PERSPECTIVES ON QUALITY IN MINORITY EDUCATION IN CHINA: THE CASE OF SUNAN YUGHUR AUTONOMOUS COUNTY, GANSU

Doctor of Education, 2009
Stephen Arnold Bahry
Graduate Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
University of Toronto

Abstract

This exploratory multiple embedded case study investigates perspectives on education reform under conditions of minority language endangerment in Sunan Yughur Autonomous County, a minority-district in northwest China. The study included three school sites: a Yughur minority urban school; a Yughur minority rural district school, and a Yughur majority rural district school and four embedded cases: school administrators, teachers, parents and students, of Yughur, other minority, or Han nationality.

Adult stakeholders were interviewed on what is important to learn in “education for quality”, and what aspects of Yughur knowledge, culture and language should be included in school curriculum as part of education for quality, while students were asked what they enjoyed studying and whether they would enjoy learning stories, poems and songs in Yughur in school. Findings include strong support among parents and students regardless of ethnicity or school site for Yughur language and culture as “essential qualities” to foster in Sunan County school curriculum, with moderate to weak support among educators ranges with some variation among sites.

Three parallel visions emerge from the study of what it means today for Chinese minority student to be an educated person in contemporary China: (a) regular Chinese-medium education; (b) multicultural Chinese-medium education; and (c) maintenance bilingual education in Yughur
and Chinese. The third vision envisions developing additive bilinguals who know the heritage of their minority as well as the national curriculum in Mandarin. A vision of balanced bilingualism and multiculturalism that sees heritage languages and Mandarin as “resources” is shared by the large majority of parents and students, most teachers and some administrators. Holders of other visions for local minority education largely share a “Language as Problem” orientation towards minority languages.

One aim of devolution of school-based curriculum authority is to develop schools’ individuality. This study reveals three divergent models of local schooling that have developed in one minority school district: one that centres on a monolingual model of national culture, one monolingual, multicultural model, and one bilingual, multicultural model, with the latter model corresponding more closely to minority stakeholder perspectives that schools should play a stronger role in the maintenance and revitalization of their cultural and linguistic heritage.
Acknowledgements

There are a number of people to acknowledge who supported this study. In the first place, I wish to thank my supervisor, Prof. Jim Cummins, whose work in equity in education for language minority students has been an inspiration for this study, for acting as helmsman, keeping me on course, and at times hauling me off various reefs. I wish also to thank the members of my thesis committee: Prof. Ruth Hayhoe, who taught me Comparative Education and Higher Education in China, and Prof. Normand Labrie, who taught me Language Planning and Policy, whose teaching, and confidence in me played an important role in this study. Thanks are also due to the additional members of my committee, Dr. Julia Pan and the external examiner, Prof. Dongyan Ru Blachford, who challenged me during the oral defence.

Various teachers over the years have influenced me and my approach to the study in ways that are not always apparent but are nevertheless significant. In particular, Prof. Joe Farrell’s rigorous persistence in quest of innovative education that works for rural students, families and communities in the developing world has played an important part in the evolution of this study. I wish also to acknowledge Alister Cumming, Eunice Jang, Brent Kilbourn, Karen Mundy, Nina Spada, Vandra Masemann the late David Wilson at OISE/UT; Prof. David Mendelsohn of the TESL Certificate Programme at Woodsworth College, Brian Merrilees of the Department of French; and my M.A. supervisor J. K. Chambers, as well as K. Rice, H. Schoft, R. Wardhaugh, the late Ed. Burstynsky, and the late H. A. Gleason of the Department of Linguistics at University of Toronto, and Professors. Xiao, Chu and Wu of the East Asian Studies Department who taught me Chinese. Special thanks are due to my supervisors in the ESL Part 1 AQ programme at OISE/UT, Jūra Seskus, Elizabeth Coelho and John Macdonald, and to Prof. Lilian Nygren-Junkin of Gothenburg University, Prof. Rena Helms-Park of OISE/UT, and
Prof Zha Qiang of York University, classmates, colleagues, and friends, as well as to Professor
Kristian Kirkwood of Nipissing University, Brock University and Khorog State University,
Tajikistan, who has been an exemplary model of a researcher, teacher, and person; and who,
along with Sharon Kirkwood, provided constant guidance, and encouragement. While studying
at OISE, I have been employed as an Academic ESL Instructor at the English Language
Programme of School of Continuing Studies, University of Toronto. The understanding of my
supervisors, Carolyn Coté, Sherry Yuan Hunter, Marjatta Holt, Lisa Morgan, and Ian
Wigginsworth, and the support of ELP staff and colleagues during the doctoral programme have
been particularly appreciated. Thanks also to friends and classmates at OISE/UT, officemates,
Kirk Perris, Jaddon Park, and Eynolah Ahmadi-Bidhendi, as well as Alison Neilson, David
McCormick, Amir Soheili-Mehr, Naxin Zhao, Ting Xue, and Joy Kangxian Zhao. Thanks to
Steve Bland, Scott (write-a-page-a-day) Easson, Bill Mboutsiadis, and Dave Wilson for keeping
me on an even keel, and to Alan DeYoung, Sarfaroz Niyozov, Duishon Shamatov, Jazira
Asanova and Michael Sinclair for all their support, constructive criticism, collaboration and
friendship.

Special gratitude is due for the invaluable assistance of those who have read, critiqued or
translated various parts of the study: Jia Luo, Patrick Darkhor, Carol Benson, Kimmo Kosonen,
as well as Terry Compton, Mona Ghali, Louise Gormley, Rowena He, Doug Orme, Anne van de
Velde, & Bark-kwang Yoon. Needless to say, their contribution has been particularly important.

Thanks are due to Prof. Ma Xuefeng of Northwest University for Minorities and his
students for supporting me in Lanzhou and assisting with translation; to Professor Wang Jiayi,
Vice President of Northwest Normal University, Lanzhou, and to his students for their support,
as well as Gloria and Wang Kun for their painstaking work in transcribing hours of tape, and to
Fei and Danzhenduojie for bearing with me from dawn til well past dusk interpreting for me.

Thanks also to Profs. Wang Jian and Wan Minggang of Northwest Normal University for their critical feedback on portions of the literature review on minority education in China.

Appreciation is due to the Education Bureau of Zhangye Prefecture, Gansu and the Education Bureau of Sunan Yughur Autonomous County, Zhangye for inviting me to conduct this research. In addition, thanks are due to Tiemuer and Arslan of the Sunan County Yughur Culture Research Office, who shared with me some of the insights from their work, and to Ma Xueyun of the Sunan County Education Bureau, who assisted throughout my stay with the logistical challenges of my fieldwork in Sunan County. Similarly, Prof. Wang Jiayi of Northwest Normal University, and Yughur scholars Prof Zhong Jinwen of Central University for Minorities, Beijing; Prof. He Weiguang of Northwest University for Minorities and Prof. An Xuehui of Northwest Normal University provided me with useful background information, insights and publications that helped to make the picture of Yughur education more complete.

Particular appreciation is due to Jia Luo of Northwest University for Minorities in Lanzhou, Gansu, currently a doctoral student at OISE/UT, for all his kind and patient assistance, and to Meryl Greene of Education Commons, OISE/UT, for the painstaking care she brought to editing the thesis.

Of course, my ever understanding, wife, Susan Bird Bahry, and my children, Timothy, David and Matthew, have borne as much or more of the sacrifices required for this study as I have, for which I am truly thankful. Without their patience and love, I could not have completed my studies. Many others have knowingly, and often unknowingly, encouraged the completion of this work: I am grateful to you all!
Dedication

Учітесь, читайте, чужого навчайте і свого не цурайтесь

Teach, read and learn from others, but do not shun what is your own.

Taras Shevchenko, 1845

This study is dedicated to my parents, Norma Sutton and Michael Bahry, and my grandmother Anne Bahry, who first awoke in me curiosity about languages, education and bilingualism, and to the late Chuck Elsey, classmate, colleague, supervisor and friend, who had endless curiosity about other tongues, lands and cultures, who accomplished great things in the Pamir Mountains, and could have done so much more.

Finally, this study is dedicated to all the children, parents, grandparents, educators and researchers of Sunan Yughur Autonomous County and Gansu who shared their experiences, opinions and hopes with me.
# Table of Contents

Abstract .......................................................................................................................... ii
Acknowledgements ......................................................................................................... iv
Dedication ....................................................................................................................... vii

Chapter One: Introduction ............................................................................................ 1
  Overview ....................................................................................................................... 1
  Rationale for the Study ............................................................................................... 3
  Research Problem ....................................................................................................... 6
  Research Questions .................................................................................................... 7

Chapter Two: Conceptualizations of "Quality" in the Education of Non-Dominant Groups .................................................................................................................. 10
  Introduction ................................................................................................................ 10
  Perspectives on Quality in Education ......................................................................... 10
  Local Stakeholders and the Education of Non-Dominant Groups ............................ 14
    Local Stakeholders, Trust, Null and Hidden Curriculum ........................................ 17
  Ruiz' Language Orientation Framework .................................................................... 19
  Empowering Models of Education for Language Minority Students ......................... 22
  Non-Dominant Stakeholders and Quality of Education ............................................. 25
    Rural Education ....................................................................................................... 25
    Development Education: Local Stakeholders, Modernization and Human Capital .... 28
    Community schools in developing countries .......................................................... 29
    Nomadic education .................................................................................................. 30
  Non-Dominant Stakeholders and Multicultural Education ......................................... 32
  Local Stakeholders and Bilingual Education ............................................................. 34
    Quality and Bilingual Education in Developing Contexts ....................................... 36
    The Role of the Elementary School in Preventing or Reversing Language Shift ........ 38
  Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 42

Chapter Three: Quality and Language in Education of Non-Dominant Groups in China .................................................................................................................. 44
  Introduction ................................................................................................................ 44
    Quality as Characteristics of People, Processes, and Systems .................................. 45
  Quantitative Perspectives on Quality of Education in China .................................... 45
    Variability of Quantitative Measures of Quality of Education in China .................. 46
  Quality Education Versus Education for Quality in China ......................................... 47
    Decentralization and Quality in Chinese Education ............................................... 49
  Perspectives on Quality in Rural Education in China ............................................... 50
    Perspectives of Rural Stakeholders on Quality in Education ................................... 51
  Perspectives on Quality in Minority Education in China .......................................... 54
    Null and Hidden Curriculum and Quality in Minority Education in China ............ 55
  Language in Education Policy and Minority Education in China ............................. 56
  Bilingual Education in China ..................................................................................... 57
    Models of Bilingual Education in China ................................................................. 59
    Language orientations and multilingualism in China .............................................. 60
  Scholarly Debate on Quality and Bilingual Education in China ............................... 62
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Four: The Research Site: Sunan Yughur Autonomous County, Gansu, China</th>
<th>81</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Context of the Study</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunan Yughur Autonomous County</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunan County’s Economy</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationalities in Sunan County</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Yughur Nationality</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Origins of the Yughurs</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yughur Family Structure</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yughurs, Religion and Education</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Use in Sunan County</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yughur Language Planning</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary Education in Sunan Yughur Autonomous County</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent Attainment Trends: Comparison of Yughur with Han</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education, Curriculum and Language in Sunan County, Gansu</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trial Sarigh Yughur Revival Programme in Huangnibao, Jiuquan Prefecture</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disconnect Between Home and School</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-Based Curriculum and Cultural Relevance in Sunan County</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yughur Language Interest Group in Sunan Yughur Autonomous County Centre School</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Policy in Sunan Yughur Autonomous County</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Five: Research Design and Methodology</th>
<th>109</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach: Multiple Embedded Exploratory Case Study</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploratory Study Methods</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple case study</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Cases: Three Schools</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 1: Urban School + Yughur Minority District</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 2: Rural School + Yughur Minority District</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 3: Rural School + Yughur Majority District</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded Case Study</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded Case Selection</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded Cases: Stakeholder Participant Selection</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family members</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary participants</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Sources and Data Collection Procedures</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative Data Sources</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-structured interviews and group interviews</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Semi-structured classroom observations .............................................................. 120
Other observations ................................................................................................ 121
Artifacts .................................................................................................................. 121
Documents ............................................................................................................. 122
Quantitative Data Sources ..................................................................................... 122
Methods and Procedure of Data Analysis .............................................................. 123
Analysis of Quantitative Data .............................................................................. 123
Analysis of Interview Data .................................................................................. 123
Limitations of Data, Reliability, Validity, Credibility, and Trustworthiness ............. 125
Researcher’s Role: Insider Versus Outsider Research ............................................ 127

Chapter Six: Case 1: A Model Regular School ...................................................... 130
Introduction ............................................................................................................. 130
The County Town .................................................................................................. 130
The School .............................................................................................................. 131
Embedded Case 1: The Principal .......................................................................... 133
  How Important Is Local Knowledge, Culture and Language in School Curriculum? 134
  What Is Most Important to Learn as Part of “Education for Quality”? ................. 136
    Challenges to achieving “Education for Quality.” .............................................. 138
Summary: The Principal ......................................................................................... 139
Embedded Case 2: The Teachers .......................................................................... 142
  How Important Is Local Knowledge, Culture and Language in School Curriculum? 143
    Local minority languages .................................................................................. 144
  What Is Most Important to Learn as Part of “Education for Quality”? ................. 147
    Challenges to achieving “Education for Quality.” .............................................. 147
Summary: The Teachers ......................................................................................... 149
Embedded Case 3: The Parents ........................................................................... 153
  Yughur Parents’ Perspectives on Local Content in the Curriculum .................... 153
  Perspectives on Yughur Language in the Local and School Curriculum ............. 155
    Perspectives of parents of other nationalities .................................................... 157
  Yughur Parents’ Perspectives on Education for Quality .................................... 158
    Perspectives of parents of other nationalities .................................................... 160
  Parents’ Aspirations for Their Children’s Ultimate Educational Attainment .......... 162
Summary: The Parents ......................................................................................... 162
Embedded Case 4: The Students ......................................................................... 164
Summary: The Students ........................................................................................ 169
Case 1 Findings ...................................................................................................... 170

Chapter Seven: Case 2: A Monolingual, Multicultural School ............................ 176
Introduction ............................................................................................................. 176
The District and its Administrative Centre ............................................................... 176
The School .............................................................................................................. 178
Embedded Case 1: The “Zhuren” and the Curriculum Development Committee ...... 179
  Local Minority Languages and the School ............................................................. 179
  School-Based Curriculum in the Case 2 School .................................................... 182
    Local Sunan and Yughur cultural content and the school curriculum ................ 183
References

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Ten: Conclusion</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions of the Study</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of the Study</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for Policy Development, Implementation, Assessment, and Revision</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion: Incipient Community Schools in Sunan Yughur Autonomous County</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horseback Schools</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Houses as ‘Language Nests’</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority Language Preschools</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraprofessional Instructors</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Education or Re-Education?</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Choice or System Reform?</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research in School-Based Minority Curriculum Development in Northwest China</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>References</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Appendices

Appendix A Tables .................................................................................................................. 337
Appendix B Figures .................................................................................................................. 377
**Chapter One:**

**Introduction**

*Overview*

Significant economic changes have occurred in China since the introduction of the Four Modernizations policy in 1980, raising average national income levels significantly. Education is one of the four areas targeted for modernization in a policy that has seen increased central government investment in tertiary education, and selected secondary schools, while financing of the primary schools, and the bulk of secondary schools has been devolved to lower levels of government. However, the economic benefits of reform have not reached the nation equally, creating concern about developing disparities. Figure 1 in Appendix B presents a map illustrating the range of rates of economic growth from 1993 to 1998. It is evident that the coastal areas experienced greater growth than the interior regions.

One of China’s goals in modernizing education is the achievement of universal basic education. In fact, average educational attainment has increased nationally (e.g., the percentage of the population with tertiary education rose from 2.00 to 3.73% from 1990 to 2000). Nevertheless, there is considerable variation among regions, genders and ethnicities in educational attainment, as can be seen easily in Figure 2, which illustrates the regional variation in educational attainment with the regions identified as lowest in educational attainment largely the same as those identified in Figure 1 as having the lowest rates of economic growth (China, 1994, 1998, 2002; Epstein, 1993; Hannum, 1999; Hayhoe, 1995; Huang, 2004; Lewin, Xu, Little & Zheng, 1994; Yao, 1999).
Table 1 in Appendix A\(^1\) presents statistics for China’s total population and minority population from the 1990 and 2000 census and a calculation from these figures of the rates of growth of population from 1990-2000. It is evident from the table that the rate of growth of the minority population is quite high and much faster than that for the population as a whole. Thus, China's coastal urban areas are relatively developed, while the interior and border regions, with lower incomes and educational attainment and high population growth resemble developing countries.

China is also an ethnically diverse, multilingual state with many dialects and regional forms of the Chinese language and languages of ethnic minorities spoken in addition to standard Mandarin Chinese, or *Putonghua*. While there is no simple one-to-one relationship between income, education, region, ethnicity and language, a comparison of Figure 3, showing the geographic distribution of minority languages in China, with Table 1 and Figures 1 and 2 suggests that to some degree in China lower levels of income and education together with high rates of natural increase are largely a feature of areas where minority languages are spoken. Thus, *development* or *modernization* in China is not purely a geographic or economic phenomenon, but is also a linguistic, cultural and ethnic phenomenon.

In China, recent educational policies have been put into effect that attempt to balance pan-Chinese social and economic development with the pan-Chinese development and local development. The major policy associated with the first goal is: *education for quality*, or, *suzhi jiaoyu* (Fong, 2007; Huang, 2004). The major policy initiatives associated with the second goal decentralize a portion of the curriculum: *local curriculum*, or *difang kecheng* and *school-based curriculum*, or *xiaoben kecheng*.

\(^1\) Tables are found in Appendix A, and figures are found in Appendix B.
Central government Ministry of Education publications on curriculum reform do not explicitly specify the implications in minority districts of education for quality, local and school-based curriculum, and do not direct that lessons should now include more content drawn from local minority knowledge, culture or language; nor do they exclude doing so (Yang & Zhou, 2002; Zhu, 2002).

Rationale for the Study

At the same time that gaps in income are widening, the central government has devolved much of the financing of education to the local level; the impact of this policy is much greater in the interior and western regions of the country, which are least able to finance education without central support. Investment in primary education brings the greatest private and social returns, reducing inequitable access to education, while investments in higher education maintain disparities (World Bank, 1999), yet China’s modernization strategy invests in senior secondary and tertiary education, exacerbating, and possibly increasing, social disparities (Epstein, 1993).

Preferential college admission policies for minority students, such as the right to select the language of testing, have had little effect in increasing equitable access to higher education (Bass, 1998; Sautman, 1999), while educational stratification by ethnicity seems to be increasing (L. Benson, 2004; China, 2003; Hannum & Xie, 1998), with implications for long-term social stability. Thus, there is a need to study conditions affecting the participation, achievement, survival and attainment of minority youth in the lower levels of the state education system.

Several factors have been argued as influencing participation of linguistic and ethnic minorities in state education: religion (Gladney, 1999; Mackerras, 1999), gender (Seeberg, 2004), nomadism (Kräti, 2000), and poverty (Postiglione, Jiao & Gyatso, 2006). Curricula and pedagogies, and particularly unfamiliar language(s) of instruction, and related lack of
comprehension and alienation have been identified as factors in educational difficulties of linguistic minorities in other contexts (Baker, 2001; C. Benson, 2004; Cummins, 1981, 2000, 2001; Hovens, 2002; Pattanayak, 2001; Watt & Roessingh, 1994, 2001; Willig, 1985).

A key factor that may influence minority education is the language of instruction, that is, whether linguistic minorities are educated in their mother tongue (L1), in Mandarin, their second language (L2), or in some form of bilingual education. L1 education preserves the native language, but does not prepare students for the wider multi-ethnic society where L2 proficiency is necessary, while L2 education may lead to cultural assimilation and loss of the mother tongue (Baker, 2001; Corson, 1993; Cummins, 2001).

In China, mother-tongue (L1) education is not mandated for linguistic minorities, but is constitutionally permitted, while promoting the state language, Mandarin, is now required by law (Zhou, 2004), and English (L3) is both a compulsory school subject and an obligatory component of college entrance examinations (Adamson & Morris, 1997; Hu, 2003; Ross, 1991). Unproblematized assumptions exist in China about: (a) the need for China and all its nationalities to modernize, (b) the absolute necessity of basic education for all, (c) the extreme desirability of post-secondary education, (d) the need for proficiency in Mandarin Chinese among minorities, and (e) the need for knowledge of English.

Thus, greater valuation by the broader society of Mandarin and English proficiency creates pressures for minority education to emphasize L2 and L3 over L1. As a result, L1 is taught only as a subject and not used as a medium of instruction, or is not taught at all, leading to submersion bilingual education, that is, instruction in a less familiar or unfamiliar language (Baker, 2001). In these circumstances, sending rural minority children to boarding schools in a distant L2 (Mandarin) environment is seen as a progressive measure for minority youth (Wang &
Zhou, 2003). Nevertheless, such measures have been found to frequently lead to linguistic and cultural assimilation of minority children (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2008).

The equitable participation of minorities should not require choosing among assimilation, cultural isolation, or political separatism, and thus, some means of effectively combining local minority knowledge, culture and language with national curriculum, Mandarin language and a third language is necessary. Educational change requires active involvement of stakeholders (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Leithwood, 1992; Snyder, Bolin & Zumwalt, 1992); thus, the study of stakeholder perspectives towards bilingual education and the practices of local educators and administrators and their interconnection is needed. Some research on stakeholder perceptions in China exists, but little field-based study has been done thus far. Participation in the study gives educators a voice on the multiple challenges of the context and an opportunity to "recover" and "reconstruct" meaning (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, pp. 81-82), for, in the process of "deliberation" in making their practical pedagogical and curricular choices (Schwab, 1970, 1971, 1973, 1983) they can come to a more informed response towards the education of linguistic minority students. Participation in the study of other stakeholders, parents and students provides participants with an opportunity to express their voices on what they learn and what they think they should learn (Pinar, Reynolds, Taubman & Slattery, 1995, pp. 525-532). Scholars, policy makers, administrators, teachers, community members and activists in China can benefit from understanding stakeholders’ views and practices, better informing the dialogue on the development and implementation of local and school-based curriculum (Yang & Zhou, 2002). Finally, insights from the research can inform understandings of educational change in China and the process of inclusion of linguistic minorities in the educational system, providing insights into similar challenges in other contexts, such as schooling for indigenous peoples in North America.
**Research Problem**

Curricular centralization gave teachers little scope to minority needs, but recent policy promoting quality education has reduced central control, encouraging school-based curriculum development (Yang & Zhou, 2002; Zhu, 2002). Therefore, the central research problem of this study is to explore the understandings and practices of local educators and stakeholders on how to achieve quality education among linguistic minority students in contexts where educational participation, achievement and attainment are below the national mean (Bahry, 2005b, 2006).

This study explores how curriculum and education are understood among stakeholders in a minority site in China, in which the phenomenon of increasing educational attainment is combined with decreasing numbers of the minority population proficient in the mother tongue. Thus, the case study represents both a typical case in some respects and an extreme case in other respects. Much research on minority education in China focuses on extreme cases in terms of degree of average educational attainment, studying nationalities whose average years of schooling completed are relatively low such as the Tibetans and Uygurs, or extremely high, such as the Koreans (China, 1994, 2003). At the same time such research focuses on atypical cases in terms of the impact of education on retention by minority students of the mother tongue, since their languages are used locally as languages of administration, education and publishing; on a scale of ethnolinguistic vitality of minority languages, they both ranked in the five most vital minority languages in China (Huang, as cited in Zhou, 2003, p. 30).

This study focuses on a case which is, in a sense, the opposite of either the Tibetan or Korean case. It is a typical case from the perspective of educational attainment, since Yughur mean attainment levels differ relatively little from the national mean; hence, it resembles the average educational attainment of the Han nationality, which comprises approximately 90% of
China’s population (China, 1994, 2003). From the perspective of language maintenance, however, the case studied will be atypical. Sunan Yughur Autonomous County represents an extreme case in that the population of the Yughur minority is quite small, under 20,000, and has two different mother tongues, West Yughur, or *Sarigh Yughur*, and East Yughur, or *Shira Yughur*, both of which are considered by some to be “endangered”. Although autonomous status was granted in part to protect Yughur language(s) and culture (Sunan County, 1994), Standard Chinese is the exclusive language of instruction in the classroom, and West or East Yughur languages are not formally used as languages of instruction or taught in school as subjects, a situation which may play a role in promoting language shift to Mandarin and exacerbate the risk of language loss in this community (Bradley, 2005; China, 2003; Hahn, 1998; Huang, as cited in Zhou, 2003, p. 31; Moukala, 2003; Nugteren, 2003). Thus the study’s purpose, conventional enough, to identify stakeholder perspectives towards what should be learned in school, is highlighted by the background context of the local perspectives concerning the purpose of education, minority language and culture retention and development, and the interplay between these perspectives.

**Research Questions**

Given the Ministry of Education’s recent decision to emphasize quality education and to devolve greater control of curriculum and materials development to local and school levels, the major research question is:

What do local stakeholders in a minority district feel is important to learn in schools as part of quality education; in particular, what part do local stakeholders feel the maintenance of Yughur indigenous knowledge, culture
and language should play as part of a quality education in Sunan Yughur Autonomous County schools?

Additional research questions include:

1. What is the nature of stakeholders’ understandings of the place within the curriculum of local minority language(s), local minority culture and other local knowledge in “quality” basic education in Sunan County?

2. What challenges do stakeholders perceive, and what responses to these challenges do they see as appropriate to these challenges?

3. What is the nature of stakeholders’ thinking about what adaptations of curriculum are, could or should be made in schools and in the classroom to take into account the local context, including the multiple languages and cultures of the context?

Thus, the research questions attempt to engage stakeholders in reflection on what is important for the youth of Sunan Yughur Autonomous County to learn in school in national, local, and school-based curricula. The questions are formulated in quite general terms so that they may encompass by "the nature of primary participants' thinking" the entire semantic field covered by a range of similar constructs in the literature on teacher development: teachers' thinking (Kompf & Denicolo, 2003), teachers' cognition (Woods, 1996), teachers' knowledge and understanding (Buchmann, 1984), teachers' knowledge, beliefs and attitudes (Pajares, 1992) teachers' personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988), teachers' epistemology (Pope & Scott, 2003) and teachers’ knowledge-in-action (Schön, 1983), extending these constructs to include other stakeholders. Given the fact that so little is known about perspectives of stakeholders in multiethnic, multilingual minority districts in China, the purpose of the study
is exploratory and therefore the research questions’ are broad, in order to not greatly restrict the scope of stakeholders’ responses.
Chapter Two:  
Conceptualizations of "Quality" in the Education of Non-Dominant Groups

Introduction

This study’s purpose is to explore what quality in education means to four key sets of local stakeholders in Sunan Yughur Autonomous County under conditions of rapid sociocultural change, including language shift: school administrators, teachers, parents and learners. Since judgments of quality depend on the context and the identity of the judges, the study focuses on local stakeholders’ perceptions of educational quality; that is, what minority qualities should form part of quality minority education. The chapter will first deal with literature on quality in education, and then review literature on local stakeholders and quality, followed by a discussion of Ruiz’ language orientations as a framework for understanding stakeholder perspectives on quality education for linguistic minorities. Finally, the role of local stakeholders in frameworks for empowerment of minority student will be reviewed, followed by a synthesis of the literature.

Perspectives on Quality in Education

At its most basic, quality refers to the presence of desired characteristics, or a process that produces or embodies desired characteristics. Yet implicit understandings of educational quality often leave criteria for judging quality unstated. A recent work defines quality in education thus:

Quality in Education is an evaluation of the process of educating which enhances the need to achieve and develop the talents of the customers of the process, and at the same time meets the accountability standards set by the clients who pay for the process or the outputs from the process of educating. (Hoy, Bayne-Jardine, & Wood, 2000, p. 10)

While it is stated that “each stakeholder may have his or her own ‘quality standard’ against which to arrive at a judgment. Parents, children, governors, industry and business, the
government may each have a different perspective” (Hoy et al., 2000, p. 13), yet the construct, quality, is not defined beyond client and customer satisfaction, determined by quantitative measures, such as student attendance and achievement, that are assumed to be valid proxies for quality, without giving stakeholders a role in negotiating how quality is understood in their school.

Beeby (1966) argues that three types of judgements of quality in education are often confounded. The classroom inspector sees quality as the presence of observable characteristics, such as students’ factual knowledge, and dispositions such as diligence (pp. 10-11). The economist sees quality as the fit between educational “outputs” and the economy, the efficient production of “outputs”, and the “rate of return” on educational investment (p. 12). At the social level, “everyone becomes an expert on education, and each of us judges the school system in terms of the final goals we set for ourselves, our children, our tribe, our country” (p. 12). At this level, quality depends on values; thus strong disagreement on what constitutes quality results.

Chapman and Carrier (1990), in contrast, claim that education should reflect cultural diversity, arguing that each culture has symbols that strongly influence perceptions of quality of education among local stakeholders, but that “when innovations in the school may diminish or eliminate these symbols, the worth of the total innovation may be questioned” (p. 13). Indeed, they conclude that judgments of educational quality must involve local stakeholders:

The worth of an educational program is based not only on the perceptions of those who fund or administer the program, but on those who participate in it on a day-to-day basis, those who send their children to engage in it, and those who live with the program in their communities long after the program originators have moved on. (p. 14)

The World Bank defined quality in education in developing countries based on national mean achievement scores, and claimed that local participation strongly affected quality:
School governing bodies, principals, and teachers with their intimate knowledge of local conditions, are best able to select the most appropriate package of inputs. Under the right circumstances, making schools and higher education institutions accountable to parents, communities, and students helps bring about more effective learning and hence improves educational quality. (1995, p. 8)

The World Bank (1999) argued that criteria for quality must be decided with partners, with “the knowledge and understanding of local values, culture and traditions that are an essential feature of sustainable development” (p. 16), who include local communities, parents and students, whose participation in school activities and governance is “crucial” for quality education (p. 18).

UNESCO’s Millennium Development Goals for Development define quality in worldwide education in purely quantitative terms as the achievement by 2015 of universal primary education and the elimination of gender disparities between 2005 and 2015 (UNESCO, 2004, p. 28). UNESCO has also defined educational quality as “learning the right things to lead a decent life in a fast-changing world” for “future adult roles as creative, thinking citizens who can sustain themselves and contribute to the well-being of their families, communities and societies” (Pigozzi, 2006, p. 40), without specifying who decides what a ‘decent life’ consists of. UNESCO (2004) also argues that quality requires relevance of education:

imported or inherited curricula have often been judged insufficiently sensitive to the local context and to learners’ socio-cultural circumstances. The Convention on the Rights of the Child stresses a child-centred approach to teaching and learning. This in turn emphasizes the importance of curricula that as far as possible respond to the needs and priorities of the learners, their families and communities. (p. 31)

UNESCO (2004) presents behaviourist, humanist, critical and indigenous views on quality in education (pp. 33-35), arguing that achieving quality requires dialogue among proponents of all four perspectives with the aim of establishing broad agreement on aims, objectives and the agreed upon dimensions of quality in education (p. 36).
A UNICEF publication defined quality in basic education as making “people’s needs and well-being—the fulfillment of each person’s human potential in its material, spiritual, individual, and social dimensions—the central focus” (Ahmed, 1991, p. 4), which requires national, subnational, and local levels of curriculum authority allowing basic education programmes to adapt to the diversity of places and students. This would involve “major decentralization with greatly enhanced local responsibility and popular involvement” (pp. 10, 13) and the legal empowerment of “village education committees, … voluntary associations, social activists, and higher levels of government … to serve as countervailing forces to entrenched local structures of domination and exploitation” (pp. 14-15). In Ahmed’s view:

The process and inputs of education—how teaching-learning occurs, who teaches with what learning materials, and in what kind of facilities—are usually raised as quality related questions. These are appropriate and important questions, but these can be answered adequately only in relation to the goals to be achieved. It is, after all, possible to move with great efficiency and speed towards the wrong destination. (p. 73)

UNESCO, UNICEF, and World Bank views are consonant with a strong form of school-based curriculum development (SCBD) (Marsh, Day, Hannay, & McCutcheon, 1990; OECD, 1979) in which principals and teachers making school curriculum, with students (Skilbeck, 1984), “parents and other citizens” (Marsh et al., 1990, p. 199), or “the parties involved in daily school work: teachers, parents, pupils, and school administrators” (OECD, 1979, p. 11).

Clearly, understandings of quality in education among scholars, and educational planners have evolved beyond notions of increasing access, attendance, achievement, and national income. A significant role is now granted by many to the judgments of local stakeholders on quality in education, and to their participation in establishing the content and processes of
education at the school level, which is seen as a necessary condition for educational effectiveness.

**Local Stakeholders and the Education of Non-Dominant Groups**

Educational decentralization and increased local participation in determining visions of quality in education receives support from criticisms of objective, universal knowledge treated as independent of time, place (Nelson, 1996; Walker, 1996), and the knower’s subjectivity (Code, 1996; Harding, 1991; Jaggar, 1996; Rose, 1994). It has been argued that knowledge is a feature of an epistemic community, a social group situated in a particular time and place. On this view, knowledge claims reflect the point of view of those making the claims, including subjective and non-rational elements (Code, 1996; Pendelbury, 2005). On this view, central curricula are framed by the perceptions of educational planners, who are typically highly-educated urban members of socially-dominant groups, who do not, or cannot easily take into account perceptions that differ fundamentally from their own.

Liberal arguments for the restriction of minority languages in the public sphere, including in schools, requiring dominant-language education for language minority students are based on a utilitarian argument that the greatest good to the greatest number, including for minorities, flows from such a policy (Laitin & Reich, 2003). This method permits a conclusion of what constitutes ‘good’ for language minorities without any empirical evidence of how members of language minorities conceive “quality” and its relation to economic and educational success and language.

Corson (2001) critiques such liberal justice theory applied to minorities in a multilingual, multiethnic society on two grounds. First, such an interpretation of liberalism seriously misunderstands the function of language, treating it as an “instrumental convenience available by chance to the individuals who acquire it”, not recognizing the role of language as “the very
means by which individual human beings are socialized and from which they develop a consciousness of themselves and their world” (pp. 28-29). For Corson, language is not simply a neutral channel for communication, but forms a fundamental part of individual and collective identity. Secondly, this interpretation of liberalism does not take into account that:

decision makers cannot see the world from the point of view of those who are very different from themselves and who do not enjoy the same privileged language position. In the United States, for example, the Latino population’s well-being is almost exclusively in the hands of English-speaking monolinguals. (pp. 9-30)

Corson critiques the liberal conception of social justice as identical treatment for every member of society, concluding that social justice requires unequal treatment, for “to treat people equally and fairly, we do not treat them as if they were all the same, or even potentially the same” (Corson, 2001, p. 31). Corson further concludes that justice requires some form of preferential treatment for non-dominant groups in the education system for compulsory state education to be just. Following Bhaskar, he argues that preferential treatment of non-dominant groups alone is no guarantee of a just education, for the preferential policies offered may differ considerably from what non-dominant groups desire from their own perspectives. Such policies should thus be established through consultation with communities they are intended to benefit.

Following Bhaskar (1986/2009), Corson argues that social justice first requires evidence, and that “the most basic evidence we can have about the social world is the reasons and accounts that given people offer to describe the things in their world that they value, or the things that oppress them” (Corson, 2001, p. 31). Corson’s critiques centralized curricula epistemologically, since they presume with insufficient grounds to know what is good for minority students, treating their own subjective notions of good as objective, universal standards that do not need verification. Corson’s critique also has a political aspect, for making substantial policy decisions
without participation of the group affected by the decision is undemocratic. Thus, where and how questions of minority educational policy are decided has profound implications for the implementation of education that reflects minority students, parent, and community perceptions of quality. Building further on Bhaskar, Corson concludes devolution of decision making power to minority communities is required with decisions on policy and practices arrived at through consultation between all local stakeholders concerned. To achieve fairness in education for linguistic minorities in multilingual settings, Corson argues for three policy principles:

1. If possible, children should be guaranteed an education in the language of the home, or the language they most value;

2. If principle 1 is not possible, then children should be guaranteed an education in an environment where respect is shown for their home language and its cultural role;

3. All children should be guaranteed the opportunity to learn the language of wider communication current in their society to the highest ability possible. (2001, p. 32)

Corson’s ethical argument is that if members of a linguistic minority desire education in their native, minority language, then it is unethical to not follow principle 1, if it is at all possible to do so. It is equally unethical, Corson argues, to compel minority communities to be educated in their native language, if they wish to be educated in the dominant language of their society. However, in this case, policy makers have the ethical obligation to first engage minority communities in dialogue about the potential negative consequences of such a choice. Failing such an informed dialogue, Corson implies that it would be unethical for policy makers to cease to provide mother tongue or bilingual education in multilingual communities, particularly without informing themselves of current research on language in education and conducting rigorous qualitative and quantitative research within their jurisdiction. Thus, how and by whom it is decided if it is “possible” to implement principle 1, and if not, how “respect” for the home
language and culture will be interpreted is a key question, since Principle 3 applied alone or with higher priority than Principle 1 can be used to justify excluding the mother tongue from schools.

**Local Stakeholders, Trust, Null and Hidden Curriculum**

The null curriculum, or the absence of curriculum content concerning non-dominant groups (Eisner, 2002, pp. 97-106; Jackson, 1992, p. 9), and the hidden curriculum, the presence of implicit negative messages about non-dominant groups (Apple, 2004, pp. 77-98; Curtis, 1988; Jackson, 1968, pp. 33-35, 1992, 8-9) are often said to impair the quality of education of non-dominant students, who may react with resistance to education, or acceptance of these messages, generating complex feelings concerning their identity, including, anger and shame (Igoa, 1995; Jalava, 1988; Nieto, 2002; Skutnabb-Kangas, & Cummins, 1988; Willis, 1977).

Language minority children may be ridiculed, criticized or punished for speaking their language; in consequence, they may respond to their language’s low social status by ceasing to use it, responding in L2 when addressed in their native language. Feelings of shame may induce parents to use L2 with their children, in the hope of sparing their children the pain they had themselves experienced at school. Thus, language shift may be accomplished in three generations: the first generation speaks and understands, the second generation understands but cannot speak; the third does not know the language. Combined with isolation from family and community in residential schools, as it was for North American aboriginal children, language shift can occur in one generation (Fishman, 1989, 1991; Grenoble & Whaley, 1998, 2006; Hinton & Hale, 2001; Jalava, 1988; Nettle & Romaine, 2000; Skutnabb-Kangas & Cummins, 1988).
A strong consensus exists on the importance of parental involvement in children’s academic achievement and as a factor in school effectiveness (Coleman, 1998; Fullan, 2007; Mortimer, Sammons, Stoll, Lewis & Ecob, 1988; Reynolds and Teddlie, 2000; Topping, 1985). Nevertheless, the construct, parental involvement, does not see parents as partners in curriculum making, labelling such attempts as “criticism” and “complaints”, from which effective principals “buffer” teachers (Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000, p. 151). Educators’ conceptions of quality are assumed unproblematically within school effectiveness research; thus, parents and students who do not cooperate with teachers’ visions are seen as the problem:

The kid is where the problem is today. There is nothing wrong with the curriculum. If I could just get people that wanted to learn, then I could teach and everything would be wonderful. (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, p. 13)

How and why parents and students may resist teachers’ objectives, and what their perspectives on quality of education are, is underresearched within school effectiveness literature, although ethnographies of education of non-dominant groups have begun this task (Corbett, 2007).

Despite research support for stakeholder co-operation, dialogue between teachers and other local stakeholders is relatively limited (Hargreaves, 1992; Lortie, 1975). Bryk and Schneider (2002) attribute such isolation to insufficient trust. Trust is common, they argue, in schools with little diversity, where cultural values and expectations about education are shared. Where there are few shared assumptions, trust must be established through dialogue, a challenging task when teachers’ and parents’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds differ widely:

Teachers often see (poor) parents’ goals as impediments to students’ academic accomplishments. Parents in turn believe that teachers are antagonistic toward them and fail to appreciate the actual conditions that shape their children’s lives. (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 6)
Thus in the education of non-dominant groups, a condition promoting quality in education is the establishment of trust through collaboration among stakeholders (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 6).

**Ruiz’ Language Orientation Framework**

Ruiz pointed out in a seminal article originally published in 1984 (Ruiz, 1984/1988) that language planning and policy debates reflected assumptions about language and the relation between language and society. He argued that policy debates revealed two opposed conclusions about policy, which he termed the “Language as Problem” and “Language as Right” orientations, which derived largely from “unconscious and prerational” “dispositions” (p. 4). Thus, language orientations seem based more on folk psychology and folk pedagogy (Olson & Bruner, 1998) than research. Ruiz claims that orientations frame the discourse about language, society, and education, since “they determine the basic questions we ask, the conclusions we draw from the data, and even the data themselves” (Ruiz, 1988, p. 4).

The first orientation, typical of language planners and policy makers working for central governments, Ruiz (1988) termed the “Language as Problem” orientation (pp. 6-10). This orientation treats language diversity as a problem for modernization (p. 7) and national unity (p. 10), seeing a single national language known by all as a prerequisite for a united, modern society. Ruiz argues that holders of the “Language as Problem” orientation falsely treat diversity and unity as mutually exclusive, echoing Fishman’s argument (1978, p. 43) that opponents of multilingualism confound unity and uniformity, and thus see the ideal society as monolingual. Thus, since monolingualism in the dominant language of society is treated as a social norm within this orientation, bilingualism itself can be seen as a social problem, which can be solved with the provision of bilingual education as a temporary solution to the problem of students who understand too little of the dominant language to participate in instruction through that language.
Thus, bilingual education is not seen in this orientation as supporting language minority students’ L1 learning; rather, it eases the transition to later monolingual instruction in the dominant language (Ruiz, 1988, p. 10).

The second orientation, typical of members of linguistic minorities and their advocates, Ruiz termed the “Language as Right” orientation (1988, pp. 10-14). While members of minorities may claim certain cultural or linguistic rights, to be enjoyed they must be sanctioned by society as a whole. More commonly, conventional or normative rights are established and encoded formally by a political body. National rights are encoded in legislation and constitutions, while the broadest type of right is one that encompasses a range of countries through international agreements. Such agreements as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) express an international consensus that aspects of language use should be protected by international agreement (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2008, p. 122). Ruiz argues that the confrontational nature of the legalistic approach of holders of this orientation makes it hard to achieve new rights or to succeed in the enforcement of existing rights. Since every group’s claim to a particular right can be seen as a claim against some other group, this approach necessarily sets one social group against another, “children vs. schools; parents vs. school boards; majority vs. minority groups; some minority groups vs. others; state rights vs. federal authority, and so on (p. 13).

Within this orientation, an important question is how to deal with “incompatible” rights (Ruiz, 1988, p. 14). A case in point is the interpretation and prioritization of CRC articles related to language and education of language minority groups. Article 28 of the CRC requires signatories to recognize all children’s right to education, while Article 29 stipulates that the
education system instil respect for children’s parents, home culture, values, and language. At the same time, Article 20 stipulates that children of minority groups not be “denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her culture, to profess and practice his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2008, p. 122).

The CRC articles, however, do not state how to meet their stipulations. Ensuring that every child receives an education can be done through coercive measures; respect for parents and their culture can be taught transmissively without children acquiring the language and culture; granting the general right to use one’s own language, does not specify that this right extends to the school. If minority children are exposed to an assimilatory education, do their parents have the right to withdraw their children from school, or the obligation to encourage attendance? Does the state have the obligation to change the curriculum and pedagogy to attract enthusiastic minority participation or to compel attendance? At the least, UN conventions discourage overt discrimination and suppression of languages and other features of minority groups, but have no means of enforcement other than international scrutiny. Moreover, taken individually, separate articles of various conventions do not require compensatory countermeasures that actively promote minority language and culture in the face of pressures from dominant cultural and linguistic groups. It is also extremely difficult to ensure that rights once formally granted are actually enforced and enjoyed by their intended beneficiaries (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2008, p. 13).

Ruiz (1988) argues that both the “Language as Problem” and “Language as Right” orientations are problematic, and builds on a comment by Thompson (1973) to propose that a “Language as Resource” orientation would prove more fruitful (pp. 14-18), arguing that such an orientation recognizes that existing proficiency in any language, and hence bilingualism, is a
resource both for the individual and society. Additive bilingualism provides additional abilities or skills to the learner, and does not involve the new language and associated culture replacing learners’ first language and culture, whereas subtractive bilingualism involves the second language performing certain functions instead of the first language (Lambert, 1974). Cummins (2000) argues that the “Language as Resource” orientation supports additive rather than subtractive bilingualism. Under subtractive conditions, speakers of minority languages may feel pressured to give up some or all uses of their language and culture to conform with the majority, or they may resist learning the second language and participating in education as a means of preserving minority group language and values. Thus, the “Language as Resource” orientation sees additive rather than subtractive bilingualism as an achievable ideal in which a both/and logic operates, rather than an either/or logic (Baker, 2001; Cummins, 2000).

Ruiz’ framework has been used as a heuristic in the study of language policy and planning by many researchers, for example, in the comparative analysis of minority heritage language programmes in Canada (Cummins, 1992). Hornberger (1998) has argued that Ruiz’ orientation framework should extend beyond orientations of language planners to include local educators, and members of language minority communities.

**Empowering Models of Education for Language Minority Students**

Scholars who have examined literature on education programmes for minority students have attempted to identify characteristics of “quality” programmes that include quantitative measures of participation, achievement and attainment. Scholars have expanded the success criteria, widening them to include measures of cultural and linguistic maintenance leading to additive bilingualism, as well as qualitative measures, such as perceived satisfaction of students, parents, and teachers with the educational process and its outcomes. In a review of programmes
for language minority students deemed successful, Lucas, Henze and Donato (1990) identified conditions facilitating educational success for linguistic minority students, such as:

1. Treating L1 & L2 as important, and L1 as advantage not liability;
2. Promoting language minority students’ L1 throughout the curriculum;
3. Providing a variety of courses in L1 & L2 with small class sizes;
4. Making an active commitment to language minority students’ educational success and empowerment.

Skutnabb-Kangas (1995), in a review that went beyond schools in the USA, also identified a series of supportive conditions:

1. All children know, or alternate equally between knowing and not knowing language of instruction;
2. L1 is the main language of instruction, especially during first 8 years;
3. Foreign languages are taught through L1 and/or by teachers who know it;
4. Study of both L1 and L2 as subjects is compulsory through grades 1-12;
5. All teachers are bilingual.

Cummins’ review of successful programmes for language minority students (1986) argues that success may derive from two factors. First, since language minority students need up to 2 years to be able to develop oral interaction in their L2, and up to 7 years before their proficiency in formal academic language in L2 is comparable to that of their dominant-language peers, the use of students’ L1 permits greater comprehension of curriculum content (Cummins, 1981, 2000). At the same time, Cummins notes Ogbu’s argument (1978) that minority student achievement is powerfully affected by the subordinate status ascribed to some minority groups within society and the school, which, when reflected in the curriculum and pedagogy, weakens their identity construction. Empowerment of students, argues Cummins, is a variable that
promotes the development of knowledge, skills necessary for academic success, as well as required attitudes, desire to succeed and belief that academic success is possible. Thus, the construct ‘empowerment’ both mediates a positive outcome ‘school success’ and is in itself a desirable outcome, a positive, confident identity. Cummins (1986) concludes that four major features contribute to minority students’ empowerment:

1. Incorporation of the home language and culture, which permits greater learning and support of student identity;
2. The inclusion of minority parents as partners in their children’s education with educators;
3. The use of pedagogies that involve meaningful interaction rather than one way transmission from teacher to student;
4. Assessment is used as a form of advocacy for minority students.

Cummins (2001) develops this framework further with the “Development of Academic Expertise” model for the education of disempowered language minority students who generally fail to thrive with traditional teaching under circumstances of linguistic and cultural submersion. The model attempts to lower the cognitive and affective barriers to learning that are presented by submersion in an unfamiliar language and negative labelling of minority language and culture through engaging students in constructivist and interactionist pedagogies. This model also incorporates a focus on language form, or the linguistic code, a focus on language in use (i.e., on uses of the language for communicative purposes), and an emphasis on identity investment, which means students need to be engaged intellectually and affectively in what they are doing. Most significantly, empowerment is defined as depending on the nature of power relationships manifested in interactions between students and teachers, which can empower students through collaboration and negotiation, or disempower students through imposition (pp. 125-156).
Non-Dominant Stakeholders and Quality of Education

Rural Education

Arnold, Newman, Gaddy and Dean (2005) reviewed the English-language literature on rural education with the aim of identifying where the ‘quality’ of American rural education research needs strengthening. Quality was defined as whether research design permitted causal attribution, thus, eliminating non-experimental research, observational studies and single case studies. Based on these criteria, they concluded that US rural schools competently deliver basic education and found little support for a deficit view of rural students and education (Fan & Chen, 1999; Lee & McIntire, 2000; Roscigno & Crowley, 2001), and an increase in discipline problems and no advantages in costs, student achievement or behaviour to schools that had been consolidated on the urban model (Haller, 1992; Hough & Sills-Briegel, 1997; Streifel, Foldesy, & Holman, 1991).

While Arnold et al.’s (2005) review provides evidence for questioning the effectiveness of rural school reform, which has been driven by the assumptions of a deficit view of rural students, teachers and schools, Arnold et al. criticize rural secondary schools’ curriculum, recommend they provide more advanced academic secondary courses on the urban model, without inquiring from the perspectives of local stakeholders why rural schools should reorient themselves in this way. Furthermore, the research reviewed uncritically valorizes college preparation and careers that require college education and treats other aspirations and forms of education as less valuable. It is noteworthy that no studies of the understandings of rural administrators, teachers, parents or students have been included within Arnold et al.’s review. However, a review of US rural education literature that includes scholarship on the experience and perceptions of
stakeholders of rural schooling arrives at a quite different consensus of research on quality in rural education.

Over the past 100 years, the drive to make rural schools more centralized, standardized, bureaucratized, and professionalized has nearly robbed them of their distinctiveness and has failed to deliver on the promise of improved quality of education. Even so, many state and national reform leaders today continue to ignore the distinctiveness of schools (not just rural) and push for generic reforms for all schools in the nation, aimed at achieving generic results. Rural education scholars, in contrast, have argued that if rural schools are to be, first, preserved, and second, improved, reform efforts must build on rural schools' existing strengths, particularly their strong ties to local communities. (Kannapel & DeYoung, 1999, p. 75)

Rural school consolidation from this perspective produces few or none of its putative benefits, but negates a strength of rural schools relative to urban schools, the close community-school connection; thus, consolidation plays an alienating rather than integrating role in American rural life (Franklin & Glascock, 1998; Haller & Monk, 1988; Howley, 1996; Rosenfeld & Sher, 1977; Sher & Tompkins, 1977; Stern, 1994). School reform failure has been identified as rooted in lack of dialogue with rural parents on educational aims, many of whom reject the imposition without consultation of standard educational models designed for national urban life due to their excessive cost, insufficient community control, and alienating effect, preparing students to leave, rather than build their communities (Branscome, 1982b, 1982c; Dunne, 1982a, 1982b; Seal & Harmon, 1995). In contrast, reforms arising from rural stakeholders’ felt need for change have been received more positively than have imposed solutions (Branscome, 1982a; Dunne, 1982a; Gjelten, 1982a, 1982b; McLaughlin, 1982).

Rural community schools have also been praised as providing an education that affirms students' identity, grounding them with a sense of their relationship to a particular community and environment, giving them a sense of place and community (Herzog & Pittman, 1995;
Howley, 1997; Rosenfeld, 1983; Theobald & Nachtigal, 1995). Thus, Haas and Lambert (1995) argue that for rural school reform to actually be rural school reform, the curriculum and pedagogy must be centred on the particular place where the school is sited, belong to the local community, and incorporate community views on the educational aims, treating the school not only as a site for study, but also as a community-building institution.

Within this view of rural education, rural teachers play a key potential role as partners in dialogue with the local community and the broader pedagogical and academic communities. However, teachers in rural schools are often urban outsiders with little knowledge of the place and community in which they serve, or alternatively they may be insiders / outsiders, rural students who have been socialized by teacher education in urban universities to accept outsider views of rural life. As Kannapel and DeYoung explain, from the perspectives of professionally-trained teachers assigned to rural schools:

their responsibility [is] to prepare students to participate in the larger society and economy, with academics as the main focus. They tend to look down on rural youth who do not aspire to leave the community. Rural parents, on the other hand, expect the schools to provide their children with basic literacy and numeracy skills, but they often would like to keep their children close to home. (1999, p. 72)

One response to the disconnect between rural education and local youth identity is place-based education, which creates a counterdiscourse to that of mainstream society, which devalues the rural context as a site of cultural and economic failure, locating that failure within the rural culture and students themselves (Nachtigal & Haas, 2000). Such strategies serve to demonstrate that narratives of rural failure are not universal truths, but narratives, created to some extent by an education centred on non-rural beliefs and values.

Two streams of research disagree in their understandings of rural education. One stream treats mainstream education as the norm, treating rural differences as problems, and leaving the
possibility that rural stakeholders may not share these assumptions underexplored. The other stream investigated subjective factors that influence rural stakeholders’ perspectives on education, finding that they may reject or resist aims, content and pedagogies that have been decided for them and do not take into account their understandings of their interests.

Development Education: Local Stakeholders, Modernization and Human Capital

Post World-War II development education assumed that the greater wealth and economic power of the developed countries derived from their modernity, which was theorized as involving particular worldviews. Modernization theory depended on changing pre-modern to modern outlooks, involving political, social and cultural change. Its thesis was that poverty and underdevelopment were due to a population’s inability to participate in modern exchange relations, due to the influence of non-scientific, even superstitious, traditional ways of understanding. Thus, modernization education sought to inculcate modern knowledge and modern attitudes (Jones, 2006; Lerner, 1965; McLelland, 1961; Rostow, 1960). Modernization theory also includes the notion of stages of cultural and economic development based on the historical experience of western nations, which non-western nations are expected to recapitulate (Rostow, 1960). Modernization theory has been supplanted by human capital theory, propagated largely major development funders such as the World Bank, who treat education as an economic input, with educational attainment playing a causative role in generating wealth and reducing poverty (Jones, 2006). Human capital theory in education is supported through relational analysis and calculations of social rates of return to the economy as a whole and of private rates of return

---

2 For rural youth, low school achievement may not be a problem Corbett (2007) found some secondary school males in Nova Scotia who intended to work in the local fishing industry in their community, where they could earn more than in white collar careers. Schooling has little connection to their lives and work, so they make just enough effort to pass their courses, but little beyond that until they are old enough to drop out and get a job.
to individuals (Berryman, 2000; Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2004; Psacharopoulos, Velez, & Patrinos, 1994).

Within education for modernization and human capital, traditional rural communities' knowledge, cultures and languages are treated as problems to be solved through imposed centralized change, analogous to Ruiz’s “Language as Problem orientation. Within both modernization and human capital approaches to development education, local rural knowledge is incompatible with the learning of modern knowledge. Thus, researchers’ assumptions about “the idiocy of rural life” (Marx, 2006/1848, p. 249) preclude including rural stakeholders’ perspectives, regardless of their language or ethnicity. This research stream cannot identify causes of failure of educational reforms that might be influenced by failure to try to understand local communities perspectives on schooling and form partnerships with them; rather, lack of success of local children in modern education may be seen as confirmation of negative assumptions concerning rural residents, rather than evidence of flawed educational models.

**Community schools in developing countries.**

Yet examples of effective initiatives exist that are successful in reaching marginalized rural children within developing countries, particularly girls. Community-based non-formal education initiatives such as Escuela Nueva in Colombia, BRAC schools in Bangla Desh and Community Schools in Upper Egypt, have succeeded in achieving success in primary enrolment, attendance, completion and achievement comparable to or greater than the formal state school system. Attendance and achievement scores of rural students in these programmes, especially girls, have caught up to, and in many cases passed those of urban schools and the system as a whole (Connelly & Farrell, 1994; Farrell, 2003; Haiplik, 2004; Lovell & Fatema, 1989; Pitt, 2004; Sarker, 1994; Schiefelbein, 1991). Farrell’s cross-case analysis of several programs in the
developing world has identified commonalities of successful programmes for rural children in developing (2002, 2004, 2008) that include features such as:

1. Multi-graded curriculum with continuous learning and assessment;
2. Child-centred, self-guided group and pedagogy, with students setting their own pace;
3. Teachers are both fully & partly trained, and include community resource staff who receive continuous in-service training and peer mentoring and work with students to construct materials;
4. Parents are heavily involved in their children’s learning and in school governance and may be involved in teaching, curriculum & materials development;
5. Students participate as active learners, responsible for their own learning, active in school governance and in peer tutoring & materials development.

These features of successful rural school in developing countries include many of the features identified by Cummins as empowering. A major component of the achievement of success by community schools in developing countries, not only in the terms set by the state, but also according to criteria set by local parents and community is that in these community schools local rural knowledge is seen as a resource that supports the national curriculum, rather than as a problem that interferes in school achievement.³

Nomadic education.

A review of literature on nomadic education has found that the ‘value of education’ is such a strong dogma among policy makers and educators that the low attendance rates are still attributed primarily to parental ignorance about the value of modern schooling for their children (Krätli, 2000, p. 26). A key finding of Krätli’s review of nomadic education is the frequency of a

³ A factor in these programmers’ success is their extensive institutional support by NGOs that link community schools in a network, in Colombia by the Coffee Growers cooperative organization, in Bangla Desh by the Bangla Desh Rural Advancement Committee and in Egypt by UNICEF.
rational, flexible, attitude towards modern schooling on the part of nomadic families, who frequently select one child to receive formal education to the highest level possible and to find employment in an urban area. This child is seen as a resource for the entire nomadic household, a link to the city and the modern world that can benefit the whole family and perhaps community. However, beyond educating one child to establish an urban beachhead, schooling is seen as not useful for participation in the pastoral economy. Thus, where schooling has not adapted to the conditions, needs and desires of nomadic communities, but has required that nomadic communities adapt to a uniform rigid model of education that takes no account of nomadic ways of life, it has been resisted as not of benefit (Krätli, 2000). The frequent recourse, for example, to sending even very young nomadic children to boarding schools takes children far from the nurture and care of the family and community and poses an ethical dilemma for parents, since they cannot assure their children’s well-being and security in such circumstances. Where schooling has adapted to nomadic life, for example, through mobile primary schools, parents have not been required to separate children from their care at an excessively early age, and one source of resistance to schooling has been removed (Krätli, 2000).

Krätli argues based on his review that ‘failure’ of nomadic education results largely from the imposition without consultation with nomadic communities of standard models of education based on untested assumptions of what is good for nomadic communities (see Table 2). Krätli also argues that wholesale acceptance among nomadic communities of modern schooling, far from being a sign of educational success, indicates failure of the nomadic culture and economy, and a desire to abandon their way of life completely, not to modernize it.
Non-Dominant Stakeholders and Multicultural Education

Multicultural education has been proposed as a solution to educational problems of minority students, or as an approach for all students that deals with the actual pluralism of contemporary societies. Major proponents of multicultural education insist that the school should respect the dialects and languages that minority students bring to school, but de-emphasize the role of minority language varieties as media of instruction, while acknowledging that in the case of linguistic minorities, multicultural education may be delivered partly in minority languages of instruction. These proponents of multicultural education take the view that multicultural education, incorporating pluralist knowledge perspectives, is for all students, not just for minorities (Banks, 1993, 1994).

Thus, while Banks’ sees multicultural education as including minority languages, his contention that it is for all ethnicities may imply a monolingual model of ME that is sensitive to minority languages without using them in instruction. In contrast, where minority language is seen as a key aspect of multicultural education, the only way it can be implemented is for all students, whether from a dominant or non-dominant language group to be educated bilingually, as in dual language bilingual education, where for example, all students take some courses with Spanish, and others with English, as the language of instruction (Freeman, 1998), or with an indigenous and a dominant language LOI (Cazden, 1989; May, 1994), or even trilingual education where students are instructed in three different languages (Baetens-Beardmore, 1995).

Yet where partnership between educators, minority students, their families and communities is weak or does not exist, multicultural education may simply present “sanitized” facts about minority groups’ histories and cultures, rather than reflecting the experiences and knowledge perspectives of the minority group themselves. At the school level, multicultural
education may be implemented differently depending on the degree of participation of educators from minority groups in the process as well. It is important to recruit more minority educators and involve them in the process of Multicultural Curriculum development, despite the paradox that as long as few minority students continue to post-secondary education and become teachers, it is quite challenging to recruit significant numbers of minority educators (Banks, 1994).

Consequently, multicultural education will most frequently be implemented by mainstream educators. Yet mainstream teachers and minority parents and their children may have fundamental difficulties in communicating each others’ expectations of schooling, with the non-dominant partners, the parents having greater difficulty communicating their perceptions. Particularly, when they know that teachers often hold parents responsible for their children’s problems in school, they justify themselves in front of the teacher, rather than challenging a perception they feel is false (Ogbu, 1974). Borman, Timm, El-Amin and Winston (1992) identified a strong disconnect between the views of teachers and minority parents, and of majority and minority parents that made cooperation difficult. Qualitative studies have established that minority parents’ views on their children’s education typically differ from teachers’ views, with each group often misunderstanding the position of the other, evidence of insufficient collaboration between teachers and minority parents (Bernhard, Lefebvre, Kilbride, Chud & Lange, 1998; Doucet, 2008). Ahlquist (1992) found that anti-racist education courses can be strongly resisted by majority group teacher candidates and perceived as imposition of the instructor’s point of view, rather than as a collaborative negotiation.

Banks (1994) points out that it may be difficult to involve minority parents, not only due to time constraints, but also because they may not feel empowered by the process and retain distrust of educators from their own experience of schooling. McCaleb, however, present models
within schools for the building of ‘communities of learners’ in which teachers, parents and students establish trust through collaboration together (1995). Similarly, Brown’s evaluation of teacher education of mainstream teachers on issues of cultural diversity found that the impact on teachers’ perspectives was greater using a dialogical and inquiry-based method, while resistance to change in perspectives towards diversity was greater with transmissive approaches (2004).

Thus, the fundamental challenge for multicultural education and implementation at the school level is for minority parents and students to establish relationships with mainstream educators that enable them to collaborate as partners. Clearly, true participation in deliberation on curriculum and the pedagogical process among minority students, parents and educators would constitute one action that would reduce or eliminate the caste barriers in schools among dominant and non-dominant groups identified by Ogbu (1987, 1991).

**Local Stakeholders and Bilingual Education**

While the general literature on curriculum and school effectiveness supports the need to involve teachers closely with parents in the education of their children, the literature also suggests that a gap in communication may exist between parents and teachers. This gap can be even greater between mainstream teachers and language minority parents, who may be unable to speak with the teacher, or uncomfortable with their difficulty in the dominant language.

Thus, where minority children are placed in a bilingual education programme, there will be teachers who can speak with parents in their native language, reducing the power differential between them, increasing communication and, potentially, trust. Moreover, parents can cooperate with their children in mother-tongue activities, reading to their children, listening to

---

4 Grandparents, older siblings and other family members can similarly support these activities.
them read, or telling them stories in their own language. One example of such an approach is engaging students, teachers and parents in producing creative writing in the home language that they can share (Ada, 1988; Ada & Campoy, 2003). Other programmes have tried to include ‘local funds of knowledge’ (Schwinge, 2008, pp. 53-54) in addition to the use of L1 as a way to connect parents, students and teachers in learning, and allowing children to take pride in the status conferred by the teacher and school on the expertise in local affairs of their parents (González, Moll, Tenery, Rivera, Rendón, González & Amanti, 1995).

The introduction of minority language programmes in mainstream schools has often involved considerable conflict among stakeholders. Conflict in Ontario, for example, concerning the teaching of heritage languages in public schools arose between the education system, teachers and minority communities over whether heritage languages should be taught in public schools or in community centres; taught for credit through bilingual education as languages of instruction for provincial curriculum; taught as non credit subjects within normal school hours or after class. Teachers, mainly monolingual Anglophones, argued that, while important, heritage languages were not as important as the official curriculum delivered in English, and that heritage language instruction during school hours would harm minority children’s overall education. There are reports that some teachers tried to influence the debate by telling minority children (who would tell their parents) that integration would harm their education. Needless to say, teachers and parents did not engage in meaningful dialogue on this issue and so, eventual implementation of heritage language programmes was far less than the bilingual education programmes minority communities were seeking (Cummins, 1983; Cummins & Danesi, 1990). In this debate, teachers displayed a “Language as Problem” orientation towards minority languages, and a “Language as Right” orientation towards English-medium instruction, while
minority parents asking for L1 and L2 instruction by right, could be said to be seeking additive bilingualism for their children and thus to display a “Language as Resource” orientation.

