



TRILINGUAL OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATION IN KAZAKHSTAN

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 24th June, 2017
Received in revised form
08th July, 2017
Accepted 29th August, 2017
Published online 30th September, 2017

Keywords:

“preschool education in Kazakhstan”, “early childhood education in Kazakhstan”, “trilingual policy in Kazakhstan”, “language policy in Kazakhstan”, “multilingual in Kazakhstan”, “early childhood education and care”.

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Citation: Aigul Medeshova and Gulnar Bakytzhanova, 2017. “Trilingual of preschool education in Kazakhstan”, *International Journal of Development Research*, 7, (09), 15379-15384.

ABSTRACT

In the article the problem of trilingual in preschool organization is considered. Trilingual is the development of time. The teaching of trilingual is, to date, an urgent need and an opportunity for the young generation to learn about their abilities for free entry into the world educational spaces. The study of trilingual from preschool age becomes a requirement of today.

INTRODUCTION

The development of Kazakhstani education system includes adaptation of teaching in three languages: Kazakh, Russian and English starting from the preschool education. The aim of our research is to identify the current level of the trilingual education in preschool education system. In the Address, called “New decade – New economic growth – New opportunities of Kazakhstan”, in 29 January 2010, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan acknowledged that all Kazakhstani children are expected to be provided with preschool education and upbringing by the 2020 (Nazarbayev, 2010). In 28 May 2010 the State Program “Balapan” was launched by the decree of Nursultan Nazarbayev in order to provide all Kazakhstani preschool children with quality teaching and upbringing Within this State Program some of kindergartens have been already teaching children, aged 3-5, the additional two foreign languages (Kazakh or Russian and English) to their native language. The current status of implementing the trinity of languages in Kazakhstani preschool education system is only at an incipient level. Therefore, it deserves to be

researched to analyze strong and weak points in order to be improved (MoES, 2013). As a result of literature review we had an attempt to outline a few state policy documents of the Republic of Kazakhstan as primary sources, and for secondary sources we picked up some materials related to the theme of research and its question.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to show that the teaching of trilingualism can and should be started in preschool institutions, in accordance with the accepted state programs, the conclusions of scientists and practitioners

Research questions

How is trilingual education being realized in Kazakhstani preschool education?

Historical roots

In order to analyze one particular reform it is logical to start from the historical roots, because without being aware of its

historical background it may be almost impossible to get the in-depth understanding. Historical roots include the issue which the reform is intended to solve, the reason why it was launched, the main goals of the reform initiatives, and the stakeholders who will benefit or crap out from it. According to the National Report on State and Development of Educational System in Kazakhstan (Kultumova *et al.*, 2014). Early Childhood Education and Care is the first level of the whole educational system, and is very important step to take in social shaping of a child as an individual. Pre-school education is a foundation of the educational system as in this stage the framework of children's personal development is established. The preschool ages are the most suitable period for children to form the basic abilities which will contribute further development because in this period children are like sponge which can acquire everything. The results of the researches conducted by UNESCO indicate that future success of children mainly depends on the development of their personal abilities in the early years. Before the years of taking our independence from Soviet Union, Kazakhstan had the best system of preschool education in the Central Asia: approximately 70% of children, aged under 7, were covered with early childhood education and care (MoES, 2010). However, after 1991 the number of preschool education institutions started to diminish sharply. Consequently, only 10% of Kazakhstani children were enrolled to preschool organizations (UNESCO, 2005).

