



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

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THE STATE OF MINORITY EDUCATION IN TIBETAN AREAS OF CHINA

International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) submission to
the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues

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The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) submits the following response on the state of minority education in Tibetan areas of China. In this submission, we provide a brief background on the socio-economic policies that have shaped minority education policy for Tibetans and outline gaps, challenges and opportunities for improvement drawing on lessons learned from best practices.

Given minority education policy can be a politically sensitive topic in the People's Republic of China (PRC), as it is often conflated with so called splittist activities that endanger China's national security, we request that identifiable information (such as place, individual or institutional names) from case studies referenced here are not publicised. For ease, we have highlighted the sections where names should be redacted.

Introductory remarks

The PRC has 56 officially recognised minority nationalities, of which the Han constitute 92 per cent of the population.¹ Tibetans comprise just over six million of the approximately 107 million non-Han ethnicities counted in the 2010 census.²

Historical Tibet is split into three distinct cultural regions: U-Tsang, Kham and Amdo. Each region has a distinct dialect, with other local dialects within them. The region of historical Tibet – encompassing all three cultural regions – is 2.4 million square kilometres and constitutes one quarter of the PRC.³ Under Chinese rule, Tibet has been split up into the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) and various Tibetan Autonomous prefectures and counties within the Chinese provinces of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan. The TAR captures the region of U-Tsang, while Kham was incorporated into Sichuan and Yunnan, and Amdo into Gansu and Qinghai, with some overlap in between.⁴ As a result of these new boundaries, at least half the Tibetan population and land is located outside the Tibet Autonomous Region, the region which China calls 'Tibet'.⁵

It is important to note that on the Tibetan plateau, and particularly in rural areas, Tibetans are a majority in the areas where they reside. About one third of Tibetans are nomadic peoples, constantly moving with

¹ Population Reference Bureau, May 2011, 'China Releases First 2010 Census Results', <https://www.prb.org/china-census-results/>.

² The 2010 census recorded the population of mainland China to be 1,339,724,852 and found eight per cent of the population was made up of non-Han ethnic minorities. See *ibid.*, Population Reference Bureau, May 2011, 'China Releases First 2010 Census Results'.

³ Josephine Ma, 11 March 2009, 'The double-edged sword of 'Greater Tibet'', <https://www.scmp.com/article/672872/double-edged-sword-greater-tibet>.

⁴ For example, Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai is culturally Kham, while all other Qinghai Tibetan regions are culturally Amdo.

⁵ According to the 2010 census, about half of the Tibetan population lives outside the TAR. See Voice of America, 20 June 2014, 'Beijing: Tibetan Population Actually over 7 Million', <https://www.voatibetanenglish.com/a/1940971.html> and Xinhua, 4 May 2011, 'Tibet's population tops 3 million' 90% are Tibetans', http://www.gov.cn/english/2011-05/04/content_1857538.htm.

their herd for grazing.⁶ These features of newly formed political boundaries, Tibetan life and demography are key to understanding the minority education landscape. In particular, the practice of minority education policy differs significantly across the various political jurisdictions and cultural spheres. For example, the TAR is subject to greater scrutiny and control because of its regional autonomy status and historical position as the political centre of Tibet.

Minority education policy in China is a reflection of ethnic policy goals, which have oscillated between ethnic identity promotion and enforced assimilation since 1951. The cyclical pattern reflects a broader conflict between two goals. The perception is that mother-tongue language policies help the Chinese government win the political support of non-Han nationalities and enable them to more effectively disseminate government policies, while enforcing Putonghua (standard Mandarin Chinese language) would develop political loyalty, stability and ethnic unity. The current position on minority policy is, “cultural diversity is only desirable in the context of developing political loyalty with Chinese nationalist values”.⁷ This position of only partially supporting ethnic diversity and mother-tongue language is also reflected in China’s national laws.

Key points

- Through examining government documents, research papers and news reports on Tibetan minority education, we have observed a clear shift from Tibetan-medium education to Putonghua education since the 1990s. The policy stance was officially strengthened in 2010 and 2016, with the release of National long-term education reform and development plan (2010-2020) and the Thirteenth Five Year Development Plan for National Language Works (2016-2020); both documents plan to advance the popularization of the national commonly used language and written script, Putonghua.
- It is generally true across the Tibetan region that secondary schools employ Chinese-medium instruction, although there are some exceptions in areas outside the TAR. The lack of Tibetan medium secondary schools is due to a lack of qualified Tibetan teachers, lack of available Tibetan language textbooks and competition from Han teachers. A policy shift in the late 1990s began an initiative to enforce Chinese medium instruction in all Tibetan schools.
- According to available research, this has been broadly achieved in the Tibet Autonomous Region. In 2007, 95 per cent of all TAR primary schools employed Chinese-medium instruction.⁸ This was a marked shift from 2001, when 95 per cent of primary school students studied under Tibetan-medium instruction.⁹
- In Tibetan areas outside to the TAR such as Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan, minority education practices have differed due to local leaders and conditions. While the majority of secondary schools employ Chinese-instruction and offer Tibetan language as a subject, primary education is predominantly delivered using Tibetan language instruction.