**Quality and Bilingual Education in Developing Contexts**

In many developing countries, the medium of instruction is a former colonial language that is not understood by most speakers of indigenous languages when they begin school (Brock-Utne & Skattum, 2009). Minority parents in developing contexts are precluded from involvement in their children’s education when they are unfamiliar with the curriculum content and the language it is taught in. Furthermore, teachers selected for their knowledge of the ex-colonial language will often be from outside the community and not know the local indigenous language. The use of the community language to teach curriculum content that also reflects local culture and values may increase the pride of parents and students in their own language and culture, but also increase the communication between parents, students and teachers about education. Bilingual education programmes have also been found to exhibit greater participation of minority girls in education, perhaps due to the greater trust between teacher and parents (Benson, 2005; d’Emilio 2001; Dutcher, 1995; Hovens, 2003).

In bilingual schools in Mali and Guatemala, however, the student repetition and dropout rates are markedly lower in bilingual schools than in French and Spanish submersion programmes. Moreover, in Mali, in a series of comparisons of French-only programmes and bilingual programmes, students educated in both L1 and French had pass-rates for examinations more than 10% higher than those in French-medium education for 6 out of 7 years from 1994 to 2000 (Bender, 2006; World Bank, 2005, June).
Nigeria has seen several innovative bilingual education projects that have achieved success in increasing educational attainment. The 6-year Primary Project in a Yoruba-speaking district consisted of experimental schools with 6 years of mother tongue education and English, the former colonial language, taught as a school subject, while in control schools English and Yoruba was the primary medium of instruction. Programme evaluations have found higher achievement levels in experimental schools in all subject areas, including in English. (Akinnaso, 1993; Bamgbose, 1991; Benson, 2004).

Another Nigerian project involved community members in curriculum development and teaching. The Rivers Readers Project used multiple local languages alongside a regional language, Igbo as languages of instruction, and featured relatively high quality teaching materials in multiple local languages, some of them quite small and previously unwritten, that were produced and taught by community members (Obondo, 2008; Williamson, 1976).

Hovens (2002) compared two types of elementary school in Niger: Ecoles traditionelles (ET), where all instruction was conducted in a second language, French, and écoles expérimentales (EE), where children were taught an indigenous language in addition to French. Students in Grades 3 to 5 from both school types were tested in their indigenous language and French using instruments designed to be somewhat easier than tests based on the official curriculum and to measure comprehension. One test was on mathematics and one on language comprehension, with one version each in the local indigenous language and in French. Bahry (2005b, March) calculated effect sizes (Cohen’s d) of type of school and language of testing from means and standard deviations provided in Hovens (2002) for greater ease of comparison. For mathematics tested in French there was a small or no effect of school type; when testing was in the indigenous language, there was a small effect in favour of bilingual schools; when
comparing students in bilingual schools tested in the indigenous language with students in French submersion tested in French, there was a small to medium effect in favour of students in bilingual education. For reading tested in French there was a small to medium effect in favour of bilingual schools; when testing was in the indigenous language, there was a large effect in favour of bilingual schools; when comparing students in bilingual schools tested in the indigenous language with students in a French submersion programme tested in French, there was a small to medium effect in favour of students in bilingual education (see Tables 3-7 in Appendix A).

However, parents confronted with the choice between L1 and L2 education may view mother tongue education as inferior to dominant-medium education and thus ‘choose’ the route of L2 submersion for their children (Qorro, 2009). However, when parents are presented with information about the potential of quality bilingual education for their children’s schooling, they are less likely to select second language submersion in a dominant language (Heugh, 2002).

**The Role of the Elementary School in Preventing or Reversing Language Shift**

Much of the literature on bilingual education focuses on the use of L1 in schooling to increase measures of educational success as defined by the school system. However, among many small linguistic minorities, mainstream schooling in dominant languages is associated with language shift from L2 to L1, and the threat of eventual language death. Thus, in these contexts, the use of L1 or L1 and L2 bilingually are recommended as measures to prevent language shift (language maintenance) and to increase the use of L1 among the young (language revitalization) and even to create speakers of a heritage language, where it had already disappeared from use (language revival) (Fishman, 1989, 1991, 2001; Hornberger, 2002). As a North American aboriginal parent observed, “if a child learns only the non-Indian way of life, you have lost your child” (McCarty & Watahomigie, 1999, p. 79). Thus in minority schools, educators have a
particular challenge, or perhaps handicap to the extent that they do not know the languages and
cultures of the students, families and communities they serve. As Corson puts it, they generally:

have no preparation in intercultural and minority relations. Often they have few
insights into the interests and values of those affected by their decisions.
Sometimes they know nothing about the traditional values and knowledge of the
indigenous people themselves. So instead of running schools ‘effectively’,
administrators and teachers are often ignorant of the real effects of what they are
doing. As a result, their schools can easily become ‘islands of isolation in the very
communities that they are meant to serve. (1999, p. 15)

Thus, Fishman argues that:

The family, the neighbourhood, the elementary school and the church [sic] need
to be urged, instructed, rewarded and guided to play their irreplaceable roles in
this connection. Endangered languages must assume control of the former,
intimate spheres of family and community, even though they may never attain
control of the latter, the status spheres of supra-local power and authority. (1989,
pp. 397, 399)

An investigation of perspectives of indigenous Inuit elders, parents, teachers and students
in the recently created territory of Nunavut in northern Canada identified a range of concerns
related to quality of Inuit children’s education (Martin, 2000; Martin & Tagalik, 2004). Inuit
stakeholders expressed strong interest in the presence their culture and language in schools, as
well as great concern about the quantity and quality of Inuit instruction. Indigenous stakeholders
felt disconnected from school and educators, who were mainly non-Inuit and did not understand
local conditions or respect Inuit language, culture and teachers well enough to organize adequate
instruction. Some local stakeholders did not blame non-Inuit educators, for what they cannot be
expected to understand; rather, they blame the Department of Education for not giving outsiders
proper linguistic and cultural training (Martin, 2000, pp. 58-66) (see Table 8 in Appendix A).
Meeting demands of indigenous communities for effective bilingual education that includes
knowledge derived from their community seems considerably difficult, particularly when
education is ‘for’ minority communities, but not ‘by’ minority communities (May, 1999).
One response of non-dominant groups to ‘low quality’ education in their terms has been to establish community-run and funded schools. In Quebec, a Cree school board was created in 1978, which negotiated with the province the right to teach mainly in Cree in early grades (Burnaby & Mackenzie, 2001, p. 198). The need to learn French as a 3rd language in addition to English as a 2nd language made some parents reluctant to embrace mother-tongue education (p. 205). Despite these doubts, parents shifted to a positive evaluation of Cree-medium instruction: after 1 year, the programme was extended to Grade 2 in two communities, and spread to several other communities (pp. 200-201, 206-207).

Community schools have opened in rural, indigenous, communities in Guatemala serving more than 4,100 communities and 445,000 students. From 1999-2001 community stakeholders, including school administrators, teachers, parents and students were surveyed at 110 traditional rural schools and 330 national community-managed schools. Findings included that students spent more time engaged in learning, parents had more contact with teachers and principals and promotion rates were higher in community than traditional schools (World Bank, 2005, February). Moreover, when controlling for school and student characteristics, students in community schools performed as well as students in traditional schools and outperformed them in reading (Wu, 2003, as cited in World Bank, 2005a).

Te Kōhanga Reo ‘language nests’ were founded by Māori communities in Aotearoa/New Zealand, in which grandparents with strong oral proficiency conducted preschool activities with children entirely in Māori. The intention of language nests was to maintain and strengthen existing L1 proficiency and to develop it where language shift had already occurred; thus functioning simultaneously as language revitalization, revival and maintenance programme. The movement began in 1982 with one language nest and spread by 1996 to include 767 centres,
covering 14,000 Māori children aged 2-4, so that Māori preschool participation rose from below 30% in 1982 to 53% in 1991, passing the 1982 non-Māori rate of 41%. The success of the language nest concept has led to demand for the expansion of Māori-medium education to the primary level. Due to dissatisfaction at the difficulty of accomplishing this through state schools, ‘Kura Kaupapa Māori’, private community-based Māori-medium mother tongue primary schools were established, without state funding. However, in 1988–89, for reasons unconcerned with minority education, the government introduced educational decentralization, including school-based curriculum development, as a means to increase parental choice. Kura Kaupapa Māori lobbied for state funding under the new reform, and despite initial resistance, were eventually extended state funding, reaching 54 schools and 4,000 students by 1998 (May, 1999; Cummins, 2000, 2001). Similar programmes have been attempted in various communities under cultural and linguistic threat, for example, among the Navajo of the US (McCarty & Watahomigie, 1999) and the Basques of south-western Europe (Cenoz, 2008; Huguet, Lasagabaster & Vila, 2008).

Provision of bilingual education does not always lead to the support of the community. Among Quechua/Quichua of Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador and Guaraní of Paraguay, some parents continue to believe in the superiority of Spanish-only education. Parental opposition may perhaps occur more often in cases where inclusion of indigenous language and culture in the curriculum have originated as top-down measures designed to increase achievement and attainment in the national curriculum in the dominant language, and parents have not been involved as closely in the process as in the cases where demands for such inclusion have directly come from parents and the community (Hornberger, 1988; King, 2001).

Deyhle (2005) reports a Navajo community case where parents are actively involved in bottom-up activities designed to increase Navajo cultural and linguistic presence within their
schools. However, minority parents have achieved their goals through “Language as Right” orientations, exerting pressure from higher levels of government and law suits on their educational district. Cooperation of school administrators and teachers in installing bilingual education has been coerced and not arrived at in dialogue with parents and the community, and are overtly accepted, but covertly resisted. Thus, such a programme cannot really be called a community-based programme. While created overtly ‘for’ the community, it is implemented ‘by’ the school ‘for’ superficial compliance with regulations. Fishman (1989) concludes, therefore, that theoretical solutions alone are insufficient to ensure that schools are part of the solution to language shift, and need to form a key:

part of the family-neighbourhood axis of child socialization and identity commitment formation. Schools cannot succeed, whether their goal be RLS or merely history or mathematics instruction, if the relation between teachers, parents and students is such that they are estranged from each other and from the curriculum. (pp. 30-31)

**Conclusion**

The literature reviewed clearly illustrates that quality in education is undertheorized and often assumed by policy makers, educators and others without rigorous analysis. Nevertheless, it is increasingly accepted that quality is determined by quantitative measures such as attendance, achievement and attainment, and subjective perceptions of satisfaction with the aims, content, processes and outcomes of education. It is further recognized that low attendance, achievement and attainment are as likely, or more likely, to indicate perceptions of low quality of education among students, families and communities as low “quality” of the students themselves.

It is equally clear that quality in education of non-dominant groups requires that students, families and their communities must be partners with local educators in determining standards of
quality in their children’s education, or failing that, their knowledge, culture and language and their perspectives on the aims, content, and methods of education should be considered.

Differing, but long and firmly held, perceptions of the proper interrelation of language and society, as well as lack of knowledge about members of other groups, resulting in low levels of trust among educators and members of non-dominant communities, present considerable challenges to establishing collaboration among local stakeholders in establishing schools that embody quality from the perspectives of all local stakeholders. However, the experience of a wide range of programmes cited in this chapter shows that such collaboration can be established. Conditions of empowerment of non-dominant students require cooperation among all local stakeholders exercised through collaborative relations of power. Where local educators are drawn not only from dominant groups but also from local indigenous populations, collaboration with indigenous students, families and communities ought to be easier due a greater proportion of shared assumptions about quality in education. The first step in establishing collaboration among local stakeholders in minority education is to learn each other’s perspectives on quality in education, and the place in quality education of minority knowledge, culture and language.
Chapter Three:
Quality and Language in Education of
Non-Dominant Groups in China

Introduction

We have seen in the previous chapter that quality of education is a subjective perception of satisfaction among stakeholders created by the perceived existence of, experience of, or creation of, desired characteristics among stakeholders involved in the educational process, primarily among the students. In this chapter, literature dealing with perspectives on quality of education in China, particularly in the education of language minority groups will be reviewed. The chapter will deal first with different understandings of quality in education in China focusing on quantitative perspectives of quality. The next section will discuss increasing government dissatisfaction with previous perspectives on quality in Chinese education that has led to a curriculum reform promoting “Education for Quality”. This section will be followed by a discussion of the implications of this reform and its attendant understandings of quality for the education of non-dominant groups in China, that is, rural education and minority education. Each followed by a discussion of literature on perspectives of local stakeholders on quality and education. The next section focuses on bilingual education in China, including perspectives of scholars and local stakeholders on bilingual education and quality, with reference to language orientations. A section on the relevance to minority culture of local and school curriculum will be followed by section on the role of language in education models in minority language endangerment and revitalization before a final conclusion that discusses what is known and still in need of research concerning local stakeholders’ perspectives on the relation between quality in
education and the inclusion of minority knowledge, culture and language in local and school curriculum.

**Quality as Characteristics of People, Processes, and Systems**

The Chinese language has two terms that are translated into English as ‘quality’: zhìliang, and sùzhì. Kipnis (2006) has conducted a study of the term suzhi and its evolving semantic field in contrast to other ‘quality’ terms. In earlier periods, zhìliang was commonly used to refer to the quality of either a system or of an individual. At that time, sùzhì was used to mean quality in the sense of an innate characteristic that was part of an individual’s genetic inheritance. Gradually sùzhì has come to mean the aggregate of such characteristics, both innate and acquired. Thus, in contemporary usage, individuals’ sùzhì refers to their accumulated inherited and learned qualities, most importantly those acquired through schooling. Thus, (high) quality (zhìliang) education refers to the quality of the entire system, and is used to refer to the high standards of the system, maintained by concentrating on a small number of students in a small number of schools. In contrast, in the phrase sùzhì jìaoyù, ‘quality education’ refers to all the qualities students develop and manifested by educators in schooling, and includes many qualities beyond the abstract intellectual knowledge. For the purposes of this study, both notions of quality as zhìliang and sùzhì will be included.

**Quantitative Perspectives on Quality of Education in China**

Welch (2000) argues that educational quality is of “great urgency” for developing countries, although there is no consensus on what quality in education is. World Bank and OECD, for example, have tried to establish internationally accepted quality measures, but these are often not accepted by practitioners and politicians in developing countries. In particular,
Welch critiques the World Bank’s increasing emphasis on economic over other dimensions to quality (p. 5, 17). Nevertheless, the accepted measure of quality in education in China seems to be “success” in highly selective “competition” (Epstein, 2000; Price, 2000) as measured by educational attainment, specifically post-secondary educational attainment.

For much of the history of the People’s Republic of China, every post-secondary graduate was guaranteed relatively secure, high status work as a state employee. Even now after the job assignment system for university graduates has been eliminated, a post-secondary diploma seems to be education’s major purpose. For rural students, a high score on the annual *GaoKao*, or national college entrance examinations (CEE) was almost the sole escape from a life of manual labour. Thus, CEE as the measure of quality of students, teachers, and schools exerts a powerful washback effect on curriculum and pedagogy at lower levels of the education system: the quality of a senior secondary school is judged by CEE scores of its students and the numbers admitted to university; similarly, junior secondary schools are judged by their promotion rate to senior secondary school, and even elementary schools have been rated by how well their students do on competitive entrance examinations of so-called good junior secondary schools (Epstein, 1993; ‘Harmful key school system’, 2006; Huang, 2004; Lin, 1993; Zhu, 2002).

**Variability of Quantitative Measures of Quality of Education in China**

Quality of education understood in terms of levels of educational attainment depends on financial resources of families, schools and local education systems, which vary considerably among regions (see Figure 4). Data on mean educational attainment from the 2000 census show that city residents complete more schooling than town dwellers, who in turn receive more education than those in township centres and villages (see Table 12). There is also broad variation in years of schooling by region and gender (see Figure 5) China, 2002). Most minority
groups are found in south-western, north-western and north-eastern China (see Figure 6), areas of low income and educational attainment. There is considerable ethnic variation in educational attainment in China, with some groups having much higher, and others much lower, average years of education than the average for China. From 1990 to 2000, the mean proportion of China’s population with post-secondary education rose from 2 to 3%, while rising more rapidly from 5.25% to 8.38% among Koreans, and declining from 1.68% to 1.34% among Tibetans (China, 2002). Gender, region, ethnicity and attainment interact in complex ways. Attainment is generally higher among males than females, but regional variation in this gender gap is considerable, such that female attainment in one region may be as high as or higher than male attainment levels in another region. Interethnic variation is also considerable, again, such that female attainment for one ethnicity often surpasses male attainment for another ethnicity. For example, as of 2000, elementary, junior and senior secondary completion rates are higher for Korean females than Han males and for Han females than Tajik males (China, 2002) (see Figure 7). This suggests that cultural perspectives on the importance of state education for males and females are not uniform in China, but may differ among ethnicities.

**Quality Education Versus Education for Quality in China**

The State Council in 1999 decided to intensify educational reform and the comprehensive adoption of *education for quality*, which required “adjusting and reforming the system, structure, content of the curriculum in order to establish a new curriculum system” and reiterated the need in 2001 to speed up the creation education for quality (Zhu, 2002, p.1). The most recent curriculum reform in China is based on the main aim of education for quality for all-round development. A recent publication of the Ministry of Education, *Entering the New Curriculum:*

A Dialogue with Curriculum Implementers, gives the rationale for the reform at length in book form. In the preface, the Deputy Minister of Education sums up the reform’s key objectives:

1. Reduce passive transmission of outdated book knowledge via meaningless repetition, memorization and mechanical drilling;

2. Promote active learning, inquiry, fostering the ability to acquire new knowledge and skills, to analyse and solve problems, to communicate and work cooperatively;

3. Provide a comprehensive curriculum with integrated subjects and student choice;

4. Increase relevance of curriculum content to students' lives, interests and experience, as well as new developments in science and technology;

5. Shift assessment’s emphasis from screening (summative assessment) to encouraging student development and improving teaching (formative assessment);

6. Shift curriculum from one to three types: national, local and school, adapting curriculum more to the local district, the school and the students (Zhu, 2002, p. 2).

These proposals constitute a strong critique of the model of education in force since 1977, termed examination-oriented education, in reference to the strong influence of examinations on its curriculum and pedagogy, or promotion-oriented education, due to its emphasis on promotion rates to the next level of the education system as the main measure of quality. The Ministry of Education (MOE) has proposed instead, Education for Quality. By quality they mean the qualities of students. Implicit in this reform is a new notion of quality in education, and the ideal of the educated person, shifting from a narrow academic expert to someone with “all-round development” incorporating more of students experience and interests,

5 suzhì is sometimes translated as essential qualities.
balancing academic knowledge with practical problem-solving skills and creativity, and a more positive attitude towards self, others and society (You, 2001; Zhu, 2002; Zhou & Zhu, 2007).

Decentralization and Quality in Chinese Education

The MOE has also criticized the uniformity of knowledge in the single unified standard curriculum for all China oriented mainly to large urban centers on the east coast (Yang & Zhou, 2002), whose lessons were “far from the experience” of most Chinese students, failing to connect learning to their prior knowledge, creating many dropouts, and “pushouts”\(^6\). Such students not only failed in the college-bound curriculum, but also failed to learn any practical knowledge or skills useful in their local area, seriously affecting their ability to find work besides manual labour (Lewin, Xu, Little, & Zheng, 1994; Lin, 1993). As a result, the MOE has introduced three levels of curriculum management: the national curriculum, local curriculum and school curriculum, and requires up to 10-12% of classroom time be spent on local and school curriculum, and 6-8% of time be spent on comprehensive practical activities decided at the local and school level. Local and school-based curricula are intended to compensate for inadequacies of the national curriculum in the local context (Huang, 2004; Su, 2002; UNESCO, 2000; Yang & Zhou, 2002; Zhu, 2002) (see Table 13 for an outline of the new curriculum).

The current rationale for ‘Education for Quality’ is two-fold: on the one hand, it is claimed that today’s society and economy are knowledge-based, and that to participate in a globalized knowledge economy, China needs more citizens with creativity and problem-solving skills, who are life-long learners, flexible and adaptive to new conditions, qualities not developed by Examination-based education, based on the needs of a 19th-century industrial society.

\(^6\) Rural students unable to continue their education, due to failure on entrance examinations have been termed “pushouts” (Lin, 1993).
Education should foster all-round development of students, focusing on moral and aesthetic sense, and also giving more rein to students’ own opinions and interests, areas not developed sufficiently in examination-based education. Pedagogy is also meant to change from a transmission mode to a more student-centred orientation with increased two-way interaction between teacher and students and among students (China, 2002; Huang, 2004), all education reform goals supported in the region by the World Bank (Bahry, 2005a).

The notions of quality underlying this rationale are partly unchanged from those of examination-based education, that is, the preparation of a scientific and technical élite for China’s development. However, understandings of what qualities the élite should possess have changed drastically from mastery of a base of knowledge to the development of general cognitive skills that allow rapid learning of new knowledge and flexible adaptation to changing circumstances. Yet the notion of quality as mastery through memorization of a mass of factual information tested by an authoritative examination remains, since the CEE system has not been reformed to reflect the aims of the new curriculum. The second half of the quality education rationale reads like a justification of a progressive approach to education; that is, one whose orienting focus is on personal development. It remains to be seen how these twin aims can be balanced within a coherent curriculum policy; indeed, there may be a certain tension between the two rationales.

**Perspectives on Quality in Rural Education in China**

A human capital approach to education as an input into the economy defines quality in rural education as determined by a complex interaction of low investment in school infrastructure, teacher training and materials, low quality of students due to undernourishment and overwork, low parental educational attainment, resulting in low enrolment, attendance, and
achievement (Abadzi, 2006; Jones, 2006). English-language literature on China’s rural education focuses on quantitative measures of quality: enrolment, attendance, achievement, etc, and how to increase these measures, particularly among females, for whom these measures are typically much lower than for males. Some research has explored motivations of rural parents in choosing to educate their daughters, focusing primarily on the costs of education to rural parents as explanatory factors in this decision (Bray, Ding, & Hannum, 1999; Huang, 2004; Wan, 2003).

Many researchers argue that to raise quality in rural education requires increased relevance of education to local life, through vocational education (Lin, 1993), or local and school-based curriculum designed to meet the needs of the local economy and developing work related skills through practical activities (Zhou & Zhu, 2007). A study of educators in rural northwest China found that some share this understanding of the aim of school-based curriculum development as meeting the needs of the local economy, but that many others interpret it as requiring supplementation of national curriculum lessons with local content to make lessons more interesting and understandable (Li, Liu, & Ma, 2006).

**Perspectives of Rural Stakeholders on Quality in Education**

A survey of rural primary teachers in Gansu province found that teacher satisfaction was influenced by many factors, but was higher when the teacher was a member of the village community, and not an outsider (Sargent & Hannum, 2005). This concurs with research on non-formal primary education in other developing contexts that found that villagers with incomplete secondary education, when well trained and supported, achieved equal or greater success as elementary teachers relative to state-prepared teachers (Schiefelbein, 1991; Connelly & Farrell, 1994; Farrell, 2002; Haiplik, 2004). Another study found that where basic physical needs are met, the major factor influencing dropout is not poverty; but the experience of schooling.
Frustration with student-teacher relations, the study experience, and dissatisfaction with conditions for boarders, and the long distances from home for day students were given by students as reasons for quitting school (Shen & Xue, 2003, as cited in Yang, 2003, p. 19).

Similar results were found in a qualitative study of dropout in two primary school and one junior secondary school districts in three rural townships (Liu, 2004). From students’ perspectives, the typical reason for dropping out was also that they were tired of study and the least frequent reason from students’ perspectives was the costs of continued study. Students are also affected emotionally by tracking. For students placed in slow tracks, schooling is uninteresting and without purpose, since they are expected by all to fail. Moreover, according to some students the students in the weaker groups are:

outcasts of the selective school system. Neglected and despised, they come to school disgraced and downhearted. They come to class only to listen to the teachers talk to the selected few as if the others were not present. In case any behaviour is discerned that is in line with the order of a typical Chinese classroom, harsh stares and/or insulting remarks may fly at the teenagers. (p. 16)

In addition to the negative learning environment, boarders in this study who dropped out also often mentioned boarding school conditions as a reason for dropping out (p. 16).

Parents’ attitudes divided into three types: those who support their children’s decision, those who oppose it, and those who take a neutral stance. Those that support dropping out frequently attribute it to their child’s low quality, that is, lack of innate ability (Liu, 2004). As one parent said, “He does not have the brain for learning. What is more, there has never been a single one among his ancestors who has succeeded academically” (p. 12).

Despite the talk about all-round development and education for quality, Liu (2004) found that parents, teachers and school administration all equated educational quality with test rankings. Students are ranked within their class; classes (and teachers) are ranked within schools,
and schools are ranked within townships (pp. 14-15). Thus, as has been found elsewhere in rural education, examinations have a powerful gate keeping and washback effect (Hamp-Lyons, 1997; Wall & Anderson, 1995).

The major barrier to continuing education after compulsory education (9 years) is the Zhongkao or entrance examination to the college-bound senior secondary school (Liu, 2004). The pass rate on the Zhongkao is the local barometer of quality: A local driver evaluated local schools, in these terms:

How can our countryside junior secondary schools compare with those in the city? …Only four students passed the Zhongkao in Chengzi Junior Secondary School last year. Nevertheless, it is already not bad for a rural middle school. So, you see how poor the quality of education is in this area! (p. 15)

Parents viewed quality in their children’s education according to its outcomes: the likelihood of education letting children escape the hardships of rural life and increasing family status and income; in contrast, students paid more attention to the quality of the experience of education. Thus, Liu (2004) concludes that for rural education to succeed in China:

It has to be perceived by the local people as indispensable to their lives. It ought to be a pleasant experience and not a depressing one for the majority of students. When schooling is perceived as beneficial, enjoyable and affordable, who would not try his/her best to have it? (p. 20)

Rural students and parents in Liu’s study (2004) evaluate the education that is available to them from their own perspectives; thus dropout for them is not caused simply by misestimating the value of education. These findings are consonant with findings elsewhere that non-dominant communities make educational decisions that, according to their own quality standards, are perhaps more accurate than those of educators and policy makers (Corbett, 2007; Kannapel & Young, 1999; Krätli, 2000).
Perspectives on Quality in Minority Education in China

Quality measured by educational and occupational outcomes differs among ethnicities. A multivariate analysis of the relationship between occupational status and ethnicity in Xinjiang region found a lower probability of high status employment for minorities, while the return to education for minorities was as high as, or higher than for Hans (p<.01). However, when controlling for educational attainment, Han-minority differences in probability of high status occupation were minor, suggesting that that those minority students who can complete secondary or tertiary education can find high status occupations. However the majority-minority educational gap has been widening, with minority chances of attaining high status occupations falling (Hannum & Xie, 1998). This study contrasted the Han with an aggregate of all minorities in Xinjiang; a similar study that disaggregated individual ethnicities in Xinjiang also found clear intra-minority differences in educational and occupational attainment (L. Benson, 2004).

Notions of the purpose of education, and thus of quality in education, may also differ among ethnicities. One observer concluded that notions of quality in education differed among rural Korean and Han teachers, with Han teachers focusing on high standards of learning for the strongest students, while Korean teachers attempted to teach the entire class, paying similar attention to strong and weak students (Pepper, 1996). Many minorities also prefer values developed through traditional education to the secular values emphasized in state schools, (Bass, 1998; Hansen, 1999; Gladney, 1999, 2004; Mackerras, 1999). Among ethnicities where traditional Buddhist and Muslim education is reserved for boys, state schooling is the main avenue for girls’ education. Chinese-medium schooling is reportedly unpopular among some minority girls and their parents, but demand for basic education among girls has surged when

---

7 Except one category, with no significant interaction.
mother-tongue schooling has become available as an alternative (Harrell & Ma, 1999; Seeberg, 2006), concurring with findings in Africa (C. Benson, 2004). Hansen (1999) found that among the Dai of southwest China, moreover, young females preferred a future spouse who had received a traditional Buddhist education to one educated only in state schools. Thus among ethnicities where boys drop out of state schools to attend traditional schools, educational attainment in state schooling is sometimes higher among girls than boys.

Null and Hidden Curriculum and Quality in Minority Education in China

Pedagogy in China is generally described by outsiders as transmissive, teacher-centred, authoritarian, focused on rote learning and test preparation (Paine, 1990). Little observational study of teachers’ pedagogical orientations in minority districts has been done, although ethnographic studies suggest that minority teachers share a transmissive orientation with majority teachers (Hansen, 1999; Harrell & Ma, 1999). Islamic and Buddhist religious education in the region, however, is said to supplement transmission with discussion and debate methods (Street, 1984; Khalid, 1998; Tillemans, 1999; Patrik, 2004).

Teachers’ negative expectations based on class, ethnicity, gender, race, religion, or sexual orientation may have harmful effects on minority students (Apple, 2004; Ogbu, 1991, 1992; Cummins, 1986). One focus of such research in China has been to examine how minority students are affected by the politics curriculum, which explicitly classifies most of their cultures as backward (Feng, 2005; Hansen, 1999; Zhou, 2004). Dai students in a boarding school in a L2 environment developed negative perspectives towards their own language and culture (Hansen, 1999). A qualitative comparative case study of Baoan, Salar and Yughur minority students from north-west China found that the cultural isolation in boarding school led minority boarders to drop out more often than students who returned home daily (Qian, 2007). Some researchers
investigated how minority students engage with views of their culture encountered in schools. Building on Ogbu’s “folk theories of success” (1987), Harrell and Ma (1999) argue that some minority students construct an identity in which their chances of educational success are as good as or better than any other ethnicity. Zhu (2007) similarly explores how Tibetan students in boarding schools in Mandarin-speaking regions negotiate their identities, sometimes accepting, at other times resisting stereotypes they may encounter in schools about their minority.

**Language in Education Policy and Minority Education in China**

Article 4 of China’s constitution has enshrined “the right to use and develop minority languages in minority communities” (Zhou, 2004, p. 79). Article 36 of the PRC Regional Autonomy Law for Minority Nationalities states that “schools mainly enrolling minority students should adopt textbooks in minority languages and scripts when available and use minority languages as the medium of instruction; in upper grades in primary schools or in secondary schools Chinese courses should be offered and Mandarin should be used”. Article 36 applies, however, only in special territories granted limited autonomy to protect minority culture and language (China, 1998, cited in Zhou & Sun, 2004, p. 78). Further, since Article 36 states a preference rather than requirement for minority language schooling, it leaves the choice of implementation mode to local authorities, producing a wide range of practices.

China’s language policy is also informed by the norms of international conventions to which it is a signatory that include articles referring to ethnic minorities, language and education, notable among which are the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), and the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) (United Nations, n.d.). All signatories are required to submit periodic reports to the United Nations concerning compliance with the terms of these
agreements, and to respond to queries from United Nations concerning implementation of
international norms. Thus one concern for policy makers is concordance of explicit policy with
the external political situation as expressed in international normative agreements. Concerning
the CRC, some of the recommendations for China have been to:

(a) Ensure primary and secondary teaching and learning materials for are
available in minority languages and with culturally sensitive content; (CRC, 2005,
Section 25, pp. 14-15)

(b) Increase the allocation of resources towards ensuring that all children, in
particular girls … and ethnic minority children, … complete compulsory
education and have equal access to early childhood education and development
programmes; (Section 77, pp. 20)

(c) Make the report and the written replies submitted by the State party and the
related recommendations adopted by the Committee widely available in the
languages of the country, … in order to generate debate and awareness of CRC.
(Section 98, pp. 20)

International concerns have also been expressed about ‘irregularities’ in the provision of
universal, free, compulsory elementary education, especially in rural and minority areas; about
the high rural dropout rates from junior secondary school; and about some reports of
discrimination against minorities in employment and education, commenting in particular that
increased dissemination in minority areas is required concerning “the economic, social and
cultural rights enshrined in the Covenant” (CESCR, 2005, p. 5). Thus, although implementation
of agreed norms is monitored by external bodies, these norms provide little guidance on the
content and form of minority education, or how to balance the requirement that education should
be universal, free and compulsory, with sensitivity to minority languages and cultures.

_Bilingual Education in China_

China’s language policy approaches in minority areas have been divided into three phases
according to its greater or lesser emphasis on minority languages and Mandarin. In the first pre-
Cultural Revolution ‘pluralistic’ stage, a permission stance towards Mandarin learning was combined with a promotion stance towards minority languages (1949-1965); in the second stage, during the Cultural Revolution, Chinese was promoted and minority languages prohibited (1966-1978); in the third stage, Chinese promotion has been combined with a tolerance or permission stance towards minority languages (1979-present). During these periods, important changes occurred in the language policy for officials in minority districts, which have had ramifications for language in education policy. In the first stage, minority officials were expected to learn Chinese, while Han officials were expected to learn the local minority language. This policy seems to have been implemented in the first phase, but not enforced at all in the second phase. After the Cultural Revolution, ‘The Law of Autonomy of Ethnic Minority Groups’ in 1984 explicitly returned to promotion of Mandarin and minority languages, requiring learning of each other’s languages by Han and minority cadres (Blachford, 1998; Teng & Wang, 2001; Zhou, 2004, 2007; Zhou & Ross, 2004). Little information is available on implicit policy for cadres since 1984, although Blachford’s study of local policy implementation suggests it is rare in recent years for dominant language officials to learn minority languages (1998).

Furthermore, the recent addition of compulsory foreign language classes to the national curriculum is an added pressure to the local curriculum. Currently, there are some who call for reduced or no use of minority languages in education due to the great importance of developing L2 proficiency in the state language, Mandarin (Badeng Nima, 2001); it can be surmised that the addition of English to the primary curriculum will be adduced as further evidence against the use of minority languages in education, as was the case in the Soviet Union in the 1950s (Lewis, 1972; Shorish, 1988; Fierman, 1991; Landau and Kellner-Heinkele, 2001; Schlyter, 2004).
**Models of Bilingual Education in China**

Models for language of instruction for minority students are quite various in China. In urban areas, and rural where several nationalities live in the same territory, generally Mandarin is used as language of instruction. However, in territories where a particular minority lives in large numbers, there are many models that are followed ranging from second language submersion to mother tongue education with Mandarin taught only as a school subject. Table 14 sets out the range of models that exist in contemporary China, drawn from a number of sources.

Models of language in education in China vary according to the role of the mother tongue in education. Monolingual mother tongue education may be encountered in traditional religious schools, which minority youth, usually boys, may attend after completing 9 years of compulsory education in state schools. However, in state schools, Chinese is always taught in some form. The main approach to ‘bilingual education’ is major Language of Instruction (LOI) + 2\textsuperscript{nd} Language as a subject, which has a minority-language dominant form, and a Chinese-dominant form. That is, one language is used as the main language of instruction, and the other language is taught as a school subject and is not used to teach other content. Thus, there is a model of mother-tongue education with Mandarin as a subject, or the inverse Mandarin as the main language of instruction. Among minorities with no approved writing system is sometimes found ‘mixed’ bilingual education, in which Chinese-medium instruction is supplemented by oral explanation in the mother tongue, an approach that requires bilingual teachers. Chinese-medium instruction for minority students is further divided into ‘submersion’ in which all instruction is in Chinese and no mother tongue is provided (see Table 14 for the models of language in education found in China) (Blachford, 1998; Lam, 2005; Teng & Wang, 2001a & b; Tsung, 2009; Wang, 2002; Zhou, 2004, 2007).
As a result, transitional bilingual education in China often consists of an abrupt shift from model 2 to model 3; that is from Mandarin being taught only as a subject 1 year, to being the main LOI the very next year. A gradual transition where L1 and L2 are both used as languages of instruction for a period of time is rarely identified in the literature. The major difference between bilingual education models among districts is when the transition from L1 to L2 language of instruction takes place, from Junior Secondary to Senior Secondary, elementary to secondary and lower to upper elementary being common times for a switch of LOI (Blachford, 1998).

**Language orientations and multilingualism in China.**

Clearly, local officials, educators, parents and students in minority areas exhibit a variety of language orientations (Ruiz, 1990), but most frequently there is a tension “Language as Right” and “Language as Problem” orientations, in which linguistic diversity itself is seen as a problem: “Language X is a child’s right; but Language Y is a problem, barring access to Language X.” Thus, one group sees Mandarin creating a problem for minority children’s access to their right to their native language, culture and heritage; another group sees minority language as a problem blocking minority children’s right to learn Chinese, the lingua franca of all China, and Access to scientific knowledge and modernity. Neither view is informed by the language as resource view supported by current research that suggests that minority children can develop strong proficiency and literacy in two languages using maintenance bilingual education (Cummins, 2000, 2001).

Nevertheless, there is some evidence that suggests that there has been a long tradition of folk multilingualism among multiethnic minority populations in northwest China in which the “Language as Resource” orientation was the norm (Lee-Smith, 1996). In Vortala district in Xinjiang, for example, Uighurs, Kazakhs and Mongols have arrived at a mutual sociolinguistic accommodation process, in which during cross-cultural interaction, speakers address
interlocutors in their mother tongue; that is Mongols address Kazakhs in Kazakh, while Kazakhs reply to them in Mongolian, and when visiting, everyone speaks the host’s language (p. 901). A similar strategy is reported as typical of Kyrgyz interaction with Russians in Kyrgyzstan (Korth, 2005). Korth speculates that one reason for massive language shift to Russian by ethnic Kyrgyz was the disturbance of reciprocity in interethnic communication. Korth argues that Kyrgyz cultural norms required them to address Russians in their language, according to Russian assumptions of cultural superiority, it is not necessary to learn enough Kyrgyz language and culture to reciprocate. There is evidence that Han Chinese rarely learn any of the other languages of China, treating China’s language diversity as a problem, rather than as enriching resources (Ma, 2007), thus disturbing sociolinguistic accommodation norms of the local language ecology (Hornberger, 2002; Mühlhäusler; 1996). At the same time, there is evidence that rural Han who live among speakers of minority languages often develop oral proficiency in their neighbours’ languages and accommodate themselves to local norms of communication (Hansen, 2005; Ma, 2007). Indeed, there is evidence that local dialects of Chinese in the northwest have been influenced by surrounding languages, sometimes exhibiting, for example, word order typical of Turkic and Mongolic languages (Slater, 2003).

A study in 1985 in a district with mixed Mongolian-Han population found that Chinese was the chosen language of interethnic communication in the vast majority of cases in urban areas, with almost all Mongolian heads of household studied reporting ability to speak Chinese, and almost no Han household heads reporting any proficiency in Mongolian, whereas in pastoral areas, among Han household heads, 47% reported some Mongolian proficiency, and 27% report the ability to speak Mongolian well. In this case, both languages function as media of interethnic communication (Ma, 2007, 9-10).
Ma’s description of the process whereby members of a Chinese minority develop bilingual proficiency in Mandarin and rural Han residents of Mongolian areas develop bilingualism in Mongolian is based on twenty-year-old data and does not mention the question of language shift of Mongolians and the effect this has on their identity. More current reports paint a less pastoral picture, arguing that language shift to Mandarin among Mongolians has developed rapidly, even in rural areas, and is producing acute anxiety within among Mongolians on the significance of this shift for their continued national identity. Bulag (2003), a Mongolian anthropologist from China, assigns much of the blame for language shift in Inner Mongolia to the failure of Mongolian-medium schools in pastoral areas to teach Chinese well enough for their graduates to find work in urban environments. This drives parents to send their children to Mandarin-medium schools, where children soon lose their Mongolian proficiency.

**Scholarly Debate on Quality and Bilingual Education in China**

In some minority districts, only Chinese-submersion programmes are offered. In a county in Yunnan province, Miao, Yao, or Dai nationality children who were monolingual in the mother tongue when beginning school were provided submersion education. Scholars have criticized this model, since students could not understand lessons in Mandarin until Grade 2 or speak Mandarin until Grade 3, which had a negative effect on their academic achievement (Ma, 2000, p. 21).

Although rare in practice, some minority education scholars in China support models of bilingual education that are in essence maintenance and not transition bilingual education. There are scholars in China who argue that study:

> in the minority language and educational instruction in Chinese should not be mutually exclusive or replace one another, but rather, they should complement and reinforce each other. ... The two must be emphasized equally, without
favouring one over the other or showing bias. (Xie & Sun, 1991, p.114, as cited in Ma, 2007, p. 12)

However, the major debate among scholars concerns the choice between late and early transition. Badeng Nima (2001), and Teng and Wang (2001), for example, argue for the first view, criticizing transitional bilingual education for shifting prematurely to all Mandarin-medium instruction, leading to low literacy in both the minority language and Mandarin. This argument has considerable support in bilingual education research outside China, which has found that maintenance bilingual education typically leads to higher proficiency in both the first and second language than does transitional bilingual education (Abadzi, 2006; Baker, 2001; Benson, 2004; Cummins, 2000, 2001; Hovens, 2002; Kosonen, 2005; Pattanayak, 2001; Willig, 1985).

Supporters of the second view reason less from systematic research than from ‘experience’ and “common sense” assumptions about the nature of language, learning, education and society that are clearly related to Ruiz’ “Language as Problem” orientation that Mandarin is more important than mother tongue proficiency to minority children’s life chances, that effective learning of Mandarin, requires maximum exposure to a Mandarin language environment, and that mother tongue learning interferes with Mandarin learning, and that modern knowledge is best learned through Mandarin (Jiang, 2002; Ma, 2007).

The view of Mandarin as right and minority language as problem together with the low average educational attainment and Mandarin-proficiency levels of many minority children have led to the proposal that minority children can benefit from being sent to boarding schools in urban Mandarin areas. Wang and Zhou (2003) and Postiglione, Jiao and Manlaji (2007) have studied programs for Tibetan children in an urban Mandarin environment, where students studied
one course on Tibetan language and the remainder of the curriculum in Mandarin. Both studies found that these programs led to increased Mandarin proficiency, but to moderate oral and low written proficiency in Tibetan, such that graduates have insufficient Tibetan proficiency to work in their communities, except as teachers of Chinese and Mathematics, commonly taught in Mandarin (Postiglione, Jiao & Manlaji, 2007; Wang & Zhou, 2003).

Wan and Zhang (2007) moreover, conducted a study in a Tibetan-speaking district of Gansu province that found no significant differences between students’ mean scores on tests of Mandarin and Tibetan proficiency in Tibetan-dominant and Mandarin-dominant bilingual education programmes, where one language was the medium of instruction for all curriculum except one course in the other language as a subject. Wan and Zhang found that scores on mathematics tests were significantly higher in the Mandarin-dominant program, which the authors ascribe to the better conditions in Mandarin-dominant schools, rather than to an advantage of the model of bilingual education. Discussion of dual language maintenance bilingual education, in which students study curriculum content in two languages up to secondary, and even into higher, education, are noteworthy by their absence from the literature (Zhou, 1991, as cited in Stites, 1999, p. 108).

**Local Stakeholders’ Role in Selection of Models of Language in Education**

According to Ma (2007), there are two main schools of thought among officials in ethnic minority areas and minority parents about language of instruction for minority children, with some preferring later transition to Chinese-medium education, and others preferring early transition to, or even exclusive use of, Chinese-medium education, although reportedly officials in some minority districts in Sichuan promote the continuation of L1 instruction in Yi and
Tibetan languages alongside Chinese beyond elementary to secondary education (p. 17), in effect establishing a form of maintenance bilingual education in these areas.

There are reports that minority parents sometimes prefer Chinese-dominant education, but feel compelled to send their children to mother-tongue-dominant programmes (Ma, 1996, as cited in Ma, 2007). The main rationale of teachers, parents and students who prefer Chinese-dominant education in earlier grades is that entrance examinations:

- especially college entrance examinations, are not written in the minority language\(^8\), nor is the minority language one of the subjects on the examinations, then, rather than being like ‘the blind person who only wastes wax by lighting a candle,’ it is better to invest the time allocated for learning the minority language in studying mathematics, physics and chemistry. (Su, 1989, p. 49, as cited in Ma, 2007, p. 21)

Some scholars argue that the parents and officials in minority areas do not understand the consequences of the difference between L1-dominant and L2-dominant models of education and should be educated in the benefits of mother-tongue education, saying for example, that “we should put effort into our work, … make the cadres and herdsmen in the pastoral areas especially aware of the real importance of learning and using minority languages” (Sun et al. 1989, p. 75, as cited in Ma, 2007, p. 21).

Nevertheless, some reports claim that local minority parents:

- raised no objection to this process of ‘sinicization,’ quite the contrary, they believed that learning Chinese would help the students with future academic testing and finding employment, which made it a basic condition for personal development. Here [in Yunnan] we have not yet seen any ethnic group intent on rejecting Chinese language instruction in order to defend its own traditions. (Yu, 1999, p. 590)

---

\(^8\) In fact, CEE can be written in many minority languages, but not in languages without scripts (Sautman, 1999).
Examples are given of need to respect the “wishes of the masses” when minority parents request Chinese-dominant education:

There are people, however, who view this common wish on the part of the masses as an aberration that needs to be corrected and find fault with it. What they are actually finding fault with, however, is the way the masses take the practical value of knowledge into consideration, and that is something that defies criticism. (Ma, 2007, p. 22)

However, this view does not discuss the quality of the research on local stakeholders’ views on language and education models for minority children. We have seen above that references are made to “parents want”, “the masses want”, with no discussion of how many of the masses were consulted, and how the information was gathered. Where mother-tongue education is seen as of low quality, and where escape from manual labour depends on dominant language education, parents who are asked to choose between either “low quality” mother-tongue dominant education or “high quality” L2-dominant education will choose the latter.

However, Corson (2001) cautions us that minority communities and policy makers need to make informed decisions to be aware of the range of models of education available and their likely effects; Heugh reminds us that when minority parents understand that the choice is not necessarily either L1-dominant or L2-dominant education, they are less likely to choose L-2 dominant education over maintenance bilingual education. Thus, if the above forced choice question is reframed as “what kind of education would you envisage as ideal for your children”, minority parents in China are more likely to state a preference for a model of bilingual education that supports learning both the heritage language and the language of wider communication.

Blachford (1998) examined the local language and education policy making process in areas inhabited by three nationalities in Xinjiang: the Uygur, Kazak and Xibo. Policy makers seemed influenced by demographics with L1 instruction playing a greater part in schooling of the
larger minorities, Uygur and Kazak, than of the smaller minority studied, Xibo. Similarly, in urban areas dual language education with two languages of instruction L1 and Mandarin was more commonly implemented, whereas in rural areas, L1 was the main LoI, with Mandarin taught as a school subject throughout elementary education; among the Xibo, transitional bilingual education from Xibo to Mandarin was universal.

Policy implementation is strongly influenced by orientations of local officials, who, Blachford has suggested, belong to three types: those who advocate for central policy to the local minority locality and population; those who advocate local needs and desires to higher levels; and those who take a neutral stance changing their orientation according to the situation (1998). Blachford argues that minority officials are divided into those who advocate for their locality, and those who aim to accommodate to prevailing political tendencies, while Han cadres are always representatives of the interests of the centre (Blachford, 1998). It is not clear how well this three-fold division into political orientations corresponds to Ruiz’ language orientations.

Two extreme positions are said to be errors in minority education: a Great Han chauvinist position that exclusively favours Chinese-medium education and a narrow provincialism of minority communities and educators that favours traditional minority language education and rejects modern, scientific learning (Wang, 2002). Nevertheless, a “Language as Right” orientation among local policy makers that leads to advocacy of greater minority language use in education and administration in minority areas has been at some times interpreted as correct application of national language policy; at other times, as a sign of incorrect ‘nationalism’ that is harmful to inter-ethnic solidarity.

Badeng Nima (2001) reports an exceedingly complex picture of language in education policy and bilingual education in Tibetan areas of China. Badeng Nima further states that
Tibetan is as capable as Chinese as developing a modern scientific lexicon, but that without much greater attention to this corpus planning problem, in the short term, the shortage of teachers and materials for non-Chinese-medium science teaching is used by officials and Chinese-medium teachers as an argument against minority-medium secondary education. A further issue raised by Badeng Nima is a lack of voice among minority parents over local language-in-education policy making. He argues that Tibetan parents and educators are reluctant to voice opinions in favour of greater use of Tibetan language in education for fear of hyperpoliticalization; indeed, he states that some Tibetan officials work against Tibetan-medium education and punish those who attempt to develop and popularize it.

Zhou (2004) also argues that ethnic minorities are more likely to receive bilingual education if they have a numerous population, located in strategic border areas. Thus, while there is one central language-in-education policy for all China, implementation of policy for language minority children is manifested in a range of possibilities (see Table 14). The models range from monolingual Mandarin instruction, to five different forms of bilingual education.

Thus, China’s policies include elements that correspond to what Skutnabb-Kangas (2006) has termed rights-based, in that the possibility of minority language education is enshrined in laws and regulations, and what Patten & Kymlicka (2003) term norms-based elements, in that standard Mandarin-medium education is treated as the norm, with compensatory policies and programs provided for minority learners who have difficulty in mainstream schooling. There are a range of compensatory policies for China’s minorities that focus on reducing minority students difficulties in college admission (Sautman, 1999), among which are
1. The option to write college entrance exams in a minority language;
2. Lowered CEE cut off scores for college admission for minority applicants;
3. Quotas for minimum numbers of minority students to be admitted.

Thus policy agrees with Corson (2001) on the need to provide preferential policies for members of non-dominant groups as a means to create greater equity in access to education. Indeed, China’s preferential educational policies for language minorities are to be commended for attempting to redress potential imbalances in access to higher education. Corson’s argument, however, extends also to lower levels of education, where preferential policies might be able to have a greater impact. Nevertheless, the proportion of several minority groups with higher education has gone down from 1990 to 2000. This suggests that preferential policies at this level may need to be supplemented with preferential policies at lower levels, such as (a) increasing the quantity of minority youth completing senior secondary education; (b) increasing the quality of education of minority youth; and (c) changing the role or form of CEE (including abolition) (Bahry, 2006a).  

Feng (2005) reviews contrasting attitudes in Chinese educational literature towards bilingual education, identifying strong concern that Mandarin-English bilingual education must develop additive bilingualism, maintaining Chinese proficiency without English replacing Chinese in any domains, while no similar concern that minority-Mandarin bilingualism is frequently subtractive, with development of Chinese literacy at the cost of L1 literacy (Cummins, 2000, 2001). Feng argues, however, that the generally favourable attitude in China towards additive bilingualism in English may affect policy discourse towards increased attention to the similar need for minority students to also develop additive bilingualism in Chinese, through

---

9 See Table 15 for the range of tertiary attainment among ethnicities in China.
maintenance bilingual education. Feng does not discuss the role of local minority autonomous regional and county governments in these issues. Autonomous governments exist to protect minority interests, but minority officials pass through a selection process usually involving Mandarin-medium education and thus, following Bourdieu and Passeron (1990, p. 73), may acquire “Language as Problem” orientations towards minority languages.

Zhou (2007) has completed a comparative investigation of explicit language policy at lower than national levels, finding considerable diversity of practice. While at the national level, he concludes that policy is oriented towards promotion of Mandarin and tolerance of minority languages, he has found that higher level policy may in fact be echoed, adapted or inverted at lower levels. He finds three policy approaches: promotion, where regulation explicitly requires the use of minority languages and scripts in education; permission, where regulations explicitly allow but do not require the use of minority languages in literacy and education programmes; and tolerance, where minority languages and scripts are not mentioned in regulations.

Zhou states that where a minority community vigorously demands such use, it is constitutionally permitted to do so, but there seems to be an implication that local governments are not obligated to fund such policies. This seems to imply that minority communities may enact whatever local language-in-education policy they wish, through private schooling. ‘People-run’ (minban) schools might also be permitted to enact their own policy, although their case is less clear than that of private schools, since they are partially supported by public funds.

Of relevance to the current study is his examination of policy in northwest China in Qinghai and Gansu provinces. Qinghai’s legislation, ‘Implementation Measures of the PRC Law on Compulsory Education’ stipulates that Mandarin should be actively promoted in schools as should minority languages with scripts, while minority languages without scripts should be used
as ‘auxiliary’ languages of instruction with Mandarin as the primary language of instruction. Qinghai thus takes a promotion stance towards languages with scripts and a permission stance towards use in oral instruction to assist in Mandarin instruction of speakers of minority languages without scripts (Zhou, 2007, p. 111). Furthermore, there are language policies enacted at even lower administrative levels that may differ from provincial policy. Guoluo Tibetan autonomous prefecture in Qinghai province concurs with provincial policy in promoting Mandarin at all levels of schooling, like the provincial policy promotes the use of Tibetan in Tibetan minority schools, but goes beyond provincial policy in two ways. First, their 1995 Regulations on Compulsory Education extend beyond to the secondary level, thus requiring maintenance rather than transitional bilingual education; secondly, it stipulates:

Non-minority primary and secondary schools should use Chinese as the main medium of instruction and offer Tibetan language courses at appropriate grades according to needs. (Zhou, 2007, p. 114)

Thus, at the local level, interesting flexibility in policy has appeared: in effect, a policy which encourages, but does not require, dual language bilingual education for Hans and Tibetans.

**Quality in Minority Education and Local Cultural Diversity**

National primary curriculum promotes pan-Chinese identity, emphasizing love of the land of China, its nationalities, the responsibilities of citizens towards each other and to the state, and the importance of becoming a builder of socialism with Chinese characteristics. The model of pan-Chinese identity (*Zhonghua minzu*) presented to children is based on Fei Xiaotong’s concept of *duo yuan yi ti*, or, diversity in unity, with every ethnic group, including the majority

---

10 This recognizes the longstanding status Tibetan language as a lingua franca and language of higher learning within Qinghai and parts of Gansu for speakers of smaller languages without scripts such as Monguor (Tu) (Slater, 2003).
Han, seen as participating together equally in a larger organic whole, in which all participate and are valued (Wang & Wan, 2006; Zhou, 2003). Ethnic assimilation of minorities to become Han is against policy however, integration of ethnicities into the zhonghua minzu, is permissible (Zhou, 2004). However, there are two major images of this pan-Chinese identity. In the first image, ronghe, or fusion, China’s ethnic groups mutually interact, leading to creation of a new, stronger, but essentially uniform identity. As with the smelting of steel, there are several elements blended together, but one, the majority Han nationality, makes the largest contribution (Teng & Wang, 2001b; Wang, 2002). This interpretation, comparable to the American melting pot image and the “Language as Problem” orientation, proceeds from diversity to uniformity.

In the second image, China is likened to a flower garden, where each bloom is unique in size, colour and fragrance, yet contributes to a beautiful and harmonious whole, a hybrid view of Chinese identity. In this image, all citizens’ identity is simultaneously on two levels, an individual ethnic identity plus a pan-Chinese national identity incorporating both diversity and unity at the same time, comparable to the North American cultural mosaic image, and both the “Language as Right” and “Language as Resource” orientation (Wang & Wan, 2006). Fei (1982) seems to prefer the second interpretation of pan-Chinese identity, emphasizing the autonomy of the 55 minority nationalities and the protections they receive from the government, ensuring that they will not follow the fate of the North American Indians. Nevertheless, in practice curriculum and pedagogy in minority areas frequently emphasize the whole (unity) more than its parts (plurality), so that curriculum lacks relevant local content, and is not reflective of the social reality in the area for which it was designed (Chen, 2004, p. 11-12; Wang & Wan, 2006).

The national curriculum, even when delivered in the mother tongue, is difficult to understand for children, and even for many teachers, in remote minority areas to understand.
National textbooks for example contain none of the distinct flora and fauna found in mountainous or regions or grasslands. In response, Wan Minggang, Badeng Nima and Jia Luo (1999) and Jia Luo (2003) have prepared Tibetan-Mandarin bilingual textbooks that attempt to reflect the local environment and culture, incorporating for example traditional riddles and language games as means to stimulate creativity and advanced oral literacy. Surveys of local teachers, parents and students report a generally positive response to these textbooks (Jia Luo, unpublished field notes).

The MOE recommends study of the local community, its beliefs and cultural practices (Yang & Zhou, 2002). Chen (2004) extends this argument to multilingual, multiethnic districts, concluding that multicultural education is needed, and could benefit China by strengthening minority students’ school achievement and ethnic identity, and developing increased mutual understanding and respect among students of different ethnic backgrounds. Wang and Wan (2006) critique multicultural education (ME) in USA, Canada, UK and Australia, and assess its utility in China, particularly in the northwest, a highly multiethnic region. For them, a major challenge in adapting ME to China is its imprecise definition: does it focus on minorities, and not the mainstream; how does it differ from bilingual education? Nevertheless, they conclude that this approach has great potential in China, as long as it does not blindly imitate foreign models. In fact, they call for both sinicization and localization of multicultural education.

Wan (2003) points out formidable obstacles to developing ME in the face of enormous fiscal gap between interior minority areas and developed coastal regions. Wan raises for discussion western models of compensatory education that subsidized educational development within disadvantaged regions and social group, such as western China and its minority areas.
Zheng (2003) similarly points out that successful implementation of the national policy of developing China’s western regions economically requires putting minority education in these areas in first place in order to develop local human resources to assist in the development strategy. However, for most minorities in western China, the entire way of life is closely integrated with the physical environment, and thus a culturally sustainable education for minorities must also incorporate environmental education.

Zhu (2007) is a useful beginning to the study of the role of education and the hidden curriculum in the identity construction of minority children in China. A fruitful extension of such research would be ethnographic and sociolinguistic investigation of language, culture and interaction among a broader range of ethnicities, stakeholders and schools to help understand the minority student experience of schooling, how the process can be demystified for them, and the perceptions within minority communities of the interplay of local and pan-Chinese identity.

**Quality in Minority Education, Language Endangerment and Revitalization**

Beyond language policy, there is tension between views about language as a neutral instrument of communication or as an essential component of cultural identity. Among some minorities in China experiencing rapid language shift alongside increases in children’s Mandarin proficiency and educational attainment, there is an anxiety that ethnic identity will completely disappear if their language is lost (Bradley, 2005). UNESCO has taken a strong position in support of multiculturalism, multilingualism and linguistic and cultural preservation. Accordingly, Articles 5 and 6 of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity call for protecting linguistic diversity, supporting the use of as many languages as possible and:
Encouraging linguistic diversity – while respecting the mother tongue – at all levels of education, wherever possible, and fostering the learning of several languages from the earliest age. (UNESCO, n.d.)

UNESCO has termed this decade ‘The International Decade of the World’s Indigenous People’, and has been trying to increased awareness of the social, cultural and linguistic challenges faced by indigenous peoples worldwide, including the question of appropriate schooling and languages of instruction, for an education that can support indigenous peoples need for education and development without deracination (UNESCO). The Chinese government does not officially accept that any of its minority languages can be considered ‘indigenous’ languages (He, 2005), reserving this appellation for ethnic groups who were colonized by an external power that arrived by ship from overseas, the so-called ‘saltwater’ thesis of indigeneity.

Nevertheless, UNESCO’s China office terms its activities in support of endangered languages as supporting indigenous languages. UNESCO China has been involved in cooperation with research of the Institute of Nationality Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in language documentation efforts (Moukala, 2003). Of course, language documentation when not in alliance with community and development and changes in education policy does little to reduce language shift and prevent language loss (Tsunoda, 2005). Thus, UNESCO China has taken on the role of advocating for policies that will support endangered language, maintenance and revival, such as:

1. adoption of indigenous language into the educational system;
2. identification of cultural heritage resources for development for underprivileged ethnic groups generating income for social development;
3. promotion of indigenous arts and crafts through integrated artisan development projects (Moukala, 2003, p. 3).
UNESCO China states however that some local authorities are forcing indigenous languages that no longer have any use on unwilling individuals in a form of ‘cultural protectionism’ (p. 3). Note that revitalization achieved by linking traditional culture with economic opportunity is predicated on those aspects of a minority group’s culture that feature in a contributions approach to multicultural curriculum: colourful clothes, handicrafts, foods, songs and dances (Banks, 1994; Cummins, 2000), just the exotic elements of minority culture that seem to fulfil a need among the majority group for variety (Gladney, 1999, 2004).

**Conclusion**

Wang and Wan (2006) agree with Banks (1994) that multicultural education in China should be intended not only for minority students, but also for majority Han students. Moreover, research on bilingual and trilingual education suggests that two or three languages of instruction can be used in a school successfully, where all students take some courses in another language (Cummins, 2000). Thus, it seems reasonable to experiment with two-way dual language enrichment education in areas where several linguistic groups live together. However, although majority Han farmers in minority districts have often developed some oral proficiency in minority languages (Ma, 2007; Hansen, 2005), the attitudes or urban educated Han, who have come from outside to work in minority areas have been little investigated, and there is little or no precedent for majority students using a minority language as the medium of instruction, which could be a barrier to instituting two-language maintenance bilingual education (Baker, 2001).

As Wang and Wan (2006) and likeminded scholars argue, the plurality in unity concept of Chinese identity, although fruitful, and even necessary for the harmonious development of China, particularly in its most linguistically and culturally diverse western regions, presupposes much greater devotion of resources toward research, curriculum and materials development,
teacher development, program implementation and evaluation related to approaches to education which embody diversity. Increased dialogue of educators, education scholars and policy makers both within China and internationally will assist the process of debate, experimentation, and implementation of models of education in China that can both maintain and revive minority language and culture, while permitting participation within the broader society that does not involve the loss of their language and culture, and simultaneously enriching mainstream education by broadening its perspectives (Chen, 2004; Feng, 2007; Wang & Wan, 2006).

Such change involves much discussion, disagreement and perhaps resistance, particularly if proposed changes are perceived as weakening students’ chances to succeed in the national curriculum and the goal of high CEE scores and college admission. However, while local and school curriculum are less valued by many, this lack of connection to the CEE should permit greater flexibility to experiment with diverse knowledge perspectives and pedagogies that will support stronger forms of bilingual education and multicultural education as well as the integration of indigenous and scientific knowledge relevant to local environmental challenges. However, research on bilingual education in China deals more with prestigious Mandarin-English bilingual education programs in the urban east than minority-Mandarin bilingual education in the rest of the country (Feng, 2005).

From the above discussion, it is clear that many educational debates in China resemble global debates on education. First, while China’s unity has traditionally been emphasized through uniformity of curricula, there is increasing recognition among the MOE, Chinese and international scholars of the extent of China’s social, geographic, cultural and linguistic diversity, and the relationship of this diversity to continuing differences in educational
participation and achievement within China that hinder the quantitative achievement of the goals of universal basic education, and also have consequences for students’ qualitative experience.

Globalization or modernization is increasingly seen as leading to the weakening of traditional local knowledge, culture and values. This perception can be found everywhere in China, but is more common in rural areas, minority districts and interior provinces, since their experience is farthest from global knowledge and culture. While all students should have access to national and international knowledge and skills, it should not need to come at the expense of local culture and identity; at the same time, preservation of local culture and identity should not imply a romantic turning to the past and refusal to engage with modernity and the outside world.

MOE’s encouragement of teachers’ roles as curriculum developers is a means to develop strong local and regional knowledge and identities, working in tandem with researchers and local stakeholders. However, the reform is a case of top-down imposition of bottom-up empowerment, not necessarily desired by all. The perspective of one minority county education bureau concerning school-based curriculum development was, according to one local administrator, “not to encourage, nor to oppose or to concern ourselves [with this]” (Li, D., 2006, p. 262).

Yang (2006) cautions against uncritical globalization of Chinese educational research by western research methods and paradigms, advising that Chinese educational researchers:

need to develop their unique perspectives and values based on rich local experience and an awareness of their local society and culture. This is to grasp the meaning of locality in the situation when nation-states experience transnational destabilization. Such a sense of locality would allow them to seize the initiative in identifying the real needs of their local societies and in setting up their own research agendas and targets. (p. 218)

Yang’s argument parallels the argument of Haas and Lambert (1995) on American rural education reform, and can be applied to educational research on non-dominant groups in China.
The literature on non-dominant education suggests several trends: first, centralized policy too often omits crucial information about local conditions for an effective policy to be designed and implemented. Moreover, arguments have been made that it is unethical to treat children as “inputs” in a system and to impose without participation educational models that fail to take into account the quality perspectives of local stakeholders. There is evidence that minority parents prefer a both/and educational model that includes their own as well as mainstream language and culture to an either/or conception that limits their children to the mother tongue, or the dominant language, rather than providing maintenance bilingual education. Evidence also suggests that involvement of students, parents and community members in deciding school language policy, curriculum making, and even teaching, can lead to rises in quantitative measures of quality and subjective satisfaction with schooling.