Taking into account the significance of the early childhood education and the situation, happening in the country concerned the preschool organizations, the President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, mentioned the importance of preschool education in his Address, "To competitive Kazakhstan, competitive economy, competitive nation", in 2004. He claimed that the competitiveness of nation is defined by its education, and said: "firstly, we need to bring back the system of kindergartens and to form preschool education" (Nazarbayev, 2004). According to K. Shamshidinova, Vice Minister of Education and Science at that time, the focus of the president on preschool education helped to solve some of the main crucial problems with preparing to the school (Predshkola *et al.*, 2004). Again in 2010 president Nazarbayev highlighted that 100% Kazakhstani children are expected to enroll to preschool education by 2020. Moreover, Strategy "Kazakhstan 2020" stated the necessity for the modernization of educational system from preschool level to higher education. (Strategic plan, 2010; Strategy, 2012). These were the initiatives for the creation of State Program Balapan for provision children with preschool education and care for 2010-2014. The State Program Balapan worked well in the country, and the number of preschool organizations, which give opportunity for development of preschool education, increased. Nursultan Nazarbayev (Nazarbayev, 2014), taking into account high demographic growth, decided to prolong State Program Balapan for provision children with preschool education and care till 2020. One of the main tasks of the State Program Balapan for 2010-2020 is to modernize preschool educational system which includes trilingual education policy. According to Strategy "Kazakhstan 2050", Kazakhstani people should be able to master Kazakh, Russian and English languages by 2025. So, trinity of languages in Kazakhstan means mastering Kazakh as a state language for the heritage language maintenance, Russian as the language of international and interethnic communication and English as the language of successful integration into the global economy.

Due to the political, economical and historical background, three ideologies of Kazakhisation, Russification and globalization, which prioritized the role of English, existed in the country. On the one hand, being multinational country, Kazakhstan was trying to maintain Russian along with other languages because the majority of population spoke Russian (Smagulova, 2008). On the hand, the country was on the track of 'kazakhisation' in order to increase the role of Kazakh language as a heritage language, to promote Kazakh language in all spheres of life (Kulzhanova, 2012). Moreover, the penetration of English into Kazakhstani society coupled with the government's ambitions of making Kazakhstan a competitive player in the regional and world economy. Therefore, the government of the country decided to adopt multilingual ideology, which contained the implementation trilingual education. There is no one specific reform dedicated to the trilingual education policy in the Kazakhstani context; however, the aims of it are mentioned in the State Program of Education Development 2011-2020, State Program of Education Development 2016-2019, Strategy "Kazakhstan – 2050", and Road Map of Trilingual Policy 2015-2020. The main goals of trilingual education, as cited in the above mentioned documents, are:

- To teach academic context in Kazakh, Russian and English;
- To provide pre- and in-service teacher training;
- To update curriculum design;
- To promote learning Kazakh language from preschool till higher education.

As for the stakeholders of trilingual education policy in preschool level, the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) of the Republic of Kazakhstan, children aged 3-5, parents, teachers, businessmen and representatives of language minorities are key stakeholders. MoES is responsible for trilingual education implementation. Children aged 3-5 and teachers are main participants, because teachers are the people who embody trilingual education policy in the classroom, and its success or failure depends on teachers with their methodology and techniques, while children aged 3-5 are the ones who will demonstrate on the results of the policy. Businessmen are also involved in the process as they set up private preschool organizations and decided whether to implement trilingual education policy or not. Representatives of languages minorities, such as Uzbek, Uigur, etc, are the ones who can lose from the trilingual education policy since their native languages are ignored (Bokayev *et al.*, 2012). In conclusion, trilingual education policy in preschool level has a number of reasons to be implemented. They are the necessity for development of preschool education, the promotion of Kazakh language, the maintenance of Russian language and introduction of English language to the Kazakhstani context from early childhood. The main stakeholders who supposed to gain from the policy are MoES, children aged 3-5 with their parents and some businessmen, whereas high possibility exists for minority language representatives to lose.

Implementation of reform

The development and improvement of early childhood education and care is pre-emptive direction of state policy of our country. The educational programs of preschool education and care are prepared in the alignment with state educational standards. On the basis of these educational programs children

aged 3-5 are taught in preschool organizations. Preschool education is quite new phenomenon in the Kazakhstani context, it is being known in Kazakhstan for about 15 years (Doshkolnoe obrazovanie *et al.*, 2015a). There are three main directions of preschool education: preparation for schooling, motivation for lifelong education, and to formation of healthy and developed personality. However, due to the long queues, in 2015, only 82% of 3-6 aged Kazakhstani children are covered with early childhood education and care (MoES, 2016). In order to solve this issue State Program Balapan is working in the country: preschool organizations are being built, taking into consideration demographic and economic situation of the regions. Moreover, the program Balapan financially supports private kindergartens, and pay for state educational order to reduce queues. So, the mission of the State Program Balapan is not only to provide country with "the quantity" by building preschool organizations, but also it offers "quality" by giving opportunity for children to get preschool education, and gives out funding for it.

