

**PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING TRILINGUAL
EDUCATION POLICY IN MAINSTREAM HIGH SCHOOLS OF
KAZAKHSTAN**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Trilingual Education Policy in Kazakhstan is considered one of the important policies in educational system and it is being implemented in all high schools across the country. However, the outcome and success of the policy has varied across the country. The implementation process has first been implemented at Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS) and later has been transferred to mainstream schools. However, this posed challenges to school administration and teachers in mainstream schools, because the policy lacks clear regulations and guidelines for the implementation. Since teachers are the main agents in the implementation process, the current study aimed to present what challenges and obstacles teachers face during the process. The study used interviews in order to better understand and identify the needs of teachers. In the future, this research contributes to understand how trilingual policy is being implemented across secondary schools of Kazakhstan. In addition to these, overall it can be helpful to the fields of educational policy, language policy, multilingualism in Kazakhstan and the Central Asia.

INTRODUCTION

Kazakhstan is a multi-ethnic country, in which there are about 130 various ethnic groups, predominantly Kazakhs, Russians, Uzbeks, Uyghurs and others. (Yeskeldiyeva & Tazhibayeva, 2015). During the Soviet Union, Russian language was promoted as one of the global languages for all these ethnic groups and Russian speakers were privileged to get a prestigious job, whereas the status of Kazakh was considerably devalued. As Fierman (1998) notes, because of the Russification policy, teaching Kazakh was restricted in Russian schools, education in Kazakh was decreased and about seven hundred Kazakh secondary schools were completely removed. The language of urban Kazakhs was assimilated; Russian was dominant language mostly in urban areas, and as there was a need for Kazakhs to get education and job, they started to learn and speak in Russian language.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, creating a new unified language policy was quite challenging because of the impact of complicated social, political, historical and cultural context of Kazakhstan. The first president of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev stated in his “New Kazakhstan in New World” speech that: “Kazakhstan should be taken as a highly educated country, whose population uses three languages. They are as follows: Kazakh as a state language, Russian as the language of international communication, and English as the language of successful integration into the global economy.” (Kubieva et al., 2021) Consequently, in 2007, the government announced adoption of a new policy, “Trinity of languages”, which aimed to develop multilingualism in Kazakhstan. European Commission (2005) defines multilingualism as a capability of effectively communicating in more than one language by either citizens or group of people in a country. In case of Kazakhstan, multilingualism refers to trilingualism, in which majority of the population would be able to speak in three languages, Kazakh, Russian and English, Kazakh being the main language (Amrenov & Samsakova 2017; Pavlenko 2008a).

Further, in 2015 the Ministry of Education and Culture introduced “the Strategy of Multilingual Education in Kazakhstan”. The program targets to facilitate joint trilingual education throughout the whole education system, relying on international teaching standards and practices in all contexts of education. This implies that high schools are expected to carry out the progression towards teaching natural science courses in English,

History of Kazakhstan and Geography courses in Kazakh and World History in Russian (Moldagazinova, 2019). Moreover, multilingualism is supported by the National Program for the Development of Education and experimental sites for multilingual education have been established in some universities and secondary schools of Kazakhstan (Yeskeldiyeva & Tazhibayeva 2014).

In support of Trilingual Policy, the State Program of Education Development in Kazakhstan aimed to increase the number of trilingual schools and Nazarbayev Intellectuals Schools (NIS), which were said to be an exemplary model for multilingual education. In NIS, teachers are expected to use all three languages in balance, and if they are not proficient, then they are expected to learn these languages. Apart from that, teachers have access to training programs where the schools welcome cross-curricular and cross-linguistic integration (AEO NIS, 2013b, as cited in Bakytzhanova 2018). As Bakytzhanova (2018) further statet, NIS schools are expected to share their experiences of trilingual education with mainstream schools of Kazakhstan.

In 2016, ex-minister of Education and Science, Erlan Sagadiyev, introduced and thoroughly described the national plan of implementing trilingual education policy in Kazakhstan. This proposal was officially accepted by ex-President Nursultan Nazarbayev. According to this strategy, the number of English language classes in first grades should be increased from 2016. From the next academic year, students from fifth to seventh grade should start to learn the vocabulary of science classes in English. From 2018-2019 academic year, all schools need to learn World History in Russian and History of Kazakhstan in Kazakh languages. From 2019-2020 academic year, secondary school teachers and students need to practice English in different activities outside of the regular classes. Finally, the mainstream schools of Kazakhstan should completely be transferred to trilingual education from 2021-2022 academic year. This means that all natural science classes have to be taught in English language (Ministry of Education and Science, 2016).

The afore-described proposal shows that Kazakhstani secondary schools are expected to be transferred to trilingual education within five years. This fast track implementation of trilingual education policy would create problems and challenges in teaching and delivering the quality content of the subject classes. Despite of many attempts to implement the Trilingual Education Policy in mainstream high schools of Kazakhstan, it

still does not show a clear success. Especially, it is very sophisticated for teachers to educate students on trilingual system and consequently brings the following problems for teachers. First of all, teachers' voice and needs are frequently left unheard in policy design and decision-making processes. Secondly, there are lack of clear and explicit regulations or guidelines for implementing the policy in schools. Thirdly, there are textbook translation issues, lack of professional teachers in implementing Trilingual Education.

