

The Influence of Trilingual Education Reform Into Cram School and Education Inequity in Kazakhstan

Ybyrayeva Korkem¹, Fedorova Natalya²

Master of Science in Educational Leadership and Inclusive Education, Nazarbayev University, a teacher of English language and Global Perspectives at Nazarbayev Intellectual School of Chemistry and Biology, Shymkent, Kazakhstan¹

Teacher of English language at Nazarbayev Intellectual School, of Chemistry and Biology, Shymkent, Kazakhstan²

Abstract: The paper reveals the influence of trilingual education reform into cram schools and education inequality in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Education quality is an issue for urban and rural school children because the resources are not distributed in accordance to equity of opportunities. In order to make justice for all children and meet their needs, the authors offer other possible solutions such as cram schools, online learning platforms, distance learning, and video lessons. The research can be considered as a policy solution to implement trilingualism reform in Kazakhstan.

Keywords: trilingualism, reform in education, education equity

INTRODUCTION

To implement 2030 Kazakhstan Strategy State Program several effective steps as well as best international practices must be taken into account. Moreover, there are both long-term and short-term solutions to be addressed for the issue. Additionally, it is important to mention that five years are left to realize the first step of the program when 95% is expected to speak Kazakh, 90% Russian, and 15% English languages. The paper offers some international practiced-based examples of multilingual society as well as best usage of cram-schooling as a powerful tool.

Multilingual education is a challenge for everyone, especially for school children. Taking into consideration that pupils are with various social, economic, as well as educational backgrounds. Trilingual education reform is making a tension in mainstream schools, pupils and their grading system, parents, in general for the society. Therefore, the Ministry of Education and Science is making attempts to improve the teaching quality and provide a better opportunity of good knowledge for pupils, national budget is being allocated partially for Education Excellence Center to re-educate and re-qualify teachers of English language and subject teachers in English. Special trainings for teachers are good examples to implement the Strategy for the further development of Kazakhstan by 2050. However, this policy solution is a long-run process. According to some case studies courses on trilingualism have been too short to comprehend. Literally within a week, some good teachers were teaching in English medium and offered own ways of working. It was a good course, but it was only a week long. (Shamatov, D. 2015)

Another alternative of shifting to a trilingual education system can be taken from the Luxemburg multilingual education policy. This is an excellent example of balance when school reform offers system-level policies namely tracking, academic selection, school choice and grade repetition. Education is compulsory (4 to 16 years old), and it is provided in different language-mediums as the aim to provide a progress for all students through the system. Pre-primary education is provided in Luxembourgish, primary education in German, and most of secondary education in French or German. Tertiary education is also delivered in German, English and French (Cai, 2011). Nevertheless, for newly arrived immigrants multiplicity of languages becomes a struggle in the start period. At age 12 tracking takes a lead, when students enter secondary school (compared to the OECD average age of 14) and is based on student academic records and reports from previous schools. School choice is limited through geographical assignment at lower secondary level, but is common at upper secondary level. With 35% of 15-year-olds reporting that they have repeated at least one year in primary or secondary school, Luxembourg has the second highest rate of grade repetition among OECD countries (OECD, 2016). Through implementing system-level policies and giving incentives for the school faculty in Luxemburg three languages (Letzeburgesch, German and French) are having a harmony usage among both citizens and immigrants. Currently, almost the vast majority of inhabitants are considered to be trilingual. Letzeburgesch is used primarily for oral communication, whereas French and German are for written languages (e.g. in courts or correspondence). The major drawback in the solution that it takes a long period of time to realize.

Cram schooling makes a direct impact on boosting learners' language skills and it provides flourishing results in a short-term policy. However, the Ministry of Education and Science in Kazakhstan is underestimating its role and utility for the society. According to other countries such as Japan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, India more than half of the pupils in mainstream schools attend cram schools annually. The shadow education system can be used as a powerful instrument to achieve a target of trilingual society. Currently, in Kazakhstan more than 130 state and private centers have been established. The private sector and entrepreneurship can be also a part of the program implementation. However, the only obstacle that may occur is social inequality and education inequity for the serious reason that not every parent is able to afford such expensive tuition fees. In this case to mitigate the problem of social and economic injustice, sharing tuition fees would be a possible solution, so called "Tuition Share Policy". By this method 50% of the cram schooling should be paid by the government, the rest by disadvantaged families. However, the stakeholders will be on charge for making decisions on socio-economic status of each family before allowing their children to attend cram-schools. This approach can be a remedy to state equality. Supplementary education classes of English, Kazakh, and Russian languages are needed for school children because the curriculum is not covering all the topics, but at the end school graduate is required to be a fluent trilingual user.

At the same time, it is quite ambitious and over-exaggerated to declare that education inequity can disappear in a country. If to be realistic, teaching quality desires to be improved even though children from rural areas are distanced from most facilities and comforts. In that case to resolve the problem, online learning tools or video lessons are good substitutes for learners living in far-distanced places. On the one hand, online learning erases the boundaries and every child from any corner of the country could have a chance to be educated by professionals, on the other hand there is no need to force teachers to move to rural districts. Additionally, the program "S diplomom v selo" can be alternatively used as a year in the village and another shifting to cities but still providing online lessons.

Another appropriate option to equalize education quality between rural and urban school children can be video lessons. By taking a good example of Russian polyglot Dmitry Petrov and overlooking his method of teaching foreign languages through well-organized video lessons and textbooks. The main idea of this policy is to provide even the basic level of English or Kazakh languages to the mass. However, it is a controversial topic whether it provides only the basics. According to Dmitry Petrov: "To learn any language two things are required: inner motivation and a good methodology" (ZhZL, 2020). So through well-planned and logically-levelled video lessons some good results can be achieved. Including to the policy, even preparations for international examinations such as IELTS, TOEFL, and KazTest can be organized as well.

Considering above mentioned alternatives it is impossible to find the best way to cope with the problem of education equity in all social levels. Supplement tutoring can be a good solution for all socio-economic levels (low income and middle income families) if the stakeholders decide to share the expenses 50/50. In order to avoid social instability and injustice video lessons are another option to think about. These measures are being proposed as they are more probable to give short-term results and they have never been practiced yet.

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