⁶ International Campaign for Tibet, 2013, ‘Tracking the Steel Dragon’, <https://www.savetibet.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/TrackingTheSteelDragon.pdf>, page 104.

⁷ Yang Bai, 2018, ‘Hybridity and Tibetan language education policies in Sichuan’, *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education*, Vol. 28. No. 2. page 13.

⁸ 2007 Research report by the TAR Bilingual Education Commission cited in Ma Rong, 2013, ‘The Process of Bilingual Education Development in the TAR since 1951’, in James Leibold and Yangbin Chen, (eds.) *Minority Education in China: Balancing Unity and Diversity in an Era of Critical Pluralism*. Honk Kong University Press, page 101.

⁹ Ibid., Ma Rong, 2013, page 97.

- The 2010 push to replace Tibetan-medium instruction in all primary and secondary schools, as outlined in the national long-term education reform and development plan (2010-2020) is a concerning development and has faced opposition from Tibetan students.¹⁰ In October 2010, over 1,000 Tibetan students protested plans to downgrade Tibetan language in Rebkong (Ch. Tongren) County, Qinghai.¹¹ Protests throughout Qinghai continued into 2012 and 2014, with eight protesters sentenced to prison terms of up to four years.¹²
- In this submission, we have identified a lack of political will and commitment to pursue legally consistent, and culturally and linguistically relevant education policy, lack of funding and support for bilingual teacher training and Tibetan-language learning resources, an absence of culturally and regionally relevant schooling that is responsive to the realities of the local communities, and broader ethnic and linguistic discrimination in the education and labour market.
- Given minority-language education increases enrolment rates and leads to higher educational performance, it serves the state's goal to increase education indicators and so-called minority development. With a view to improve educational performance, and based on best practices, we recommend the adoption of a clear and legally consistent minority education policy. We also recommend government support for policies that fund Tibetan textbook translation, bilingual teacher training, culturally and regionally defined curricula, and viable career pathways for minority-language graduates.

1. Please provide information on the specific legislative, institutional and policy framework at the national and local levels that address minority education, and education of and in minority languages, including sign language. Please provide examples of key laws, policies and practices, including good practices, as well as gaps.

Legislative structure

A number of national laws protect minority language education and use. For Tibetans the following political agreement and national laws are most relevant.

The 17th-point Agreement signed between the Tibetan and Chinese governments in May 1951 agreed for Tibet to be incorporated into the PRC as an autonomous region enjoying genuine autonomy.¹³ While the

¹⁰ UNESCO, 2010, 'Outline of China's National plan for medium and long-term education reform and development 2010-2020', <https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/en/2010/outline-chinas-national-plan-medium-and-long-term-education-reform-and-development-2010-2020>; International Campaign for Tibet, 22 October 2010, 'Protests by students against downgrading Tibetan language spread to Beijing', <https://www.savetibet.org/protests-by-students-against-downgrading-of-tibetan-language-spread-to-beijing/?format=pdf>.

¹¹ International Campaign for Tibet, 22 October 2010, 'Protests by students against downgrading Tibetan language spread to Beijing', <https://www.savetibet.org/protests-by-students-against-downgrading-of-tibetan-language-spread-to-beijing/?format=pdf>.

¹² Radio Free Asia, 14 March 2012, 'Language Policy Comes Under Scrutiny', <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/students-03142012213524.html>.

¹³ Ministry of Culture, PRC, 2011, '17-point agreement paved the way to progress', http://en.chinaculture.org/focus/focus/60PLT/2011-05/25/content_415167.htm.

Agreement has been repudiated by the Dalai Lama in 1959 as null and void (being signed under duress), the agreement nonetheless outlines a number of principles of autonomy.¹⁴

In addition to the agreement on autonomy, at least four national laws include the right for minority nationalities to learn and use their mother-tongue language. The Constitution of the People's Republic of China (amended 2018)¹⁵ states that all ethnicities are equal and have the freedoms to use and develop their own spoken and written language (article 4). Peoples of ethnic autonomous areas also have the power to formulate separate regulations (article 116), independently administer education (article 119), and use their language in local administration (article 121) and in court proceedings (article 139). The constitution also emphasizes, "the State promotes the nationwide use of Putonghua [standard Mandarin Chinese]" (article 19).