Evidence has accumulated that successful L1 education in poor, rural districts in developing countries is possible when standard models of education are adapted to involve local stakeholders more closely; evidence has also accumulated that linguistic minority students, even in poor developing contexts can learn as successfully or better through bilingual education than their counterparts do in L2 submersion programmes; there is some evidence in China that ‘quality’ bilingual minority education has achieved equal or more success than L2 submersion.

However, evidence has also accumulated that empowering local stakeholders is not as simple as handing curriculum and governance authority down from above. It is clear that local stakeholders often have different visions of what should be learned in school, and the place of minority culture and language in school curriculum. It is also clear that teachers and local administrators have a dual role: to meet their obligations towards the state, whether at the level
of the county, prefecture, province or national governments, while also meeting their obligations towards their clients, their students, their parents and the community in which they serve.

However, micro-politics and career competition can play a confounding role in the process. Teachers may support or oppose mother-tongue education for reasons besides research evidence. Nevertheless, for exclusion of minority language and culture from curriculum to be ethically and educationally tenable, all stakeholders’ views on the question must be known. If L2 submersion or a weak version of bilingual education are implemented without reasonably full inclusion of local stakeholders’ voices’, a policy of implicit assimilation is being enacted.

Nevertheless, insufficient research on the above questions is available in China: first of all, research evidence and research methods from the fields of bilingualism, language and education are not often enough brought to bear on crucial decisions on curriculum and LOI; secondly, there is insufficient knowledge derived from rigorous research methods on stakeholder perspectives on education, perhaps because of previous hyper politicization of advocacy of mother-tongue minority education, which was for almost 20 years termed “linguistic nationalism” (Teng, 2001). In this policy environment, maintenance bilingual education, where both the dominant and minority language are given equal weight, is the most viable language in education model for China’s minority education, and yet the least tested and researched.

Thus, it is of great importance to research what the opinions of local stakeholders actually are on the question of inclusion of minority knowledge, culture and language in minority education in China. Clearly, qualitative research is one manner of systematically gathering evidence on stakeholder thinking. While qualitative research methods are becoming known in China, there is still insufficient rigorous study of perspectives of administrators, teachers, parents and students in minority areas.
Chapter Four:
The Research Site:
Sunan Yughur Autonomous County, Gansu, China

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the location of the research, Sunan Yughur Autonomous County, giving an overview of its environmental, cultural, historical and economic situation within the larger context of Zhangye Prefecture and Gansu province. A similar overview will be given of the nationalities in Sunan County, focusing on the languages and culture of the Sarigh Yughurs and Shira Yughurs, including their historical traditions. This will be followed by a presentation of what is known about language use and language planning in Sunan County. Next, the development of state education and the implementation of 9-year compulsory basic education in Sunan County will be discussed, along with a comparison of educational attainment of Yughurs and Sunan County as a whole in comparison to other ethnicities and regions will be provided. Finally, what is known of attempts to incorporate Yughur language into Sunan County will be presented, followed by a summary of the state of knowledge about the perspectives of local stakeholders on Yughur language in Sunan County schools.

The Context of the Study

The research site, Sunan Yughur Autonomous County, is located in Zhangye Prefecture, Gansu Province in Northwest China. This county is located in the Hexi corridor, the narrow strip of land which connects central China with Xinjiang and Central Asia, and along which the historical Silk Road passed. The Hexi corridor consists of a narrow tongue of arable land, irrigated by glacial melt water, runs from southeast towards the northwest, with grasslands and mountains on the southwest and desert on the northeast. The Hexi corridor has long functioned
as a channel for movement of goods, peoples, languages and religions in several directions, the traces of which are still to be found in contemporary Gansu (Whitfield, 2004).

Gansu province is surrounded by regions with large minority populations: Qinghai, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) and Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), with 43%, 62% and 96% respectively of the population belonging to minorities in 1990 (Lamontagne, 1999). Gansu’s territory, 454,430 square kilometres, is 26% mountainous, 30% plateau, and 15% desert. Forty percent of Gansu is over 2,000 metres, and 92% over 1,000 metres above sea-level; 10% of land is forest, 37% is grassland, while only 7.5% of land is cultivated (Gansu, 2005).

As a result of the harsh environment and difficult terrain, Gansu is one of China’s poorer provinces. According to recent statistics, Gansu’s population of 26,187,800 comprises 2.01% of China’s total population, while the number of those employed is similarly 2.02% of the total for China. Nevertheless, gross regional product for Gansu is only 1.1% of the national total, while the annual average per capita disposable income of 1,852 Yuan for rural residents is 63% of the national average for rural residents of 2,936 Yuan (Gansu, 2005).

Gansu’s population is 2% of the national total, while its gross regional product (GRP) is 1.1%, and its expenditures 1.25% of the national total, while Gansu government revenues are only .82% of government expenditures in China (Gansu, 2005). Not surprisingly, Gansu’s educational indicators are low. Higher education enrolments, at 1.5% of the national total, are 25% lower than Gansu’s share of China’s population, while in 1990, its illiteracy rate was, at 24.7%, China’s 4th highest (China, 1998). The mean illiteracy rate among the 8% of Gansu’s population belonging to minority nationalities was even higher, at 32% (Lamontagne, 1999).
Sunan Yughur Autonomous County forms part of Zhangye prefecture, which is located in the northwest of Gansu province between Jiuquan and Wuwei prefectures (see Figures 9 & 10 for Gansu’s location within China and Sunan County’s location within Gansu). Zhangye prefecture has a total population of 1,270,000, of which 26,959 or 2.2% of the total belong to minority ethnicities. The most numerous ethnicity in Zhangye prefecture is in fact the Yughur nationality, 98% of whom live in Sunan Yughur Autonomous County within Zhangye prefecture (Xu, 2005).

Zhangye, known in the past as Ganzhou, is a major historical site in the Hexi Corridor. After the fall of the Uighur khanate in the 800s, the Uighur population migrated southwards, with one group headed towards today’s Xinjiang and another group to the Hexi corridor where they founded the Ganzhou Uighur Khanate, which lasted from 840 AD to the 10th century (Gao & He, 2003; He, 1999).

**Sunan Yughur Autonomous County**

Sunan County lies in and at the foot of the Qilian Mountains, which straddle the border between Gansu and Qinghai provinces. Consequently, much of the county comprises mountains and high altitude grasslands. Rivers that arise in the mountains, fed by annual snow and glacier melt, run Northeast, providing irrigation water for Zhangye prefecture, finally flowing into the desert where they run dry. Sunan County’s total Regional Gross Product was valued in 2005 at 376,540,000 Yuan, of which 123,830,000 or 33% of the total derives from primary industry. This figure seems low relative to the high proportion of rural population; of 10,400 households in the county, 6,600 are classed as rural households (Gansu, 2005). Temperatures in the region have been above average recently and glaciers in the Qilian Mountains are retreating an average of 1 metre per year, reducing water from the annual spring melt, which irrigates the agricultural
areas below the mountains and leading to desertification (Yin, Clinton, Luo & Song, p. 95). Degradation of Sunan County’s grasslands contributes to dust storms that reach as far as Beijing (S. Liu, 2004) (see Figure 11 for Sunan County and its districts).

Sunan County’s Economy

Sunan County, while not rich by national standards in China, is relatively prosperous by regional standards. As we can see from Figure 12, per capita Gross Regional Product is more than 25% higher in Sunan County than it is in the region it is situated in, Zhangye Prefecture, where it is, in turn, almost 30% higher than in Gansu province as a whole. The Sunan County government’s capability to fund education is likely greater than that of Zhangye prefecture or Gansu province.

The Sarigh and Shira Yughur and Tibetans of Sunan County were traditionally, and many still are, pastoralists, herding sheep in the grasslands of the lower slopes of the Qilianshan Mountains (Gao & He, 2003). As noted above, 66% of Sunan households are classified as rural households. Since herders’ wealth is dependent on the size of their herds, overgrazing is always a possible threat. Western China faces the challenge of degradation of grasslands and resulting desertification of pasture lands: for example, in one minority county in Gansu, 10-20% of pasture used to graze livestock is considered degraded (World Bank, 2003, p. 7). Degradation of grassland became a noticeable problem in Sunan County in the 1970s (He, 1999). One approach of the central government to this problem has been to relocate pastoralists to other areas; however, there are indications that environmental degradation has not been significantly helped by these resettlements (Mailisha, 2004), while there certainly is potential for cultural disruption in large scale relocations.
In Minghua District, the district with the highest proportion of Yughur population was also most economically dependent on herding and the poorest. Thus, traditional herding culture, poverty and environmental threat are seen as interrelated. In response, economic diversification into farming, forestry and industry was supported by the government. Up until the 1970s, some Yughurs would rent land to other farmers of other nationalities, but Yughurs themselves rarely farmed the land, preferring to continue in their traditional economic specialization of herding. In the 1970s, however, the whole country was under pressure to imitate the agricultural techniques of the Dazhai commune, with Sunan’s herders no exception. In one township, a special agricultural development township was established as an attempt to diversity the local economy (He, 1999, pp. 316-317). It is unclear whether this district has been developed by teaching local herders to farm, or whether outside farmers have settled in Sunan County, which could create cultural disruption.

Nationalities in Sunan County

Sunan county is inhabited by several nationalities: Yughur, Tibetan, Monguor and Mongolian as well as Han Chinese, the national majority nationality (see Table 19). Almost all Yughur living in China are resident in Sunan Yughur Autonomous County; hence it’s name. Sunan Yughur Autonomous County was formed shortly after the proclamation of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, as a political unit that would be home to the majority of the Yughur nationality living in China, whose autonomous status was intended to give the county powers to protect the Yughur language and culture (Gao & He, 2003).

Linguistically, the Yughur can be divided into two distinct groups. The Sarigh Yughur, live primarily in the western part of the county and speak a Turkic language (see Table 20), while the Shira Yughur live primarily in the eastern part of the county speak a Mongolic
Neither Sarigh nor Shira Yughur has a script in general use. Tibetan is spoken in the region in the south in Huangcheng and Mati districts and in the north in Qifeng district. The form of Tibetan spoken in the south is the Amdo dialect, spoken in the Tibetan-regions of Gansu and Qinghai (known in Tibetan as Amdo province), while the form of Tibetan spoken in Qifeng resembles the Lhasa dialect of the distant Tibetan Autonomous Region (Wang, 2004). The Yughur, whose religion is Tibetan Buddhism, also use Chinese language and script, and in the religious sphere, Tibetan language and script (Gao & He, 2003, p. 122).

Some Yughur-Tibetan bilingualism and Shira-Sarigh Yughur bilingualism has historically existed, in addition to Minority-Mandarin bilingualism. Yughur population in China is estimated at 13,719 in 2000, but statistics for Yughur speakers’ numbers are unavailable, since census statistics count members of ethnicities but not speakers of languages. Both Sarigh and Shira Yughur are considered endangered languages, due to the small number of speakers, and the increasing shift to Mandarin, as is reportedly happening among the Sarigh Yughur of Qiantan Township in Minghua District (Bradley, 2005; Chen & Lei, 1985; Hahn, 1998; Nugteren, 2003; Zhaonasitu; 1981).

While Yughur make up only 24% of the population of the county, there are several districts where they constitute a majority. In 1993, Sarigh Yughur formed 86.35% of the population in Minghua district with 95.25% of the population of Minghai Township and 87.53% of the population in Lianhua townships respectively. Shira Yughur made up 64.46% of the population in Maying Township, Huangcheng district, and 69.85% and 75.52% respectively of the population of Hongshiwo and Yangle townships in Kangle district. West and Shira Yughur are said to both live in Dahe district and to form a majority in Jiucaigou and Shuiguan

---

11 Sarigh and Shira mean ‘yellow’. The Chinese designation for Sarigh and Shira Yughur is West and East Yughur,
Townships, with 63.79% and 54.37% of the population respectively. Finally, Tibetans constitute a majority of the population Qifeng district and in Xishui township of Mati district (Yang, 1993, as cited in Roos, 2000) (see Table 21).

The Yughur Nationality

The Yughurs are in some senses a problematic nationality. The post-1949 Yughurs were declared a single nationality during the 1950s as part of the process of officially determining how many nationalities there were in China, what their distinguishing characteristics were and assigning every individual in China to an official national category (Teng & Wang, 2001a & b; J. Wang, 2002; Zhou, 2003;), echoing the process of national delimitation in the Soviet Union in the 1920s following Stalin’s criteria for distinguishing nationalities, “A nation is a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture” (Stalin, 1942, p. 12, as cited in Bilik, 2002, p. 146).

The Yughurs in China consist of two smaller groups according to their language: the Sarigh Yughur (Yellow Yughur), or West Yughur, who speak a Turkic language, and the Shira Yughur (Yellow Yughur), or East Yughur, who speak a Mongolic language. As nomadic pastoralists living in adjacent territories, both following a combination of shamanism and Tibetan Buddhism, they certainly appear to have a common economic life, psychology and culture. Nevertheless, Sarigh Yughurs call Shira Yughurs Qara Yoghur, and Shira Yughurs call Sarigh Yughurs Khara Yoghur, both of which mean ‘black’ Yughurs; that is a similar, but, not identical, group. The Shira Yughur are also called Engger (Hahn, 1998; Nugteren, 2003).
Historical Origins of the Yughurs

A Turkic confederacy centred on the Orkhon River in Mongolia was driven out of this territory by the Kyrgyz, another Turkic tribal grouping, in the mid 9th century AD. Many Uighurs escaped towards the south and settled in the Hexi Corridor of Gansu, founding a khanate centred on the city of Ganzhou (today’s Zhangye). Chinese historians argue that the core of today’s Yughur nationality are the descendants of the Ganzhou Uighur khanate. Chinese historical records also record a Turkic group leaving the territory of today’s Xinjiang and crossing the Chinese frontier to receive the protection of the emperor. It is presumed that groups of Uighur Buddhists became in effect religious refugees’ leaving Xinjiang at the time of the Muslim conquest of the region and seeking a place where they could continue as Buddhists. However, Chinese historical research on Yughur origins differs from oral literature, which says nothing about the Ganzhou Khanate, nor of being driven out from Xinjiang by Muslims.

Rather, Yughur traditional songs and poems tell a different story of an epic migration not from north to south, but from west to east. According to tradition, the Yughurs homeland was Xizhihazhi, which they were forced to abandon, in response to a catastrophic drought. Their songs say that they wandered in caravans in search of food, water and pasture, nearly starving several times, and eventually coming to the Hexi corridor, where they stayed (He, 1999; Gao & He, 2003). Much Yughur historiographic research focuses on trying to identify the actual location of Xizhihazhi (Gao & He, 2003; He & Zhong, 2000; Zhong, 1995, 2006).

Yughur Family Structure

Families traditionally lived in tents, although in the steppes they converted to living in mud-brick Han style houses. Marriage customs were of two quite different types. Under one system, parents arranged marriages for their children without consulting them. Under another
system, a young woman could continue to live near her parents and support them, but live separately and choose her own partner, and change partners as she wished without any fear of social censure. If a child was born the relationship became more permanent, but the child took the mother’s surname and the ‘father’ was called ‘uncle’. Her partner was not formally her husband, and he had to work for the young woman’s parents, not his own family. Moreover, ending either type of marriage and remarrying is also said to be relatively easy among Yughurs in comparison to neighbouring Han (He, 1999; Sunan County, 1984, pp. 38-39).

The traditional division of labour among Yughurs assigned sheep herding, spinning, weaving and household tasks to women, and herding of cattle and camels, cutting hay, spinning and weaving to men (He, 1999, p. 335). Thus, there is considerable overlap in traditional work between women and men with both participating in herding and the production of homespun cloth, wool thread and cloth.

Also unlike the surrounding Han, Yugbr parents are said to show no preference for sons over daughters. Moreover, there is no clear distinction made between sexes in inheritance. Perhaps due to the two types of family structure in Yughur society, female social status was quite high in traditional society. Yughurs traditionally are given several names: a new-born child is given a Yughur name, usually by the grandfather; as adults, a lama selects a religious name from Tibetan scriptures. Since 1949, Yughurs have all received Chinese names, which are used for official purposes, in school etc (He, 1999, p. 336).

**Yughurs, Religion and Education**

The Hexi corridor historically displayed considerable ethnic, linguistic and religious pluralism. In the 7th century AD, alongside Tengrism, the traditional shamanistic religion of
Turkic tribes, were found Manichaeism, Nestorian Christianity and Mahayana Buddhism. The Ganzhou Uighurs became followers of Tibetan Buddhism: during the Ming and Qing dynasties, and mainly followed the Gelugspa (Yellow Hat) sect of Tibetan Buddhism. However, unlike most Tibetan Buddhist areas, monks, but not lamas, in Yughur areas could marry (Gao & He, 2003; He, 1999, p. 345; Sunan County, 1984, p. 33-34). Temples normally had at least one lama, several monks and a number of novice monks. As can be seen in Table 22, 11 temples remained in operation after 1949 within Sunan County.

Starting in 1939 under the impetus of local leaders, schools for children not preparing to become monks were opened in several local temples. From 1939-1942, five elementary schools were founded with one teacher each and a total of 135 students. Subsequently three other temples opened similar schools. According to the Sunan County government publications, school conditions were poor, funds insufficient, teaching quality was not high, and books had “reactionary feudal” content. These sources also say that most children could not attend school due to the costs involved and their nomadic lifestyle. According to these sources, the number of students decreased over the 1940s; for example, enrolment at Xigou Temple School in 1942 was 135 and in 1949, 77 students. Attendance was also said to be variable, perhaps also according to seasonal change in family residence, perhaps for other reasons, “In spring classrooms are full, in summer just one half, autumn withers, and in winter none are seen” (Sunan County, 1984, p. 34).

Nevertheless, according to the 2000 census of those Yughurs who were school aged before 1949, 46.6% of males and 7.3% of females had completed elementary education, in comparison to 66.5% of Han males and 26.5% of females of the same age (China, 2003). The content of the curriculum and the medium of instruction at these elementary schools is not

---

12 Born before 1936 (China, 2000).
mentioned by the sources, but may have been Tibetan, since they were located at Tibetan Buddhist sites, and since the Yughur traditional élite was said to know Tibetan in the 1950s (Luobuzangdunzhi, 2006), although presumably considerable oral explanation in Yughur must have been provided.

However, these temples were destroyed during the 1958 Anti-Feudal Movement: whose activities in Sunan County are now officially seen as incorrect policy due to extreme leftism (see Table 22). After 1986, repairs began on three of these temples, which as of 1996 had a total of three monks, and traditional Buddhist folk practices have revived somewhat (He, 1999, p. 344).

**Language Use in Sunan County**

Most reference works on the Yughur nationality and its languages point out that they have no script (Sunan County, 1984, 1994). Yet Yughur researchers point out that historically the Yughurs of Gansu used the ancient Uighur script, which remained in use until the 16th century when and a switch to a Tibetan form of Buddhism, when Tibetan script and language seem to have become predominant in the religious sphere (“Yugu wenzi”, Yughur Puchig, 2007).

Indeed a local researcher states that in 1958, the Yughur élite knew the Tibetan language and literature, as well as Yughur oral literature: historical poems, ancient songs, many of which have been lost, making Yughur oral literature almost die out. Currently, those with solid knowledge of historical poems and old songs are getting fewer and fewer and are mainly older than 60. Yughur language is in a similar condition, rapidly heading towards disappearance. The whole county has less than 10,000 Yughurs, an estimated 7,000 of whom can speak a Yughur language. In most districts the young don’t speak Yughur; in some districts, it seems none under 30 years of age understand their mother tongue. In Shangyou village in Qinglong Township, only
16 of 200 residents know Yughur, mainly people over 60, while in Qiantan Township in Minghua District, besides individual elders, already no one understands Yughur; in (Luobuzangdunzhi, 2006).

An ethnographic study of village life was recently conducted in a Shira Yughur-speaking area of Kangle District, which included a survey of mother-tongue language proficiency (Zheng & Gao, 2004, pp. 227-229). Their method was to interview 50 villagers in each of five age groups, asking 10 questions in Shira Yughur. For each question to which a villager responded in Shira Yughur rather than Mandarin one point was awarded with a maximum score of 10. Table 23 displays the results categorized by age and proficiency of Shira Yughur use, with a score of 10 points considered highly proficient; 6-9, proficient; 2-5, somewhat proficient, and 0-1, not proficient. As is evident from the table, those who were elementary-school-aged from 1940-1972 are all deemed highly proficient in Yughur, able to respond exclusively in Shira Yughur over a range of topics, while those who were school-aged from 1970-1982 during the Cultural Revolution, when suppression of minority languages in the school system was said to be at its highest, respond in Yughur from 60-90% of the time. Yet for those in elementary school after the Cultural Revolution from 1980-2002, when minority language-in-education policy is said to have returned to pluralism and tolerance, are showing a continued decrease in Yughur proficiency.

True, the high oral Yughur proficiency of those school-aged from 1940-1972 may be a function of low completion rates for elementary education, but according to 2000 census data, of Yughurs who were elementary-school-aged between 1948 and 1972, 70-90% of males and over 50-70% of females completed this stage of education (China, 2003). Clearly, then, although we cannot conclude definitively that schooling in this period supported Yughur proficiency, it is
reasonable to assume that during this time the process of schooling itself did nothing to weaken Yughur proficiency in the community.

Thus, weakening Yughur proficiency among the younger cohorts interviewed cannot be explained by changes in the quantity of elementary education, but may be influenced by changes in the form in which it was delivered. Interestingly, there was a steady quantitative change in the proportion of Yughurs completing the next stage of education during the period the youngest three cohorts were Junior-secondary-aged. The proportion of Yughurs completing Junior Secondary education rose steadily from less than 40% or for males and 20% for females for the cohorts who were Junior-secondary-aged up to 1970, levelling off at above 60% for males and 40% for females by the 1970-1984 period, and beginning to rise again during the 1989-1995 period, and reaching over 80% and virtual gender parity with the 1994-2000 cohort. Similar increase in Senior Secondary completion occurred in the same periods. Thus, increasing junior and senior secondary participation and completion rates among Yughurs are associated with decreases in Yughur proficiency in one village. Again, while it may be that something about secondary education in Kangle District leads to reductions in measures of Yughur proficiency, we cannot conclude that this is the case. What we can conclude, however, is that the form of secondary education is itself not strongly supportive of maintenance of Yughur proficiency.

**Yughur Language Planning**

The Sunan Yughur Autonomous County government established its own Sunan County Yughur Culture Research office in June 2003. This office has several functions, including conduct of local research on Yughur culture and language, publishing a journal on Yughur

13 Vocational and pre-academic streams combined.
language and culture *Yovhur Puchig* [Yughur Culture], as well as preparing and publishing a Yughur-Mandarin dictionary and working on corpus development of the Yughur language (Luobuzangdunzhi, 2006).

As we have seen, one objection to the teaching of Yughur languages in school has been its putative lack of an approved script. In fact, scholars working on Sarigh Yughur and Shira Yughur within China have been using modified International Phonetic Alphabet [IPA] to transcribe oral literature in both languages (Chen, 2006; Chen & Lei, 1985; Zhaonasitu, 1981, 2006). However, a further concern about Yughur mother-tongue instruction has been anxiety about interference with Chinese language skills, such as learning to write romanized Chinese, or *pinyin*, a major task in early elementary school. This concern is reflected through the official requirement, announced in 1958, that new minority language scripts should conform to the Chinese *pinyin* (Teng & Wang, 2001a&b; Zhou, 2003). In the case of ‘Yughur”, this has required producing a single writing system suitable for both Sarigh Yughur and Shira Yughur that also conforms to the Mandarin sound system. The Yughur Culture Research Office has developed a unified romanized script for writing Yughur languages that is intended to support learning pinyin, although some long-time Yughur researchers still prefer a script based on IPA to one harmonized with pinyin (Arslan, 2006; Chen, 2006; Zhaonasitu, 2006).14

As part of their dictionary preparation and corpus development work, the Yughur Culture Research office has been gathering examples of oral literature that they transcribe and translate into Mandarin (see Figure 13). Of course, such oral literature materials are an ideal source for adaptation into elementary curriculum for meaningful learning of Yughur as a living language.

---

14For example, the voiceless uvular stop of both Yughur languages symbolized as [q] in IPA might confuse learners of *pinyin* in which the letter *q* represents a Mandarin voiceless affricate [ʨ]. Accordingly, a combination of existing symbols *kh* has been selected to represent the voiceless Yughur uvular stop that can clearly represent the Yughur sound without interfering with *pinyin*.
used for communication. Where parents or grandparents are proficient in Yughur, they could provide a “language environment” to support learning of Yughur language and literacy.

**Contemporary Education in Sunan Yughur Autonomous County**

Village schools in areas of low population often consisted only of “teaching points”, where only the primary Grades 1-3 were taught often had only a single teacher, who taught all subjects in a multigrade environment, comparable to the traditional North American one-room schoolhouse. Many of these schools were community-funded *minban* schools, and used teachers that often did not have the full certification required of government school teachers.

Few schools existed in the territory that is now Sunan Yughur Autonomous County before 1949. One of the main planks of the CPC’s minority policy is that it brings formal education and literacy to minorities that had none, or *modern, secular* education to those who only had traditional, religious education. Thus, a major task for education in Sunan County in the 1950s was the training of teachers and the opening of schools. This process has been uneven over the last 60 years (Gao & He, 2003; Sunan County, 1984, 1994).

Within national educational policy-making circles, there have been two schools of thought: one that emphasizes selectivity and competition of a small number of students in a small number of schools, the other that promotes mass education, opening more schools and accepting more students. During the Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976, mass education was the official policy, whereas with a change of government leadership in 1979, mainly schools were closed or consolidated (Pepper, 1996). This process is evident in Figure 14, which displays the number of elementary and secondary schools and students in Sunan County over a 40-year period.
In recent years, the government has been promoting closing teaching points and closing _minban_ schools or converting them to regular schools in its drive to improve quality of education and regularize the school system (J. Wang, 2002). Grade 1-3 teaching point schools and _minban_, 'people-run', schools have virtually all been closed in Sunan County in the last decade (Sunan County, 1994, 2006). As is evident from Figure 14, the number of schools in Sunan County rose slowly, but steadily throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, and rose rapidly during the late 1960s and the 1970s, reaching a peak of 106 schools in 1976, when the number began to fall again to the levels achieved during the late 1960s, with only 60 schools open in 1989. By 2006, consolidation of schools had continued further reducing the total number of schools in Sunan County to 36, slightly more than the number attained in 1964 of 36 schools. National data from the 2000 national census, on educational attainment are available broken down by region (China, 2002), by ethnicity (China, 2003). In addition, since 98% of Yughurs in China live in Sunan County (Xu, 2005), the national statistics on Yughur educational attainment can serve as a reasonable proxy for statistics on the Yughur of Sunan County. Thus, educational attainment means can be calculated for Gansu province (except Zhangye prefecture), for Zhangye prefecture (except Sunan County), for Sunan County (except Yughurs, and for Yughurs, thus allowing comparison on quantitative measures of educational attainment.

There is near universal primary school completion among the male population of Sunan County, with little variation among the districts and ethnicities displayed. However, among the female population, primary completion is about 10% lower than among males in each category (China, 2002). It is noteworthy that while primary completion rates for Sunan County and Zhangye are quite similar, for the Yughur ethnicity, primary completion for males is 4.4% lower and for females 5.2% lower than for Sunan County as a whole (see Table 15). This suggests that
for the non-Yughur population of Sunan County primary completion rates are higher than in Zhangye and Gansu as a whole. Given that the majority of the Yughur population of Sunan County at its founding in 1953 could not speak, read or write Chinese (Gao & He, 2003), the language in which education in Sunan schools has been formally conducted, it is not surprising that primary completion is rarer among the Yughur of Sunan County than the non-Yughur; what is surprising is that it is so common in Sunan County. For this to occur, despite a lower primary completion rate for Yughur than for non-Yughur in Sunan County and Zhangye, transition rates to junior secondary school must be noticeably higher and/or dropout rates for those who have started junior secondary school must be noticeably lower than for other groups in Sunan County and Zhangye.

Junior secondary attendance has been compulsory only since 1986 (Mackerras & Yorke, 1991), and so not surprisingly, in all the jurisdictions and among both ethnicities displayed in Figure 16, completion rates are considerably lower than for primary education. However, junior secondary school completion rates differ considerably. Completion rates for Gansu and Zhangye are about the same, around 40% and 30% for males and females respectively, but about 5.8% and 5.6% higher in Sunan County than in Zhangye as a whole.

More remarkable, considering that primary completion for Yughur was lower than in Gansu, Zhangye and Sunan County as a whole, is that junior secondary completion rates among Yughur are 11.7% and 11.2% higher than the rates for all Sunan County, suggesting that the higher completion rate for Sunan County in comparison with its prefecture and province may perhaps result from the unusually high junior secondary completion rates, for the local context, among the Yughur.
As for post-compulsory education, Figure 17 displays the rates for completion of upper secondary education, combining technical and college-bound streams, and any post-secondary degree, combining 3-year colleges, 4-year university programmes and graduate education. At these levels, the gap between Sunan County and Zhangye and between Yughur and Sunan County remains about the same, but the completion rates for upper secondary and tertiary education are higher among the Yughur than for Sunan County, Zhangye and Gansu, but also surpass the rate for the Han nationality across China. The percentage of Yughur having graduated from technical schools is considerably higher than it is in Gansu, Zhangye or Sunan County and among the Han ethnicity as a whole. Yughur completion rates for senior academic secondary schooling are also above those for the region, but about 2% below those for the Han (China, 2002, 2003). The Yughurs’ relatively higher rate of completion of technical secondary school seems due more to greater acceptance of admission to technical secondary school when not admitted to academic secondary school than to lower acceptance rate to academic schools.

Similarly, the percentage of Yughur with a 3-year college degree is much higher than in Gansu, Zhangye or Sunan County or among the Han ethnicity, while the proportion of Yughurs with a 4-year undergraduate degree is somewhat higher than in the region and about the same as for the Han (see Figure 18). Again, the greater proportion of Yughurs with post-secondary degrees than the means for their region is much more due to their high rate of completion of 3-year college degree than to lower acceptance rate to 4-year degree programs. Thus, it seems that Yughur students and their families value upper secondary and post-secondary education, even technical and junior college education. This is counter to the reported strategy of rural Han students and families (F. Liu, 2004) to drop out as soon as it is clear that admission is unlikely to a good senior academic secondary school that will lead to admission to a 4-year university (Liu,
Liu’s argument seems borne out by the extremely low senior technical completion rates for Zhangye prefecture as a whole, which are 5.1% lower for males and 4.3% lower for females than for Yughurs. Thus, it seems that, relative to the rest of Zhangye prefecture, Yughurs value continued education of any type, vocational-technical or academic, whereas, the data suggest that the majority in the region value continued education primarily if it leads to academic senior secondary school and thence to a comprehensive university.

**Recent Attainment Trends: Comparison of Yughur with Han**

National average attainment statistics for the Yughur differ relatively little from national means or from mean attainment levels of the majority Han, making the Yughur minority a “typical” case, in the sense that they are a minority whose attainment profile is close to the typical profile for China as a whole. Note that, since the majority of Yughur live in Sunan County, Gansu, the national figures for this ethnicity reflect not only national, but also local trends. Statistics for Han are based on all regions of the country. Although historically, attainment levels of Yughur are similar to those of the Han nationally, recent trends up to the 2000 census show some interesting differences. Figure 19 shows trends for Yughur and the majority Han of the proportion of the 5-year age cohorts included in the 2000 census to have been old enough to complete primary education since education reforms began in 1980. As can be seen, while Yughur primary attainment levels are still below those of the Han, the gap between Han and Yughur, and for both nationalities between male and female primary attainment is rapidly decreasing. Clearly, in terms of primary completion Yughur have been coming closer and closer to universal primary education.

China’s policy has also been to introduce universal junior secondary education. Figure 20 illustrates recent trends in attainment of junior secondary education for Yughur and Han. It can
be seen that rapid progress has also been made in levels of junior secondary attainment for Yughur as well as Han. However, interestingly, while attainment levels are approaching 90% for all four sub-groups displayed, in this case, Yughur male attainment levels have surpassed those of Han female attainment, while Yughur female attainment levels are rising faster than those of Han females. Clearly, at the Junior Secondary level, Yughur do not seem to experience greater access to educational attainment than do the majority Han. However, the situation is somewhat different when we examine recent trends for senior secondary education. Figure 21 displays recent trends for senior secondary school (academic stream).

_Education, Curriculum and Language in Sunan County, Gansu_

Post-1949 the People’s Republic of China established state schools in ethnic minority areas using volunteer teachers who underwent training in the minority language of the area in which they were to teach. For minority areas where there was no established script, teachers could use Mandarin teaching materials, and supplement their teaching in Mandarin with oral explanation in minority children’s language (Teng & J. Wang, 2001; J. Wang, 2002; Zhou, 2003). This seems to have been the practice in Yughur areas, for Sunan County sources state that their schools were developed in the 1950s through Han volunteers. These same sources speak about one of the main challenges of education in Sunan County in the 1950s being the development of Yughur and other minority cadres, who presumably were required to be bilingual in Mandarin and Yughur. Since the Yughur population of the time was fluent in oral Yughur, the main challenge at the time was Mandarin proficiency development. However, the sources are silent on the development of bilingual cadres and teachers, and on how long the policy and practice of mixed bilingual education persisted in Sunan County.

15 _Ganbu_, or ‘cadre’, may refer to party and government officials; the latter are not necessarily party members.
**Trial Sarigh Yughur Revival Programme in Huangnibao, Jiuquan Prefecture**

From 1958 to 1978 language policy was integrationist, strongly promoting Mandarin as a medium of instruction over minority languages. In areas where the minority language had no script, almost no official use of minority language in education occurred. After 1978, policy towards minority languages returned towards pluralism. In this context, a Sarigh Yughur language programme was opened in a secondary school in Huangnibao Township, Jiuquan prefecture, Gansu in November, 1983. The Yughur of Huangnibao have undergone complete language shift to Mandarin, and so the Yughur language courses were taught by a proficient speaker of Sarigh Yughur from Sunan Yughur Autonomous County. Up to 180 primary and junior secondary students received instruction in Sarigh Yughur from November 1983 to July 1984. No special training was provided for the teacher, nor was any published curriculum or reference materials available to the teacher at that time, and therefore, oral instruction alone was used. Content of the course was limited in scope: counting, kinship terminology and basic conversational interaction. Evaluations of the programme were mixed. It was claimed that students, particularly the younger ones, were enthusiastic and made good progress. At the same time, it was claimed that learning Sarigh Yughur interfered with the learning of Chinese, especially among younger students. Some also argued that children could not retain and strengthen what they had studied, since there was no “language environment” in Huangnibao to support students’ learning. Some non-Yughur parents are said to have opposed the programme (Ba, 2006, 2007). In the end it was concluded that “there was no way but to terminate the Sarigh Yug[h]ur language schoolroom instruction activity” (2007, p. 84).

Criticisms of the Huangnibao programme were mixed: on the one hand, it was seen as something that was *successful*, and according to common belief would interfere with the learning
of Mandarin; on the other hand, it was criticized as something that could not succeed, since complete language shift to Mandarin has ensured the lack of a language environment outside class to support classroom learning at home and in the community. Several problems made the programme difficult to implement. Since the Sarigh Yughur language had effectively died out in Huangnibao, the programme could have had either the modest aim of educating local children about their heritage language, strengthening their sense of identity and pride in their nationality’s language and culture, or the much more ambitious aim of developing communicative competence in the Sarigh Yughur language in Huangnibao Township, that is Sarigh Yughur revival. Criticisms of the programme’s failure to ‘consolidate learning’ based their negative assessment on criteria more appropriate to the latter than the former aim.

Despite this programme’s cancellation, there is evidence that a strong desire to learn Sarigh Yughur persists. A convenience sample of 41 Huangnibao residents found that 85% of respondents surveyed strongly approved of the local school teaching Yughur language, history and culture. As is apparent from Table 24, which shows the responses towards learning the Yughur language, the interest in learning Yughur is notable, and seems to be strongest among the youngest Yughurs surveyed (Arslan, 2006a). Moreover, the curriculum and pedagogy may have had an effect on learning and interest of the students. As in Huangnibao, the content of the course consisted of language isolated from meaningful use. In particular, the use of a reference grammar not designed for pedagogical use that consists of vocabulary lists and grammatical rules is more easily learned, if not enjoyed, by older students (Lightbown & Spada, 1999).

**Disconnect Between Home and School**

Qian (2007) studied the phenomenon of minority students running away and dropping out from consolidated boarding schools, interviewing dropouts from three nationalities, including
Additionally, dropouts interviewed said that continuous absence from home living and eating meals at school made them feel homesick and run away. Qian found that students who were able to return home every evening drop out from school far less often than those who board at school. Interestingly, Qian investigated a civil society initiative in Sunan County that seems to reduce dropout rates. Rather than boarding at school, some Yughur students in Sunan County live in “student houses” where several students share rented space, cared for by ‘elderly’ people. Qian reports reasonable fees are charged and dropout rates are lower than among those who board at the school. Qian does not report on linguistic and cultural practices, but presumably Yughur language and culture are more evident there than in school dormitories. Qian concludes that dropout is motivated less by curriculum content than by its psychological effect:

What this really meant was that they could not adapt culturally, because the difference in cultural environment between their homes and the schools had a profound effect on them emotionally. … This indicates that for students who crave emotional warmth, life at school seems lacking in the emotional closeness they need, and this is probably one of the subjective reasons for which they drop out of school. (pp. 69-70)

A Yughur researcher, however, blames the absence of Yughur curriculum content for distorting Yughur students’ development, summing up their experience in the following words:

Everything you study and come into contact with is from an extremely different culture; for more than 10 years of education, the teacher will not say a single word about your nationality, language, history or culture. Thus, this kind of lopsided education fosters students whose spirit and individuality are similarly lopsided. (Tiemuer, 2006, p. 41)

This comment suggests that teachers of Yughur students either did not know Yughur culture and language, and thus couldn’t incorporate Yughur content in their lessons, or knew such content,

---

16 Former boarding school drop outs were found to be female much more frequently than male, except among Yughurs. This was explained partly as family concern for girls’ security, especially for Muslim girls. For discussions of motivations for dropout among rural Muslim girls, see Falkingham (2000) for Tajikistan, Lovell & Fatema (1989) for Bangla Desh, and Connelly and Farrell (1994) for Egypt.
but, for a series of reasons, didn’t include it in their teaching. Sources seem clear that the first generation of state-school teachers were non-Yughurs who had learned Sarigh Yughur or Shira Yughur. Sources do not mention language in education policy for subsequent generations of teachers or special efforts to recruit Mandarin-Yughur bilingual teachers. In recent years in China, raising the quality of minority teachers has been understood as increasing the number of teachers with full-state qualifications for teaching at each level (Wang, 2002), a condition which may make it more difficult to recruit minority teachers.

School-Based Curriculum and Cultural Relevance in Sunan County

School-based curriculum has been proposed as a means to deal with the disconnect between home and school culture experienced under the national curriculum (Chen, 2004; Yang & Zhou, 2002), while others have argued out that quality education requires the inclusion of traditional culture (Zhang, 1997). What is the state of school-based curriculum development in northwest China, especially Sunan County, and to what extent does it incorporate minority content? Some research on the implementation of school-based curriculum under the education for quality reform in north-western China is available (Li et al., 2006). In fact, one of the case studies included in Li et al.’s research is Sunan County. At the time of their study, no schools had opened SBCD projects, although 3 individual teachers were preparing their own materials (p. 261). A member of the Education Bureau research office said, “No School-based Curriculum has yet appeared in our county. As long as the nationally determined curriculum is first class, then it’s fine” (p. 261). The Bureau’s attitude towards SBCD seems to be “wait and see’ if the central authorities are serious about their top-down granting of bottom-up curriculum

17 One teacher each at No. 1 combined Junior / Senior Secondary School, No. 2 combined Elementary / Junior Secondary School and Dahe District combined Elementary / Junior Secondary was working on similar material related to Yughur Culture.
authority to local schools, expressed by one Sunan educational administrator as “not to encourage, nor to oppose or to concern ourselves [with this]” (Li et al., 2006, p. 262).

**Yughur Language Interest Group in Sunan Yughur Autonomous County Centre School**

Twenty years after the Huangnibao experimental Yughur language programme, in response to requests from members of the Yughur community, Yughur intellectuals, and the Sunan County government, the Sunan County Bureau of Education issued a document in September 2003 requiring “schools in all districts of our county where minorities reside to form interest groups and actively promote extracurricular activities that use minority languages” (Ba, 2007, p. 83). Only one school had actually implemented this policy before 2007. In September 2003, a town school opened a Sarigh Yughur interest group. This group seems to have been partially modelled on the previous Huangnibao Sarigh Yughur programme. The group was led by a teacher proficient in the language but with no language teaching training. As in Huangnibao, content was limited to kinship terms, counting and simple conversational phrases. This programme had Chen and Lei’s Chinese reference work on Sarigh Yughur (1985) and another Chinese book on Yughur customs. Initially, over 25 students enrolled in the group but by the beginning of the next year, the number of students registering for the group had declined seriously and the group was suspended by the school leadership (Ba, 2006, 2007).

Ba argues that students were uninterested, and enrolled in response to parental pressure. Ba reports that learning, especially in lower grades, was said to be insufficient, which is explained as due to the lack of a supportive Yughur language environment in the home and the town. Third, some teachers felt that Yughur study would reduce students’ learning of English and Mandarin, did not support the programme, and finally there was overt opposition from some Yughur parents, who labelled minority languages as “backward” (2007, p. 86).
Information on actual educational practice in Sunan County, Gansu is difficult to obtain in published form. While the above analysis of national statistics on Yughur educational attainment is suggestive, there are major limitations to their use. First of all, it is not certain how reliable national statistics are and they were 7 years out-of-date also at the time of field work. The last census was taken in 2000, and little or no information is available on whether the trends identified above are continuing, or whether some social, economic or policy factors have since intervened to change local perspectives on schooling. The national statistics suggest that Yughur families and students are strongly committed to levels of educational attainment that are high for their county, prefecture and province, and even for the country as a whole. At the same time there are have been concerns expressed in the literature about the potential linguistic, cultural, emotional and psychological effect of the disconnect between Yughur knowledge, culture and language and the national curriculum as implemented in Sunan schools. We have seen also that an experimental program in Sarigh Yughur language was cancelled partly due to the protests of some parents about the lack of usefulness of studying minority knowledge. Nevertheless, the report of negative attitudes on the part of Yughur parents was not gathered by the researcher, but was a report of a report that does not indicate how these opinions were gathered or what proportion of parents shared these attitudes. Moreover, attitudes of other stakeholders have not been systematically gathered. Thus, research on the place of Yughur knowledge, culture and language in education for quality in Sunan County classrooms is fragmentary and requires additional observation in Sunan schools and interviews with stakeholders.

Moreover, the distribution of population by ethnicity within Sunan County varies from place to place as can be seen clearly in Figure 16; as well, the proportion of teachers by ethnicity in the teaching force (state certified teachers) varies greatly among Tibetans, Han and Yughurs,
as is evident from Figure 24. Han teachers are overrepresented compared to their share of Sunan County’s population, although the degree of overrepresentiveness has come down dramatically, while Yughurs are seriously underrepresented among teachers.

**Language Policy in Sunan Yughur Autonomous County**

Sunan Yughur Autonomous County issued a summary of regulations concerning the administration of the autonomous county in May of 1989. Several articles referred to minority culture and language and to the education system, which are displayed in Table 25. The regulations stipulate that every nationality has the right to the free use and development of their own nationality’s language but also stipulate that Mandarin be used in the functions of the autonomous county organs. The regulations specify in Section 8 that rights of each nationality are guaranteed, and that they all enjoy equal rights, while in the sections dealing with education, it is termed minority education, but no reference to language is made (Sunan County Website).

Thus, the Sunan Yughur Autonomous County takes a permission stance towards the use of minority languages by minority citizens, but takes a strong promotion stance towards Mandarin in local state organs. It is not clear whether the phrase “autonomous organs” includes schools; if so, the policy requires the sole use of Mandarin in schools, and implicitly prohibits the use of minority languages; if not, the policy is weaker than the Gansu province policy, which explicitly permits the use of minority languages in education, while the Sunan County regulations say nothing at all about the place of Yughur languages and other minority languages in the schools. Thus, the regulations explicitly promote the preservation of Yughur material culture and customs, but takes a permission, not promotion stance on the use of Yughur languages within Yughur families and communities, and seems to require Yughur not be used in
schools, while tolerating the use of Yughur in the judicial system for those with low Mandarin proficiency.

Yughur languages and culture are reputedly under threat. Local government policy explicitly promotes the promotion of minority culture, but promotes Mandarin, a dominant language, while not providing explicit tolerance, permission or promotion for the use of Yughur or other minority languages in schools. In response to concerns of prominent Yughur citizens and researchers about language shift, loss and potential language death, the Sunan County government recently required schools to provide optional courses in Yughur language. As of the time of field work, only one school is known to have implemented such a course, with minimal investment in curriculum development and teacher training. The course seems to have been both hard and boring for children, and parents who were originally supportive seemed to have changed their minds when they noticed that children’s actual development of Yughur proficiency was minimal. At the same time, some members of the community actively campaigned against the programme, on the grounds of the lack of utility and “backwardness” of Sarigh Yughur, and it was cancelled after 1 year. As far as is known until 2007 no more Yughur courses have been implemented. Interestingly, it was reported that core teachers and a group of parents opposed the programme, but details of what proportion of each stakeholder group supported and opposed the programme, and their reasons for their positions were not provided in detail. Thus, there is a need to investigate in a systematic fashion and in details what the attitudes are of the various stakeholders affected by school curriculum on Yughur language and culture: students, parents, teachers and administrators.
Chapter Five:  
Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

As established in the previous chapters, perspectives of local stakeholders on the content and form of local education in China are underresearched, with almost no knowledge about the situation in Sunan Yughur Autonomous County available. Under these circumstances, the most suitable form of study to help broaden knowledge of stakeholder perspectives in rural, minority districts in China and to establish some definite knowledge of perspectives in Sunan County’s particular circumstances is an exploratory study.

Approach:  
Multiple Embedded Exploratory Case Study

Case study research design is widely regarded as suitable for exploratory studies intended to establish basic facts about a phenomenon or process, where little is currently known and to develop hypotheses and propositions for later examination (Yin, 2003, p. 6). This study is a multiple embedded case study (Yin, 2003), or in Stake’s terms, a collective case study (2000, p. 437), since four stakeholder types of several ethnicities were studied in four school districts.

Stake (2000) calls multiple case studies “collective case studies” (p. 437), whereas but later terms this type “a multiple case study or collective case study”, both of which he classifies as a subtype of “instrumental study”, one which is undertaken not simply for the sake of intrinsic interest in the case alone, but for reasons of theoretical interests outside the case itself or for generalization to other case (2005, p. 445). This study is undertaken for intrinsic reasons, to understand, and generate useful insights into, the dilemmas facing Sunan County and the Yughur community in reforming school curriculum, but also for instrumental reasons, since aspects of
the Yughur dilemma are repeated with other nationalities in other sites in China, and indeed the world. For this reason, Yin’s typology of cases is more fruitful for the purposes of this study.

**Exploratory Study Methods**

Since little field research has been conducted in China on language in education issues among rural minorities in China, less on schooling and language maintenance and endangerment, with only one English-language article on Yughur schooling in Sunan County, and virtually no theoretical explanation has been proposed for understanding these phenomena in China, the study clearly has a major exploratory emphasis. However, Yin argues that a range of designs are suitable for exploratory inquiry: history, archival analysis, survey, experiment as well as case study, and thus proposes three criteria for selecting from among these research strategies: the degree of control of behavioural events necessary to conduct the study, whether the study focuses on contemporary events, and whether the study focuses on who, what, when, where questions, or how and why questions. Yin states that inquiries that focus on how and why questions should select experimental, history or case study methods (2003, p. 5).

The research questions of this study focus on both what, why and how questions: what is important for students to learn in the site, why stakeholders feel this way, and how they understand the needs of students, and thus any of these latter three might be suitable research methods. Yin states further that experiment requires control and focuses on contemporary events, history does not require control and does not focus on contemporary events, case study methods do not require control and focus on contemporary events (2003, p. 5). Experimental methods are difficult in naturalistic settings, and not possible in this site; historical documents are not readily available in this site, nor is the focus of the study the past: thus, case study method is most appropriate for a an exploratory study in a naturalistic field setting in a rural, mountainous,
minority district in northwest China of how stakeholders understand the place of local minority knowledge, culture and education in schools and their reasons for these understandings.

*Multiple case study.*

Case study methods have been criticized for the putative lack of generalizability that results from their restricted focus on understanding a single case. Stake argues that extending a case study to several related cases allows a more complete understanding of the phenomenon of interest in a “collective case study” (2000, p. 437). Yin similarly argues that although case studies cannot be generalized to a population, analytical generalizations can be made to theory (Yin, 2003, pp. 37-38). Moreover, a strength of case studies is their replicability. Rather than waiting for other researchers to test a case study’s findings in other relevant contexts, Yin recommends when possible to include multiple cases to allow the findings of one case to be tested or challenged by replicating cases within a single study (Yin, 2003, pp. 37-38). (see Table 26 for a grid for numbers of participants by ethnicity and stakeholder type). A study can be extended by expanding the number of cases studied, but any single case can also be subdivided into smaller units of analysis: “cases within cases” (Stake, 2000, p. 447), or “embedded cases” (Yin, 2003, pp. 42-43). Yin argues that embedded case design is superior to “holistic” design, since a single holistic design without sub-units may become too abstract, “lacking any clear measures or data” (2003, p. 45). Holistic case design is too flexible, allowing research aims to drift imperceptibly during the study, but including embedded cases in the research design is an important means of safeguarding against “slippage” of research focus. Nevertheless, with embedded case design, the researcher must also guard against overemphasis of analysis of subunits at the cost of neglecting the overall case (2003, p. 45).
This study includes multiple cases: three schools. Within each case, there are further embedded cases by stakeholder type: students, family members, teachers and administrators, and further embedded cases by participants’ stated ethnicity: Yughur, other minority and or Han. The multiple data sources of the case study method are suited to a complex research context where historical, attitudinal, behavioural and cultural factors are all in play and provide for potential strengthening of findings through triangulation of multiple data sources (Yin, 2003, p. 98). 18

Multiple Cases: Three Schools

Three school cases were selected to allow theoretical replication of cases. Two extreme cases were selected: a school in an urban site where Yughur are a minority, and a rural school in a district where Yughur were a majority. An intermediate case, a rural school in a district where Yughur are a minority, was also selected. It was expected that findings in the first two cases would clearly differ, while the last case’s findings would be intermediate to findings for the first two cases.

Case 1: Urban School + Yughur Minority District

The first case chosen was that of the grade 1-6 primary school in the county town. Data collection went on at this site from June 12-15th, 2007. The school is a boarding school that draws its students from the town, from children living with relatives in town, and students from all the districts of Sunan County who have been sent to board there. The school is considered to be the best primary school in the entire county. Indeed, its principal boasted that it was of higher quality than any school in the neighbouring large city of Zhangye. This site was chosen as an

18 Data were gathered at a fourth school, in a rural district with a plurality of Shira Yughurs and Mongolians. This school was not included in the final study for reasons of brevity, since preliminary analysis suggested it largely replicated Case 3 findings. Where relevant, views of stakeholders at this school will be cited in the final chapter where they shed light on the overall study.
extreme case: an urban, Han-majority, Mandarin dominant environment. In the early 1990s, the demographic composition of Case 1 site was 62% Han, 21% Yughur and 12% Tibetan, changing by 2006 to 54% Han, 28% Yughur and 15% Tibetan (Sunan County, 2006; Yang, 1993). Despite a reduction in the proportion of Han residents, they still constitute an absolute majority of the site’s residents, while Yughur, though increasing are still barely 30% of the population of the centre of the county created for the protection of Yughur language and culture. Further, following Hansen (1999), it is expected that those Yughur adults resident in the town working in administrative positions are among those Yughur most successful in the Mandarin-only school system and who have internalized the attitudes of non-Yughur to Yughur knowledge, culture and language, including negative and/or stereotypical perceptions of minority language and culture.

Thus, it was expected that discourses on quality in education in this site would most strongly reflect a concern for transmission of national knowledge as defined by the national curriculum and the national College Entrance Examination in the national language, Mandarin, and show the lowest degree of concern that local knowledge, culture or languages be included in the school curriculum, perhaps denigrating such knowledge as not worthy of inclusion in the school curriculum. Furthermore, an experimental interest group for Sarigh Yughur language learning had been formed at this school, operated for 1 year, and then closed among criticisms that it was too hard to learn, there was no language environment in the town to support learning, and that minority languages were not worth learning (Ba, 2007).

**Case 2: Rural School + Yughur Minority District**

The second case chosen was the grade 1-9 combined primary / junior secondary school in a district centre. Data collection went on at this site from June 20-22, 2007. This school is also a boarding school that draws its students from the district centre and from rural children living
with nearby relatives, renting rooms in the district centre, or boarding at the school itself. This site was chosen as a **literal** replication of Case 1 in a rural setting (Yin, 2003, p. 47). It is a small administrative centre of a rural township, where the Han population is increasing, from 48% in the early 1990s to 50% in 2006, while the Yughur population is decreasing, from 20% in the early 1990s to 18% in 2006, with the Tibetan population holding steady at 28% (Sunan County, 2006; Yang, 1993). Despite a reduction in the proportion of Han residents, they still constitute an absolute majority of the site’s residents, while Yughur, though increasing are still barely 30% of the population of the centre of the county *created for the protection of Yughur language and culture*. Thus, it was expected that discourse on quality in education in this site would largely replicate perspectives expected for Case 1: a strong concern for *national* knowledge and little concern for the inclusion of local knowledge, culture or languages in the school curriculum.

**Case 3: Rural School + Yughur Majority District**

The third case chosen was also a grade 1-9 combined primary / junior secondary boarding school in a district centre, whose students come from the district centre and live at home, or come from outlying areas and rent rooms or more frequently board at the school itself. Data collection went on at this site from June 25-27, 2007. This case was chosen as a **theoretical** replication of Cases 1 and 2 (Yin, 2003, p.47). This rural district has throughout the post-1953 history of Sunan Yughur Autonomous County been the jurisdiction with the highest Yughur population and the lowest penetration by non-Yughur. In the early 1990s, the demographic distribution for the whole districts was 86% Yughur, 12% Han and 2% Tibetan, with almost exclusively Sarigh Yughur living in this district and very few Shira Yughur, with the population of one township where the district centre is situated is 95% Yughur (Yang, 1993 in Roos, 2000). The site of this case has until recently been virtually monoethnic. In recent years the Han and
Tibetan population have increased to 30% and 8% in 2006, while the Yughur population has decreased to 62% (Sunan County, 2006). Despite the reduction in the proportion of Yughur living in the Case 3 site, they are an absolute majority of the site’s residents, and still represent a district in Sunan where Yughur residents are strongly predominant, forming a local majority. Thus, it was expected that discourse on quality in education in this site would significantly differ from attitudes for Cases 1 and 2: showing an equally strong concern for national knowledge and local knowledge, culture or languages in the school curriculum.

**Embedded Case Study**

The study, however, is not simply a study of communities, nor of schools, but also is a study of the stakeholders most closely concerned with the education of primary and junior secondary-aged children: the students themselves, their families, their teachers and their school administrators. Each stakeholder type can form an embedded case, that is, a case within a case (Yin, 2003). Thus, the four types of stakeholders form embedded cases across all four school sites. Furthermore, there are two further embedded cases: Yughur and non-Yughur within and across embedded stakeholder cases.

**Embedded Case Selection**

The selection of multiple cases was based on "maximum variation sampling" (McMillan & Schumacher, 1989, p. 380), since school sites were selected across a range of demographic characteristics in urban and rural settings, while participants who belonged to four different categories of stakeholder were studied, from among a range of ethnicities and both genders.

Yin advises that the inclusion of multiple cases or embedded cases allows for two types of replication: *literal replication* and *theoretical replication* (2003, pp. 47-53). A literal
replication obtains where similar findings are expected across a group of cases; a *theoretical* replication obtains where different findings are expected across a group of cases on theoretical grounds derived from some key existing difference between the cases. Successful literal and theoretical replication adds to the robustness of the findings of the initial case, whereas failure to replicate contributes to reinterpretation of findings and retesting them against other cases.

**Embedded Cases: Stakeholder Participant Selection**

*Administrators.*

Once permission was received from authorities in Zhangye prefecture and Sunan Yughur Autonomous County to conduct research in Sunan County schools, the head of the Sunan Yughur County Bureau of Education was provided with a letter informing the Bureau of the aims and methods of the research, requesting his participation in the project as well as the Bureau’s permission to approach principals of schools in Sunan County for participation. After receiving the Bureau’s agreement, principals were provided with a similar letter of information and letter of agreement. As a benefit of participation in the study, the researcher offered various “commitment” acts (Glesne, 2006, p. 114) for schools: a gift of sports equipment as well as an offer to conduct a large-group English as a 2nd Language activity. If the principal agreed to his school’s and his own participation in the study, and if his school met the criteria for case selection outlined above, teachers’ participation was solicited. In Case 2, the principal was away and was substituted by the *Zhuren* or school manager. In all, there were six administrators, who participated in the study, two principals, one vice principal (*zhuren*) and three members of a school curriculum committee.
Teachers.

Teachers were selected by a combination of convenience sampling and purposeful sampling (Cohen et al., 2000). Teachers in selected schools were provided a letter of information and a letter of agreement soliciting their participation in the study. To reduce variation due to subject matter differences, only teachers of Mandarin Language, a core class of the national curriculum, were recruited, except in Case 2, where Sunan History and Sunan Geography teachers were purposefully selected, since this was the only school where school-based curriculum was taught. Participants were selected at random from signed letters of agreement. However, the number of Yughur teachers was so few that none were selected by this process in Cases 1 and 2. Thus, in Case 3, purposeful sampling of a single Yughur teacher from among volunteers was done, with one additional other teacher selected at random from among remaining volunteers. In all, 11 teachers participated in the study.

Students.

Students were selected by convenience sampling. All students in the classes of selected teachers were given four letters: a letter of information and agreement for themselves, and two letters for parents: a letter of information and letter agreeing to the student’s participation as well as agreeing to the participation of an adult family member. Up to 6 participants per class were selected randomly from signed letters of agreement & permission. The researcher also offered participating students a small souvenir of Canada as a gift to acknowledge appreciation for their participation in the study (Glesne, 2006, p. 114).

Family members.

Family members generally parents, but on some occasions a grandparent or adult sibling, were selected after student participants by indirect convenience sampling. That is, while student
participants were randomly selected, an effort was made to select the family members of those students already selected. Where students had received permission from a guardian (usually the home room teacher who acted as guardian for boarding students), another parent was selected randomly.

Secondary participants.

In addition to primary participants, the head of the Sunan County Education Bureau and researchers in education in northwest China and/or Yughur language and culture were requested to participate in the study to provide background to the data collected from primary participants. Researchers were given similar letters of information and agreement to other participants.

Data Sources and Data Collection Procedures

Qualitative Data Sources

Semi-structured interviews and group interviews.

At the core of this enquiry are the attitudes of stakeholders in schools in a multicultural, multilingual district with regard to local, minority language and culture, particularly Yughur languages and culture, in the context of perceived threat to the maintenance of Yughur language and culture. As Patton says, “We cannot observe everything. We cannot observe feelings, thoughts and intentions. We cannot observe behaviours that took place at some earlier point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things” (2002, p. 341). Wolcott concurs, stating that interviews complement observations, telling us that “what people tell us tends to reveal how they believe things should be” (1992, pp. 20-21). Thus, interviews were used as a suitable method to elicit data on current perspectives towards the research questions on what “should be learned in
school” and what aspects of local knowledge, and minority culture and language should be taught in schools as part of a quality education.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the prime mode of data collection as a method of gathering verbal data that incorporates sufficient structure to allow for easy comparability within and across cases, while also allowing sufficient flexibility to tailor follow-up questions to the individual participants and contexts (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 146). The structured component of the interviews was provided through the writing of standard interview guides that ensured that comparable data was gathered in each interview. Questions were substantially the same with adaptations for each group. In particular questions for children were rephrased: rather than asking what was important to learn, they were asked what they enjoyed learning (see Appendices for the interview guides).

A combination of individual and group interviews was used. Individual interviews were conducted with relevant individual stakeholders: scholars, education officials, school administrators, and teachers. Given the numbers of students and parents, group interviews of 2-6 participants afford an efficient means to gather a large amount of data, while providing a comfortable environment for those such as children, who might be uncomfortable in individual interviews (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 287).

Interview guides were followed closely to maximize comparability of responses, but were followed by “How and Why” probe and clarification questions based on initial responses to seek reasons for attitudes of stakeholders. Responses to structured questions and unstructured follow-up questions further influenced the interview process, providing insight in subsequent interviews as to possible probes (Patton, 2002; Stake, 2000; Yin, 2003). Interviews lasted approximately two hours including time for interpretation from English to Chinese and from Chinese to
English. In one group interview session interpretation was from Sarigh Yughur to Chinese to English and vice versa and so took up more time than in other cases. Detailed notes were taken during interviews, which were audio taped or videotaped. An interpreter, proficient in English, Mandarin and on one occasion Sarigh Yughur, was available to translate questions and responses. The researcher is proficient in Mandarin, and listened to responses in Mandarin and to the interpreter’s translation as back-up. Notes were taken in English and on occasion romanized Mandarin (pinyin) and occasional Chinese characters. Tapes were later transcribed by speakers of standard Mandarin from the region familiar with northwestern Mandarin dialect. Thus, data for analysis are two-fold: raw transcripts in Chinese, supplemented by field notes in English.

_Semi-structured classroom observations._

Interview data on perspectives on local knowledge, culture and language(s) in education were supplemented by data on teacher practices regarding integration of local knowledge, culture and languages into national curriculum lessons, and contrariwise, on the integration of local knowledge, culture and languages in school-based local curriculum with the national curriculum content. Observations also focused on language in the classroom, particularly student-student and teacher-student-interactions, and the presence, absence, or acknowledgement of minority languages and Sunan County’s multilingual character in classroom teaching as suggested by Hornberger’s study of Quechua-Spanish use in schools in Peru (1988). In addition, Cummins’ (2001) Academic Expertise framework was used to note to what degree activities and interaction indicate focus on language, focus on meaning, and focus on use and provide cognitive engagement and identity investment among students.

Observations were semi-structured (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 305): particular focus was given to the above points, while any other salient or remarkable occurrences were also noted.
The observer’s role was as a non-participant seated at the back of the class to draw as little attention of the students as possible. In fact, in Sunan schools classes were often observed by other teachers or students teachers assigned to the school, and so the presence of an observer was less remarkable than it otherwise could have been. Detailed field notes were kept following the guidelines above, and also noting aspects of the atmosphere and environment as a whole. Lessons were videotaped by a research assistant allowing not only the teacher’s lesson and individual student responses to teacher questions to be recorded, but also a sample of student pair and small group interactions.

*Other observations.*

Informal observations were made of the school environment, particularly student-student interactions in corridors and playgrounds whenever possible. The main feature of observations was to note whether interactions were conducted in Mandarin, local minority languages or a combination of languages (Hornberger, 1988). As the study was restricted in time and space, absence of observed minority language use does not constitute evidence of absence of its use, whereas observed use of minority language on study sites is evidence that some students do interact in minority languages sometimes on school property.

*Artifacts.*

Permission was granted by school administration to take images of school environments including outdoor and extracurricular activities, displays of student work in corridors, posters etc. A key purpose in gathering artifacts is to be able to gather supplementary information on attitudes encouraged officially by the school towards local knowledge, culture and language. In addition, permission was granted for participants’ images to be recorded.
Documents.

Another source of supplementary data was documents gathered in the course of the study. Local documents and publications in Chinese on language, culture and education in Sunan were gathered in the field. In addition, some teacher participants provided photocopies of the lesson plan and textbook unit for the lesson observed lesson. These documents were examined for evidence of local debates and discourses on the quality of education in Sunan, the state of the Yughur culture and language, and the place of local knowledge, culture and language, especially Yughur culture and language in Sunan’s schools.