Considering these problems, the study aims to explore practices and experiences of secondary school teachers in Kazakhstan. Mainly, the study will provide an overview of current implementation of Trilingual Policy in mainstream high schools of Almaty city and identify what challenges teachers are facing. Since the teachers are the main agents in implementing the policy, this study focuses on specific challenges faced by teachers. Moreover, the study focuses only on the experiences of natural science teachers, because the usage and application of English language (unlike Kazakh and Russian), is very challenging for both teachers and students. In this regard, the study takes into account the role of linguistic ideologies, interpretation of trilingual policy, teachers' practices and overall how they address challenges in order to meet and sustain the expectations of unified trilingual policy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Across the world, there has been a growing interest in multilingual education, and having access to different forms of multilingual education has been considered as necessary for all learners. There are countries that have implemented trilingual education policy in schools, with English being one of the medium of instruction. There can be various reasons that can be attributed to the use of multiple languages in education. According to Cenoz and Genesee (1998), one of the motives for multilingual educational policies can be a reflection of countries' desires to develop national identity through competence in a common language (p.4). As Cenoz and Genesee (1998) further stated, innovative language education programs are implemented as a means of promoting proficiency in international languages of wider communication as well as proficiency in national and regional languages (p.4). However, those languages-based education policies and practices are diverse and complex. As an example, the National Minimum Curriculum that is issued by the Ministry of Education in Malta emphasized the teaching of two official languages as well as other foreign languages (Sciriha, 2001, p. 24). In other words, the education curriculum ensures that state and non-state schools given opportunity to teach three languages. Similarly, multilingualism policy is also widespread among other European countries as well. For example, the European Union educational language policy made adjustments and language policy recommendations such as "mother tongue plus 2" objective: Sweden and Switzerland have adopted that recommendation of the EU (Lundberg, 2018, p. 48).

According to Aubakirova et. al. (2019), there are about 178 countries across the world trying to implement multilingual education policy (p.27). These countries can be exemplified in two main groups, which are strong and weak. Only five out of these countries (The Netherlands, Luxemburg, Switzerland, Finland, and the Basque country in Spain) have best experiences in successful implementation of the policy. It is important to note that these countries have a long experience in multilingual education, which varies from thirty to forty years. Thus, it is very crucial to study the bi/trilingual developments in these countries, since they are important and noteworthy examples of the implementation of above-mentioned "mother tongue plus 2" objectives. Irsaliyev et al. (2017) defines the success of these countries on timely organization of language learning in school classes and high education expenditures (p.151). In addition to this, future teachers, as part of the curriculum are required to take blocks on multilingual education.

The introduction of the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) system with the participation of higher education, where they study fifty percent of subjects in English in the theories and practices of multilingual education is a complementary principle aimed at solving the problem. As a consequence, majority of the students are able to speak four languages, including French, Finnish, German, Swedish and English after graduating from high schools. Moreover, teachers teach from forty to seventy percent of the subject matter in English language for five years.

On the other hand, if we consider the examples of weak groups implementing this policy, Shamim (2008) studied the role of English, which was implemented as a third language in Pakistan (p.236). He examined issues and challenges in policy and practice of English language education, in which sciences and math are taught in English. In detail, the author has identified the issues of trilingual education policy, in which there was a lack of trained teachers who were proficient in the English language and lack of shared implementation plan with strategies for acquisition of English (pp. 244-245). However, the study has some limitations that need to be considered when making interpretations. There was a lack of information about how the trilingual policy was implemented across the country, whether certain initiatives or training programs were taken in order to educate teachers, and to what extent the school curriculum was changed. Thus, in order to make thorough interpretations and inferences about the challenges of implementing the trilingual educational policy, further studies are needed with more explicit information about the implementation process of the policy.

The previous claims made by Shamim (2008), can be analyzed with the case of trilingual education policy in non-specialized Kazakh high schools of Kazakhstan. While English is not considered a colonial language for Kazakhstan, it is implemented as a language that is part of trilingualism in addition to Kazakh and Russian. Another comparable case of multilingual education is in Nigeria that examines the challenges encountered by teachers in the implementation process comes from Olagbaju (2014, pp. 66-73); his study provides an overview of the National Policy on Education. The policy stated that the medium of instruction during pre-primary school should be the mother tongue; at primary school, the medium of instruction should be a language of the immediate environment; and after fourth-year, the medium of instruction should be English (p. 66). The policy intended to expose children to at least three languages, so a recipient of such system of education will be multilingual. The study have identified several factors responsible for the unsuccessful

implementation of the policy, such as non-sponsorship of practicing teachers for relevant courses, conferences and seminars on languages and lack of materials to sustain teaching (only major languages Hausa, Igbo have enough materials) (p.69). Apart from these, as Olagbaju (2014), asserted, the scarcity of qualified language teachers in some indigenous/minority languages has been another impediment to the successful implementation of the multilingual policy (p. 69). In other words, in both cases, the problems seem to be associated with the lack of qualified teachers and lack of resources, in which classes are conducted mostly in native languages. This means that the objectives of multilingual/trilingual policy are not being accomplished.

Hogan-Brun and Melnyk (2012) highlighted that all Central Asian countries (except Turkmenistan) support multilingualism in educational domains (p. 616). That is, after the collapse of Soviet-Union in 1991, each republic balanced its aims regarding language use in education spheres: raising status of titular language, developing proficiency in Russian and global language English (Bahry, 2016, pp. 11-25). In other words, bi-/multilingual education is highly recognized among Central Asian countries. However, there is a scarcity of literature on the practices, success and challenges of trilingual education in these countries. In case of Kazakhstan, it is implementing different education reforms as a means of modernizing the education system, and in doing so, has embedded a trilingual policy into the educational programs.

Prilipko (2017), in her study defined the practices and challenges of implementing trilingual education policy from the university administrators' and managers' perspective in Kazakhstan (pp. 45-47). The study revealed that the challenges of implementing trilingual education policy comes from the top-down perspective, which is exclusive to Kazakhstani system of education. Majority of the managers and administrators believed that they are not ready to implement the policy because of the challenges such as shortage of teaching resources and qualified teachers to teach in English. Moreover, they admitted that low-proficiency of English among students and staff members also impede the implementation of Trilingual Education Policy. This means that regardless of specific attempts of university administration to promote the implementation of Trilingual Education Policy, there is an urgent necessity for analysis and reflection of challenges and obstacles from the side of the Ministry.