The same conflict is born out in the Education Law (1995)¹⁶ and the Law on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language (2000)¹⁷. Both laws promote the popularization of Putonghua as the standard common language, while acknowledging the right of ethnic minority groups to use and develop their native language.¹⁸

In contrast, the Regional Autonomy Act¹⁹ (2001) treats all languages equally. For example, it not only grants minority nationalities freedom to use and develop their own language (article 10), formulate education plans (article 36), use textbooks in their own languages and enjoy mother-tongue instruction (article 37), but it also states that Han language and literature courses should be taught in the lower or senior grades of primary school to popularize common language. It adds, both cadres of Han and non-Han nationalities should learn each other's spoken and written languages when working in the offices of ethnic autonomous areas (article 49).

Institutional structure

Minority education is governed by the Ministry of Education, the State Ethnic Affairs Commission, and local provincial education bureaus. The 'Five Provinces and Regions Tibetan Textbook Coordination Group' (established in 1982) is responsible for developing unified Tibetan educational materials for use in primary and secondary schools throughout Tibetan areas.²⁰

The education system is structured into primary, secondary and tertiary school systems. See table 1, for a breakdown of the schooling years.

¹⁴ Walt van Praag, (1987) *The Status of Tibet: History, Rights and Prospects in International Law*. Boulder (Colorado): Westview Press, page 163.

¹⁵ National People's Congress Observer, 2018, 'Constitution of the People's Republic of China', <https://npcobserver.files.wordpress.com/2018/12/PRC-Constitution-2018.pdf>.

¹⁶ Ministry of education of the People's Republic of China, 26 May 2009, 'Education Law of the People's Republic of China', http://en.moe.gov.cn/Resources/Laws_and_Policies/201506/t20150626_191385.html.

¹⁷ National People's Congress, 31 October 2000, 'Law of the People's Republic of China on the standard spoken and written Chinese Language', http://www.gov.cn/english/laws/2005-09/19/content_64906.htm.

¹⁸ See article 12 in the Education Law and article 3 and 8 in the Law on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language.

¹⁹ Congressional-Executive Commission on China, 14 February 2006, 'Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law of the People's Republic of China (Chinese and English Text)', <https://www.cecc.gov/resources/legal-provisions/regional-ethnic-autonomy-law-of-the-peoples-republic-of-china-amended>.

²⁰ Adrian Zenz, 2010, 'Beyond Assimilation: The Tibetanisation of Tibetan Education in Qinghai', *Inner Asia*, Vol. 12, page 295.

Table 1: Education system by school year²¹

Schooling	School name	Grades
Primary	Primary school	1-6
Secondary	Junior high	7-9
	Senior high	10-12
	Middle school	7-12
Tertiary	College	3 years
	University (undergraduate)	4 years

Current minority education policies

Table 2: Minority education policies

Policy	Description
Bilingual Education	A type of 'transitional bilingualism', as the main purpose of learning one's mother tongue is to hasten the acquisition of the majority language. ²² Bilingual education does not mean bilingual, rather the teaching of at least the inclusion of two languages. Three models of bilingual education are employed: Model A: Tibetan medium instruction (TMI) with Putonghua taught as a subject Model B: Chinese medium instruction with Tibetan taught as a subject Model C: Both languages media of instruction, but proportion varies due to student and teacher ability
Nationalities universities	System on nationalities universities offering courses and majors in minority subjects and minority-language instruction. The universities also offer quotas for minority recruitment. ²³
Multiple education	A multi-grade classroom model in a primary school with lack of teachers in remote areas
Minzu gaokao (late 1970s)	Introduction of minorities' version of the college entrance exam. Structure differs by location, but most students only take Tibetan subject in Tibetan language. ²⁴
Three Guarantees (1984)	Preferential policy for Tibet's rural and nomadic areas, providing school-aged students free food, clothing and lodging. ²⁵
Inland ethnic boarding schools (1985)	Called 'neidi Xizang ban', Tibetans students are sent to secondary schooling in Chinese schools in 19 provinces outside the Tibetan regions. Ten per cent of class time is allocated to Tibetan language with the remainder spent on the Chinese curriculum. Students also undertake ideological and moral education classes, and do not return home for four years. ²⁶

²¹ Eirini Gouleta, 2011, 'A bilingual education professional development project for primary Tibetan teachers in China: the experience and lessons learned', *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, page 6.

²² Hansen, M. H. (1999). *Lessons in being Chinese: minority education and ethnic identity in southwest China*. Seattle (WA): University of Washington Press, page 5-6 in Op. Cit., Adrian Zenz, 2010, page 297.

²³ See Pu Riwa, 1999, page 17 as cited in Op. Cit., Zenz, 2010, page 294.

²⁴ Op. Cit., Zenz, 2010, page 297.

²⁵ Kelsang Wangdu, 2011, 'China's minority education policy with reference to Tibet', *Tibetan Review*, June issue, page 19; Gerard Postiglione, Ben Jiao, Li Xiaoliang, and Tsamla, 2013, 'Popularising Basic Education in Tibet's Nomadic Regions', in James Leibold and Yangbin Chen, (eds.) *Minority Education in China: Balancing Unity and Diversity in an Era of Critical Pluralism*. Honk Kong University Press, page 125.

