



Bilingual Curriculum Construction and Implementation of Preschool Education in Tibetan Areas

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Abstract

Preschool bilingual curriculum development is a hot issue of preschool education in ethnic areas of China. This study used in-depth interviews and observations, were studied in the bilingual education in 23 kindergarten Tibetan area. The purpose of the study is to understand the current status of preschool bilingual education curriculum development in Tibet area, so as to analyze the construction and implementation of preschool bilingual education curriculum. The study found, preschool bilingual curriculum construction in Tibetan areas has made remarkable achievements, such as the Tibetan cultural characteristics of thematic curriculums, the form of the game teaching methods, immersion language communication modes, and visual forms of parent participation in kindergarten education. The survey also found the problems of preschool bilingual curriculum construction and implementation, such as the content of the curriculum does not reflect the characteristics of Tibetan area, teaching methods are unsuitable for children's learning requirements. The researchers believe that, preschool bilingual education curriculum construction must correctly understand the special nature of bilingual education. The relationship between Tibetan culture inheritance and the development of education is coordinated, so that the quality of preschool education will be improved.

Key words: Preschool education; Bilingual education; Tibetan culture; Bilingual curriculum

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Since 2010, the preschool education in Tibetan areas have received a lot of attention in the national education policy. The government issued special education policy and provided a large number of special funds for the development of preschool education. In 2011, the government of Qinghai Province implemented the special development of preschool education support programs in the Tibetan inhabited regions. Preschool education is free in these areas. The children were given education and living allowance of 3700 yuan per year (education subsidy is 2200 yuan, living subsidy is 1500) (Wang, 2011). In 2012, K1 to K3 (there are 3 grades in Chinese kindergarten system) were made free in Tibet and it was the earliest area in China to have free preschool education. In 2014, fewer children in the Tibet area went to enter kindergarten and education subsidies were again raised. After the adjustment, the allowance of children in the Second District, Third District, Fourth District and border area was 2800 yuan (RMB), 2900 yuan (RMB) and 3000 yuan (RMB). (*The announcement of the people's Government of Tibet Autonomous Region*, 2014) Unilingual education mode leads to the imbalanced development of bilingual abilities of children, which is not in line with psychological characteristics of children and rule of bilingual education (Wan & Liu, 2012). In fact, the Tibetan children are still in the weak position in the education development.

1. RESEARCH REVIEW

The key factor of Tibet preschool education fairness is the development of bilingual education (Yan & Yao, 2010).

Since 2010, preschool bilingual education in Tibetan areas developed rapidly. The research related to bilingual education was first published in 2009, and the number of the research literature is increasing year by year.

Teachers and parents need time to accept the establishment of “the Tibetan language classes”, in the Tibetan population dispersion region. Some problems need to be solved: teachers do not speak the Tibetan language, lack of teaching resources, inadequate number of teachers; teachers are not trained in effective methods. Moreover, the teaching level of teachers should be improved, a good language learning environment should be created (Chen, 2009; Ba Sang, 2011). In Tibetan pastoral area, problem of insufficient number of teachers and the lack of educational resources need to be solved (Liu, 2012). Materials from real life should be used in bilingual curriculum in kindergarten. Bilingual kindergarten curriculum development objective is not clear, so that the children do not get actual benefits (Cai & Gadan, 2009). However, bilingual education policies are incomprehensively understood and misconducted by some teachers and in the same time, research into bilingual education fails to catch up with practices of bilingual education, which hinder the improvement of bilingual education quality (Sun & Wang, 2013).

