a duty to act in favor of the claimants. In order for language rights to qualify as universal human rights based on a claim rights theory, these rights must meet three criteria: 1) paramount importance, 2), practicability, and 3) universality.

Paramount importance

Undoubtedly it is vital for language rights to be universal human rights because language is a significant component of a person’s cultural identity and religious practices. A state effectively forbids a person from retaining his or her identity, different from the majority when it bans or restricts a person from using his/her mother language.¹⁰³ In effect, “the state essentially restricts or violates the norm that he/she is entitled to, even in the sense of negative rights. Such acts by the state are usually considered human rights violations”.¹⁰⁴ Since Tibetan language is the carrier of Tibetan culture and a critical part of studying and practicing Tibetan Buddhism, Tibetan is of paramount importance to preservation of Tibetan

100 Ibid.

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid.

103 Ibid.

104 Ibid.

cultural identity.

Practicability

Language rights may satisfy the practicability test depending on how convincing claims are made for the use and development of the language. The weakest claim argues that the authorities should refrain from interfering with the minority language use and maintenance in minority communities.¹⁰⁵ However, “this claim can be easily satisfied when the state enacts toleration-oriented language laws,” even when they fail to enforce them. On the other hand, a more robust claim demands, “the state provide administrative, judicial, and educational services in minority languages and help to maintain minority languages in minority communities”.¹⁰⁶ This type of claim puts pressure on the state to make progress towards fully protecting human rights.

It is absolutely practical to maintain minority languages in Tibet because over 8 million people inside and outside Tibet currently speak some dialect of Tibetan.¹⁰⁷ PRC has enacted laws and regulations promoting the preservation of Tibetan language in the past and has the resources to continue to make it part of Tibetan society and education system. It is not impracticable; it just takes political will to enforce the laws it has protected since the PRC’s first official constitution in 1954.

Universality

The notion of universality works to “identify language uses that possess a universal dimension (i.e. what does everyone need on a regular basis for human dignity?) and can be practically defined at this global level.” It is believed one gives up individual language rights when voluntarily crossing the border out of his/her own

105 Ibid.

106 Ibid.

107 Irene Thompson, *Tibetic languages*, About World Languages, 20 January 2016, available at <http://aboutworldlanguages.com/tibetan>

language-speaking region. However, this argument is discriminatory and used by anti-immigration forces in economically advanced countries to protect “linguistic and other forms of discrimination against immigrants because immigrants are perceived as political and economic threats to the host communities”.¹⁰⁸

Since the PRC occupied Tibet in 1950, Tibetans have been treated like second-class citizens within their homeland. Unlike voluntary immigrants who left their home country with the expectations of facing pressures to adapt to a new culture and learn a new language, Tibetans never relinquished their language rights. As the PRC views Tibetans as political and cultural threats to the PRC, the PRC has made efforts to replace the Tibetan language and culture with Mandarin Chinese and Han culture. Thus, in order for Tibetans to maintain their human dignity and distinct identity through their religious and cultural practices as transmitted through the Tibetan language, Tibetans must be given the freedom to use and develop their language.



Tibetan singer Gebe was briefly detained in May 2014 for singing a song calling for the protection of Tibetan language

108 Minglang Zhou (2004).

Linguistic Rights: Individual v. Group Language Rights

Universal human rights can be classified as individual rights or group rights. When classified as individual rights, “language rights are claimable and exercisable by individuals.” When classified as group rights, “language rights are claimable and exercisable by groups.” Since languages are spoken by groups of people, language rights are commonly “considered collective self-interests of groups.”¹⁰⁹ Since group language rights are usually resolved in the sphere of national and/or subnational politics, minority groups are warranted an opportunity to “share power in the government, education, judicial system, etc., with the dominant group”. In this way, “the group rights approach to language rights appears to threaten the majority, which of course does not want any power-sharing, be it in a democratic society or a totalitarian society”.¹¹⁰ But experts contend that efforts to obtain recognition for minority language rights will always face challenges from both the state and the dominant majority thus leading to the marginalization of minority language rights.¹¹¹

The PRC is threatened by the idea of giving group language rights to Tibetans because they believe it threatens nationalism (sameness) and encourages separatism. It is a known fact that for the Chinese party state, there is no greater priority than national unity and stability, “for which any right can be sacrificed.”¹¹² This is revealed by the cadre requirements to claim atheism and communicate in Mandarin Chinese with the Han cadres, which means rejecting Tibetan culture and Buddhist studies where Tibetan language is prevalent. In effect, to join the cadre is to relinquish not only Tibetan cultural identity, but also Tibetan language.

109 Ibid.

110 Ibid.

111 Ibid.

112 Wang, Yuxiang, & JoAnn Phillion, 2009

Language Equality and Law

Language equality is an issue “treated legally in relation to language rights, because languages themselves are not considered proper subjects for equality unlike speakers of languages”.¹¹³The “association of language equality with language rights leads to two approaches to equality: the individual approach and the group approach”.¹¹⁴Since language rights are considered collective self-interests of groups and because language survival is eventually an issue of community survival such that a language cannot survive without its speech community, the group approach is most appropriate to apply to Tibetan language rights issues in Tibet.

Applying the group approach to measure language equality

The group approach leads to three rather clearly defined and operational measures of language equality: 1) equality of legal status, 2) equality of service, and 3) equality of use¹¹⁵

Equality of Legal Status

First, equality of legal status is “measured according to a language’s status in law as a language of government and its institutions”.¹¹⁶As outlined above, there is a long history of Chinese law recognizing the importance of minority languages in the autonomous regions, including Tibet. For example, article 10 of the PRC’s regional autonomy law for minority nationalities states that “autonomous governments should guarantee the freedom for local national minorities to use and develop their native languages and scripts...” While on its face, Tibetans are free to use and develop their language; the PRC has made it almost impractical to do so. The replacement of Tibetan languages in schools with Mandarin Chinese and the forced assimilation into Chinese culture in order

¹¹³ Minglang Zhou, 2004.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

to communicate with Chinese migrants and find secure jobs reveals that their organic freedom is being burdened by economic pressures from the majority.

Equality of Service

Second, equality of service is “checked according to the degree and quality of government service being available in the languages that the government is supposed to use”.¹¹⁷ Although Article 47 of the PRC’s regional autonomy law states, “Courts of law and offices of public prosecutors in autonomous areas should use the locally common language in their official business, guarantee citizens of all minority nationalities the right to use their native languages in lawsuits and trials, provide interpreters when the parties involved do not understand the locally common language, and adopt one or more locally common languages in legal documents according to actual needs,” this is not happening in practice. According to accounts by families of prisoners in Tibet, official proceedings in the justice system are being conducted in Mandarin Chinese and inmates are forced to speak in Mandarin Chinese to their visitors in order for Chinese prison guards to understand their conversations. In this way, inmates and their families are being denied the ability to communicate in their native tongues, which creates a deficit in the quality of conversation and closeness between families and their detained loved ones. Thus, no equality of service exists within the justice system in Tibet as it is dominated by Mandarin Chinese language.

Equality of Use

Third, equality of use is measured depending on “whether languages of equal legal status are equally used in government and its institutions.” While Article 49 of the PRC’s regional autonomy law requires autonomous governments to “educate and encourage their

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

officials of all nationalities to learn each other's languages and scripts and Han officials to learn the minority language(s) and script(s)", these laws are not being enforced. Additionally, legal provisions are not implemented at all or "often undermined by practices of local Han officials whose stereotypical and discriminative views have a negative impact on the enactment of official policy about minority culture and language."¹¹⁸ Research found that "some local Han officials in minority regions interpret minority language and culture as 'backwardness' and Han language and culture as 'civilization,' even though Article 53 in the regional autonomy law states, 'Autonomous government should ... encourage officials and masses of all ethnic groups to respect each other's languages and scripts'".¹¹⁹ Thus, the larger percentage of Mandarin-speaking Han cadres than Tibetan-speaking Tibetan cadres creates inequality in language use and perpetuates these ideas of Tibetan language and cultural inferiority within the CCP cadres within Tibet. As a result, Tibetan language is being marginalized in Tibet as is apparent from observing road signage on which Mandarin Chinese is written in large characters whereas Tibetan characters are written below Mandarin, in smaller characters, and commonly with spelling mistakes.¹²⁰

118 Ibid.

119 Nima, B. Problems Related to Bilingual Education in Tibet, *Chinese Education & Society*, 10611932, Mar/Apr2001, Vol. 34, Issue 2;

120 Tournadre, 2003a.

EDUCATION RIGHTS AND POLICY

BACKGROUND ON PRC EDUCATION POLICIES AND PERCEPTIONS OF TIBETAN CULTURE

While it is generally understood that access to education is a human right, the human right to high quality education is rarely protected, which has led to widespread discrepancies in the quality of education received. These gaps in education quality usually exist between wealthy and poor populations such that the wealthy have access to higher quality education whereas the poor have only limited options that are usually of low quality. These discrepancies commonly occur due to motives by a more powerful group to design local school curricula in a way that advances their national agenda within the greater region.

In the case of Tibet, the PRC increasingly uses the education system in Tibet as a tool to promote its ideology.¹²¹ The PRC has manipulated Tibetan history and undermined Tibetan culture by teaching that Chinese culture and Communist idealism are more superior and civilized. Realizing these motives behind education policy within Tibet is critical for analyzing how the PRC is using education as a tool of domination over Tibetans thereby violating their rights to autonomy.

Chinese Views of Minority Language and Culture

First-hand experiences by foreign students, journalists and scholars in minority areas have concluded “that ‘the Han’ living in

121 TCHRD, 2015.

minority areas hardly ever learn the local languages, have racially discriminating views of minorities, rarely intermarry with them and either ignore their festivals or exploit them as resources for ethno-tourism”.¹²² Chinese researchers studying minority educational outcomes between the Han and minority groups, reported that Han as a *minzu* has a greater “interest in formal schooling” due to a supposed “inherent characteristic of the Han people who, compared with many ethnic minorities, were supposed to be more eager to learn, more open towards foreign cultures and at the same time adaptive and capable of assimilating others into their culture”.¹²³ The published results of these Chinese researchers imply a “myth of a specific power inherent in the nature of the Han people and Han culture,” which acts to “naturalise dichotomies between the Han and the non-Han, between the majority and all the minorities.” In effect, this type of racially-biased research perpetuates racial justifications for restructuring the education system to cater to the more “racially-superior” Han people including the replacement of Tibetan language with Mandarin Chinese.¹²⁴

With racial justifications at the foundation, the PRC has expanded efforts to ‘unify’ China with the minority regions including Tibet by imposing nationalistic ideas throughout the education system. In the school education system, “nationalism is most explicitly (though far from exclusively) played out through the various campaigns to strengthen patriotic education as a natural part of formal learning”.¹²⁵ One method of promoting nationalism is “reflected in the government’s renewed emphasis on standard Chinese as a common, national language and its decreasing attention to the development, or sometimes even the maintenance, of bilingual and other forms of education in minority languages”.¹²⁶ The PRC’s main

122 Hansen, 2004.

123 Ibid.

124 Ibid.

125 Ibid.

126 Ibid.

argument is to “speed up modernization,” which is hindered by the promotion of less developed languages. Support for this argument depends on “the fact that participation in higher education and success in many different types of jobs demand fluency in Chinese, and therefore many parents belonging to ethnic minorities (especially those with an education themselves or with positions as cadres) naturally prefer their children to get an education first of all in the national language”.¹²⁷ Therefore, the PRC has formulated a widespread belief that Han people are superior, more capable of learning, and deserving of good jobs and therefore for minority people including Tibetans to escape from poverty (which the PRC is purposely perpetuating) they must assimilate with Han culture and learn Mandarin Chinese.