²⁶ Opt.Cit., Wangdu, 2011, page 21.

Compulsory Education Law (1986, amended 2006) ²⁷	Nine years of compulsory education enforced in Tibetan areas between 2002 and 2006. The policy was rolled out in the TAR in 1994 and set targets to popularize three-year education in nomadic areas, six years in rural areas, and nine years in major urban areas. ²⁸
School consolidation policy (2003) ²⁹	Consolidated primary schools into cities and towns, by replacing village schools with boarding schools in towns and cities.
National long-term education reform and development plan (2010-2020)	National Plan emphasizes the prioritization of Chinese medium teaching in primary and secondary schools. ³⁰
Thirteenth Five Year Development Plan for National Language Works (2016-2020)	Recognising the fundamental role of the national commonly-used language in safeguarding national unity and promoting ethnic solidarity, the Plan seeks to accelerate the popularization of Putonghua in minority regions. ³¹

Good practices

Many of the central government's early policies and practices have had positive impacts on Tibetan educational achievements. They include the creation of the 'Tibetan textbook coordination group', the creation of the system of minority nationalities universities, minority college entrance exam, and compulsory nine year education policy. A large majority of the policies were born in an era where central government pursued mother-tongue education policies as a means to recruit cadres to disseminate central government policies and improve relations with minority groups.

- The creation, in 1982, of the 'Five Provinces and Regions Tibetan Textbook Coordination Group', a dedicated group responsible for producing Tibetan translations of Chinese language primary and secondary school textbooks was a positive development. The textbooks were successfully used in a 1989 secondary Tibetan education pilot scheme in the TAR, however due to the political crackdown in the early 1990s, it is believed that the textbooks were not widely disseminated. Researchers contest their use, with some researchers only recording their use in 1999 and reaching areas of Amdo in the early 2000s.³² Regardless of the political sensitivities, it has been noted that the group has helped to develop standardized Tibetan translation for

²⁷ State Council of the People's Republic of China, 23 August 2014, 'Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China',

http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/laws_regulations/2014/08/23/content_281474983042154.htm.

²⁸ Op. Cit., Ma Rong, 2013, page 94; Zhou 2002 as cited in Op. Cit., Postiglione et al, 2013, page 113.

²⁹ Op. Cit., Yang, 2018, page 6.

³⁰ Op. Cit., UNESCO, 2010, 'Outline of China's National plan for medium and long-term education reform and development 2010-2020'.

³¹ Jing Zhang and Miguel Perez-Milans, 2018, 'Structures of feeling in language policy: the case of Tibetan in China', *Language Policy*, Vol. 18, No. 1, page 43. Xinying Zhao, 13 September 2016, 'Work plan hopes for more than 80% of Chinese to speak Mandarin by 2020', China Daily, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-09/13/content_26788080.htm.

³² See Op. Cit., Zenz, 2010, page 296. While Bass (1998, page 100) states that they were available by 1991, Kolas and Thowsen (2005, page 114) suggest there were not completed until 1999. Zenz's own interviews suggest there were used by some of his informants since the early 2000s in the Chinese and Tibetan language classes.

modern scientific and other foreign terms, much needed for the development of scientific materials.³³

- The creation of nationalities universities soon after the creation of the People's Republic of China, although motivated by a need for educated and trained minority cadres (translators and administrators),³⁴ provided minority nationalities a pathway to tertiary education with some focus on minority language and culture. It is however notable that minority colleges and universities provide Tibetan language graduates limited opportunities because they do not offer a variety of disciplines outside Tibetan language and literature.³⁵ This limitation is largely attributed to the lack of trained Tibetan-language teachers and Tibetan-language resources outside the humanities discipline.
- The creation of the minzu gaokao system in the late 1970s, a minority friendly college entrance exam, allowed Tibetan students to include Tibetan-language as an exam subject as well as provided the option of taking the exam in Tibetan rather than Chinese. While it is rare for Tibetan students to take the exam in Tibetan due to the lack of Tibetan vocabulary in other subjects,³⁶ the option of a minority-nationality exam gives Tibetans and other minority nationalities an opportunity to marginally level the playing field for positions in minority colleges and universities.
- The enforcement of compulsory nine year education between 2002 and 2006 across Tibet ensured children of all backgrounds gained access to a basic level of education. The quality of education provided is however questionable.

Gaps

Lack of political will and commitment to pursue culturally and linguistically relevant education policy

The gap between minority educational rights and policies and actual practice is the result of partially the unique geography of Tibet and a lack of political will by the Chinese government to genuinely pursue a culturally and linguistically relevant education policy.³⁷ This in turn has resulted in a lack of funding and support for bilingual teachers and culturally informed Tibetan language resources.

