

Multi-ethnic school in the Russian Federation: the Preconditions of Formation and Development (a case study of a national region)

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ABSTRACT

The relevance of the study is based on the fact that unification of the peoples' life-support environment is observed in today's society. Most of them can no longer manage only with ethnically specific methods developed in traditional life-support for their existence and reproduction. Their present-day life-support activities have become integrated, nationally interdependent, whereby the interdependence is deepening. On this basis, the aim of this study is to identify essential characteristics of a multi-ethnic school as the main component of multilingual and multicultural education. The focus is on the mechanisms of a monolingual school transformation in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) as a multinational region of the Russian Federation. The socio-pedagogical feasibility of a multi-ethnic school in today's conditions is substantiated in the article. Prospects for the development of a multi-ethnic school are related to the fact that multilingual education in a multi-ethnic environment has certain goals. The choice depends on the goals of linguistic and cultural policy and should be in agreement with it, as one of its main manifestations. Setting goals is aimed at solving problems by promoting integration within the country and facilitating communication and understanding with the outside world.

KEYWORDS

Multilinguism, multicultural education, multi-ethnic school, language goals and objectives, evolution, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)

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Introduction

The main component of national identity is a notion of the life and culture of other ethnic groups, when something in common with them is distinguished, especially in one's own culture. Thus, a multi-ethnic school serves not only as a transmitter of its own national culture, but also as its synthesizer with other cultures. The notion of other nations is a complex, multi-level formation, including the attitude to the homeland, to oneself, the attitude towards other nations in general, including the peoples of Russia (National Doctrine on Education in the Russian Federation, 2000).

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Peoples, developing in the same natural, economic, social and cultural conditions, generate types of character, behavior, mindset, and a particular view of life appropriate to these conditions. Mutually attributing the cultural heritage of each other, the interacting communities come to a common cultural existence. The Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) is one of the first regions of Russia, where tolerance ideology began to develop based on fostering the culture of international dialogue.

In the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), national schools are developing quite dynamically and steadily; they have proved their efficiency and are popular with the population. The education system experience of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) allows defining a national school not only by ethnic, but also by linguistic and cultural characteristics.

A review of historical and pedagogical literature gives grounds to believe that the problem of formation and development of a multi-ethnic school as a system of multilingual multicultural education of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) over the last 50 years has not been the subject of research in the domestic pedagogy and still remains poorly developed. In this regard, on the basis of analysis of formation and development of a multi-ethnic school it is necessary to reveal the originality of multilingual multicultural education, to identify the role of a multi-ethnic school in solving problems of both the identity of ethnic groups and their integration into the broader social and cultural structure.

The purpose and objectives of the study: to determine the essential characteristics of a multi-ethnic school as the main component of multilingual and multicultural education; the originality of a multi-ethnic school as a system of multilingual multicultural education; classification of multi-ethnic schools by the master language of instruction; a complex of social-pedagogical conditions for a multi-ethnic school development.

Methodological Framework

Provisions for interconnection, interdependence of social, cultural, educational, objective, and subjective factors in the development of education are methodological bases of the research. The following has been carried out as part of the study: a retrospective analysis of multi-ethnic schools' work in a multi-ethnic region; scrutinizing official, archival documents and statistics; analysis and generalization of pedagogical experience for the national schools' development.

Results and Discussion

The results of historical and pedagogical analysis of the multi-ethnic school evolution in Yakutia

The interdependence of nations is perhaps the most characteristic feature of the 21st century. This interdependence, which covers all the areas of public life, generates in all the peoples of the Earth, and especially in those whose language is not one of the common languages of communication, the need to ensure their young people study one or more other languages. Such a study is almost always carried out in the framework of bi- and even multilingual education, which takes place in a situation of interaction between not just two or more ethnic groups, but two or more cultures (and what is more, in the global context) (Bray et al.,

2014). At the same time the openness to the whole world and enrichment through a contact with other cultures also brings forth a number of problems (especially language ones). These problems are different both in essence and in gravity. Specificity of certain situations requires various approaches and, as a consequence, different education policies (Nikolaeva et al., 2016). Thus, according to U.F. McKee, and M. Siguang, nowadays, it is impossible to speak about bi- and multilingualism in general, but we should rather talk about specific cases, none of which can be reduced to another one (Siguang and McKee, 1990).

There are 200 sovereign states in the world, and there are about 4 thousand different languages. The languages are distributed unevenly. There are almost monolingual states, whereas the population in some others speaks tens or even hundreds of languages. These figures show that the cases of coexistence of languages and cultures, and the need for multilingual (multicultural) education, carried out in a multi-ethnic environment, are quite frequent and extremely complicated (Borisova, 2006). Thus, bilingualism in relation to monolingualism is rather the rule.