The researchers believe that, the following suggestions can improve the quality of preschool bilingual education in Tibetan areas. Firstly, bilingual education goal should be consistent with the children’s age characteristics, curriculum content selection from the daily life experiences, the suitability of the curriculum resources construction. Secondly, the government should strengthen the planning and management of preschool bilingual education, the government should increase the investment for Preschool Bilingual Education and establish the policy guarantee mechanism of Preschool Bilingual Education (Yang & Jiang, 2014). Third, the government should expand the educational resources, increasing the number of preschool bilingual teachers, and improve the quality of bilingual teacher training. Preschool bilingual education should be changed to modern knowledge, but should also use traditional Tibetan culture organic integration (Xing & Li, 2013; Yao, 2014; Shao, 2014). Fourth, the kindergarten should pay attention to the creation of bilingual teaching environment and constructs the model of bilingual education in various forms (Wang & Sun, 2014).

The key to implement preschool bilingual teaching is to make the children love the Tibetan culture and language, keep the national characteristic, and develop children’s sense of identification with the national culture.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses interview method and observation method, mainly aims at understanding the reality of preschool bilingual education of Tibetan area, analyzes the

positive and negative development of preschool bilingual education experience. Research on the interviews of the participants is the principal of the kindergarten, teachers, and parents, they come from 23 kindergartens (including 22 public kindergartens and 1 private kindergarten), and 8 preschool education managements. The basic situation of 23 kindergartens in Tibetan areas is shown in Table 1.

Table 1
The Basic Situation of 23 Kindergarten

Location			Scale		
County	Township	Pastoral/ rural	Large	medium	small
9	5	9	5	8	10

Note: Large scale refers to the number of children more than 200, more than 9 of the class. Medium size refers to the number of children between 100-200, the class number is 6-9. Small size refers to the number of children within 100, the class number is less than 6.

The study collected a total of 53 copies of the interview records, that come from 23 kindergarten the principal or vice principal, 12 preschool teachers, 12 parents of children for the interview in 12 copies, and 8 preschool education management. The study observed and recorded 12 cases of bilingual education.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE SUCCESSFUL EXPERIENCE OF BILINGUAL CURRICULUM OF PRESCHOOL IN TIBETAN AREAS

The development of bilingual education of Tibetan area is in the initial stage, so the system of curriculum system has not been established. Most of the kindergarten has not formed a systematic, suitable environment for the development of children. However, there is also a part of the kindergarten to explore some effective methods in practice, those practices have an important role to promote the upgrading of the quality of bilingual courses.

3.1 Curriculum Content Design Relies on Excellent Traditional Tibetan Culture

Y kindergarten is located in Western Qinghai province T County. Development of kindergarten curriculum has characteristics of Tibetan culture, such as Tibetan area geography, production and life, folk customs, history and culture, folk art, language and literature. National unity of content, the curriculum units such as, “beautiful pasture”, “shepherd’s life”, that reflects the geographical and production characteristics of Tibetan area. “The Tibetan name”, “Tibetan prayer flags”, “Aka Don Ba”, “The secret of Tibetan text”, that embodies the characteristics of Tibetan culture. “Making the milking pail”, “black yak tent”, “The sheep love little lamb”, that reflects the characteristics of Tibetan production tools. The teaching method of bilingual course for cosplay, self-experience. The course content is close to the lives of children education; the curriculum implementation method

accords with the characteristics of children's learning, the content and teaching methods of the course are very fond of children. According to the results of the survey, in 2014, the children graduated from Y kindergarten, their ability to use two languages are the same which illustrate the effectiveness achieved some bilingual curriculum. As the director said: "In Y kindergarten, bilingual children's ability of synchronous development. And they will be able to quickly adapt to primary school learning requirements. Moreover, these children enter primary school often served as class leader role, such as, monitor, Chinese curriculum representative." (12/26/ 2014, director interviews records)

3.2 Immersion Language Communication Mode

G County is located in the southern area of Qinghai province. G County kindergarten explores immerse characteristics of teachers and children's language interaction model. That is in 1, 3, 5 such odd date, communication language can only use the Tibetan language; in the 2, 4, 6 such even date, communication language to use Chinese, and requests the teacher to reduce the use of the Tibetan language translation and interpretation of the situation of Chinese content. At the same time, the teacher also encourages children to obey the rules between language, ensure children infiltration single language environment in which one day, only to accept a Tibetan or Chinese language stimulation. The practice proved that, this kind of language communication is more effective than the original Tibetan and Chinese mixed use of language in an interactive way, more conducive to the development and expression ability of two kinds of children's understanding of language.