Students at the Beijing National Minorities University protest the Mandarin language education policy (22 October 2010)

127 Ibid.

HISTORY OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION POLICY IN TIBET

Prior to the PRC and CCP's Takeover of Tibet in 1949

Before the CCP took over Tibet in 1949, Tibetan Buddhism played an integral role in the education of young Tibetans who were traditionally educated in monasteries. Initiatives to introduce secular education were thwarted by more conservative forces in the Tibetan society who perceived it as potentially harmful to Tibet's religious and cultural traditions.¹²⁸ Though education was centered on Tibetan Buddhism teachings at monasteries thereby maintaining Tibetan culture and language, children unable to access monastery education, such as females and children of nomadic families, remained uneducated. This policy led to high illiteracy rates within Tibet.¹²⁹

Early 1950s

Prior to the PRC's invasion of Tibet in 1950, the only official language in Tibet was Tibetan and monastery education continued to be the primary method of Tibetan education.¹³⁰ The number of students around this time in Tibet was approximately 3000 including those in some 20 public schools and in many traditional tutorial schools.¹³¹

After consolidating its rule over Tibet with the 17-Point agreement, Mao Zedong, the founding father of the PRC launched the project to "educate the masses".¹³² In the early years, Mao adopted a gradualist method in asserting control over Tibet by implementing an education system that accorded respect to the Tibetan language.¹³³ In fact, the 17-Point agreement provides that,

128 Castle, N. (2015). "The Sociopolitics of Language: Bilingual Education in Tibet." Victor H. Mair, ed. *Sino-Platonic Papers: Language and Ideology in Nationalist and Communist China*, 39-53.

129 TCHRD, 2015.

130 Tournadre, 2003a; Zhou, 2004.

131 Maocao Zhou, 2004.

132 Ibid.

133 Ibid.

‘The spoken and written language and the school education of the Tibetan nationality shall be developed step-by-step in accordance with the actual conditions of Tibet’.¹³⁴ Yet, it allowed the monasteries to continue as the primary centres of education, leaving a large majority of the local Tibetan population illiterate. In the early 1950s, community-funded schools were set up to foster “skilled personnel who would become governmental cadres”.¹³⁵ In accordance with this policy, PRC sent many Tibetan children of wealthy elites for cadre training in Beijing and other Chinese cities.¹³⁶

1951

To consolidate its fledgling control over Tibet and other areas occupied by PRC, the CCP adopted the Soviet model of providing equal rights to all nationalities in a multinational state. It was “a pluralistic minorities policy and showed a good-faith effort to eradicate Han prejudice against ethnic minorities”.¹³⁷ From 1949 to 1957, bilingual education was promoted “as one of the good-faith measures”.¹³⁸ During this time, the CCP considered bilingual education as language education in only “two written languages”.¹³⁹ At the first national conference on minority education, the CCP created three approaches to bilingual education policy based on prevalence of language use and development.¹⁴⁰

The first approach labeled “type 1” regions included minority communities that spoke languages with developed writing systems. Type 1 regions included minority communities located along PRC’s western, northern, and northeastern border areas.¹⁴¹ In these regions, education policy determined that subject courses must be

134 Postiglione, Zhiyong, & Jiao, 2004.

135 Ibid.

136 Ibid.

137 Zhou, 2001a.

138 Ibid.

139 Ibid.

140 Ibid.

141 Ibid.

taught in commonly used written minority languages (Mongolian, Korean, Tibetan, Uygur, and Kazak) in schools in minority communities. Generally during this period, Type 1 communities used their minority languages as the language of instruction (L1) and Chinese as the second language (L2).¹⁴²For example, Tibetan was L1 with Chinese as L2 in Tibetan schools.

The second approach categorized other minority areas into “type 2” regions, in which minority communities languages without “writing systems or with imperfect writing systems.” Education policy in this region called for the creation and reform of writing systems, and teaching of subject courses in Chinese or a minority language of the community’s choice. In Type 2 schools, Chinese was used as L1 with minority languages as supplements.

In “type 3” regions, the CCP stated, “Chinese course offerings should be determined by the needs and desires of local minority communities”. Thus, experimental projects using newly created writing systems was implemented in some Type 3 schools.

1954

In 1954, the CCP affirmed the rights of minorities to use and develop their native languages and put obligations on local governments to use their languages at the First Chinese People’s Congress and in the PRC’s first constitution (Principles, Article 71, and Article 77).¹⁴³From 1954 to 1956, the CCP nationalized private businesses, services, and industries in urban areas, and began envisioning “a quick collectivisation of farms and a 15-year plan (the Great Leap Forward) to realise socialism as the transition to communism, a vision that eventually led to the disastrous Cultural

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Zhou, M. [Minglang]. (2001b). The Politics of Bilingual Education in the People’s Republic of China Since 1949, *Bilingual Research Journal*, 25:1-2, 147-171, DOI: 10.1080/15235882.2001.10162788

Revolution (1966–1976)”.¹⁴⁴

1957

In 1957, the CCP encouraged the rapid construction of more schools in minority regions; both community schools and state-funded ones were developed.¹⁴⁵ This time of rapid education expansion was a “quantity strategy”, aimed at increasing access to education within Tibet.¹⁴⁶ This strategy privileged Mandarin Chinese to the exclusion of Tibetan by rejecting Tibetan as part of the ‘old customs’ that needed to be fought against.¹⁴⁷ Therefore, 1957 marks a turning point away from embracing minority language development and use and towards the goal of assimilation through imposing Mandarin Chinese language on the minority communities.

1958

In 1958, the monopolistic stage of language policy led to three events that made bilingual education “linguistically, politically and pedagogically difficult, if not impossible”.¹⁴⁸ The first event occurred in January 1958 when Premier Zhou Enlai announced that the revision and creation of minority language writing systems should follow the newly published Plan for Phonetic Spelling of Chinese (in the roman alphabet and known as Pinyin).¹⁴⁹ Second, at the second national conference on minority languages in March of that same year, minority language advocates were censured as ‘bourgeois intellectuals’ for promoting minority languages and condemned non-Stalinist linguistic theories as ‘bourgeois linguistics’.¹⁵⁰ About 5 months later, in September, the CCP decided at a national

144 Zhou, 2001a.

145 Castle, 2015.

146 Ibid.

147 Ibid.

148 Zhou, 2001.

149 Zhou, 2001.

150 Zhou, 2001.

conference on publications in minority languages that required all primary, secondary, and normal schools in minority communities to use nationally adopted textbooks directly or in translation. Furthermore, “locally compiled materials were to be used only as supplements and must promote education of students in socialism, communism, and patriotism”.

In effect, these three policies restricted bilingual education by reducing the minority communities’ autonomy to choose the language curriculum including its teaching resources. During this time, Type 1 and Type 2 schools replaced courses in minority languages with courses in Chinese while Type 3 schools ended teaching courses in minority languages.¹⁵¹ The ensuing Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) brought complete end to bilingual education in Type 2 and Type 3 communities, and was used to the minimum in Type 1 schools.

After 1959

After 1959, the PRC built more schools to replace the role of monastic education.¹⁵² Chinese courses were taught in primary schools and more courses were taught in Chinese in secondary schools. Chinese language teachers replaced Tibetan language teachers who were mostly monastic. Thus, the movement toward Tibetan cultural denigration is apparent during this period. This negative perspective of Tibetan culture and language combined with the Dalai Lama’s forced exile out of Tibet contributed to the Tibetan Uprising of 1959.¹⁵³ Consequently, Tibetans began to believe that education was the imposition of the Han people’s ideology and beliefs.¹⁵⁴

1960-1966

Following the end of the **Great Leap Forward** (1958–1961)

151 Zhou, 2001.

152 Zhou, 2001b.

153 Postiglione, Zhiyong, & Jiao, 2004.

154 Wang, Yuxiang, & JoAnn Phillion, 2009.

that involved scaling up the number of schools within Tibet, policy transitioned back to a 'quality' approach that saw the revival of bilingual education. At the same time, Tibetans from wealthy family in Tibet were trained as cadres in Beijing and other Chinese cities, while efforts were made to support community (minban) schools in Tibet.¹⁵⁵ But these community schools were either closed or left aside for failing to meet staffing and funding demands, in favor of state-run institutions. The closure of community schools due to their low quality pressured Tibetan families to send their children out of Tibet to obtain a higher quality education, which involved learning Mandarin Chinese.¹⁵⁶ The policy during this period favored 'key schools' which received majority of state funding and promotion of education remained restrictive. The early 60s was also a period of Mao's waning years that made it possible for minority language education to make a come back. In 1963, complete sets of primary school textbooks for community schools and Tibetan texts for the study of Tibetan, Chinese, math, natural science, and geography was compiled and translated into Tibetan.¹⁵⁷

1966-1976

After years of progress towards bilingual education in Tibet, the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) quickly reversed it all by mandating a monolingual policy that instructed schools to only teach in Mandarin Chinese. Schools that catered to minority students and their languages were denounced as anti-Communist and were closed.¹⁵⁸ The new policy was to promote mass education that was ideologically driven and required learning quotations from Chairman Mao. Education across the region was severely impacted as schools and colleges stopped enrolling students. The impact was

155 Postiglione, Zhiyong, & Jiao, 2004.

156 Ibid.

157 Bass C., *Education in Tibet: Policy and Practice Since 1950*, Zed Books, 1998

158 Bass, 1998.

most negative and severe on minority community education.¹⁵⁹ The Cultural Revolution period regressed minority cultural preservation efforts throughout China and the autonomous regions. It also affected the Tibetan written language that was banned for several years.¹⁶⁰

1978

When the Chinese revolutionary, Deng Xiaoping, came into power in 1978, he reinstated the pluralistic minority and bilingual education policies that had been eliminated during the Cultural Revolution. Deng revived the ‘quality’ policies of the early 1950s and 1960s, promoted bilingual education, and prioritized minority-language education.

This “second pluralistic stage”¹⁶¹ during which minority communities were allowed to restore and develop bilingual education, for example, by designing minority culture-specific education curriculums. However, these rights were conveyed to minority communities on the condition that socialist ideals are upheld. During this period, some primary schools adopted Tibetan as the primary language of instruction (L1) whereas Mandarin Chinese was offered as a secondary language class (L2). Yet some primary schools maintained Chinese as the primary language of instruction (L1) and Tibetan was secondary. Colleges used both Tibetan and Chinese as L1, but secondary schools mainly used Chinese as L1.