In the aspect of the problem under consideration, this is expressed depending on the type of bi- or multilingualism and on the method of language acquisition. But as far as the process of language acquisition depends on social circumstances as well, hence, different types of multilingualism are the result of certain social circumstances affecting the coexistence of these languages and cultures (Krylova, 1996).

There is a very tight connection between the language and the culture, which is expressed through it. However, it would be simplistic to talk about their automatic concordance. The indigenous peoples of Yakutia have quite similar forms of culture, but speak very different languages (Neustroev, 2013). Conversely, one and the same language can be a means of expression for very different cultural situations (e.g., in the case of the dominant Russian language functioning in the life of non-Russian students in a multi-ethnic school with Russian language of instruction). Mastering another language makes it possible not only to integrate into a different group, but also to identify with a culture different from one's native culture (Barakhsanova and Varlamova, 2015).

Each ethnic group once 'arose from a combination of two or more constituents, which merge to form the integrity, but with a certain internal structure' (Gumilyov, 1993; Desheriev and Protchenko, 1968.). That is, ethnic ties are stronger than language ones.

Each ethnic group has its own internal, almost unique, structure and a pattern of behavior. Both are in a dynamic state in developing ethnic groups, i.e. change from generation to generation. For example, the Yakut and Even languages are different the way the cultures expressed through these languages are different. But it would be wrong to say that a Yakut, first coming to a reindeer herd and discovering new forms of culture, would not understand anything. They understand a lot, for the Yakut and Evenk cultures are the foundation which is based on centuries of shared history. Unfortunately, there is no denying the fact that the nations in the world tend to focus on themselves and take their self-interest as the basis of relationships. However cultures celebrate their own distinctive features and forget about the common features. Therefore, bi- or multilingualism, in fact, would be enrichment and a personal elevation to the extent to which a bi- or multilingual (multicultural) individual



finds a group of those speaking their languages, and bearers of the cultures expressed through these languages, harmonized or integrated into a unity. On the contrary, to the extent that the group appears opposing and the cultures appear irreconcilable, multilingualism can throw the person into a dilemma, threatening their balance of mind and personal enhancement (Martin and Nakayama, 2000; Nikolaeva et al., 2016). All the above said shows that it is impossible to study multilingualism of an individual without taking into consideration the functions of those languages they speak in their community, therefore, without regard for a multilingual society.

The connection of the established ethnic groups with their host landscapes is seen in the adaptation of an ethnic collectivity and its economic activity to certain conditions. In the course of time the ratio of ethnicity/landscape becomes optimal for both of them. This means that a sustainable landscape stabilizes the ethnicity, and reasons for the creation of a new ethnic group do not occur. One-landscape territory, such as the Siberian taiga (excluding azonal river valleys), the inland of Australia, savanna, rainforests, and so on, has never been a place of ethnic groups origin (Gumilyov, 1993). Thereby, a conclusion can be drawn that while developing multilingual educational models, the following factors must be taken into account: the historical causes of multilingualism (expansion, unification, post-colonial situations, etc.); geographical factors; socio-political factors; linguistic factors; cultural factors. Therefore, the functional dependence of the educational system on personal enhancement conditions is obvious. This is determined, firstly, by the fact that 'school as a living social organism, with its own specific features, acting in a certain socio-cultural environment, creates a social and cultural environment for the comprehensive development of a student's personality' (Dzhurinskiy, 2016). Secondly, functioning in a particular socio-cultural environment, in addition to their educational functions, schools solve a number of social tasks. Thus, the development of a multilingual multicultural school in a multi-ethnic environment (in a multinational region, as is the Republic of Sakha) is one of the most important tasks of the regional education system, as it meets the spiritual needs of various ethnic groups.

Classification of multi-ethnic school types in Yakutia

As part of the study, based on the criteria for determining multilingualism (multiculturalism) of a school, offered by Siguang and McKee, for the first time the classification (typology) of the national schools of Yakutia has been drawn up on the basis of their formation and development:

Type 1. The language of instruction is different from the student's language. The student's language is completely absent in the education system or is used exclusively to prepare the student to training and, hence, to the knowledge of another language. The obvious goal here is linguistic unification and integration through language.

Type 2. The language of instruction is different from the student's language, but the latter is given particular attention, for example, it is taught. At a higher level the language of a student is not only taught, but it is also the language of instruction, but subordinate to the master language. The goal is again unification and integration, but also the recognition of linguistic and cultural pluralism, together with a plan to save it.

Type 3. The main language of instruction and the student's language are equally distributed among the syllabus materials and are included in the education system activity. The goal is multilingualism and multiculturalism.