Moreover, Bakytzhanova (2018) mentioned that there are some challenges that the teachers faced in the implementation process at NIS schools. They are language barriers in Kazakh and English and lack of time for teachers for professional development and thus unpreparedness of teachers for trilingual context (pp. 72-73). Schwartz, Mor-Sommerfeld, and Leikin (2010) claim that one of the biggest challenges for teachers is the existence of bi-/tri-lingual education program without professional and effective trainings. Teachers generally are not aware of what approach or theories to use to implement the program (pp. 198-199). This shows that further study have to be conducted in order to understand the obstacles that are preventing the implementation of Trilingual Education Policy in Kazakhstan. Since there is a scarcity of studies about the experiences of mainstream school teachers, the current study examines the experiences/challenges of mainstream school teachers of Almaty city in implementing the Trilingual Education Policy.

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative interview-based research design was used in order to explore what kind of challenges teachers had faced during the implementation of Trilingual Education Policy and to answer the following questions:

1. What are the challenges teachers faced during the implementation of the Trilingual Policy?
2. To what extent teachers were able to conduct classes in English?
3. Are there any differences in the implementation process and challenges faced by different subject teachers?

Research Design

In order to investigate and identify the subject teachers' experiences of trilingual education, a qualitative interview-based research design was employed. This is because, according to Oppenheim (1992, p.65), exploratory interviews “enable respondents to talk freely and emotionally and to have candour, richness, depth, authenticity and honesty about their experiences” (as cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 219). Further, as Fossey, Harvey and Davidson (2002) state, qualitative research gives privilege to perspectives of the participants and to illuminate subjective meaning, actions and the context (p.723). In this case, the use of qualitative research approach helped to find out participants' attitudes, reactions and practices towards the trilingual policy.

Moreover, Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007) emphasize, “the interview is a flexible tool for data collection, enabling multi-sensory channels to be used: verbal, non-verbal, spoken and heard” (p.349). This can be helpful because interviews enable the researcher to perceive respondents' not only verbal answers, but also allows to see the use of body language, tone and etc. In other words, the rationale for choosing to employ interviews was to understand teachers' experiences, perspectives and deeply investigate what challenges they had faced. Thus, in achieving this, qualitative research approach is better than quantitative because interviews enable participants to discuss their own interpretations and express how they regard the trilingual policy from their own point of view.

Research Site and Sampling

The study was conducted in Almaty region. The interviewees were selected from four different secondary schools of Almaty city. Purposeful sampling method was used,

because the study had chosen city-based mainstream secondary schools that had adopted trilingual policy and embedded English language as medium of instruction in their curriculum. As mentioned, the study focused on those teachers' experiences and challenges, therefore, we needed teachers who had been working under the trilingual curriculum and could share both positive and negative experiences. The teachers of science classes were chosen: Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science and Physics. The rationale for choosing variety of science teachers was to look at teachers' experiences and compare whether the challenges they experienced were different or similar and to see if there were any distinctive features in these classes.

In order to recruit participants, researchers contacted mutual acquaintances who were working in those secondary schools, so they could help to look for possible secondary school teacher participants with above-mentioned characteristics. After having list of potential participants, the researchers contacted with them via phone and messengers. Since the data collection period and teachers' monthly bureaucratic reports overlapped, some of the teachers did not want to devote their time for the interview and refused to participate. However, regardless of having tight schedules, 16 teachers from 4 mainstream schools of Almaty city agreed to participate in the study. Most of them were interested in participating in such projects and sharing their experiences. The teachers were coming from 4 different Kazakh mainstream schools. Overall, the participants consisted of: four Biology teachers; four Chemistry teachers; four Computer Science teachers and four Physics teachers. Table 1 (Appendix 2) includes participants' background information. All of the participants attended English language courses or teacher trainings which had been organized in preparation for the trilingual policy.

Data Collection Methods

In order to conduct this qualitative interview-based study, semi-structured interviews with open –ended questions were used. The interview questions were constructed based on several categories, such as: educational background, the participants' attendance of special training courses, challenges, the ways of coping with them and participant's suggestions about the policy.

Data collection took place during October-November, 2020. Due to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic and for everyone's safety, all interviews were conducted via zoom platform. Each interview lasted from 30 minutes up to 1 hour. The interviews were

conducted in Kazakh language, because the participants work in Kazakh medium schools and thus it was comfortable for them to express themselves in Kazakh language.

Before proceeding to the interview, researchers introduced themselves and explained the purpose of the study. Then informed consent form was filled by the interviewees. At the beginning, participants were asked to provide information about their educational background, age, work experience. After these, the main questions were asked about the challenges they had faced in teaching under the trilingual policy. During the interviews, follow-up questions were also asked in order to clarify some points delivered by the respondents. Towards the end of the interview, participants were asked for possible recommendations and suggestions that could be useful for further improving the trilingual policy.

Data Analysis

Several steps were taken in order to analyze the data. In addition to audiotaping the interviews, notes were taken which described respondents' feeling as well as interviewer's observations during the interview. Then, the collected data were categorized into several themes: teachers' perspectives about the trilingual policy, challenges they have faced, quality of teacher training programs etc.

Ethical Considerations

This section describes the steps taken for ethical considerations. After developing proposal of the research, NU GSPP IREC form was prepared. The form included information about the purpose of the study, research design, data collection methods, interview questions and written informed consent for participants. NU GSPP Research Committee approved the research on June 17, 2020. Written informed consent (appendix 3) included brief description of the study, risks and benefits of the study, confidentiality and privacy of the participants and contact information. Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity were important in this study. For this reason, the participants were promised to exclude any personal information that could identify them, thus participants' names were coded; and only the age, the subject and language of instruction were revealed. The participants were also informed that their participation was voluntary and they had a right to withdraw from the study. In addition, it was promised that the audiotaped interviews would not be published anywhere but they would be protected on a computer, with only the researchers' access to the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section of the study analyzes and discusses the major findings from the interviews from secondary school teachers in Almaty region. The results are classified into four major sections: teachers' attitudes towards the policy, challenges teachers are facing in implementing trilingual education, the quality of language training programs and the suggestions from teachers for further implementation of the policy.

I. TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE POLICY

Teachers' viewpoints about the policy

This chapter discusses the main findings regarding teachers' attitudes about the trilingual policy. That is, as a means of understanding teachers' perspectives about the policy, different questions were asked so that they could evaluate the policy. The majority (11 out of 16) of teachers have reported that they have overall positive viewpoint about the effectiveness of the implementation of Trilingual Education Policy. Also, almost all of the teachers reported that learning subjects in English gives more opportunities to students both in domestic and global job markets as well as in education sphere. In addition, 12 out of 16 teachers see trilingual education as an opportunity that improve students' competitiveness in this globalized world. One of the teachers said, *"Being fluent in Kazakh, Russian and English languages is a necessity of today's realm. There are a lot of privileges of trilingual education policy, importantly, it will enable students to study at international universities, make them competitive at international standards of education."* Moreover, they mention that learning content knowledge and science subjects in English at schools enable students to benefit from extended vast educational resources both offline and online. In other words, some of the respondents believe that mastering three languages enable young generation to have access to different sources of knowledge and help them to broaden their horizons. This shows, as Qorro (2004) emphasizes people's choice of language education is grounded on the power and popularity of the language in this modern social era (as cited in Desai, Qorro and Brock-Utne, 2010). In other words, it seems that the power and prestige of English language have affected interviewees' choice of language instruction, thus, they have claimed positive role of integrating English into the curriculum although they themselves have struggled to acquire the language. Interestingly, one of the respondents mentioned that

this policy would improve the qualification of teachers, as the policy demands constant work and effort.

On the other hand, some of the respondents are doubtful about the quality of education in schools after implementing the policy. Majority (11 out of 16) of the respondents said that teachers are not ready to teach classes in English language. Most of the teachers are on their middle ages, they do not have basic language level, and it will be hard for them to learn and speak in English language very well. For these reasons, they have claimed that mainstream school teachers may not be ready to implement the policy, thus, it may take long time for the policy to function as expected by the Ministry of Education. However, they claim that fresh graduates may be ready, because they can learn English within a short period of time. From those responses, it can be seen that for the majority of teachers, the trilingual policy meant adoption of English language and thus, less attention was paid to Kazakh and Russian languages. In other words, for most of the teachers introduction of the trilingual policy meant as promotion of English, and they regarded this as positive movement towards globalization. While around 40% of the respondents mentioned the equal importance of Kazakh and Russian languages when they talked about the trilingual policy. Additionally, the interviewees responded that teaching in Kazakh and Russian languages is not difficult as Kazakh is their native language; while Russian is widely spoken in the country and they have been exposed to it since their childhood. Although the main mission of the trilingual policy is to promote proficiency in all three languages, the respondents' understandings have diverged; one claimed the policy as promotion of English; while some of them also mentioned importance of learning Kazakh and Russian in addition to English.

School Support

It was found that among the four secondary schools, two schools have support system from their school administration for those teachers who work under the trilingualism. The 8 respondents reported that teachers working under the policy are attached to English language teachers in their schools. These teachers supervise them in advance, that is, they assist subject teachers in creating course plan, understanding the material and any other challenges they could face. Moreover, together they organize joint seminars, conferences, subject weeks, and open classes in order to practice English language effectively. In addition, trilingual subject teachers participate and observe each other's classes in order

to exchange experiences and learn from each other. However, the rest of the 8 teachers who are coming from the other two secondary schools mentioned that they do not have any support from the school and there are no activities organized for them. From the interview, it was found out that those 8 subject teacher who have seen support from their school or cooperated with English language teachers reported that they could benefit and could overcome language related difficulties. On the other hand, the remaining 8 teachers who have not received any support from their schools have struggled to deliver classes under the requirements of the policy. Therefore, support from schools may play important role in facilitating the implementation process of the policy. This is because as Throop (2007) state, well-constructed language policy increases opportunities for school success and also plays role in student achievement (p.53). Similarly, Ahmad and Khan (2011) says that lack of teachers' awareness of language policy in the curriculum development have created gaps in delivering class contents (p.1897). Based on the experiences of these studies, it is important that the rest of the teachers also get support from their school administration.

Class Quality and Performance

The viewpoints of younger teachers and older teachers varied when the question was about the impact of trilingual education policy on the quality of the subjects and delivery of classes. Younger teachers report that they think language affects positively to the content of the subject. On the contrary, they think that knowing English language opens ways and makes accessible to wide range of resources and learning materials. Moreover, they reported that students are ready for further implementation of the policy, because it has almost been three years for the implementation of the trilingual education policy. Apart from these, they have emphasized that initially it might be challenging to implement the policy, however, by tenth grade students will be almost ready and fluent in the target language(s).

Older teachers, on the other hand, report that teaching subjects in English would negatively affect the quality of subject. They think that it is not possible to provide complete information to students in English language. It may be possible to implement this policy in schools where medium of instruction is English, but in ordinary secondary schools, it is very difficult to explain and to convey the content in English to students. According to them, the performance of students in trilingual classes is poor. Teachers

mention that there are few students who understand the natural sciences in their native languages. In other words, delivering the course content in Kazakh language itself is difficult. Therefore, they report that when it is hard to explain the content in native languages, it seems unrealistic to explain it in English. On the other hand, one of the respondents say that if students know the language, the subject matter is not difficult; here the main problem is lack of (English) language proficiency. From these responses of interviewees, it can be seen that the role of teachers in the implementation process is critical, in which success of policy sustainability seems to depend on teachers' knowledge and English proficiency. As it is argued by Spillane et.al (2002), although implementers or teachers follow policymakers' intent, they may not have the necessary skills and capabilities in order to understand and fulfill what the policy is asking them to do. Similarly, in the current study majority of the teachers report that they are lacking (English) language proficiency skills and these are negatively affecting the delivery of course content and the class quality. Therefore, in order to create effective trilingual education sphere, it is imperative that teachers have the essential language skills and are able to deliver the content of science subjects in the target language(s).