1979

Minority education policies during this period witnessed the establishment of the department of ethnic minority education

¹⁵⁹ Zhou, M. [Minglang]. (2001a). The Politics of Bilingual Education and Educational Levels in Ethnic Minority Communities in China, *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 4:2, 125-149, DOI: 10.1080/13670050108667723.

¹⁶⁰ Wangdu, 2011.

¹⁶¹ Zhou, 2001.

under the PRC's ministry of education "with corresponding organizations and appointments made at the provincial (minzujiaoyuchu), prefecture (minzujiaoyuke) and county levels (minzujiaoyugu)."¹⁶² Additionally, "ethnic autonomous regions became authorized to develop their own educational programs, including levels and kinds of schools, curriculum content, and languages of instruction".¹⁶³ The PRC also allocated more funding towards minority education and allowed minority areas to spend a percentage of their annual budget on education-related expenses. For the first time, funds for teacher training increased and various types of in-service training were developed and school curriculums "were designed according to the culture and language of the ethnic minorities and stipends for school fees and materials were available for students".¹⁶⁴ These educational curriculums were allowed to focus on "ethnic minority language, culture and historical traditions" instead of overtly promoting Han culture and Mandarin Chinese language. In contrast to the negative effects on education during the Cultural Revolution, Deng's policies expanded higher education and cooperation between schools.

Early 1980s

In the 1980s, popularity of the Tibetan language increased again thereby leading to publications of many literary works. Pilot schools in were set up in TAR to teach scientific subjects (mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, etc.) in Tibetan. The bilingual education policy generated much interest as is apparent from the number of conferences that were convened in the early 1980s on the subject of minority language policy. New measures were introduced to protect minority language and culture and fund schools and boarding schools. A system to aid Tibetan education efforts while simultaneously linking Tibet back to the mainland was developed.

162 Postiglione, 2009.

163 Ibid.

164 Ibid.

It included *neidischools*, boarding schools in China proper where Tibetan students were sent to receive their secondary education, and the importation of Chinese teachers from other provinces.¹⁶⁵

During this favorable time for the development of bilingual education policy, except for a few Chinese primary schools, Tibetan and Tibetan teaching materials were commonly used, and Chinese was offered from the third or fourth grade.¹⁶⁶ Research (2004) found that “in most secondary schools, except Tibetan language courses, Chinese textbooks were generally used in other courses, but Tibetan teachers usually used Tibetan for explanation or tutoring.”¹⁶⁷ However, “in secondary technical schools and universities, only students who majored in Tibetan used Tibetan and Tibetan textbooks”.¹⁶⁸ Furthermore, Tibetan was generally used in primary schools in communities with a concentration of Monba, Lhoba and Dengren but Chinese was used in other courses and the local languages were supplementary.

In 1980, the First Tibet Work Forum highlighted the low levels of literacy and basic education in Tibet.¹⁶⁹ In response, the PRC developed a policy to “gradually popularize primary education, eliminate illiteracy, and convert the primary schools run by local people (minban) into the state-run schools (gongban).”¹⁷⁰ But the usage and learning of Tibetan language was ignored. Also, school enrolment rates were emphasized more than improving the quality of education.

1984

In 1984, the Second Tibet Work Forum blamed the low school enrollment and other related issues “to the influence of ‘leftist’

165 Castle, 2015.

166 Maocao Zhou, 2004.

167 Ibid.

168 Ibid.

169 Postiglione, Zhiyong, & Jiao, 2004.

170 Ibid.

thought”.¹⁷¹ This forum “called for a correct and full understanding of the specific characteristics of Tibet educational work, and put forward the notion that all work should start from the reality of the situation in Tibet”.¹⁷² This situation involved the reality that low quality education was the norm in local schools, which had Tibetan as L1 and higher quality education was the norm in state-run schools with Tibetan as L2. The forum announced that the extension of Tibetan medium education is to junior secondary school, but at the same time continued with the policy of dislocating Tibetan children to be educated in neidi schools and importing Chinese teachers to Tibet. In neidi schools, Mandarin Chinese is the main teaching medium. Therefore, it is clear the CCP had a plan to reverse the “principle of ‘locally run schools as the main part and state-run schools as subsidiary’ ... into ‘state-run schools as the main part and locally run schools as subsidiary’”.¹⁷³

1987

In 1987, the TAR People’s Congress passed the ‘TAR Regulations on the Study, Use and Development of the Tibetan language for trial implementation) at the instigation of the 10th Panchen Lama and Ngabo Ngawang Jigme, and promulgated in March 1989.¹⁷⁴ These trial regulations set out procedures for implementing Tibetan language policy in education and public life, permitting the use of both Tibetan and Chinese. Tibetans were to speak in Tibetan at important, large-scale meetings, though there was no mention of what language Chinese cadres were to speak. But these plans were withdrawn after the 1989 crackdown and the sudden death of 10th Panchen Lama that considerably weakened local Tibetan leadership. Years of progress towards preserving the minority

171 Ibid.

172 Ibid.

173 Postiglione, Zhiyong, & Jiao, 2004.

174 Tibet Information Network, Tibet Autonomous Region’s Regulations on Tibetan Language unlikely to stop the growing influence of Chinese, Phayul, 31 January 2003, Available at <http://www.phayul.com/news/tools/print.aspx?id=3713&t=1>

languages reversed once more, largely due to the PRC's fears about stability and order particularly in the minority communities. Protests in Tibet in 1987 to 1989 and Tiananmen student protests in 1989, combined with the fall of USSR pushed the PRC towards aggressive state-building project that encouraged nationalism and patriotism and identification with the uniform modern Chinese identity.

1990s

By the 1990s, a preliminary bilingual education system had been established in Tibet that consisted of schools using Tibetan as language of instruction except for a few primary schools in urban areas.¹⁷⁵ Further research into the language curriculums in Tibetan schools showed that Tibetan as the language of instruction was also promoted in secondary schools. Additionally, Tibetan was sometimes still the main language of instruction in courses taken by students who not enrolled Tibetan language courses.

Despite efforts to scale-up education access, barely 20 per cent of Tibetans in TAR had a primary education and few had more by 1990.¹⁷⁶ By the end of 20th century, enrolment in junior secondary school was below 25 percent and illiteracy and semi-literacy stood a little above 50 percent.¹⁷⁷ School enrolment rate was higher in urban areas where the dominant population is non-Tibetan.

Official Chinese statistics published in 1991 showed that Tibetan students were performing better in scientific subjects taught in their mother tongue.¹⁷⁸ In contrast to these results, the mid-1990s witnessed a steady decline in the use of Tibetan and Chinese was promoted as a dominant language. This trend has resulted partly from an increased devotion to Chinese language instruction in

175 Maocao Zhou, 2004.

176 Postiglione, Zhiyong, & Jiao, 2004.

177 Ibid.

178 Tournadre, 2003a.

school curriculums and “its introduction at an earlier and earlier age.”¹⁷⁹ Around the same time, changes in official discourse was noted such as the change in terminology in using ‘ethnic’ for ‘nationality’. Tibetans and other minority populations were no longer national minorities but the downgraded status of ethnic minorities.

1994

The trend toward patriotic education focusing on Mandarin Chinese instead of Tibetan intensified. The PRC’s 1994 Action Plan for Education focuses on patriotic education with the goal of cultivating students to become loyalists to the PRC and not to the ‘Dalai Clique’. It also encouraged the entire people to fight resolutely against language and action that betrays the interests of the motherland, damage national dignity, or compromise national security and unity. In contrast to the nationalistic propaganda that penetrated the education system, the PRC issued ‘Guidelines for Implementing the Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China in the Tibetan Autonomous Region,’ in 1994, the same year as one of the nationalism campaign pushes, stipulates that a bilingual education must be perfected that uses Tibetan as the principal language of instruction.¹⁸⁰

1995

In 1995, bilingual education was reintroduced into the national education system including minority regions. The PRC’s National People’s Congress adopted ‘Education Law’ that instructed schools nationwide to implement Mandarin Chinese as the basic language of instruction and “appropriate minority languages as LI for schools in minority communities”.¹⁸¹

179 Ibid.

180 Castle, 2015.

181 Article 12, Education Law of the People’s Republic of China, available at <http://www-en.hnu.edu.cn/Admission/Policies%20&%20Regulations/2010-12-07/209.html>

1997

In 1997, the TAR party chief, Chen Kuiyuan, stated, “the notion of separate Tibetan culture is ‘obscuring the dividing line between classes’ and intended ‘to oppose Han culture.’” With this theory in mind, Mandarin Chinese language was imposed on minority children beginning with their first year of primary school. But Tibetan areas located outside the TAR did not follow the policies passed by TAR authorities, allowing them to design policies in their own respective provinces, which led to two different systems. These dual-track systems allowed students to select either Mandarin Chinese or Tibetan as the “principal language of instruction with parallel tracks in each of the languages”.¹⁸² Within this dual-track system, the duration of instruction in each language differed widely and also the school year in which the second language was added to the curriculum.¹⁸³ From 1990 through 1997, bilingual education policy was heavily impacted by patriotism campaigns that attacked the Dalai Lama and Tibetan culture was labeled ‘uncivilized’ and ‘backward’.

1999

While the education policies in the 1990s were progressing towards replacement of the Tibetan with Mandarin Chinese in schools, the PRC seemed to notice a brooding unrest among Tibetan communities and made efforts to quell that unrest by publicly recognizing the Tibetan language. In 1999, in order to promote the use of Tibetan, the Tibetan Language Committee commended model Tibetan-use units (government offices, schools, and businesses that had exemplarily used Tibetan in their work) in Lhasa, and the Tibetan Autonomous Government and the Tibetan CCP Committee also commended many model Tibetan-use units

¹⁸² Castle, 2015.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

in Tibet.¹⁸⁴ However, due to previously mentioned history revealing the PRC's failure or unwillingness to enforce policies promoting the use and development of the Tibetan language in schools, the Tibetan frustration with the countless violations of their linguistic rights culminated into a ten-year conflict from 2000-2010.

2000-2010: Conflicts between Tibetans and the PRC continued through the 2000s, culminating in the October 2010 protest against language policies. Numerous protests were documented by TCHRD in various areas in Tibet. The 2008 uprising was one of the longest running series of protests across the entire Tibetan plateau and the largest Tibetan uprising since 1959.¹⁸⁵ The most striking element of the protests across Tibet was their spontaneous nature, and the manner in which they completely defied a repressive regime supported by heavy military forces.



Tibetan school children protest in Rebkong (October 2010)

184 (Maocao Zhou, 2004).