According to the National Report about State and Development of Education System in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2014), the quality of pedagogic process in preschool education is defined by the content of educational programs which are controlled by State Standards of preschool education and care. Due to state educational standards, educational programs in preschools are required to have 5 sections: "Health", "Communication", "Knowing", "Society" and "Creation". Educational plans and programs of preschool education give individual development for each aged period. For instance, there are program such as "Algashky kadam" for 1-3 aged children, "Zerek bala" for 3-5 ages, "Biz mektepke baramyz" for 5-6, "Karlygash" for 4-5 aged children in mini-centers, "Kaynar" for preparing children to 12-year-schooling, "Balbobek" for shaping national identity. These programs are methodologically supplied by republican centre "Doshkolnoe detstvo". Additionally to these programs, "Development of trinity of languages in preschool organizations" was launched to organize early teaching English, Russian and Kazakh with principles of polylingual education.

The implementation process of trilingual education policy in preschool level is only taking its initial steps in Kazakhstan. "Currently, 200 pre-schools are piloting trilingual education" (Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education, 2014). In the Kazakhstani context trilingual education is distinguished as unity of Kazakh, Russian and English. The content of trilingual education in preschool level is realized through educational programs by the "Communication" section through speech development, belles-lettres, familiarization with environment, basics of literacy, writing and state, Russian and other languages. In preschool organizations modern methods of teaching trinity of languages allow children to enlarge their active and passive vocabulary, and they learn the names of things and environment in 3 three languages. These teaching methods should differ from teaching methods in primary and secondary schools foreign languages, as the age particularities should be taken into consideration (Boranbayeva, 2015). These methods are embodied by the educational programs which were mentioned above. For instance, the program "Zerek bala" contains the section "Communication", which includes subsection "Development of speech", "Literature", and "Learning of state language". By the subsection "Development of speech" children learn phonological aspects such as pronouncing words correctly

using tongue twisters, differentiating vowels and consonants, and intonation; vocabulary where they learn part of speech as verb, noun, adjectives, their antonyms; grammar where children are taught gender, singular and plural forms, cases, the prepositions 'in, on, under, above'. In the subsection "Literature" preschool children learn written and oral folklore, and they are supposed to understand that surrounding people are different and interesting and to learn to create friendly environment. The aim of the subsection "Learning state language" is to prepare children for learning state language and to create tendency for talking with adults. Children are to understand the names of toys, animals, and be able to do task like "give, bring and take" in Kazakh, also they learn to understand the question "what is it?" and to answer to this question. Moreover, preschool children learn phonological aspects and simple grammatical structure, and enlarge vocabulary.

Furthermore, in the program "Zerek bala" trilingual education is also distributed by outclass activities like holidays and entertainments. For instance, the holiday "The day of languages of Kazakhstani nation" is celebrated in 3 languages (Kalashnikova *et al.*, 2009). Currently the program "Development of trinity of languages in preschool organizations" is working in Kazakhstan. In the framework of this program, the classrooms of kindergartens are equipped with audio and didactic materials in three languages; teachers use TV lessons and introduce new material in form of dialogs with fairy tale heroes. There are 3 types of preschool organizations where children can learn English: English kindergartens, bilingual kindergartens and kindergartens with English disciple. In the English kindergartens children are taught by native speakers, and it may cause some problems with the maintenance of native language. In bilingual kindergartens children are taught by principle 50/50: 50% in Russian or Kazakh, and 50% in English with native speakers. In kindergartens with English disciple there are some hours dedicated for learning English.

In public kindergartens learning of English is mainly elective discipline whereas in private kindergartens try to make English lessons intensive, but not arduous at the same time (Detskiy sad s angliyskim uklonom, 2015b). Preschool children learn the basics of spoken speech, phrases, and alphabet. In order not to make lessons tense, lessons are organized in the form of plays instead of traditional lessons in the classroom. 3-5 aged children want to know and try everything at once, but their brain becomes tired very quickly and is not ready to gain much information. So the time of lessons in preschool organizations should not overcome 30 minutes without break. Teachers of preschool organizations mainly use audio and visual methods of teaching languages. Songs, kids video programs, thematic pictures, and toys assist teachers in teaching process. Children exercise pronunciation with fairytales, rhymes and tongue twisters, and pictures, toys and other didactic materials help to enlarge vocabulary. As vivid example of implementing trilingual education in preschool level, private kindergarten in Almaty "Mary Poppins" can be accepted. In this kindergarten children learn Kazakh, Russian and English by effective everyday practice. This approach coincides with the requirements of "Development of trinity of languages in preschool organizations". Languages can be taught both in groups and individually (Mladshaya gruppa, 2016). Language lessons are designed with alignment with programs "Algashky kadam" in junior groups, "Zerek bala" in middle groups.