Quantitative Data Sources

Several sources of quantitative data were available. One source was local statistics on education on Sunan gathered from local publications and internal Bureau of Education and school documents. The second major source is published statistics on population, educational enrolment and attainment, such as the Gansu Province Statistical Annual and various volumes of data from the recent 2000 Census. Gansu statistical publications do not give educational attainment breakdowns by ethnicity; 2000 Census data provide such data down to the county level, but without breakdowns by ethnicity, while detailed statistics on educational attainment by ethnicity are available at the national level only, without more detailed regional and local breakdowns. Fortunately, 95% of Yughur in China reside in Sunan Yughur Autonomous County and so national statistics on Yughur educational attainment are a reasonable approximation of Yughur educational attainment in Sunan County.
Methods and Procedure of Data Analysis

Analysis of Quantitative Data

Descriptive national, provincial, district and county level statistics from the 2000 census on maximum educational attainment by ethnicity, gender, age and school level and type were displayed in tabular and graphic form to prepare profiles that permit easy visual examination by juxtaposition (Noah & Eckstein, 1968). Attainment profiles were examined to determine the likelihood of educational survival and typical educational paths of each group. Furthermore, similarities and differences between groups were noted that may inform the analysis of verbal data on perspectives on continued education in Sunan Yughur Autonomous County.

Analysis of Interview Data

The data are primarily verbal, and thus appropriate methods to deal with stakeholders’ statements are content analysis and discourse analysis (Cohen et al., 2000, pp. 284-285, 298-300). Tokens of key events in observations, and key language and attitudes and explanations for attitudes from interviews were coded to facilitate comparison between cases (Brown, 1988; Cohen et al., 2000; Seliger & Shohamy, 1989). Qualitative language data in participants' own words about their understandings were gathered in the study (Freeman, 1996). Significant emergent themes from qualitative data were identified and coded to facilitate analysis and cross-case comparison of cases and sub-cases. Analysis of cases and embedded cases was done manually by means of the grid in Table 2. Themes and interrelations among themes, and embedded cases within each case from embedded cases within individual cases were identified manually.

Analysis of cases proceeded sequentially with the first case, with the largest number of participants undertaken first. Subsequently, Case 2 was analyzed bearing in mind that this was a
replication case, expected to resemble Case 1; thus, counterexamples to findings from Case 1 were looked for. This was followed by the simultaneous analysis of Case 3, which as a theoretical case, was expected to differ noticeably from Cases 1 and 2. Interview questions, following conceptual categories in the national curriculum documents, organized thinking on curriculum, teaching and learning into three categories: knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Yang & Zhou, 2002; Zhu, 2002). At the same time the research questions centred on the particular understandings not of individuals but of groups of individuals: students, family members, and educators. Moreover, the research questions focus on the relation between perspectives on “education for quality” and perspectives on local Sunan knowledge, Yughur culture and language. Initial data processing involved an analytical grid for the analysis of each embedded stakeholder case, as indicated in Table 26 above. Interview transcripts and field-notes were examined for key phrases, statements and extended responses. Recurrent themes and typical language associated with themes were identified and coded by means of the grid. Juxtaposition of participant responses using the analytic grid facilitates identification of commonalities and differences between participants in an embedded case, and also allows direct comparison of embedded cases. Yin recommends sequential analysis begin at the level of embedded cases, followed by iterative analysis of the next level composed of two or more embedded cases, until the level of the entire case is reached (2003).

While analysis of verbal data can be conducted entirely manually as outlined above, the number of cases, embedded cases, and participants makes the above process unwieldy, particularly during the process of comparison of cases. For the next stage of analysis, cross-case analysis, qualitative data were used to make the data analysis process more efficient, but also to allow the possibility of preparing networks of associated themes and attitudes.
**Limitations of Data, Reliability, Validity, Credibility, and Trustworthiness**

Statistics gathered from official sources are subject to limits to their reliability: since figures provided may significantly over- or underrepresent actual numbers, their use is problematic. Data from several sources can be triangulated with one another, if they represent comparable categories, for example to test reliability. Validity of statistical data refers to the meaningfulness of the statistical categories themselves. For example, assuming that language is a key characteristic distinguishing different nationalities, we are confronted with an official Chinese ethnic category, Yughur, which is subdivided into a Mongolian-speaking and a Turkic-speaking group; yet, this linguistic distinction is not recognized in official statistics on Yughur population in China.

Interview questions were written in English and translated into Chinese or Yughur. Interviews were conducted in two and on one occasion three languages: the researcher posed questions in English and an interpreter then translated them into Mandarin. Spontaneous interpretation into English of responses was done on-site. While a certain amount of unreliability may arise from the process of interpretation, this threat to reliability was checked by basing analysis on Chinese-language transcripts rather than on field-notes based on spontaneous interpretations. Rather, field-notes were used to supplement transcripts during analysis. Translations of data during analysis were checked against field-notes; key sections were checked by an independent translator in Canada.

Verbal data in Case 3 in one group interview were gathered in Sarigh Yughur and translated into Mandarin by a local interpreter, and then reinterpreted into English by the Mandarin-English interpreter. As in the above cases, the analysis was conducted on the transcript of Mandarin responses; in this instance, this was not the participants’ words, but the interpreter’s
paraphrase. However, minority participants were also proficient in Mandarin and were able to correct any mistranslation.

It seems a challenge for participants to adequately express their intentions and for the researcher to reasonably interpret and make inferences from participants' language. However, this is an extreme case of what always occurs in the gathering of verbal data, even when all participants share a common language: as Freeman (1996) cautions, verbal data consists of representations of thought, not thought itself, while statements on attitudes may differ from actual attitudes or be inconsistent with actions. Therefore, the threats to interpretation are different in degree rather than kind from those that exist in a monolingual, monocultural environment, and thus the same sort of responses to these challenges are made, but with extreme sensitivity at all times to the possibility of misunderstanding, or incomplete understanding.

Real cultural and linguistic barriers to interpretation exist, which clearly challenge the credibility and trustworthiness of interpretation in such a study, and thus research methods and study design need to counter these threats. Goldstein (1997) advises that the choice of and consultation with a reliable interpreter is another means; and an emphasis on equivalence in meaning rather than on lexical correspondence; the use of member checking, comparison of observations and interview responses, triangulation of data from different participants within and between cases are all also means of reducing such threats. Nevertheless, some nuances of meaning in verbal data are likely to be missed.

During the gathering of interview data, 'negotiation of meaning ' by means of which researcher and participants express their understandings of what their interlocutor has said in paraphrase taking as many turns as necessary to achieve satisfactory mutual understanding and as practiced by the researcher in his 20 years work in cross-cultural communication, can also
reduce the chance of serious misinterpretation. As mentioned above, the researcher is proficient in Mandarin and was able to check on reliability of interpretation, on occasion questioning the interpreter on what participants had meant.

Self-selection by volunteer participants suggests that participants may not be typical stakeholders, but those with strong interest in the research topic. Thus, findings cannot be taken as representative of populations, but they can be considered as representative of prominent discourses in the context on the research topic. Self-selection of parents/family members was partly reduced by the requirement that a parent stakeholder could not participate unless their child had also volunteered to participate. In most classrooms, almost all students volunteered to participate; therefore, there was generally a large population to draw parent participants from.

Data gathering using multiple methods, multiple data sources, replication of cases and embedded cases, triangulation within and between cases, and combining qualitative and quantitative research strategies, all means by which to guard against these challenges. Triangulation of data gathered through multiple methods permits commonalities and differences to be established between individuals and sub-groups; convergence among all cases and several methods, if found, is powerful evidence for a commonality across cases, and potential generalizability to other cases. At the same time, deviant cases where triangulation does not establish commonality or convergence of evidence also reveal significant areas for analysis and further research (Patton, 2002, p. 248).

**Researcher’s Role: Insider Versus Outsider Research**

Some debate exists in the literature on the limitations on the influence of the researcher’s role as insider or outsider in the local culture. Niyozov (2001) and Shamatov (2005) are
examples of field-based studies in non-Western developing contexts conducted by insider researchers with training in research methodologies current in the West. They argue that their insider status allows them access to and insight into the context that are difficult for outsider researchers to achieve. Certainly outsider researchers can be regarded with varying combinations of curiosity and distrust, and may be dependent on not only the reliability of interpreters, but also on the good will of participants (Shamatov, 2005).

On the one hand, Bishop critiques ‘outsider’ research in which “the research has served to advance the interests, concerns and methods of the researcher and to locate the benefits of the research at least in part with the researcher, other benefits being of lesser concern” (2005, p. 111). At the same time, Bishop admits that “cultural ‘insiders’ might well undertake research in a more sensitive and responsive manner than ‘outsiders’” (2005, p. 111), but also warns that insiders may also show bias in researching their own culture, and may take significant aspects of the case for granted, failing to question what would stand out more strongly to an outsider (p. 111). Bishop sums up the insider/outsider dilemma, saying “these concerns and aspirations might be met by invoking a discursive repositioning of all researchers into those positions that operationalize self-determination for indigenous peoples” (p. 113).

Anthropologists and ethnographers argue that outsider researchers can overcome many of these limitations through learning the language and the culture. However, in this study, the length of time in site recommended for ethnographic methods was not possible, nor was it possible to learn more than a few phrases of Sarigh Yughur and Shira Yughur. Nevertheless, my previous experience in China as an English teacher, my ability to speak Mandarin, and my willingness to try simple phrases in Yughur seemed to earn much good will in the field. As an outsider, I was not familiar with taken-for-granted aspects of the context, and thus had the
opportunity to pose unasked questions that need answering, and bring significant aspects of the site to the fore that hitherto had been unexamined. It was made clear to all participants and stakeholders that the aim of the study was to arrive at understanding that can better inform practice, not evaluation of individuals.
Chapter Six:
Case 1:
A Model Regular School

Introduction

This chapter presents the first case of the study, the elementary school of the county town. This case will be used as a basis of comparison for the remaining cases, which will be presented in Chapters 7 and 8. The chapter will begin with a survey of the site of the Case 1 school, the town, and its history, economy, and population, followed by an introduction to the school itself. The body of the chapter consists of reports of individual and group interviews from four embedded stakeholder cases: a) the principal of the school, b) the teachers of a Grade 1, Grade 2, Grade 4 and Grade 5 Chinese language arts class, c) groups of four to six students from each of the participating classes, and d) groups of four to six parents of the participating children from each of the participating classes. Each embedded case reports the content of the interviews concluding with a short summary of the findings of the embedded case. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings of the case as a whole, focusing in particular on perspectives within the case towards the inclusion of local minority cultures and languages, especially Yughur, within the school curriculum and language orientations of the participants.

The County Town

The county town is located along the upper reaches of a river that flows from the Qilian Mountains downstream towards Zhangye city, and is surrounded on all sides by mountains, some of which are snowcapped year round (see Figure 25). The location of the town is between two adjoining mountainous districts, Kangle district, traditionally inhabited by Shira (East) Yughur and Dahe districts, traditionally inhabited largely by both Sarigh (West) and Shira (East) Yughur.
Before 1949, today’s county town was not an urban settlement, but a Buddhist temple, whose site was selected as the administrative centre of Sunan Yughur Autonomous County on its founding in 1954. The temple had 18 senior and 10 junior monks in 1955, and remained active until it was destroyed in the 1960s (Sunan County, 1984, p. 34). The population of the county town in 2006 was 8,490 in all. The breakdown of the town’s population by ethnicity in 2006 is displayed in Table 27. As is evident from the table, the number of members of the Han ethnicity in the county town is greater not only than the number of Yughurs or Tibetans, but is also greater than the total of all members of minority ethnicities in the town. The Han population thus constitutes an absolute majority of the town’s population, a majority which was even greater in the 1990s than it is now as can be seen from Figure 27, which displays the percentage of the town’s population by ethnicity in both 1993 and 2006 (Sunan County, 1990, 2006). Thus the county town is a site where the major “minority” ethnicities of Sunan Yughur Autonomous County, the Yughurs and the Tibetans, constitute a minority of the town’s population, which in demographic terms is clearly a Han-majority site, and presumably also, a Mandarin-dominant site. Indeed, during field work in the town, Yughur language was not observed to be spoken in streets or in shops, but was observed in private.

The School

The Case 1 elementary school is one of the two oldest schools in Sunan County, having opened in 1939 during the Republic of China. Originally, the school was part of a Buddhist temple, and offered lower elementary education. In 1955, the school became a complete 6-year elementary school, producing 24 graduates in 1956, the first students to complete their elementary education in Sunan County. In 1958, the first junior secondary school in Sunan County was opened in the town, so that graduates of the elementary school could continue their
education without leaving the county. The school has won several awards for excellence. In 1998, it was granted an award for “teaching quality” (Gao & He, 2003, p. 139, 141). It has subsequently been granted several other awards, mounted on plaques beside the main entrance (see Figures 28 & 29).

In 1989, the school had 16 classes, 755 students and 35 teachers (Sunan, 1994, p. 305). As the central elementary school in Sunan County, it accepts students from every district of Sunan. Out-of-district students sometimes board with relatives, or rent rooms in town; otherwise, boarding facilities are provided for students who do not live in the town. Parental permission was required in order for a child to participate in the study, consequently, there was less opportunity for participation by children who board at school, since their parents were generally unavailable to receive, read and sign the participation permission in the time available.

As the first complete elementary school in Sunan County, the sister school of the first junior secondary school in Sunan County, the elementary school has always had better physical conditions than schools in rural districts. A basic classroom is well-equipped for a school in a remote, minority district in one of China’s poorest provinces (Figure 30).

Recently facilities have been further updated to include computer classes for children including internet access for children and the installation of a “smart classroom”, equipped with a computer console, from which the teacher can project supporting lessons accompanying national curriculum textbooks developed by Beijing Normal University.

The school’s physical appearance is attractive with hallways filled with colourful posters providing students with models to emulate and moral slogans to inspire them. The image of learning, knowledge and civilization are international, with Chinese culture, Western culture and Yughur culture all appearing. Models from pre-1949 and post-1949 Chinese culture pride a mix
of traditional and modern, ranging from traditional sages and scholars, such as Confucius, and Sima Qian, the first Chinese historian, to Lu Xun, the 20th century short-story writer, essayist and progressive social critic. Western models similarly combine the classical and modern, traditional, scientific and progressive; with students presented with a maxim from Aristotle about learning and posters and brief biographies of western scientists, thinkers and “progressive” political activists (see Figures 31 & 32). Other posters exhorts student to be honest, oppose corruption and to learn standard Mandarin (Figures 33 & 34).

The physical representation of Sunan County and its minority cultures differs from the representation of Chinese and western civilization. Images of Sunan County mountain scenery are used as the background for posters with exhortatory slogans. Female students in Yughur costume are seen diligently studying and learning to paint, as in Figures 35 and 36. Yughur culture is not depicted as content of learning; rather, minority students are seen learning the excellent products of other cultures (books in Mandarin and water-colour painting).

Embedded Case 1:
The Principal

The principal, born and raised in a rural environment in Sunan County in the district of Case 2, is in his 40s and a member of the Han nationality. After having served in the army as a young man, he was invited to work as a teacher in a village school in that district. At first he found teachers’ work unstimulating, but after he realized how important this work was, and took a greater interest in individual students, he began to enjoy being a teacher more, stating that the sense of responsibility he derived from education was his major reward. Apparently, his changed attitude was noticed, for he was soon invited to become principal of a village primary school,
then of the central primary school of the district, culminating in his appointment as head of the keypoint complete primary school in the county town of Sunan.

The principal is very proud of his school, his staff and his students, arguing that the quality of his school is as high as in the schools in Zhangye, the nearby city of about 1,000,000, and the centre of Zhangye district. When asked whether some parents did not send their children to the city because they preferred the schools there, he responded adamantly that they sometimes did transfer to Zhangye schools, but that this would be due to their parents’ work, or other reasons, and not due to higher schooling standards, since as far as he was concerned his school had higher standards than those in the city of Zhangye.

The principal has received training in up-to-date school management and the reformed curriculum objectives, spending several months taking a refresher course for principals at a teacher training university in Wuhan, a large city on the Yangtze River in Hubei province in central China. The principal asserted, moreover, that teachers at his school are also kept up-to-date on the latest in pedagogy, mentioning that they had regular meetings where they would discuss articles in pedagogical journals for teachers.

**How Important Is Local Knowledge, Culture and Language in School Curriculum?**

Although the recent curriculum reform calls for the introduction of both local curriculum and school-based curriculum, the principal did not mention any local content as necessary to learn as part of the school curriculum until specifically asked. When directly asked, however, he focussed in his response on knowledge about Sunan that, from the outsider’s point of view, makes it distinct from other places in China, and did not justify his selection of local curriculum content according to either its extrinsic value in developing Sunan (one of his key concerns), nor
as having intrinsic value in developing Sunan student identity, or as a base of prior knowledge that can be integrated with national curriculum to facilitate learning. Rather, his main justification for students learning about Sunan is for students to be able when they leave Sunan to spread knowledge in the outside world about Sunan County’s remarkable and unique characteristics. As the principal put it:

I feel students’ firm grasp of knowledge about local conditions, cultural inheritance, and its scenic places and historic sites is beneficial for students’ development. A student can then spread all these things about our place to the outside, spread it to every place in the whole country. For example, our Sunan is the Yughur nationality’s autonomous county, and our county is the only place where large concentrations of Yughurs live, so Yughur culture has a relatively large reputation throughout the whole country. In particular, Yughurs’ special skill is dancing and music. (Case 1, Principal Interview Transcript)

However, despite the principal’s strong views of the importance for Sunan students of learning about Sunan County, and about Yughur culture, reflection of local Yughur content in the school’s curriculum is restricted to optional classes in Esthetic and Physical Education: no immediate plans to include minority content in core “academic” subject areas are mentioned:

Our school? Our school has mainly opened school-based curriculum in Art and Physical Education, which some children can choose as an optional class. … In the future, our school-based curriculum will have to add more content related to aspects of our Yughur nationality’s history and culture. Since our county is the sole Autonomous County for Yughurs, carrying on and spreading Yughur heritage must be done starting from here in Sunan. Yughur language, Yughur history, for example, Yughur music, sports and so on, as well as Yughur costumes and other historically inherited things should be in the school-based curriculum. (Case 1, Principal Interview Transcript)
Concerning the Yughur language, the principal acknowledged the potential benefits to Yughur-speaking children of having teachers who know their language. When asked whether students enjoy studying Yughur in school, the principal spoke about the limited practicality of learning Yughur in the county town, rather than about student interest, saying, “The scope for the use of Yughur is relatively small, so in general there is no language environment, and so people who have learned to speak Yughur are relatively few” (Case 1, Principal Interview Transcript). Asked about any plans to open up a Yughur language class in his school the principal responded:

Our county government and education bureau have a plan to do this. They are planning to open up a Yughur-language class from kindergarten starting next term in the fall. The main language of instruction of the kindergarten class will be Yughur, which is not according to the requirements of bilingual education. It will be a special kindergarten, not in our school. (Case 1, Principal Interview Transcript)

What Is Most Important to Learn as Part of “Education for Quality”?  

When asked what was most important for students to learn as part of “education for quality”, the principal stated that he considered the main task of primary education to establish an educational foundation for students, saying, “It’s just like putting up a tall building: the foundation needs to be well laid, then there’s progress” (Case 1, Principal Interview Transcript). The principal also stated that elementary education involved fostering students’ attitudes: they should learn to “actively” and “positively” study. However, for him, the most important part of Education for Quality was innovation, conceived as both a skill and an attitude:

For suzhi education, the most important is to nurture students’ innovation skills and a spirit of innovation: more concretely, their skill at thinking and translating their thinking into action. This is because it is good for the country’s development, and the country’s development and a nationality’s development
both require innovation; without innovation there is no progress and no development. Therefore, the key point for us now is to foster students’ innovative spirit and ability (Case 1, Principal Interview Transcript).

The principal argued that for a minority district such as Sunan, and for a minority nationality, such as the Yughur, innovation had a particular significance:

This means, narrowly speaking, to vigorously develop our Yughur nationality; broadly speaking, to vigorously develop our Chinese nation. The Yughur are one of the 56 nationalities of China, so Yughurs must think about their own nationality’s ability to develop. It is indispensable for students from the time they start school to develop their innovative spirit and ability, only then can the entire economy and society have all-round development later on. If a nationality is without innovation, then it is a backward [nationality]. Because speaking about this district, we national minorities, considering our history and culture, relatively speaking, lag behind the culture of relatively developed areas, such as the central plains [of East China]; we’re lagging behind comparatively, and require even more innovation skill. (Case 1, Principal Interview Transcript)

It is also noteworthy that the principal raises the issue of the practical application of knowledge, skills and attitudes from national curriculum objectives to concrete local problems of Sunan County’s development and the development of the Yughur nationality. The principal argued that Sunan students and its Yughur minority students especially need innovation ability to develop Sunan and the Yughur nationality economically and socially, but no mention was made of the need for his students to develop concrete understanding of Sunan County, or of Yughur culture or language as a knowledge base to which the higher order cognitive skills that the principal argues are essential for local progress can be applied.
Challenges to achieving “Education for Quality.”

The most common challenge for his school in accomplishing Education for Quality, according to the principal, is that a certain number of students have difficulty in thoroughly acquiring knowledge. He attributes this to the fact that each student is different: some of them can easily acquire textbook knowledge, while for others this is difficult. As the principal puts it:

There are two main aspects to the difficulties we face. First, the intellectual development of the students we encounter is not balanced: village and herders’ children can’t catch up to town children’s pre-school education, their own development is not in balance, and so this creates a problem for teachers’ instruction. The second aspect is that their home education is insufficient. (Case 1, Principal Interview Transcript)

When asked to respond to similar comments of teachers that parents’ lack of education was one source of children’s learning problems, the principal responded:

There is this factor, because our students come from different places, some come from the county town, some from the surrounding villages, and some are herders’ children. Herders’ children, from their birth until they come to school are together with their parents and have extremely little contact with the outside world. They have mainly learned Yughur or Tibetan languages, so their pre-school development has not caught up, which creates problems for their learning later on. (Case 1, Principal Interview transcript)

The principal explained that the school handles these kinds of learning difficulties by providing two types of pre-school classes: normal kindergarten class for children from the town and a special preparatory class (学前班 xueqian ban) for village and herder’s children where they learn music, drawing and Mandarin vocabulary [for unfamiliar concepts] (语义方面的知识), as a foundation for Grade 1 study. The principal singled out herder’s children explaining that
they had mainly learned Yughur or Tibetan before coming to school and that a major purpose of this class was to aid them in establishing a Mandarin language foundation.

This class is so significant that the principal appoints the most experienced teachers to undertake preparatory class instruction. When asked whether the preparatory class had any teachers who could speak Yughur, the principal agreed that would be ideal, but pointed out that Yughur-speaking teachers were specifically not selected to teach the preparatory class, since:

only two people can speak Yughur and they are both physical education teachers.
Our Phys. Ed. teachers from the language perspective could lead the class well, and interact with students, and interaction in Yughur is very helpful for their learning Mandarin. However, in other areas of teaching, they would be inadequate. So we generally arrange our <other subject> teachers to undertake this work. (Case 1, Principal Interview Transcript)

When asked whether herders’ children’s Mandarin proficiency was a problem for Grade 1-6 teachers, the principal explained that minority children’s Mandarin proficiency was not a major challenge for his teachers, saying “This kind of situation doesn’t exist anymore. In general, herders’ children have already learned Chinese, frequently used Chinese language, so we can say that there is no problem in communicating” (Case 1, Principal Interview Transcript).

Summary: The Principal

The principal’s understanding of the place in his school of local knowledge, minority culture and Yughur language is twofold: it is a resource that supplements national curriculum in the national language, Mandarin, when it is defined as unique places, personages, music and art that distinguish Sunan County and Yughur culture from other places and nationalities in China; it is a problem, when students arrive to school with local knowledge, culture and language actually
embodied. While acknowledging students can benefit from including local knowledge, culture
and language in the school curriculum, the principal admits that until now, no curriculum based
on Sunan County has been developed, while indicating that in the future school curriculum will
include factual information about Sunan County and Yughur culture that will help all students
understand the uniqueness of their place and its titular nationality.

Furthermore, there is no mention of any special role for Yughur teachers in developing
such curriculum; indeed, the Yughur teachers on staff are presented as less knowledgeable than
non-Yughur teachers, whose strengths are restricted to physical skills, in line with the principal’s
statement that Yughur are especially good at singing and dancing. Nor is there any mention of
any special inclusion of Yughur language in the school curriculum; in fact, the principal
explicitly excludes the use of the only teachers who can speak Yughur from any language-
teaching role on the basis that they are needed to teach physical education, implying either that
they cannot be replaced in that role, or that physical education is a higher priority than mother
tongue.\(^{19}\)

The principal claims that herders’ children are more proficient in Yughur or Tibetan than
Mandarin, and implies that this is a problem for their school readiness. The principal is also
aware of the argument that they can develop their Mandarin proficiency better with bilingual
than monolingual instruction, but Yughur-speaking physical education teachers are not seen as
having the necessary experience to prepare students for Grade 1 study, and so they are taught by
more experienced monolingual teachers. At the same time, the principal denies that insufficient
Mandarin proficiency is in fact a problem, since herders’ children now arrive at school with
conversational Mandarin proficiency. Thus, although the principal is concerned to “lay a good

\(^{19}\) The current curriculum strongly emphasises that a balanced education must include physical education,
which was deemphasized under so-called examination-based education
foundation”, he does not explain what relation the existing foundation of prior knowledge formed in the pre-school home and community environment that Yughur and other minority children bring to school should have to the type of educational foundation in basic Mandarin and numeracy that he has in mind.

Further, the principal stresses the importance of developing a positive and active attitude towards study as part of his school’s responsibility towards all students, including rural and pastoral students, majority and minority students. Nevertheless, the principal makes no link between development of active participation in school activities and a positive attitude towards study and the absence from school of significant inclusion knowledge, culture and language that reflect of minority and rural children’s identity. The principal also points out that the intellectual development of rural and herder’s children lags well behind that of town children’s, but does not link this to the fact that the “gap” in development is measured by another culture’s standards, and in the case of many herders’ children, in a second language, in which they are less proficient than in Yughur or Tibetan. Finally, while the principal posits “innovation” as especially important in minority districts such as Sunan, his attitude towards education in this minority district consists more of faithful reproduction of models of education developed elsewhere in different circumstances, than of “innovating” solutions for the unique challenges of education within Sunan. Indeed, his views on difference from the standard cultural and linguistic model treats it essentially as a problem rather than a resource, and as separate from the knowledge and language taught within the school.

Thus, although the new MOE curriculum policy expressly authorizes the development of school-based curriculum that connects the national curriculum to local realities, the principal mentions few initiatives to develop such curriculum, and seems to be taking either a
pedagogically conservative attitude towards the validity of this policy innovation, or a politically pragmatic ‘wait-and-see’ attitude about the local political viability of such an innovation.

The principal’s conception of minority education in his school is not one in which language and curriculum content are negotiated within the school, but more one in which minorities are socialized into national knowledge and language, with the incorporation of some local knowledge and culture envisaged sometime in the future, while local minority languages are not given any explicit role by the principal. Thus, the principal’s perspectives reflect a minority “Language as Problem” perspective, in which students have a right to learn the national language of wider communication, Chinese, a right which is impeded by the problem of teaching Yughur students their language.

*Embedded Case 2:*

**The Teachers**

The four teachers selected at this school, a Grade 1, 2, 4 and Grade 5 teacher, are all teachers of *Yuwen*, Modern Standard Chinese Language. The teachers, all female, all Han by ethnicity, all also grew up in Sunan and studied in local schools. All attended the county town middle school. None of the teachers attended an academic stream college-preparatory senior secondary school. Rather, they all completed upper secondary education at Zhangye Shifan Xuexiao, the secondary normal school in the regional centre of Zhangye devoted to the training of elementary school teachers. The Grades 1 and 4 teachers experienced rural education: the Grade 4 teacher in a Han-majority district in Sunan, and the Grade 1 teacher in a village near the county town. None of the teachers have studied or taught in a district of Sunan where Yughur or Tibetan languages are still commonly spoken.
How Important Is Local Knowledge, Culture and Language in School Curriculum?

Teachers’ responses to the question of the importance of learning local knowledge, culture and language as part of local and school curriculum were complex. On the one hand, there is unanimity that local content must be provided, if not now, sometime in the future, on the other hand, there is much variation about the form this content should take and the urgency with which it is implemented.

The greatest level of consensus is on the inclusion of knowledge about Sunan, its history and culture (see Table 28). Arguments provided by teachers for including such content in the curriculum vary. All teachers feel that local knowledge plays a part in identity formation, but not the same part. The Grades 3, 4 and 5 teachers, assume that a knowledge of one’s own is important with the Grade 2 teacher adding that the school needs to teach local culture since, she claims, parents teach this relatively little.

The Grade 1 teacher, however, goes farther saying that studying local knowledge and culture can instil pride in minority students, who, without such study, may feel ashamed of their nationality. This teacher does not mention a related benefit for the learning process, which all the other teachers raise as a benefit of studying local knowledge and culture. On the one hand, the Grades 4 and 5 teachers argue that the inclusion of local content will support learning the national curriculum; on the other hand, the Grade 2 teacher in common with the Grade 1 teacher feels that local content will increase minority students’ pride in their nationality, but she adds that this will stimulate minority students to study more conscientiously. The Grades 3, 4 and 5 teachers all support the inclusion of local content in the curriculum as a way of adding interest to children’s’ studies, which the Grade 4 teacher states is “dry and dull” (Case 1, Grade 4 Teacher
Interview Transcript). Interestingly, only two teachers claim that local knowledge and culture constitute useful knowledge for students.

**Local minority languages.**

While there is general agreement among these teachers that local knowledge and culture should be included in the curriculum in some form, they are divided on the question of teaching or teaching in local minority languages (see Table 29). Interestingly, lower and higher grade teachers divided on this question. The Grade 1 teacher states directly that minority legends and stories should be taught in minority language, because parents wish their children to learn the language and because children enjoy learning stories. The Grade 2 teacher expresses a similar opinion on the importance to minority parents of the preservation of their language, without an opinion on children’s interest. The Grade 4 teacher mentions the importance of teaching local minority language, mentioning her school’s efforts in this area, not in the curriculum, but through a non-credit extracurricular after-class interest group, yet fails to mention that this interest group has been cancelled, partly due to disputes about the usefulness of learning something that is not evaluated and that in the view of some parents interfered with learning core curriculum (Ba, 2007).

Whereas the Grade 4 teacher implies her support for learning minority language through the school, she gives no reason the school should teach minority languages, and seems to indirectly oppose its inclusion in the curriculum. The Grade 5 teacher does give a reason that minority languages are not taught at this school, claiming that children would not be interested in learning minority language as part of the curriculum.

All four teachers, however, even those arguing for the inclusion of minority languages in the local or school curriculum, present reasons why such inclusion would be difficult to
implement, or should not be implemented Table 30 presents the range of arguments presented by teachers. The first argument, presented by the upper grade teachers, has two sides: on the one hand the Grades 4 and 5 teachers are not against learning Yughur or other minority languages, but question the need for doing this in school, when the language can be taught in the home and community by parents and grandparents; on the other hand, they question the utility of learning Yughur, when its scope for use is so limited.

The next reason presented is not that there is no need for learning Yughur, since no-one questions its endangerment, but that there is insufficient interest among students and/or parents in Yughur study in the school for it to be included in the curriculum. The Grade 1 teacher explains the lack of interest as due to the fact that minority languages are not included on the College Entrance Examinations. She has previously said that children enjoy learning stories, so presumably she means that parents would not support studying Yughur in school. The Grade 5 teacher also claims that children themselves would not be interested in learning Yughur, nor would parents support their children studying their own language, although she does not give a reason for them to oppose it. The Grade 4 teacher’s argument is curious in that she states that children would not be interested in learning, but refers to the fact that there is no Yughur language environment in the county town to support their study as an explanation for why children would not wish to learn the language in school, although this seems to be represent an adult’s, rather than a child’s, perspective.

Teachers also ascribed difficulty in implementing Yughur language in the curriculum to teachers themselves. Two state that teachers themselves have no interest in developing local Yughur language curriculum, while two state moreover that teachers have no necessary training in how to prepare and deliver minority language lessons. It is noteworthy, however, that while
the upper grade teachers assumed that training was required to teach minority languages, they did not argue that the school or the county education bureau should provide such training. One lower grade teacher stated that teachers at the school are not interested in or willing to prepare necessary curriculum, but neither lower grade teacher argues that local language cannot be introduced to the curriculum because of need for special preparation in order to do so.

All teachers present arguments on the difficulty of implementing Yughur language curriculum. Three of the teachers imply that the lack of a script for Yughur is an impediment. None of them make arguments concerning the need for a script for a language to be taught, nor for the need to develop special teaching strategies to base teaching on oral proficiency. None of them seem to be aware that Yughur is already written by researchers in adapted International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) (Chen & Lei, 1985; Zhaonasitu, 1981), nor that the Yughur Culture Research Bureau in the county town has published a proposal for a unified Romanized script for both West and East Yughur that conforms with Mandarin romanization rather than International Phonetic Alphabet romanization so as to support rather than interfere with children’s learning of Mandarin Romanization (Yovhur Puchig, 2007, pp. 19-23).

The remaining arguments about difficulty of implementing Yughur language curriculum refer to the language rather than the content. Two teachers claim that students would show more interest in Yughur stories if they were taught in Mandarin, and imply that there would be student resistance to learning Yughur content through the Yughur language. The Grade 4 teacher makes a curricular argument that the Mandarin language is more important than minority language, and that therefore any Yughur language classes would have less weight in the curriculum, seemingly implying that parents, teachers and students will take the class less seriously. She does not state however that this means that Yughur should not be taught in school.
Two teachers present stronger impediments to teaching Yughur in school: on the one hand, it is stated that students who do not already know Yughur will not understand such lessons, and on the other hand, it is stated that studying Yughur will increase students’ study burden and potentially put their chances of college admission at risk.

**What Is Most Important to Learn as Part of “Education for Quality”?**

While the principal singles out the development of innovation ability as most important aspect of *Education for quality*, teachers do not find this skill noteworthy. True, the Grade 5 teacher mentioned this skill, but did not elaborate on its importance at all. Rather, teachers are divided by grade level: the Grade 1 and 2 teachers emphasized the importance of breadth of knowledge that goes beyond textbooks, while the Grade 4 and 5 teachers emphasized basic knowledge of Mandarin language. In contrast, the Grade 4 and 5 teachers emphasized the development of practical life skills, with only the Grade 1 teacher states that study skills and life skills should be balanced with communication skills. All teachers mentioned attitudes as an important component of education but each emphasizes different attitudes (see Table 31).

**Challenges to achieving “Education for Quality.”**

More interesting are the teachers’ explanations for the challenges they face in providing education for quality (see Table 32). Three teachers identify the education system as a source of challenges. For the Grades 1 and 5 teachers, the school itself presents challenges in the form of its evaluation system, which still reflects “Examination-based education”, its in-service teacher education program, which has not prepared teachers to thoroughly understand the new curriculum, and its library, which does not provide enough outside reading material for students.
Teachers also ascribe many of the challenges of education for quality to the parents. Most teachers point to the low level of education of many parents as a problem. First, they argue that such parents do not provide a sufficiently stimulating pre-school environment and family education thus affecting children’s psychological development and school readiness. One teacher points out that children of illiterate herders’ are rarely exposed to printed matter in the home. Second, they have insufficient education to understand what their children are learning and to support for their study adequate by checking their homework. In addition, they do not understand the goals of the education reform, and overemphasize marks, and also put pressure on teachers.

While the principal is very direct in stating that the greatest challenges lie in teaching the children of herders, teachers are more circumspect. They identify low educational level of parents as the main problem, but only one of them adds that the parents’ with the lowest educational levels are in fact herders. None of the teachers directly indicates that in the Sunan County context, herder parents are minority parents, either Yughur or Tibetan.

Two of the teachers also point out that the children themselves present challenges to the teacher. The Grades 1 and 5 teachers go beyond saying that children of parents with low education are not sufficiently prepared for school when they first come to class, but argue that some children have learning difficulties, or even delayed intellectual development as a result of the inadequate home environment provided by parents. Only the Grade 5 teacher includes inadequate Mandarin proficiency of minority children as a challenge. This teacher points out that Yughur language interferes with Mandarin word order, with some children saying fàn chī “food eat” rather than chī fàn “eat food” even after 5 years of school.

Teachers’ responses to these challenges were varied (see Table 33). The Grade 1 teacher said she provides individual tutoring and also assistance from stronger students to students who
are experiencing difficulties, while the Grade 2 teacher said she adapts her lessons to connect with familiar content outside the classroom, whether from the media or their own lives. The Grade 5 teacher, who pointed out a lack of exposure to books in the home environment, has set up a personal lending library so that students can read interesting outside material, such as Chinese classic novels like *A Dream of Red Mansions*, or *A Journey to the West*.

While most teachers identified parents as a problem, only the Grade 4 teacher singled out communication with parents as a strategy she uses to deal with the challenges she faces in teaching education for quality. While most of the teachers pointed out that the school and education system itself produced some of their greatest challenges, only one teacher said that change was needed in the examination system “from top to bottom” (Case 1, Grade 1 Teacher Interview Transcript) to remove the distorting effects of the College Entrance Examination system whose negative effects were perceptible down to the elementary school level, causing undue attention to marks in the schools evaluation system and in the eyes of parents, undermining the education for quality reform, which emphasizes “all round development” and not just high marks in core subjects of the College Entrance Examinations (Chinese, Mathematics, English).

**Summary: The Teachers**

Teachers interviewed present a broad range of views as to the interpretation of what is important to learn for education for quality. However, their explanations of the challenges they face in teaching education for quality show a greater convergence. Three out of four teachers argue that aspects of the education system itself present challenges, with teachers, the school, and the curriculum variously seen as problematic and challenging teachers’ ability to implement education for quality.
One teacher sees a need for the teachers themselves for more understanding of the new curriculum, and the school’s evaluation system as not supportive of the goals of education for quality. Three out of four teachers locate parents as a source of challenge, but again present the challenge they perceive from parents in different ways. Two raise the issue of parental pressure as a problem, with one of these two saying that this is because of an undue concern for high marks caused by a lack of understanding of education for quality. More teachers (3 out of 4) question the ability of many parents to provide a suitable preschool learning environment and a supportive atmosphere for elementary school study for their children.

The reason most frequently presented for this perceived inability is the low educational level of rural and herder parents. Ethnicity is not specifically mentioned as a barrier to children’s learning; rather parents’ illiteracy and lack of understanding of curriculum content are presented as explanations for parents’ inability to support education for quality. However, teachers imply that they are referring mainly to problems with rural and pastoral parents, and one teacher specifically points out that herder parents are more frequently illiterate and unlikely to support children’s <Mandarin> learning by keeping printed matter in Mandarin in the home. The Grade 5 teacher, like the principal, singles out herder families as having special difficulties, while remaining teachers did not distinguish agricultural from pastoral rural families.

Two teachers say that some children have learning disabilities or mental delays that they explain to be the result of an impoverished cultural and linguistic home environment that children face. Thus, many teachers ascribe educational challenges of children to inadequacy of the home environment, because of parents’ lack of awareness or ability to provide what teachers see as the necessary kind of support for children’s learning before and during their children’s attendance at school. Teachers do not directly ascribe these challenges to ethnicity or language,
since in the rural environment there are several ethnicities including Han. In the local context, however, parents working in agriculture are understood as mainly Han by ethnicity, whereas parents working as herders are understood to be Yughur or Tibetan by ethnicity.

It is not clear from the data whether the teachers view absence of national language and culture or presence of minority language and culture as more important factors. If the former, local curriculum, particularly in Yughur or Tibetan, will be seen by teachers as not necessarily a problem, but if the latter, minority language curriculum will be seen as interfering in the acquisition of national language and culture.

Teachers interviewed all support the inclusion of local knowledge and culture, more specifically, knowledge about the Yughur nationality and its culture in the curriculum. Two teachers mentioned the usefulness of incidental supplementation with local content as a means to enhance students’ understanding of national curriculum content. While one teacher views this content as primarily about the place, primarily local geographic knowledge with economic relevance, such as mineral resources, that is useful to anyone in Sunan, the remaining teachers focus on local cultural content, understood as minority or Yughur culture, that is mainly beneficial for minority students. Teachers seem to recognize that the lack of inclusion of content related to local minority culture in the curriculum affects minority students negatively, since their main argument for inclusion of local culture is not that it is intrinsically valuable to learn this in school, but that it is instrumentally valuable in building up their “national confidence”, a phrase that was used by more than one teacher. Thus, it is not clear whether the knowledge about their culture or the acknowledgement of their culture is seen by teachers as having the major beneficial effect on minority students.
The teachers do not explicitly state an opinion until directly asked on whether the inclusion of minority cultural content in the curriculum should extend to the inclusion of instruction about or in minority languages. It is apparent however, that there is a division of views within the teaching staff on the place of minority languages in the local and school curriculum. Among the teachers interviewed, three teachers mention many reasons why there is no need, no interest, and no benefit to teaching Yughur in schools, while some mention a potential negative effect on non-Yughur students of doing so. Thus, while teachers are more open to local and minority content in the curriculum than is the principal, partly perhaps because they may have already seen a positive effect to incidental supplementation of national curriculum lessons with minority content and culture, they are committed to the transmission of minority culture through the medium of the Han language.

Only one teacher acknowledged the fact that the Yughur language is endangered and some parents wish to use the school system as a means to support the transmission of their language as part of preserving their national identity. The remaining teachers either do not mention this concern, or refer to the home as the appropriate site for the transmission of Yughur, thus suggesting that they regard this concern as not the business of the school, while one teacher points out that Yughur language interferes with the learning of Mandarin syntax and pronunciation as well as learning the pinyin alphabetization of Mandarin Chinese. Even though the school is located in the administrative centre of a county explicitly created for the protection of Yughur language and culture, teachers seem to regard local content more as an aid to learning national curriculum content than as something intrinsically worth learning. Perspectives towards Yughur and other minority languages within the school are less positive than local content taught through Mandarin. Furthermore, the lower grade teachers (Grade 1 & 2) expressed a more
positive attitude towards the possibility of students learning minority language in school. As the curriculum and the homework load increases, and anxiety about examinations increases, perspectives towards local language and curriculum content seem to increase also. Thus, it is very clear from the perspectives expressed in the interviews that teachers, although they are involved in minority education, like the principal, see the transmission of Mandarin Chinese as a much greater responsibility than the support for the endangered minority languages of their town and county. No examples were noted in classroom observations reference to Yughur by the teachers, or of minority language use by the teacher or any students. Teachers’ perspectives, despite a recognition that minority knowledge, culture and language should be used as a supplement to aid the learning of national curriculum in Chinese, nevertheless, also reflect a minority “Language as Problem” orientation.

**Embedded Case 3:**

**The Parents**

A total of 21 parents with children in the county town elementary school were interviewed with the breakdown of parents by gender and ethnicity provided in Table 34. As is evident, Yughur parents are somewhat overrepresented, and Han parents underrepresented relative to their ethnicities’ share of the overall population of the county town.

**Yughur Parents’ Perspectives on Local Content in the Curriculum**

Most Yughur parents expressed a strong interest in the inclusion of local content in the curriculum. When asked to specify what sort of local knowledge, culture and language they felt was important to include, parents mentioned Yughur history, Yughur customs and Yughur language as important for Yughur children to learn.
No Yughur parents mentioned any local knowledge about Sunan County, such as its geography and its natural resources, as important to include in local curriculum. Rather, parents’ primary concern seemed to be about their children’s identity as Yughurs. Only one parent argued that children should be taught Yughur knowledge so that they would not feel ashamed in comparison to children of other cultures, saying “This can increase their feeling of pride in their nationality” (Case 1, Grade 1 Parent Interview Transcript).

The aspects of local content that they mentioned as important for Yughur children to learn, their history, customs and language, seem to have intrinsic value, that is, things that should be learned for their own sakes, as an essential part of being Yughur. As one West Yughur father put it, “Every nationality has its own things, its customs. …It is very important to let them be able to know about the customs of their own place, the history of their own nationality and their own language” (Case 1, Grade 1 Parent Interview Transcript). This view was explained by another parent with reference to visible external manifestations of Yughur culture that differ from other cultures, “For example, to celebrate the New Year or holidays, each nationality has its own different customs” (Case 1, Grade 1 Parent Interview Transcript).

One Grade 5 parent treated the transmission of Yughur culture as an obligation, saying:

I feel like for us in this place, children ought to learn local knowledge in school, which will let children know what kinds of customs we have, and where they come from. So that the next generation of Yughur children can know its own nationality’s history. If we have our own language and writing, we should absolutely hand it down <to the next generation>, no matter how, because it is ours”. (Case 1, Grade 5 Parent Interview Transcript)
Similarly, Yughur history is expressed by some parents as something that all Yughur children should learn. The parents seem to indicate by history, both Yughur traditions about their history, which could be considered folk literature, as well as history as a discipline:

It is necessary to let children know Yughur history, and the chaos after the rule of the Communist Party; as for the language area, they should know the Yughur language, and also know where they and their ancestors came from. (Case 1, Grade 5 Parent Interview Transcript)

Another Yughur parent also stated that preserving the Yughur system of etiquette and respect for elders was valuable, perhaps implies the superiority of Yughur manners:

For example, in the area of respect for old people, we Yughurs have many good points that are worth preserving. Also, in the area of manners, for example, bowing to older people and those senior to us, and for example, serving our elders first at meals, etc. (Case 1 Grade 1 Parent Interview Transcript)

**Perspectives on Yughur Language in the Local and School Curriculum**

Yughur parents in the primary school in the county town spoke in a general way about the importance of learning about Yughur history, culture and language in school. However, specific comments on the need for learning Yughur language in the school were fewer. One Yughur parent implied that there was no need for teaching Yughur in school, “We ourselves have no trouble with the Yughur language, so Chinese characters are the main problem <for us>” (Case 1, Grade 5 Parent Interview Transcript). Yet the same parent implied elsewhere that parents themselves in the county town did have trouble with the Yughur language:

We use Chinese, but old people use Yughur to communicate with each other. However, we can just understand, but cannot speak. … If someone now investigated what nationalities of this generation understood what language, we
are Yughurs, but we only know a part of the Yughur language, simple greetings and daily conversation. (Case 1, Grade 5 Parent Interview Transcript)

This parent is aware of talk of introducing Yughur language classes into the school system, mentioning that Yughur is taught in Huangnibao Yughur Autonomous Township in Jiuquan Municipality, and another school in Sunan County was planning to introduce Yughur language curriculum the next year. The parent states that Yughur language in school would be good for Yughur children, saying that in that case, “our Yughur language teaching conditions or the number of students would be in a strong position” (Case 1, Grade 5 Parent Interview Transcript).

However, parents mentioned impediments to the implementation of Yughur language instruction in schools. One factor blocking Yughur language education in some parents’ thinking is written language, “The main reason<we have no bilingual education> is that we have no writing system <for Yughur>” (Case 1, Grade 5 Parent Interview Transcript). Another parent argued that other nationalities living in Sunan might also be interested in studying Yughur in school, as long as a writing system for Yughur was taught (Case 1, Grade 5 Parent Interview Transcript).

Another group of parents showed interest in the possibility of their children learning Yughur in school, but pointed out another difficulty, the lack of language environment in the town and in their homes, since many of them could only understand, but not speak Yughur. In fact they said that there had been a previous attempt to teach Yughur in the school that had failed because of parents’ inability to support learning in the home. These parents responded with interest, however, to the possibility that they could also learn Yughur in adult classes to support their children’s learning (Case 1, Grade 4 Parent Interview Field Notes).
One Grade 1 Yughur mother did not respond on the place of Yughur knowledge, culture or language in the curriculum, but did state the importance of basic curriculum knowledge in Mathematics and Mandarin, while also saying that “My child loves to study and has a very good comprehension skill, but lacks skill in eloquent oral expression” (Case 1, Grade 1 Parent Interview Transcript). In her case, there seems to be no connection seen between proficiency in the community language, Yughur, and confident oral expression in the language of wider communication, Mandarin.

**Perspectives of parents of other nationalities.**

Several Tibetan parents were interviewed and expressed an interest in their children learning Tibetan in school. One parent confirmed that partial language shift has begun in her family, “My child uses Mandarin when speaking to grandparents, but the grandparents know Tibetan”. At the same time, more than one parent indicated that their children are highly interested by local cultural content. Said one Grade 2 mother, “My child gets very excited watching TV if there is a singer from Sunan” (Case 1, Grade 2 Parent Interview Transcript). Another Grade 2 mother concurred, saying “Children love it much but they are without culture, they just sit and watch TV, <but if they see > a program about Tibetan culture, my child calls, ‘Mama, here’s a Tibetan program!’” (Case 1, Grade 2 Parent Interview Transcript).

Han parents had relatively little to say on this subject, with two not responding, and one volunteering the simple statement that local curriculum should include “customs and language” (Case 1, Grade 1 Parent Interview Transcript). Other Han parents were more vocal, but had mixed perspectives on the inclusion of local content. A Han father supported including local content but not minority language in the curriculum, especially local history and customs, saying:
My child knows just a little about local culture, something about Yughur. We should keep our own local culture, so <this> is a good way to teach children to love their country and our own culture. But we hope children have ways to fly to other places, because the outside world is very interesting. Many people believe it should include this kind of education. … In other places like Xinjiang, Qinghai and Tibet they have mother tongue <education>. They tried it in Huangcheng <Case 2 district of Sunan> and it failed there. There was a lack of mother tongue environment in the town <where the programme was located>. It has a big contradiction with market education. (Case 1, Grade 2 Parent Interview Transcript)

A Grade 5 Han father expressed mixed support for inclusion of local content in the curriculum, saying “Our children should know and understand their ancestors”, but adding that “if it’s not <about> your own nationality, then there’s no interest” (Case 1, Grade 5 Parent Interview Transcript). Another Grade 2 Han father, who had had actual experience of Tibetan-medium education, expressed mixed support for local content and languages in the curriculum:

From a global point of view, it is not important, but for the minority we should keep our own culture. …We had this kind of class before, especially in Tibetan areas. At the beginning it was interesting, but later <I> was not interested. It’s not a good way to communicate if you just know one <language>. … <Bilingual education> is good but we tried it and it failed; there was a Yughur language group and a Tibetan group. (Case 1, Grade 2 Parent Interview Transcript)

Yughur Parents’ Perspectives on Education for Quality

For Yughur parents who spoke on the question of knowledge and quality education, the emphasis was on knowledge of the core subjects tested in the College Entrance Examinations, put most clearly by one father as, “For education for quality, I feel, first of all, they should learn well the most basic knowledge, particularly Mandarin Language, Mathematics, and later, I feel Foreign Language is also particularly important” (Case 1, Grade 1 Parent Interview Transcript).
The emphasis of the suzhi education reform on a broader notion of learning than in the former curriculum supplemented is little commented upon. In fact, one parent’s definition of suzhi seems to define quality in terms of the former curriculum, as dependent on knowledge alone, “If they can receive even more knowledge, then they can raise their suzhi [quality] (Case 1, Grade 5 Parent Interview Transcript). Nevertheless, one or two Yughur parents seemed to have a broader notion of learning than the core subjects of the CEE. One parent echoed the goals of suzhi education to broaden the scope of school learning, saying, “In the future, they should learn the cultures of all places in the world (Case 1, Grade 1 Parent Interview Transcript). Another parent did not focus on knowledge gained in school, but rather emphasized that in Sunan preschool learning was inadequate for quality education (Case 1, Grade 5 Parent Interview Transcript).

Concerning the skills development aspect of quality education, Yughur parents said relatively little. One mother commented on the need for development of oral expression skill in addition to comprehension, while one father mentioned the development of cooperation skill as a basic necessity for the advancement of society (Case 1, Grade 1 Parent Interview Transcript). Yughur parents from the Grades 2, 4 and 5 groups did not mention skills as an area of importance.

In contrast, Yughur parents interviewed mentioned perspectives much more frequently than skills as an important component of quality education, for example one parent mentioned the importance of developing a proper attitude towards study. The parent who had mentioned the importance of cooperation skill argued that this skill depended on developing a proper attitude of “group awareness” (Case 1, Grade 1 Parent Interview Transcript). However, Yughur parents in every group, mothers as well as fathers, had near consensus on one attitude that should be
inculcated in school: respect for elders. The Chinese term used by parents for elder [长辈 zhangbei], indicates not simply the older generation, but anyone senior to oneself, including senior classmates. As mentioned above, among the parents interviewed, the Yughur tradition for showing respect for elders seems to be seen as a distinct feature of Yughur culture that is significant not only as an *intrinsic* value, but also as a marker that distinguishes Yughurs from other groups, and perhaps, in these parents’ eyes, marks their culture as superior to their neighbours’.

**Perspectives of parents of other nationalities.**

Unlike the Yughur parents interviewed, Tibetan and Han parents interviewed more frequently expressed the importance of developing broad knowledge from a range of sources besides classroom textbooks, including the Internet as important for quality education and made little reference to basic knowledge of core subjects. In the Grade 2 group, two Tibetan mothers, a Han mother and a Han father pointed out the importance of learning knowledge other than from textbooks (Case 1, Grade 2 Parent Interview Transcript). In contrast, a Grade 5 Han mother remarked that family education was narrow in contrast with the knowledge available to students through school (Case 1, Grade 5 Parent Interview Transcript).

Non-Yughur parents raised skills development as a concern more frequently than did Yughur parents. However, there was a range of particular skills that parents mentioned as concerns. A Grade 2 Tibetan mother and Tibetan father raised the broad goal of “learning how to be a good person” as important, defined by one as “caring for others”; at the same time, several parents raised life skills as an issue, with a Tibetan father claiming that “Now students are less able to care for themselves” (Case 1, Grade 2 & Grade 5 Interview Transcripts). One Han father implied that schools should develop children’s physical skills, saying “Students don’t like sports
anymore. Now they just go on the Internet. If you give them a football, they don’t know how to use it. At least a student should be healthy” (Case 1, Grade 2 Parent Interview Transcript).

Another parent’s understanding of physical involvement in learning is somewhat different; he argues for experiential learning: “Students need to know how to use their hands; through this they can find out what’s going on. They need to use all their sense, hands, eyes, ears, and in practice, not just book knowledge” (Case 1, Grade 2 Parent Interview Transcript). All of the above are consonant with the stated aims of the new *quality education* curriculum. One Han father raised the issue of study skills, also an aim of the new curriculum; however, it became clear that the parent’s interpretation was more in agreement with the philosophy of “Examination-based education” than the new curriculum approach:

Parent: They should also teach students the learning way.

*Interviewer:* *What kind of way do you mean?*

Parent: Most students don’t like to study by themselves. We need to give students some pressure so that they’ll learn.

*Interviewer:* *Really?*

Parent: Yes, this is necessary. (Case 1, Grade 2 Interview Transcript)

A range of concerns for the development of attitudes in school varied among Non-Yughur parents. Those Han parents who spoke of attitudes as important to learn in school did not raise respect for elders as an issue. Parents mentioned the development of attitudes towards knowledge as important, and the development of personal interests, as well as developing awareness of the collective; as one Grade 1 mother explained, “If a child wants to do something, that doesn’t mean it can do it by itself, that’s self-centred” (Interview Transcript).
All of these attitudes are supported by the new curriculum. However, the only Tibetan parent to mention attitudes as a concern for quality education concurred with the view of many Yughur parents that children need to learn respect for elders, but differed from them in focussing on parents and teachers, rather elders in general:

Today’s children don’t know how to appreciate their parents. They are only children with no brothers and sisters, who are very dependent on their parents and very selfish. They don’t know their parents’ hard work. Parents give them a good environment, but they are never grateful to their parents or teachers. If the school could have a book to teach students how to show gratitude towards their parents. (Case 1, Grade 2 Interview Transcript)

Parents’ Aspirations for Their Children’s Ultimate Educational Attainment

Despite many minority parents’ stated desire that their children learn their culture and language, this does not seem to reflect a continued attachment to the traditional semi-nomadic way of local Yughur and Tibetan life as herders. Rather, minority and majority parents alike express the hope that their children continue as high as possible within the formal education system, “to university if they can”. When asked why many students do not continue their education beyond compulsory education, or do not continue to higher education after senior secondary education, parents provided two common responses, “they couldn’t pass the entrance exams” and “they got tired of study”.

Summary: The Parents

Minority parents, Yughur and Tibetan, expressed strong support for the inclusion of Sunan minority content in the school curriculum. None spoke against the value of making the curriculum more reflective of local realities through inclusion of minority cultural and linguistic content, although some spoke of the difficulty in doing so, mentioning the failure of some
previous attempts, one at this school, one in the district of Case 2. Tibetan parents seemed to focus more on language than culture; while Yughur parents spoke both about the importance of language and culture in the curriculum, although more Yughur mothers spoke mentioned the importance of Yughur cultural content than specifically mentioned the teaching of Yughur language in school. No parents justified the inclusion of local content in school curriculum as a requirement of MOE policy; none argued that the incidental inclusion of local content would facilitate the learning of the national curriculum. Rather, parents seem to view local content, in particular minority culture and language, as intrinsically worth learning and, thus deserving of inclusion in the school curriculum.

Han parents’ views were mixed: one mother spoke positively of the need to include minority culture and content in the curriculum, and two Han fathers were supportive in a general way, but expressed doubts about the feasibility of minority content curriculum, while one Han mother stated frankly that non-minority students would have no interest in learning other nationalities’ culture or language.

Interestingly, parents’ stated desires for their children’s formal schooling seem to require the development of an innovative local education system that provides some of the content of Yughur and Tibetan community- and family-based traditional oral education in combination with the usual school curriculum: that is, some form of multicultural, multilingual education.
Children were not interviewed about what was important to learn about Sunan but were asked about what they enjoyed learning in school, and whether they would enjoy learning traditional Sunan stories, poems and songs, and whether they enjoy learning them in the Yughur language. Students from a range of nationalities participated in group interviews, with two thirds of participants minority children, as displayed in Table 35.

The Grade 1 group included one Han student, and 5 Yughur children, none of whom were able to say whether their family was West Yughur or East Yughur. No Grade 1 student claimed to know or have ever heard any traditional stories or songs from Sunan County at all. Nonetheless, the group responded excitedly to the prospect of learning such traditional stories and songs, and also responded positively to the idea of learning them in the Yughur language. It is noteworthy that all children in the Grade 1 group said they enjoyed study and that it was not difficult. At the same time, they all said that their parents helped them by checking homework, reading texts with them and buying them outside reading material. (Case 1, Grade 1 Student Interview Transcript and Interview Notes).

The Grade 2 group was composed of three Tibetan and two Han children, and one member of the Tu nationality (self-designation, Mangghuer), a nationality found in the northwest, whose language is related to Mongolian, as their ethnonym derives from Mongol. As with the Grade 1 group, none of the students, whether majority or minority, knew any traditional minority folklore from Sunan County. However, when asked whether they would be interested in learning Yughur songs and stories in Yughur, there was a mixed response with several students exhibiting interest, and several stating they were not interested in learning minority language. In
terms of study interests, only one student mentioned *Yuwen* as a favourite class; the remaining students all preferred *non-core* courses: physical education, music, arts and computer class. All of the Grade 2 students report some study difficulties, *all* with core classes: two mention mathematics questions as difficult, while four of the six state that *memorizing* texts for later recitation in *Yuwen* class is difficult. All students in this group said that parents helped them with their homework, for example, by explaining unfamiliar Chinese characters in texts that they had to memorize (Case 1, Grade 2 Student Interview Transcript).

The Grade 4 group consisted of three Yughur students and three Han students. Among the Yughur students there was a mainly positive response to the prospect of learning Yughur stories and songs in school in Yughur. One Yughur was not interested in studying Yughur in school, pointing out the difficulty of learning Yughur. In contrast, the other Yughur students were not concerned with the difficulty of the language. One stated, “It would be very interesting; although Yughur is hard to learn, it’s still interesting” (Case 1, Grade 2 Student Interview Transcript). As stated by another Yughur student in the interview:

Student: I am a Yughur; Yughur songs sound very nice; the only thing is I can’t sing Yughur.

Interviewer: *Would you be interested in learning this kind of thing in school?*

Student: Yes. (Case 1, Grade 2 Student Interview Transcript)

The response among Grade 4 Han students differed from that of Yughur students: two were uninterested in studying Yughur, while one gave a mixed response. One student was positive towards Yughur culture, but felt that Yughur language was too difficult, and implied perhaps that it was not something for Han students to learn, “I feel that Yughur songs sound very nice, but singing them is too much like saying a tongue-twister, it’s very hard to learn. I am a
Another Han student seemed to be opposed more to the language than the songs themselves, “I am a Han. Yughur songs are very hard to sing, everything in them is all in Yughur language” (Case 1, Grade 4 Student Interview Transcript). The most categorical rejection of learning in Yughur was given by another Han student:

I wouldn’t like that because I am not a Yughur; their songs are too old-fashioned and local, too difficult to sing. I am a Han. (Case 1, Grade 4 Student Interview Transcript)

Interestingly, among this group, the classes mentioned as most of interest are core classes, Yuwen and mathematics; none of these students mentioned physical education, music, art or computer class as their favourite. At the same time, they claimed much difficulty with their lessons. Students did not report a particular class as difficult; rather, they all mentioned that there were difficult questions that were hard to understand. Students still mention asking parents for help, but that some parents are beginning to have difficulty with the material, and so they also mention other strategies they can use: figuring out the meaning of difficult questions by themselves, asking a classmate, or asking the teacher. A Han student explained his parents’ role, “If my parents have studied a question, then I ask them; If they haven’t learned it, then I ask the teacher” (Case 1, Grade 4 Student Interview Transcript). One Yughur student explained:

Sometimes it’s simple, at other times I draw a diagram, and then I look at it, and then I understand; if I still don’t understand, then I ask my parents. My mother sometimes can’t do a question: sometimes she can help, sometimes she can’t; that’s when I go to the school and ask the teacher. (Case 1, Grade 4 Student Interview Transcript)

The Grade 5 group had one Han, one Tibetan and four Yughur students. In this group, there was little knowledge of local traditional culture: one Yughur student reported knowing one
Yughur story that his mother taught him in Chinese. Of the four Yughur students, one reported no Yughur ability, while another said, “In our family we use Han language; usually we don’t use Yughur. Sometimes my grandparents speak Yughur together”. The third Yughur student claimed only simple speaking skills such as counting. Another Yughur student said:

Grandfather and grandmother use Yughur language, I use Han language, but I understand them. I can’t speak, but I can understand. If they say a sentence in Yughur I can understand it. (Case 1, Grade 5 Student Interview Transcript)

The Tibetan student also expressed limited Tibetan knowledge, such as:

‘Father’ is Abo, ‘mother’ is Amo, and ‘uncle’ is Ake. I don’t know 1, 2, 3. Grandfather and grandother sometimes have a conversation in Tibetan. They don’t speak Tibetan often; they usually speak Han language. My grandparents and I usually speak in Han language. However, they sometimes call me by my Tibetan name. My mother is a Han, she doesn’t understand Tibetan; my father doesn’t understand Tibetan, only my grandfather and grandmother do. (Case 1, Grade 5 Student Interview Transcript)

Yughur students’ responded negatively to the possibility of learning Yughur in school, with difficulty the main reason given. One explained, “Studying Yughur is very complicated; there’s so much vocabulary that you can’t remember it”. When asked how they would feel if studying Yughur were easier, three Yughur students said they would still have no interest, while one Yughur said it might be interesting to learn if it were made easier. The single Tibetan student had a positive opinion about learning Tibetan, stating “I’d be interested because I’d like to learn a little and talk with my grandparents.” The Han student was uninterested in learning Yughur at school, saying minority languages are “particularly difficult”. 
The Yughur students in the group uniformly chose physical education class as the most enjoyable. One child justified the choice rationally, “I like gym class, because there are not only so many interesting programs for us to play, but also we can develop our physical quality. I like doing sit-ups and skipping rope”. The Tibetan student also chose a non-core class, computer class, as most enjoyable, “because we can get very much knowledge on the computer. In computer class, I like to make slide shows about animals from all around the world.” The Han student was the only one whose favourite class was a core subject, but interestingly mentioned neither Yuwen nor Mathematics, preferring instead foreign language class:

I like to go to English class, because sometimes the teacher gives us some very important knowledge. The important thing is English sentences. For example, ‘They are men.’ Can be said in reverse; the teacher said to make a question, it’s ‘Are they?"

While no Yughur students mentioned core classes as particularly enjoyable, they were mentioned as sources of study difficulty. One Yughur student mentioned Mathematics class as a difficulty, adding that his older sister was able to help with analyzing questions. Another Yughur student said that Yuwen class is sometimes difficult, explaining, “Reading texts aloud in class [Yuedu 阅读] is fairly difficult. Memorizing texts and reciting them by heart analyzing texts into paragraphs is hard. Writing is hard.”