185 Tibet Protests in 2008-2009: Profiles of known Tibetans who Died in the Protests, TCHRD, Special Report (2010), available at http://tchrd.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/tibet_protest_2010.pdf

In 2001, an amendment to the PRC's National Autonomy Law represented a sudden shift in China's classroom language policy. As previously noted, the 1987 'Regulation on the Study, Use, and Development of Tibetan Language and Script,' which was later enacted by the TAR People's Congress in 2002 was considered a breakthrough as it provided equal official status for both Tibetan and Chinese language in TAR and Tibetan was to be used as a medium of instruction at junior middle school level in TAR. However, this legislation was short-lived and abandoned due to precedence given to economic development in TAR and Tibetan remained the medium of instruction for Tibetan students only at primary level in TAR. These regulations were the first of their kind that aimed to protect the language of a minority nationality in PRC. Article 1 of the regulation states that "Tibetan is the common language of the Autonomous Region of Tibet" and Article 3 states, "Tibetan and Chinese have equal administrative status in the Autonomous Region of Tibet".¹⁸⁶ Article 8 states, "The Chinese and those belonging to the other minorities living in the Autonomous Region of Tibet must learn Tibetan".¹⁸⁷

The 2002 regulations however remained unimplemented as they "operate on a purely theoretical level, with no pragmatic dimension."¹⁸⁸ No effective mechanisms or incentives were made available for the enforcement of the regulations. No efforts were made to address the issues of varied dialects, standardising of the spoken language or diglossia (literary and spoken Tibetan), which poses barrier to the learning and spread of Tibetan language.¹⁸⁹ Authorities continued to use Chinese for official meetings and documents and Chinese remained the language of the education system and of public administration. With the enforcement of common national language law in 2001, Mandarin Chinese was promoted throughout PRC.

¹⁸⁶ Tournadre, 2003a.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

2003

In 2003, bilingual education policy was implemented in Tibetan areas in Qinghai Province when the Qinghai provincial education department released guidelines aimed at improving bilingual education in Qinghai Province, which divided the education system into two models. Model 1 was implemented in regions where the Chinese language skills were “not good”. In these areas, the minority language of the area is to be used as the medium of instruction while introducing Chinese language as a subject, but not as the main language of instruction.

On the otherhand, model 2 was implemented in regions where the Chinese language skills are “relatively good”. In these regions, the primary language of instruction is Mandarin Chinese and the minority language is secondary. The Model 2 policy does not support the policy and practice for minority children to receive education in their first language and show respect for minority culture and language. These guidelines are consistently vague and arbitrarily applied. They fail to provide any standard or defining characteristics to distinguish a Model 2 ‘relatively good’ Chinese language environment from a Model 1 ‘not good’ language environment. The arbitrary application of the guidelines not only undermines the ability of Tibetan students to learn, but it also provokes student protests. This is backed by data from surveys that show Tibetan students prefer and are willing to advocate for the Tibetan language as the primary language of instruction.¹⁹⁰

2010

In 2010, the intense frustration felt by Tibetan communities over the PRC’s failed promises to protect the Tibetan language and culture culminated in peaceful protests among the Tibetan students in Qinghai Province. Six days of demonstrations (October 19-25)

¹⁹⁰ TCHRD, 2015.

were spurred by the release of Qinghai's ten-year education plan, which stated that Mandarin would be the primary language of instruction in primary schools by 2015, and minority languages would be considered secondary. The Qinghai Province Mid- and Long-term Plan sought to forcefully develop bilingual preschool education in the farming and pastoral areas, strengthen teaching of the Chinese language in the basic education phase, basically resolve nationality students fundamental ability issues in speaking and understanding Chinese. The plan called for the adoption of Mandarin Chinese as medium of instruction with Mandarin Chinese textbooks in all classes except for courses teaching the Tibetan and English languages. Chinese authorities tried to clarify by stating that Mandarin Chinese would be "used as a teaching language to help minority students learn both Mandarin and their own language." The clarification caused more confusion because it was not explained how Mandarin Chinese could help minority students learn their own languages. However, recent information obtained by TCHRD clears this confusion by providing evidences of Mandarin Chinese being used as medium of instruction to teach Tibetan language to Tibetans in Meldrogungkar (Ch: Maizhokunggar) County and other areas in TAR.¹⁹¹ In June 2016, a photo of a Tibetan word appeared on social media including explanations in Chinese of Tibetan vowels, consonants and alphabetical usage pertaining to the particular word. The 2010 demonstrations highlighted the issue of cultural autonomy and cultural assimilation and demonstrated the role education plays in cultural reproduction.¹⁹²

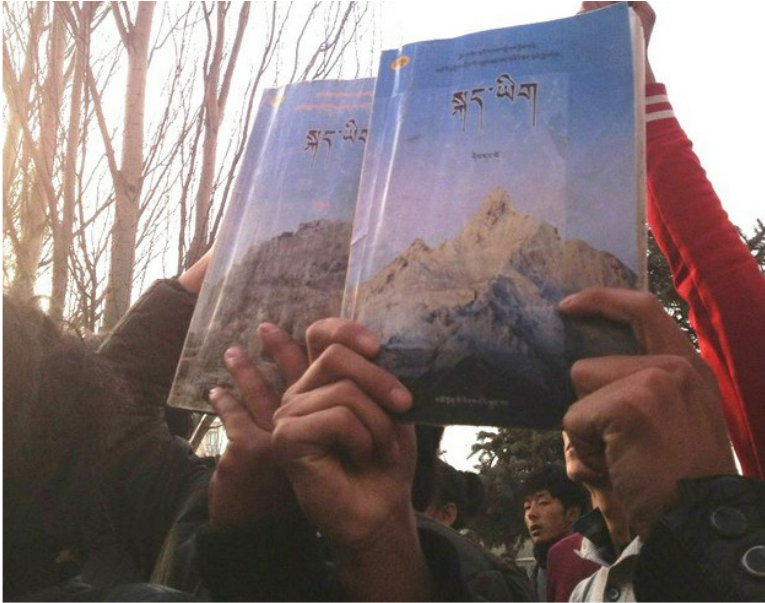
2011-2013

In order to continue to quell the Tibetan communities' disappointments with the linguistic and education policies, in

191 Bilingual Education with Chinese Characteristics: China replacing Tibetan textbooks with Chinese, TCHRD, 21 June 2016, available at <http://tchrd.org/bilingual-education-with-chinese-characteristics-china-replacing-tibetan-textbooks-with-chinese/>

192 (Wangdu, 2011)

January 2011, a few months after the student protests in Qinghai, the provincial authorities announced that at least 5,500 bilingual teachers would be trained by 2015 to teach in both Mandarin and ethnic minority languages in the province's 5 Tibetan autonomous prefectures. Compared to other Tibetan autonomous areas, local regulations in Qinghai Province were the strongest in terms of promoting Tibetan as the language of instruction in school education.¹⁹³ That same year, Qinghai Province's education department claimed that over 196,500 students in 544 primary and secondary schools in six ethnic minority prefectures in Qinghai were being taught in their respective mother tongues.



Tibetan students protest in Rebkong demanding language freedom in 2012

193 TCHRD, 2015

2014

Despite a survey published in 2014 demonstrating that Tibetans prefer teachers who can explain a concept in Tibetan and research showing that Tibetans learn more effectively when taught in Tibetan, the Chinese government still insists on imposing Mandarin Chinese as the language of instruction in Tibetan areas.

In 2014, the PRC made additional promises to protect Tibetan autonomy. Official Chinese news agencies claimed that Chinese government officials in Tibet have been working on a ‘new regulation [that] will provide a legal protection for the rights and freedom of the people of Tibetan ethnic group to study, use, and develop their language’. However this new promised regulation was never realized. The series of false promises made by the Chinese government have led to negative effects such as lower quality of overall education and social unrest.

2016

In June 2016, ethnic studies professor at Minzu University of China, XiongKunxin, reported that Tibetan and Uyghur students in neidi schools not only received “better education and rich experience”, but they also brought “different values to their families and communities”.¹⁹⁴ This was Xiong’s reaction to the release of a “guideline on boosting the development of education in [PRC’s] central and western regions” by the General Office of the State Council that promised the expansion in the exchange of educational resources between Han and minority areas, including setting up of more secondary school classes for Tibetan and Uyghur students in Chinese cities. The guideline also announced plans to send 30,000 teachers from other areas of China to work in Tibet and Xinjiang by 2020, displacing over 90 percent of minority science teachers, “who

194 Jie, S. and Yusha, Z., W. China education gets boost, Global Times, 16 June 2016, available at <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/988626.shtml>

will receive off-the-job training”.

The same month, Chinese authorities denied media reports that Mandarin Chinese would replace Tibetan as medium of instruction for primary school mathematics textbooks in TAR.¹⁹⁵ Overseas media sources reported that the PRC plans to replace all Tibetan maths textbooks with Chinese language textbooks to ‘boost learning efficiency,’ saying that ‘the procedures will become complicated if [schools] adopt Tibetan language textbooks’.¹⁹⁶ Zhu Yun, deputy head of the TAR education department, did not deny that mathematics textbooks in Mandarin Chinese had been introduced although he said that primary schools in the region “can choose either version with the same content”.

In early 2017, the Chinese government started bilingual education training to Tibetan cadres in Chone, Pari, Drugchu in Gansu Province. Videos on social media showed teachers using Mandarin Chinese to teach Tibetan language. In both written and oral instruction, Chinese was used as a medium of instruction to teach Tibetan to young Tibetan cadres.

Most recent research indicates that the schools that use Tibetan as their main language of instruction are gradually being converted into Chinese medium schools. There are two models of education in Tibet: the first mainly uses Chinese as the medium of instruction. In the Chinese dominant medium, a Tibetan language is taught as one of the subjects. The second type of Tibetan as the medium schools is usually located in rural farming and nomadic communities, where none understand Chinese. Very few of Tibetan medium secondary schools exist in Tibet; Badeng Nima (2008) identified only four in Kardze and three in Ngaba.

195 Jie, S. and Heying, C. Tibet denies textbook sinicization, Global Times, 17 June 2016, available at <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/988888.shtml>

196 <http://www.rfa.org/mandarin/yataibaodao/shaoshuminzu/dz-06152016102805.html>

BILINGUAL EDUCATION POLICY

Wide-ranging policy implementation

It is clear that an analysis of bilingual education in Tibet is challenging because of a variety of policies and their implementation in various regions of Tibet. From the beginning, the CCP leadership prioritised ways and means to further its ideology through mass education.¹⁹⁷ With the PRC engaging more with the international community, it also worries about its international image. The PRC is attempting to tread a fine balance between promoting its own agenda and maintaining stability, which means to crush revolts and opposition from the affected communities.