Teachers of the kindergarten undergo qualification training in London every year, and it is also possible for children to travel to London with group (Stranichka prepodavatelya angliyskogo yazyka, 2016).

Method

Analysis of any reform initiatives includes the outcomes of the reform along with its historical roots and implementation. In this part I will have an attempt to cover the intended and unintended outcomes of the State Program Balapan for 2010-2020 and the implementation trilingual education in preschool level. Moreover, the outcomes of trilingual education policy in early childhood in Hong Kong will be analyzed to make the reform successfully feasible by not to repeat unintended outcomes. Regarding the State program Balapan for 2010-2020, the number of preschool organization, including nurseries, kindergartens and mini-centres, is increasing: in Kazakhstan there were 6446 preschool organization in 2010, and by 2015 the number raised to 8834 (MoES, 2016). There are 7 stages of program Balapan; currently we are in the fifth stage (2014-2016), and the program intended to cover 80% of 3-5 aged children with preschool education in this stage. However, the statistics provided by MoES (MoES, 2016) show that the program reached a bit higher results than it was expected: 82% of 3-5 aged children have opportunity to attend preschool organizations. These indicators show that the program works well and has gone beyond the intended outcomes. Unfortunately, as trilingual education policy in preschool education is only emerging in the country there is a lack of information about its outcomes. The expected outcomes of trilingual education in preschool organizations are as follows (Metody i priemy razvitiya triedinstva yazykov, 2016):

- Development of children's communicative functions, including the ability of talking;
- Development of speech abilities (phonetics, abilities to imitation, etc) and psychological functions (speech thinking);
- Development of speech mechanism (acquisition of English sounds, which do not exist in L1, help on developing and saving pliability of children's speech mechanism) and speech of preschool children;
- Development of thinking because in the process of learning English children consciously or unconsciously analyze and compare it with native language, so it cause continual thinking process;
- Enrichment of vocabulary;
- Development of psychological processes such as attention and memory putting on the learning foreign languages.

However, it is important to admit that intended outcomes can be reached only by properly organized teaching process. Another positive outcome of the reform initiative is the development of Kazakh language revitalization. According to the educational programs in preschool level (eg, "Algashky kadam", "Zerek bala", "Biz mektepke baramyz", etc) some subsections are dedicated for learning Kazakh language. It has positive effects on Kazakh language maintenance and revitalization; furthermore, it raises the prestige of Kazakh language as a state language. Children start acquire Kazakh in the critical period when their brain is accept knowledge easily. A research conducted by P.Lee about implementation of trilingual education, teaching in Cantonese, English and

Putonghua, in early years (3+) acknowledges that some factors can influence the outcomes of the implementation: government funding, human resources, and parents' involvement. Firstly, English and Putonghua were planned to be taught for the sake of economical and social benefits in Hong Kong, and it coincided with "Guide to Pre-primary Education"; however, government did not give out funding for trilingual education implementation, and there is no clear instructions of what language and how it should be taught (Lee, 2015). In the case of Kazakhstan, we know that Kazakh should be taught as a state language, Russian as international, and English as successful integration into world arena, and public kindergartens are financially supported by the government. Secondly, in Hong Kong teachers were trained in three target languages, and they sent to undergo methodological training, so children benefited from their teachers' professional development. In Kazakhstan, there is no information about teachers training in preschool level for trilingual education, so it is assumed that it should be paid attention and developed. Thirdly, in Hong Kong parents, one of the key stakeholders, wanted their children learn mor Chinese writing and English phonics, writing and reading, and kindergartens had to follow parents' asking because it influenced children enrollment (Lee, 2015). While in Kazakhstan, the results of survey among 1000 Kazakhstani parents 66% vote for implementation trilingual education, and 81% of them admitted they want their children know specifically English (Irgaliyev, 2016). At last but not least, minority languages are likely to be marginalized in the Kazakhstani context of trilingual education in preschool organizations: no attention paid for these languages. Therefore, preschool children representatives of minority languages may possible be overloaded. In conclusion, there is lack of studies investigating the outcomes of the reform initiatives. We know only expected outcomes. For this reason, the results of empirical research in Hong Kong were compared with our content in terms of financing, teacher training and parent involvement. Also, the impact of preschool trilingual education on minority languages was assumed.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