While Tibet's unique high-altitude landscape presents challenges for education delivery, it is clear that there has been no clear and consistent commitment to the implementation of the language rights guaranteed by the Constitution and other relevant national laws. Although minority language promotion remains a politically sensitive topic, there has also been no effort to clarify and streamline the various laws and policies against a desired goal. Some critics argue that China's legal provisions are used by the government to improve its international image as a modern nation-state and deflect criticism, despite a starkly opposite reality.

Recommendation: Apply national laws consistently and clarify potential conflicts between Tibetan language instruction and Chinese medium education.

³³ Ibid., Zenz, 2010, page 302.

³⁴ Op. Cit., Pu, 1999, page 17 as cited in Zenz, 2010, page 294.

³⁵ Op. Cit., Gouleta, 2011, page 6.

³⁶ Op. Cit., Zenz, 2010, page 297-298.

³⁷ Op. Cit., Wangdu, 2011, page 22.



Lack of funding and support for bilingual teacher training and Tibetan-language learning resources

China's lack of commitment to implement language rights is evidenced in the lack of consistent funding and support for Tibetan bilingual teacher training and Tibetan-language learning resources.

Researchers in the field consistently lament the almost absence of Tibetan teacher training resources.³⁸ Gouleta, who worked to develop a Tibetan bilingual teacher training program in Tibetan autonomous areas of Gansu noted a complete lack of understanding of the instructional practices, methodologies and delivery of bilingual programs, adding "there is not a clear understanding of 'how to' or of 'what works and what doesn't'".³⁹ After the delivery of the Tibetan teacher training workshop, which drew on research-based and traditional Tibetan education principles, one Tibetan teacher said, "some of us have attended some teacher training before but never this kind of training especially prepared for Tibetan teachers. Most of the training we have had so far it was in lecture format and only in Mandarin. We very much appreciate this opportunity and have learned a lot from it".⁴⁰

Researchers are also clear and consistent about the lack of Tibetan language resources, especially in secondary and tertiary schooling.⁴¹ Of the textbooks that are translated into Tibetan, they have limited reach as they are translated into classical Tibetan – not the local dialects – and are not adapted to include culturally and geographically relevant content.⁴² The textbooks are contextually unfamiliar to the students and fail to stimulate interest in learning.⁴³ In addition to textbooks, Tibetan students don't have access to Tibetan literature and culture books. As these texts often contain references to Tibetan religion, they are banned from entering schools.⁴⁴ This creates challenges in creating culturally relevant resources, as Tibetan Buddhism is the carrier of traditional culture, which includes rich knowledge of philosophy, ethics, law, language, science and art.⁴⁵ Government aversion to Tibetan religion results in Tibetan students not having access to culturally relevant learning materials.

One consequence of inadequate Tibetan-language resources has been the end of Tibetan-language instruction in secondary schooling. Before 1988, all primary schools in the TAR taught in Tibetan, while all courses (except language classes) at middle and high school levels were taught in Putonghua.⁴⁶ Education statistics from the TAR in 1994 show 94.4 per cent of primary school students accessed bilingual education (Tibetan-medium instruction with a Chinese as a subject). This drops to 23.6 per cent in junior middle school, and to 5 per cent in high school.⁴⁷ The absence of Tibetan-medium secondary schools forces Tibetan students to complete a one year preparatory Putonghua class, which increased drop-out rates. For example, in 1994, when primary school enrolment in the TAR was 66.6 per cent, only 29.9 per cent of students were enrolled in high school. Even though central government introduced Putonghua instruction in TAR urban primary schools in 2001 and enforced Putonghua instruction in 95%

³⁸ Lubei Zhang and Linda T.H. Tsung, 2019, 'Tibetan bilingual education in Qinghai: government policy vs family language practice', *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, Vol. 22, No. 3, page 299; Op.Cit., Postiglione et al, 2013, page 128.

³⁹ Op. Cit., Gouleta, 2011, page 3.

⁴⁰ Ibid., Gouleta, 2011, page 16.

⁴¹ Op. Cit., Zenz, 2010.

⁴² Op. Cit., Gouleta, 2011, page 5-6, 9. Op. Cit., Ma Rong, 2013, page 94.

⁴³ Op. Cit., Gouleta, 2011, page 6.

⁴⁴ Op. Cit., Zhang and Tsung, 2019, page 298.

⁴⁵ Op. Cit., Postiglione et al, 2013, page 128.

⁴⁶ Op. Cit., Ma Rong, 2013, page 90.

⁴⁷ See Tanzen et al, 2007 as cited in Op. Cit., Ma Rong, 2013, page 97.

of TAR primary schools by 2007⁴⁸, Tibetan students still struggle to progress through to higher levels of education. In 2009, while primary school enrolment was 98.8 per cent, high school enrolment was 55.2 per cent.⁴⁹

Recommendation: Allocate funding to the development and dissemination of Tibetan bilingual teacher training courses. Invest in the production of culturally relevant Tibetan textbooks for secondary and tertiary schooling subjects, and produce new translations of textbooks covering non-humanities subjects.