Education or Assimilation

By the end of the 20th century, More than 50 percent of Tibetan population was illiterate and semi-literate. In response, the PRC popularized schooling by charging no school fees, and offering free textbooks, built boarding schools, expanded bilingual education, provided locally relevant textbooks, and improved vocational education and teacher training.¹⁹⁸ Additionally, the PRC created the controversial neidi school program for the top achievers of rural Tibetan primary school graduates are dislocated and educated in segregated classes and schools in cities across China, where “they spend the first year improving their Chinese language ability, and the next three years studying the national curriculum.”¹⁹⁹ Although the PRC has made some efforts to integrate minority and Han groups, the effect will have a long-term effect on the character of Tibet due to “the dislocation caused by schooling large numbers of Tibetan students in far away places.”²⁰⁰ After obtaining an education outside of Tibet, graduates frequently “return to Tibet or continue

197 Castle (2015)

198 Postiglione, Zhiyong, & Jiao, 2004.

199 Ibid.

200 Ibid.

their education in other Chinese boarding schools and classes at the government's expense" (Postiglione, Zhiyong, & Jiao, 2004). While returning educated youth and young adults to Tibet helps to improve literacy data and increase the viability of the workforce in Tibet, the students educated in Tibet also often bring back Han culture and ideas of Chinese nationalism.

Since the neidi school system in 1984, a number of Tibetan schools were established in Chinese towns and cities to provide 'quality education' to Tibetan children. Tibetan children studying in these distant schools mainly get Chinese-oriented education, removed from their home environment. Latest figures released by Chinese government show that there are 17 junior middle schools attended by Tibetan students from TAR in 12 Chinese provinces and cities. In the past 30 years, TAR Tibetan students have been educated in 137 schools and professional training schools located in 21 Chinese provinces and cities. Out of these, 18100 Tibetan students have not returned to Tibet. Every year, 1620 junior middle school students and 3000 senior middle school students from TAR are sent for education in China. Since 2010, an additional 3000 students annually have been sent from TAR for vocational education in Chinese provinces and cities. The neidi program is also implemented in other Tibetan areas outside TAR such as Tibetan province of Kham and Amdo located in present-day Gansu, Sichuan, Qinghai and Yunnan.

The PRC's state education system promotes the Han Chinese identity as representing the national culture. The state school system is tasked with preserving minority cultures within the overriding dominance of Han Chinese culture. Therefore, Tibetan children educated in Chinese state schools within rural Tibet are immersed into Han culture through the state school education system.

Gap between educational policy and practice

The gap between China's educational policy and practice in Tibet is evident and is "compounded by the remoteness and inaccessibility of many ethnic homelands".²⁰¹ Yet, the PRC has dedicated its efforts to "development in Tibet a top priority for the new century".²⁰² Some of these development plans include 'nine-year compulsory education'. Additional forms of developmental aid include "teacher-training and school-building projects." But the state education system with its goal to civilize the natives faces opposition from the traditional cultural values and practices.

As global market pressures continue to affect China's economy at local and national levels, more students would drop out of school due to poor Mandarin Chinese skills to excel in the new global market.²⁰³ These pressures to assimilate can create "resistance to aspects of schooling, which encroach on ethnic culture and identity formation" (Postiglione, Zhiyong, & Jiao, 2004). Therefore, as China moves to modernize Tibet and conform to worldwide standards, it is doing it at the expense of Tibetan culture and language because China sees modernization as equivalent with nationalism and sameness.

Differing views

As Tibetan society meets the challenges of a changing Tibetan society, there are differing views on choosing the language of instruction. There are a growing number of urban Tibetan residents who are concerned about their children's future for good universities and stable government jobs, which maintains that Mandarin Chinese should be used as the main medium of instruction.²⁰⁴ This group of Tibetans mainly consists of government officials and personnel

201 Ibid.

202 Ibid.

203 Ibid.

204 Nima, 2008.

living in cities. But Tibetans living in farming and nomadic communities including also some local government officials, where 90 or more percent of the population is Tibetan, supports Tibetan as the main language of instruction in schools. Among the senior Tibetan intelligentsia, there is general disapproval about the current standard of bilingual teaching in schools that weakens Tibetan language teaching and culture. As for the young Tibetans, they increasingly face a society dominated by proficiency in Mandarin Chinese. Majority of official documents, notices, letters, and letters of certification are written in Mandarin Chinese. But the young remains worried about their mother tongue and maintains that Tibetan language is capable of conveying all the contents that all other languages are capable of expressing.

Primary and Secondary School

Except in Qinghai, the Tibetan language medium is used only up to the primary level in most of the schools in Tibet.²⁰⁵ Other primary and secondary schools that were built in late 1980s used Chinese as the main language and others that used Tibetan as the main language.²⁰⁶ From grade 3, schools are “required to use the national uniform curriculum,” which “features Han knowledge as the norm and Mandarin Chinese as the official language”.²⁰⁷ The promotion of the dominant Han group in the guise of the national uniform curriculum has led to the steady loss of access to minority languages and cultures but also loss of identity.²⁰⁸

The development of primary and secondary education was influenced in many ways by factors that were political, economic, cultural, and religious combined with the politics of bilingual education.²⁰⁹ For a good bilingual education system to make progress

205 Wangdu, 2011.

206 Hansen, 2004.

207 Wang, Yuxiang, & JoAnn Phillion, 2009.

208 Ibid.

209 Zhou, 2001a.

beyond primary school in minority communities, it is necessary to provide “qualified teachers, pedagogically appropriate teaching materials, and excellent execution”.²¹⁰ A good bilingual education system will enable more to receive Tibetans primary and secondary education.

Remaking Tibetans in China – Dislocated Education

Most secondary schools now use Mandarin Chinese as the medium of instruction and Tibetan language is either dropped or retained as a language subject.²¹¹ Since 1990s, secondary normal schools were merged into high schools in Tibetan areas in Sichuan, Gansu, Qinghai, and Yunnan. Many Tibetan-medium secondary and elementary schools switched to Han-medium schools. But some Tibetan secondary schools still use Tibetan medium to varying degrees in Qinghai, where some secondary schools teach Tibetan, history, geography and maths in Tibetan, but teach science in Chinese.²¹²

Since the *neidi* program began, thousands of Tibet’s top ranking primary graduates were sent to study in inland secondary schools in China. Around one third of TAR students who enter secondary education attend these inland classes and schools.²¹³ While this policy may seem remarkable in its provision of such high equality educational support to Tibetan students, it should be viewed “in the light of what Cruikshank (1999) called as “technologies of citizenship” that seeks to constitute and regulate citizens, and entail power relation that are both voluntary and coercive”.²¹⁴ For all practical purposes, the *neidi* schools promote an assimilationist agenda in the name of quality education in these dislocated secondary classes and schools. Except for four or five periods of Tibetan

210 Ibid.

211 Wangdu, 2011.

212 Ibid.

213 Postiglione, 2008.

214 Wangdu, 2011.

language classes out of the weekly 34-43 periods, the curriculum is same as mainstream Chinese schools including “ideological and moral education classes”.²¹⁵ Students were not allowed to spend their vacation in Tibet and forbidden to travel until they complete four years of junior secondary school.²¹⁶ The effect of this policy has been negative in identity formation of Tibetan students who return to Tibet after seven years of education in China with little knowledge about their culture.

Higher Education

In most cases, fluency in Mandarin Chinese is required continuation to university, which is why university enrolment of Tibetan students still remains low. Even in local universities such as Tibet University in Lhasa, the number of Tibetan students is far below their proportion in the TAR population. For Tibetans with limited skills in Chinese, the next option is to major in Tibetan-related fields in some of the minority nationality colleges (minzuxueyuan). Another option was to join teacher-training schools in Tibet. Yet, self-sustaining job opportunities for Tibetan-only speakers are scarce both within and outside of Tibet due to the need to communicate with Mandarin Chinese-speaking Han immigrants.

FAILINGS OF THE BILINGUAL EDUCATION POLICY IN TIBET

Analysis of Inland Secondary Schools

The principal issue associated with ethnic minority education in Tibet is the continued implementation of neidi inland school program. The number of Tibetan students sent from Tibet under the program continued to increase despite the availability of good

215 Ibid.

216 Postiglione, Zhiyong, & Jiao, 2004.

quality schools and teachers in Tibet such as Lhasa and Shigatse. The rationale behind the program was the lack of good quality education in Tibet and part of the Chinese government aid programs in TAR. The real goal of the policy, which is assimilation, is not acknowledged publicly by the PRC. The consequence of introducing policies aimed at assimilation of minorities rather than their educational needs threaten Tibetan culture and will leave students fluent in neither Tibetan nor Mandarin. Furthermore, these students are taken away from their homes when they are still very young, and they are not able to return home for at least four years, and those who remain for the complete secondary-school cycle, return home only once in seven years. While away from home, they live in an urban environment dominated by Han Chinese, learning the national uniform curriculum and attending only one course in Tibetan language and literature.

Impact of Inland School Program on Tibetan religion and culture

The policy of sending students to inland junior secondary schools negatively impacts student's religious and cultural practices. Students cannot participate in any religious services or ceremonies in inland schools. The inland school curriculum gave no precedence to Tibetan culture. Research (2004) found that "teachers seldom if ever use Tibetan examples to illustrate curriculum concepts, and they are generally unfamiliar with Tibet, a place most have never visited". It was also observed that years of schooling in Chinese cities had not made much of improvement on the Chinese language proficiency of Tibetan students. Therefore, this policy negatively affects students' Tibetan language fluency and Tibetan cultural and Buddhist religious practices.

Home language background

The complicated home language background may also affect

the ability of Tibetan children to perform in a bilingual education environment.²¹⁷ Due to inadequate education in Mandarin Chinese and Tibetan languages and interaction between Tibetans and Han immigrants, many students learn parts of both languages, which have created creole mixed Chinese-Tibetan languages called Wutunhua and Daohua. These languages are the product of PRC's preferential treatment of Chinese migrants in Tibet that led to the sudden contact between Tibetan and Chinese populations. They are based mainly on basic Chinese vocabulary, with Tibetan grammar structure, and a mix of phonetic aspects from each language. Mixed languages have become the mother tongue among some of the younger generation, who are unable to speak either Tibetan or a topolect of Chinese fluently. For children who enter school unable to speak neither Tibetan nor a topolect of Chinese, "bilingual education may then mean immersion in two foreign languages and no instruction in what has become their mother tongue".²¹⁸

The bilingual education policy in Tibet has additional failings that are further exacerbated because many Tibetans who are now teachers did not learn Mandarin Chinese from qualified teachers. The majority of present day Tibetan teachers received an education in Mandarin Chinese from teachers who were not qualified to teach the language, which led to shortage of Chinese language specialists, and contributed to a generational cycle of broken Mandarin Chinese language among Tibetans. As a result, these teachers are unqualified to teach the language of instruction to students, which hinders the students' ability to read, speak, and write the language fluently.