After conducting the research on how trilingual education is being implemented in Kazakhstani preschool education, I have understood that it is on the initial emerging level. In this part, I am going to introduce the practical experience of my parents and relatives with the reform. In my opinion, the reform initiative is working successfully and achieving its intended outcomes, however, there are still some challenges, including absence of guidance, teacher training, discrepancy between rural and urban area, and finance, which need proper planning. Firstly, talking to my parents, who were stakeholders when my brother went to kindergarten, I understand that their attitudes to trilingual education are very positive. They say that it was extremely effective to teach three languages at the age of 3-5 when children can acquire languages easily and quickly. Especially, the foundation of English was built in the kindergarten: my brother still remember the vocabulary which he learned 3-4 years ago in the public kindergarten. At the same time, Kazakh and Russian were not ignored, both in the junior and medium group children learned by heart tongue twisters, watched cartoon and played different games, that is why the learning process was not supposed to be boring. However, after entering primary school he did not have opportunity for developing language skills at school. So, I suggest that the implementation of trilingual education policy

should go smoothly at each level of education from preschool till higher education. In other case, we cannot win only implementing it in preschool education. Secondly, I want to highlight that there is no one specific reform dedicated for implementation of trilingual education in preschool level, which guides teachers, informs parents, and states the clear goals and tasks. Having launched the program “Development of trinity of languages in preschool organizations”, there is still no unified program for teaching English in preschool organizations (Metody i priemy razvitiya triedinstva yazykov, 2016). Without knowing where they are aiming and what are their clear tasks teachers, who are the key stakeholders to implement teaching in three languages in the preschool organizations, cannot make it workable. Because of this challenge, we do not know whether the intended outcomes are achieved or not, so it also cannot be assessed. Thirdly, in order to succeed in the implementation of trilingual education teachers should undergo training programs because without being aware of the certain methods and techniques of teaching they possibly may end up with failure of policy. Particularly, teachers should know psychological and physical characteristics of preschool children, and they should be able to approach each student individually. For example, in the kindergarten “Mary Poppins”, mentioned above, teacher of English undergo training for qualification every year in London, as a result the children show good results.

Fourthly, we should consider the discrepancy in language proficiency between urban and rural areas. As W. Fierman (2006) and J.Smagulova claim the level mastering Kazakh and Russian is not equal in rural and urban areas: in urban areas Kazakhstani people tend to be more proficient in Russian, and in rural in Kazakh. So, I assume that adding English to preschool education will lead to sharpening of the discrepancy. In cities preschool children have more chances to learn languages while in rural areas some children even do not attend any preschool organization. This discrepancy which starts from preschool level will increase in the next levels of education. Fifthly, all these mentioned challenges can be solved, however, it needs financing. The implementation of trilingual education not only in preschool education but also at others levels of education requires the certain amount of money. So, before starting the implementation process the government should think of financing and plan carefully each detail of embodying the reform.

Implications and Recommendations

To sum up, I would like to say that it is too early to anticipate for the results of the trilingual education policy at preschool level. It is only emerging, and supposed to be on the right track. In order to make it successful we should first understand what trilingual education is, then plan thoroughly financing and implementation. Moreover, I suggest conducting more empirical researches to know the detailed outcomes of the implementation process: to conduct interview, to get the perceptions of all stakeholders, to observe teaching process in preschool organizations. From conducting this research on trilingual education in preschool organizations, one can conclude it is being implemented successfully but still need more support and time to get the intended outcomes. To restore the trilingual on our part, electronic textbooks on mathematics, a national outlook in three languages, have been developed. Using electronic teaching aids in preschool, the kid

learns words in three languages and forms the ability to apply computer technology.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author

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