Type 4. The main language of instruction is the student's language, but at some point the language study of a language minority is introduced. To that effect, this language is taught as a target language or is taken as the language of instruction for some subjects. The goal is to achieve understanding and harmony between the different language groups.

Type 5. The main language of instruction is the first student's language, but at some point a foreign language study is introduced, knowledge of which may be quite deep and result in its use to perform certain functions. The goal is to expand the culture of a student, to increase their social and professional opportunities.

Type 6. At the first stage of learning, the main language of instruction is the student's language (or their second language, mastered by the student at the beginning of training), but at some point another language is introduced, becoming the master language of instruction at the final stage. The goal is to give students an opportunity to gain knowledge, which their national language cannot provide.

Type 7. Another language is introduced at the beginning of training simultaneously with their own language, and they are both languages of instruction under the same conditions till the end of the school period. The goal is to give students an opportunity to master another language perfectly, so that they could teach it or to increase their professional chances at the international level (Nikolaeva et al., 2016).

This classification is based on the purposes of various multilingual education systems, which arise from certain social situations. Therefore, instead of trying to improve it, it is preferable to study in more detail the system of bi- or multilingual education in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), based on the social situation in which it originated and developed, and on the problems and needs that it claims to solve.

The results of analyzing the socio-pedagogical conditions of a multi-ethnic school development

According to the research carried out, in assessing the socio-pedagogical appropriateness of an educational system, first and foremost, one must take into account the goals that the education system has set itself. Objectives of an educational system can be separated into three blocks of certain tasks:

1. Language tasks. Multi- or bilingual education should target students to achieve a certain level of competence in the use of languages included in the education system. The choice of language education purposes is directly dependent on the language policy and is one of its main manifestations.

2. Learning objectives. Multilingual education system in a multi-ethnic school is a system of education, which, along with the language tasks, is designed to solve also tasks parallel and common with the general objectives of monolingual education system. Multilingual education system has the right to exist only in the event that it proves its efficacy in this field (Siguang and McKee, 1990; Uvarova, 1995). Therefore, in addition to the task for learners to achieve a certain level of linguistic competence, the challenges to achieve



learning outcomes no less high than the similar results in monolingual education system, must be addressed.

3. Social problems. Multilingual education system meets the needs of a certain social and cultural situation and tries to solve some of its problems through mutual understanding and integration. Its results in this regard are also of great importance to the school and the community.

Socio-cultural analysis of formation and development of a multi-ethnic school has shown that while in pre-revolutionary Yakutia the purpose of bilingual education was unification and integration through the language and the culture, in the Soviet period, the goals of bilingual education, varying depending on the type of school by the language of instruction, were limited to the following: integration but together with the recognition of linguistic and cultural pluralism, as well as the intention to preserve it and to give students the opportunity to gain knowledge, which their national language could not provide. Assuming that only the education system, where the languages studied share the instruction language learning function, may be called multilingual, multilingual education system as such did not exist before the 1990s. And it is only since the 1990s when the education system of the Republic has been able to be called a system of bilingual education, which very quickly transformed into a system of multilingual education. Under current conditions, the functioning scope of the indigenous peoples' native languages and the recognition of the special role of the Russian language as the supranational language has expanded. The language goals of the present day education system of the Republic are the following: multilinguism and multicultural; understanding and harmony among the various linguistic and cultural groups; mastering another language perfectly, which promotes raising the students' professional prospects at the international level.

In general, the evolution of the school types in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) by ethnic, linguistic, and cultural features can be observed in the following table:

Table 1. Evolution of the school types in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)

<i>Features</i>	<i>Pre-revolutionary period</i>	<i>Pre-war period</i>	<i>1940-1950</i>	<i>1960- 1980</i>	<i>1990-2000</i>
<i>Ethnic feature</i>	Mono-ethnic	Mono-ethnic and multi-ethnic (Schools of low-numbered peoples of the North in cohabitation areas)	Mono-ethnic and multi-ethnic (mixed)	Mono-ethnic (Rural national (Yakut) schools, schools of low-numbered peoples of the North in compact settlement areas) and multi-ethnic.	Mono-ethnic (Rural national (Yakut) schools, schools of low-numbered peoples of the North in compact settlement areas) and multi-ethnic.
<i>Linguistic feature</i>	Monolingual	Bilingual	Multilingual and bilingual (Schools of	Multilingual	Multilingual

			low-numbered peoples of the North)		
<i>Cultural feature</i>	Monocultural	Multicultural	Multicultural	Multicultural	Multicultural

The language goals are addressed by different school types by the language of instruction at different levels. Thus, it can be stated that the vast majority of schools already manage to achieve the full competence of the students in all the aspects of the master language of instruction (native language in Russian and Yakut schools, non-native language in schools of small peoples of the North; the children of non-Russian nationality, going to Russian schools).