Minority Languages and Culture in School Textbooks

Minority knowledge, language, and culture are underrepresented or non-existent in the content of elementary textbooks used in

217 Castle, 2015.

218 Ibid.

Mainland China.²¹⁹ Tibetan textbooks have been rewritten to denigrate Tibetan religion and culture and make students feel ashamed of the culture and traditions they grew up with and the character traits that distinguish them from other Chinese students.²²⁰ For example, only a few texts in Tibetan schools talk about Tibetan's experiences of poverty or economic and education inequalities. All the textbooks for the regular curriculum in inland schools are the same as those for Chinese students in other schools in the city.²²¹

The absence of minority knowledge and culture in school textbooks or curriculum lead to minority students having few role models. As a result, minority parents are increasingly deciding to send their children to temples and mosques for a more culturally appropriate education in minority languages.²²² The elimination of minority cultural references and language from school textbooks points to the exclusion of minority knowledge, language, and culture from the state education system. The purpose of this educational policy is to uproot and dislocate minority students from their home language, culture, and identity. The focus of the CCP policy is to promote the Han knowledge, culture, and language as a sign of progress and modernity, reject minority knowledge, culture, and language as backward, unscientific, and not worth learning.

Although the PRC has included provisions in its Constitution and enacted multiple laws “to protect minority rights, the dominant group, the Han, determines what knowledge, culture, and language should be included and excluded from school curriculum and school knowledge in China; through this determination, hegemonic control is maintained and minority groups’ knowledge, language,

219 Wang, Yuxiang, & JoAnn Phillion, 2009.

220 TCHRD, 2015.

221 (Postiglione, Zhiyong, & Jiao, 2004).

222 Wang, Yuxiang, & JoAnn Phillion, 2009.

and culture are subjugated”.²²³ Much like the Native Americans in the United States and Indigenous people globally, Tibetans and other minority groups experience “loss of language and culture, removal of children from homes and placement in dominant culture environments, loss of cultural identity, and, in many cases the complete eradication of Indigenous tribes”.²²⁴

Qualified Teachers

One of the major causes for concern is the sheer lack of teachers capable of teaching in Tibetan. The fact that many of these teachers generally cannot speak Tibetan poses a major issue within a Tibetan education system where the overwhelming majority of its students are Tibetan.²²⁵ This creates situations where Tibetan students are unable to fully understand subjects taught in Mandarin Chinese because the teachers cannot explain ideas the students do not understand in Tibetan.

In 2001 there was approximately “one Tibetan-language teacher for every two schools” in Kanlho (Ch: Gannan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Gansu Province.²²⁶ In 2014, the situation has not improved as over 40% of junior and senior high school teachers are now of Chinese origin (see Figure 1 below) as a consequence of Mandarin Chinese becoming the primary language of instruction in Tibetan areas.²²⁷ Because of this disparity Tibetan students are not only deprived of a basic education in their own language, but are also severely disadvantaged, compared to their Han Chinese counterparts.

Regarding teacher qualifications in Tibet, Tibetan teachers take turns working in inland schools for two-year periods. Moreover,

223 Ibid.

224 Ibid.

225 TCHRD, 2015.

226 Teng Xing, “Objects, Characteristics, Content, and Methods of Research in Ethnic Minority Bilingual Education in China,” 2001, *Chinese Education and Society*, pp. 54.

227 Ibid. Pg. 3, Table 1.

the qualified Tibetan language teachers working in inland schools must have “good [political] ideology, be responsible and capable professionals, and be strong at both Chinese and Tibetan language”.²²⁸ These requirements are included in the ‘Requirements of Tibetan Language Teachers and Life Teachers Dispatched to Inland Tibet Classes’ and later in the 1987 ‘Regulations on Tibetan Language Teachers and Life Teachers Dispatched to Inland Tibet Classes’.²²⁹ A 1988 State Education Commission report introduced further requirements that Han Chinese teachers for Inland Tibet classes (schools) have “good political behaviour, moral integrity, strong responsibility, a great deal of teaching experience, high-level professional skills, healthy physique and love of Tibetan students.”

Another failing is many Tibetans who are now teachers, did not learn Mandarin Chinese from qualified teachers. Before the influx of Chinese in the 2000’s, Mandarin Chinese had little prevalence in Tibetan society. As a result, the majority of present day Tibetan teachers received an education in Mandarin Chinese from teachers who were not qualified to teach the language. This led to situations, particularly in rural areas, where “there is a shortage of Chinese language specialists, in which case teachers of other subjects who are unqualified as language teachers, [took] on the role of teaching Chinese as a subject.”²³⁰ The situation is further exacerbated by the Chinese government’s plans to offer “all children in Tibet’s farming and herding areas...at least two years of free preschool education in both the Tibetan language and Mandarin Chinese by 2015.”²³¹ Although this proposal seems highly beneficial on its face, it is not.

228 Postiglione, Zhiyong, & Jiao, 2004.

229 Ibid.

230 Gerard Postiglione, Ben Jiao, and Li Xiaoliang, “Education Change and Development in Nomadic Communities of the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR),” 2012, *International Journal of Chinese Education*, pp 89

231 Fang Y., “Tibet to ensure free bilingual preschool education by 2015,” Xinhua News Agency (Beijing, December 3, 2010) http://big5.xinhuanet.com/gate/big5/news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2010-12/03/c_13633958.htm

A similar policy was enacted in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). The policy undermined the native Uyghur language.²³² NurBekri, chairman of the XUAR, claimed that teaching Mandarin Chinese to Uyghur's youth aided in the Chinese government's fight against terrorism in the XUAR by making Uyghur's youth a part of the PRC's mainstream society.²³³ These comments show that the PRC sees bilingual education policies as another means of furthering the PRC's nation building efforts in minority regions. The consequences of introducing such policies that are aimed more at assimilation of minorities rather than their educational needs can be drastic. Critics argue that such policies threaten "Tibetan culture, and will leave students fluent in neither Tibetan nor Mandarin."²³⁴



A campaign poster calling on Tibetans to speak pure Tibetan

- 232 International Campaign for Tibet, "Tibetan teachers write petition in support of Tibetan language; fears for students after detentions," International Campaign for Tibet, October 26, 2010, <http://www.savetibet.org/tibetan-teachers-write-petition-in-support-of-tibetan-language-fearsfor-students-after-detentions/>
- 233 Cui J., "Mandarin lessons in Xinjiang 'help fight terrorism,'" China Daily (Beijing, June 4, 2009). http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009-06/04/content_8250223.htm
- 234 Chris Buckley, Andrew Roche, "Tibetan student protests spread: overseas group," Reuters US (London, October 21, 2010). <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/10/21/us-china-tibetansidUSTRE69K3S320101021>

PROS AND CONS OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION POLICY

Low Quality Education and Outcomes: Parental Distrust of School Education

As a result of a dearth of educational opportunities and culturally irrelevant school curriculums, many parents in Tibet have to seek alternative source of education for their children by taking the risk of sending them to India. Research by the Tibetan Refugee Reception Centre at Dharamsala found that of the 43,634 Tibetans who fled Tibet and came to India from 1991 to June 2004, 60% were below the age of 25.²³⁵The Tibetan Children's Village schools in India alone received around 14,000 children from 1980 to 2010.²³⁶This mass exodus of Tibetans in the past four decades is driven mainly by lack of culturally relevant education and religious freedom. Other factors include the ramping up of Chinese medium of instruction in the secondary schools, which have had adverse affects Tibetan educational enrollment and attainment.²³⁷

Tibetan parents are generally distrustful of the state school education system and are mostly unwilling to send their children to state schools.²³⁸ In the TAR, where the Tibetan community comprises 90% of the population, roughly 38% of Tibetan youths do not receive an education. These data contradict China's claim that "Tibetans receive an average 8.4 years of education" in the TAR.²³⁹An analysis of PRC's 2010 census data shows that the TAR illiteracy rate is roughly 23%. It is more than double the illiteracy rate in the next highest region and approximately five times higher than the national average. At its lowest, the illiteracy rate in TAR is almost ten times higher than claims made by PRC officials in 2008

235 TCHRD, 2015.

236 Wangdu, 2011.

237 Ibid.

238 Zhou, 2004.

239 TCHRD, 2015.

that it was under 2.4%.²⁴⁰

PRC's functional definition of literacy rate is problematic. The Measures on Standards and Assessment of Illiteracy Eradication among Adults in Tibet do not distinguish between literacy in Tibetan or Chinese languages.²⁴¹ The law on illiteracy eradication stipulates that one is literate whether one can read and write in Chinese or Tibetan. As a result, in China's 2010 census data it is impossible to determine the literacy rate of Tibetans in their mother tongue given because literacy is by the ability to read and write in either Chinese or Tibetan. This does not decrease the importance of literacy, which is a social and cultural practice that plays an important role in maintaining and transmitting cultural values and beliefs.²⁴²

Paradoxical Issues Facing Promotion of Tibetan Language

There are paradoxical issues affecting students and their families faced by culturally irrelevant education policies in Tibet. As the state juggles the importance of minority identity with the desire for a unified China that communicated in Mandarin, parents are also forced to choose between education that could get their children good jobs, and education that kept their traditions and language alive.²⁴³ In Mandarin Chinese medium schools, minority students are required to complete the standardized curriculum (for which there are standard exams) in addition to their Tibetan language studies. The negative consequence of this policy is that it pushes Tibetan children to compete with students who only need to learn the standardized Chinese curriculum. Researchers maintain that even if Tibetan students were "able to take exams different from the

240 Ben Jiao, "Remarkable Development of Basic Education in Tibet," Tibetan Academy of Social Science, June 18, 2012. <http://www.xzass.org/english/newsinfo.php?id=2016>.

241 Zhou, Minglang. "Legislating Literacy for Linguistic and Ethnic Minorities in Contemporary China," *Multilingual Matters*, 2007, Language Planning and Policy: Issues in Language Planning and Literacy, Anthony Liddicoat (eds), p. 109-111.

242 Ferdman, B M. *Ethnic and minority issues in literacy, an international handbook*, 1999.

243 Castle, 2015.

standardized ones and split their time more easily between Chinese-taught and Tibetan-taught classes”, the problem of ‘target colloquial competencies’ would still arise.²⁴⁴

The target colloquial competencies enable students to communicate specialized topics in a given language. For instance, if a student had learned biology in Tibetan but law in Chinese, he or she might not possess the necessary vocabulary to discuss biology in Chinese or law in Tibetan.²⁴⁵ Likewise fluency in Tibetan does not guarantee the ability to talk about physics or computer science. This situation would make it difficult for Tibetan students to compete in the job market due to communication problems.

The two models of bilingual education system is supposedly meant to solve the abovementioned problems in language and communication but the system is not equal. It was found that the Chinese language classes enjoyed better resources, better class quality, with more variety in subject classes. Furthermore, unlike Tibetan classes, Chinese ones continue to higher levels with more opportunities for higher levels of education. Therefore, there exists a very few opportunities for higher education in Tibetan, and seats are extremely limited in universities. Employment opportunities for students educated in Tibetan medium are extremely limited and often lowly paid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Castle, 2015.