Two Yughur students pointed out that English class gave them some difficulties. One said, “I don’t understand English. My study difficulty is to memorize <English> words. My older (16-year-old) sister helps me study.” Another Yughur student concurred:

I have some study difficulties. For example, in English class when we have to memorize model sentences, I always forget the words, because I haven’t quite
learned the phonetic alphabet. My aunt helps me study. If there’s any words or sentences that I can’t read, then she helps me say them.”

The Tibetan student also agreed that English class was most difficult:

In English class when we’re doing model sentences, reading out loud is very difficult. My older sister often helps me with English; sometimes when I don’t know a word and she can’t help me, I can look it up in the dictionary by myself.”

The Han student shares the consensus view of the difficulty, if not the interest of, English:

English class is difficult. Although I said it was my favourite, I still have trouble, especially with the phonetic alphabet. Other times I don’t know some English words. My aunt helps me study. Every time she has a vacation break, she helps me review my homework.

**Summary: The Students**

Students present a range of perspectives towards learning local content, including minority culture and language, in school. The form in which this learning would take place was presented to the students as essentially narrative-based, the learning of stories, songs and poems. Students’ responses in the lower grades were enthusiastic towards both learning minority stories and songs, and towards learning them in minority language. In higher grades, the students were still enthusiastic about learning minority stories and songs, but perspectives towards the language they were learned were mixed. Some Yughur and Han students referred to the supposed difficulty of minority languages as an objection to learning in Yughur or Tibetan, while a small number of Han students in the higher grades saw lessons in another nationality’s language as inappropriate for them to learn. It is interesting to speculate what the source of the older children’s negative perspectives towards minority language might be. One parent referred to a West Yughur interest
group at the school that had opened and closed. It is possible that some older students had
participated in this interest group and had a negative experience. It might also be that Grades 4
and 5 students are already beginning to feel the pressure of the overcrowded curriculum and any
difficult study that takes time away from core class homework is resented. It is noteworthy that
lower grade students report few study problems, and higher grade students rarely report core
classes as their favourites. Thus to the extent that minority language lessons are enjoyable and
not burdensome, they may be perceived as not serious; to the degree they are serious and
difficult, they are unenjoyable and add to children’s study burden.

As for the attitude that a minority nationality language should only be studied by
members of the same nationality, it is not expressed by younger students of minority or majority
nationality, and presumably is learned; whether from parents, teachers or some other source can
only be speculated.

**Case 1 Findings**

The case of the County Town Elementary School is one in which a range of views
towards the inclusion of local content, culture and language in the curriculum are evident.
However the school curriculum, interviews with the principal and teachers, and several
classroom observations, reveal an overall minority “Language as Problem” orientation.
Photographic images of Yughur culture are evident on posters in hallways, but actual presence of
Yughur cultural content and language use were not evident in classrooms. There are several
possible rationales for such inclusion. At one extreme, the rationale seems to be to implement
national curriculum policy. Unlike the teachers interviewed, the principal does not argue
positively for the importance of inclusion of local and school curriculum, but does note that his
school is in compliance with MOE policy, since they teach local Gansu provincial history
curriculum as an optional class, and have included Yughur traditional games as part of physical education classes, and at some time in the future will local Sunan history. A second rationale is related to implementing the spirit of the MOE’s argument for local and school curriculum as a measure to compensate at the local level for shortcomings in the national curriculum. This argument is presented by teachers alone, but not as a rationale for the systematic development of new school curricula with local content, but as a justification for their current practice of incidental supplementation of national curriculum lessons with local content. Thus, educators interviewed express the view that local content, including minority culture taught in Chinese, could be included in school curriculum. Thus, the principal and higher grade teachers have a neutral attitude towards the development of school curriculum with local cultural content. They do not oppose it, but neither do they argue strongly for its formal inclusion outside incidental supplementation of the national curriculum. While lower grade teachers express more positive perspectives towards local school curriculum development of local minority cultural content, they do not express strongly a view that the pace or scope of this development should increase.

However, when shifting to the question of inclusion of local minority languages, in particular, of Yughur languages in the curriculum, the principal and the higher grade teachers express negative perspectives towards the utility and effectiveness of doing so within the school. They express pessimism that students could learn Yughur successfully, and at the same time, if it can be learned in the county town environment, they question the school as the proper site for such learning, putting forward the home and a new minority language kindergarten outside the school as places where Yughur learning can take place.

The principal and the higher grade teachers, rather than seeing the endangerment of Yughur as a problem, or at least as a problem the school should deal with, see Tibetan and
Yughur proficiency as interfering with the learning of Mandarin caused by as an important concern of the school. While aware that many minority parents feel strongly about increasing the recognition of their culture and language within the school, the principal and higher grade teachers do not express opinions about a need to find an effective means for incorporating local language within the curriculum that might satisfy those minority parents expressing this desire. The lower grade teachers expressed more neutral perspectives towards the teaching of minority languages in school, and one expressed an awareness of the strong concern among Yughur parents that their language survive and the opinion of some Yughur parents that the school should play a role in this survival. While all school staff interviewed grew up in Sunan County, none expressed any knowledge of Yughur language(s), or any other minority language.

In contrast, a large number of minority parents expressed a desire that their culture and languages should be taught in school. Parents to some degree shared the doubts of some of the school staff that Yughur could be learned successfully, but nevertheless, many still feel strongly that it should be taught in school. Parents explained that the lack of a script had been the main argument for excluding Yughur from education for many years, but did not say that they agreed that their language should not be taught because of the lack of a writing system. Han parents expressed neutral perspectives towards the inclusion of minority cultural content in the school curriculum, and did not express opposition to the inclusion of minority language, but did express doubts as to feasibility of such a course of action, while one Han parent seemed to imply a concern that no student be required to study a minority language not of its own nationality.

A summary of the perspectives expressed by stakeholders interviewed in Case 1 towards studying minority language, particularly Yughur, in school is provided in Table 36. Perspectives are divided into negative, positive, and mixed-neutral, with negative referring to categorical
statements that minority languages should not be taught in school, positive referring to categorical statements that they should be taught in school, and mixed-neutral referring to statements that take an intermediate position, no position at all or a balance of negative and positive perspectives. Mixed-negative refers to responses that do not categorically oppose the teaching of minority languages in school, but that present exclusively negative perspectives about the feasibility of doing so, or affirm the need for learning minority languages, but deny a need for such learning to take place in this school. Mixed-positive refers to responses that categorically support the teaching of minority languages in school, but that also present negative perspectives about the feasibility of doing so. Children’s responses are categorized based on the level of expressed interest in learning minority language stories and songs in school in a minority language.

As is clear from Table 36, there is a broad range of perspectives current within Case 1 on the inclusion of minority languages in the school curriculum. Most noteworthy is that no-one expresses categorically negative views this possibility. This is understandable considering a) that the Sunan Yughur Autonomous County was created in part to provide protection for Yughur language and culture, and b) that to make statements or take actions harmful to 民族团结 “minzu tuanjie”, that is ‘national unity’ or rather, unity of the nationalities, is forbidden by law. Thus, it is possible that no participants harbour extremely strong views against the learning of minority languages, but it is also possible, that some in fact do, but that no-one is willing to express such an extreme negative attitude.

Also noteworthy is that among the youngest children, there is little difference between minority children and majority children. All minority children and most majority children expressed an interest in learning minority oral literature in minority language. However, children
in upper grades respond differently from younger children. Majority children state that they are Han, and there is no reason for them to learn a minority language, and that minority languages are too difficult. Minority children express both an interest in learning and a hesitation due to the perceived difficulty of minority languages. Thus, the attitude that minority languages are too difficult and only appropriate for minority children to learn seem more prevalent the older the child.

The data do not support any conclusion as to the source of these perspectives, but it can be speculated that they are learned. The opinion that minority languages are difficult may be learned from adults, but it is also possible that the older children participated in the previous failed West Yughur extracurricular interest group. It is conceivable that the approach to teaching West Yughur may have been responsible for its failure, since the only available material for the teaching of this language is a formal grammar written in Chinese that contains examples of isolated sentences out of context and no stories, songs or interesting dialogues. Such teaching material can only be used to teach West Yughur using an inappropriate and dull grammar-translation methodology.

The attitude that it is only appropriate for a minority language to be learned by members of the same nationality implies a non-reciprocal attitude towards language groups. Some majority children express a curiosity about learning Yughur at all ages, but among Grade 4 and 5 majority children many justify a lack of interest in learning Yughur by stating “I am Han”. This attitude, presumably learned from adults, is neither directly supported nor opposed by current official language policy, which differs from policy in minority areas before 1959, which required majority officials to learn the minority language of the local area in which they were assigned to work. This previous policy likely derives from the early Soviet policy of korenizatsiya or
‘indigenization’ (Bahry et al., 2008; Fierman, 1991; Lewis, 1972; Shorish, 1988). Indeed, in the early years of the People’s Republic, Han teachers were brought to minority areas to help develop local education (Gao & He, 2003), and were taught, as part of their training, the minority language of the area they were assigned to teach in (Wang, 2007, p. 4).
Chapter Seven:
Case 2:
A Monolingual, Multicultural School

Introduction

This chapter presents the second case of the study, the unified elementary-junior secondary (Kindergarten - Grade 9) school of the Case 2 district. This case is intended as a theoretical replication in a rural district for the base findings of Case 1, since its demographic composition is closest of the remaining cases to Case 1. The chapter will begin with an introduction to the district, and a sketch of its history, economy, and population, followed by an introduction to the school itself. The body of the chapter consists of the embedded cases: the administration, teachers, parents and students. The chapter concludes with a summary of the case as a whole, focusing in particular on perspectives towards the inclusion of local minority cultures and languages, especially Yughur, within the school curriculum.

The District and its Administrative Centre

The Case 2 district is located along the northeast slopes of the Qilian Mountains, consisting of snow-capped mountains, forests, grasslands, and a limited amount of arable land, surrounding a river that flows downstream towards the Hexi corridor. However, Case 2 is separated from the main body of Sunan County. In order to travel from the county town to Case 2 district, it is necessary to leave the mountains for the Hexi corridor lowlands, passing through Zhangye City and continuing south-eastwards on the main highway towards Lanzhou, and then leaving the highway and driving southwest back into the mountains, a distance of over 150 kilometres from Zhangye City, and a journey of approximately 8 hours by bus from Sunan’s County town. Unlike the rest of Sunan County which was formed by amalgamating various
neighbouring districts of Gansu province with Yughur and Tibetan populations, Case 2 district belonged to Qinghai province for Sunan County’s first 5 years of history. In 1959, the Qinghai-Gansu boundary was adjusted and some Sunan territory was transferred to Qinghai, while the entire Case 2 district was transferred to Gansu as part of Sunan Yughur Autonomous County. During the Cultural Revolution, Case 2 district was removed from Sunan County and attached to Wuwei Prefecture from 1971 to 1972, when it was returned to Sunan County’s administration (Gao & He, 2003, pp. 150-152; Sunan County, 1994, p. 9) (see Figures 37 and 38).

Case 2 district’s overall demography closely resembles that of the county town as is evident from Figures 39 and 40. The total population is approximately that of the county town and the percentage of Han Chinese resident in the district, just over 50%, is slightly lower than that of the county town. While the percentage of minority residents is slightly more than in the county town, the ethnic composition differs somewhat: in Case 2 district there are more Tibetans than Yughurs. However, when the ethnic breakdown by township displayed in Figure 40 is examined, it is evident that it varies considerably from township to township: one township is majority Yughur, another is majority Tibetan, and three are majority Han townships. The Case 2 district is a site where, although there is one Yughur-dominant township and two Tibetan-dominant townships, in demographic terms, the district as a whole is a Han-majority site. Thus, except for the three townships mentioned above, this district and its administrative centre is likely a Mandarin-dominant site. During field work on the school grounds and in the administrative centre, no minority language was observed to be spoken in.
The School

The Case 2 district centre 9-year combined elementary-junior secondary school was founded in 1959 as a 6-year elementary school; its programme was extended to 9 years when a 3-year junior secondary program was added in 1969. In 1979, a 3-year senior secondary program was attached to the school; in 1982, the elementary program was separated from the school. The senior section of the resulting 6-year general secondary school was converted in 1983 to a vocational school specializing in animal husbandry and veterinary science. In 1999, the school dropped its senior secondary section, becoming a 3-year general junior secondary school. In 2005, the central elementary school and the Maying Township elementary school merged with the district junior secondary to form a 9-year elementary-junior secondary boarding school.

In 1989, the school had 6 junior secondary classes with 275 students and 3 senior secondary classes with 46 students and a total staff of 31 (Sunan, 1994, p. 314). The school now comprises 15 classes, and has a staff of 40 and a total of 600 students, 200 of whom are boarding students, with over 60% of students members of national minorities, with Yughur, Tibetan, Mongolian, Hui and Tu nationalities represented alongside the Han ethnicity.

The school boasts up-to-date facilities including facilities for physics, chemistry and biology experiments, as well as a multi-media computer laboratory with Internet connection, and a “smart classroom” where audiovisual materials can be projected (Case 2 No. 2 Middle School History). As with Case 1, participation in the study of children and parents from distant villages is restricted both by distance and difficulty of parents to receive read and sign the participation permission in the time available. The school is a three-storey modern building with student and teacher residences behind (see Figure 41). Figure 42 displays the plans for the school after further construction is complete. The grounds are attractive with gardens in front of the main
building filled with greenery, much of it planted by students, perhaps as part of a Green School Programme (see Figure 43). As in Case 1, the hallways are decorated with inspirational posters on the importance of study. Traditional Chinese models are less evident here than in Case 1. Figures 44 & 45 cite Western authors in support of effort and reflection as part of learning, but unlike Case 1 where progressive Westerners are models of scientific and/or socialist thinking, the authors cited, Edmund Burke and Leo Tolstoy, are generally considered traditionalist, not progressive models.

**Embedded Case 1:**

**The “Zhuren” and the Curriculum Development Committee**

The Case 2 principal, a Yughur, was away during fieldwork. The senior member of the school administration in the absence of the principal was the zhuren, or school manager.20 Since the Case 2 school had prepared school-based curriculum, the zhuren (school manager) and members of the curriculum committee were interviewed in place of the principal. In the past, the zhuren was the third most senior member of the school’s administration after the principal and the school’s Communist Party secretary (Pepper, 1996, p. 361, n. 17). The zhuren and three teachers on the committee were present. Three of the members interviewed were Han, and one, a history teacher was a member of the Hui nationality, the Mandarin-speaking Muslims of China.

**Local Minority Languages and the School**

The zhuren presented an extended rationale for his school’s activity in developing school curriculum with local content, explaining:

---

20 School leadership includes the principal, the party secretary and the jiaodao zhuren, or academic supervisor, of the school. The jiaodao zhuren is responsible for academic management and discipline (Pepper, 1999, p. 361).
Our development of school curriculum is mainly under the guidance of the spirit of the new national curriculum; one can say that it gives us the independent authority to develop our own curriculum, so under the guidance of such a major state policy, we have opened up a school curriculum. Another aspect is that as a multiethnic area, in the context of its multicultural background, it is necessary for each nationality to carry on its own outstanding traditional culture. The third point is that the school curriculum makes up for the inadequacies of the national curriculum and lets students study and understand the national curriculum even better. (Case 2, Curriculum Committee Group Interview Transcript)

The zhuren said a major rationale for developing school curriculum was minority culture transmission. A major means for cultural transmission is language, yet during general discussion on their school curriculum development, the topic of minority language was touched upon by only one committee member, a Grade 8 local history teacher, a member of the Hui nationality:

Concerning things related to their own nationality, students by means of school curriculum understand more deeply. Now the question we’re facing is that minority culture may disappear, which is an inevitable tendency. I am a pessimist; I consider that this is a trend. Just as English is spreading through the whole world, so some nationalities’ languages may be replaced. Our school curriculum is mainly oriented to the Yughur nationality: that was our point of departure, so students of other nationalities possibly would not feel interest. Besides Yughur students, we have Tibetan, Hui, Mongolian, Manchu, and Tu students and so on. (Case 2, Curriculum Committee Group Interview)

When the committee as a whole was directly asked about the role of the school in the transmission of local languages, the following exchange ensued:

21 Chinese-speaking Muslims, as opposed to other Muslim nationalities, such as the Tajiks and Uighurs, who have their own national language.
Int.: What do you consider the place of the school is in helping the learning of <local> languages?

His T.: I feel that the disappearance of minority language is an inevitable trend. In my class the other day, there were three students who could speak Yughur; and to inspire the class <I asked them> to say a few simple sentences in Yughur. They are real Yughurs, but they could only speak simple Yughur, so if this continues, their children will be able to speak even less than they do.

PE T.: This forgetting of their own language is due to the unique conditions of Sunan County.

Int.: Do you mean that generally for village children who board at school, they forget their own language more quickly, but can more quickly raise their educational level?

Zhu: In the local conditions of primary and secondary education, in order to better concentrate educational resources, a boarding school can resolve the problem of the difficulty of attending school for rural and herders’ children, so that this kind of school is relatively in accord with local reality.

His T.: Because here there are some students who need 7 or 8 hours to get home, so boarding schools solve that kind of problem. (Case 2, Curriculum Committee Group Interview)

At present, descriptions of salient facts about one local minority language, Sarigh Yughur, constitute one component of the local history curriculum. Teaching of the language or in the language has no current role in the school curriculum. Perspectives expressed overtly about the potential role of the school in teaching minority languages are summarized in Table 37. As is evident from the table, the curriculum committee as a whole has little concrete to say on this issue. The committee indicates no conviction that the school curriculum should or could play a significant positive role in transmission of the languages of local nationalities, particularly
Yughur. The committee seems aware of the role that residential schooling can play among minority children in weakening proficiency in the mother tongue, but offers no opinions about how to balance the school’s role of promoting Mandarin with efforts to encourage the maintenance of the mother tongue among rural minority children.

**School-Based Curriculum in the Case 2 School**

The school has developed and published a set of textbooks for courses that form part of the school’s response to requirement that up to 20% of classroom hours be devoted to local and/or school curriculum and practical activities. The textbooks embody the views of the administration and curriculum developers on what local content should be taught in the school. The local curriculum materials that have been produced have been published in a set of textbooks for courses in Grades 7 and 8 at the Junior-Secondary level of the school and are filled with many colourful illustrations. The title of the series of local school curriculum is “Yughur Nationality Local Teaching Materials”; Table 38 displays the individual textbook titles. The materials centre mainly on the titular nationality of the county, the Yughurs, and their culture.

The textbooks are remarkably forthcoming on some topics, reticent on others. The history textbook, for example discusses the local manifestation of the national Anti-Feudalism Campaign of 1958-1959, in which many traditional Yughur clan leaders, who had been appointed by the Communist Party as officials in the local government after 1949, were almost 10 years later treated as class enemies and subjected to “cruel struggle”²². The textbook further

---

²² The history textbook provides a brief bibliography of several prominent Yughur political personalities, mentioning the “cruel struggle” they were subjected to, and the date of their death (1958), but omits the fact that they committed suicide under the pressures of the “Struggle” they were subjected to during the Anti-Feudalism Campaign, which is now considered a leftist error resulting from the campaign against the Tibetan uprising, although there were no antirevolutionary activities in sympathy with the uprising in Sunan County (Gao & He, 2003, pp. 148-150).
mentions the destruction of the Yughurs’ Buddhist temples during the Anti-Feudalism Campaign of 1958, and also covers the Great Resettlement of 1958 when Case 2 District joined Sunan County. The textbook describes these political actions as a serious error which harmed the reputation of the CPC and unity of nationalities. On the other hand, the Yughur language is assigned a short chapter in the History textbook with minimal actual examples of the language provided.

**Local Sunan and Yughur cultural content and the school curriculum.**

The committee presents a range of arguments for the inclusion of Yughur cultural content in the school curriculum (see Table 39). The *zhuren* provides several arguments for the necessity of local school curriculum, summing up the case for school-based curriculum as achieving two overarching goals:

Our plan regarding school-based curriculum is in accordance with the overall national curriculum management system which ensures the implementation of the national curriculum while amply providing the school with the authority to develop its own school curriculum, developing its compensatory function, which at the same time lets students from this place develop a solid understanding of this place, thereby transmitting some of our nationalities’ outstanding culture. (Case 2, Curriculum Committee Group Interview)

The *zhuren* justifies the development of school curriculum partly as a response to Sunan County’s demographic character, arguing that “each nationality needs to carry on its own excellent culture.” Thus, from this point of view, local minority cultural content is presented as intrinsically worth learning from the point of view of each local nationality. However, the school curriculum textbooks introduce all the nationalities of Sunan County to all its students regardless of nationality, and so constitutes a form of *multicultural education*. Nevertheless, the Yughur
nationality is given prominence, perhaps due to its status as *titular* nationality of the autonomous county. Based on demographic statistics, it seems there are as good grounds for providing similar prominence to the Tibetan nationality (see Figures 39 & 40).

However, while the *zhuren* presents the knowledge and culture of Sunan County’s minority nationalities as something worth learning for its own sake, he also argues that school curriculum has the function of supporting the national curriculum:

One point is that we can make up for the inadequacies of the national curriculum, and let students study and understand the national curriculum even better. Regarding the national curriculum, it is universal; regarding each local area, each one has its own way of life and local characteristics: and so school curriculum serves to help better learn the national curriculum. (Case 2, Curriculum Committee Group Interview)

The *zhuren* also adds that the national curriculum is difficult to implement in some circumstances, such that the granting of independent curriculum authority allows the school to substitute local content for centrally-mandated content that is impractical to implement in the local environment:

For example, the national physical education curriculum includes a unit on swimming. Because of our special geographical situation, there is no way that this can be implemented. So, this part of the curriculum we have supplemented with traditional sports activities and compensated for a deficiency in the national curriculum. (Case 2, Curriculum Committee Group Interview)

The *zhuren* further argues that the pedagogy being used to implement school curriculum is more effective than the pedagogy used in national curriculum classes, due to the manner in which it is developed and designed:
Regarding our school textbooks, there were many developers involved in the process of developing the teaching materials, who at the same time were testing the implementation of the materials pedagogically. The structure of this kind of curriculum has a knowledge element, activity element, experiential element and a discussion element, which makes up a major part of students activity and fosters a new spirit among students. Thus, by adding local customs, history and so on to the curriculum we can integrate knowledge and skills. (Case 2, Curriculum Committee Group Interview)

The zhuren sees several challenges to the implementation of school curriculum featuring local content. The first challenge relates to the school’s teachers, who “have very much experience in teaching the national curriculum, and so methods for teaching the school curriculum and for teaching the national curriculum are not very different” (Case 2, Curriculum Committee Group Interview). The second challenge relates to how it affects the students:

There is a contradiction, since students still must devote the majority of their time towards studying the national curriculum, and so students’ main problem is time. The solution of this problem mainly depends on state policy, which can be resolved by <changes in> the national evaluation system for schools and teachers. (Case 2, Curriculum Committee Group Interview)

The history teacher presents a challenge in relating school curriculum to their level of interest:

Some students are interested in this kind of school curriculum; students will learn well about their own nationality, but students of other nationalities who learn well about another nationality are few, so in this situation pedagogical approaches must certainly differ. We divide students into discussion groups, so that students can exchange this kind of information. (Case 2, Curriculum Committee Group Interview)
Overall, the zhuren is optimistic about the potential of inclusion of local content in school curriculum as a means to improve learning at his school, and hopes, if conditions permit, to expand local curriculum into the lower elementary school grades. It should be noted, however, that the zhuren did not speak of the issue of the inclusion of local minority languages in the school curriculum, neither arguing for nor against their inclusion directly. When asked about the effect on mother tongue proficiency of minority children from rural areas who lived as boarders, the zhuren said:

In the conditions of primary and secondary education, in order to better concentrate educational resources, a boarding school can resolve the problem of the difficulty of attending school for rural and herders’ children, so that this kind of school is relatively in accord with local reality. (Case 2, Curriculum Committee Group Interview)

Thus, it seems that for the zhuren local content in the school curriculum, while perhaps important for its own sake, is justified mainly according to its effect in facilitating students’ learning of the national curriculum. This can be done in this view it seems through incorporating local culture and traditions taught via the medium of the state language, Mandarin. Transmission of local culture and traditions thus is not seen as requiring the traditional medium of the mother tongue, at least not in the school. When the committee was asked what role the school could play in the study of local minority languages, the zhuren did not respond, nor did he mention the issue of minority language maintenance, even when asked directly about the effect on mother tongue proficiency of having elementary-school-aged children live in residential schools.
What Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes are Important to Learn for “Education for Quality”?

In the discussion on knowledge, skills and attitudes in support of quality education, the committee focused on teachers’ learning more than students’ learning. A summary of the range of views expressed is displayed in Table 40. The most extended explanation of the committee’s thinking on school curriculum development was made by a teacher member:

We began a reflection by everyone on the nature of knowledge in this area; our proposed school-based curriculum is based on an understanding of the nature of knowledge; real knowledge is what is useful for our students’ maturing and development and their future. One more point is the change in our conceptions: before we felt knowledge was what was in textbooks; now we know that local knowledge is very useful for our students, in that it allows teachers to raise their understanding of the nature of knowledge. A third point is to reorganize teachers’ knowledge structures. Previously we received a standard form of teacher education, and the curriculum was relatively professional; now after having implemented our own local textbooks, teachers feel that besides possessing certain professional knowledge, you must add an understanding of local knowledge to your own knowledge structure. (Case 2, Curriculum Committee Group Interview)

The sole minority member of the committee expands further on the benefits to teachers’ of developing understanding of local cultures through curriculum development activities:

Our development of this school curriculum required curriculum developers to learn about minority nationalities’ religion. For me this introduction to the minority nationalities of the northwest was all quite interesting, and so participating in curriculum development has been extremely useful <for me>. (Case 2, Curriculum Committee Group Interview)
What challenges do students face in achieving “Education for Quality”?

Members of the curriculum committee did not refer to two sorts of challenge faced by their students. One was the challenge of school attendance for farmers’ and herders’ children in a remote mountainous district. The other was the educational challenge of teaching children from such a district, many of whom were members of minority nationalities. The first problem is seen as belonging to the past, solved by the expansion of residential schooling to allow more village children to attend school. The second challenge is framed not as a learning problem of students who have a deficit in Mandarin proficiency, family educational level, quality of family environment or education. Rather, these are taken as challenges for the school to solve by designing an appropriate school curriculum and selecting more effective pedagogical strategies. Such problems that are ascribed to students arise from the curriculum. The zhuren, for example, acknowledges that the adoption of school curriculum alongside national curriculum has created a study overload for students, since it seems reduced classroom hours for national curriculum courses to accommodate school-based curriculum has not led to a concomitant decrease in study hours outside class required for national curriculum courses.

Summary: The Zhuren and the School Curriculum Committee

The zhuren and the school curriculum committee understand local knowledge and Yughur minority culture as having a significant place within the curriculum, while excluding Yughur language and the culture of other minorities from the curriculum: local content in the curriculum is depicted as intrinsically worth knowing by Sunan County students and is also depicted as extrinsically valuable in the learning of the national curriculum. Rather than being depicted as a problem for the learning of the national curriculum, the national curriculum’s universal, abstract, nature is depicted as the problem, which can only be solved by integration
with local knowledge, which serves as a bridge to the learning of the national curriculum.
Furthermore, the place of local knowledge in this school’s curriculum goes beyond celebration of
colourful discrete elements of minority culture. However, the committee conflated minority
culture and Yughur culture. Within their curriculum, there is an introduction to all the ethnicities
of Sunan, but detailed minority cultural and historical content only of the titular ethnicity, the
Yughur. The culture of local Tibetans, whose district population is roughly equivalent to that of
the Yughurs, does not enjoy any special emphasis within the school curriculum.

In addition, while intrinsic and extrinsic arguments are presented by the zhuren and the
committee for the inclusion of local knowledge in the school curriculum, the bulk of their
comments in support of the school curriculum deal with the benefits for students’ learning of the
national curriculum of the inclusion of local knowledge. While research shows that learning of a
minority language does not preclude successful development of high proficiency in the state
language (Abadzi, 2006; Baker; 2001, Cummins, 2000), for those unaware of such research, the
common sense assumption is that learning Yughur or Tibetan has no benefits for Mandarin
learning. Thus, it is not surprising that despite the special emphasis on inclusion of Yughur
culture in the school curriculum, the committee does not mention any special approaches to
Yughur or other minority language in the curriculum, either as a language of instruction for local
curriculum content, as a special subject in itself, or within special Mandarin classes for Yughur-
speaking students with difficulties in Mandarin proficiency. Thus, the committee’s vision for the
inclusion of minority culture is one which treats minority language as separable from culture and
not as an essential component of that culture, and presumably with no relation to the
development academic language proficiency in Mandarin.
Significantly, a committee member points out that implementing school curriculum requires a new, active conception of knowledge that seems to imply a transactive or transformative orientation, which implies taking more account of students’ heritage culture and language in the curriculum development and teaching. Nonetheless, this particular member was silent on the entire question of the place of minority language in the school curriculum.

The school curriculum communicates local knowledge in the state language. The content is quite similar to that found in academic publications in Mandarin on Yughur culture. While one member of the committee mentioned engaging with the local community to better understand its cultural practices, the local content seems derived from official conceptions rather than community conceptions of what is significant about their culture.

**Embedded Case 2:**

*The Teachers*

Three teachers’ classes participated in the study at this school, a Grade 5 elementary school *Yuwen* class (national curriculum), a Grade 7 Sunan County Geography class and a Grade 8 Yughur History class. The two teachers of school curriculum, both male, were interviewed individually. The Grade 7 Geography teacher is a Tibetan by ethnicity, who grew up in the neighbouring Sunan district of Mati, while the Grade 8 teacher is a Hui, a Chinese-speaking Muslim, who grew up in the district. Both completed elementary and junior secondary education in local Sunan schools in rural Han-majority districts with large Tibetan minorities. Both grew up and completed their basic education in an area of Sunan where the Yughur population is extremely small. The Grade 7 teacher completed normal secondary school in Zhangye City, specializing in music education. The Grade 8 teacher completed senior secondary school in
Zhangye City and then completed his post-secondary studies at the Hezuo Minorities Teachers’ College in Gannan Tibetan Autonomous District about 500 kilometres from Sunan.  

**Inclusion of Local Minority Language in Local and School Curriculum**

At this school, Yughur culture and local Sunan County content are already included in the set of local curriculum textbooks prepared at the school. A lesson on the Yughur languages is included in the Yughur history textbook, emphasizing their the particular characteristics, such as the fact that they belong to the Altaic language family, that West Yughur is related to Turkic languages, and East Yughur is related to Mongolic languages. The lesson includes a description of the peculiarities of the West Yughur numerical system, whose numbers from 11-19 are distinct from other Turkic languages and include an archaic remnant from Old Turkic. However, the entire lesson provides no actual Yughur language at all, but merely describes the language in Chinese. Thus, while this school has made organized its local curriculum around Yughur culture, there is no Yughur language content in the curriculum, nor is there any Tibetan minority language content. Table 41 summarizes teachers’ opinions on Yughur instruction.

The Grade 5 teacher, a Han female, was formerly a minban teacher; in a people-run, rather than state-run school. This teacher stated that all Yughur use Chinese in school and that only a few can speak Yughur, pointing out that some students have learning difficulties and that...
their home education was relatively backward. Furthermore, many students’ parents were illiterate and busy working; in rural areas grandparents frequently looked after children.

The Grade 5 teacher strongly supported teaching Yughur language at school. She argued that since the Yughur language is likely to disappear, it should be included in school curriculum. At present, local school curriculum is offered only at the junior secondary level. The teacher argued that local school should be extended to the elementary level and that Yughur language should also be included in order to protect the language and culture of the Yughur. She adds that she would be willing to teach local school curriculum at the elementary level, “so that children can learn their own history; they should know this” (Case 2, Grade 5 Teacher Interview Notes).

The Grade 7 teacher, a Tibetan who cannot himself speak Tibetan, considers that the inclusion of minority language in the local school curriculum should be considered by the school’s curriculum committee for several reasons. First, he mentions its effect on the cultural group as a whole, saying that including minority language will “protect local language and <ensure> that local language and culture are not forgotten”. Secondly, he mentions its positive effect on individual minority students, claiming that they will develop a greater interest in their studies if their language is taught in school. However, he considers that in order to do so, the development of a Yughur language writing system is important, and states that he is aware that the Yughur Cultural Research Centre is conducting work on this a Yughur script. A more unusual challenge in his view, in contrast to the positive effect he anticipates that teaching minority language will have on students is his perception of minority parents’ perspectives on this question. He claims parents from different minority groups look at this possibility differently:
Tibetan parents hope that their children will learn Tibetan spoken and written language. However, it seems that Yughur parents do not hope very much that their children learn <their language>.

The Grade 7 teacher feels that teaching minority languages at school would have a positive collective effect on minority cultural maintenance and a positive effect on minority students’ study attitudes, but feels Tibetan, more than Yughur, parents would support this move.

Yet the Grade 8 teacher of local Yughur history is of the opposite opinion. He feels that if local minority language classes were offered at his school, “it is possible that the only students to study <this> would be Yughurs”. He justifies this opinion by referring to the great change he has noticed in the vitality of the Yughur language in the district, and implies that a change in language of instruction policy of the school might be able to resist or reverse this change:

10 years ago when I came to this school, all the Yughur students used Han language to communicate in the classroom, but after class was finished, they communicated completely in Yughur. However, now very many Yughur students not only do not speak Yughur at school, but also do not speak it at home. If Yughur is taught, it must have a very good function towards the development of the nationality’s language. (Case 2, Grade 8 Teacher Interview Transcript)

The Grade 8 teacher also recognizes that boarding schools have an ambiguous role in language development. When asked if living in the dormitory posed a risk for language loss, he said:

The only good point is towards Han language: each nationality can use a single language for linguistic interaction. Possibly, <there is a risk of language loss>. (Case 2, Grade 8 Teacher Interview Transcript)

Thus, the Grade 8 teacher feels that an appropriate response to the observed reduction in minority mother tongue vitality would be for minority students to study both their mother tongue
and Mandarin in school, saying “Learning both languages would be mutually supportive. I personally consider that bilingual education is very good”. However, to teach Yughur in schools, presents a challenge to develop the language as an instrument for communicating modern knowledge outside of the traditional spheres in which it has been used in the past:

Yughur language has no problem itself, but has no way of recording anything, so that earlier vocabulary is not used by today’s people anymore, but for new things that have appeared they have no way to translate into today’s Yughur language. (Case 2, Grade 8 Teacher Interview Transcript)

In addition to the development of a modern vocabulary, this teacher feels that learning the new romanized Yughur script is necessary, but that few local people are aware of its existence, and so its popularization will be very difficult. On the other hand, he feels that the fact of living in a boarding school is a lesser threat than that posed by the broader language environment, in which there is competition between languages for predominance:

However, this danger is of small scale; the greater danger should be the spread of English. As a minority in the context of learning the Han language, a student must learn English and also their own nationality’s language. Because students’ energy and time is limited, even though there are many <minority> parents, who, when faced with a choice, will ask their children to study their national language, the school has to promote English, and so this is a problem. (Case 2, Grade 8 Teacher Interview Transcript)

What is of Most Importance for Students to Learn for “Education for Quality”? 

While the zhuren and curriculum committee focus more on what knowledge, skills and attitudes teachers need to be able to prepare and teach school curriculum and to integrate it with national curriculum, teachers in individual interviews emphasize students’ knowledge, skills and attitudes. It is noteworthy that the two minority teachers interviewed were involved in
developing and teaching local school curriculum, but emphasize the importance of “basic knowledge” related to the national curriculum and do not mention local knowledge related to Sunan, its cultures and languages, while the Han elementary school teacher strongly argues for the importance of local knowledge at the elementary level. She argues that such knowledge is intrinsically valuable to her students, but also seems to suggest that it is more learnable and practical in the local situation than is the national curriculum. Perhaps, this is connected to her views on skills, where the skill she mentions as most important in Sunan is “how to survive”. Otherwise, there is a wide variety of opinions on important skills to teach, ranging from how to be a person to how to learn actively and how to use knowledge to solve problems. The Grade 8 teacher mentions interest as a necessary attitude to develop, and the Grade 7 teacher emphasizes “willingness to ask questions” as an important attitude. The Grade 5 teacher’s opinion is that school should help children learn “to love life”. As is evident from Table 42, for the elementary teacher, knowledge and skills were emphasize, while for the Grade 7 teacher skills and attitudes were emphasized, while the Grade 8 teacher emphasized knowledge and skills. All teachers gave similar emphasis to skills as an important component of education but varied considerably in choice of important skills to learn.

Challenges and solutions to achieving “Education for Quality.”

The teachers’ perceptions of challenges to providing students with “education for quality” vary somewhat, as is evident from Table 43. For example, two teachers agree that economic factors limit their ability to implement education for quality, but for quite different reasons. One teacher mentions no economic challenges, but for the Grade 5 teacher rural poverty means that many parents cannot afford to support their children’s study through the purchase of outside reading materials, weakening students’ ability to learn (Case 2, Grade 5 Teacher
Interview Notes). For the Grade 8 teacher, rural families with pastureland can guarantee their children a job in the future, which undermines their motivation for further study after completing junior secondary school, while poorer families will not be able to afford to pay tuition fees for senior secondary and post secondary education (Case 2, Grade 5 Teacher Interview Notes).

The Grade 8 teacher argues that there is a need for veterinary staff, but that local students seldom find employment in this area since the local senior secondary school and its basic veterinary medicine programme closed in 1999:

Now there’s only one problem with rangeland which is the health of the livestock. But the veterinary stations are staffed only by people with professional qualifications, so they <students> feel there is no need to study more, because there are no other problems. (Case 2, Grade 8 Teacher Interview Transcript)

All three teachers concur that parents present a challenge to their children’s education. The Grade 7 teacher takes a relatively neutral view towards the parents themselves, pointing out that the diversity of students’ preschool experience is a challenge to their learning, since they arrive at school with the same educational foundations. The Grade 5 teacher takes a more negative view of home education, stating that is “backward” in contrast to urban areas, due to parents’ low educational levels and even illiteracy. The Grade 8 teacher argues that the fact of minority parents’ lack of knowledge is not the key challenge to education for quality; rather he views the main challenge as their attitude towards formal education:

Minority students’ study is not organized. This is a fairly common phenomenon, because of the influnce of parents: neither the father nor mother has received a very good education, so their educational perspective also has some problems; they don’t value education. This is widesread, but there are also some minority students who do study well. (Case 2, Grade 8 Teacher Interview Transcript)
Teachers divide over their attitude towards challenges that derive from the students. While the Grade 5 teacher ascribes some challenges to parents, she ascribes no challenges to the students themselves. Similarly, the Grade 8 teacher points out that not all students have sufficient basic knowledge to learn effectively, but ascribes this difficulty to family and environmental factors. The Grade 7 teacher, in contrast, points out many qualities that some students lack which he feels are necessary for education for quality, such as the willingness to ask questions.

While teachers discussed challenges for teachers deriving from parents and students, only one teacher presented any challenges deriving from teachers themselves; as he put it, “Some teachers passively implement school curriculum; others think it has no effect” (Case 2, Grade 8 Teacher Interview Transcript). Two teachers did, however, mention challenges that reside in the school or the education system as a whole. The Grade 7 teacher pointed out that, while the new pedagogy of education for quality requires students to ask many questions, the school has no way to resolve the challenge that very few students seem willing to do so. Finally, the Grade 5 teacher mentions a contradiction between demanding that teachers implement the curriculum and pedagogy required in education for quality while retaining the previous examination-based assessment system for students, teachers and schools.

Just as the challenges teachers identified differ widely, so do the solutions they raised for the challenges of implementing education for quality in a rural minority district. One teacher feels that what is needed is to change nothing, but give some students more attention after class; another teacher feels that what is needed is to change students’ attitudes, to make them more interested in study. Another teacher feels that the need for change is not primarily at the school level; rather systemic policy changes are needed, so that there is no contradiction between curriculum aims and assessment methods:
We feel there is a contradiction in Education for Quality: there is new content and new teaching methods, but we still use the old standards to evaluate this teacher is good/bad, this student is good or bad, so there is a contradiction. (Case 2, Grade 5 Teacher Interview Notes)

Summary: The Teachers

The Case 2 school policy is to include Yughur minority culture, but not language, in the junior secondary, but not elementary, curriculum. The teachers interviewed, however, are more supportive of the inclusion of minority language in the school curriculum than current school policy provides for. All teachers say that minority language could form part of the curriculum, but differ on specifics. One teacher says that the inclusion of minority language in the curriculum should be considered; a second argues that minority language and customs should be taught at school, beginning at the elementary level; another teacher says that bilingual education should be offered at the school, but only to Yughurs, and not, presumably to Tibetans or to Hans, the only other ethnicities present in Case 2 District in large numbers. Teachers argued that teaching Yughur language in school is a means to achieve the social goal of preserving minority language and culture, while also serving an educational goal of making schooling more interesting for Yughur students. Despite the general support for including Yughur language in school curriculum, teachers see the school as largely a Han-dominant site, and mention the importance of also supporting the use of the mother tongue in the home.

Teachers were divided on what should be learned by students. All emphasize local content, but ironically, it is the majority Han elementary level teacher who emphasizes its value for students’ self-understanding and for survival within the local environment, while two minority teachers at the junior secondary level emphasize its value as a means to motivate
students to study and as a means to facilitate understanding of the national curriculum, which may enable them to go to university and leave the local environment.

Teachers are also divided on what the challenges are for their students to receive education for quality. The teacher who stresses the importance of minority language and culture does not see students themselves as a problem, while the teachers who emphasize basic knowledge and the national curriculum see students’ psychological quality, whether reticence to speak, or lack of interest in study, as a barrier to their receiving education for quality. Moreover, all teachers agree that parents’ relatively low education and income is a major barrier to their children’s education.

Teachers all assess their own role in students’ education positively and do not identify a lack of knowledge about local language and culture, or negative attitude towards the rural and/or minority parents and children among teachers as a challenge to delivering education for quality.

Interestingly, the two minority teachers interviewed did not argue for including Yughur language instruction in school on the grounds that it was an endangered language, which was only given as a major reason for doing so by a Han teacher. While elementary and junior secondary teachers all expressed support for Yughur language instruction, the lower grade teacher (Gr. 5) spoke out more forcefully on its importance.

**Embedded Case 3:**

*Family Members (Parents and 1 Older Sibling)*

A total of six family members were interviewed in this case. Three Han parents, two mothers and an older sister were interviewed. In addition three Yughur parents were interviewed, two fathers and one mother. No Tibetan, or other minority, parents were interviewed. It is not certain why the numbers of parents interviewed per class were smaller than in Case 1. It may be
that some parents lived too far away, or were too busy with or tired from their work to attend.

Table 44 summarizes the ethnicity and gender of parents interviewed for this case. Two of them spoke of their experiences with language in school. One Yughur father explained his experience:

> We were used to speaking Yughur. In school, the teacher spoke Han language, so sometimes I could not understand what the teacher was saying. Sometimes I would ask the teacher; other times, if you don’t understand, you just don’t understand. The teacher couldn’t understand Yughur, but in Grade 3, I could understand 60 to 70%. (Case 2, Grade 5 Parent Interview Transcript)

A Yughur sibling who understood more Mandarin when she began school had less difficulty:

> Before I started school I used both Yughur and Han language. Usually my father speaks Yughur, I also can speak a little, but when I was in elementary school I could speak a bit more. My teacher did not understand very much Yughur. When the teacher spoke Chinese I could understand. If a Yughur student couldn’t understand, the teacher would use gestures and figures of speech to help students understand. (Case 2, Grade 8 Parent Interview Transcript)

**Inclusion of Local Minority Language in Local and School Curriculum**

Yughur parents were in support of the teaching of the Yughur language in school, although their opinions varied in detail. A Grade 5 father, who lives in the district town and has spoken Chinese since a young age, when asked what aspects of local knowledge, culture or language should be included in school curriculum, answered “I haven’t thought about that”. However when asked how he would respond to the inclusion of Yughur language in school lessons, he said that he would be interested, and willing to buy any materials that were published, and would also be interested in attending evening classes in Yughur for adults if they became available. A Grade 5 father from Maying Township, where 65% of the population are Yughur, when asked what aspects of local knowledge, culture or language should be included in the
curriculum, answered, “In my opinion, language”. This parent also expresses willingness to buy any published teaching materials on the Yughur language and to take part in adult courses in Yughur language (Case 2, Grade 5 Parent Interview Transcript). The remaining Yughur family member raised the issue of the Yughur language before being specifically asked. In response to what knowledge, skills and attitudes are important for quality education, she answered, and “I feel that to learn the mother tongue well is important, Han language and also learning English well.” (Case 2, Grade 8 Parent Interview Transcript).

Han parents similarly supported including Yughur language in the school curriculum. Interestingly, they supported Yughur study for their own, and not only for Yughur, children. One Grade 8 Han parent agreed that other nationalities in the district learning Yughur would reduce local communication barriers (Case 2, Grade 7 and 8 Interview Transcripts).

Yughur parents provided a variety of reasons that their children should learn Yughur. Grade 5 Parent 1 cited his own case and the consequences for the next generation “Although I am Yughur, I do not understand the Yughur language, so in this case my children and my children’s children will have forgotten it completely”. Grade 5 Parent 2 combined the study of Yughur history, saying that “Learning these things in school is good. Studying a little of stories about our history and language are all good; otherwise they will all perish; because I feel that we cannot let the Yughur language be lost, and so these things should be <supported by the school> (Case 2, Grade 5 Interview Transcript). The Grade 8 family member elaborated further on why Yughur language should be studied in school:

Our own language must be learned, not only at home, but outside. So I think this is important, because China is a multinational country, and each nationality has its own independent character, so to master one’s own language, I feel, is extremely important. < So the school curriculum should include> the Yughur language.
Other nationalities could study it too; that would reduce communication barriers; some students have spoken their mother tongue since they were small, and so they cannot speak Han language so well. (Case 2, Grade 8 Interview Transcript)

Parents did not raise many challenges to the inclusion of minority language in the curriculum. In fact, only one Yughur parent pointed out the difficulties of doing so:

In my opinion, to open language courses would have certain difficulties, because the Yughur nationality is divided into East Yughur and West Yughur. Moreover, the language of these two groups is not the same, so when preparing curriculum they have to choose East or West Yughur, which will be difficult. Because after all, the school is not directed towards a single group, and so it is relatively hard. (Case 2, Grade 5 Parent Interview Transcript)

Unlike the Grade 8 parent, who sees the status of the Yughurs as one of the many nationalities of China granting it an equal status with other nationalities, this parent sees the proliferation of nationalities conferring a low status on Yughur:

For example, we Yughurs are one of the smallest of China’s 56 nationalities; who will pay attention to a nationality with such a small population? So, it’s difficult. (Case 2, Grade 5 Parent Interview Transcript)

Challenges to Their Children’s Education

Two Grade 5 Yughur parents pointed out that the main difficulty for their children’s education was that they had too few outside reading materials, since because of their difficult financial condition, they could not afford to buy as many extracurricular books as they felt was necessary, requiring their children to borrow such books from other children. The parents pointed out also that the elementary school did not have a lending library to provide extracurricular reading materials. Two Grade 8 family members pointed out that the main
difficulty for children’s study was English, with one of them ascribing this problem to poor instruction. The two Grade 7 Han parents were unclear about what study problems their children had, explaining that since they were illiterate, they could not understand the lessons, and were too busy with work to discuss study problems with their children (Case 2, Grades 5, 7 & 8 Parent Group Interview Transcripts).

Parents’ Aspirations for Their Children’s Ultimate Educational Attainment

Despite many minority parents’ stated desire that their children learn their culture and language, this does not seem to reflect a continued attachment to the traditional semi-nomadic way of local Yughur and Tibetan life as herders. Rather, minority and majority parents alike express the hope that their children continue as high as possible within the formal education system, “to university if they can”. When asked why many students do not continue their education beyond compulsory education, or do not continue to higher education after senior secondary education, parents provided two common responses, “they couldn’t pass the entrance exams” and “they got tired of study”.

Summary: The Parents

Yughur parents interviewed all supported the teaching of Yughur language in the school. Two spoke strongly and directly in favour of this; one concurred that if it were done, he would be interested in his child studying Yughur in school. While many parents stated the concern that the Yughur language might be lost if such a measure is not taken, one Yughur family member mentioned that reciprocity of language learning (i.e., non-Yughur children learning Yughur) would reduce interethnic communication barriers in the district. Han parents interviewed not only supported the learning of Yughur language in school by Yughur children, but by all
nationalities. Parents pointed out that lack of resources was a challenge for their children’s education. On the one hand, sufficient outside reading material is not provided by the school; on the other hand, individual families have difficulty in purchasing books for their children. At the same time, some parents point out that they speak little with their children about their studies, because of the shortage of time and also due to the difficulty for them to do so, since many of them have received less schooling than their children, and with low levels of Mandarin literacy. Nevertheless, despite all parents’ limited education and the desire of minority parents to transmit traditional language and culture to their children, many parents aspire for their children to continue their education to as high a level as possible, even to university.

**Embedded Case 4:**

**The Students**

Four students from a Grade 5 *Yuwen* class, four from the Grade 7 Local Geography class, and three from the Grade 8 Local History class were interviewed. The detailed distribution by gender and ethnicity and grade is presented in Table 45.

The Grade 5 student group included three East Yughur students and one Han student; the Grade 7 group included 1 Hui student, 1 Tibetan student, 2 Han students and no Yughur students; the Grade 8 group included 1 Yughur student and 2 Han students.

Among the Yughur students, one cannot understand Yughur, one has very basic proficiency, for example, counting, and two say they know Yughur. One of the students who know Yughur points out that his Yughur proficiency has been declining in recent years:

Int.: From whom did you learn Yughur?

S2: Dad. Sometimes he uses Yughur to speak to me and I use Han language to answer.

Int.: Does he use Yughur more than Han language?
S2: Less.
Int.: When did he speak Yughur to you?
S2: When I was in Grade 4.
Int.: When did you start to speak less in Yughur?
S2: When I was in Grade 6.
Int.: What do you think about it?
S2: Because at the same time, father and mother and I basically use Han language, not Yughur language.
Int.: Is minority language often used in the dormitory?
S2: Very little; only when there are two people of the same nationality do they use it.

(Case 2, Grade 8 Student Interview Transcript)

The single Tibetan student similarly reported that from Grades 1-5 she could understand some Tibetan, but only spoke to her grandparents in Mandarin. The Tibetan student also reports a limited ability to understand Yughur language that was in learned in the dormitory from a classmate (Case 2, Grade 7 Student Interview Notes).

Three Yughur students have heard traditional Yughur oral literature and would like to learn it in school. The other two minority students (1 Tibetan, 1 Hui) have not heard any Yughur oral literature but say they would like to learn it in school. Of the five Han students, three have heard some traditional Yughur stories or songs, and four express interest in learning some Yughur traditional literature in school. One Grade 5 Yughur student said that she did not know whether he would enjoy learning Yughur stories or songs, since she had not heard any and did not know whether she liked them or not.

Students’ responses to the possibility of learning Yughur stories and songs in Yughur were similarly positive. All Yughur students expressed interest in learning traditional oral literature in Yughur. The Tibetan and Hui students also said that they would be interested in
learning traditional Yughur songs and stories in that language. Four out of five Han students interviewed expressed interest in learning traditional Yughur literature in Yughur. Yughur and non-Yughur students alike made reference to the beauty of Yughur songs as a reason to be interested in learning them; several Yughur students also explained that they were interested in learning Yughur culture because of their nationality.

Only one Han student expressed a disinterest in learning Yughur oral literature in school based on cultural difference, explaining, “I haven’t heard any. … Because I am Han, and cannot understand songs in Yughur language, I am not interested in studying them” (Case 2 Grade 5 Student Interview Transcript). In contrast to such lack of interest, one Han student was quite open to Yughur culture and language, saying that she enjoys hearing:

songs from the grasslands. I know one song, “Homeland”; it’s sung in Han language. I’ve also heard some songs in Yughur on television programmes, for example, on every National Day they broadcast them. I like listening to Yughur songs. I don’t know Yughur, I’ve heard others speak it, and I’ve learned a bit from one of my classmates. I’ve heard more East Yughur than West Yughur.

(Case 2, Grade 8 Student Interview Transcript)

Core subjects were rarely reported as students’ favourites. English, with four mentions, was the most frequent response, with art, computer, and history also mentioned. One student’s favourite class was Mathematics, while Yuwen was chosen by only two students, both Han females. English, in contrast, was most frequently mentioned as favourite with four mentions.

In contrast, several students mentioned core classes as difficult. Three students mentioned mathematics as difficult to study, and three mentioned Yuwen. One elementary school Yughur student mentioned that the greatest difficulty was to understand the Three Character Classic, a
Foreign language was most frequently cited as challenging for students, with 5 students mentioning English class was difficult. A Grade 7 student explained:

Sometimes studying English is hard. In class, sometimes I can’t understand. I am not interested, because I have not established a good English foundation. In elementary school, I liked English class. Junior Secondary English class is harder. (Case 2, Grade 7 Group Interview Transcript)

One Grade 5 student summed up her feelings this way, “Sometimes when I don’t know how to do my homework, I feel sick of studying” (S2, Grade 5 Group Interview Transcript).

Three students reported that their parents would help them directly with homework, explaining difficult questions or reviewing homework with them. However, five students reported that their parents did not understand the homework well enough to help them, although one of them was able to turn to an older sister for help.

**Summary: The Students**

Students presented generally positive perspectives not only towards studying local minority cultural content such as Yughur songs and stories in school, but also towards learning such content in a Yughur language. All minority students expressed interest towards learning Yughur culture and language, while most non-Yughur students, minority and majority nationalities alike, expressed an interest in such lessons.

---

26 The Three Character Classic, a classical Chinese primer, taught introductory literacy using rhythmic two or three character phrases, believed to be easy for children to memorize. Still used after 1949, but banned during the Cultural Revolution as politically inappropriate, the San Zi Jing has been revived as a *Yuwen* textbook. For more, see “Three Character Classic to enter all primary & secondary schools”. (2008, April 25). People’s Daily. Retrieved 2008/10/15 from http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90882/6399244.html
Yughur, other minority and Han students interested in learning Yughur songs, stories and school mentioned that Yughur traditional literature is enjoyable for its beauty. Even among Yughur students, few mentioned that they would study Yughur language and oral culture out of duty. The idea that Yughur language and culture is only suitable for Yughur students to learn in school was expressed by only one student. Interestingly, one Han student is so interested in Yughur songs that she has begun to learn some Yughur from a classmate.

Thus, the prospect of learning Yughur language and culture through traditional oral literature is attractive to the vast majority of students interviewed irrespective of nationality or whether they already know the Yughur language. Students seem to view this possibility as relief from the burden of study involved with core courses. As for the attitude that a minority nationality language should only be studied by members of the same nationality, it is virtually unexpressed among students interviewed in this site.

**Case 2 Findings**

Case Two presents the question of the relation between culture and language in a rural district where Yughurs are a minority, and can be seen as a theoretical replication of Case 1, where Yughur knowledge, culture and language are virtually non-evident in school, and where the model of education enacted is virtually undifferentiated from an urban school in a Han area elsewhere in China. Case 2, like Case 1, is in a Han-majority and Yughur minority district. Unlike Case 1, it is in a rural context. It was expected that based on demographic similarity to Case 1, differences between the schools would be minimal. In terms of language of education, Case 2 school practice replicates that of Case 1. The school curriculum, interviews with the zhuren, teachers, and classroom observations, also reveal an overall minority “Language as Problem” orientation, with no observations of use of Yughur or other minority language in
classrooms. However, the curriculum differs radically from Case 1, where minimal implementation of school-based curriculum has taken place, much of it focusing on music and art and having little content related to Yughur culture or other Sunan County content.

The administration of the school represented by the school-based curriculum committee argues that in a rural, pastoral, minority district of northwest China, the national curriculum alone is not satisfactory, presenting great challenges to students to learn and requiring supplementation with local content related to Sunan County and its nationalities, in particular the Yughurs. The committee argues that Yughur culture is an essential part of school curriculum and has accordingly prepared a local curriculum textbook series. While the committee valorizes minority culture taught via Mandarin, they report no efforts at inclusion of minority language in school curriculum, seeming to imply a separation between culture and language, whereby a culture can be learned via any language. Including Yughur culture without including Yughur language differs from the opinions of others interviewed. All three teachers thought minority language instruction could be considered, with one stating categorically that it should be offered, and another adding that it should only be offered for Yughurs. Similarly, parents all supported learning Yughur in school, even for non-Yughur children. One Han parent explained that mutual learning of each other’s languages would improve communication in the district. Students, moreover, whether Yughur or Han, shared parents’ perspectives towards learning Yughur in school, reacting positively, not for instrumental reasons, but for intrinsic reasons related to the perceived beauty of the Yughur language(s) and oral culture. Thus, teachers, parents and students concur in their support for the inclusion of Yughur language and culture in school curriculum, not as a means to better learn the national curriculum and the national language Mandarin, but
since they are worth learning in their own right in addition to national curriculum knowledge and the national language.

As in the previous chapter, a summary categorizing the responses expressed by stakeholders interviewed in the district towards studying minority language, particularly Yughur, in school is provided in Table 46. As is clear from the table, the range of perspectives expressed within Case 2 on the inclusion of minority languages in the school curriculum is relatively limited with positive and mixed positive views expressed far more frequently than neutral or negative views. The data do not support any conclusion as to the source of these positive perspectives, but it can be speculated that they are related to the fact that rural Han, Tibetans and Yughurs live close together and that the demographic balance in this district is stable; that is, there is no large influx of non-Yughur residents from outside Sunan County. While the responses of students and parents are almost categorically positive, and those of teachers mixed positive to positive, it is harder to categorize the responses of the zhuren and the curriculum committee, since only of their number responded on this topic. The silence of the majority of the curriculum committee on the question of the place of Yughur language in the school curriculum can be taken as not indicating a positive response; however, since one member gave positive and negative responses, and others said nothing positive, the response of administration has been categorized as mixed-negative. The single non-Yughur student who stated having no interest in learning Yughur did in fact justify this in two ways: by the fact that he did not know any Yughur, and could not understand lessons; and by nationality, taking it for granted that Yughur is only for Yughurs. Thus, there is a stark difference in the responses of the administrative group responsible for school curriculum and the remainder of stakeholders interviewed. For teachers, parents and students interviewed Yughur language and culture are not separated: both should be
included in the school curriculum; for the administration, culture and language are separable: minority culture should be taught in Mandarin, not through minority language, as a means not of transmitting culture, but of instilling pride in students and aiding their development of Mandarin proficiency and learning of the national curriculum. Case 2 then differs from Case 1 in curriculum content, reflecting local knowledge and culture attempting to present itself as a school where knowledge and culture derived from Sunan County and the Yughur ethnicity distinguish this school from other schools in Sunan County. At the same the evident language-in-education policy at this school is Chinese language submersion, which the administration did not address during our interview. As in Case 1, parents and students were quite receptive to Yughur language being taught in school curriculum. Teachers interviewed were more receptive to Yughur language curriculum than was the vice principal and the curriculum committee. Clearly, the Case 2 educational model is multicultural in content, monolingual in form, similar to most multicultural education in North America among the African-American, in which, just as among China’s Hui-minority, a minority culture uses the dominant language as its own (J. Wang, 2002; Teng & Wang, 2001a). This model treats language as a neutral communication tool, separate from culture, while simultaneously revealing a minority “Language as Problem” orientation.
Chapter Eight:
Case 2:
A Yughur Majority District School

Introduction

This chapter presents the third case of the study, the combined elementary-junior secondary boarding school of a Yughur majority district. This case is intended as a theoretical replication in a rural district for the base findings of Cases 1 and 2, since its demographic composition strongly differs from the other cases. Case 2 district has one Yughur-majority township, whereas Case 3 is the only district in Sunan County with an overall Yughur majority. Thus, it was expected that Case 3 findings would differ markedly from other cases.

The District

The Case 3 district differs from all the other cases studied in its physical environment. Located at the foot of the Qilian Mountains, it is surrounded by semi-desert in the steppe zone of the Hexi Corridor (see Figure 46). The traditional occupation of the population of the Case 3 district was herding of sheep and other animals, which is still a major income source. In recent years, more and more crops are raised, particularly corn (maize), watered by underground water sources (see Figure 47). According to Sunan residents, farmers are generally Han by ethnicity, and herders are generally Yughur.

The district’s population was 3,168 in 2006. The breakdown by ethnicity in 2006 is displayed in Table 47. As is evident from the table, Yughurs constitute an absolute majority of the district population. The Han population thus constitutes a minority in this district. However, as indicated in Figure 48, the Yughur majority has shrunk significantly in recent years, from 87%
in 1994 to 61%, with a moderate increase in the Tibetan population of the district, and with the proportion of Han population increasing almost 2.5 times from 1993 to 2006.

As is evident from Figure 49, the Yughur population was an overwhelming majority of the population in 1993, with over 90% of the population in two townships and 65% of the population in the remaining township. However, it is also evident from Table 47, and from Figure 48, which displays the percentage of the population for each ethnicity in 1994, 2004 and 2006, that this Yughur predominance, while still evident, is on a downward trend. The proportion of Yughur population for the entire district in 2006 is lower than that of the township with the lowest proportion of Yughurs in 1994. According to the available statistics for 2004 and 2006 displayed in Figure 48, this downward trend has been fairly rapid, with the proportion of Yughur in the Case 3 district dropping 9.4% in only 2 years from 70.5% to 61.1%.

As is evident from Table 48, this drop in Yughur population is a combination of a small reduction in overall Yughur population and a modest increase in Tibetan population together with a large increase in Han population in a very short period. It is not clear from the available statistics how much of these changes is due to out-migration of Yughur and in-migration of other ethnicities, and how much to changes in rates of natural increase. Nonetheless, the magnitude of the change in a brief interval of 2 years suggests a greater role of migration than changes in birth and death rates.

Thus, the Yughur, the titular “minority” ethnicity of Sunan County, are not a “minority” in the Case 3 district, but form a local majority. It cannot then be presumed that the district as a whole is a Mandarin-dominant site; indeed it is reasonable to presume that the usage of Yughur is more frequent in this site than in any other district of Sunan County. In fact, during field work in the Case 3 district administrative centre, the Sarigh (West) Yughur language was observed to
be spoken in streets and in shops, and was observed occasionally on school grounds among students outside the classroom. However, it is also clear that Yughur demographic predominance is weakening in Case 3 district, which may have consequences for the situation of the Sarigh Yughur language in the district, and possibly create anxieties among the local Yughur population about the state of their language and culture within the district. It is also clear that population by ethnicity varies greatly among townships; thus consolidation of village and township schools into a single district school has the effect of reducing Yughur-dominance within schools while also increasing children’s exposure to spoken Chinese) (see Figure 49).

**The School**

The school studied in the Case 3 district school is a unified elementary-junior Grade 1-9 boarding school, and the only school in the district offering junior secondary education (see Figure 50). The first non-religious elementary school in this district was opened in 1939 at a Buddhist temple under the Republic of China. An elementary school, also located in a temple, was opened in the township where the district school is located in 1942, (Sunan, 1994). During the 1960s and 1970s, there was no school in the current location of the Case 3 district school.

There were in that period three state schools, one in each of the three townships, with the district 9-year school at that time in another township. In the 1960s and 70s, in addition to these state schools, many “people-run” minban schools that provided lower elementary education (Grades 1-2, or 1-3) were opened at the village level: 6 from 1965-66, and another 5 from 1971-77, thus expanding access to education for children in rural areas. Some of these schools were so-called 巡回轮流 xunhui lunliu, or “itinerant”, schools. As can be seen in Figure 51, school enrolment expanded rapidly during the 1960s and 1970s in Case 3 district, only to shrink rapidly from the late 1970s and during the 1980s. School enrolments in Case 3 district began to recover slowly in
the early 1990s expanding rapidly from 1997 to 1999, after the Sunan County decision to implement the new law on compulsory 9-year education, and the abolition of tuition fees for junior secondary school, but have not yet recovered to the peak enrolment of 1978. A large proportion of the rapid expansion of school enrolment was due to the creation of local level minban schools, including mobile schools, as is illustrated in Table 48, which displays total enrolments, state school enrolments and minban enrolment statistics for 1961-1994.