II. CHALLENGES TEACHERS FACED

In this chapter, we try to find out what challenges teachers have faced while implementing the new trilingual reform. The interviews have depicted that teachers themselves are conscious of difficulties. Accordingly, the challenges the teachers have faced are shortlisted. That is, the problems that are common to all of the teachers are in this study are: language barrier, class capacity, and insufficiency of resources/materials.

Language Barrier

It was found out that one of the major challenges teachers have faced is language barrier. Teachers admit that they have very poor English language proficiency and it is generally limited with terminology they have learned in training programs. One of teachers reported, *"Of course it is challenging... It seems like it is too early to implement this policy in secondary schools. Maybe it is possible for gymnasiums or special school where English language is taught deeply, but not in mainstream secondary schools. Teachers will not definitely become fluent in English after taking two language-training programs. It is even more challenging for elderly teachers, as they make up the majority of the teachers at schools."* These findings somehow overlap with Shamim's (2008) study, in

which he examined issues and challenges in policy and practice of English language education, in which sciences and math are taught in English. In his study, English was implemented as a third language in Pakistan (ibid). He found that lack of trained teachers who were proficient in the English language and could deliver the course materials in that language was an impediment for implementing the policy. Another comparable case of multilingual education is in Nigeria, where teachers faced similar challenges as teachers from Kazakhstan. In other words, in Nigeria, National Policy on Education intended to expose children to at least three languages (Olagbaju, 2014). According to the study results, one of the factors that were responsible for unsuccessful implementation of the policy was absence of teachers' participation in language courses, seminars and conferences (p.5). From these examples it seems that lack of language proficiency of school teachers has been one of the impediments to the successful implementation of the multilingual policy.

In addition, respondents highlighted that learning subject courses in Kazakh or Russian is very difficult for students, so it is going to be even more challenging for them to study courses in English, as most of them do not know it very well. Some of the teachers try to solve this issue using different teaching approaches. One of the respondents say, *"We learn language together during the class. We read together, we translate together, we write the definitions of the words. I give assignments depending on the level of each student. This is actually very time consuming. I should not fall behind the course plan. So, I have to take such approach "*. Whereas, other teachers try to solve the issue by themselves as it was mentioned above, or by asking help from English teacher colleagues. From these interview responses, it seems essential to form trilingual teaching staff in those schools. This is because as Bicaj and Shala (2018) emphasized, teachers act as models in language learning (p.4). Thus, it is important that they have the essential language skills in order to deliver the course content.

Class Capacity

Another challenge for teachers is a large class capacity. The numbers of students in each class is ranged approximately from 20 to 30 students. One class session in mainstream secondary schools lasts for forty-five minutes. Most of the teachers complained that with the given language barrier and scarcity of materials, it is very hard to deliver the information within forty-five minutes. According to the interviewees, it would be much

more easier if trilingual classes would consist of 10-15 students. Aoemeur (2017) study shows that large class sizes impact negatively on the quality of teaching and learning (p. 349). Therefore, since teachers are considered as important contributors for the successful implementation of the trilingual policy, it is important that their challenges are acknowledged by policy makers.

Insufficiency of Resources

Interestingly, all of the teachers responded that lack of teaching resources complicates their work even more. They need to prepare English materials for the class by themselves. This is very time consuming and big pressure for teachers. They do not have sufficient textbooks for each subject course. Besides, most of the respondents mentioned that there was a website before, called “Ustaz”, which provided teachers with instructions and plans for the course, teaching materials and etc under the trilingual policy. However, there is no access for the website any more. All of the respondents complain that the organizers and trainers of trilingual curriculum do not share course information, resources and materials with the teachers because of confidentiality issues. According to them, this has posed challenges in order for them to analyze the materials and review them later on.

Because of the lack of resources, teachers spend their time looking for materials from the internet, translating and adopting to the grade level. Teachers claim the content of the subject is very difficult itself, and writing course plan in English has become even more difficult with the absence of available materials and the website.

III. THE QUALITY OF LANGUAGE TRAINING PROGRAMS

Duration of Teacher Training Programs

All of the 16 teachers participated in language training courses in Almaty region. The majority, 11 of them attended to a three month teacher training programs and attended only once. Two teachers attended twice, in total for nine months. These teachers were exempt from school classes for this entire nine-months period. Other three teachers attended teacher programs twice for seven months. Furthermore, two of these teachers attended course guideline trainings during the holidays after each semester. One of the Chemistry teacher says: *“We had many training programs. Before the last year’s pandemic, we used to have course guidelines, during the holidays after each semester. We started each training with the materials of eighth grade program. We studied the program materials of the next semester. For instance, in the trainings we were taught*

how many chapters we would teach in the next semester, how to deliver the information from these chapters in English. Moreover, we were taught how to make course plan in English language. However, this was before the pandemic. Nowadays, some teacher training online classes are still available.”

Effectiveness of Teacher Training Programs

Respondents had mixed feelings about the quality of teacher training programs. Most of the teachers reported that they were satisfied with the quality of teacher training programs. Computer Scientist teacher mentions, *“The quality of teacher training courses was very high. Real specialists taught us English very patiently, clearly and understandably. Thanks to them, we have learned language effectively.”* Among the teachers who mostly benefited the trainings were younger teachers. Teachers who were below 40 enjoyed the language courses and expressed their enthusiasm.