ANALYSIS OF HUMAN RIGHTS TO LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION POLICY

FAILURE TO UPHOLD LAWS

International Law

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) recognizes the importance of education in preserving a child's cultural identity, language, and values. In two articles, the CRC requires state parties to design their education policies accordingly.²⁴⁶ Since the PRC is a state party to the CRC, the CRC is legally binding on the PRC. It is important to note that Article 30 of the CRC is identical to Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The ICCPR is widely recognized as one of the core human rights treaties and along with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Political Rights, makes up the International Bill of Human Rights. The ICCPR states that people "...shall not be denied the right . . . to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practice his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language." Therefore, as a signatory to the ICCPR, the PRC is required not to defeat the object and purpose of the ICCPR.

Part II: Article 2 of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights' (OHCHR) International

²⁴⁶ CRC articles 29(c) and 30.

Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, states “The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to guarantee that the rights enunciated in the present Covenant will be exercised without discrimination of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”. China signed the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1976 and in 1997 and ratified it in China’s in 2001.

Obligations Disregarded

By using Mandarin Chinese instead of Tibetan language as the primary language of instruction in the Tibetan education system, the Chinese government has continuously disregarded its obligations under Chapter 3, Section 6, Article 119 of the PRC’s constitution to the Tibetan people under its own legislation. Contrary to this promise in article 4(4) of the PRC’s Constitution, Tibetans do not have the freedom to use and develop their language when the Chinese government perpetuates education policies in which Mandarin Chinese is required to be the primary language of instruction. This stuns the development of the Tibetan language in future generations rather than preserve and develop it.

Article 7 of the PRC’s national autonomy law states: “Schools (classes) and other educational institutions whose students are predominantly from ethnic minority families should, if possible, use textbooks printed in their own languages, and lessons should be taught in those languages. In practice this does not happen. By continuing down this road, the Chinese government not only contradicts its obligations under the PRC’s own legislation, but also completely disregards the educational well-being of Tibetan students.

There clearly exists an enormous gap between educational rights and policies enshrined in the constitutional legislation and the actual practice. A variety of factors hinder the implementation of constitutional provisions such as widespread poverty, geographical remoteness, and dearth of qualified bilingual teachers in Tibet. But the main reason is lack of political will on the part of the Chinese government to genuinely pursue a culturally and linguistically relevant education in Tibet and other minority areas. The constitutional provisions merely help PRC to look progressive and to reduce international criticisms.²⁴⁷

PRC'S MORAL AND LEGAL APPROACHES TO HUMAN RIGHTS AND CITIZEN RIGHTS

The question of individual rights and government duties, which concerns whether the state or the individual should be given more power, represents the fundamental differences between the PRC and the mainstream international community in moral and legal approaches to human rights and citizen rights.²⁴⁸ A state that legally guarantees individual rights also enables individuals to use more ways and means to make the state fulfill its duties. On the contrary, in a state that empowers the state with legally prescribed duties, individuals have no means of making the state comply with the laws even if the state fails to carry out its duties. The PRC's policy and practice on the issue of minority language rights and use demonstrates this problem, in light of the fact that PRC is a polity that empowers not the individual, but the state with its legally specified duties.²⁴⁹ If the PRC fails to comply with its own laws, the individual citizen has no power to force the state to obey the law.

247 Wangdu, 2011.

248 Minglang Zhou, 2004.

249 Ibid.

Group Rights: Citizens of China and the TAR

The PRC views the label of minority language rights as state duties that are group rights rather than individual rights.²⁵⁰ The PRC followed the Soviet model of defining a nation “as a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture”. Based on this model, the PRC categorized minority groups into 55 nationalities or ethnic groups, albeit with much flexible manipulation around the term ‘historically’.²⁵¹ Using this classification, the PRC reached at four criteria—common language, territory, economic life, and culture—as defining features of groups, not of individuals. The adoption of the “Stalinist notion of nation and nationality” meant that PRC would resolve issues concerning minority rights and minority language rights in the “group approach in the arena of national and subnational politics”.²⁵²

As guaranteed by the PRC Constitution (Article 23 of 1954 version & Article 59 of 1982 version), the group approach was first of all entrenched in regional autonomy and proportional representation of minority groups in people’s congresses (legislature) at various levels.²⁵³ In the 1954, 1975, 1978, and 1982 versions of the PRC constitution, language rights were enshrined as group rights, that is, ‘all minority nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their native languages and scripts’. Furthermore, it was enshrined in all the four versions of the PRC Constitution as ‘every minority nationality has the freedom to use and develop its language and writing systems and to maintain or reform its customs and religion.’ Since the constitution is worded this way, one can assume that all languages are equal, which can also mean that minority

250 Minglang Zhou, 2004.

251 Ibid.

252 Ibid.

253 Ibid.

languages and Chinese are equal. Yet, this theoretical equality in the 1982 constitution is contradicted by Article 19, which declares that the state promotes the commonly used Putonghua throughout the whole country.

This contradiction led to promulgation of the common language law passed in 2000, which explicitly enshrines Chinese as the national/official language of the PRC. Although the Chinese government emphasizes the equality of all languages, this equality looks more like a narrow interpretation of “legal equality among minority languages”.²⁵⁴ Notwithstanding any differences between the broad and narrow interpretations, the crux of the matter is to what extent citizens are able to exercise the constitutionally guaranteed equality in every day life. Therefore, a substantial disparity exists between the country’s Constitution guarantees and the government’s practice in the sphere of language rights and equality.

RELIGIOUS AND ANTI-RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES ON BILINGUAL EDUCATION

Tibetan language and Tibetan Buddhism are not mutually exclusive

As previously discussed, the PRC has consistently viewed Tibetan Buddhism as an avenue for ‘separatist’ activities and has therefore worked to diminish religious practices within Tibet by destroying monasteries and eliminating religious teachings from the school curriculums. For instance, in 2000, the Chinese government implemented a Materialism and Atheism campaign, which urged teachers and parents ‘to increase children’s understanding of atheism, ‘in order to help rid them of the bad influence of religion’. This campaign violated Chapter 2, Article 36 of the Constitution of the

254 Ibid.

PRC, which prohibits the government from compelling citizens to believe or not believe in any religion or to discriminate against citizens because of their religious beliefs.²⁵⁵ Thus, the Chinese government is not only pursuing policies that undermine and antagonize religion, it is seeking to compel students to accept atheism and pro-Chinese Communist Party ideology. In effect, this campaign continues to teach Tibetan students to denigrate their own heritage as Buddhism has historically and still plays a fundamental role in Tibetan culture.

The treatment of Tibetan culture and religion in the school curriculum is determined by the prevailing political mood of the Chinese government. Except for a brief period from early 1980s to early 1990s, Tibetan culture and religion was denigrated to varying degrees.²⁵⁶

The demarcation of education into “minority education” and “regular education” is triggered by the overriding political motive of “fostering allegiance towards the state and ensuring stability as the primary goal of education for minorities.”²⁵⁷ Minority students are thus made to “unlearn aspects of their culture [often linguistic and religious] that the government describes as ‘unpatriotic’ and ‘elitist’”.²⁵⁸

255 Constitution of the PRC, Art. 36

256 Wangdu, 2011.

257 Ibid.

258 Bass, 1998.

RESISTANCES TO THE DISPLACEMENT OF THE TIBETAN LANGUAGE IN TIBET

EFFORTS TO INCLUDE TIBETAN IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

In response to the historically persistent opposition to Tibetan culture and religion in Tibet, substantial efforts have been made to promote Tibetan as the language of instruction. For instance, since the late 1980s to the late 1990s, the Tibet University in Lhasa “had trained over 1,400 middle school Tibetan teachers, compiled 19 Tibetan language textbooks, edited and translated 181 textbooks on 16 subjects from primary school to high school, 122 reference books and 16 kinds of syllabi. It had also compiled Chinese-Tibetan dictionaries on the terminology of eight subjects, including physics, biology and mathematics, each with over 120,000 entries”.²⁵⁹ Additionally, the University had “translated 55 educational books on patriotism for primary school students and produced a lot of teaching software, pictures, and materials for Tibetan language teaching”.²⁶⁰ Despite these efforts at expanding the level and scope of Tibetan use in education, a gap still exists “between reality and the reputation of Tibet as ‘the Center of Tibetan Culture’”.²⁶¹

Some also noticed efforts to improve education access in Tibet. Research showed that “Ethnic-minority teacher education has been one of the main measures used to improve school attendance in

259 Maocao Zhou, 2004.

260 Ibid.

261 Ibid.

poor ethnic-minority regions”.²⁶² Furthermore, the provision of Tibetan language textbooks was selectively supported through secondary school. A UN development project in Qinghai supported the provision of Tibetan language teaching materials in universities that trained teachers of secondary school science and mathematics in Tibetan areas.

CONFOUNDING ISSUES HINDERING PROMOTION OF TIBETAN LANGUAGE IN SCHOOLS

Variations in Tibetan language

As mentioned in the introduction of this paper, multiple Tibetan dialects exist. Research found the Tibetan dialects being taught to children have not been recorded.²⁶³ Therefore, teachers may teach in regional dialects or may utilize standard Tibetan, which is derived from the speech in Lhasa. Professor David Germano refers to this standard “as ‘proto-standard Tibetan’ and is not actually standard across many eastern regions of Tibet”.²⁶⁴

One of the best ways to promote Tibetan widely is to create a standard Tibetan language curriculum in Tibet. Since the mid-1990s, the TAR government had drafted Methods and Regulations for Standardization of Tibetan Terms that saw limited implementation, and preliminarily standardized more than 3,000 terms.²⁶⁵ In the past, standardized Tibetan was used in public signs in Lhasa and other cities in Tibet.

262 Postiglione, Zhiyong, & Jiao, 2004.

263 Castle, 2015.

264 Ibid.

265 Zhou, 2004.

OBSTACLES TO BILINGUAL EDUCATION POLICY REFORM

Research by Zhou (2004) has declared “six subjective factors that reflect the attitudes of government officials and the Tibetan masses, and that may have hindered progress in Tibetan use and development”.²⁶⁶ First, he suggests that “some government offices and leaders do not fully understand and/or do not pay enough attention to what the PRC Constitution, the Laws of Regional Autonomy for Minorities, and the Compulsory Education Law have stipulated with regard to the freedom and right of minorities to use and develop their native languages and writing systems”.²⁶⁷ Even though “local governments at different levels have formulated local regulations and established local institutions to implement these freedom and rights, they usually do not realize the importance, reality, and long-lasting nature of studying and using minority languages and writing systems”.²⁶⁸ In consequence, policies exist but no concrete measures for implementing them. The local leadership needs to ensure that administrative measures are in place for the implementation of language laws and regulations.