Many schools have achieved the full competence of the students in the master language of instruction and a certain level of competence (in different schools of different levels) in the second language, which may be the first language of a student (schools of small peoples of the North and the Sakha children, studying in Russian-language schools) or a foreign language (schools with a special profile in a foreign language and Sakha-foreign schools). The main factors of monolingual school transformation into a multi-ethnic school are the goals appropriate to academic objectives, the relationship between the student's language and the language of instruction; linguistic homogeneity or heterogeneity of the students.

A similar and equal competence in both languages is observed in Sakha children, studying in mixed and higher level schools. Sakha-foreign schools and schools with a special profile in a foreign language are closest to this level of competence out of the other types of schools, which may result in a students' similar competence in three languages. Therefore, currently, the language objectives defined by the Sakha Republic (Yakutia) education system are carried out by objective ways of political solutions, provide stability and sustainable functioning of the system and, at the same time, ensure a favorable position and cooperation of the whole society, and in the first place, of the parents of students, who are the main actors benefiting from the education system. However, at the same time, students' knowledge of several languages, the possibility of their mutual understanding and social integration cannot themselves provide a full picture of the educational situation in the system, since it happens mainly through a decrease in learning outcomes in other subjects.

Prospects for the development of multilingual education in a multi-ethnic school

Creating a system of multilingual multicultural education in a school with a multi-ethnic environment, or simply an amendment of the current system is a complex matter that requires careful planning. The following should be considered therewith:

- Definition of goals is a precondition. What level of competence and the use of each of the languages by the students is it required to achieve by the end of schooling? What kind of students' integration in each of the cultural traditions expressed through language and traditions as a whole, present in the system of ethnic groups, is it intended to achieve?



- The choice of objectives depends on the language policy and should be in agreement with it. This is a major political decision which, being dependent on the linguistic and cultural policy of the country, is one of its main manifestations;

- As any long-term political solution, the definition of these objectives suits complicated (and in some cases potentially conflict) situations. It is aimed at solving problems by promoting integration within the country and facilitating communication and understanding with the outside world;

- After determining the objectives, work planning can be based on the following provisions: the place of multilingual multicultural education throughout the whole educational system; the structure of the system and its components; the scope of activity or the curriculum; the system of academic staff recruitment; budgeting and time management.

Multilingual education in a multi-ethnic school should be based on a thorough comprehension, and, therefore, the scientific understanding of the reality which it affects (Saparbayeva, 2013). In this regard, studying the main variables, that affect the results of multilingual education in relation to socio-cultural and socio-linguistic situation in the region throughout the school institution existence in it, is required (Neustroev, 2012).

Analysis of the results of the study can be used in any other region of the Russian Federation in the process of designing multilingual (multicultural) education development in a multi-ethnic school. Also, in cases where international practices, giving positive results, are adjusted or just the data obtained in several studies are compared. It is necessary to take into account that the place taken by any method of multilingual (bilingual) education throughout the whole education system, significantly impacts on its results. The brilliant results obtained by an experimental school do not guarantee that in case of applying the same method in all schools the results will be just as satisfactory (Banks and Banks, 2013; Neustroeva et al., 2014).

Conclusion

The analysis of the multi-ethnic schools evolution has shown that at the present stage the educational policy of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) is focused on the course of developing a multi-ethnic school, expanding the functioning scope of the native languages of indigenous peoples and recognizing the special role of the Russian language as the supranational and, if necessary, the second language for all the inhabitants of the Republic. The internal content has changed and the number of school types by the language of instruction has increased. Thus, it can be argued that the language policy of the Republic's education system ensures its stability and sustainable operation, guarantees a favorable position and cooperation of the entire society. However, the objective conditions of personality formation functional dependence, primarily social ones, are not always taken into account.

Prospects for the development of a multi-ethnic school can become more efficient, provided the factors of interaction of the educational system with the society (socio-cultural level, the position in relation to languages, sociolinguistic level) are taken into account.

The objective of further improving the quality and effectiveness of a multi-ethnic school requires determination of socio-pedagogical conditions of its

development, a search for new ways to improve the educational process in a multi-ethnic school as a multilingual education system.

The analysis of different methods of multilingual education throughout the general education system may be useful in the planning of such education in any other region of the Russian Federation and in countries with a similar situation and a critical examination of the draft plan during its elaboration or discussion related to the fact that multilingual (multicultural) education is based on a thorough comprehension, and, therefore, the scientific understanding of the reality which it affects.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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