In addition to the opening of minban lower primary village schools as a means to make access to school more convenient to rural children, “student houses” were opened at the location of state schools in order to make attendance more convenient for children who lived too far from these schools to walk from home to school and back each day. In “student houses” young students could live together, taken care of by older students, and or, a parent or grandparent, who in some cases, also lived at the student house, or in other cases, delivered meals to the children from their home village. As of 1994, 40 such rooms were in operation in Case 3 district, housing approximately 70% of the district’s students (Minghua, 2006, pp. 90-91).

In 1994, the research site school was opened as a new elementary school, taking over many of the students that formerly attended the local township elementary school. In 2002 the former district 9-year school closed its junior secondary section, which was then transferred to the research site school, which now functions as the district level 9-year combined elementary-junior secondary school. In 2004, the district school had 18 students in the preschool class, 203 elementary school students and 145 junior secondary school students, for a total of 366 students and a staff of 29. In 2004, there were 44 students in Grade 5, but only 23 in Grade 6, suggesting a near 50% drop-out rate; at the same time, there were 73 and 72 students in Grade 7 and 8 respectively, suggesting that approximately 2/3 of junior secondary students are not graduates of
the school’s elementary program, but come from other schools in the district, and are likely boarders, whether at the school or in a “student house” (Minghua, 2006, p. 94-96). In 2007, when data were gathered at the school, it had a staff of 40 and 446 students, 78% of whom belong to a minority ethnicity (Case 3, Principal Interview Transcript).

The school consists of an older one-storey building, a newer two-storey building, a student dormitory and a dining hall. The school’s physical appearance is modern with occasional coloured posters quoting moral slogans exhorting students to live up to behavioural standards that exhibit high *quality*, such as respecting each other and speaking in standard Chinese, as well as large Chinese characters illustrating the themes of all-round development; that is: *zhì*, knowledge; *měi*, beauty; *tǐ*, body; *dé*, morality; *láo*, labour. There are no images posted in the corridors peculiar to Sunan County or Yughur culture. It is noteworthy that each poster exhorting students to exhibit *quality* is accompanied by an English translation, thus suggesting that foreign language is in some way indicative of *quality* (see Figures 52-55).

**Embedded Case 1: The Principal**

The principal is in his early 40s and a member of the Yughur nationality. He was born in a village in Case 3 district, in the township with a large Han nationality minority. In fact, he is of mixed Yughur-Han background: his father is Yughur, whose father was Yughur and whose mother was a Han woman from Henan province in the central plains of eastern China, while his own mother is a Han from Jiuquan, a neighbouring prefecture. The principal cannot speak Yughur, although his father’s father can speak Yughur. His junior secondary education was in the Case 3 District School, which at that time was located in a different township than it is today. After graduation, he tested into the Zhangye City Normal Secondary school and in 1986 began
work as a teacher in the Case 2 District Junior Secondary School, where he taught Grade 7 and 8, physical education for 1 year and mathematics for 2 years, before transferring to his home district. In 1989, he began to teach in the elementary school of the township of Case 3 where the current district school is located.

As an elementary school teacher, he taught Language, Mathematics and Physical Education to Grades 1-3. In 1992, he transferred to a district village school as principal, where he stayed for 1 year and 3 months and then was transferred back to the township centre’s elementary school in 1993, where he also worked as jiaodao zhuren, the head of the school’s teaching office, responsible for supervising the implementation of curriculum and assessment of teachers. He worked as jiaodao zhuren for 3 years until August of 1996, when he became the principal. While working as a teacher and principal he studied in the Chinese Language distance education program of Northwest Normal University from 1989-1995. From 1999 until 2002, he worked as principal of the district school of Dahe, a district with almost 50% of the population West or East Yughur population. In 2002, the principal was transferred to the newly formed Case 3 9-year district school in his home township (Case 3, Principal Interview Transcript).

The principal defines education for quality as “all-round development” of people, which he explains as meaning:

Taking as a starting point the raising of students’ overall quality (suzhi), for the sake of their future development and in order to lay a foundation for them to become useful people. (Case 3, Principal Interview Transcript)

The principal pointed out, moreover, that one of the successes of his school has been its quality of instruction, which he attributes to the emphasis on constructing an effective teaching team, and their participation in interschool teaching and collaborative research. When asked what
challenges his school faces, the principal’s response was indirect. He pointed out that his school was located in the area of Sunan County with the highest concentration of Yughur population, and the area where Yughur culture was most typical, leading to his district being known as the Yughur Song and Dance District (Case 3, Principal Interview Transcript).

**What Aspects of Local Knowledge, Culture and Language are Most Important for Students to Learn in School as Part of Local and School Curriculum?**

The principal speaks at length when asked for his understanding of local curriculum and school-based curriculum:

> Concerning these two, we are just at the first stage, we are now emphasizing research and development. In our district in particular, along with the development of society, our Yughur traditional culture, the language, our customs and so on, is gradually disappearing. To deal with this situation, our objective in developing school-based curriculum is to pass on Yughur traditional culture. (Case 3, Principal Interview Transcript)

When asked the importance for students of including local knowledge, culture and language in the school curriculum, the principal responded that for minority students it was important that their traditions be transmitted and that they “do not forget their ancestors”. Nevertheless, he explained that the school is still mainly using the national curriculum and that the school’s curriculum does not sufficiently embody the special characteristics of the district, although some teachers do supplement their teaching with local content.

The principal states that his school’s response to the curriculum’s inadequate reflection of local reality will be to offer optional courses for the study of Yughur language, somewhat analogous to bilingual education, a project that is in initial stages of development. The principal believes that the integration of national with school curriculum will “enrich students’ knowledge
and broaden their vision”, while the provision of Yughur language instruction will “strengthen students’ national consciousness”. When asked about teaching staff for this project he explained in detail:

First of all, we require four or five teachers who are fluent in Yughur. Our school-based curriculum will focus on Yughur language as the main content and include culture, customs, and traditional oral history. (Case 3, Principal Interview Transcript)

The principal plans to select suitable teachers from current staff, and to invite additional teachers if necessary from other school from other schools. The principal said that there was not a shortage of Yughur teachers, but that there were very few who could speak Yughur. If sufficient teachers cannot be identified, members of the Yughur community will be asked to voluntarily participate in the project, two or three times per week, and if conditions permit, even be paid.

The principal mentioned that the Sunan Education Bureau had taken a fairly strong initiative in supporting this curriculum project. A higher level education authority document had been issued saying that Yughur curriculum should be offered. Nevertheless, the funding for the initiative is quite complex; asked how much financial support could be expected from higher levels, the principal responded, “It’s very hard to say. If we are determined enough, then we’ll find a way” (Case 3, Principal Interview Transcript).

What is of Most Importance for Students to Receive “Education for Quality”?

When asked what was most important for his students to learn in order to receive education for quality, the principal did not mention students’ knowledge, skills or attitudes as
important; rather, he emphasized the importance of developing teachers’ knowledge and skills in achieving education for quality, explaining:

Raising teachers’ quality (suzhi) is most important. We need to enable teachers to understand the concept of education for quality (suzhi jiaoyu). We can do this through advanced study, concentrated professional training, and by observation and discussion at good schools. Teachers need to increase their skill in instruction and in instructional research. The main challenge we face now is to concentrate our attention, where we are relatively deficient, which is in classroom teaching skill and pedagogical research. (Case 3, Principal Interview Transcript)

The Principal’s Perspectives on Challenges and Hopes for Students

Despite the challenges faced by his school, the principal stated that he hopes that all the students at his school can continue to study after completion of 9 years of basic education at his school. He points out that his school’s rate of promotion to the senior secondary level, counting academic and vocational secondary streams together, was 92.6%, which he expected to reach 95% at the end of the 2007-2008 academic year. The principal attributes this relatively high promotion rate largely to the encouragement by the state of continued education and to the fact that parents had changed their thinking about education and now hope that their children study beyond the required junior secondary level.

Given this circumstance, the principal explains that more students from Sunan County do not continue to post-secondary education due to individual factors: one factor, he argued, was that some students had some difficulty in studying at a higher level; the second factor, in his opinion, was some families’ <limited economic> conditions.
Summary: The Principal

The principal’s understanding of the educational role of Yughur language is that it has an important place in his school. He has spoken of beginning plans to introduce something similar to bilingual Sarigh Yughur-Mandarin education with national curriculum taught in Mandarin and optional school curriculum courses offered in Yughur. While the principal mentions the maintenance of Yughur culture as one justification for offering such courses, it seems clear that for him, protecting the Yughur language is their central purpose.

Interestingly, although District 3 is a Yughur majority district with many rural residents, the principal did not argue for an instrumental need to teach Sarigh Yughur in the school curriculum as an aid to elementary school children’s comprehension and learning. Rather, he speaks of the learning of Sarigh Yughur as an intrinsic good from the point of view of both individual children, who he argues will develop a stronger self-identity of themselves as Yughurs, and from the point of view of the Yughur community, whose heritage will not be lost, if the school succeeds in supporting the passing on of their language and culture to the next generation of Yughurs.

It is of note that the principal at no time refers to rural Yughur children’s language and culture as a problem for their learning of the national curriculum and the state language, Mandarin. Instead, the principal points out the responsibility for his teachers to improve their pedagogy. The principal seems to imply that student “difference” is not a problem; the problem is the school’s ability to deal with the realities of the district and its local children, which includes that most of them arrive at school able to speak Sarigh Yughur, but fewer of them do so than in the past.
Interestingly, the principal’s statement that one should take the raising of children’s quality as the starting point, in combination with his views on improving pedagogy and providing Yughur language instruction, suggests that he views Sarigh Yughur language proficiency and knowledge of Yughur culture as essential qualities (i.e., suzhi) that ought to be developed within his conception of education for quality. Thus, it seems he treats the Sarigh Yughur language neither as a problem, nor as a resource, but as a right.

Further, according to the views expressed by the principal, Yughur culture should not be learned in school divorced from the Yughur language. This suggests a treatment of language as not only an instrument for communication, replaceable by another language, but also a view of language as an essential component of culture. It is interesting, moreover, that the principal takes a pragmatic approach to staffing of Yughur language classes: he will seek ‘qualified’ teachers proficient in Sarigh Yughur, but if not enough are available, he would consider involving un-certified teachers, even community members, who are ‘linguistically’ qualified, following an approach similar to minban schools of the 1960s-70s.

It is noteworthy also that the principal treats local Yughur curriculum and national curriculum in a parallel fashion: teaching Yughur language is important for the achievement of local goals, but he does not relate local curriculum to better implementation of national curriculum, nor does he include among necessary qualification for teachers in his school to be able to implement education for quality knowledge of local conditions, Yughur language and culture.

The principal views the main aim of the basic education provided in his school as continuation to the senior secondary level, which in a sense is a continuation of the standards of examination-based education. Interestingly, rather than focussing narrowly on the success in
promotion of his students to the academic stream of senior secondary education, he points out the near universal success of his school’s students in promotion to the senior secondary level, whether in the academic or vocational stream.

**Embedded Case 2:**

**The Teachers**

Two *Yuwen* classes were observed and their teachers interviewed at this school, a Grade 2 and Grade 7 class. The Grade 2 teacher is a male Yughur, and the Grade 5 teacher a female Tibetan. Both grew up in Sunan County and studied in Sunan schools, the Grade 2 teacher in the Case 3 district, and the Grade 5 teacher in another district with a predominantly Tibetan population. The Grade 2 teacher attended junior and senior secondary school in the county town, while the Grade 7 teacher attended her district’s junior secondary school and the continued to senior secondary school in the county town. Both teachers received their pedagogical training at the Hezuo Pedagogical Institute in Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Region of Gansu. The Grade 2 teacher is able to speak Sarigh Yughur fluently, while the Grade 7 teacher does not speak Tibetan.

**Educational Experience**

**The Grade 2 Yuwen teacher.**

The Grade 2 teacher, a Sarigh Yughur, is in his early twenties and grew up about 20 kilometres from the school where he now works, and attended the township centre’s elementary school. As an elementary school student, he felt relaxed, pointing out that, unlike today, there were at that time no assignments to be done at home. His favourite subject in elementary school was mathematics, which he felt was simple and relatively easy to learn. However, in junior secondary school, mathematics became his weakest subject, which he explains as due to the
much greater difficulty of the curriculum and the teacher’s inability to explain the subject clearly. The Grade 2 teacher’s entire family spoke Sarigh Yughur in the home, and at that time all his classmates were Yughur and spoke this language amongst themselves. Thus, when he began school, his Mandarin proficiency was limited, and so he had some difficulties in understanding lessons, particularly Chinese Language, in which his marks were not good. Nevertheless, his marks were above average in the class. The Grade 2 teacher said he understood about half of what was said by the teacher in Mandarin in Grade 1, and that his ability to write pinyin was particularly weak. He explained that when he didn’t understand something, he rarely asked the teacher for help, since, if he did, the teacher would keep him after class for extra study, which made him cry. Instead, he would ask another student in Sarigh Yughur what the teacher had said.

According to the Grade 2 teacher, there had been some Yughur teachers at the school, whose Mandarin was not very good and spoke with a noticeable Yughur accent. Nevertheless, the teachers who knew Yughur did not use this language to explain points that students found difficult to understand in Mandarin. In fact, he said, the teachers had a quite strict attitude towards students’ speaking Yughur in class, and would criticize or punish students for doing so, which he felt was unfair and wronging the students. He said that he had a good relationship with those teachers who were kind, mainly female teachers. The teacher explained that it took him until Grade 4 or 5 to be able to fully understand Mandarin.

After elementary school, he attended the county town junior secondary and senior secondary schools as a boarder. The Grade 2 teacher began to lose interest in mathematics and science and became more interested in humanities subjects at this time. He felt that mathematics content was much more difficult than before, but it was mainly the teaching that led to his lower
interest. During this period, his favourite activity was to practise writing Chinese characters. He enjoyed reading, but preferred extra-curricular reading to the textbooks, and particularly liked to read traditional adventure novels. He accustomed himself quickly to life in the school dormitory, where, due to the small number of Yughur students, he communicated with most students in Mandarin, and with the few Yughur classmates, half in Sarigh Yughur, and half in Mandarin.

After junior secondary school, the teacher continued to the senior secondary school in the county town, where he enjoyed his study much more than he had in junior secondary school, partly because the teachers had a more relaxed approach with a freer atmosphere that relied less on punishment to teach, with no punishments for speaking Yughur. At this time, mathematics was still his weakest subject, while his favourites were now geography and history.

After senior secondary school, he attended the 3-year pedagogical college in Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Region of Gansu province. He attended this post-secondary institution since his scores on the College Entrance Examinations were not high enough for admission to “a very good university”. In teacher’s college, his best subjects were Chinese, Geography and History, while his English marks were average, and Mathematics was still his weakest subject. 2 years ago he was tested by Sunan County Education Bureau and assigned to teach in the Case 3 key school (Case 3, Grade 2 Teacher Interview Transcript).

The Grade 7 Yuwen teacher.

The Grade 7 teacher, a female Tibetan, graduated from college in 2000, when she was assigned to teach at this school. She is a native of the northernmost district of Sunan, which has a majority Tibetan population. Nevertheless, her village had a mixed Han-Tibetan population and neither she nor her parents could speak Tibetan. She attended the local elementary school, where she most enjoyed physical education and music classes. Her greatest difficulty during elementary
school was the conflict between her schooling and her family duties. Since the school was not far from her home, whenever her parents needed assistance, she had to miss school to help them with housekeeping, cooking, sweeping the floor and so on. As a result, she had to repeat 1 year of school. However, she said she had little trouble catching up, since she never stopped studying and spent all her free time in self-study. Although her school was in a Tibetan district, the language of instruction in school was Mandarin. In fact, in her village, besides some old people who could speak Tibetan, most village Tibetans, including her and her family, spoke only Mandarin. In the neighbouring village, many could speak Tibetan, she says, due to its more remote location, and lack of communication and contact with Han Chinese.

After elementary school, the Grade 7 teacher continued to study in the district junior secondary school as a boarder, and was only able to return home once per term. In this period, her favourite course was Yuwen, which she especially enjoyed because she loved reading, especially fairy tales. In class, she liked to analyze texts, which she says taught her how to appreciate the most spectacular parts of a text. She enjoyed writing compositions about what was going on around her, and also kept a diary where she wrote her experiences and her opinions.

When she had completed junior secondary school, she was able to continue to the senior secondary school in the country town where she also boarded. During this period, her favourite activity was free reading of Classical Chinese. She said her teacher taught them classical texts character by character, and sentence by sentence, after which students would recite the text, and through this process understand what they read.

The Grade 7 teacher described dormitory conditions as relatively poor, yet remembers the experience fondly, pointing out that everyone could share very many experiences. Interestingly,
one of the positive experiences of dormitory life in her was the opportunity to meet bilingual Tibetan classmates who could teach her the Tibetan language.

After senior secondary school, when studying at the Pedagogical Institute, her favourite activity was to read literature, magazines and newspapers in the library. Her favourite course there, continuing her interest in Classical Chinese, was Ancient Literature. After graduation, she was assigned to work at the Case 3 School, where she has taught Yuwen for several years.

**What Aspects of Local Knowledge, Culture and Language are Most Important for Students to Learn in School as Part of Local and School Curriculum?**

Opinions of the Case 3 teachers on the inclusion of local knowledge, culture and language in the school curriculum are displayed in Table 49, and then discussed in detail.

*The Grade 2 Yuwen teacher.*

When asked how important it was for students to learn local knowledge, culture and language as part of local and school curriculum, the Grade 2 teacher linked this question to education for quality:

> At the very least, through quality education, we can transmit the distinctive features of the locality, including customs of the Yughur nationality; if quality education had not been advocated, this kind of content would appear in Mandarin and would introduce national knowledge, not local knowledge. (Case 3, Grade 2 Teacher Interview Transcript)

The teacher said that currently the curriculum included something about local history and local nature, delivered in Mandarin, but that:

> In my opinion, the local language should enter into the local curriculum, as well as customs and famous sites. (Case 3, Grade 2 Teacher Interview Transcript)
At the same time, he felt that Yughur language study would be interesting to some students of other nationalities, but would also not be very enjoyable to some of them. The teacher felt that including more local content in the curriculum would at the least benefit students by allowing them to understand the basic customs and culture of their own home district. The teacher also considered that the inclusion of Yughur language lessons in the curriculum would play a role in preventing the disappearance of the Sarigh Yughur language and reviving the language among the younger generation.

The Grade 2 teacher was observed to speak Sarigh Yughur to his class on occasion during his lesson. When asked why he did this, he explained that although all his Yughur students can understand Mandarin:

I <use Yughur> when I am teaching class so that any students that use Yughur will have a reaction. It can stimulate their interest; they are usually quite pleased. When I speak Yughur the content is from the textbook, but my main goal is to stimulate their interest. At the very beginning of the lesson, speaking Yughur is to make the students have greater interest. (Case 3, Grade 2 Teacher Interview Transcript)

The teacher said that students of other nationalities also enjoyed hearing Yughur in class, because, he felt, it was a novel experience for them.

When the Grade 2 teacher was asked whether he had taught Grade 1 students using this approach, since they might perhaps benefit from this even more than Grade 2 students would, he responded that he had never taught Grade 1, but that if there were to be a Yughur language class, it would be most useful for Grade 1 students, not only to support their understanding, but also to make lessons more interesting. He explained further:
The Grade 1 situation is that they don’t understand very well; their teacher also doesn’t understand, because the teacher is Han nationality. (Case 3, Grade 2 Teacher Interview Transcript)

The Grade 7 Yuwen teacher.

The Grade 7 teacher, when asked for her understanding of local and school-based curriculum, stated that:

We have not yet opened up school-based curriculum here. I myself consider that school-based curriculum integrates the actual situation of the locality, and opens up curriculum that is suitable for the development of this school’s students. Our school is in an area of compact settlement of a minority nationality, and so opening up school-based curriculum is part of a general trend, for example, which should energetically promote the learning of the Yughur language. (Case 3, Grade 7 Teacher Interview Notes)

When asked specifically what aspects of local knowledge, culture and language should be learned in school, she responded that it was important to maintain local customs through their inclusion in school curriculum. She went on to argue that including students’ favourite knowledge in the curriculum, whether local or non-local, can help students’ develop, but that this should be done according to what is suitable for students. For example, she explained that sometimes Yughur language can be a barrier to Yughur students’ learning of Mandarin, and so these students would need more communication with other students to develop their comprehension ability in Mandarin. In the Grade 7 teacher’s opinion, adding Yughur lessons to the curriculum would have no special influence on the students: studying Yughur would in her view be “just like studying English” (Case 3, Grade 7 Teacher Interview Notes).
Thus, in her opinion, there is no need to include any particular aspects of local knowledge, culture and language in the curriculum, largely, she says, because it would take too much time. When informed that there is not yet an established script for Sarigh Yughur, the teacher remarked that there should not be language classes that relied on oral instruction only. The Grade 7 teacher was asked whether minority students had the same level of confidence in their students as other students and she responded that at first it was difficult for them, but that after a while they can get used to the situation (Case 3, Grade 7 Teacher Interview Notes).

**What is of Most Importance for Students to Learn as Part of “Education for Quality”?**

**The Grade 2 teacher.**

The Grade 2 teacher singles out Art and Music as the most important aspect of education for quality. Although at his school these courses are optional curriculum, he supports this choice by explaining that these subjects are extremely interesting to students. He further connects esthetic education to individual motivation, saying:

This is related to an individual’s interests. For example, I enjoy Latin and International Dancing very much; from the way the dance instructor’s body moves, we can see very high quality. I feel that this is the kind of thing that we should encourage and children should learn. (Case 3, Grade 7 Teacher Interview Notes)

In the Grade 2 teacher’s opinion, the main challenge in implementing *education for quality* is the uneven level of students’ ability. However, he does not mean by this their background knowledge, language proficiency or literacy in Mandarin. In fact, he is referring to their range of skill in art and music. He says, moreover, teachers do relatively little to address this variability in performance in music and art classes.
It is noteworthy that the Grade 2 Yuwen teacher does not point out any major challenges for education for quality in teaching Yuwen as. When reminded that he had mentioned that he had said that some of his class did face some Mandarin language difficulties, he responded that he gave extra instruction to these students after class, focusing on vocabulary, and correcting the students’ pronunciation of written characters.

**The Grade 7 teacher.**

The Grade 7 teacher focuses on skills over knowledge and attitudes as most important for students to learn as part of education for quality, specifically mentioning study skills. She explains that using the proper study method, a student can quickly grasp the content of a text using a relaxed method, giving an example of how she teaches her students to approach the study of difficult texts:

For example, studying a Classical Chinese text, I first ask them to read the text, and then I ask them to compare the text with modern Chinese so that they can easily understand the meaning. Then, according to the lesson outline, I explain to them the main points of the text, so that they can understand it better. (Case 3, Grade 7 Teacher Interview Notes)

Interestingly, the Grade 7 teacher relates the strategy of directly teaching study methods to students’ individual interests, saying that, once a general method of study has been learned, “students can use this method to learn knowledge that they most would like to learn” (Case 3, Grade 7 Teacher Interview Notes).

As for students’ challenges in receiving education for quality, the teacher spoke on the one hand of the continued limitations of the school evaluation system. Despite several years promoting education for quality, including physical and esthetic education, the evaluation of
teachers still depends on student marks in core courses. In this situation, she feels that many students’ special skills will not flourish.

The Grade 7 teacher further points out that limitations of resources at the school and in her district of Sunan County are a problem. She hopes that every student will be able to achieve all round development, since “it is beneficial for the students when they enter society”. In her opinion, this requires her to encourage students to do extracurricular reading, in order to “let them accumulate and use <Chinese> language. Unfortunately, she says, there are too few of such books available in the school and district library, and internet is not available locally. As a result, when she is in the county town she tries to photocopy interesting books and print material from the internet which she can share with her students (Case 3, Grade 7 Teacher Interview Notes).

On the other hand, the Grade 7 teacher spoke of students’ limitations in ability as a challenge in achieving education for quality, saying that there were differences among her students in the amount of curriculum content they could absorb in a lesson and in the rate of their learning. Furthermore, she said there were limitations in students’ motivation: some students didn’t like to study and so “the teacher may have to compel them to study; there may be a conflict between teacher and student”. The teacher said that the pedagogical methods she had been taught were useful at first, but that in the face of these differences in capability and motivation, experience was most useful in helping her deal with the realities of teaching. She also instructs the students who cannot keep up outside class, providing them with extra exercises (see Tables 50-52 for a summative view of teacher perspectives).
Summary: The Teachers

The Case 3 school has not yet opened any school curriculum, but plans to do so, focussing on Sarigh Yughur language as the core of the school curriculum. The teachers interviewed support providing minority language curriculum, however, for somewhat different reasons. The Grade 2 teacher, bilingual in Sarigh Yughur and Mandarin, already uses limited Yughur in his classroom, with a double purpose to explain anything that some Yughur students did not fully understand and to create an atmosphere that stimulates the interest of students, Yughur and non-Yughur.

The Grade 2 teacher also supports the teaching of Yughur in school as something of intrinsic value, worth learning for its own sake. From the Grade 7 teacher’s point of view, student interest in what they learn is an important stimulus to learning, and so she supports Yughur curriculum if it is a student interest. The Grade 2 teacher expresses concern that some non-Yughur students might not wish to study Yughur, a concern which arises only if he conceives of Yughur courses as compulsory for all in the school to take. In contrast, the Grade 7 teacher is supportive of Yughur study if it is a special interest of a student, and thus implicitly supports Yughur study as an optional course, but not as a required course. Similarly, the Grade 2 teacher’s rationale for learning Yughur is consonant with the view that Yughur proficiency is an essential skill for a Yughur student in this district, and thus comparable to Mandarin study, which is compulsory.

What neither teacher explicitly discussed was the role of mother tongue proficiency as a component of national identity. For the Grade 2 teacher, the view that mother tongue proficiency is a necessary component of minority identity is not threatening to his self-identity, since he speaks Yughur proficiently, whereas for the Grade 7 teacher, such a view of Tibetan ethnic
identity would be threatening, since, through no fault of her own, and despite efforts as a student to learn on her own, she does not consider herself a Tibetan speaker.

Both teachers seem in agreement with the philosophy of “Education for Quality” by emphasizing student interests as important to develop in school for themselves, not simply as a means to motivate study, therefore implying perhaps that students’ interests are intrinsically worth developing. Indeed, the Grade 7 teacher argues that the major challenge in providing education for quality is the lingering effects of examination-oriented education.

In contrast, the Grade 2 teacher emphasizes the language difference between minority students and school instruction as a barrier to learning in early grades. From this perspective the introduction of Yughur instruction at the school may reduce or remove a barrier to education for quality. From the Grade 7 teacher’s perspective, the school has insufficient resources to provide enough stimulus for student development of interests through outside reading of library books (in Chinese). Notably, neither the Grade 2 nor Grade 7 teacher raise parental interest or educational level as a factor that influences the achievement of education for quality.

However, while the teachers agreed on the need to emphasize student interests for education for quality, they differ on the challenges to receiving education for quality. The Grade 7 teacher points out some students’ limited capacity to learn the curriculum, while the Grade 2 teacher points out that limited learning of the curriculum at least in the lower grades can be related to some teachers’ lack of knowledge of minority language which limits their ability to provide quality education for their students, when, for some Yughur students, Mandarin comprehension has not developed enough yet to understand lessons thoroughly. For the Grade 7 teacher, barriers to quality education related to teachers are connected to their persistent emphasis on marks, which is a trait of so-called examination-based education. This barrier is one
that may occur in any setting and has no particular connection to the peculiar linguistic environment of the Case 3 district.

Interestingly, the Grade 7 teacher, while emphasizing the key role of student interest in education also points out that low motivation of some students in junior middle school is a challenge for the implementation of education for quality. Nevertheless, this teacher did not address the source of low motivation, or connect it with student interests, but seems to assume it as a given among some students that can be dealt with mainly by increased discipline. The Grade 2 teacher seems to imply that at least for Yughur students low achievement may derive from difficult comprehension in early grades when most teachers in the school cannot provide incidental bilingual instruction to assist minority students with lower Mandarin proficiency.

Teachers’ approaches to dealing with the perceived challenges to education for quality also differ. In the case of the Grade 2 teacher, the main perceived challenge is the linguistic and cultural difference between minority children’s home and school environments. Accordingly, he focuses on helping minority children in particular by providing them with incidental bilingual instruction. For the Grade 7 teacher, the main perceived challenges are insufficiencies in materials, curriculum and students’ readiness. Therefore, she personally provides extra reading materials, adapts the curriculum, and provides extra instruction outside class.

Thus, within the school we can find quite differing understandings of teachers of the place of minority language and culture and its relation to the successful achievement of education for quality. For a member of the local Yughur nationality, who is able to teach bilingually, it is extremely important to include local language and culture in school curriculum, perhaps as compulsory curriculum for all students. Furthermore, this teacher sees knowledge of
Yughur language and culture as important for teachers in lower grades as important so that national curriculum can be taught more effectively to minority students.

For a teacher who is not a member of the Yughur nationality, but is also a member of a minority nationality, who has only limited proficiency in her nationality’s language, local Yughur language and culture are not seen as essential for all Case 3 students, or even for Yughur students. Rather, they are seen as important to offer as optional curriculum for those students who are interested, but clearly are less important than national curriculum. For this teacher then, knowledge of Yughur language and culture would not be needed by teachers of national curriculum courses, but only by teachers of special courses on Yughur language and culture.

*Embedded Case 3: Parents and Other Family Members*

Ten family members of children in the district school were interviewed with the breakdown of parents by gender and ethnicity provided in Table 53. As is evident, only Yughur and Tibetan parents are represented in this case. Two group interviews were conducted: one for family members of Grade 2 children, and another for family members of Grade 7 children, which was also attended by several Grade 2 family members who had been unable to attend the evening before. Questions were asked in Mandarin; responses were given in Yughur or Mandarin: Yughur responses were translated into Mandarin by a Yughur bilingual.

*Family Members’ Background*

All of the family members were born in a rural village, 8 within the township where the school is located, and two in a Tibetan township in another district. Two are in their 50s, one under 30; the rest are in their late 30s. Most of the family members interviewed are engaged in
the rural economy, many as shepherders. The family members participating in the study had a range of experiences with school when they were young. All attended elementary school, although one reports finishing only lower primary education (3 years); one entered junior secondary school, but withdrew after one month of boarding at school in the county town. All can speak Sarigh Yughur and Mandarin; the two Tibetan parents are trilingual speakers of Tibetan, Mandarin and Sarigh Yughur. However, the only written language they are familiar with is Chinese: they are not literate in Yughur, which has had no approved Romanized script, nor did the two Tibetan participants study written Tibetan in school. A brief personal narrative of the experience of each family member focusing on their schooling is presented in Table 54.

All parents report having enjoyed going to school, although part of the enjoyment seems to have involved meeting other young people with whom they could play: several parents report participating in traditional Yughur singing, dancing and sports outside class as among their favourite experiences from when they were in school.

As for their experience with the Yughur and Chinese languages in school, their experiences are varied. All report that their teachers taught in Chinese, and most report that they did not understand this language, or did not know it very well when they began school and needed several years time to learn it well. However, several family members reported that they had grown up in an area where they could hear Chinese spoken and therefore, already understood some Chinese when they began school.

Interestingly, many family members reported that their teacher had not only taught them in Chinese, but also explained lessons in Sarigh Yughur, and so they were provided with
“mixed” bilingual education. However, several reported that their teacher spoke only Mandarin and did not explain anything in Yughur. It is unclear whether these were bilingual teachers, who could but chose not to supplement their teaching with Yughur teaching, or whether they were monolingual Chinese-speakers who were unable to use Yughur as a supplement to their teaching. Similarly, family members reported two sorts of reactions to students speaking Yughur in class among those who taught exclusively in Mandarin: some teachers ignored this behaviour, while others criticized students who did so, creating a feeling of injustice and resentment among these family members when they experienced this treatment.

Language Use Within the Family, Community, and School

Many family members reported that their child can understand spoken Sarigh Yughur, but is not able to speak the language. When asked about family language use with his child, one father said that he and his wife speak Yughur amongst themselves, but speak Chinese to their daughter, explaining that:

She can understand Yughur, but she can’t speak it. That’s because of the influence of the environment; there are too so many Han Chinese people around; moreover, her teachers are all Han Chinese teachers. The bad effect of my daughter speaking only Chinese is that Yughur may disappear; the good effect is that, using Chinese, she can learn other knowledge more quickly. (Case 3, Grade 2 Parent Interview Transcript)

Another father explained the thinking of Yughur parents who elect to speak to their children in Chinese within the home:

---

27 It is not certain whether these bilingual teachers were among the Han teachers who had come to Sunan County in the 1950s to help build Sunan County’s school system (Gao & He, 2003), during a period when Han teachers volunteering to work in minority areas were required to learn the local minority language (Wang, 2007, p. 4).
Now the curriculum is all taught in Chinese, so that we think that speaking more Chinese will make them get used to a Chinese language environment. Children when they are small can only speak Yughur; in order to avoid them being unable to understand Chinese, we teach them some; now our child’s Chinese is very fluent, but she can understand but not speak Yughur. (Case 3, Grade 2 Parent Interview Transcript)

This problem of children understanding the spoken Sarigh Yughur language, but not being able to speak it was discussed at length in the mixed Grade 2/7 Family Member group:

Int.: Why is there this situation of understanding but not speaking Yughur?
P 5 (FWY): Because from the beginning of school, they start speaking Chinese, and after a long time, they can’t speak (Yughur) anymore. Int.: What do you think of one parent speaking Yughur to the child and the other parent speaking Chinese?
P 4 (FWY): I have always felt this way; because if we don’t often speak (Yughur), the Yughur language will be forgotten. P 1 (MWY): For example, people our age in their 30s and 40s can still speak the language, but those younger than us can’t speak it anymore. P 5 (F Tib): That’s because the people we come into contact with are all Han Chinese. Minority people are few, so we are gradually Sinifying, and more and more people don’t speak Yughur. P 1 (MWY): For example, when we want to go to a shop and buy something, if you are not able to speak Chinese, then you can’t get what you want. P 3 (F Tib): Especially, these days when a new product comes out, there’s no way to translate into Yughur, then all we can do is use Chinese. Even though the Yughur population is developing, the use of the language is continually decreasing. Teachers cannot speak Yughur, this is a problem. When teachers speak, students don’t understand. When students speak, teachers don’t understand.
P1 (MWY): I strongly support teachers speaking Yughur. (Case 3, Grade 2/7 Family Member Interview Transcript)

Family members, despite their desire to pass on Sarigh Yughur language proficiency, are concerned that their children will not have enough Mandarin proficiency to succeed in Mandarin-medium school instruction, and so many have resorted to speaking Mandarin in the home with their children.

**What Local Knowledge, Culture, or Language Should Children be Taught in Their School?**

All Yughur family members expressed strong support for the provision of instruction in Yughur language and culture in the school curriculum. For example, the mixed Grade 2/7 family group all agreed that “in order to receive a high quality education, local knowledge, culture and language must be included” in the school curriculum. Two parents in the Grade 2 family group said more directly that it was their hope that a special Yughur language class be opened at the school. No parents raised concerns about Yughur language interfering with the learning of Mandarin. Only one parent raised the lack of established Yughur script as a challenge to the teaching of Yughur, although some parents expressed concern when the interviewer mentioned that others had mentioned this as a potential barrier for Yughur instruction.

No family members separated Yughur language and culture: while some specifically mentioned that Yughur songs and history should be studied in school, but pointed out that it should be learned in Yughur. A large number of parents also assented to the statement that all language skills should be learned in Yughur class: listening, speaking, reading and writing. One parent stated that the Yughur class should not be taught bilingually, but should be taught only in Yughur. Indeed, the family members emphasized teaching traditional verbal culture in school. No mention was made of the teaching of traditional customs in school. One grandparent stated,
in fact, that traditional customs of hospitality could be learned at home and did not need to be taught in school.

Justifications for including Yughur language and culture in the curriculum were of several types. One argument is related to the need to use the school to help with the preservation of group identity through the passing on of the language and culture, which are in danger of extinction. A Tibetan mother married to a Yughur man, who is trilingual in Tibetan, Mandarin and Sarigh Yughur put it this way, “The Yughur nationality’s traditional things must be well protected and passed on; otherwise, they will be lost afterwards” (Case 3, Grade 2/7 Family Member Transcript). Another parent felt that whether they study all in Yughur, or half in Chinese, half in Yughur was not the main question, saying, “as long as we don’t let the Yughur language disappear, any way is good” (Case 3, Grade 2 Family Member Transcript).

A second argument is less overtly concerned with the threat of loss of the culture as a whole, but focuses on the acquisition of Yughur cultural knowledge, including language proficiency, as a necessary part of group membership, and leaves unstated the fact that family transmission is no longer sufficient for children to acquire Yughur language and culture. In other words, on this view, inclusion in school curriculum is necessary for the full development of children’s identity. One father stated simply, “They should learn traditional stories in Yughur. They should learn to sing <Yughur> songs; this is very important” (Case 3, Grade 2 Family Member Transcript). Another parent more explicitly pointed out Yughur children’s obligation to know their own language and culture, saying “Because we are the descendants of the Yughur nationality, this is something we ought to know” (Case 3, Grade 2 Family Member Transcript).

A third argument is concerned with the benefits towards children of studying Yughur language and culture in school. Some family members simply stated that this would have a
positive effect on their children. Others were more specific, but varied in what they considered the benefits to be. One father linked knowledge of Yughur language and culture to the expectations of the outside world:

The crucial point is that if our children go outside to study, if none of them can even speak their own language, it can make them feel very embarrassed (Case 3, Grade 2 Family Member Transcript).

A mother made a similar point, implying that acquiring their nationality’s culture and language was necessary for children’s successful development:

Our children now have started to study English; moreover, if there is a Yughur course later, they aso should study this: otherwise, they will not be able to speak. This is for our children’s futures; otherwise, later they will have some problems. (Case 3, Grade 2/7 Family Member Transcript)

One father seemed to imply that flourishing of Yughur culture and thriving of individual Yughur children were interrelated, saying that if their children could study this kind of local knowledge, local culture and local language, “the crucial thing is for them to bring into full play all the special skills of their nationality” (Case 3, Grade 2 Family Member Transcript).

Another father raised several of these themes, linking individual benefit for children’s personal and career development to the question of preservation of the group’s language and culture within the region and perception of the group outside the region:

It doesn’t matter whether it’s singing, dancing, or mastering the language, all of this will be beneficial for the children afterwards; when they plan to go to work, if they have these kinds of special skills, it will be better for them. …To be able to sing in Yughur, to perform Yughur dances, not only can make it easier for our
children to find work outside, but it can also help prevent the loss of these kinds of traditions. (Case 3, Grade 2 Family Member Transcript)

**Family Members’ Perspectives on Quality in Education**

Family members views on what is important to learn did not reflect the education for quality policy of equally emphasizing the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes with curriculum content balanced among intellectual, esthetic, physical, moral and labour education. In fact, they spoke relatively little about national curriculum goals in comparison with their views on local and school curriculum. Those that did speak about what is important to learn besides Yughur language and culture emphasized knowledge, which was characterized by various family members as something strongly contrasting with local knowledge. One member of the Grade 2/7 group said that parent said that their children needed to learn to “communicate more about things from outside”. Another member of the Grade 2/7 group was more specific, saying that their children needed to be able to “be in touch with knowledge from large cities”, adding later that their children learn more “scientific knowledge”. The Grade 2 family member group similarly focussed on knowledge over skills and attitudes as important goals of education, mentioning the core national curriculum subjects of Yuwen, Mathematics and English as important.

The Grade 2 group pointed out that a major challenge for children in receiving education for quality was the difficulty of the curriculum. On the one hand, one parent said that since the curriculum was harder than it used to be, sometimes his child could not understand. Moreover, an additional challenge was the difficulty of family members in assisting children with their studies. As one Grade 2 parent put it, there are study problems, “our educational level is low, and
so we are not able to help our child with homework assignments”. Another parent explained this problem more graphically, saying:

Because our own level is so low, we are not even able to help a Grade 2 child with their study. We can speak Chinese, but quite a lot of the content and formulas, there’s no way we can tutor them. (Case 3, Grade 2 Family Member Interview Transcript)

These parents also argued that it was not only their own knowledge that was insufficient, but also that of the teachers. One felt that teachers “should go to large cities to take refresher courses in all areas of knowledge”. Another considered that “all-round quality” needs to be raised, arguing that “if the quality of teachers is raised, the quality of the children will also rise”.

Interestingly, in this group, school language issues were linked not only to the survival of the Yughur culture, but also to the achievement of overall educational goals. When asked about the challenges of teachers, one parent raised the problem of minority student-teacher comprehension:

The teacher not being able to understand Yughur language is a difficult point; when the teacher speaks, students don’t understand, when the students speak the teacher doesn’t understand. (Case 3, Grade 2/7 Family Member Interview Transcript)

Parents in this group all agreed with the statement of one parent that learning Chinese was somewhat difficult for their children. When asked how they helped their children with this difficulty, one parent explained that in her family, they dealt with this problem by speaking Mandarin. (Case 3, Grade 2/7 Family Member Interview Transcript)

28 Suzhi, or essential quality
**Summary: The Family Members**

Minority family members interviewed in this district expressed strong support for the inclusion of Yughur cultural and linguistic content in school curriculum. Not only Sarigh Yughur, but also Tibetan family members expressed greater concern over the inclusion of Sarigh Yughur language in lessons than over the inclusion of lessons on cultural customs, which as one grandparent expressed, could be learned at home. It is notable that Tibetan family members had learned Sarigh Yughur through interaction with Case 3 residents, and were strongly supportive of adding this language to school curriculum, but did not raise the provision of Tibetan lessons within the school as a priority. None spontaneously raised any doubts about the importance and feasibility of providing Yughur instruction at the school, not even the absence of a broadly known writing system, although a few parents thought the lack of a well-established writing system might create some difficulties, when they were informed about that fact. Family members did not refer to the MOE policy of local and school-based curriculum as a justification for adding Yughur language and culture to the school’s curriculum; none claimed to be familiar with the policy. Thus, minority parents interviewed in a majority district of their nationality seem to view their nationality’s language as something that ought to be included in school curriculum, not to enrich learning of national curriculum, but because it is itself important to learn in school.

Since most parents and many children in this district are proficient in Sarigh Yughur before starting school, their goal is language maintenance more than revitalization. Thus, it is doubtful that they would be satisfied with previous attempts at reviving Sarigh Yughur by teaching about the language rather than in the language. It seems that what parents in this district are asking for is not the typical weak bilingual education model of Mandarin plus minority language as a school subject, but dual language maintenance bilingual education. One parent
asks whether Yughur classes should be conducted monolingually or bilingually, and states a strong preference for monolingual Yughur instruction. Will parents be satisfied with the symbolic value of adding one optional Yughur course, or do they wish all school-based curriculum to be conducted with Sarigh Yughur as medium of instruction?

**Embedded Case 4: The Students**

Children were not interviewed about what was important to learn about Sunan but were asked about what they enjoyed learning in school, and whether they would enjoy learning traditional Sunan stories, poems and songs, and whether they enjoy learning them in the Yughur language. Students from a range of nationalities participated in group interviews, with two thirds of participants minority children, as displayed in Table 55.

Despite the majority status of the Yughur population of the district and township where the Case 3 School was located, only 3 of 12 students interviewed were Yughur. This may reflect a lower interest on the part of Yughur students to participate in the study, or it may equally reflect the difficulty for Yughur students, whose families are often herders living in outlying villages, to receive parental permission to participate in the student by the time of the interview dates. Of the remaining students, there was one non-Yughur minority student, a member of the Chinese-speaking Hui nationality who was born in a Han-majority district of Sunan, and eight Han students, all of whom were born outside Case 3 district, one in a Han-majority district of Sunan, one in a neighbouring Han-majority agricultural county within Zhangye prefecture, and five who were born in Wuwei, the neighbouring prefecture to the southeast.
Learning Yughur Language and Culture

Yughur students in the Grade 2 group reported that they already knew some traditional Yughur stories or songs, but they had learned them in different ways. One Grade 2 student explained that:

I love to listen to stories. My father and mother tell stories to me. Sometimes they use Chinese and sometimes they speak in Yughur. My grandparents speak Yughur, but we use Chinese to answer them. (Case 3, Grade 2 Student Interview Transcript)

Similarly, another Grade 2 student also was familiar with some Yughur traditional literature in Chinese. As the student elaborated:

They speak Yughur to me, and I use Chinese to answer. Mom and Dad speak Yughur together, and I can understand what they are talking about, but I use Chinese to answer”.

A Grade 7 Yughur student also reported having learned some traditional Yughur oral literature within the family, explaining that his father had told him the traditional story of Yughur origins. Of the non-Yughur students, only one Grade 7 student was familiar with some traditional Yughur literature, having read a book of Yughur fairy tales in Chinese.

Students in the Grade 2 group, when asked whether they would enjoy learning traditional Yughur stories and songs, answered enthusiastically. When further asked if they would be interested in learning these songs and stories in the Yughur language they also answered positively. No difference in response between Yughur and non-Yughur children was noted.

The Grade 7 group was shown some Yughur traditional stories written in phonetic script. When students were asked whether they had any interest in learning this script, the Yughur
student in the group responded, “I have, because it can help find out even more knowledge about our Yughur nationality”. In contrast, one non-Yughur student responded negatively, explaining, “I have no interest. I can’t understand <Yughur>, and it is very hard.” The remaining non-Yughur students were non-committal, but when asked about the difficulty of learning Yughur, the Yughur student responded that “it is an easy language”, while non-Yughur students believed that Yughur was “harder than English” (Case 3, Grade 7 Student Interview Group Transcript).

**Student Interests and Challenges**

Grade 2 students said that their most interesting class was mathematics, and that study was generally not difficult. When students had a problem, most students said that their parents would help them. One Yughur student said that he did not get help from his parents, explaining:

> They do not have time. I don’t like other people to help me; that isn’t a smart way. But I feel that a good friend who has learned well can help me. (Case 3, Grade 2 Student Group Interview)

Students did not mention Yuwen class, but they did mention that they enjoyed extracurricular reading, such as stories and fairy tales. One Grade 2 Yughur student mentioned enjoying reading traditional Yughur stories in Chinese. Many Grade 2 students also expressed an interest in continuing their education to university.

In contrast, language learning is mentioned by several Grade 7 students as a favourite activity. Yuwen class discussion of words and reading out loud textbook dialogues were each mentioned by one student as enjoyable. Similarly, performing dialogues in English class was mentioned by one student as most enjoyable, while another student mentioned small group discussion in English class as a favourite activity. One student mentioned that doing mathematics
questions that develop intelligence was a favourite activity, while another student’s favourite activity was playing badminton in physical education class.

Several students mentioned challenges to their study. For example, a Han student pointed out that geography class was difficult, explaining that “characteristics of the climate, products; there’s too much, so it’s very hard to remember” (Case 3, Grade 7 Student Group Interview Transcript). The Yughur student mentions English class as a special challenge, explaining that “in English class, learning the text <is hard>. Some sentences are very hard to understand, I don’t know what they mean. I have to look them up in the dictionary” (Case 3, Grade 7 Student Group Interview). One Han student mentioned that his father helped him directly with the organization and revision of difficult compositions, while several other students’ parents help their children by buying supplementary study books or free reading material for their children.

When asked if they hoped to study at university Grade 2 children responded affirmatively; Grade 7 students had a range of hopes for their future study and careers. The Yughur student wants to become a local policeman; several Han students mentioned wanting to study at the post-secondary level. One wants to study at a military institute, while two want to study English at a university or normal university so that they can become English teachers; one of these two stated a desire to go abroad to study some day.

**Summary: The Students**

Yughur students interviewed were all familiar with some Yughur traditional culture, and showed interest in learning Yughur oral literature in school in the Sarigh Yughur language. Non-Yughur students from the Grade 2 group showed a similar interest learning Yughur stories and songs even in the Sarigh Yughur language. Non-Yughur students from the Grade 7 group did not generally express positive or negative perspectives on learning Yughur traditional culture and
language in school. One non-Yughur student from the Grade 7 group did directly express a strong disinterest in learning Yughur content and language.

It is interesting to speculate what the source of the older non-Yughur children’s perspectives on minority culture and language might be. Except for the non-Yughur member of the Hui minority, all non-Yughur students interviewed were born outside Sunan county, which might mean that their families were relatively unfamiliar with Yughur culture and language, and perhaps less tolerant of differences from mainstream culture and language than non-Yughur families that had lived in a Yughur district for a much longer time.

Students who state that they are interested in learning Yughur culture and language in school do not give as a reason the risk that they may disappear, nor do they mention an obligation as Yughurs or as residents of a Yughur majority district to learn them. Except for one student, Non-Yughurs who do not express an interest in learning Yughur do not state that this is because as non-Yughurs there is no need or obligation for them to learn such things; instead it is pointed that Yughur is even harder to learn than English, an opinion that may derive as much from non-Yughur stereotypes about the Yughur language as it does from actual experience in trying to learn the language.

**Case 3 Findings**

Case Three presents a demographic context that stands in stark contrast to that of Case 1. Case 3, unlike Case 1, is in a Han-minority and Yughur majority district and in a rural context. Case Three is a rural district in which there is preserved a “language environment” in which Sarigh Yughur is still widely used. Indeed, the site if the Case Three School is the sole site in which a Yughur language was observed to be used in public, on the streets, in shops, restaurants etc., and where students who seemed to be additive bilinguals in Yughur and Chinese were
encountered. It was expected that based on demographic contrast to Case 1, differences between the cases would be greatest. In terms of language of education, Case 3 school practice replicates that of Case 1. Thus Case 3 ’s findings stand as a theoretical replication of Case 1, where Yughur knowledge, culture and language are virtually non-evident in school, and where the model of education enacted is virtually undifferentiated from an urban school in a Han area elsewhere in China. In Case Three, as expected, the school administration and teaching staff were more supportive of inclusion of Yughur language and culture in school curriculum than elsewhere. There are two Yughur-speaking teachers given responsibility to teach the core subject Yuwen, unlike Case 1, where teachers fluent in Yughur languages do not teach language, not even in the pre-school class where Yughur-dominant students learn oral Mandarin. Indeed, a Yughur teacher was observed in Case 3 to use Sarigh Yughur in class in support of Yughur-dominant students’ learning.

Thus, the evolving nature of the school curriculum, interviews with the principal, teachers, and classroom observations, also reveal an emergent minority “Language as Resource” orientation, with some observations of use to Yughur or other minority language in classrooms. Case 3 curriculum plans differs also from Case 2, where the importance of Yughur cultural content is recognized, but where there are no plans to teach either of the Yughur languages.

The case of the Yughur majority district school is one in which a relatively limited range of views towards the inclusion of local content, culture and language in the curriculum is evident. The principal supports the inclusion of Yughur language and culture within local and school-based curriculum. The principal did not raise any arguments against doing so related to potential interference with the achievement of the aims of the national curriculum, as did the

29 A Yughur-speaking teacher of Grade 9 Yuwen arranged a demonstration by a group of Grade 9 students proficient in Sarigh Yughur and Chinese of story-telling in Sarigh Yughur followed by the same story in Mandarin.
Case 1 principal, nor did the principal justify doing so with reference to the positive effects on the learning of national curriculum of integrating local and national curriculum content. Rather, the principal treats school-based curriculum with Yughur linguistic and cultural content as independent of national curriculum and important *in itself*. While the principal does mention difficulties in implementing Yughur curriculum, these difficulties are not related to any conflict in aims between national and local curriculum, but are practical difficulties related to staffing Yughur language courses.

Thus, the principal’s views are largely consonant with those of Case 3 parents interviewed. Parents interviewed in this district seem to see no conflict between learning national curriculum and local knowledge in school. Parents, like the principal, did not justify learning local knowledge as supportive of national curriculum, nor did they express fears that time devoted to learning Yughur language and culture would reduce learning of national curriculum and Chinese, which is suggestive of a shared “Language as Resource” orientation and a potential for collaboration among stakeholders in developing a vision of the school as fostering additive bilingualism and multiculturalism.

The teachers interviewed both support in principle the inclusion of Yughur language and culture as part of school curriculum, but differ in the strength of this commitment and the grounds for this commitment. The Grade 2 teacher, a Yughur, views the teaching of Yughur language in school as something that ought to be provided for all Yughur students, and possibly to non-Yughur students as well. For this teacher, this is basic knowledge that members of this minority *ought* to know as Yughurs. In the sense that he feels Yughurs ought to know this, he displays a “Language as Right” orientation; however, he is himself an additive bilingual, and seems to see no necessary conflict between L1 and L2 learning, and so it seems more accurate to
attribute to him a “Language as Resource” orientation. The Grade 7 teacher, a Tibetan, monolingual in Chinese, expresses both Yughur children’s right to learn their L1 in school together with many reservations about the difficulty and potential harm of doing so, thus, displaying a minority “Language as Problem” orientation.

Thus, among the adult stakeholders interviewed in this district, there are none who question directly the provision of school-based curriculum on Yughur language and culture; minority parents, the principal and both teachers are in favour of some sort of Sarigh Yughur language classes. Where there is some debate is on the details: for parents, whether classes should be monolingual or bilingual; for teachers, whether classes should be offered as compulsory or optional curriculum, for all students or primarily Yughur students.

All adult stakeholder groups presented the endangerment of the Sarigh Yughur language as a rationale for its inclusion in the school curriculum. Yughur parents also justified language shift within the home as a means to support their children’s school learning. One grandparent argued against this family language policy, saying that parents can help their children by speaking both languages within the home. Other Yughur parents seemed to accept the parental strategy of shifting to exclusive Mandarin communication with children as a reasonable response to their children’s perceived needs for greater support in Mandarin acquisition. Thus, by implication requiring children to study Yughur in school may be viewed as a means to require parents to speak more Sarigh Yughur within the home.

Interestingly, not only Yughur, but many younger non-Yughur Grade 2 students expressed interest in learning Sarigh Yughur stories and songs in that language, while among older Grade 7 students no non-Yughur students expressed interest in such courses, only one non-Yughur student expressed a view against non-Yughurs learning Sarigh Yughur language.
As in previous chapters, a summary of the perspectives expressed by stakeholders interviewed in the district towards studying minority language, particularly Yughur, in school is provided in Table 56. As is clear from the table, the range of perspectives expressed within Case 3 on the inclusion of minority languages in the school curriculum is relatively limited with positive and mixed positive views expressed far more frequently than neutral or negative views. The data do not support any conclusion as to the source of these perspectives, but it can be speculated that they are related to the majority status of Yughurs within the district and the relative frequency of use of this language compared to the other cases. It also may be that within this context, no one dares to express less than positive views on Yughur language, and so that doubt about the importance of the Yughur language is expressed guardedly, via doubts about the feasibility of Yughur language education. Older non-Yughur students who expressed some reservations about learning Sarigh Yughur in school did not refer to their nationality, but only the supposed difficulty of Sarigh Yughur as a reason for their hesitation. Thus, the overall attitude among stakeholders interviewed is strongly supportive of the inclusion of Yughur culture and language in school-based curriculum.
Chapter Nine:
Findings of the Cases and Discussion

Introduction

This chapter will treat the four stakeholder groups as embedded cases in the multiple case study, combining views of students, parents, teachers and administrators from each of the three schools studied\(^\text{30}\). Within each embedded stakeholder case, two further embedded cases will be distinguished by ethnicity.

Yughur Parents

Yughur parents interviewed were strongly supportive of the mission of Sunan schools to increase achievement and promotion to higher levels of the education system, and ultimately admission to post-secondary studies. Broad consensus among Yughur parents and grandparents on this point existed in all cases, whether male or female, Sarigh Yughur or Shira Yughur. Nevertheless, when asked “what is important for your children to learn in school?” the question of whether and to what degree Yughur children should learn Yughur language and culture in schools was not raised by parents at all. It was only when specifically asked “what aspects of local knowledge, culture and language should be included in school curriculum?” that a different picture emerged. In all four sites, the preponderant majority of Yughur parents offer the opinion that Yughur culture and language should be taught to their children in schools.

Yughur parents differed more on the question of the practicality of such implementation than on its necessity. Those Yughur parents who had themselves undergone partial or complete language shift feel the urgency to protect their language and culture strongly, but also question

\(^{30}\) Data were gathered at four schools. The fourth school has been excluded for brevity.
whether school instruction in Yughur language can reverse language shift if they, as parents, are unable to support their children’s study within the home. The Yughur parents who had undergone language shift were resident in the county town, where Yughur language was not observed to be spoken in public places. Occasionally Yughur parents would question the feasibility of Yughur language instruction mentioning the lack of an established script as a problem or barrier. This problem was raised by some Yughur parents in Case 1, and was not raised by Yughur parents in other sites. Thus, it seems that this concern towards the existence of a writing system was a product of the controversy over the failed experimental Sarigh Yughur programme in the Case 1 school, and reflected arguments raised by opponents of that programme (Ba, 2007). When informed that there are many Sarigh Yughur and Shira Yughur folkloric texts written in IPA script and that the Sunan County Yughur Cultural Research Office had devised a common script for both Sarigh Yughur and Shira Yughur, many parents were quite interested to learn this; indeed, parents who understood but could not speak Sarigh or Shira Yughur were interested in the idea of Yughur language classes for adults that would teach this script.

Furthermore, there was a general consensus on the reason for including Yughur language and culture in the schools. The most common reason, contrary to Ruiz’s notion of language as right (1990), was that of language as obligation: Yughur parents spoke of the transmission of their languages and cultures as a duty: on the part of parents and grandparents to transmit them to their children and grandchildren, and on the part of the younger generation, to learn from the older generation. The Yughur languages were spoken of by the majority of Yughur parents as an inheritance not so much from their own parents as from their ancestors. Thus, the language was treated literally as a heritage, or patrimony: something valuable that has been received from past generations and must be passed on to succeeding generations. Moreover, parents did not separate
Yughur culture from Yughur language, but linked the two closely together, conjoining the loss of the Yughur language and the disappearance of Yughur culture. A certain number of Yughur parents gave additional reasons for including Yughur language in the schools that come under Ruiz’s *language as resource* (1984/88). The main resource that parents felt that Yughur language proficiency would provide is *a sense of identity* for their children. Parents expressed the opinion that studying Yughur language, history and culture in school would help students understand *who they were and where they had come from*. A few parents reflected formal language used by teachers and reported by Ba Zhanlong (2007), saying that it would “strengthen their ethnic pride”. One Tibetan mother, married to a Sarigh Yughur man, and living in a Sarigh Yughur majority district, expressed pride in the fact that she was *trilingual* in Tibetan, Mandarin and Sarigh Yughur and that she hope that her child would learn all these languages *plus* English. Several other parents spoke of proficiency in Yughur as a resource for their child, not *within* Sunan, but *outside* Sunan, where ability to speak Yughur and especially to *sing* Yughur songs *in* Yughur would serve as a source of pride for their children, and possibly distinguish them from the majority who would possess no such exotic skills. Parents spoke positively of Yughur learning in school as an obligation for Yughurs; as something that would help children’s self-understanding.

It is noteworthy that no parents spoke of Yughur language proficiency as essential for participating in life in the Sunan County. This is related to the question of whether Yughur language classes should be compulsory or optional, and taught monolingually or bilingually. Many parents seem to prefer compulsory attendance of Yughur children: this is evident from their hesitations in requiring non-Yughurs to take Yughur language classes. Yughur parents did not object to non-Yughurs studying Yughur, but some of them did express concerns that non-
Yughur children would not like taking Yughur classes. No Yughur parent referred to the possibility of non-Yughur parents objecting to their children studying Yughur, nor did any parent refer to the campaign in Case 1 against minority language classes organized by Yughur parents that was reported by Ba (2007).

A large number of parents’ statements concerning the need for Yughur language instruction in the schools correspond to Ruiz’ language as problem orientation (1990). All but a few parents who spoke about their own school experience arrived at school with no knowledge of Mandarin. Most report that it took two to 3 years for them to understand lessons in Mandarin, a finding consistent with the BICS/CALP distinction (Cummins, 2000, 2001). However, the parents’ experience of this period is of three types.

One group, who experienced mixed bilingual education, report little problem in this period, since when they did not understand Mandarin lessons the teacher supported their first language directly by using it to provide supplementary explanations in Yughur. Thus, among this group, learning was scaffolded by bilingual oral instruction by the teacher.

A second group was also taught exclusively in Mandarin without any direct support through the mother tongue for learning; however, teachers in this group tolerated student communication in class in Yughur, permitting students with stronger Mandarin proficiency to provide supplementary instruction in Yughur. Among this group, learning was scaffolded by mother tongue oral instruction by more proficient peers.

The third group, like the second group received instruction from the teacher exclusively in Mandarin, but in this case, the use of Yughur in school was not tolerated by the teacher, and students who spoke Yughur in class were criticized or punished for speaking their mother
tongue. Many of these parents report that they felt unfairly treated by these restrictions on their language.

While all three groups report a similar length of time to learn enough Mandarin to understand lessons (1-4 years), only the third group speaks of this period negatively, and thus as a problem. Nevertheless, while the first two of the groups reported no negative emotion associated with their learning Mandarin in school, most Yughur parents speak of their children’s Mandarin proficiency today as a problem for their children’s educational achievement in the exclusive Mandarin environment of almost all of today’s classrooms in Sunan County.

Parents were less clear about the form in which Yughur curriculum should be provided. Some parents raised the possibility that it could be a compulsory subject for all students, Yughur and other nationalities included; some seemed to feel that it should be for Yughur children only, on the grounds that students of other nationalities (or their parents) might not be interested in learning Yughur. A few parents preferred monolingual Yughur instruction.

Parents’ statements about what was important for their children to learn at school indicate strong support for children’s high achievement in the national curriculum and developed advanced proficiency in Mandarin. No parent raised the possibility that Yughur language could be used for teaching national curriculum content. Thus, parents’ desires to see Yughur language and culture taught in school together with their desires for Han proficiency seem to indicate a desire for additive bilingualism.

At the same time, parents who can speak Yughur have noted that their children’s rapid loss of productive proficiency in Yughur has followed parents’ own shift in family language policy towards exclusive use of Mandarin to address school-aged children. Few parents, however, stated, as had been true for previous generations, that it was unnecessary for the school
to teach Yughur culture and language, since they could be transmitted within the home without any formal teaching, if parents reverted to treating the home as a primarily Yughur domain.

No parents stated directly that Yughur language loss was a problem caused by schools and their Mandarin-only practices, and therefore should be solved by schools. What was said by Yughur-speaking parents was that their wish to help their children to adapt to a Mandarin-only environment was their prime motivation in speaking Mandarin to their children. No Yughur parent stated that learning Yughur in school would hold back their children’s learning in Mandarin. Parents’ concurrent wish that children advance as high as possible in the school system largely instructed in Mandarin while also learning their heritage language in school suggests that they also see language as a resource.

However, the insistence of Yughur parents that schools should formally teach their culture and language is also in effect a demand for formal recognition of official status to their language as an approved language for use in a state institution within its special homeland. Although no parents directly claimed their wish for Yughur to be used within the school as a right, their attitude towards its use in school is consistent with a view of this use as a right, and its absence as a problem. Parents did not oppose Mandarin as the dominant language of instruction within a state institution, the school, but have expressed a vision of the school as a shared site, where the use of Yughur is tolerated at least and encouraged at best, as was the case in the village schools attended by many parents.

At the same time, some Yughur parents argue that Yughur culture not only should be transmitted to children as a necessary part of their identity as Yughurs, but as something that has value in itself. Implicitly, this value derives from a comparison with other culture’s or sub-cultures and their value systems. Several parents specifically mentioned Yughur traditions for the
treatment of *elders* as worth preserving, perhaps implying that they value *their* traditions more than those of other nationalities, presumably Han.

Yughur parents expressed high aspirations for their children’s educational attainment within the current school system, most expressing the hope that their children can continue to post-secondary education. Yughur parents also expressed the belief that Mandarin proficiency is both an enabling and limiting factor in their children’s educational futures. They express at the same time strong desires that children learn Yughur culture and language, and that the school must not only teach the national curriculum, but should also support the learning of Sarigh Yughur and Shira Yughur in Sunan County schools, while acknowledging that family decisions to begin using Mandarin in the home with school-age children have led in many cases to children’s weakening ability to speak Yughur. This insistence on the place of Yughur language and culture in the *school* system goes beyond a desire that Yughur should survive in a *diglossic* manner as a language reserved for low status domains: interaction in rural Yughur settings.