Lack of regionally relevant schooling that is responsive to the realities of the nomadic community

As the researchers Postiglione et al note, “Tibetan nomads are distinguished by a complete economic dependence on livestock, particularly Yaks.”⁵⁰ In their study of Tibetan nomads in the TAR between 2007 and 2010, they found that state education is not embraced by nomadic Tibetans who perceive the education to be irrelevant to their nomadic life and unable to provide a path toward non-pastoral job opportunities.⁵¹ Postiglione et al point out “school learning fails to connect closely enough with nomads’ lives and is separated from the demands of economic and social development in nomadic areas.”⁵² Furthermore, not only did the “School Consolidation Policy, which relocated village schools to townships under the guise of economic efficiency, require primary school-aged children to board for long periods, the education diverged from Tibetan cultural modes of thinking, emotional expression and value orientation.”⁵³ Graduates from primary school also had to switch from Tibetan-medium instruction education to Chinese-instruction when they entered secondary school. As noted by Zenz, pure Tibetan tracks particularly benefit nomadic Tibetans who are more capable of advancing into higher education with Tibetan.⁵⁴ The current approach to nomadic education reflects the prioritization of education indicators and financial efficiency rather than meeting the needs of the students and families.

Recommendation: Include household involvement in the management and planning of schools and the development of school-based curriculum to increase the relevance of education to nomadic life. Improve bilingual education standards to facilitate transition from primary to secondary education, and develop vocational education and training programs that prepare youth for non-pastoral employment.⁵⁵

Ethnic and linguistic discrimination in the labour market

Due to the Han-dominated labour market, Tibetans face discrimination in both the private and public sectors, including in areas where Tibetans are the majority.⁵⁶ While there have been some model cases of successful Tibetan-language instruction programs running from primary to tertiary education, graduates still face limited career prospects.

Tibetan-language graduates can only obtain jobs as Tibetan language teachers, government administrators or translators. However, this Tibetan-language advantage has increasingly been challenged with changes to government recruitment criteria. Between 2001 and 2002, the Qinghai

⁴⁸ 2007 Research report by the TAR Bilingual Education Commission in Op. Cit., Ma Rong, 2013, page 101.

⁴⁹ Statistical Bureau of the TAR 2010, page 245 as cited in Op. Cit., Ma Rong, 2013, page 96.

⁵⁰ Op. Cit., Postiglione et al, 2013, pages 109-110.

⁵¹ Ibid., Postiglione et al, 2013, page 126.

⁵² Ibid., Postiglione et al, 2013, page 119.

⁵³ Ibid., Postiglione et al, 2013, pages 118, 122.

⁵⁴ Op. Cit., Zenz, 2010, page 309.

⁵⁵ Op. Cit., Postiglione et al, 2013, pages 128-129.

⁵⁶ Op. Cit., Zhang and Tsung, 2019, page 297.



government ended the job allocation system which guaranteed or preferred local Tibetans for local government jobs and introduced a meritocratic Chinese language exam.⁵⁷ The TAR also phased out preferential treatment for Tibetans and individuals with Tibetan-language skills in 2007, although temporarily reinstated it between 2011 and 2017.⁵⁸ The gradual removal of the policy received resistance in November 2016 when hundreds of Tibetan graduates in Lhasa, TAR protested against the policy when the annual civil service exam resulted in 98 Han Chinese students and only two Tibetan applicants obtaining 100 of the available positions.⁵⁹

Recommendation: Implement and improve Tibetan-medium language education in primary, secondary and tertiary schools, and include basic Tibetan language requirements in the recruitment criteria for government positions in majority Tibetan areas. Create spaces for the development of culturally and personally meaningful employment opportunities in the private sector.

2. Please provide examples of programmes of linguistic diversity, learning materials, multi-lingual and multi-cultural approaches to and methods of teaching and learning, involving the teaching and learning of minority languages and cultures.

- Programs of learning materials for methods of teaching and learning:

The most distinct program providing learning materials is the ‘Five Provinces and Regions in Tibetans Textbook Coordination Group’, first established in 1982. See Question 1, section good practices, paragraph 1 for a description of the program.

- Programs of multi-lingual and multi-cultural approaches to teaching:

One multi-lingual program was the introduction of the bilingual education policy and the subsequent models (A, B, and C). This policy was implemented across the Tibetan region in various forms. See ‘Table 2: minority education policies’ (page 4) for a description of the bilingual education program.