3.3 Visual Form of Parent Participation in Kindergarten Education

In 2013, the gross kindergarten enrollment rate from K1 to K3 reached 85% in T county. The findings from the interviews, the degree of satisfaction with the parents of T County of bilingual education is very high, which originates from the T implementation and the implementation of the county "to let the parents saw the child interaction in life and learning" kindergarten home system. Every day, children's food and handicrafts have been placed in the window display to parents. Parents are invited to the kindergarten to participate in children's games. In this way, parents can directly recognize the children in the kindergarten activities, and gradually realize the bilingual curriculum plays an important role in children's language ability and academic development. So parents will support the children learning two languages, and parents and kindergarten cooperation to develop bilingual curriculum suitable for Tibetan children. The quality of preschool bilingual education has been improved. This conclusion is that the analysis of parent interviews, as the following example, "*Every day I can see the children to eat food, participate in*

various activities, etc.. I quite agree with the practice of kindergarten, which made me feel at ease for the education of my children."

"My children learning good health behaviors in the kindergarten. Every day he brushing your teeth, washing face, washing hands before eating, love the clean and health, it is beneficial to the growth for child."

"In the kindergarten, Chinese ability has been improved very quickly, my child four years old, have been able to use Chinese when he playing with friends .At the same time, his Tibetan language ability was not affected, he learned a lot of Tibetan folk story." (12/ 26/2014, Y kindergarten parent interviews records)

4. ANALYSIS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PROBLEMS OF BILINGUAL CURRICULUM OF PRESCHOOL IN TIBETAN AREAS

The 23 kindergartens in this study, 2 kindergartens in Naqu region of Tibet, the rest of the distribution of the six Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai province. Compared with the mainland, the seven areas in the natural geography, language and culture, society and economy are quite different, however there are 2/3 kindergarten curriculum system almost completely copy the kindergarten curriculum in the mainland.

4.1 Bilingual Curriculum Content Is Not Suitable for Tibetan Children's Life Experience

The survey found that bilingual curriculum implementation is based on the textbook, and these courses in the 90% is the basis for the preparation of the characteristics of the mainland. These materials include: Yanbian University Press published "The kindergarten curriculum development of multiple ability;" in 2010, Wuhan Press published "The children's multiple functions of interactive course;" in 2010, the Yangtze River Press published "The Enlightenment kindergarten education reading book;" in 2011, Wenxin Press published "The multiple intelligence to explore the interactive game curriculum" in 2013, and so on. The content of this bilingual curriculum is mainly derived from the main culture. Geographical and ecological characteristics of Tibetan area, nomadic production, traditional folk stories, traditional game in Tibetan, and the Thangka art, that was rarely included in kindergarten curriculum content. Because the content of bilingual curriculum and children's real life experience is not consistent, children's understanding of course content is faced with many difficulties, so they don't like bilingual teaching. This is an important reason why parents do not approve of their children entering kindergarten accept preschool bilingual education.

4.2 “City of the Bilingual Curriculum Standard” for the Orientation of Development in Agricultural and Pastoral Areas

The 23 bilingual kindergartens belong to seven different administrative areas, and there are big differences in language, customs and habits. For example, as for Tibetan dialect area delimits, Naqu area in Tibetan and Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture belongs to the Tibetan dialect, while the rest belong to the Amdo Tibetan dialect. As for cultural system distinction, these seven areas belong to agricultural culture system and pastoral culture system, but only on the Tibetan Bilingual Curriculum teaching language are different. The kindergarten curriculum content, curriculum topics highly similar in city, rural and pastoral area, with similar to the mainland in kindergarten curriculum. We believe that the process of the development of preschool bilingual education in Tibetan areas in the kindergarten, the setting of curriculum system completely copy the city areas of the curriculum, this will make the traditional Tibetan culture and culture of human target is gradually weakened; it may have negative effects on the development of cultural diversity.