Second, the lack of qualified Tibetan teachers is a major problem for the use of Tibetan in education. Qualified teachers need to possess “both professional and subject training as well as bilingual training” in addition to ability to “adjust teaching methods and update and diversify teaching materials according to their students’ levels and real needs.”²⁶⁹ The availability of such qualified teachers in primary and secondary schools is crucial for the consistent and smooth transition from primary school to secondary school, so that “students can adjust to teaching and thinking in both Tibetan and Chinese and succeed in learning languages and sciences”.²⁷⁰

266 Maocao Zhou, 2004.

267 Ibid.

268 Ibid.

269 Ibid.

270 Ibid.

Third, in order to decrease high illiteracy rates in Tibet, Tibetan literacy campaigns should be allowed in all Tibetan communities, the goal of which is not just to eradicate illiteracy but also to promote the importance of studying and using Tibetan.²⁷¹ As the UNESCO's 1981 Paris meeting pointed out, native language is the most powerful tool for wiping out illiteracy, non-education, discrimination, and poverty.²⁷²

Fourth, the standardization of Tibetan language is necessary for Tibetan to be used more effectively in education and communication. Not enough work has been done in language planning and standardization to bridge the gap between written Tibetan and the three major Tibetan dialects. Also the gap between the regional dialects and the written language (including differences in grammar, lexicon, and phonology) needs standardization and unification.

Fifth, insufficient financial support hinders plans for promotion of the use and development of Tibetan. Local governments could be made to allocate special funds for the use and development of Tibetan.

Sixth, the existing regulations and laws on minority language and language rights must be subjected to thorough review to make them more relevant to the local realities. A detailed and effective set of regulations and laws will genuinely protect and promote the use and development of Tibetan. In summary, the 2002 'Regulation on the Study, Use, and Development of Tibetan Language and Script,' which provided equal official status for both Tibetan and Chinese was not enforced, and remains on paper only.

271 Ibid.

272 Ibid.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Incorporating both Han and Tibetan cultural values and stories into the school curriculums is one necessary change needed to decrease the denigration of Tibetan culture in the minds of young students. Multicultural education is also one method for assisting Chinese authorities, instructors, and cadre members “to respect and value minority cultures and languages, reduce discrimination, and terminate the assimilation approach”.²⁷³ Evidently, the multiculturalism with Chinese characteristics includes “tolerance of minority cultures and languages on the condition that they do no damage to the national stability and national unity”.²⁷⁴ In contrast, multicultural education in Western countries advocates “providing culturally and linguistically inclusive instruction and curriculum to minority students, which helps maintain their home language and culture, construct their identity, and improve their school achievement”.²⁷⁵

Banks’ (2006) five dimensions of multicultural education could be used as a guideline for Chinese policy makers, school administrators, and teachers to address language and culture issues regarding minority students: 1) Language and culture inclusion in school curriculum; 2) Curriculum knowledge constructed from the perspectives of minority groups; 3) Teaching approaches adapted to minority students’ needs in order to promote minority students’ academic success; 4) Prejudice reduction through the inclusion of minority perspectives; and 5) Creation of an empowering school and social culture.²⁷⁶ These “principles may provide minority students with a language- and culture-friendly environment in which they can experience success and critically examine social

273 Wang, Yuxiang, & JoAnn Phillion, 2009.

274 Ibid.

275 Ibid.

276 Ibid.

injustices.”²⁷⁷ Furthermore, “the principles may also increase Chinese policy makers’ sense of respect for minority cultures and languages. Culturally responsive teaching will provide a supportive environment for minority students, as it takes minority students’ learning styles into consideration”.²⁷⁸ Since the current curriculum concerned with or relevant to Tibet is scarce, and qualified Tibetan teachers are few, efforts to reform the school curriculum and teaching materials should incorporate “a more even-handed cultural policy on the identity formation of Tibetan youth”.²⁷⁹

Some experts recommend the promotion of standard spoken Tibetan, which is the vernacular language, due to the high rate of unemployment and illiteracy.²⁸⁰ This would also reduce the problems caused by diglossia and make it possible, for instance, to fund projects that will publish classical texts in the vernacular language. The state patronage to help encourage the development and use of the Tibetan language is important. It could be in the form of institutional support or financial aid such as conferment of prizes and awards for artists and writers. The goal

“is to help young Tibetans realize that their language and culture does have prestige”.²⁸¹

Tibetans recognize the value of learning Mandarin Chinese for job opportunities and social interaction, however, Mandarin Chinese courses should not replace Tibetan language because it destroys Tibetan students’ cultural identity and ability to read Tibetan Buddhist religious texts.²⁸² The issue is also of quality education. It is the government’s responsibility to build up local education system with qualified bilingual teachers who can help

277 Ibid.

278 Ibid.

279 Postiglione, Zhiyong, & Jiao, 2004.

280 Tournadre, 2003b.

281 Ibid.

282 Wang, Yuxiang, & JoAnn Phillion, 2009.

educate minority students in both languages effectively.

Regarding the choice of a language of instruction in Tibetan schools, Professor BadengNimastates that Tibetan is the most suitable language because it “is convenient, most easily learned, time-wise most economical, spatially most widespread, and most efficient for the development of people and society.”²⁸³ At the same time he recognizes the importance of learning Mandarin Chinese for the development of Tibetan culture, as there is much that can be learned by interacting with other cultures that are also modern. In addition, Tibetans students must be given opportunities to learn other suitable foreign languages so that Tibetan students. The school curriculum should pay equal inclusion of values and aspects of Tibetan as well as Chinese.

CONCLUSION

According to the United Nations Declaration on Linguistic Rights (UNDLR), a language is a product of interaction and intermingling of “a wide range of factors of a political and legal, ideological and historical, demographic and territorial, economic and social, cultural, linguistic and sociolinguistic, interlinguistic and subjective nature”.²⁸⁴ The Declaration highlights the threatened state of languages due to “a lack of self-government, a limited population or one that is partially or wholly dispersed, a fragile economy, an unmodified language, or a cultural model opposed to the dominant one, which make it impossible for many languages to survive and develop unless the following basic goals are taken into account.”²⁸⁵ In the political perspective, a new growth model of organising linguistic diversity needs to allow effective participation

283 Nima, 2008.

284 Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights, pmb1.

285 Ibid.

from language communities.²⁸⁶ While “in a cultural perspective, the goal of rendering the worldwide communications space compatible with the equitable participation of all peoples”, is to allow “language communities and individuals in the development process.”²⁸⁷ And “in an economic perspective, the goal of fostering sustainable development based on the participation of all and on respect for the ecological balance of societies and for equitable relationships between all languages and cultures.”²⁸⁸

Despite PRC’s stated objectives that the education to minorities in Mandarin and Han Chinese culture is an effort at empowering minorities by bringing economic and educational development to minority regions, the minorities’ see it as “clear disempowering effects, as the educational displacement causes low school enrollment and erosion of their language and culture.”²⁸⁹ Past policy experiences provide evidence that “a Chinese education system with Tibetan characteristics does not solve the problem of Tibetan education”.²⁹⁰

The PRC’s assimilationist agenda is causing irreparable damage to the development of Tibetan culture and language. This can be averted by the creation of “culturally specific support systems that provide alternatives to the standard Mainland pathways.”²⁹¹ There are examples of successful trilingual students in countries like Denmark and Sweden that PRC can emulate, by developing the necessary infrastructure and resources to teacher preparation. Without effective measures, the Tibetan language will continue to face marginalization and devaluation, worsen the grievances of Tibetan people, and cause instability.²⁹²

286 UNDLR, 1996.

287 *Ibid.*

288 *Ibid.*

289 Wangdu, 2011.

290 Castle, 2015.

291 *Ibid.*

292 *Ibid.*

The dominant discourse on minority education is national unity and stability.²⁹³ In Tibet, the government associates Tibetan Buddhism and language with local nationalism. Thus, deliberate attempts are being made to exclude Tibetan culture, including religion and language, from education. But the exclusionary policy model hasn't diminished minority nationalism, but rather increased alienation and sense of exclusion.²⁹⁴ The policy has become a major cause of instability and protests in Tibet. The 2008 and 2009 uprisings in Tibet and Uyghur areas, followed by 2010 Tibetan students' protests and numerous other protests including self-immolations have called for language freedom as one of their main demands. A culturally relevant education can bring the minorities closer to the Chinese nation and promote unity in diversity. But for that to happen, PRC "must recognize that the child's community and local milieu form the primary social context in which learning takes place, and in which knowledge acquires its meaning".²⁹⁵

The true panacea for PRC's minority educational problem is to establish a genuine bilingual education rooted in minority culture.²⁹⁶ "In the case of Tibet, Tibetan language should be promoted as the first language. Along with that, it is important to create economic and political expanse for Tibetan language to gain functional utility. This entails making Tibetan language the language of administration and commerce. Without the prospect of political and socio-economic gains and opportunities, even the choice for an education in Tibetan language would be a 'false choice'".²⁹⁷ The current version of bilingual education can at best be described as 'subtractive bilingualism' when learning a second language means losing the first.

293 Wangdu, 2011.

294 Ibid.

295 Ibid.

296 Ibid.

297 Ibid.

Evidences show that the minorities fully recognize the importance of learning Mandarin Chinese. As Julkunen (2001) “explains three main motivations for learning a second language, namely integrative, instrumental, and cognitive,” first, “minorities in the PRC possess strong instrumental motivation for learning Mandarin Chinese such as prospect for getting good job, educational opportunities, etc.”²⁹⁸ Therefore, “even in a system of a bilingual education rooted primarily in minority languages, Mandarin Chinese will naturally gain high place, almost at par with the first language due to economic and demographic reasons.” Thus, “the fears of the minority groups about being not conversant in Mandarin Chinese can be kept at bay.” In consequence, “a culturally oriented bilingual education rooted in minority language is the best option for both Beijing and the minorities”.²⁹⁹

Adequate protection and promotion of Tibetan language and culture through education is crucial for enhancing educational achievements of Tibetan students, reducing the current level of unemployment, promoting social development, and achieving national unity and stability.³⁰⁰ The cultural and literary legacies in Tibetan as one of the four oldest and original literatures of Asia, and its significance to Tibetan Buddhism, is critical for the survival of Tibetan culture and language.³⁰¹ According a 2016 media report titled, ‘Manuscript Mission: Tibetan Beats All But Three Indian Language’, Tibetan scripts now outnumber those in all other languages barring three - Sanskrit, Odia and Hindi.³⁰²

If PRC continues with the current linguistic policy, Tibetan

298 Ibid.

299 Ibid.

300 Ibid.

301 Tournadre, 2003b.

302 Kumari, C. “Manuscript Mission: Tibetan Beats All but Three Indian Languages.” *The Times of India*. Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd., 19 July 2016. Available at: <<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Manuscript-mission-Tibetan-beats-all-but-three-Indian-languages/articleshow/53284630.cms>>.

will become endangered language in less than forty years, if not to outright extinction within two generations.³⁰³The current “ecolinguistic situation” can be changed by a far-reaching reform introducing a real Tibetan-Chinese bilingualism.³⁰⁴A real Tibetan-Chinese bilingualism will “make schooling a viable investment for households, it must teach Tibetan and Chinese so that students can learn them both, and learn them well”.³⁰⁵Furthermore, “in order to permit teaching innovations to take place the language issue has to be depoliticized”.³⁰⁶

303 Tournadre, 2003a.

304 Ibid.

305 (Postiglione et al., 2006).

306 Ibid.



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