Multi-cultural approaches to teaching were recorded by researcher, Adrian Zenz in Yushu, Qinghai. Zenz notes that some schools with ethnically minded headmasters have been actively seeking to Tibetanise their school environments by constructing new buildings that feature Tibet-style architecture, putting up official posters of Communist heroes and western scientists with quotes in Tibetan language, and posting Tibetan motifs and translations of state slogans.⁶⁰ Zenz also highlighted how one Yushu school replaced the nation-wide standardized daily morning exercise routine with traditional Tibetan dancing to ensure that the young generation grows up with a knowledge of ethnic dancing.⁶¹ Inclusion of Tibetan culture in teaching environments is notably absent from Tibetan schools led by Han or sinicised Tibetans.⁶² Therefore multicultural approaches to teaching tend to be at the discretion of ethnically minded school leaders.

⁵⁷ Andrew M. Fischer, 2014, *The Disempowered development of Tibet in China: A Study in the Economics of Marginalization*, Lanham and Plymouth: Lexington Books.

⁵⁸ The policy was reinstated in 2011 by Chen Quanguo in the TAR. See Andrew M. Fischer and Adrian Zenz, 2017, ‘The Limits to Buying Stability in Tibet: Tibetan Representation and Preferentiality in China’s Contemporary Public Employment System’, *The China Quarterly*, Vol. 234, June Issue, pages 527-551.

⁵⁹ Radio Free Asia, 8 November 2006, ‘Tibetans stage rare public protest in Lhasa’, https://www.rfa.org/english/news/social/tibet_protest-20061108.html.

⁶⁰ Op. Cit., Zenz, 2010, page 303.

⁶¹ Ibid., Zenz, 2010, page 303.

⁶² Ibid., Zenz, 2010, page 303.

3. Please provide information on initiatives and programmes that effectively address challenges faced by minorities in accessing quality education, including the issue of direct and indirect costs of education.

Two policies are known to provide financial support to students. The 1984 “Three guarantees” policy is a preferential education policy for Tibet’s rural and nomadic areas, providing school-aged students free food, clothing and lodging.⁶³ Inland ethnic boarding schools also offer financial support in the form of large subsidies, however the exact costs are not known.⁶⁴ It is believed that boarding schools in townships are largely government funded with the exception of food costs.

4. Please provide examples of training programmes for teaching staff and educational administrators, including inter-cultural training, aiming at preparing them to respond to the educational needs of minority students.

There are three different types of teacher training institutions in minority areas:

1. The Normal School (equivalent to high school). This is the teacher preparatory program for primary school teachers.
2. The Normal College (three years undergraduate education) for Junior High School teachers
3. The Normal University (four years of undergraduate education) for Senior High School teachers.

Outside the standard teacher training courses, there are not many examples of specific bilingual training programs for Tibetan teachers. From the available academic research, one successful training program was developed in 2006 for Tibetan bilingual teachers in Gannan. Based in Gansu Province, the ‘Gannan Tibetan Bilingual Project’ was a bilingual teacher training project for Tibetan primary school teachers supported by the UK Department for International Development in China as a component of the Support to Universal Basic Education Project (SUBEP). The project was also conducted in collaboration with the Gansu Provincial Department of Education.⁶⁵ The project had two aims: to develop bilingual education teacher training materials for teaching language arts and mathematics, and to train Tibetan teachers in Gansu Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures on sound modern bilingual teaching principles and methodologies following the participatory approach.⁶⁶

A baseline evaluation of the teaching methods at both primary and secondary schools revealed the need for teacher training on delivering quality and culturally appropriate bilingual education.⁶⁷ The researchers also observed a lack of instruction materials and learning resources, as well as use of outdated teaching methods.⁶⁸ The project worked with a team of Tibetans and external experts on traditional Tibetan and modern teaching methods to develop a sample lesson that “reflected the Tibetan culture aligned with the Chinese national curriculum and followed current research-based bilingual

⁶³ Op. Cit., Wangdu, 2011, page 19; Postiglione et al 2013, page 125.

⁶⁴ James Leibold, 2019, ‘Interior Ethnic Minority Boarding Schools: China’s Bold and Unpredictable Educational Experiment’, *Asian Studies Review*, Vol. 43, no. 1, page 4.

⁶⁵ Op. Cit., Gouleta, 2011.

⁶⁶ Ibid., Gouleta, 2011, page 6.

⁶⁷ Ibid., Gouleta, page 9.