On the other hand, three teachers who participated in initial training programs during 2016-2017, evaluated the quality of programs as very poor. One of these respondents say, *“The quality of initial training programs was very poor. The teachers themselves did not know the terminology in English very well. They had little teaching experiences. When we asked questions, they themselves used translators and materials to explain us. However, I heard from my colleagues, who recently attended training programs say that the quality of training programs have improved greatly.”* Those teachers who had been unsatisfied with the quality of the language courses reported that they attended additional language courses independently. In other words, 4 out of 16 teachers reported that they attended language courses on the paid basis because training programs could not gave them much.

From the interviews it was evident that teachers’ workload seems to have affected negatively for the effectiveness of the trainings. In addition to teaching their lessons, attending language courses, teachers are overwhelmed with administrative work in their schools. Teachers have reported that since teachers have great deal of paper work in their schools, they are not having enough time to learn and practice new materials from training programs. From this, it can be concluded that such excessive administrative workload negatively affect teachers’ motivations and thus successful implementation of the policy. This is because learning the language and learning methodology require energy and

effort. Therefore, this factor might be one of the important ones in assessing the effectiveness of the teacher training programs, and in evaluating the success of the policy.

IV. SUGGESTIONS FROM TEACHERS

The majority of the respondents reported that they have overall positive viewpoint about the policy and its consequences. However, they believe that the policy was not fundamentally implemented correctly. Some of the teachers say that it would be better to implement this policy gradually. That is, teachers would prefer teaching students science terminologies first then switch to teaching in the target language, English. According to them, such step by step and incremental application of the policy would be easier both for the teachers and the students. Furthermore, almost all of the respondents suggested implementing university level English based education. They admit that it would be much more effective and time-efficient, if teachers learn the content of the courses in English from the university years. For instance, one interviewee says: *“I would say that instead of spending too much money on re-training teachers, it would be feasible and efficient if government opens pedagogical programs in English, so that they can work at schools under this trilingual policy once they graduate”*. Moreover, as students in mainstream secondary schools start learning subject courses from sevenths grade, teachers proposed to teach students intensively English language until the seventh grade, so that it would not be challenging to study in English once they go to seventh grade. Thirdly, teachers admit the lack of resources and teaching materials in English language, so they suggest providing teachers with these materials. They believe that this would improve the quality of the courses, because it has been very time consuming for teachers to prepare course plans by themselves. Lastly, respondents request to increase the number and length of teacher training programs.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, the aim of the current research was to identify the challenges of the trilingual policy in mainstream schools of Kazakhstan and to analyze teachers' perspectives regarding the implementation processes. Teachers are considered one of the important agents in the implementation processes, therefore their needs and requests are important for successful enactment of the policy. In this policy analysis exercise, we tried to investigate what challenges teachers have faced while implementing the trilingual policy. Based on the research question, we asked teachers what extent they were able to follow the requirements of the policy and conduct classes in the target language(s).

The primary data was collected by conducting interviews with 16 teachers from four different schools of Almaty city. The study used qualitative method in order to explore attitudes and viewpoints of teachers regarding the trilingual policy. Thus, we designed semi-structured interview with open-ended questions, so that respondents can express their ideas and needs. Our sample size included teachers of science subjects (Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science and Physics) who have shifted to teach under the trilingual policy.

Based on the interview findings it was found that overall teachers had positive viewpoints about the trilingual education policy. However, it was evident that in practice, they have faced different challenges while working under the policy. In other words, their lack of language proficiency, large class sizes and absence of teaching resources had negative impact on the successful implementation of the policy. Furthermore, the experiences of teachers diverged regarding the teacher training programs. Some of the teachers claimed that the training programs were effective and well organized. Whereas, other claim that they were not as effective as it could have been. Several of the participants were not satisfied with the length of the programs, because it was not enough to master the language within the given timeframe. Apart from these, in addition to administrative and bureaucratic responsibilities of teachers, it was difficult for them to concentrate on learning the target language. So, working and meeting the requirements of the trilingual education policy was difficult due to the increased workload of teachers. Unfortunately, such high pressure can stress teachers and negatively affects their motivation and thus the quality of the classes they deliver.

As hypothesized above, fast track implementation of the trilingual education policy seems to create challenges in delivering the quality content for teachers. This is because, as seen from the study, similar to students, teachers were viewed as passive recipients of the policy and they were not communicating with the Ministry of Education in order to express their practical difficulties. Therefore, in order to improve the situation in the long-run, it is important to have open communication between teachers and the government, that is, bottom-up approach is needed, so that teachers can express their challenges and concerns regarding the reform implementation. The detailed list of potential policy recommendations will be provided below. These suggestions are targeted to fill the gaps that we could identify through this explorative study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this policy analysis exercise allowed us to provide a number of recommendations for improving the effectiveness of teachers' performance and alleviating the problems that arise because of top-down process and techniques of policy applications. The suggestions we offer relate to the workload of teacher training programs, cooperation between English language teachers and science teachers within the school, smaller class sizes and sharing resources/materials with teachers.

Teacher Training Programs with less workload

The first suggestion relates to teacher training programs, which appear to have several limitations. The main conclusion is that workload of training programs have to be more systematized with regard to their duration, level of language-proficiency, supply of reference materials and timing of training classes. Training programs have to be arranged regularly so that teachers know the time of upcoming classes. In addition, we would recommend that curricula of the courses need to be developed and projected so that teachers are properly classified into different classes based on their level of English proficiency. This would help teachers to have equal access in terms of course duration and materials/handout availability. Less workload according to their level would increase the effectiveness of language programs, because teachers will learn the language with colleagues who have the same level of language skills.