Parents did not state a wish for the reinstatement of the *informal* mixed bilingual education that many of them experienced under bilingual village primary school teachers; they have not asked that teachers of national curriculum should be proficient in Yughur and Mandarin and able to teach bilingually. Those parents that expressed an opinion about the manner in which Yughur language and culture are learned at school have not asked for the inclusion of Yughur language and culture in the curriculum as an informal instrument for more effective learning of national curriculum. That is, inclusion of local knowledge, culture and language for Yughur parents is not *merely* a means to an end, but an *end* in itself. Thus the parents’ envision Sunan County schools as *both* sites of excellence *and* multiculturalism and multilingualism.
Non-Yughur Parents

Interestingly, the perspectives of non-Yughur parents interviewed were generally quite positive towards the inclusion of Yughur language and culture in the Sunan County schools’ curriculum. Tibetan and Mongolian parents were particularly supportive, expressing a desire that not only Yughur, but also Tibetan and Mongolian\textsuperscript{31}, their own heritage languages be included in school curriculum as well as Yughur. More surprisingly, Han parents were also generally supportive of providing Yughur language curriculum in schools, and in some cases supported their children learning Yughur in school. Thus, below the level explicit language policy that promotes Mandarin in public institutions, long-term Sunan County residents seem to have evolved an implicit language policy from the bottom-up of mutual tolerance multilingualism and multiculturalism.

Yughur Students

Yughur students are generally enthusiastic about the prospect of learning Yughur oral literature understood as traditional songs, stories and poems in the Yughur languages. The explanations that they give for their interest are of two basic types, related to esthetics and identity. Students describe Yughur oral literature as beautiful and sounding nice, in other words as pleasurable to hear, and by implication, to learn. Students also state a preference to learn this oral literature in Yughur more often than in Mandarin and seem to associate the Yughur language as part of the experience of Yughur traditional literature. Students also report that they would enjoy learning Yughur traditional literature in school in Yughur because they are Yughur. Part of this explanation seems related to feeling pride and taking pleasure in the fact that these are

\textsuperscript{31} Sunan County’s Tibet population accounts for approximately 25% of the county’s population. There is one Tibetan-medium elementary school in Huangcheng District, whose graduates either shift to a local Mandarin-medium school for junior secondary schooling or go to the neighbouring Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture where Tibetan-medium junior secondary education is available.
Yughur stories and songs and that Yughurs have such beautiful traditional literature. An additional aspect of this explanation seems related to the above-mentioned adult notion of the duty of Yughurs to learn these things. One student adds an additional explanation that connects pride in the local environment, the grasslands, with pleasure in Yughur songs which come from and in some cases are about the grasslands. Students’ responses are not sufficiently specific to be able to ascertain how much their interest in Yughur literature is due to its affirming their identity and providing a source of pride in Yughur students’ identity, and how much is due to a feeling of obligation to learn Yughur literature. Undoubtedly, these two motivations can coexist in the same individual. No Yughur student presents a response that could indicate an instrumental interest in learning Yughur literature and language. No mention is made of potential benefits of learning Yughur and success in schooling or in finding a job or career.

Despite the general interest in learning Yughur languages and literature in school, some Yughur students expressed hesitations about learning Yughur. These hesitations, however, referred more to the manner and content of study rather than to the Yughur language itself. Students noted that Yughur was difficult and that there was too much vocabulary to memorize.

These negative responses were recorded only in the Case 1 school which had previously opened an experimental Sarigh (West) Yughur special interest class in September 2003. This class was initially received with great enthusiasm and had a peak enrollment of 46, but after 1 year only 8 upper school students enrolled and it was suspended due to lack of interest. The teaching approach emphasized learning vocabulary and basic conversational phrases and was based on an advanced theoretical grammar in Chinese, and seems also not to have included any oral literature (Ba, 2007).
In effect, this approach was modeled on traditional non-communicative grammar-translation foreign language methodology typical of examination-based education. While it is impossible to conclude that Yughur students with negative responses towards learning Yughur in school did participate in this experimental class, it seems reasonable to conclude that older primary students in Case 1 were aware of this previous class and its methods.

Thus, when students are presented with the proposal of learning Yughur oral literature in Yughur, they respond positively. Those Yughur students who had hesitations learning Yughur in school expressed concerns about the burden of the formal study of vocabulary, that is, about the content and pedagogy they expected to be used rather than about the language and culture themselves. Among students who report that they are able to understand, but not speak Yughur, and among those who reported inability to even understand spoken Yughur, there is also a motivation to improve their communication with their parents and grandparents. Finally, Yughur students who were shown examples of Shira or Sarigh Yughur in romanized script also demonstrated interest in learning to read and write in their language.

Non-Yughur Students

Non-Yughur students expressed generally favourable perspectives towards the possibility of their learning of Yughur in school. Among Grades 1-2 students, there was a near universal enthusiasm for Yughur stories and songs, which were seen, as they were by most Yughurs, as beautiful. Among older non-Yughur students, there was also a positive or neutral attitude towards their learning Yughur, although among a few older Han students (Grades 4-5; 7-8), it seemed that minority language learning was seen as appropriate only for minority students.³²

³² Several of these students had moved from outside Sunan County and may have acquired these attitudes before coming to Sunan County.
Furthermore, students from other minorities, mainly Tibetan and Mongolian, were proud to show off what they knew of their heritage language and expressed a desire to learn to communicate better with their parents, and especially grandparents. Figure 56 shows three Shira Yughur and a Mongolian student comparing what they know of the Shira Yughur language, of Chinese, and of Mandarin pinyin romanized script in order to work out how the romanized script for Shira Yughur works; in effect, a multiliterate language awareness activity (Cummins, 2001).

*Teachers*

Teachers interviewed generally support the inclusion of Yughur language classes in the school curriculum, when asked directly. Of the 9 teachers interviewed at in Case 1, 2 and 3, no teacher directly disagreed with this possibility; only one teacher declined to say that it *should* be done in principle, stating simply that “*our school does not do this now*”. Among the remaining teachers, there are differences in degree of support with one teacher saying simply that bilingual education “should be considered” and another saying that it should be provided “at the elementary level”. Table 57 presents a summary of teachers’ responses concerning the teaching of Yughur language in their schools: in the first column are the responses of the teachers in the three cases towards the inclusion of Yughur language classes in school curriculum; the remaining columns display the justifications provided by teachers for teaching (or not teaching) the Yughur language in school. For ease of comparison, responses have been compiled by grade level, combining responses at Junior Elementary, Senior Elementary and Junior Secondary, each level represented by three teachers. In the last column appears a total of the number of statements in support of Yughur teaching.

As is evident from Table 57, while there is a strong consensus among teachers of the desirability *in principle* of teaching Yughur in the schools. However, on further examination, we
see a considerable range among teachers in the justifications provided for the provision of Yughur instruction. The role of mother tongue instruction in supporting identity is paramount, with seven of nine teachers raising its role in maintaining the group identity of the Yughur nationality and five of nine mentioning its importance in the development of children’s identity, suggesting a language as right orientation (Ruiz, 1990). A large number of teachers, five of nine, also saw Yughur instruction as a means to increase student interest in study, while only one teacher mentioned the potential role of Yughur instruction in increasing student comprehension of the matter being studied, suggesting that for some teachers, the Yughur language is seen as a resource for teaching and learning. While both positive orientations toward Yughur language exist in teachers’ responses, the symbolic function of Yughur study as a right to Yughur identity formation through language learning in school was emphasized by more teachers than its pedagogical function as a resource to learning in general; its pedagogical function of increasing motivation is mentioned much more frequently than its role in increasing comprehension.

When the three grade levels are compared, we find the strongest support for teaching Yughur at the junior elementary level, with unqualified support for Yughur teaching given by each teacher and an average of three justifications per teacher provided for its inclusion in school. Teachers at this level exhibit a strong language as right orientation and a moderate language as resource orientation, with all three teachers giving justifications related to identity, and with an average of 1 justification per teacher related to increased interest and comprehension.

Somewhat weaker support for teaching Yughur in school was found at the junior secondary level, where one teacher provided unqualified support, another provided qualified support for Yughur students only, and one supported deliberation on providing Yughur
instruction. At this level, the average number of justifications provided per teacher for teaching Yughur in school was two. Interestingly, no teacher at this level raised the function of Yughur study in developing students’ *individual* identity; only its role in *group* identity maintenance and in increasing motivation to study was mentioned. Among three junior secondary teachers interviewed, the *language as right* and *language as resource orientations* are both present, but at a moderate level in comparison with the junior elementary group.

The weakest support for teaching Yughur in school was found at the senior elementary level, with only two of three teachers supporting its inclusion in principle, and only one of three teachers providing any justifications for doing so. The average number of justifications provided was .67; in fact, only one teacher provided any justifications for teaching Yughur in school. No evidence of the *language as resource* orientation is apparent at this level, while a *language as right* orientation is evident in one teacher’s responses. The two remaining senior elementary teachers, however, state that Yughur instruction *should* be provided, but give no justifications for its provision.

Although the literature supports the use of mother tongue instruction as a means to increase monolingual students’ comprehension of curriculum content, only one teacher, a junior elementary teacher who is proficient in Yughur and uses it in his teaching of national curriculum, and thus the only teacher interviewed in a position to know whether it is effective, mentions this argument in the favour of teaching Yughur in school.

Table 58 presents the challenges of including Yughur instruction in the school curriculum that were presented by teachers, divided again, by grade level. The numbers of challenges of Yughur language instruction identified by teachers are suggestive of the degree to which a teacher shares a *Yughur language as problem* orientation. The columns from left to right indicate
the types of challenges presented ranging from the most frequently raised on the left to the least mentioned on the right. The two most common challenges, both raised by seven of nine teachers, were related to difficulties associated with teaching Yughur in school and a special type of difficulty, reputed lack of interest in the study of Yughur. Fewer teachers mentioned practical limitations: four stated that there was a lack of need or use for learning Yughur in school, and three claimed that there was a lack of ability or interest among teachers to teach this language. Three teachers raised separate arguments about why one shouldn’t teach Yughur in school, related to the potential negative effect on non-Yughur students, the unsuitability of teaching oral literacy that is not script-based in school, and the harm done to all students by increasing their study load. Finally, two teachers raised the question of the relation of Yughur language learning to Mandarin language learning and pointed out that Mandarin teaching must remain a priority.

When grade levels are compared, the findings based on positive statements towards Yughur are confirmed. At the junior elementary level, where teacher support and justifications for teaching Yughur were most frequent, the smallest number of challenges to Yughur instruction is presented, with four challenges to Yughur language instruction raised by teachers, with an average of 2.3 challenges raised per teacher. All three teachers see interest as a challenge: one is concerned about how to deal with those non-Yughur students that might not be interested a language that is not their mother tongue; another wonders whether Yughur oral literature would be more interesting, presumably to the class as a whole and not only to Yughur students, if it were taught in Mandarin, and one states that the absence of Yughur from the College Entrance Examinations would create a lack of motivation. Two of three teachers are concerned about how to teach a language that they believe has no script. Interestingly, no
teacher at this level presents lack of need or use for Yughur instruction as a challenge, nor does any teacher at this level raise Yughur instruction as a challenge for learning in Mandarin.

At the junior secondary level, a total of five challenges to Yughur instruction, and an average of 3 challenges per teacher were raised. All teachers questioned whether there was sufficient interest in studying Yughur. One teacher speculated that students had little special interest in learning Yughur as a heritage language or second language, and would be no more interest in learning this language than a foreign language. Another teacher speculated that without the pressure of preparing for eventual College Entrance Examinations students would not be interested to study. Notably a Tibetan teacher was certain that there was interest among Tibetan parents for their children to study their heritage language, but felt that Yughur parents would be opposed to this option. Two of the three teachers questioned the need to teach Yughur at school, since it could be learned at home, and two remarked that the absence of a script was difficulty for teaching Yughur in school, while a third teacher expressed the opinion that teaching based on oral literacy alone was not suitable in school. Thus, teachers interviewed at the junior secondary level exhibit a moderately strong minority language as problem orientation.

However, at the senior elementary level, teachers presented a total of six challenges to Yughur instruction, with an average of 3.7 challenges per teacher were raised. All teachers presented the difficulty of teaching Yughur, two due to the fact that many students know only Mandarin, and one due to the lack of a script. Interestingly, the teacher at a rural school presents no other challenges to teaching Yughur, while two teachers at a town school present four more challenges each. Overall teachers at this level exhibit a moderate to strong minority language as problem orientation; when only the town school is considered, however, teachers interviewed at this level present a strong minority language as problem orientation. A graphic comparison of
the average number of responses associated with each of Ruiz’ language orientations for teachers interviewed by grade level taught is displayed in Figure 67. From an examination of Figure 67, the differences in the balance of orientations towards Yughur language among the teachers at the three levels are quite stark.

When language orientations of teachers are compared by school, there are interesting differences that appear, as well as similarities among schools, which are displayed in Tables 59 and 60 and Figure 68. Table 59 and Table 60 present language as right and resource responses, and language as problem responses respectively; Figure 68 displays the same information graphically for ease of comparison. In order to compare degree of orientations, the percentage of the total of all comments made that conformed with each orientation was calculated to ensure comparability since the number of teachers interviewed and the number of comments made differed. When displayed graphically in Figure 68, a notable contrast between, on the one hand, the teachers of the two rural schools, and on the other hand, the teachers of the urban school stands out. The pattern of language orientations of the teachers of the two rural schools is quite similar, with Case 2 school providing fewer responses overall than Case 3 school, but with almost the same degree of language as right orientation and a somewhat weaker language as problem orientation and a moderately weaker language as resource orientation. The urban schools’ teachers stand out in the greater strength of their language as problem orientation, moderately weaker language as right orientation, and an extremely weak language as resource orientation.

Language orientations of minority and Han teachers interviewed also differ somewhat. As is evident from Figure 69, the proportion of statements of minority and Han teachers consonant with a language as right orientation is virtually identical. However, there is a notable
contrast when we compare the proportion of minority and Han teachers’ statements exemplifying a language as problem and a language as resource orientation. The minority teachers’ exhibit a moderate language as problem orientation, while the Han teachers exhibit a strong language as problem orientation. The contrast between the two groups is even starker, however, when we examine statements conforming to a language as resource orientation: slightly over half of all statements of minority teachers conform with a language as resource orientation, while less than 5% of Han teachers’ statements show this orientation.\(^{33}\)

Thus, minority teachers’ overall orientation seems to be that it is the right of minority students to learn their heritage language in school, and although it is somewhat problematic to do so, there are great benefits in doing this that justify the effort. The Han teachers’ overall orientation seems to agree that it is the right of minority students to learn their heritage languages in school, but that there are enormous problems in so doing and relatively little apparent benefit.

The attitude of minority teachers as a group is interesting in that only one of these four can speak a minority language: the Hui have no separate language of their own, and neither Tibetan teacher can speak Tibetan. An additional Yughur teacher was interviewed at another school. Of the 4 minority teachers interviewed whose ethnicity has its own language, one can speak his heritage language fluently, one has moved to another district and now speaks her heritage language with errors more typical of young children, and two cannot speak their heritage language, although one attempted to learn it by herself during junior secondary school. Although three of the four have experienced some language loss, and two have undergone

---

\(^{33}\) All language as resource statements at this school were made by one teacher, a former minban teacher, a Han native of Qinghai province. .
complete language shift to Mandarin, they are still supporters of school-based efforts in support of Yughur language maintenance, and do not accept language shift and loss as inevitable.  

**School Administrators**

School administrators interviewed display a range of orientations towards the inclusion support the inclusion of Yughur language classes in the school curriculum. Of the administrators of three schools interviewed, the principal of the Case 1 school stated that they should in future offer Yughur language school curriculum, the principal at Case 3 said they are already planning to do so, while those interviewed at Case 2 mentioned only that they already taught Yughur culture in Mandarin, but declined to state whether or not they should teach Yughur language as part of school curriculum. Table 61 presents a summary of administrators’ responses concerning the teaching of Yughur language in their schools.

As is evident from Table 61, there is a weak consensus on the desirability of teaching Yughur in the schools, with the administrators interviewed from two of three schools supporting Yughur instruction in principle. However, only one school administration has begun planning to implement Yughur instruction, while a second school reserves this for the future and another is silent on whether they ought to teach Yughur at their school. When the justifications administrators provided for the provision of Yughur instruction are examined, we find that consensus is even weaker or non-consistent. While administration of a Yughur majority rural school provided two language as right justifications related to group and individual identity and one language as resource justification related to increased knowledge; the administration of the urban school provided only one language as right justification related to group identity and a

---

34 The Sarigh Yughur teacher interviewed in the 4th school visited is ambivalent towards Yughur: she regrets her weakening Yughur proficiency, but also resents the ridicule she sometimes encounters on visiting her home district from those who have better Yughur, but weaker Mandarin.
language as right justification related to student interest, and the administration of a Yughur minority rural school mentioned that the use of Yughur was a pedagogical resource. It is noteworthy that two administrators mentioned that Yughur instruction was a pedagogical resource not in itself, but for the learning of Mandarin, and of the national curriculum in Mandarin.

Table 61 presents the challenges of including Yughur instruction in the school curriculum that were raised by administrators at the three schools. The numbers of challenges of Yughur language instruction identified are suggestive of the degree to which the administration of a school shares a *Yughur language as problem* orientation. The most common challenges, both raised at two of three schools, were related to the lack of any need for teaching Yughur in school, or the difficulty of teaching Yughur at school. There was said to be no need at the urban school, because Yughur students nowadays are said to understand enough Mandarin to be able to be taught exclusively in that language; and by implication, no use at the rural Yughur minority school, since, as one curriculum committee member opined, such small languages would inevitably disappear. A comparison of administrators’ orientations towards Yughur language instruction at the three schools is displayed in Figure 62. In this case, the overall pattern of the rural Yughur minority school’s administrators and that of the urban school principal are quite similar overall with a language as problem orientation dominant at both schools.

**Discussion**

*Yughur Parents*

In comparison to Yughur parents’ experience, their children’s schools have seen an increase in recognized standards of quality of materials, resources and facilities and teachers’
training. However, there is one aspect of the school experience that has changed from the time parents were in school: the place of the Yughur language in the school and on the school grounds. Many parents, even those who dropped out after Grade 3 just as they were beginning to understand lessons in Mandarin, nevertheless report that they enjoyed going to school. Part of the enjoyment seems to have been the opportunity to play with many other children in the mother tongue. In the past, there were teachers who used Yughur in their teaching took a personal stance of promotion by the example of a non-Yughur state employee using minority language as part of lessons. Other teachers took a tolerance/permission stance, accepting the use of Yughur among students during lessons as a compensatory learning strategy for students with low Mandarin proficiency. Others took a mixed prohibition/permission stance, forbidding the use of Yughur in the classroom, but allowing its use in on the playgrounds. While no overt prohibition of the use of Yughur language in class or on school grounds was observed, little or no minority language use was observed in Sunan county schools studied. Thus, from parents’ experience of education until their children’s experience, a transformation or several transformations have occurred, such that while there are no overt prohibitions, criticisms or punishments, the overt behaviour of minority students is as if there were. The decreased L1 use within schools has created a monolingual environment that does not reflect the actual language sociolinguistic reality outside the school, but may well reflect a future reality, since monistic school language ecology, parents say, is playing a key role in rapidly changing Sunan County’s language ecology. Parents’ wishes for Yughur courses can be seen as a wish for Sunan schools to be good Sunan schools that reflect the realities of local society and do more than mirror monolingual urban schools.

Some parents reported the experience of being submersed in an exclusive Mandarin environment for several years without understanding the teacher, but only those who were
forbidden to ask their comrades for explanation in their mother tongue looked back on that experience with bitterness. Parents have stopped using their own language to try to prevent their children from falling behind others and having to experience several years of limited understanding. The effect of the process of adapting to expectations of exclusive use of the dominant language in school is vividly captured by a Louisiana poet:

I will not speak French on the school grounds. I will not speak French on the school grounds.
I will not speak French ...
Hé! ils sont pas bêtes, ces salauds.
Dans n’importe quel esprit.
Puis là, ça fait plus mal.
Et on speak pas French on the school grounds.

(Harceneaux, 1980, p. 16, as cited in Ryon, 2005, p. 64)

It seems that in their efforts to have their children avoid such shame, Yughur parents are complicit in a greater shame in their community’s eyes: the killing of their language by their own actions. While no parent stated this directly, it is quite possible that they see the monolingual, monocultural policy of local schools as responsible for their social, cultural and linguistic dilemma, and thus wish to involve the schools in the solution.

It seems that in the past Sunan County elementary schools attended by Yughur students were not exclusive Mandarin sites: most were located in small settlements in rural areas, not too far from children’s homes, and attended by a Yughur majority. According to Yughur scholar He Weiguang (1999), a distinctive feature of traditional Yughur socialization is the small size of the family group, its relative isolation from other family groups, and the strong dependence of children and attachment to their parents. This may explain why Yughur parents interviewed

---

35 I will not speak French on the school grounds. I will not speak French on the school grounds. I will not speak French ... I will not speak French. Well, they are not stupid, those bastards. After a thousand times it will start to sink in to any one’s mind. It causes pain, it causes shame, and then one day, it doesn’t hurt anymore. It becomes automatic. And we don’t speak French on the school grounds, and anywhere else at all.
reported that they enjoyed the experience of school: as prominent or even more prominent in their positive memories of their schooling than lessons were informal interactions with classmates, such as extracurricular singing of Yughur songs, wrestling etc. A great deal of the pleasure of schooling seems to have derived from the opportunity to meet and play with large numbers of other children in free time before and after class and during breaks; thus, expansion of modern schooling in the Yughur-promotion policy phase seems to have altered Yughur socialization, decreasing opportunities for interaction in the mother tongue with age mates.

**Yughur Students**

Yughur student interest in learning their nationality’s culture through traditional oral literature in their heritage language is in accordance with the philosophy of quality education for all-round development, which suggests that students need to develop esthetic appreciation and their personal interests through education. Furthermore, the little negative response among Yughur students towards learning Yughur was directed at the expectation that it would be taught in a manner more in accord with examination-based education than with quality education for all-round development: that is, they see Yughur language and culture as interesting, even fun. Nevertheless, a small change in attitude is apparent as some of the children take on attitudes from examination-based education: no effort should be made that is not extrinsically awarded, either now in terms of marks and teachers’ praise, or later in terms of entry to “good” schools and later universities, and finally in terms of high salaries. A few children remarked that Yughur learning was too hard and / or that there was no point to it.
Administration

Language orientations of administration differ widely from school to school. The Case 1 principal is strongly orientated to a Han language as right and Yughur language as problem view, and is weakly orientated towards Yughur language as right and as resource. This is consonant with his stated views on education for quality, pointing out proudly that his school is to be compared favourably with the best schools in the regional centre, and is perhaps better than they are. Clearly, he refers to urban schools and the national curriculum as the standard by which his school is measured. To this end, knowledge about Sunan and Yughur culture learned in Mandarin is supportive of this greater goal. While acknowledging the obligation in principle of schools in Sunan to teach such content, including language, his references to Yughur language courses as potential future courses seem to indicate that his attitude towards the school curriculum policy is partially compliant: they have implemented non-controversial courses such as art and music. His school had complied with Sunan County Education Bureau policy that Sunan schools should introduce courses with Yughur language content by offering one special interest class from 2003-2004 outside classroom hours. However, this course is said to have failed due to a combination of factors: some parents said their children did not learn enough; some students were not willing to continue the course; and some teachers and (Yughur) parents opposed the study of Yughur language in school. Since then, school curriculum on Yughur culture and language have not been opened. It is noteworthy that some teachers and parents referred to the previous Yughur language experimental class at the school, but the principal himself did not do so. It might seem that the principal is opposed personally to the teaching of Yughur at his school, but the fact that his school was the only one as of Spring 2007 to have attempted to implement Sunan County’s policy on introducing Yughur courses makes it uncertain whether the principal’s lack of overt support in interviews for Yughur local curriculum
is due to his personal views or his assessment of what the current balance between pro- and con-
factions among both parents and teachers allows him to support. It is also noteworthy that he
claims that the school should open courses in Yughur culture and even language, but he mentions
no plans at his school to do so for the immediate future. Hi attitude towards school curriculum in
Yughur culture and language seems to resemble that of a Sunan County Education Bureau
official towards school-based curriculum initiatives who said, that their attitude was “not to
encourage, nor to oppose nor to concern ourselves [with this]” (Li et al., 2006, p. 262).

**Teachers**

Language orientations of teachers are intermediate between those of parents and students
and administrators, and also seem to vary with the school. Thus, the preponderant majority of
teachers point out the benefits to Yughur students in learning national curriculum in Chinese of
supplementing individual lessons with knowledge derived from Sunan County and the Yughur
ethnicity. Most teachers advocate a transactive approach in which learning national curriculum
content is supplemented with students’ prior knowledge of their place and ethnicity. This initially
seems to place them within a “Language as Resource” orientation; however, the majority of
teachers surveyed are monolingual in Chinese and incapable of implementing mixed bilingual
education in their classes. Moreover, the perspectives of most teachers seem to treat language
and culture as separable. Thus, they state that they are in favour of Yughur students learning in
Yughur in school, which seems to place them in a “Language as Right” orientation. However,
the number of qualifications and reservations made by teachers concerning the difficulty of
implementing minority language courses in Sunan County schools and the possible negative
impact of on learning national curriculum indicates that, considered as an entire embedded case,
teachers display a much greater minority “Language as Problem” orientation.
Orientations to Quality in Education

Transmissive Chinese as Right Orientation

In Sunan Yughur Autonomous County, three discourses about quality in education in a multiethnic, multilingual context have been identified. The first one is an unempirical, idealist treatment of social diversity as if it did not exist or did not matter. Knowledge is treated as unified and transmitted through the curriculum and pedagogy accordingly. Within this discourse, minority knowledge has no place within schools which are sites devoted to the faithful transmission of knowledge determined authoritatively and elsewhere, since knowledge is not created in Sunan County, nor for that matter in Zhangye prefecture or Gansu province. In theory, although China is enacting ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’, there are no local characteristics of knowledge under this view, and thus, no Chinese knowledge as such: knowledge is universal, belonging to all equally and to none in particular.

This is not to say that such transmissive discourses are necessarily assimilationist; in the sense that assimilation means forced abandonment of minority characteristics, where force is understood to involve overt punishments. No minority parents or students have reported current examples of punishment or ridicule of minority students for their cultural differences or language comparable to those some parents endured in school. Nevertheless, there is a weaker notion of coercion which does not rely on overt punishment or ridicule to achieve pressure on minority students and parents to assimilate within school grounds. While it is forbidden to discriminate or show prejudice towards students classified by their ethnic background, there is no such restriction on distinguishing students by academic ability, or by social/occupational class.

Thus, within Sunan schools, the practice of tracking students by ‘ability’ persists. Classes, or groups within classes, are separated according to teacher’s perceptions of ‘ability’. As
illustrated in Gladwell’s *Outliers* (2008), small differences in performance at an early age that lead to differential treatment for years thereafter largely produce the differences they perceive to be responding to. Many Sunan teachers in classroom observations were observed to always ask questions of the same rows of students, repeatedly omitting to question one or more rows. Teachers also responded that they had difficulties teaching ‘village’ or ‘rural’ or ‘herders’ children, since their reaction time was particularly slow. These non-ethnic categories lump Han farmers’ children together with Yughur herders’ children, and thus do not discriminate on purely ethnic criteria. Nevertheless, there is little recognition that the way these children are separated from other tracks and taught in a way that does not respond effectively to their perceived weakness perpetuates and may even exacerbate these minor initial differences. There is further little recognition of the effect of language difference on Yughur herders’ children’s experience of and performance in the classroom, nor much sign of pedagogy that recognizes language differences in the classroom and exploits them as resources.

Initial expectations were that observations could be made of Yughur-Mandarin code-switching in class and on school grounds, but no instances of linguistic minority children speaking a language other than Mandarin amongst themselves, and only one instance of a teacher using or referring to a local minority language in the classroom were noted. Thus, despite a near 50% minority population overall, schools and the town have clearly become Mandarin-dominant sites, and thus without overt language policy forbidding minority language, even in the presence of a overt permission to uses minority languages, a Mandarin-only hegemony has been achieved

---

36 Gladwell reported on research that a statistically significant number of professional hockey players were born in the months of January / February, a result produced by the January 1st cut-off date for placement in age levels beginning as young as 3 or 4 years of age. Older players are already somewhat taller and better co-ordinated on average on average than younger players, and are selected for extra attention at a very young age. An initial minor difference, which is not significant when controlling for age in months, becomes a significant “month of birth” advantage as a result of the ability streaming current in the Canadian minor hockey system.
in two of three schools studied. Only in the third school, in a Yughur majority region, was Mandarin-Yughur bilingualism observed: in public, on the school grounds, and in one of the two classrooms observed.

Within this transmissive Mandarin as right orientation, there is also a notion of interference of languages of bilingualism as necessarily subtractive: to teach Yughur in schools is to reduce learning of Mandarin, which is to reduce students’ access to the national lingua franca, precluding them from participation in modern education and the national economy, and thus relegating minorities to a secondary status, if not as hewers of wood and drawers of water, as herders of cattle and shearsers of sheep. Thus, this orientation echoes liberal political science arguments of scholars such as David Laitin for the primacy of English-medium education and the harm inherent in bilingual education for minority students in the United States. It is important to note that this orientation is often held by members of minorities themselves: Rodriguez in the United States, considered by some an example of a model Mexican-American, who has adapted to the modernity of US life by shedding his pre-modern (Mexican) characteristics, seen by others as a deracinated sell-out who must advocate for assimilationist education to justify his own experience, is a well-known case in point.

Ba Zhanlong (2007) presents the struggle over Yughur language courses in Sunan County as an intra-Yughur debate. Although the data do not provide evidence for strong views against Yughur language instruction in schools among Yughurs who are well educated, proficient in Mandarin, successful in their careers, and who have left behind Yughur language and perhaps culture, it seems reasonable to infer that a portion of the Yughur community does fit this description. Of course, Hansen in her ethnographic research, has identified minorities who have undergone a high level of submersion education as not identifying strongly with their ethnic
group (1999). Thus, transmissive methods in Mandarin submersion, when they work, may produce rejection of home language and identity. So, while coerced abandonment of cultural and linguistic identity is forbidden in China, it can be argued that the continuance of transmissive models of “examination-based education” with minority students, which do not refer to home culture or language and where models of compulsory education break the home-school-community connection at progressively younger ages, creates such pressure on minority children to conform to the dominant model. Indeed, while minority children may, many choose not to, use their language in school, on the playground and in dormitories.

Where social pressure and competition for school success predominate, and where parents and educators alike see the mother tongue as the key barrier to future success and happiness, and where parents themselves experienced psychological distress through their low Mandarin proficiency as students, it is not surprising that many parents also choose to cease to speak their own language with their children. Under these circumstances, a powerful implicit promotion of Mandarin policy in schools, communities and even in Yughur homes is evident, all through individual choice and no overt coercion. Nevertheless, the language pressure is so strong and the evidence of the study so clear that many Yughurs do not desire language shift, but feel no other choice, that we cannot but conclude that there is within this discourse an implicit policy of linguistic assimilation.

However, there are circles in government and among educational researchers that believe in the provision of minority language education, particularly in cases of language endangerment. If Sunan County and its school system do nothing while the language dies, there will be concern about how this will be received not only within Sunan County, but elsewhere in China and internationally. Yet there is a risk associated with the provision of Yughur language courses
within a Mandarin dominant transmission orientation. First of all administrators and teachers will be doing so out of a sense of compliance more than out of conviction that it ought to be done. Secondly, language teaching within this orientation often focuses more on learning about language than actually learning its use. As we have seen in Martin’s report on Inuktitut instruction, and in Ba Zhanlong’s report on a previously failed experimental Sarigh Yughur language programme, it is difficult to revitalize a language by boring and frustrating children with meaningless memorization of vocabulary and difficult vocabulary with no pay off in the pleasure of learning and using the language itself. Furthermore, reports on compulsory transmission style instruction of Kyrgyz as a heritage language in the Soviet found that it led to trite memorization of folkloric facts. We have already seen hints of this approach in Case 2. Thus, following Ryle’s (2000/1949) distinction between knowing that and knowing how, children are taught to be proud that Sarigh Yughur has a unique numbering system, but do not learn how to count in the language, or communicate in any way at all. Thus, while supporters of Yughur-Mandarin bilingual education may deplore the attitude of transmissive educators within this model of education, it is essential that schools where this orientation is dominant not be compelled to provide Yughur instruction, for, if they do, the results will be mediocre or worse, and yet be blamed not on the quality of their implementation of bilingual education but on the very concept.

**Transactive Chinese as Right Orientation; Yughur Culture and Language as Means**

This orientation is dominant among some educators, but is rarer among students and parents, but by no means the exclusive orientation of teachers. A second orientation is Mandarin dominant transactive orientation to minority knowledge. A considerable number of educators have a basic orientation that universal knowledge encoded in Mandarin should be dominant in
society and school, yet they hold a quite different orientation towards local knowledge and even language, for they hold no illusions that the transmissive orientation towards this knowledge and language can succeed in its own terms in Sunan County’s circumstances. They argue that universal knowledge is too remote from students’ experience to be assimilated by them and must be mediated via prior knowledge, which is, of course knowledge that derives from the local context. Like the transactive approach to teaching science, children’s understandings must interact with teachers’ knowledge and a good teacher must take children’s understanding into account. Clearly, however, children’s particular local knowledge is used within this orientation instrumentally as a means towards learning universal knowledge and not as something worth learning in school in its own right. Thus, while interaction is central to this notion of teaching and learning, it remains an imbalanced interaction with one side dominant and thus cannot be considered strictly speaking a dialogical approach. In a multiethnic environment such as Sunan County, teaching staff are still predominantly Han nationality, and unable to use local minority languages to mediate learning in the classroom. As we have seen several non-Han teachers in Sunan are also unable to speak their heritage language, and thus have no particular advantage in using local minority language as a tool to improve minority student learning. In an interview, a Yughur cultural researcher explained that the low number of Yughur teachers is not because schools do not recruit them, but because those Yughur whose educational level is high enough to become a ‘qualified’ teacher, education is not an attractive career, and is usually avoided.

Within this orientation, therefore, the only way to include Yughur language in the curriculum is by means of hiring teaching staff that are proficient in oral Yughur. Such staff will not likely be qualified teachers. As a result, although Yughur bilingual education could be implemented by those with a transactive orientation, it clearly would be done out of the belief
that it was a necessary to do so to achieve national curriculum goals and to enhance learning of Mandarin. Yughur knowledge, culture, language and staff teaching this curriculum would clearly be subordinate within this orientation. Thus, revitalization of the Yughur language and Sarigh and Shira Yughurs as communities is not a goal in itself. This would constitute education of Yughurs, partially by Yughurs, but not really for Yughur purposes. Schools then would not be community schools, but still primarily state institutions. Educators within this orientation could be influenced by exposure to literature on the benefits of bilingual education to consider such an approach, but seeing L1 as a means to L2 learning would likely implement a transitional model, in which Yughur instruction is still subordinate to dominant curriculum and language.

**Incipient Transformative Language as Resource Orientation?**

Scholarship on minority language and education in China points out two opposite errors which are more than educational errors, but rather political errors. An overemphasis on Mandarin at the expense of minority heritage languages is termed ‘linguistic assimilationism’, or ‘linguistic integration’, while a emphasis on learning the heritage language at the expense of the national language of wider communication is termed ‘linguistic nationalism’ (Teng, 2001). Teng and Wang (2007) argue that minority students should become bicultural and bilingual persons, thus implying the possibility of navigating the two above extremes, in effect, through strong forms of bilingual education, rejecting the either or logic of most language policy in education in China, as has begun in southwest China (Geary & Pan, 2203; Liu & Zhao, 2005). However, most programmes in China are still either L2 LOI + L1 as a subject or L1 LOI + L2 as a subject.

Yughur parents’ enthusiasm for the inclusion of Yughur language(s) and cultures in local and school curriculum have been termed ‘language nationalism’ (Ba, 2007). Modern, scientific knowledge is mediated through Mandarin; mutual help and respect among nationalities is also
considered to be mediated thorough Mandarin. As Teng uses this term, language nationalism involves a minority community turning its back on both modern China and the modern world, and on the fraternal nationalities in China. Within China’s dirigiste system, this is more than a perverse rejection of beneficial knowledge and skills provided by the state; it has at times been interpreted as damaging to interethnic solidarity, and thus a political mistake.

Significantly, almost all Yughur parents and students, and a large proportion of non-Yughur parents and students, support the learning of Yughur language in school. However, Yughur parents overwhelmingly also report aspirations for their children to continue their education in Mandarin to the highest level possible, post-secondary education. Thus, what they are advocating seems to be not an either or logic of Lx as a right and Ly as a problem, in which the LWC is opposed to the heritage language. Rather, they are advocating their children’s equal right to both Chinese and Yughur language, and the right for each language to be granted equal legal status by using them both in the schools. Many of these parents experienced bilingual education in a weak form when many teachers were bilingual and they were able to use their language in class and on school grounds as they wished. Furthermore, many Yughur parents are bilingual and undoubtedly some of them exhibit additive bilingualism, with balanced oral if not written bilingual proficiency. Thus, within the Yughur community exemplars exist of the potential of achieving additive bilingualism, and the experience of relatively successfully mixed bilingual education. In Case 3 it may be recalled, a quadrilingual family ecology was encountered in which language diversity as such was valued: members of the family were proficient in Sarigh Yughur, Tibetan and Mandarin, and their child was developing English proficiency at school.
Thus, bilingualism and even trilingualism among northwest China’s minorities is not an unknown condition, and as Hansen (1999) and Ma (2007) document, is also much more frequent among rural Han who have been living among north-western minorities for generations than for urban Han.

Sunan County is also traditionally multilingual: Sarigh and Shira Yughur used Tibetan as a higher language of learning and religion, and one group of Shira Yughur are reported to have shifted to Tibetan as their prime language; in Dahe district, settled by both Shira and Sarigh Yughur, bilingualism in these two languages is reported; in Baiyin Autonomous Mongolian Township, a small population of Mongolian speakers is surrounded by speakers of Shira Yughur, a Mongolic language, and some Mongolian-Shira Yughur bilingualism is evident. 37

Thus it seems that among Yughurs advocating for Yughur curriculum there is a conception of two languages as right, rather than one language as right, one as problem, and an incipient language as resource orientation. More significantly, there is also an incipient transformative orientation to language, culture, knowledge and identity, for these parents are arguing for a model of additive bilingualism, multiculturalism and modernization through both minority and majority language and culture. This model parallels Teng Xing’s arguments for a middle course between Mandarin assimilationism and narrow Yughur language nationalism, and yet was not argued for in terms that suggest awareness of the theoretical models. Nevertheless, arguments for two languages, mention of bilingual education that is successful in other

---

37 In Zhangye city, I met a group of Kazakhs from Xinjiang speaking Kazakh in a café; they told me that they came to Sunan annually to participate in sheep shearing. As their language is Turkic, it is possible that they could communicate adequately with Sarigh Yughurs using each other’s languages; it is also possible that they used Chinese as a lingua franca. Regrettably, I did not ask how they communicated with Yughurs.
jurisdictions in China as well as memories of previous bilingual education in Sunan County suggest that there is an implicit model in the ideas expressed by Yughur parents.

Two-way dual language bilingual education is a strong form of enrichment bilingual education (Freeman, 2008). The fact that a noticeable number of non-Yughur parents and students express interest in learning Yughur language(s), suggests that it might be possible to implement this form of bilingual enrichment education as a model for Yughur inclusion in the school curriculum.
Chapter Ten:  
Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter will first discuss the contributions of the study and its limitations; then, point out several policy implications of the study. The chapter will conclude with some questions for further research in the education of non-dominant language groups in China, such as the Yughurs of Sunan County, and a discussion of the role of research and theory in the development of educational models for non-dominant groups in China that satisfy the quality perspectives of all local stakeholders, primarily those of language minority students, parents and communities.

Contributions of the Study

As an exploratory study, the contributions of the study to the research literature are several. The study’s prime contribution is methodological. Limited use of multiple case study method using quantitative and qualitative data, particularly on voices of stakeholders has been made in China. The study of stakeholders exemplified methods recommended by the Ministry of Education in deliberating on school-based curriculum, allowing local participants a voice (Yang & Zhou, 2002). The use of multiple embedded cases and sites allows for triangulation of sites and stakeholder groups permitting greater confidence in findings that extend across cases.

A significant contribution of the study is the application of questions and principles deriving from debates on quality in education in China and extending them to minority education. A further contribution is the identification of research from a range of contexts outside China on curriculum reform, rural education, development education, nomadic education, bilingual education and language policy, and applying this research to a critique of minority education, bilingual education and language revitalization in China. Particularly
important is the application of SBCD reform principles in China to minority cultural and linguistic revitalization efforts.

**Limitations of the Study**

There were several limitations to the study. First as an exploratory case study, generalizability to other contexts is restricted. Although the scope of the study was broad, including multiple embedded cases and multiple sites, there were some limitations in the selection of participants. Self selection of participants may have limited the range of opinion identifiable by the study. The number of minority teachers was small, such that random selection of teachers from volunteers led to no minority teachers being selected in Case 1; in subsequent cases, purposeful selection of minority teachers was necessary to ensure that some minority teachers were represented in the sample.

The requirement for parental permission for children’s participation may have limited the representation of rural children living in dormitories in the student sample. A further limitation is the challenge of translation and interpretation. The research speaks and understands Chinese, but is not a native speaker, particularly of northwest Chinese dialect: both interpreters were proficient in Chinese, with one with a rural background quite proficient in northwestern rural vernacular, and the second from an urban background was less familiar with northwestern rural dialects. Both interpreters had some limitations in their English proficiency. Nevertheless, transcription of interviews in Canada allowed for further verification of participants’ meaning. Of course, the major effect of language limitations was in the field, occasionally affecting the ability to frame follow-up questions.

A related limitation is the greater dependence on English language than Chinese language literature. A final limitation is the outsider status of the researcher. Some aspects of the context
were not familiar to the researcher that could not be compensated for by literature review. On the other hand, outsider status allowed a fresh view to be brought to taken for granted situations.

**Implications for Policy Development, Implementation, Assessment, and Revision**

The findings have identified three approaches of school administrators and educators towards the new central policy empowering them to take a greater role in curriculum making. This devolution of curriculum authority to the local level has also implied a further devolution of curriculum authority in that it involves study of the local context and may include consultation with community stakeholders, including parents and students. The central policy reflects a finding also evident from a review of international literature on curriculum making that centrally planned curricula fail in implementation at the local level in highly diverse societies not only due to the many challenges in local implementation and the myriad differences in local conditions: they also fail because of fundamental flaws in the planning process.

Central plans are made for diverse local communities without knowledge of these communities, on the assumption that aims, objectives and methods determined by the centre for the periphery that have been declared valid in one context must be valid in another context. Nevertheless, there is most likely difference in the understandings of central planners and local implementers and experiencers of the effects of central plans.

Feyerabend argues that there are only three possible options to deal with such differences, “power, theory and an open exchange between the colliding groups” (1987, p. 25). Elaborating further, he compares the approach dependent on power and a theory-based approach:

*The way of power* is simple and quite popular. There is no argument; there is no attempt to understand; the form of life that has the power imposes its rule and eliminates behaviour contrary to it. Foreign conquests, colonization,
developmental programmes and a large part of Western education are examples of it.

*The theoretical approach* does use understanding, but not the understanding of the parties concerned. Special groups, scientists and philosophers among them, study the conflicting values, arrange them in systems, provide guidelines for the resolution of conflicts – and that settles the matter. The theoretical approach is conceited, ignorant, superficial, incomplete and dishonest. (p. 25)

Feyerabend argues that intellectuals often act in service of power by providing a rational structure to justify what the powerful wished to do in any case (pp. 25-30). This form of research is then, a priori and deductive, and leads to foregone conclusions, and thus is an example of rationalizing more than reason. He further argues for research approaches that welcome diversity and pluralism of thought, with dialogue and interaction among contending views, basing his case largely on Mills’ arguments for the necessity of pluralism in science:

First, because a view one may have reason to reject may still be true. ‘To deny this is to assume our own infallibility’. Secondly, because a problematic view ‘may and very commonly does, contain a portion of truth; and since the general and prevailing opinion on any subject is rarely or never the whole truth, it is only by the collision of adverse opinions that the remainder of truth has any chance of being supplied.’ Thirdly, a point of view that is wholly true but not contested ‘will … be held in the manner of a prejudice, with little comprehension or feeling of its rational grounds.’ Fourthly, one will not even understand its meaning, subscribing to it will become ‘a mere formal confession’, unless a contrast with other opinions shows wherein this meaning consists. (Feyerabend, 1987, p. 34).

Feyerabend concludes his argument with the point that a theory can often only be decisively tested through the application of an alternative theory, yet “to forbid the use of alternatives until contrary evidence turns up while still demanding that theories be confronted with facts, therefore, means putting the cart before the horse. And using ‘science’ to denigrate and perhaps even to eliminate all alternatives means using a well deserved reputation to sustain a dogmatism contrary to the spirit of those who earned it’ (p. 34). Medawar further advises that theories can over time become progressively less dependent on particular facts:
As science advances, particular facts are comprehended within, and therefore in a sense annihilated by, general statements of increasing explanatory power and compass whereupon the facts may no longer be known explicitly. In all sciences we are being progressively relieved of the burden of singular instances, the tyranny of the particular. (1967, p. 116, as cited in Feyerabend, 1987, p. 35)

Similarly, central policy in education, however rationally formed and stated, may be developed on the basis of insufficient or inadequate data, and have aims that differ from the aims of the individuals and communities for whom policy is intended. Policy makers, moreover, often rely on government officials at lower levels of government for information on particular conditions that can be used to test the effects of central policy. Such information is of two types, one merely statistical: how many students attend, graduate, advance to the next level of schooling etc; the other, qualitative, the opinions of the local community. Both types of information are inadequate for central planners to understand the effects of policy in particular areas. Statistical information gives no information on the experience of schooling and little on the content and nature of learning that goes on within schools: it tells us that x% of children are enrolled, y% are attending and z% have completed elementary school. Since information is largely restricted to these quantifiable measures, planning is done in terms of numerical objectives: increase the completion rate of compulsory schooling, for example. This can be done in numerous ways, some of them with an effect contrary to the intentions of “Education for All” (UNESCO, 2000).

Of course, central policy makers also rely on local officials to communicate central policy to the local level and to communicate local opinion to central policy makers. Local decisions should be made based on an interaction between central policy, and local conditions, including local opinion. Local officials have the right, termed in Chinese, ‘yindizhiyi”, to modify central plans according to local circumstances, and should take into account local opinion in
making decisions and implementing policies. However, local decisions to convert L1 dominant schools to L2 dominant schools or to shift from bilingual to L2 submersion programmes have all been justified by statements that local opinion demanded this. Moreover, the method of gathering local opinion and negotiating among contending views on what policy should be, and how it should be implemented differs from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

Blachford (1998) spent 6 months in the field interviewing local officials on their deliberation process in determining local language in education policy: whether to institute submersion, L1 or L2 dominant bilingual programmes; early or late transitional, or maintenance, bilingual education programmes. Three types of local policy makers and local implementers of central policy were identified: “centre agents”, who turn their locality into a “showcase” of fidelity in transmitting central policy to their region; “regional defenders”, who act as representatives of local interests and concerns, sometimes putting their career at risk, expressing doubts about, or even criticizing, central policy when it is seen as not suited to the local context, or contrary to the interests of the local population; finally, there are “survivors”, who sometimes support central policy, sometimes local interests, according to the day-to-day balance among the other two groups (p. 287).

It might be expected that Han officials appointed from outside the locality would be “centre agents” and “regional defenders” would be local minority officials. Yet Blachford found additional complexity. As Harrell and Ma (1999) and Hansen (1999) have found, members of minority groups who have succeeded in the school system have done so by acculturation towards the dominant group culturally and linguistically, and thus while they are “representatives” of their nationality, they are hardly representative. Blachford found that “regional defenders” complained that despite rules of representation on local autonomous organs that guaranteed a
majority membership selected from designated minorities, the orientation of many minority officials led them to act either as centre agents or as survivors.

According to Blachford, local policy makers have to divine which central policies are really “serious”, that is, whether the centre is monitoring policy implementation and rewarding and punishing local officials according to their fidelity in carrying out policy, and which policies are not serious in this sense and can be adapted or even ignored by lower levels. Thus, central policy that schools and local governments must reduce curriculum hours devoted to national curriculum and replace these hours with curriculum they have made themselves presents political challenges to school administrators and teachers. Is this policy serious; that is should centre agents make a showcase of carrying out the development of school-based curriculum? Is it serious in the sense that rewards will flow to those who implement the policy as will punishments to those who ignore it?

Educators interviewed in Sunan County complained about the double bind that they were in: on the one hand, they were expected to implement education for quality, and to develop school-based curriculum; on the other hand, schools, principals and teachers were evaluated by the same criteria of performance on statistical measures of student grades and pass rates as they were under the single national curriculum under so-called “promotion-based” and “examination-based” education. Teachers pointed out that the system of awards and punishments by which individuals, schools and local education bureaux are evaluated continue to reward those who maintain practices from examination-based education and in effect punish those who attempt to implement education for quality and school-based curriculum. Blachford notes however that major reverses in national language policy originated in strong bottom-up pressure on local
officials to complain to the centre about the need for changes (p. 287). Thus, in the absence of serious pressure from above to implement education for quality and school-based curricula, considerable pressure from below would be necessary to induce officials and educators to stray from well-worn paths and experiment with local innovations.

The central Ministry of Education has determined that authority should be devolved to lower levels of authority. While some lower level officials may desire this increased authority, it is equally possible that they do not wish this authority. What does it mean then to be a centre agent, when the centre advocates that the local schools and educational bureaux seek innovative solutions for their local challenges and compare their innovations and compete with each other? Is it any wonder that local officials would say their attitude towards local and school-based curriculum policy initiated by the centre was “not to encourage, nor to oppose or to concern ourselves [with this]” (Li et al., 2006, p. 262).

Nevertheless, the result of this hands-off policy has been to allow several models of local schooling to evolve side-by-side, fulfilling the MOE’s desire that schools develop their own particular characteristics and experiment with local problems so that approaches can be compared and schools can compete with each other. In visiting several schools, each with a slightly different approaching to ‘localization’ of education, the range of interpretations of this policy was broad. Case 1 elementary school has emphasized ‘all-round development’ and ‘creativity’ introducing optional courses in art and music; Case 2 has emphasized local

---

38 The example cited by Blachford is the eventually successful local opposition within Xinjiang to reverse central policy that had changed written Uyghur from Arabic to romanized script. In fact, this was the second reverse of central policy on Uyghur script: under Soviet influence in the 1950s, it was decided that Uyghur should be written in Cyrillic script. Thus official Uyghur script passed through the following stages post-1949: Arabic – Cyrillic – Arabic – Roman - Arabic. Each time a script reform was implemented, elementary school literacy instruction changed such that children educated in the Cyrillic stage, for example, are now functionally illiterate in Uyghur written in Arabic letters.
knowledge and culture and developed a complete set of textbooks for Junior Secondary school, and Case 3 is implementing Sarigh Yughur language courses, while another school in Sunan County has localized the physical education curriculum with minority dances, games and sports.

Over time, these schools may share some ideas, and also compete. Parents who wish their children to receive a standard urban-style monolingual education will send them to the Case 1 school; those who wish their children to study a ‘multicultural’ curriculum will send them to the Case 2 school; those who wish them to receive bilingual education will send their children to the Case 3 school. If students and communities are satisfied with their experience, schools may experience increased enrolments, as students are attracted from one model to another model.

Perhaps, as Blachford has suggested in the case of Xinjiang (1998), sheer demographics play a role in policy making, for in the case of bilingual education in Sunan County, of the three schools studied, it is the Case 3 school, in the district with the largest Yughur majority, where the task is more language maintenance than revival, and a Sarigh Yughur ‘language environment’ exists in the town outside the school, where it has been decided to implement bilingual education. Of course the decision to raise rural school quality by consolidating rural schools as in the USA (Kannapel & DeYoung, 1999), and via boarding schools as was done in the USSR (Niyozov, 2001, in itself alters the demographics and the language environment of language minority communities and their children.

Blachford proposes that Han officials are centre agents, and minority officials are either regional defenders or survivors, yet, with the centre promoting increased local authority, a centre agent can attempt to make his/her classroom, school or education bureau a ‘showcase’ of ‘localism’, ‘pluralism’ and the ‘flower garden’ that is China to the centre. This study suggests there are signs that Sunan County schools are becoming centres of innovation in search of
sustainable minority education models that embody perspectives of quality in education that are suitable for this multilingual, multicultural, multiethnic laboratory of diversity in north-west China.

**Conclusion:**

**Incipient Community Schools in Sunan Yughur Autonomous County**

**Horseback Schools**

Sunan County has a local tradition of linking schooling to the community. From 1965-1978, for example, rather than bringing children to standard schools, schools came to isolated communities in the mountains in the form of ‘Horseback Schools’ (Lan, 2006, p. 106). Itinerant teachers like Methodist preachers rode from one settlement / encampment to another. Thus, children were not required to be removed from the community and brought to a fixed place to receive basic education, remaining in close contact with families and traditional semi-nomadic culture, an example of Krätli’s argument that schooling that adapts to nomadic culture and way of life is more example in attracting and retaining nomadic children in school. Indeed, in the period when the Cultural Revolution was at its height, school enrolments in Sunan County rose.

It is doubtful that horseback schools will ever revive as regular schools. However, the example of the horseback schools as a place where children could learn together while immersed in Yughur traditional culture while living in the grasslands remains as a potential model for Yughur cultural and linguistic programmes for youth while school is out for the summer, which could be used as a means for linguistic and cultural maintenance among rural children who have been away at school, and for revival among urban Yughur children, and of language enrichment for non-Yughurs (see Figure 61 for an idealized image of horseback schools in Inner Mongolia).
**Student Houses as ‘Language Nests’**

Rural families in Sunan County whose children must board at school away from home have been accommodated by a community innovation. Partly in response to the higher cost of boarding at school, partly in response to the cultural isolation of minority students who board at school, parents and grandparents have instituted ‘student houses’ in which several students share a rented space, and are taken care of by family members in turn. Thus, Yughur families have devised a place in which their children can experience familiar culture and language in a space where they can be Yughur in the midst of a Mandarin dominant environment (Minghua, 2006; Ba, 2007). These student houses could potentially to develop into ‘language nests’ (May, 2008).

**Minority Language Preschools**

School operated preschools for minority students are intended as sites for the promotion of Mandarin, to prepare minority-language dominant children for all-Mandarin instruction in Grade 1. Since the main intention is to teach L2, no L1 language support is provided in this model of the preschool. An alternate model for preschool education is for minority students to be taught in their L1. The Sunan government opened a single such preschool in the county town in September 2007, with Sarigh Yughur, Shira Yughur, Tibetan, Mongolian and Chinese sections.

**Paraprofessional Instructors**

Improvement of ‘quality’ through increased qualifications of teachers and higher standards of schools have led to the closing of most lower elementary ‘teaching points’ and ‘people-run’ schools in villages and isolated settlements, and the laying off of formally unqualified teacher, thus apparently reducing the number of bilingual teachers. Thus, the fact that the principal in Case 3 school is considering to use community members as paraprofessional
teachers is a measure that allows Yugur proficient instructors to be found. As the principal remarked, although there are ‘qualified’ Yugur teachers, most of them have been linguistically assimilated. Continued insistence on ‘standards’ in the name of quality is tantamount to a policy promoting dominant-language teachers and merely ‘tolerating’ teachers proficient in Yughur.

**Teacher Education or Re-Education?**

School-based curriculum developed requires cooperation between parents’, students and educators, and a good deal of mutual trust for this cooperation to be effective. At the same time, relations between teachers and parents, particularly between dominant group teachers and minority group teachers have been characterized as exhibiting considerable misunderstanding and even mistrust. Multicultural and bilingual education focusing on minority students require that trust be established.

Several approaches exist for improving relations between dominant group teachers and minority group students and their families. The community school approach is to ensure that the minority group has significant representation in school governance, curriculum development and on the teaching staff. An alternate approach has been methods such as anti-racist education in pre-service and in-service teacher development. While many have advocated anti-racist education of dominant group members, others have pointed out considerable challenges in its successful implementation, including resistance from mainstream teachers that their behaviour and pedagogical practice in any way constitutes racism. For minority educators to ascribe treatment of minority students by mainstream education and dominant group educators as prejudiced or discriminatory is quite provocative in China. In effect, such an ascription is to characterize mainstream educators’ behaviour as contrary to regulations requiring that interethnic solidarity be maintained and that discrimination is forbidden. This ascription could itself be
termed as against the interests of national unity. Nevertheless, there are non-Yughur educators who exhibit a variety of personal stances towards minority language cultures ranging from tolerance to permission to promotion. Needless to say non-Yughur teachers who exhibit a promotion stance towards Yughur may find it easier to establish effective dialogue with Yughur parents, students, teachers and community paraprofessional staff.

**School Choice or System Reform?**

The central policy of SBCD has stated that one of its aims is for schools to establish their own distinct characteristics. This is reminiscent of Ralph Tyler’s recommendation that a school establish its own philosophy of education that distinguishes it from that of other schools (1949). It is evident that schools in Sunan County are beginning to establish an individual character of their own. Clearly, the three schools examined in this study have distinctive approaches to education, particularly in their approach to Yughur language and culture. Side by side are found a school that is based on mainstream education, monolingual multicultural education and bilingual education. Thus, the question for Yughur parents becomes whether to focus their demands for Yughur language inclusion at the level of the individual school or at the level of the county education system as a whole. The experience of the experimental Sarigh Yughur program reported by Ba shows the consequences of imposing an innovation in an incompatible context. With appropriate curriculum and materials development, pedagogical training, and community and staff support, the new mother tongue preschool and the Case 3 Yughur language classes may serve as experimental schools and as centres of innovation diffusion to other schools.
Ruiz has pointed out that ‘empowerment’ of minority students and communities can be understood in two ways: in an active sense, they are in a state in which they have power; in a passive sense, they have been empowered by others. He argues that it is not enough for the education system, a school or a teacher to create empowering conditions. They must in some sense create it themselves (Ruiz, 1991), or as Cummins (2000) argues, in equal partnership with teachers. However, concerned local educators working in partnership with minority communities have little information on effective models of community schools. Within China, the term community school echoes min-ban or people-run schools, considered by many to be ‘low-quality schools’; in the words of the education official quoted by Pepper (1996), ‘Better no school than a low-quality school’.

Despite the incipient language as resource orientation of many Yughurs parents and students and of some teachers and their desire for balanced bilingualism, the familiar models of ‘bilingual education’ are relatively weak forms: mixed bilingual education, and Mandarin plus Yughur as a “subject”. They have heard rumours of bilingual education programmes in other parts of China, but apparently have no knowledge of bilingual education and multicultural education programmes outside China. Similarly, educators generally exhibit little knowledge of bilingual education models as practiced in China or elsewhere. Parents have little knowledge of theoretical approaches supporting bilingualism through family language policies such as “one language, one parent” (Barron-Hauwaert, 2004), but they have stumbled upon the choice between a two-parent-Mandarin model and a one-parent Yughur/one-parent-Mandarin model. Nonetheless, knowledge that the “one language, one parent” model has worked elsewhere would certainly bolster supporters of Yughur use within the community.
Cummins (1999, 2000) argues that policy deliberations should not only relate research on the ground and policy, but apply a systematic theory to data and policy options to inform the process. There is little awareness among policy makers of any systematic theory that can be applied to their own research and policy questions. Current research on bilingual education in China focuses on Mandarin-English bilingual education in urban schools and universities. Thus, at the moment, the Western literature on the effect of various types of curriculum, pedagogies and language in education policies is little applied in China. Since minority education affects only 10% of the population, but in provinces like Gansu, affects a larger population, there is a need for provincial departments of education and universities to work in collaboration with local communities, educators and education bureaux to gather information on a variety of approaches to minority education, the theoretical bases that support these approaches and research methods that can be applied in these regions.

Northwest Normal University in Gansu province has begun a series of such investigations in minority districts of Gansu and Qinghai provinces on quality education, the implementation of school-based curriculum and the potential in this region for the development of multicultural education. These initiatives are a beginning attempt at establishing a knowledge base of the state of minority education and minority education research in northwest China. The research relies mainly on quantitative methods, but also does use some qualitative methodology, particularly in interviews with teachers and educational administrators. However, as Ruiz advises, these developments are part of establishing conditions in which minority communities take it upon themselves to work towards the ‘schools they need’.

It has often been argued that non-dominant language communities ‘choose’ to undergo language shift. This case study of three schools in Sunan Yughur Autonomous County, Gansu,
China has demonstrated that perspectives towards education, cultural and linguistic maintenance of non-dominant language groups are quite complex. On the surface, the Sarigh and Shira Yughur have ‘integrated’ into the mainstream, and have been presented as a showcase example of a modernizing minority, as exemplified by their commitment to high educational attainment for their children, and higher levels of average educational attainment than most minorities in China, and at some levels of education, higher than the majority Han. Yet under this model of integration lie contradictory voices; while parents have abetted their children’s language shift to Mandarin as part of a ‘folk’ strategy for educational success, there is broad dissatisfaction within the community with the unintended consequences of the strategy: rapid language shift and partial language loss in one generation. Parents see schools as a necessary part of the solution; perhaps schools are expected to actually teach children Yughur, or perhaps parents are seeking recognition for their language through its shared status with Mandarin in their children’s schools.

Canagarajah (2005) argues that what is occurring in sites such as Sunan County is what he calls “the rise of the local”, which requires a process of reconstruction of local knowledge (pp. 7-9). Ruiz (1991) has said this process requires conditions from above that permit local knowledge to take its place, but that ultimately the work of reclaiming the local belongs to the locals themselves. This study has shown that a strong desire to reclaim Sunan County’s local knowledge, heritage, culture and language is evident among local stakeholders. This desire to reclaim the local in no way suggests a monocultural, monolingual ethos. Instead, local residents are striving to reconstruct a multilingual, multicultural Sunan County on additive principles.

Recent changes to Sunan County’s basic law were announced January, 11, 2009, formally committing the Sunan Yughur Autonomous County government to the provision of minority language preschool and elementary school education (see Table 65), as well as research
supporting protection of the Yughur languages. These changes represent bottom-up change in local language-and-education policies, responding to the desires of the local community. Hornberger (2008) asks, “Can schools save indigenous languages?” Sunan County, Gansu and North-western Chinese schools are now in a position to ask, and perhaps answer, this question.
References


Bray, M., Ding, X., & Huang, P. (2004). *Reducing the burden on the poor: Household costs of basic education in Gansu, China*. Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre, University of Hong Kong.


Mailisha (2004). Ethnic minority immigrants under the western region development: a report from the Sunan Yughur autonomous county. *Inner Asia, 6* (1), 111-118. ABSTRACT.


Pope, M. L., & Scott, E. M. (2003). Teachers’ epistemology and practice. In M. Kompf, & P.M.Denicolo (Eds.), Teacher thinking twenty years on: Revisiting persisting problems and *advances in education* (pp. 91-100). Lisse, Netherlands: Swets & Zeitlinger


Tiemuer (2006). Every nationality has its own “black box”. Yovhur Puchig [Yughur Culture], (1), 41-42.


UNICEF (2002). Education For All: From a girl’s point of view. New York: UNICEF.


Appendix A

Tables

Table 1
Population aged 6 and above in 1990 and 2000 and percent change by nationality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>789,235,125</td>
<td>1,156,700,293</td>
<td>46.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority Population</td>
<td>54,883,511</td>
<td>95,503,957</td>
<td>74.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 2
Issues Related to Compulsory Sedentarised Education of Nomadic Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arguments about Formal Education</th>
<th>Based on Untested Assumptions about Formal Education</th>
<th>Resulting in the Following Problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is a fundamental right of individual children</td>
<td>Practical benefits equivalent to theoretical benefits Leaving children out-of-school is a form of child neglect Schooling invariably benefits disempowered individuals</td>
<td>Conflict of interest with integrating children into pastoral life and legitimates cultural assimilation in the name of children’s rights Assumptions obscure the ideological dimension of education in practice and the social dimension of disempowerment and miss its real causes Assumptions block analysis of education implementation and hinders the understanding of the causes of low enrollment, attendance achievement etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It causes sedentarisation, modernization, national unity, and improved group life and survival</td>
<td>Nomadism is a stage towards sedentarisation, which reduces poverty &amp; raises productivity Modernized pastoralists will abandon nomadism but remain as livestock producers Formal education is additive not subtractive in relation to traditional pastoral expertise</td>
<td>Hinders the understanding of nomads’ actual educational needs and problems Simplistic analysis of poverty demands cultural assimilation in the name of development Educated pastoralists uninterested in herding Schooling is antagonistic to traditional learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Krätli, 2000, p. 16.
### Table 3
**Languages in the Experimental School Curriculum in Niger**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Medium of Instruction</th>
<th>Language as Subject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gr. 1</td>
<td>Indigenous Language</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gr. 2</td>
<td>Indigenous Language</td>
<td>French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gr. 3</td>
<td>Indigenous Language</td>
<td>French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gr. 4</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Indigenous Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gr. 5</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Indigenous Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gr. 6</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Indigenous Language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Hovens, 2002.