⁶⁸ Ibid., Gouleta, page 6.

teaching practices while combined traditional Tibetan teaching methods”.⁶⁹ Building on the sample lesson, sixteen teacher training modules were developed for language arts and mathematics classes. The training modules used Tibetan cultural examples and an instructional approach grounded in current bilingual approaches, student-centred learning, and traditional Tibetan pedagogy.⁷⁰

In May 2008, the project ran a successful pilot eight-day primary teacher training in Lanzhou city, Gansu that was attended by 51 teachers.⁷¹ Teachers provided positive feedback, noting the unique opportunity to have targeted Tibetan teacher training. Some teachers expressed enthusiasm having learned different ways to teach, but expressed concern for the lack of on-site trainers and supplementary Tibetan-language materials to support their teaching.⁷² Feedback from teachers informed a final review of the bilingual teacher training modules. The teacher training handbooks were finalized and disseminated across Gansu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture schools at the end of 2008.⁷³

Gouleta, who was invited as an international consultant on the project emphasized the importance of grounding education in the local culture. She stressed, “one of the most significant lessons learned is the importance of the minority culture and its human capital in the success of the project,”⁷⁴ adding, “no new bilingual teaching methodology can be effective and applicable in another geopolitical and cultural context unless it ‘marries’ with the traditions of the native population. No new knowledge can be embraced unless the knowledge of the native culture is equally valued, respected, and capitalized upon”.⁷⁵ Gouleta, in particular, cited their use of both research-based bilingual education methodology and traditional Tibetan methods to create a model of Tibetan bilingual education that would be relevant and useful to teachers and students.⁷⁶

5. Please provide examples of programmes and initiatives to strengthen the availability of teaching staff who speak minority languages, including teaching staff from minority communities.

This response has been significantly redacted to protect the identities of those involved in this case.

One initiative that has strengthened the availability of high school Tibetan teaching staff, who can teach in Tibetan-language, was led by a Tibetan educator who was instrumental in establishing the first Tibetan-medium tertiary level science education program in one provincial city. This case highlights the role and efforts of key individual Tibetans at educational and government institutes, the importance of non-governmental funding in supporting translation work, and the role of monasteries in reviving Tibetan language.

⁶⁹ Ibid., Gouleta , page 12.

⁷⁰ Ibid., Gouleta , page 12.

⁷¹ Ibid., Gouleta , page 13.

⁷² Ibid., Gouleta , page 15-16.

⁷³ Ibid., Gouleta , page 16.

⁷⁴ Ibid., Gouleta , page 17.

⁷⁵ Ibid., Gouleta , page 17.

⁷⁶ Ibid., Gouleta , page 17.

6. What are the identified challenges in the design and implementation of programmes and initiatives to facilitate access to education, including vocational education and training, by persons belonging to minorities and to integrate minority languages in the national curricula as separate subjects and as mediums of instruction?

Challenges in the design of initiatives that facilitate access to education and training

- Programs are designed without consultation with teachers, students, and families. As a result, they are designed in a cultural vacuum, resulting in learning materials that are detached from the needs of the students and teachers, and don't reflect local cultural and environmental context.
- Programs don't take into account dialect differences across the region, of which there are at least three major dialects.
- Programs ignore the need for Tibetan language learning resources such as adequate textbook translations at all levels of education.
- Programs are also designed without regard for funding relevant teacher training resources, such as training courses or manuals that provide information on instructional principles for bilingual teaching and different teaching methodologies.
- Lack of vocational schools and courses in non-humanities subjects in Tibetan limits the career pathways for Tibetan-medium students. Numerous scholars such as Fischer and Wang, note the lack of quality vocational, managerial or scientific education in Tibetan areas.⁷⁷

7. Please describe to what extent and how are persons belonging to minorities and their representative organizations involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of educational programmes and curricula.

It is questionable how much minority persons or their representatives are involved in the direct design, implementation and evaluation of education programs and curricula in today's China. It is notable that some flexibility existed prior to 2008. For example, despite a long-standing policy to phase out Tibetan-language instruction in secondary schools, middle schools in Qinghai undertook a reform process in the 2000s to reintroduce Tibetan-medium instruction classes.⁷⁸ In addition, Tibetan schools established by monasteries or monastic leaders such as the Guoma Longcun school in 1997 and the Jigme Gyaltzen Welfare school established in 1994 in Guoluo prefecture, are further examples of some flexibility in Tibetan involvement in the design and implementation of education in Tibetan areas.⁷⁹ While the Guoma Longcun school was handed over to the local authorities in 2008,⁸⁰ it is uncertain whether the other schools still operate with the same flexibility. It is notable that these schools are all located outside the TAR and in Qinghai, where Tibetans have enjoyed generally more flexibility in preserving their cultural identity.

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⁷⁷ Fischer, A. M. (2014). *The Disempowered development of Tibet in China: A Study in the Economics of Marginalization*, Lanham and Plymouth: Lexington Books, page 276. Wang, S., 2007, 'The failure of education in preparing Tibetans for market participation', *Asian Ethnicity*, Vol. 8. No. 2. Page, 131-132. Wang, S. (2011) 'The Failure of vocational training in Tibetan areas of China', *Asian Highlands Perspectives*, Vol. 10, page 143.

⁷⁸ Op. Cit., Zenz, 2010, page 302.

⁷⁹ Ibid., Zenz, 2010 page 304.

⁸⁰ See footnote 20 in Ibid., Zenz, 2010, page 304.