Cooperation between language and science teachers within the schools

We are completely familiar with the fact that there are shortage of science teachers who are proficient in English language in our country. This prevents the government from making classes more intensive and concentrated, and to reach more teachers. Therefore, second suggestion considers the collaboration between English language and science teachers within the schools. The collaboration among these teachers would provide a chance for natural science teachers to continue learning without participating in language training programs. An additional recommendation would be to have native English teachers in schools all around the country, who could volunteer to help regional science teachers to learn and practice English language. These volunteer English teachers need to be ensured with wages, housing (possibly with local residents/families), health insurance and round trip tickets at no cost. With this in mind, schools must assure and provide the collaboration and reciprocal maintenance among teachers.

Smaller class sizes

Third recommendation is concerned with the class capacity in schools. As interviewees reported, the number of students in each class is ranged approximately from 20 to 30 students. It is very challenging for teachers to deliver the content of the course in forty-five minutes to so many students. Moreover, teachers mentioned that there are only one or two trilingual classes in each school which also impedes the implementation of the policy. Therefore, we would recommend to increase the trilingual classes and to arrange class sizes so that in each class there will be about 10-15 students. This would help teachers to fruitfully deliver the information by reaching every student and making sure that each of them engage effectively.

Sharing resources/materials with teachers

Lastly, we would recommend that all the materials and resources demonstrated during teacher training programs should be shared with teachers. This would help teachers to revise and learn important aspects of the materials. Moreover, we suggest that teachers should be provided with clear guidelines and outlines of the course. This would save teacher's time from translating and searching class materials by themselves. In addition, sharing course resources/materials/guidelines would make teachers to concentrate on delivering the quality content that are based on the expectations of the policy.

LIMITATIONS

There are several potential limitations of this research. The first limitation of this research is that the current study only focuses on mainstream schools of Almaty region. It is important to note that there might be some linguistic differences in the intensity of using Kazakh, Russian and English languages in different regions of the country and between city vs rural areas. Therefore, we tried to reduce this limitation by attracting teachers who have implemented the policy in early stages. Next limitation of the research is limited for conducting the research and only interview method was used, so there was limited use of various research tools. Thirdly, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown measures, it was difficult to attract more participants for the study. This is because majority of the participants rejected and withdraw from participation in to the online mode of interviews. So, there was limitation in the number of participants. Another limitation is that due to the limited scope of the research, our study only focused on studying challenges of teachers. However, it can be very useful to include administrative and students' challenges in order to broaden the scope of the research and to see how policy affects those stakeholders.

APPENDIX 1

Interview Questions ENG

1. Can you please give background information about your education? What university did you graduate?
2. Can you please indicate your age?
3. How long have you been working at school? What subject do you teach?
4. In your class, what language(s) do you use in conducting lessons?
5. What steps have your school and you (teachers) have taken in order to implement the trilingual policy?
6. How teachers were prepared to implement the policy? Did you attend any training programs?
7. If so, how long and how many trainings have you attended?
8. How would you evaluate or assess the quality of language courses that were provided to you under Trilingual Policy?
9. Are there any support in terms of teaching English language in your school? Are there language courses for teachers?
10. Can you please tell me, what challenges/problems you have faced in implementing/working with the Trilingual Policy?
11. How do you cope with the challenges?
12. How has the change in medium of instruction affected the quality of subject or delivery of classes?
13. In your opinion, does Trilingual Education policy change the quality of education in schools?
14. How do you evaluate performance of students under this policy? Are students ready to study under this policy?
15. Overall, what do you think about the effectiveness the Trilingual policy?
16. What would you suggest to improve it? Are there any other incentives that governments can use in order to motivate teachers/school administration to further implement the policy?

Интервью сұрақтары KAZ

1. Өзіңіздің біліміңіз туралы қосымша ақпарат беріп өтсеңіз? Қай университетті бітірдіңіз?

2. Жасыңыз нешеде?
3. Мектепте жұмыс істеп жүргеніңізге қанша болды? Қай пәннен сабақ бересіз?
4. Сабақ өту барысында қай тіл(дер)ді қолданасыз?
5. Үштілділік Саясатын жүзеге асыру үшін мектеп немесе мұғалімдер қандай іс-шаралар өткізіп жатыр?
6. Мұғалімдер бұл саясаттың енгізілуіне қаншалықты дайын? Үштілділікті үйрету мақсатында ұйымдастырылған қандай да бір тренингтерге қатысқансыз ба?
7. Егер қатысқан болсаңыз, қанша рет және қанша мерзімге қатыстыңыз?
8. Үштілділікті үйретуге негізделген тілдік курстардың сапасын қалай бағалайсыз?
9. Мектеп тарапынан ағылшын тілін оқытуға қандай да бір қолдау немесе көмек бар ма? Мұғалімдерге арналған тілдік курстар бар ма?
10. Үштілділік Саясатын жүзеге асыруда немесе жұмыс жасауда қандай да бір қиындықтар немесе проблемалар туындады ма?
11. Егер қиындықтар бар болса бұл мәселені қалай шешесіздер?
12. Оқу тілінің өзгеруі пәннің немесе сабақтың сапасына немесе ақпараттың оқушыларға жетуіне қалай әсер етеді?
13. Сіздің ойыңызша, үштілді білім беру саясаты мектептердегі білім сапасын өзгерте ме?
14. Осы саясат негізінде оқушылардың үлгерімін қалай бағалайсыз? Оқушылар осы саясат бойынша оқуға дайын ба?
15. Жалпы алғанда, Үштілділік Саясатының тиімділігі туралы не ойлайсыз?
16. Оны жақсарту үшін не ұсынар едіңіз? Мұғалімдерді немесе мектеп әкімшілігін саясатты әрі қарай іске асыруға ынталандыру үшін үкімет қолдана алатын басқа іс-шаралар немесе ынталандырулар бар ма?