### Table 4
**Mathematics Test Scores by Grade, School Type, and Testing Language,**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Ecole Expérimentale (transitional bilingual education)</th>
<th>Ecole Traditionelle (French submersion)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language of Testing</td>
<td>Language of Testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Indigenous Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Indigenous Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gr. 3</td>
<td>5.67</td>
<td>5.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gr. 4</td>
<td>6.78</td>
<td>5.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gr. 5</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>3.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hovens, 2002, p. 258
Note: Grade 3 & 4 Tests are out of a total of 29 points; the Grade 5 Test was out of 16 points).

### Table 5
**Mathematics Test Effect Sizes (Cohen’s d) by Grade, School Type, and Testing Language**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>EE Fr. – ET Fr.</th>
<th>EE IL – ET IL</th>
<th>EE Fr. – EE IL</th>
<th>ET Fr. – ET IL</th>
<th>EE IL – ET Fr.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gr. 3</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gr. 4</td>
<td>-0.28</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>-0.55</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gr. 5</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>-0.40</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bahry, 2005d, Cohen’s d calculated from Table 4
Note: (EE = bilingual education, ET= French education, IL=Indigenous language, Fr.=French).
Table 6
Reading Comprehension Test Scores by Grade, School Type, and Testing Language,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Ecole Experimentale (Transitional bilingual education)</th>
<th>Ecole Traditionale (French submersion)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language of Testing</td>
<td>Language of Testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Indigenous Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gr. 3</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gr. 4</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td>3.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gr. 5</td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean SD Mean SD Mean SD Mean SD

Source: Hovens, 2002, p. 259
Note: Test scores are all out of a total of 10 points.

Table 7
Effect Sizes (Cohen’s d) by Grade, School Type, and Testing Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>EE Fr. – ET Fr.</th>
<th>EE IL – ET IL</th>
<th>EE Fr. – EE IL</th>
<th>ET Fr. – ET IL</th>
<th>EE IL – ET Fr.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-0.33</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bahry, 2005d, Cohen’s d calculated from Table 6
Note: EE = bilingual education, ET = French education, IL = Indigenous language, Fr. = French
Table 8
Concerns of Inuit stakeholders concerning Inuit language and culture in Nunavut schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Concerns</th>
<th>There is a desire among parents for their children to have good quality English and good quality Inuktitut.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The present system, where English is taught exclusively Grade 4-12 doesn’t work: one girl just went south and failed because of limited English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We see the difference in quality [of language] between older and younger people, and elders must be supported to work with teachers to improve the teachers’ quality of language, so that it can be passed on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Younger people can’t understand the elders - and vice versa. The elders’ traditional language may be hard even for some teachers to understand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Concerns</td>
<td>Young people may be turned off when Inuktitut is presented as “hard grammar”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is a lot of interest in … Inuktitut as a second language but everyone knows that the programme is run poorly. It is well known that nothing is every taught in Inuktitut class, so poor and lazy students are attracted to it rather than hard-working students. Whenever we are in Inuktitut class all we ever do is labour-intensive tasks like working in shop or sewing. We used to play soccer. We never discuss the role of Inuktitut in Nunavut government or culture nor do we discuss decision-making processes in the territory. Since Inuktitut is a majority language, and 90% of the students are Inuk, Inuktitut should be treated like any other course, like French or English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does the K-6 curriculum reflect … real Inuit learning styles or is it largely a translation of an English curriculum? For instance, pisit are not to be sung by just anyone, and yet the curriculum recommends them as a teaching tool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns about Non-Inuit Principals</td>
<td>Repulse elders say that “Language is the most important part of the culture” but the school is where the language is threatened. Non-Inuk principals don’t take the language seriously. Some people feel that it is not a priority in the school – “it’s just something people are playing around with”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In Rankin, there is absolutely no promotion of Inuktitut. The school is completely English. There are two different worlds in Rankin…whites and Inuit…and the two languages are seen as in competition with each other, with English being the stronger (rather than a view of positive maintenance bilingualism). Only the French teacher understands what the issue is, that it is not a competition with one language dominating the other. The other white educators can’t seem to understand this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns about Non-Inuit Teachers</td>
<td>White teachers are often uncommitted to the community; but we should try to understand them, and help them to feel more at home in their community. Teachers have trouble relating to parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White teachers need language and cultural orientation - they used to in the old Rankin school, and they do in Cambridge Bay, but not all have this type of orientation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes meetings involving Inuit and Qallunaat [non-Inuit] fail because of (a) the language of the meeting is in English and some Inuit feel intimidated; (b) some Inuit parents feel intimidated because they don’t know much about the school system; (c) different interaction styles: Inuit are very blunt with each other. Qallunaat are “polite” and will only tell privately someone they are wrong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns about Inuit Teachers</td>
<td>Elders see that the lack of support for teachers is a problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inuit teachers see that schools don’t see Inuktitut language as important, and feel that their own role is not taken seriously. They feel that they are not supported. That is why we want the government to take the language seriously in the education system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Every year, I take a course called Inuktitut that is offered in the school and I have noticed that every year, it gets worse and worse. In the beginning, I thought it was pretty normal. But when two of the Inuktitut teachers quit, they hired an unqualified person to take over. He used to be the janitor. I’m not saying a janitor can’t be a good teacher but they should take courses first. We need a bilingual teacher so that the Inuktitut teacher can communicate with the students and help with translations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Martin, 2000, pp. 58, 59, 66.
### Table 9
**Conditions Facilitating Educational Success for Linguistic Minority Students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Ethos &amp; Organization</th>
<th>Treat L1 &amp; L2 as important, and non-dominant language as advantage not liability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide high expectations for success and strong support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide career and study counselling and monitoring of achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum and Pedagogy</td>
<td>Promote L1 throughout curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide a variety of courses in both languages with small class sizes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>Make clear commitment to language minority students’ educational success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Actively demonstrate commitment to language minority student empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Know effective approaches for teaching language minority students’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Parent have contact with teachers and counsellors and participate in meetings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Lucas, Henze and Donato, 1990

### Table 10
**Conditions Facilitating Educational Success for Linguistic Minority Students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Ethos &amp; Organization</th>
<th>All children know, or alternate equally between knowing and not knowing language of instruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum and Pedagogy</td>
<td>Mother-tongue main language of instruction, especially during first 8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreign languages are taught through L1 and/or by teachers who know it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compulsory study of L1 and L2 as subjects through grades 1-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>All teachers are bilingual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Table 11
**Conditions Conducive to Empowerment of Linguistic Minority Students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum and Pedagogy</th>
<th>Home language and culture incorporated into the school curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrators &amp; Teachers</td>
<td>Learning is regarded as more than transmission of knowledge, but requiring the involvement of students as active learners, rather than passive recipients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation takes into account student language proficiency and assesses achievement in the stronger language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Parents are involved in their children’s education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Cummins, 1986.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 12</th>
<th>China’s Population with Complete Primary, Junior and Senior Secondary Education by Residence and Gender (2000 Census)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Percent of China’s Population with Complete Primary, Junior and Senior Secondary Education by Residence and Gender (2000 Census)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All China</td>
<td>94.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cities</td>
<td>97.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towns (Zhen)</td>
<td>96.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townships &amp; Villages</td>
<td>93.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Calculated by author from China, 2002.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 13</th>
<th>New National Basic Education Curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Year</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjects</td>
<td>Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arts, or Music &amp; Fine Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moral Character &amp; Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreign Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>History &amp; Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehensive Practice Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours/week</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual hours</td>
<td>910</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Function of Mandarin</th>
<th>Function of Minority Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Mandarin submersion</td>
<td>All formal curriculum, textbooks &amp; instruction in Mandarin</td>
<td>No support for minority language; local environment may support minority language use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Minority Language + Mandarin</td>
<td>Mandarin subject only</td>
<td>Mother-tongue Education Medium of instruction for all subjects except second language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Mandarin + Minority Language</td>
<td>Medium of instruction for all subjects except mother tongue subject class</td>
<td>Minority language as subject only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Mixed Bilingual Education</td>
<td>Formal instruction in Mandarin</td>
<td>Informal oral explanation to supplement Mandarin instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Transitional Bilingual education</td>
<td>Subject in early grades; later shift to main medium of instruction</td>
<td>Medium of instruction in early grades; later occasional use; rarely used in senior secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Maintenance Bilingual Education</td>
<td>Medium of instruction for some subjects throughout schooling (usually sciences)</td>
<td>Medium of instruction for some subjects throughout schooling (usually humanities)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 15
Percentage of China’s Population with Tertiary Education by Nationality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total ALL</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>Total ALL</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>6.39</td>
<td>13.84</td>
<td>7.45</td>
<td>Yao</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tatar</td>
<td>7.96</td>
<td>13.85</td>
<td>5.89</td>
<td>Qiang</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hezhe</td>
<td>6.35</td>
<td>11.05</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>She</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oroqen</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>8.73</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>Pumi</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbek</td>
<td>6.20</td>
<td>10.41</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>Miao</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xibe</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>8.31</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>Dulung</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daur</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>7.50</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>Jino</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ewenki</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>6.69</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>Bouyei</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>8.38</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>Li</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jing</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>5.37</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>Yi</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreigner</td>
<td>5.66</td>
<td>8.45</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>Gaoshan</td>
<td>9.79</td>
<td>10.22</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchu</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>Dai</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongol</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazak</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>Shui</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mulao</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>Jingpo</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>Achang</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirgiz</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>Hani</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yug[h]ur</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>Blang</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gelao</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>Nu</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naxi</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>Lahu</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hui</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>Va</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uighur</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>Lisu</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bai</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>De'ang</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>Tibetan</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maonan</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>Lhoba</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>-0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhuang</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>Dongxiang</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>-0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tujia</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>Salar</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>-0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dong</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>Baoan</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>-1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajik</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>Monba</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>-1.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Table 19
Sunan County Population and Population Growth from 1954-2006 by Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Yughur</th>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>Other Minority</th>
<th>Han</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Change</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Change</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>7040</td>
<td>3499</td>
<td>1674</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>1499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>11343</td>
<td>4303</td>
<td>3938</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>1600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>21225</td>
<td>9882</td>
<td>3963</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>17578</td>
<td>-3647</td>
<td>4472</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>20402</td>
<td>2824</td>
<td>5064</td>
<td>592</td>
<td>4719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>23518</td>
<td>3116</td>
<td>5697</td>
<td>633</td>
<td>5289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>27396</td>
<td>3878</td>
<td>6876</td>
<td>1179</td>
<td>6021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>30702</td>
<td>3306</td>
<td>6887</td>
<td>-9</td>
<td>6299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>33632</td>
<td>2930</td>
<td>7626</td>
<td>759</td>
<td>7104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>33562</td>
<td>-70</td>
<td>7843</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>7226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>33816</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>8088</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>7449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>35500</td>
<td>1684</td>
<td>8820</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>8390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>35932</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>9577</td>
<td>757</td>
<td>9159</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sarigh Yughur</th>
<th>Uighur</th>
<th>Kazakh</th>
<th>Kyrgyz</th>
<th>Salar</th>
<th>English gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kəsi</td>
<td>kiʃi</td>
<td>kisi</td>
<td>kiʃi</td>
<td>kiʃi</td>
<td>person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mula</td>
<td>bala</td>
<td>bala</td>
<td>bala</td>
<td>bala</td>
<td>child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quləq</td>
<td>quləq</td>
<td>quləq</td>
<td>quləq</td>
<td>quləq</td>
<td>ear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kun</td>
<td>kyn</td>
<td>kyn</td>
<td>kyn</td>
<td>gun</td>
<td>sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>əj ~ ej</td>
<td>əj</td>
<td>əj</td>
<td>əj</td>
<td>əj</td>
<td>moon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>su</td>
<td>su</td>
<td>suw</td>
<td>suu</td>
<td>su</td>
<td>water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ot</td>
<td>ot</td>
<td>ot</td>
<td>ot</td>
<td>ot</td>
<td>fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bar</td>
<td>bir</td>
<td>bir</td>
<td>bir</td>
<td>bir</td>
<td>one</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Chen & Lei, 1985, pp. 48-49.
### Table 21
Ethnic composition of Sunan Yughur Autonomous County by district and township (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Majority Ethnicity</th>
<th>Districts and Townships</th>
<th>Yughur</th>
<th>Han</th>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>Hui</th>
<th>Monguor</th>
<th>Mongolian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunan County</td>
<td></td>
<td>Su</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr><tr>
<td>rnan County</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>23.64</td>
<td>47.82</td>
<td>24.86</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yughur</td>
<td></td>
<td>County Town</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>13.38</td>
<td>63.30</td>
<td>21.16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minghai District</td>
<td></td>
<td>Minghai</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>95.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liánhua</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>10.45</td>
<td>87.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qiántan</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>35.08</td>
<td>64.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Su</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr><tr>
<td>rnan County</td>
<td></td>
<td>County Town</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>63.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yughur</td>
<td></td>
<td>Minghai</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>24.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liánhua</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>18.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qiántan</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>35.08</td>
<td>64.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Yughur</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yughur</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>90.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanglè District</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yangge</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>63.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hóngshíwo</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>18.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qinglóng</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>35.08</td>
<td>64.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dahe District</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jiecágou</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>54.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shuiguan</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>18.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xuequán</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>35.08</td>
<td>64.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Yughur</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yughur</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huángchéng District</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mayíng</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>63.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dongtan</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>26.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huájian</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>3.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yangxiáng</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>26.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dahe District</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yughur</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>54.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qífeng District</td>
<td></td>
<td>Qífeng</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>36.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qíwén</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>36.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qínqíng</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>36.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matí District</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yughur</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dàquángou</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>36.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dàdoumá</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>36.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xishui</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>36.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 22
Operating Buddhist Temples in Sunan County in 1955

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temple</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Lamas</th>
<th>Monks</th>
<th>Novices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kanglong Temple</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matí Temple</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jingguang Temple</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minghai Temple</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hongwan Temple</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changgou Temple</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lianhua Temple</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenshu Temple</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xigou Temple</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhuanlu Temple</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shuiguan Temple</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sunan County, 1984, p. 34.
Table 23
Shira Yughur Proficiency Level by Age Cohort in a Village in Kangle district (N)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Groups</th>
<th>Years Elementary-school-aged(^{39})</th>
<th>Years Junior Secondary-school-aged(^{40})</th>
<th>Total N</th>
<th>10: Very proficient (4)</th>
<th>6-9: Proficient (3)</th>
<th>2-5: Somewhat proficient (2)</th>
<th>0-1: Not proficient (1)</th>
<th>Proficiency Index / 200</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>1990-2002</td>
<td>1996-2003</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>1980-1992</td>
<td>1986-1997</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>1970-1982</td>
<td>1976-1987</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>1960-1972</td>
<td>1966-1977</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>1950-1962</td>
<td>1956-1967</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 60</td>
<td>1940-1952</td>
<td>1946-1957</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Zheng & Gao, 2004, p. 228; Proficiency index calculated by author.

Table 24
Perspectives on learning Yughur in Huangnibao Township, Jiuquan, Gansu\(^{41}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 2. How do you feel about learning Yughur?</th>
<th>Would very much like to learn</th>
<th>Have some interest in learning</th>
<th>Feel indifferent about learning</th>
<th>Do not wish to learn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-40</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 &amp; over</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>75.6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Arslan, 2006a, p. 38.

\(^{39}\) Estimated by author  
\(^{40}\) Estimated by author  
\(^{41}\) Arslan, 2006a, p. 38.
Table 25
Sunan Yughur Autonomous County, selected regulations (1985)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Regulation (clause)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2        | Article 9 | a) Every nationality in the county has the right to use and develop the language of their own nationality  
b) Autonomous organs in carrying out their tasks use common Chinese language and characters |
|          | Article 11 | a) There must be Yughur citizens among the leadership and staff of the county’s courts and police  
b) Every citizen in the county has the right to use the language of his/her nationality in court cases  
c) When in investigating or hearing cases, police and courts must deal with a person not proficient in Chinese language and script, translation must be provided for them |
| 8        | Article 50 | a) The county’s autonomous organs guarantees that each nationality enjoys equal rights, protects and develops inter ethnic socialist relations based on equality, unity, and mutual help. Any discrimination or oppression of any nationality is forbidden; and any behaviour that will harming interethnic solidarity (unity) … is forbidden.  
b) The county’s autonomous organs carry out for the people of every nationality patriotism, communism and minority education policy education. Education officials of every nationality and the masses exhibit mutual trust, mutual aid, and mutual respect for each other's languages, scripts and cultures, and together maintain a stable and unified political situation. |
|          | Article 41 | a) The autonomous organs of the county will deepen the educational reform, and make great efforts to develop minority education, and to gradually implement 9-year compulsory education, popularize junior secondary education and pre-school education and to eradicate illiteracy.  
b) The autonomous organs of the county will select effective methods to implement and conduct a full and partial boarding school system among minority elementary and secondary schools; and will open a <minority> nationality class at every vocational school and general secondary school; students of the <minority> nationality secondary school students from remote, poor, isolated places will receive a subsidy towards their study fees. |
|          | Article 49 | c) The autonomous organs of the county will transmit and support the flourishing of nationalities’ cultural traditions, positively developing literature, art, music, dance possessing Yughur and other nationalities’ special characteristics, gathering minority cultural heritage, preserving important historical sites, cultural treasures and other important historical inheritances |


Table 26
Participants (3 schools + Secondary Participants) by Stakeholder type and Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Yughur</th>
<th>Other Minority</th>
<th>Han</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educators</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 27
Sunan’s County Town: Population and Breakdown by Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Yughur</th>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>Other Minority</th>
<th>Total Minority</th>
<th>Han</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>8490</td>
<td>2275</td>
<td>1386</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>3926</td>
<td>4564</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Table 28
Case 1, Embedded Case 2: Teachers, “What Local <Minority> Knowledge and Culture Should be Included in Local and school curriculum?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Local Knowledge &amp; Culture</th>
<th>Supports Identity formation</th>
<th>Benefits learning process</th>
<th>Provides useful knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1 Teacher Han Female, Sunan</td>
<td>Learn the history of Sunan Learn the culture of their birthplace: Yughur traditions and customs</td>
<td>Increased pride in their own nationality will develop increased self respect; without &lt;this&gt;, they will feel ashamed;</td>
<td>Increased pride in their own nationality will help them study seriously Yughur have many interesting stories; children love interesting things</td>
<td>Most students will live here when they grow up; this knowledge will be helpful for them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2 Teacher Han Female, Sunan</td>
<td>Sunan general knowledge Traditional Yughur and Tibetan customs: food drink, clothing, and pastimes, Yughur traditional stories</td>
<td>Parents teach children relatively little traditional culture</td>
<td>This is a pastoral area; we have to adapt the curriculum: &lt;including local content&gt; to make teaching easier</td>
<td>In the future, the most basic development of their own home district can’t be accomplished without &lt;local curriculum&gt;. So I feel local curriculum is very important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4 Teacher Han Female, Sunan</td>
<td>Traditional Culture: Minority etiquette, customs etc.</td>
<td>Writing compositions about traditional culture inspires students to learn their own customs</td>
<td>Regular curriculum is dry and dull, &lt;so&gt; my students write about traditional culture Children would be interested to learn their own nationality’s stories</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5 Teacher Han Female, Sunan</td>
<td>Mineral production, tourism, mountains, rivers They should learn more about Sunan, its culture, Yughur lifestyle, customs, &amp; its geographic environment Yughur &amp; other nationalities’ songs &amp; singing competitions</td>
<td>It plays a positive role: children can increase their understanding of their own nationality and home.</td>
<td>Supplemeting national curriculum with local content increases students’ ability to accept &lt;the lesson&gt;.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 29
**Case 1, Embedded Case 2: Teachers, “What Local <Minority> Language Should be Included in Local and School Curriculum?”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Grade 1 Teacher Han Female, Sunan</th>
<th>Grade 2 Teacher Han Female, Sunan</th>
<th>Grade 4 Teacher Han Female, Sunan</th>
<th>Grade 5 Teacher Han Female, Sunan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Folk legends and stories</td>
<td>Open Yughur language curriculum</td>
<td>Very important: our school opened a minority Yughur language small interest group</td>
<td>We do not do this now; children would not be interested.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reasons to include local <minority> language in the curriculum**

| Maintain national identity | <Minority> parents don’t want children to forget their nationality; parents want to protect their national group | Very many Yughur children cannot speak their nationality’s language Without Yughur language classes, the language can disappear |

| Increase interest in learning | Children enjoy learning stories & interesting things |  |  |
Table 30
Case 1, Embedded Case 2: Teachers, “What are Difficulties in Including Local <Minority> Knowledge, Culture and Language in Local and School Curriculum?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Grade 1 Teacher Han Female, Sunan</th>
<th>Grade 2 Teacher Han Female, Sunan</th>
<th>Grade 4 Teacher Han Female, Sunan</th>
<th>Grade 5 Teacher Han Female, Sunan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Challenges in including local languages</td>
<td>3/5 types mentioned</td>
<td>2/5 types mentioned</td>
<td>4/5 types mentioned</td>
<td>5/5 types mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No need/use to teach in school 2/4 teachers mentioning</td>
<td>Family can explain Yughur traditional culture Communication in Tibetan and Yughur language is quite narrow</td>
<td>Children learn Yughur at home, so the school doesn’t teach it The scope &lt;for using&gt; Yughur is small.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No interest to learn in school 3/4 teachers mentioning</td>
<td>Yughur not on CEE; if it were on this exam, that would create interest</td>
<td>They would not be too interested in studying in their own language, because there is no &lt;language&gt; environment</td>
<td>I feel there is no &lt;interest among children to learn Yughur at school&gt; Parents will not support this study &lt;of Yughur language&gt;.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers lack ability &amp;/or interest 3/4 teachers mentioning</td>
<td>No-one will prepare Yughur materials; it’s just an interest</td>
<td>I feel we have no teachers who have studied this specialty</td>
<td>Teachers lack preparation and concern about local &amp; school curriculum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to teach in school 4/4 teachers mentioning</td>
<td>Yughur language is only spoken, not written</td>
<td>Yughurs have a language but no script Yughur stories would be more interesting in Mandarin</td>
<td>Children less interested to learn stories in Yughur, since many speak Mandarin. &lt;Yughur&gt; should not be forgotten, but Mandarin is still most important &lt; Yughur &gt; weight would be lighter than that of existing classes &lt; Yughur class is not as important as the existing curriculum&gt; because now Mandarin knowledge is commonly used</td>
<td>Yughur language has no script.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should not teach in school 2/4 teachers mentioning</td>
<td>Students of different nationalities taught in Yughur wouldn’t understand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If we insert other things <into the curriculum> the study load will be very heavy. Children’s energy is limited: studying <Yughur language> might make them fail the College Entrance Exams.
Table 31
Case 1, Embedded Case 2: Teachers, “What is Important to Learn for Education for Quality?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Perspectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1 Teacher</td>
<td>Broad knowledge from every field</td>
<td>Study skills are most important. Life skills and communication skills are also important</td>
<td>Interest: Students must be interested in and love studying. Students must learn to accept criticism, as well as praise from their elders and teachers,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han Female, Sunan</td>
<td>Knowledge must go beyond textbooks and include life</td>
<td>Self-care skills and common daily knowledge: some parents don’t teach these well enough at home</td>
<td>Balance: Students need to learn to balance a conscientious approach towards their studies with a “down to earth” tashi attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2 Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td>Labour ability: basic daily chores, like sweeping and mopping, cleaning tables</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han Female, Sunan</td>
<td>Basic knowledge, especially Pinyin, to allow later free reading outside textbooks</td>
<td>Establishing good study habits is very important. Learning research skills: finding and gathering information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4 Teacher</td>
<td>Master the state language, (Mandarin) Understand their country</td>
<td></td>
<td>Raising a student’s general quality is important, for example, their thinking skills and innovation skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han Female, Sunan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5 Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han Female, Sunan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pinyin, the Mandarin Romanized writing system based on standard Mandarin pronunciation is used to teach initial Mandarin literacy and also is used as a means to standardize pronunciation, reducing accent derived from both local Chinese dialects and languages, and from minority languages such as Sarigh Yughur and Shera Yughur
### Table 32
Case 1, Embedded Case 2: Teachers, “What are the Challenges in Providing Education for Quality?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers / School</th>
<th>Grade 1 Teacher</th>
<th>Grade 2 Teacher</th>
<th>Grade 4 Teacher</th>
<th>Grade 5 Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers</strong></td>
<td>Han Female, Sunan</td>
<td>Han Female, Sunan</td>
<td>Han Female, Sunan</td>
<td>Han Female, Sunan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Challenges</strong></td>
<td>Teacher education: for various reasons teachers do not know enough about suzhi education concepts and methods. Pressure: the school puts pressure on teachers through its examination system, which emphasizes marks.</td>
<td>Textbook content is far from our students’ life experience. Textbook Language is not easy for such young students to understand.</td>
<td>Parental awareness: many parents overemphasize high marks, and do not correctly understand our [new] educational objectives. Parental support: home conditions are often inadequate; uneducated parents cannot coordinate well with the teacher; illiterate parents can’t check their children’s work.</td>
<td>Extra reading material: library resources are inadequate, especially for children whose parents do not buy extra reading materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parents</strong></td>
<td>Pressure: parents put pressure on teachers. Family support: some parents are unable, and some have insufficient interest to provide children with necessary basic preschool knowledge.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children</strong></td>
<td>Learning difficulties: several children learn only with enormous effort.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Intellectual development: some students have narrow perspectives and even delayed intellectual development. Mandarin proficiency: many students from outside the county town have pronunciation and syntax influenced by Yughur language.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 33
Case 1, Embedded Case 2: Teachers, “How do Teachers Deal with the Perceived Challenges in Providing Education for Quality?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solutions</th>
<th>Grade 1 Teacher Han Female, Sunan</th>
<th>Grade 2 Teacher Han Female, Sunan</th>
<th>Grade 4 Teacher Han Female, Sunan</th>
<th>Grade 5 Teacher Han Female, Sunan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase support from Teachers</td>
<td>Extra individual support: pay more attention to these children, provide individual tutoring by the teacher and assistance from stronger students. Extra opportunity and encouragement in class: give weaker students more chance to express themselves.</td>
<td>Adapt lessons: We need to provide comparable examples, using content they have seen on TV or in movies, and also sometimes from our life Sunan.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Provide free reading material: lend students outside reading material like classic Chinese novels like <em>A Dream of Red Mansions</em> and adventures like <em>Journey to the West</em>. Find other materials on the school’s internet connection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase support from Parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Communicate with and advise parents: ask parents to advise their children; even illiterate parents can check if homework is done neatly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change the examination system</td>
<td>Reform Examination System: First need to change the CEE system and school examination system that pressures students, parents, and teachers and considers intellectual factors and examination results important and non-intellectual factors unimportant.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 34
**Case 1, Embedded Case 3, Parents by Ethnicity, Sub-ethnicity, Gender & Child's Grade (N)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>Sarigh Yughur (W)</th>
<th>Shira Yughur (E)</th>
<th>All Yughur</th>
<th>All Minority</th>
<th>Han</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 35
**Case 1 Elementary school students by ethnicity (N)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>Yughur</th>
<th>Other Minority</th>
<th>All Minority</th>
<th>Han</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 36
**Case 1 Perspectives Towards Including Minority Language in School Curriculum**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Embedded Cases</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Mixed-Negative</th>
<th>Mixed-Neutral</th>
<th>Mixed-Positive</th>
<th>Positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>All</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Upper</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>All</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>Upper</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Table 37**  
Case 2, Embedded Case 1: Curriculum Committee (Administrator and Teachers)  
Perspectives on Local *Minority* Language  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inclusion of Minority Language in School</th>
<th>For: Zhuren, School Manager</th>
<th>Teacher 2</th>
<th>Teacher 3</th>
<th>Teacher 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For:</td>
<td>Incidental Student Use in Class to stimulate Student Interest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Against:                               | Too many nationalities: besides Yughur, there is Tibetan, Mongolian, Manchu, Tu etc  
Disappearance of Small Languages unavoidable |

**Effect of Residential Schooling on Mother-tongue maintenance of Minority Students’**  

| Residential schools have positive effect on attendance of minority children at school | Some students live up to 8 hours away: residential school solves the *distance* problem | <Residential school *isn’t the main cause* of Mother-tongue loss>; it is the result of Sunan County’s unique circumstances |

**Table 38**  
Yughur Nationality Local Teaching Materials  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yughur Nationality History</th>
<th>Yughur Nationality Literary Anthology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yughur Nationality Folk Art</td>
<td>Yughur Nationality Health and Traditional Sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunan Geography</td>
<td>Pastoral District School’s Student Safety Education Handbook</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 39
Case 2, Zhuren and Curriculum Committee: Perspectives on Inclusion of Local Content in School Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intrinsic</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Teacher 2</th>
<th>Teacher 3</th>
<th>Teacher 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive for Students</td>
<td>Helps minority nationalities transmit their traditional culture</td>
<td>Lets students use their own knowledge to develop an accurate understanding of their district</td>
<td>Students interested in and enjoy learning about their own nationality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive for Teachers</td>
<td>Working on developing local curriculum develops teachers' original understanding</td>
<td>Teachers learn interesting things about local area, for example, minority nationality religions</td>
<td>Enriches teachers' grasp of local knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Extrinsic | Deepen Learning of National Curriculum | Compensates for inadequacies in national curriculum, so that students can understand and learn national curriculum | School curriculum content makes students feel comfortable and so it is easy for them to learn | Students understanding is deeper through learning content related to their own nationality
Yughur culture has a strong influence and differs from eastern China and so local content helps develop students' knowledge structure | Continuous improvement of research and development of school curriculum lets students understand better and helps us achieve national curriculum goals |

| Develop New Attitude towards Learning | School curriculum combines knowledge, activities, experiment and discussion fostering a new spirit among student | Methods of teaching two types of curriculum differ, school curriculum helps teachers' develop professional knowledge | |


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect of Local Curriculum</th>
<th>Chair of Committee</th>
<th>Teacher 2</th>
<th>Teacher 3</th>
<th>Teacher 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Teachers' Orientation to Nature of Knowledge</td>
<td>Need changed view of knowledge: real knowledge serves our students needs. It is not only universal and found in books, but local knowledge is useful for our students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers' Content Knowledge</td>
<td>Teachers' need to reorganize their knowledge structures to include an understanding of local knowledge.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge of minority religion(s) indispensable for local curriculum developers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers' Pedagogical Knowledge</td>
<td>Teachers' need little new pedagogical knowledge since they are experienced teachers of national curriculum.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill</td>
<td>What skills do Teachers need?</td>
<td>Teachers can integrate knowledge acquisition with skills development by adding local content to lessons.</td>
<td>Teachers need the skill of continuously modifying our local curriculum materials to solve pedagogical problems that arise in implementation.</td>
<td>Teachers need to learn how to localize national curriculum content and learn how to relate local knowledge to national curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to develop?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers must acquire new knowledge through their own efforts, because few opportunities for training exist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>Student attitudes</td>
<td>Positive: understand their place in their home district.</td>
<td>Positive: Students love studying own nationality.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Positive: Familiar content increases interest.</td>
<td>Negative: Students less interested in studying other nationalities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 41
Case 2, Embedded Case 2: Teachers, "What Local Language Should be Included in School Curriculum?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 5</th>
<th>Grade 7</th>
<th>Grade 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yuwen Teacher</td>
<td>Local Geography Teacher</td>
<td>Local History Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han Female, Qinghai</td>
<td>Tibetan Male, Sunan</td>
<td>Hui Male, Sunan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What local minority language should be included in local and school curriculum?

| Language & customs should be included at elementary level | Inclusion should be considered | Bilingual education should be provided, but for Yughurs only |

Reasons to include local minority language in the curriculum

| Language & culture may disappear: should be protected | To transmit culture and preserve language | Develop minority language |
| Should know their own language and history | Contribute to student interest in study | Interesting for Yughurs; not for other nationalities |

Challenges in including local minority language in the curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Script</th>
<th>Language Environment</th>
<th>Attitudes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of script for Yughur</td>
<td>Yughur children know Yughur; only use Han language at school</td>
<td>Yughur parents negative but Tibetan parents positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to popularize new Yughur script</td>
<td>Risk of minority language loss in boarding school; can learn Yughur at home</td>
<td>Not to learn minority language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure to learn English leads to pressures not to learn minority language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Yughur children know Yughur; only use Han language at school</th>
<th>Yughur parents negative but Tibetan parents positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Script</td>
<td>Difficult to popularize new Yughur script</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Lack of script for Yughur</td>
<td>Risk of minority language loss in boarding school; can learn Yughur at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pressure to learn English leads to pressures not to learn minority language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>Yughur parents negative but Tibetan parents positive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspects of curriculum</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>Grade 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yuwen Teacher</td>
<td>Local Geography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Han Female, Qinghai</td>
<td>Tibetan Male, Sunan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Knowledge            | They need knowledge of *their* culture  
                      | If we had school-curriculum at this level, we could teach children their own history  
                      | Difficult to connect national curriculum to local situation |
|                      | Strengthen basic knowledge  
                      | National curriculum content  
                      | China’s traditional culture  
                      | Knowledge from outside reading  
                      | “Without this basic knowledge, how can any new knowledge are learned?” |
| Skills               | Children need survival ability to protect themselves; this is important in Sunan because I feel without this skill there is no way to survive  
                      | Not only knowledge but how to be a good person |
|                      | Students’ ability to reflect is very important  
                      | Based on his favourite teacher as a child:  
                      | Not only teach knowledge but how to be a person  
                      | How to be successful |
|                      | Apply knowledge to solve problems  
                      | Study methods  
                      | Self-care and independent study skill |
| Attitudes            | Have to love life  
                      | Based on his favourite teacher as a child:  
                      | As long as you persist in what you want you will succeed  
                      | A positive attitude towards study: with a good attitude then you can study hard  
                      | Willingness to ask questions: only through asking questions can students show what aspects of knowledge they need to learn |
|                      | Interest is the main motivation for study |
### Table 43
Case 1, Embedded Case 2: Teachers, “What are the Challenges in Providing Education for Quality?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade 5</strong></td>
<td>Yuwen Teacher Han Female, Qinghai</td>
<td>The main thing is to make students understand that knowledge is very important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade 7</strong></td>
<td>Music and Local Geography Teacher Tibetan Male, Sunan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade 8</strong></td>
<td>History Teacher Hui Male, Sunan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic</strong></td>
<td>Parents can’t afford outside reading material</td>
<td>Many families can’t afford tuition fees &lt;after compulsory education&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Many families can’t afford tuition fees &lt;after compulsory education&gt;</td>
<td>Many university students can’t find work after they graduate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children whose family has rangeland don’t need to study to have a job and a good life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parents</strong></td>
<td>Home education is low and backward compared to city: some parents are illiterate</td>
<td>Minority parents don’t value education since they haven’t received a very good education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural students’ parents work; their grandparents take care of them: many don’t get enough support</td>
<td>Many parents don’t realize students who can’t find work usually have graduated from a &lt;lower quality&gt; private university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children</strong></td>
<td>No comments about children themselves as a challenge</td>
<td>Children need more basic knowledge, skills and attitudes: if they are lacking, then there’s no way to learn well other new knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Test question understanding weak, since basic knowledge not firm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor ability to respond to spontaneous oral questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interest in study is important: otherwise, less enjoyment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students dislike like asking questions: some introverted; others afraid of teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers / School / System</strong></td>
<td>New curriculum content and pedagogy are still assessed by old standards</td>
<td>Many teachers are either passive or resistant towards new curricula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The school does not have enough conditions to deal with students not wanting to ask, or preferring to solve problems by themselves.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Solutions</strong></td>
<td>Higher levels need to change evaluation system</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students with extra books should share books with classmates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 44

**Case 2: Combined Elementary-Junior Secondary School Parents by Ethnicity (N)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>Yughur</th>
<th>Other Minority</th>
<th>All Minority</th>
<th>Han</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 45

**Case 2: Elementary-Junior Secondary Students by Grade, Gender & Ethnicity (N)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Grade 5</th>
<th>Grade 7</th>
<th>Grade 8</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tibetn</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yughur</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Minority</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Minority</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 46

**Case 3 Stakeholders’ Perspectives on Including Minority Language in School Curriculum**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Embedded Cases</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Mixed-Negative</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Mixed-Positive</th>
<th>Positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Committee</td>
<td>Han-Hui</td>
<td>Gr. 7</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Tibetan</td>
<td>Gr. 7</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hui</td>
<td>Gr. 8</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Han</td>
<td>Gr. 5</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Yughur</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Yughur</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Yughur</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Yughur</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 47
Case 3: Change in District Population by Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Yughur</th>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>Other Minority</th>
<th>Total Minority</th>
<th>Han</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2831</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2185</td>
<td>647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>3168</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2188</td>
<td>980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change 2004-2006</td>
<td>+ 337</td>
<td>- 62</td>
<td>+ 63</td>
<td>+ 2</td>
<td>+ 3</td>
<td>+ 333</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Table 48
Case 3 District Enrolments by School Type: 1961-1994 (N)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minban Schools</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Schools</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Table 49
Case 3, Embedded Case 2: Teachers, “What Local <Minority> Knowledge and Culture Should be Included in Local and School Curriculum?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Grade 2 Teacher</th>
<th>Grade 7 Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Knowledge &amp; Culture</td>
<td>Grade 2 Teacher</td>
<td>Grade 7 Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yughur Male, Sunan</td>
<td>Grade 2 Teacher</td>
<td>Grade 7 Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn their own language: West Yughur</td>
<td>Grade 2 Teacher</td>
<td>Grade 7 Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn traditional knowledge of their birthplace: Yughur customs and famous historical sites</td>
<td>Grade 2 Teacher</td>
<td>Grade 7 Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons to Include Local Knowledge and Culture in the Curriculum</td>
<td>Grade 2 Teacher</td>
<td>Grade 7 Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Identity</td>
<td>Helps survival of Yughur language and culture</td>
<td>Helps survival of Yughur language and culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintains distinctive features of Yughur identity</td>
<td>Helps survival of Yughur language and culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Identity</td>
<td>Helps students understand their own Culture</td>
<td>Helps students understand their own Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits learning process</td>
<td>Helps lower grade Yughur students understand lessons better</td>
<td>Helps lower grade Yughur students understand lessons better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increases students’ interest in lessons: West Yughur students’ mainly, but also other students’</td>
<td>Helps lower grade Yughur students understand lessons better</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges in Teaching Yughur Language and Culture in the School</td>
<td>Helps lower grade Yughur students understand lessons better</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>Some non-Yughur interested, others not</td>
<td>Some non-Yughur interested, others not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Conflict</td>
<td>Takes too much time &lt;from other subjects&gt;</td>
<td>Takes too much time &lt;from other subjects&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 50
**Case 3, Embedded Case 2: Teachers, “What is Important to Learn for Education for Quality?”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Grade 2 Teacher</th>
<th>Grade 7 Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yughur Male, Sunan</td>
<td>Tibetan Female, Sunan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Art and Music are very important</td>
<td>Any content related to students' interests can develop their knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skills</strong></td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Effective study skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudes</strong></td>
<td>Interest: Students should be encouraged to study their interests</td>
<td>If students have an effective method, study can be relaxed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 51
**Case 3, Embedded Case 2: Teachers, “What are the Challenges in Providing Education for Quality?”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Grade 2 Teacher</th>
<th>Grade 7 Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Han Female, Sunan</td>
<td>Tibetan Female, Sunan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers / School</strong></td>
<td>Early grade teachers may not know Yughur well enough to help children understand</td>
<td>Inappropriate emphasis on marks to evaluate teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Overemphasis on core curriculum fails to support students' individual interests/skills/talents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Insufficient extracurricular reading material: library resources are inadequate; there is no Internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parents</strong></td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children</strong></td>
<td>Children have uneven ability in esthetic education</td>
<td>Wide range of students' depth and speed of understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 1 students may not understand Chinese well enough to understand lessons</td>
<td>Students with low motivation must be forced to study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 52
**Case 3, Embedded Case 2:** Teachers, “How do Teachers Deal with the Perceived Challenges in Providing Education for Quality?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Grade 2 Teacher</th>
<th>Grade 7 Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Han Male, Sunan</td>
<td>Tibetan Female, Sunan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Solutions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Encourage Yughur students:</em> use occasional Yughur in class to motivate students</td>
<td></td>
<td>Provide free extra reading material: lend students outside reading material borrowed / copied by teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bilingual Approach:</em> use Yughur in class to explain when Yughur students do not understand</td>
<td></td>
<td>Adapt lessons: Change lessons from curriculum to fit variety of learning ability and speed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parents</strong></td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School</strong></td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Reform teacher evaluation system: reduce overemphasis on student grades in core courses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

### Table 53
**Case 3, Embedded Case 3:** Family Members by Ethnicity and Sub-Ethnicity (N)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Tibetan</th>
<th>Sarigh Yughur</th>
<th>Shira Yughur</th>
<th>All Yughur</th>
<th>All Minority</th>
<th>Han</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 54
Case 3 Family Members’ Own Experience of Schooling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 2 Parent 2</th>
<th>Grade 2 Parent 3</th>
<th>Grade 2/7 Parent 1</th>
<th>Grade 2/7 Parent 2</th>
<th>Grade 2/7 Parent 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I was born in 1970 in a village in this township, and attended the township elementary school. I really enjoyed going to school, and especially liked Yuwen. I liked writing compositions about things related to my family education. The school was quite far from my home: I had to cross some desert, and had to run 2 hours. I had to make my own food, steamed buns <momo> and tea. When I started school my Chinese was no good, but the teacher sometimes could use Yughur to explain. I liked that method. Our teacher did not criticize us if we spoke Yughur. I attended 3 years of elementary school and then I began to herd sheep. Moreover, I enjoyed herding. The older people placed a lot of importance on shepherding, so we also paid a lot of attention to this. Today more skills are required for shepherding than before: you can’t do it without education, you also can’t do it without experience.

I went to the township elementary school. I enjoyed everything there and had no study difficulties. At first, I didn’t understand Chinese, but the teacher used Yughur to give us an explanation. They still use this method today: our school has two teachers now who know Yughur. In all I attended 5 years of elementary school. After I graduated from elementary school, I herded sheep. I liked it. Herding sheep doesn’t require knowledge; it is all based on accumulated practical experience. As soon as you start, you meet problems and start accumulating. If sheep get sick, there are traditional methods to treat them that the older generation has passed on. For example, when a sheep is seriously sick, we feed it fresh grass. Shepherding requires knowledge of the geography of pastureland, which comes from experience.

I was born in 1969 in a village in this township. I am a West Yughur. In 1994, I moved to this place. My elementary school was the township elementary school. I enjoyed going to school. In class, the teacher explained things to us <in Yughur>; I liked that method. I learned Chinese through communication with my classmates, some of whom were Han. I liked wrestling. In class, I liked to listen to the lessons, and I was pretty attentive. I liked to listen to history and geography lessons. Because when I was small my grandfather told me many stories and because the things I studied later were a bit similar, I liked studying. It took me 2 years to speak Chinese fluently.

I was born in 1968 in a village in this township. I am also a West Yughur and moved here in 1993. I liked to go to school, and liked to play. The teacher used Chinese to teach and at first I couldn’t understand, but the teacher could give us an explanation <in Yughur>. I learned Chinese from my parents and the teacher, although their Chinese level was low. My favourite classes were mathematics and Yuwen. I didn’t need more than 1 year to be able to speak Chinese fluently.

I was born in 1969 in a village in this township and moved here in 1998. My most proficient language is Yughur. When I was a student, I enjoyed Phys Ed, playing basketball, and in class I like to write Chinese characters. The teacher didn’t understand Yughur, and gave us lessons in Chinese. The teacher didn’t care and didn’t criticize us if we spoke Yughur in class. Sometimes we didn’t understand; when this happened, I asked other classmates. So I gradually learned Chinese.
| **Grade 2 Parent 1**  
| F Sarigh Yughur 26 |
| **Grade 2/7 Parent 3**  
| F Tibetan 36 |
| **Grade 2/7 Parent 5**  
| F Tibetan 56 |
| **Grade 2/7 Parent 6**  
| F Sarigh Yughur |
| **Grade 2/7 Parent 4**  
| F Sarigh Yughur 58 |

I went to school at the township elementary school. In school, I liked mathematics and had no study problems. The teacher spoke in Chinese. I could understand Chinese. I had heard other people speak it from a young age, and so I learned myself. I used Yughur to communicate with my parents. There was no situation where I didn't understand in class. The teacher didn't say anything if we spoke Yughur in class.

I was born in 1971 in a village in another district. I am Tibetan. I moved here in 1992. I liked going to school and enjoyed Phys Ed and Mathematics. I liked to play basketball and to take part in footraces. I also liked to do calculations. The teacher used Chinese to teach the lessons. In school, I spoke Chinese, and at home, I spoke Tibetan. So when I was small I was able to speak two languages. I could speak Chinese after 1 month. Yughur took 2 years. My child learned Yughur from his grandmother before he went to school. I learned Yughur when my child was learning before school.

I was born in 1951 in a village in another district. I am Tibetan. I moved here in 1970. When I was in elementary school, I enjoyed Yuwen, singing songs, and dancing. What I liked in Yuwen class was writing Chinese characters. There was no Tibetan language class when I went to school, but I was able to understand. Our village was fairly close to a Han-speaking area, so from a young age I could speak Chinese. I was able to learn it by frequently speaking with Hans. After I got to this district, I learned Yughur, because at the time I came here, the large majority of people could not speak Chinese. So in this kind of situation, I learned Yughur.

I was born in 1949 in a village in this township. I am Yughur. During elementary school, I enjoyed going to school. I liked singing and dancing, Yughur dances, Yughur songs. This was outside class. In class, I liked to study seriously; whatever the teacher taught, I would study. The teacher used Mandarin, and moreover could not understand Yughur either. There were times I could not understand, but bit by bit I understood. The teacher didn't let us speak in Yughur. When we were criticized for this, I felt we were wronged.

I was born in 1971 in a village in another district. I am Tibetan. I moved here in 1992. I liked going to school and enjoyed Phys Ed and Mathematics. I liked to play basketball and to take part in footraces. I also liked to do calculations. The teacher used Chinese to teach the lessons. In school, I spoke Chinese, and at home, I spoke Tibetan. So when I was small I was able to speak two languages. I could speak Chinese after 1 month. Yughur took 2 years. My child learned Yughur from his grandmother before he went to school. I learned Yughur when my child was learning before school.

I was born in 1951 in a village in another district. I am Tibetan. I moved here in 1970. When I was in elementary school, I enjoyed Yuwen, singing songs, and dancing. What I liked in Yuwen class was writing Chinese characters. There was no Tibetan language class when I went to school, but I was able to understand. Our village was fairly close to a Han-speaking area, so from a young age I could speak Chinese. I was able to learn it by frequently speaking with Hans. After I got to this district, I learned Yughur, because at the time I came here, the large majority of people could not speak Chinese. So in this kind of situation, I learned Yughur.

I was born in 1949 in a village in this township. I am Yughur. During elementary school, I enjoyed going to school. I liked singing and dancing, Yughur dances, Yughur songs. This was outside class. In class, I liked to study seriously; whatever the teacher taught, I would study. The teacher used Mandarin, and moreover could not understand Yughur either. There were times I could not understand, but bit by bit I understood. The teacher didn't let us speak in Yughur. When we were criticized for this, I felt we were wronged.

I was born in 1971 in a village in another district. I am Tibetan. I moved here in 1992. I liked going to school and enjoyed Phys Ed and Mathematics. I liked to play basketball and to take part in footraces. I also liked to do calculations. The teacher used Chinese to teach the lessons. In school, I spoke Chinese, and at home, I spoke Tibetan. So when I was small I was able to speak two languages. I could speak Chinese after 1 month. Yughur took 2 years. My child learned Yughur from his grandmother before he went to school. I learned Yughur when my child was learning before school.

I was born in 1951 in a village in another district. I am Tibetan. I moved here in 1970. When I was in elementary school, I enjoyed Yuwen, singing songs, and dancing. What I liked in Yuwen class was writing Chinese characters. There was no Tibetan language class when I went to school, but I was able to understand. Our village was fairly close to a Han-speaking area, so from a young age I could speak Chinese. I was able to learn it by frequently speaking with Hans. After I got to this district, I learned Yughur, because at the time I came here, the large majority of people could not speak Chinese. So in this kind of situation, I learned Yughur.

I was born in 1949 in a village in this township. I am Yughur. During elementary school, I enjoyed going to school. I liked singing and dancing, Yughur dances, Yughur songs. This was outside class. In class, I liked to study seriously; whatever the teacher taught, I would study. The teacher used Mandarin, and moreover could not understand Yughur either. There were times I could not understand, but bit by bit I understood. The teacher didn't let us speak in Yughur. When we were criticized for this, I felt we were wronged.
Table 55
Case 3, Elementary and Junior Secondary School Students by Ethnicity (N)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 7</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Yughur</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Minority</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Minority</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 56
Case 3: Perspectives on Including Minority Language in School Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Embedded Cases</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Mixed-Negative</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Mixed-Positive</th>
<th>Positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Yughur-Han</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Yughur</td>
<td>Gr. 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tibetan</td>
<td>Gr. 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Minority (Yughur &amp; Tibetan)</td>
<td>All</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Yughur</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Yughur</td>
<td>Gr. 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yughur</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Yughur</td>
<td>Gr. 7</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level</td>
<td>Should teach Yughur in school</td>
<td>Language as Right</td>
<td>Language as Resource</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gr 1-2</td>
<td>Learn their own language: West Yughur</td>
<td>Helps language &amp; culture survive; Maintains special features of Yughur identity</td>
<td>Helps students understand their own culture</td>
<td>Raise interest in lessons: mainly Yughurs, but also others</td>
<td>Helps lower grade Yughur students understand lessons better;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=3)</td>
<td>Folk legends and stories</td>
<td>Parents want to protect their national group</td>
<td>&lt;Minority&gt; parents want children to not forget their nationality;</td>
<td>Children enjoy learning stories &amp; interesting things</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open Yughur language curriculum</td>
<td>Without Yughur language classes, the language can disappear</td>
<td>Very many Yughur children can’t speak their nationality’s language</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gr 4-5</td>
<td>Language &amp; customs should be included at elementary level</td>
<td>Language &amp; culture may disappear: should be protected</td>
<td>Should know their own language and history</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=3)</td>
<td>Very important: our school opened a minority language small interest group</td>
<td>We do not do this now; children would not be interested.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bilingual education should be provided, but for Yughurs only</td>
<td>Develop minority language</td>
<td>Interesting for Yughurs;</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level</td>
<td>Language as Problem</td>
<td>Language as Problem</td>
<td>Language as Problem</td>
<td>Language as Problem</td>
<td>Language as Problem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grades 1-2</strong> (N=3)</td>
<td>Yughur language is only spoken, not written</td>
<td>not on CEE; if Yughur were on CEE, it would create interest</td>
<td>No one will prepare Yughur language teaching materials; it’s just an interest</td>
<td>Students of different nationalities taught in Yughur wouldn’t understand</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7 reasons</strong></td>
<td>Yughurs have a language but no script</td>
<td>Yughur stories would be more interesting in Mandarin;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Some non-Yughur not interested</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grades 4-5</strong> (N=3)</td>
<td>Children less interested to learn stories in Yughur, since many speak Mandarin;</td>
<td>They would not be too interested in studying their own language, because there is no language environment</td>
<td>Family can teach Yughur culture; Use for Yughur language is quite narrow</td>
<td>I feel we have no teachers who have studied this specialty</td>
<td>Chinese knowledge is commonly used: &lt;Yughur&gt; would weigh less than existing classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11 reasons</strong></td>
<td>Yughur language has no script.</td>
<td>Children would not be interested. Parents will not support study &lt;of Yughur&gt;.</td>
<td>Learn at home, so school doesn’t teach the space &lt;for use of&gt; Yughur language is small.</td>
<td>Teachers lack preparation and concern about local &amp; school curriculum</td>
<td>Study load will be very heavy &amp; energy is limited: studying &lt;Yughur&gt; might make them fail CEE.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Few children know Yughur; only use Han language at school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No special interest: just like studying English</td>
<td>No need to include local knowledge, culture and language in curriculum</td>
<td>Oral instruction without script-based literacy doesn’t belong in school</td>
<td>Takes too much time &lt;from other subjects&gt; and can interfere with Mandarin; students will</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades 7-8 (N=3)</td>
<td>9 reasons</td>
<td>need <em>extra Mandarin</em> practice to compensate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Difficult to popularize new Yughur script</td>
<td>Can learn Yughur at home</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pressure to learn English leads to pressures <em>not</em> to learn minority language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of script for Yughur</td>
<td>Yughur parents negative attitude</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table 59
Teachers’ Orientations Towards Yughur in School Curriculum by School: Language as Right Versus Language as Resource

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Should teach Yughur in school 8/9</th>
<th>Language as Right</th>
<th>Language as Resource</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maintain group identity 7/9</td>
<td>Develop youth identity 5/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folk legends and stories</td>
<td>Parents want to protect their national group</td>
<td>&lt;Minority&gt; parents don’t want children to forget their nationality;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Yughur language curriculum</td>
<td>Without Yughur language classes, the language can disappear</td>
<td>Very many Yughur children can’t speak this language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important: Our school opened a Yughur small interest group:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We don’t do this now; children would not be interested.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 2</td>
<td>Language &amp; culture may disappear: should be protected</td>
<td>Should know their own language and history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should include language &amp; customs at elementary level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion should be considered</td>
<td>To preserve language; To transmit culture</td>
<td>Contribute to student interest in study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual education should be provided, but for Yughurs only</td>
<td>Develop minority language</td>
<td>Interesting for Yughurs;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 3</td>
<td>Helps Yughur language and culture survive; Maintains distinctive features of Yughur identity</td>
<td>Helps students understand their own culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn their own language: West Yughur</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Yughur language</td>
<td>Save the language; Maintain customs</td>
<td>If students are interested it stimulates their development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case</td>
<td>Language Status</td>
<td>Teachers' Concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case 1</strong></td>
<td>Yughur only spoken, not written</td>
<td>Yughur not on CEE; if so, there would be interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yughurs have oral language but no script</td>
<td>Yughur stories: more interesting in Mandarin; Little interest in learning own language due to lack of language environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yughur language has no script.</td>
<td>Children not interested to learn Yughur at school; Parents will not support study of Yughur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case 2</strong></td>
<td>Only use Chinese at school; Few children know Yughur;</td>
<td>Yughur parents negative attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of script for Yughur</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Difficult to popularize new Yughur script</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case 3</strong></td>
<td>Some non-Yughur not interested</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No special interest; just like studying English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No need to include local knowledge, culture and language in curriculum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oral instruction without script-based literacy doesn’t belong in school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Takes too much time &lt;from other subjects&gt; and can interfere with Chinese; students will need extra Chinese practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level</td>
<td>Should teach Yughur in school</td>
<td>Language as Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>Maintain group’s identity 2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 1, Urban Yughur Minority School Grades 1-6</td>
<td>Yughur music, sports, history language, and, music, costumes and other parts of our historical heritage should be in school-curriculum.</td>
<td>Since this is the sole Autonomous County for Yughurs to carry on and spread Yughur heritage must be done starting from here in Sunan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 2, Rural Yughur Minority School Grades 1-9</td>
<td>Incidental use by students in class stimulates interest</td>
<td>Will &quot;strengthen students' national consciousness&quot; Important that they do not forget ancestors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 3, Rural Yughur Majority School Grades 1-9</td>
<td>Will offer optional Yughur language courses, a project in development stage</td>
<td>Will &quot;strengthen students' national consciousness&quot; Important that their traditions be transmitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level</td>
<td>Language as Problem</td>
<td>No need/use 2/3 mentioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urban Yughur Minority School Grades 1-6</strong></td>
<td><strong>Herders’ children know frequently used Chinese, so there is no problem in communicating &lt;with them in Mandarin&gt;</strong></td>
<td>No language environment in town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rural Yughur Minority School Grades 1-9</strong></td>
<td>Disappearance of small languages unavoidable</td>
<td>Too many nationalities: besides Yughur, there is Tibetan, Mongolian, Manchu, Tu etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rural Yughur Majority School Grades 1-9</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 65
Sunan Yughur Autonomous County, New Regulations on Language and Education (2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section 章</th>
<th>Article 条</th>
<th>Regulation (clause)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section 6</td>
<td>Article 46</td>
<td>a) The Autonomous County in kindergartens and elementary schools offers minority language instruction classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Article 49</td>
<td>a) The Autonomous County strengthens work on the research, transmission and protection of the Yughur languages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix B

Figures

Figure 1. Mean GDP per capita by Province and Autonomous Region (2005) (,000 Yuan)
(Source: prepared by author with data from www.china.org.cn and public domain base map).

Note: Data for Tibetan and Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Regions are for 2004.
Figure 2. Average years of schooling completed in by region and province (2000 census)  
(Source: prepared by author from China (2002) and public domain base map).
Figure 3. Major minority administrative divisions of China: Autonomous regions and prefectures based on ethnic minority population (purple) (Source: prepared by author from China (2002, 2003) and public domain base map).
Figure 4. Regional and interprovincial differences in Gross Domestic Product per capita (2003) (Source: adapted from Herrmann-Pillath, Sheng, Du, Xiao, Li & Pan, 2006).
Figure 5. Educational attainment of population in China by region and gender (%) (Source: calculated by author from China, 2002).  

43 aged 6 and higher
Figure 6. Administrative divisions based on minority population: Autonomous Regions and Districts (purple) (Source: prepared by author from China, 2002, 2003 and public domain basemap).
**Figure 9.** Gansu Province, northwest China (coloured); Zhangye Prefecture (in green); Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (in purple) (Source: prepared by author from public domain basemap).
Figure 10. Sunan Yughur Autonomous County within Gansu Province (Source: http://gz.fjedu.gov.cn/dili/ShowArticle.asp?ArticleID=2784).
Figure 11. Sunan Yughur Autonomous County and its administrative districts (Source: http://gz.fjedu.gov.cn/dili/ShowArticle.asp?ArticleID=2784).
Figure 12. Proportion of Gross Regional Product (Yuan) by sector: China, Gansu Province, Zhangye Prefecture, and Sunan Yughur Autonomous County (Source: calculated from Gansu (2005, p. 278, 280, 281).
Figure 13. A Sarigh Yughur story (above) and Shira Yughur story (below) (Source: Yovhur Puchig, 2006, 1, 9, 15). Note: The Sarigh Yughur story is written in modified IPA script; the Shira Yughur story is written in the proposed unified Yughur script.
Figure 14. Numbers of schools in Sunan County (1949-2006) (Source: Sunan County Almanac, 1994, 2006).
Figure 15. Percent of population with primary education by district, gender & ethnicity in 2000
(Source: calculated from China (2002, 2003).\textsuperscript{44}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Primary + M</th>
<th>Primary + F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gansu</td>
<td>92.6</td>
<td>80.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhangye</td>
<td>94.2</td>
<td>83.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunan</td>
<td>94.5</td>
<td>84.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yughur (all China)</td>
<td>90.1</td>
<td>79.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han (all China)</td>
<td>95.1</td>
<td>86.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{44} over 5 years of age
**Figure 17.** Population with secondary education or higher by district, gender & ethnicity in 2000 (%) (Source: calculated from China (2002, 2003)).
Figure 18. Population with a post-secondary degree by type, district, gender & ethnicity in 2000 (%) (Source: calculated from China (2002, 2003)).

A working assumption in the absence of relevant statistics has been made that those with 3-year degrees previously completed senior technical school, while those with 4-year university also completed senior technical school.
Figure 19. Percentage of 5-year cohorts completing primary education for Yughurs and Han (Source: calculated from China, 2003).
Figure 20. Percentage of 5-year cohorts completing junior secondary education for Yughurs and Han (Source: calculated from China, 2003).
Figure 21. Percentage of 5-year cohorts completing secondary education by ethnicity and gender (Yughurs and Han) (Source: calculated from China, 2003).
Figure 24. Sunan County population and teaching staff by ethnicity: 1990, 2006 (Sources: Sunan County Almanac, 1990; Sunan County Department of Education, 2006).
Figure 25. The setting of the Case 1 school.
Figure 28.
Case 1 K-6 key school plaques.

Figure 29.
Some of Case 1 school’s many recognition

Figure 30.
Chengshi yonggan tuanjie huopo
“Honest, brave, united, lively”.

Figure 31.
Aristotle: jiaoyu zhi gen weiku, jiaoyu zhi guo gentian
“Learning’s root is bitter; its fruit, sweet”.

“Honest, brave, united, lively”.
Figure 32. Exemplary pre-1949 Chinese (above); foreign models (below).

Figure 33. Oppose Corruption, Promote Honesty: Be pure and clean; Do all your work with integrity!

Figure 34. Putonghua, tong Tianxia! Standard Chinese: communicate with the world!
Figure 35.
Keku xuexi lizhi chengcai fangfei mengxiang
“Study hard, determine to be a useful person, individual, your dreams fly”

Figure 36.
Yi ren wei zhu, wei xuesheng yi sheng de fazhan zuo zhunbei “Based on the let prepare each student for lifelong development”
Figure 37. Grasslands approaching Case 2 district centre.

Figure 38. Tibetan Buddhist stupa outside Case 2 district centre.
Figure 40. Case 2 District population by ethnicity and township, 1993 (%).

![Chart showing population distribution by ethnicity and township.]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Case 2 District</th>
<th>Maying Township</th>
<th>Beitian Township</th>
<th>Dongtan Township</th>
<th>Huajian Township</th>
<th>Yangxiang Township</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Han</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>64.9</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yughur</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>64.5</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>79.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 41. Case 2 School: K-9 District level key school.
Figure 42. Case 2 School: Plans for further construction of K-9 District level key school facilities.

Figure 43. 智慧树 Zhihui Shu “Wisdom Tree” planted and cared for by two students.
Figure 44. Edmund Burke: *Dushu bu sikao, dengyu chifan er bu xiaohua* “Reading without reflecting is like eating without digesting”.

Figure 45. Leo Tolstoy: *Tiancai de shifen zhi yi shi linggan, shifen zhi jiu shi xuehan*. “Genius is one part inspiration, nine parts blood and sweat”.
Figure 46. The setting of the Case 3 district: Steppe-desert at the foot of the Qilian Mountains approaching Case 3 oasis.
Figure 47. Case 3 school site looking southwest towards Qilian mountains.
Figure 49. Case 3 district population by ethnicity and township, 1993 (%) (Source: calculated from Yang, 1993, p. 106, as cited in Roos, 2000).
Figure 50. Case 3 district school.
Figure 51. School enrolments in Case 3 district (1961-2004) (Source: Minghua, 2006, p. 94).
Figure 52. Quality as “civilized interaction”
Qing sheng, xi yu; juzhi wenming: quiet voice, delicate language; civilized bearing.

Figure 53. Quality as “civilized interaction”
Yuyan wenming; limao dairen:
Civil language, treat people politely.
Figure 54. Quality as “standard language”

Qing jiang putonghua; qing xie quifan zi:

Please speak Standard Mandarin,
please write standard characters.

Figure 55. Quality as “moral behaviour”
Figure 56. Shira Yughur and Mongolian students examine Shira Yughur script with a Mandarin glossary (Zhaonasitu, 1981, A Grammar of Eastern Yughur).
Figure 57. Language orientations of teachers by grade level (% of comments per level).
Figure 58. Language orientations of teachers by school (%) (Index=N responses per school/N teachers x 10: A= 4 teachers, B= 3 teachers, C=2 teachers).
Figure 59. Language orientations of Minority and Han teachers (%).
Figure 60. Language orientations of administrators by school (%).
Figure 61. Grassland Elementary School in Inner Mongolia (Source: Ma Zhenxiang, 1973, reprinted in Cushing & Tompkins, 2007, p. 106).