4.3 The Quality of Tibetan Curriculum Needs to Be Improved

The survey found, Tibetan language curriculum in the 23 kindergarten content mainly from the translation of Chinese curriculum content, there is a huge gap between course content and pastoral children’s real life experience. In the bilingual kindergarten, children’s ability and cultural sense ability similar to the mainland children, and without significant difference. Therefore, the enthusiasm of parents to send children to kindergarten to learn in this way is still low, some children don’t adapt to kindergarten learning. Some parents believe that children under six years old are more suitable to live in the family. In the kindergarten environment, children cannot learn useful knowledge and experience (12/2/2014, parent interviews records).

4.4 Education Methods Which Are Not in Accordance With the Learning Characteristics of Children

Through the analysis of classroom observation, the bilingual curriculum implementation of Tibetan area does not meet the learning characteristics of preschool children. First, learning by rote is encouraged in Kindergarten. The game method, observation method and experience of school learning method, which is suitable for children to learn is not commonly used. Secondly, the interaction between teachers and children in Kindergarten Collective Teaching Activities in the teachers’ instruction or preserving the authority of the speech and behavior to occupy the absolute dominant. Third, the performance of the teacher evaluation based on the main children’s cognition of language, such as whether a child can count from 1 to 20, and for the children’s language ability development, social development and did not give enough attention.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Discussion

Language has been the impact of his growth, thoughts, and feelings on any person from birth. In the development of the human, thought and language are in inseparable relationship. An important aspect of human language is the language that a nation of people united together (Needleman, 2004). Preschool bilingual education in Tibetan areas which operation in two languages and two cultures are the system will be inevitably affected by many factors and constraints, and show the characteristics of comprehensive and complexity. Limitations of the study are relatively less use of the method of data analysis. A comprehensive analysis of the characteristics of complexity of bilingual teaching in Tibetan areas needs to improve.

Preschool bilingual education as a system engineering, the balanced development of education in preschool and Tibetan culture inheritance, subjectivity and value orientation of education of Tibetan children education is the starting point and destination. Tibetan culture is a sign of Tibetan children’s identity and cultural life; every member of the Tibetan language is inseparable. It carries the culture itself is a children’s life style. The Tibetan language is rooted in the particular cultural soil of the Tibetan Plateau, in the Tibetan areas of preschool bilingual development process, only the curriculum and children’s social and cultural background of consistent, cultural heritage is possible, the development of bilingual education for children to have meaning. There are many similar problems in the rural area education of preschool bilingual education of Tibetan area, especially the rural area cultural continuity problems with consistency. In the present climate, mainstream culture also has significant diversity, such as urban and rural cultural differences, regional cultural differences that are reflected the cultural diversity. Mainstream culture also has significant diversity, such as urban and rural cultural differences. Therefore, the researchers analyzed problems of preschool bilingual curriculum Tibetan areas should be integrated to its particularity and universality, especially in dealing with the relationship between cultural factors and educational problems.

CONCLUSION

Children in Tibetan area should be guaranteed a high-quality and free preschool education. The researchers believe that, for the purposes of preschool bilingual education curriculum development, the most important problem is to coordinate and handle the relationship between the two languages and cultures. The bilingual education of the Tibetan area should be based on the

development of preschool children's education needs as the basis. The government, researchers, teachers and parents should work together jointly to build a preschool language education and cultural fusion of Tibetan Chinese bilingual curriculum system. Only in this way bilingual curriculum will meet the need of development of Tibetan children education, parent education cognition will get the correct guidance, and gradually form a rational expectation of children's education so that the two culture systems will be in harmonious, synchronous development.

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