Вопросы интервью RUS

1. Не могли бы Вы рассказать о том, какого рода обучение или квалификация у вас есть? Выпускником(-ницей) какого университета Вы являетесь?
2. Можно ли узнать Ваш возраст?
3. Как давно Вы преподаете в школе? Какой предмет Вы преподаете?

4. Какой язык Вы используете на своих занятиях?
5. Какие действия были предприняты школой, в которой Вы работаете, и Вами (учителями) для внедрения политики Трёхязычия?
6. В чем состояла подготовка учителей по внедрению Трёхязычия? Посещали ли Вы какие-либо занятия программы подготовки и повышения квалификации?
7. Если это так, то как долго и как много мероприятий по повышению квалификации Вы посещали?
8. Как бы Вы оценили качество языковых курсов, которые были проведены в рамках Политики Трёхязычия?
9. Оказывается ли каким-либо образом поддержка проведения занятий на английском языке в Вашей школе? Есть ли в Вашей школе языковые курсы для учителей?
10. Какие преграды и трудности Вы встречали в процессе внедрения и работы в рамках Политики Трёхязычия?
11. Как Вы справляетесь с этими трудностями?
12. Как повлияло изменение языка преподавания на качество программы предмета и проведения занятий?
13. Как Вы думаете, меняет ли Политика Трёхязычия качество преподавания в школах?
14. Как бы Вы оценили показатели студентов с начала действия Политики Трёхязычия? Готовы ли дети к обучению по подобной программе?
15. Что Вы думаете об эффективности Политики Трёхязычия в целом?
16. Что бы Вы посоветовали изменить? Возможны ли какие-либо другие источники мотивации учителей/школьной администрации для дальнейшего внедрения политики в школах?

APPENDIX 2

Table 1. Participants' background information

Code of the respondent	Age of the respondent	Subject	Language(s) used during the class	Work Experience (years)
01	24	Biology	Kazakh/English	4
02	44	Biology	Kazakh/English	21
03	54	Biology	Kazakh/English	31
04	27	Biology	Kazakh/English	5
05	48	Chemistry	Kazakh/English	25
06	48	Chemistry	Kazakh/English	24
07	40	Chemistry	Kazakh/English	16
08	47	Chemistry	Kazakh/English	24
09	52	Computer Science	Kazakh/English	30
010	47	Computer Science	Kazakh/English	24
011	28	Computer Science	Kazakh/English	7
012	35	Computer Science	Kazakh/English	12
013	46	Physics	Kazakh/English	22
014	42	Physics	Kazakh/English	20
015	48	Physics	Kazakh/English	22
016	52	Physics	Kazakh/English	29

APPENDIX 3

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

TRILINGUAL EDUCATION POLICY IN KAZAKHSTAN

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled “Problems and Challenges of Implementing Trilingual Policy in Mainstream High Schools of Kazakhstan.”

The purpose of this study is to explore and identify different challenges that teachers have faced during the implementation process of the Trilingual Policy. The study hopes to answer the following questions: What are some of the challenges teachers are facing? How teachers’ problems/challenges impact the policy outcomes? How does the use of (three) different languages are impacting the performance of teachers?

The research site for the participants will be the schools they work. The interview will be conducted in a room, separately for each participant. The interviews will be scheduled depending on the available timeslot of the respondents.

Since the research is explorative, qualitative interview-based research method will be used. That is, the interview will be semi-structured in which you will answer 16 open ended-questions. This particular methodology helps us to identify attitudes, beliefs and experiences of you about the policy implementation processes. This interview will take approximately 45-60 min to complete. The interview will be recorded in case it will be necessary for transcribing.

Risks & Benefits

To the best of the researchers’ knowledge, there will be no more risk of harm than you would normally experience in daily life. The anticipated risks associated with participation in this research will be minimal, but you have the right to stop the interview/survey or withdraw from the research at any time.

Anticipated benefits from this study add the potential benefits to Nazarbayev University, science, and possibly the participants. Moreover, it may have benefits to the improvement in implementing Trilingual Education Policy in Kazakhstan, thus improving the teaching quality of subject courses at high schools. However, there is no guarantee you will receive any specific benefit.

Compensation

No tangible compensation will be given. A copy of the research results will be available at the conclusion of the study.

Confidentiality & Privacy

Any information that is obtained during this study will be kept confidential to the full extent possible. All efforts, within reason, will be made to keep your personal information in your research record confidential but total confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Moreover:

- the interview will be recorded and a transcript will be produced
- you will be sent the transcript and given the opportunity to correct any factual errors

- the transcript of the interview will be analyzed by Kholida Khaldarova and Gulnar Abdisadyk as research investigators
- access to the interview transcript answers will be limited to Kholida Khaldarova and Gulnar Abdisadyk and academic colleagues and researchers with whom they might collaborate as part of the research process
- any summary of interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that are made available through academic publication or other academic outlets will be anonymized so that you cannot be identified, and care will be taken to ensure that other information in the research that could identify yourself is not revealed
- the actual recording will be kept

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary, and if agreement to participation is given, it can be withdrawn at any time without prejudice.

Points of Contact

It is understood that should any questions or comments arise regarding this project, or a research related injury is received, the Principal Investigator, *Kholida Khaldarova*, +7.778.589.6343, *kholida.khaldarova@nu.edu.kz* should be contacted. Any other questions or concerns may be addressed to the Nazarbayev University Institutional Research Ethics Committee, *resethics@nu.edu.kz*.

Statement of Consent

I, _____
_____,

Give my voluntary consent to participate in this study.

The researchers clearly explained to me the background information and objectives of the study and what my participation in this study involves.

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary. I can at any time and without giving any reasons withdraw my consent, and this will not have any negative consequences for myself.

I understand that the information collected during this study will be treated confidentially.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researchers:

Signed _____ Date _____

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