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An outline of the situation of education of the Mongol minority in the People's Republic of China after 1978

The education of national minorities in the People's Republic of China is not a monolithic system, but an extensive network of institutions with varied curricula. China's territorial diversity can be closely linked to different conditions for the development of education, including the minority segment. Additionally, owing to the great diversity of ethnic groups and their political self-organization, it is difficult to comprehensively explore this system in its full complexity. However, this is not properly reflected in the scholarly literature, perhaps because its analysis is in fact possible on a fragmentary basis and during field research. This study is an attempt to fill the gap in research on minority education in China by indicating that, especially in the case of the promoted bilingual education, but also of other education models, there are differences in the praxis of their implementation. This paper presents selected determinants for these processes.

Keywords: China, PRC, national minorities, education, Mongols, regional autonomy, Inner Mongolia

Zarys sytuacji edukacyjnej mniejszości mongolskiej w Chińskiej Republice Ludowej po 1978 r.

Edukacja mniejszości narodowych w Chińskiej Republice Ludowej nie jest jednolita, ale tworzy rozbudowany system instytucji wdrażających zróżnicowane programy nauczania. W różnych częściach Chin szkolnictwo, w tym jego segment mniejszościowy, kształtowało się w odmiennych uwarunkowaniach. Jeśli dodamy do tego wielkie zróżnicowanie grup etnicznych oraz ich samoorganizacji politycznej, otrzymamy bardzo złożony system, który trudno badać całościowo. Nie znajduje to jednak odpowiedniego odzwierciedlenia w literaturze naukowej, być może dlatego, że jego analiza możliwa jest *de facto* wrywkowo oraz podczas badań terenowych. Niniejsze opracowanie stanowi próbę uzupełnienia luki w badaniach nad edukacją mniejszości w Chinach poprzez wskazanie, że szczególnie w przypadku promowanej edukacji dwujęzycznej, ale też i innych modeli,

mamy do czynienia z różnicami w praktyce ich wdrażania. Przedstawiono również wybrane uwarunkowania powyższych procesów.

Słowa kluczowe: Chiny, ChRL, mniejszości narodowe, edukacja, Mongolowie, autonomia religijna, Mongolia Wewnętrzna

Introduction

The objective of this study is to indicate the important elements of the functioning of education designed for ethnic minorities¹ with particular emphasis on the particularity of the Mongolian case. I will outline some issues associated with the organization and functioning of minority education. Although drawing a complete picture of the complexity of the system may exceed the capacities of this article, it seems important that this is going to be the first synthetic presentation in Polish scholarly literature on the problem of the multiplicity of education offers geared to non-Chinese peoples. This problem is closely connected with territorial organization, i.e. local government bodies representing ethnic minorities (the so-called autonomous bodies). This element of territorial division imposes the obligation on local governments to create minority education at all levels of the territorial autonomy. Polish and even world literature neglects to recognise the territorial diversity of the educational processes of national minorities. Western literature does not notice what Chinese literature consciously does not expose: the presence of de facto many educational subsystems – both within one administrative unit and within one national group. For this reason, it seems that they have not been described according to the differences in the praxis of implementing various education models and selected determinants of these processes. In this respect, Mongols are an extreme case, where such diversity of teaching content occurs even at the township level.

Ethnic education and regional autonomy

At this point, it should be recalled that the People's Republic of China (PRC) is a unitary state with a four-level administrative division.² The highest level

1 The term *ethnic minority* will be used interchangeably with the term *national minority*, because under Chinese law and language (少数民族) these are identical terms, which is met with understandable opposition of Western researchers.

2 More information in: J. Rowiński, W. Jakóbiec, *System konstytucyjny Chińskiej Republiki Ludowej* [‘The Constitutional system of the People’s Republic of China’], Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, Warszawa 2006.

units are: provinces, together with five autonomous regions (*zizhi qu*) and other units with special status. The second level is prefectures (*zhou*), including autonomous prefectures (*zizhi zhou*) and tribal leagues (*meng*). Similarly, at a lower level, there are counties (*xian*), with autonomous counties (*zizhi xian*) and banners (*qi*), and townships (*xiang* and *zhen*) with ethnic townships (*minzu xiang*) and sums (*sumu*). From this perspective, as we can see, the atypical division of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region stands out with a nomenclature partly corresponding to the historical structure of the administrative organization of the peoples of the North.

Table 1. The territorial division of the PRC and the particularity of Inner Mongolia

Administrative unit	China proper		Inner Mongolia	
	symbol	pinyin	Chinese	Mongolian*
Prefecture	州 市	<i>zhou</i> <i>shi</i>	盟 市	<i>aymag (aimay)</i> <i>chot (qota)</i>
County	县	<i>xian</i>	旗	<i>choshuu</i> <i>(qosiγu)</i>
	市	<i>shi</i>	市	<i>chot (qota)</i>
Township	乡, 镇	<i>xiang, zhen</i>	苏木	<i>sum (sumu)**</i>
* Contemporary name, in brackets a transcription from the classical Mongolian writing used in the region.				
** The sums and aimags in China, despite similar names, correspond to a different territorial scope than similarly named local governments in the Republic of Mongolia and Russia.				

Source: The author's own study

Minority education is an instrument of regional autonomy, carried out in practice by the provincial level, but enforced by the county and township. In practical terms, the seemingly centralised and strictly standardised system is implemented in various ways, as demonstrated by a number of field studies conducted by the author in 2007–2017,³ mainly in Inner Mongolia (IMAR) and Xinjiang (XUAR),⁴ i.e. autonomous regions of the provincial level, and Manchuria, where minority education was executed by lower-level autonomous units and outside formal ethnic autonomy.

3 In the years 2014–2017 research carried out with a grant of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education as part of the Competition for Young Scientists, in the years 2007–2011–2012 as part of scholarships of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education.

4 Research findings from Xinjiang have become obsolete due to the termination of all teaching in languages other than Chinese since September 2017.

Education in autonomous regions

Education in the autonomous regions had undergone numerous changes since the time of reform and opening-up to the end of the 2000s. These processes are illustrated by, e.g. the number of schools as well as of students and teachers. National data do not allow us to distinguish between Chinese and minority students. For future in-depth analysis, they should be identified on the basis of data from provincial statistical offices and the census.

The total number of primary school graduates had been increasing until 2000, at which point this trend was reversed. This was partly due to demographic changes. However, in secondary and higher education, the total number of both students and graduates had been rising. This means that with a decline in the total number of children and youths in primary schools, the percentage of those continuing education had been increasing very dynamically. The number of full-time teachers also surged, even at the primary level, which generally improved the student-teacher ratio. Especially in the context of a decrease in the number of primary and secondary schools, we can assume that this was, on the one hand, the effect of a policy of improving teachers' competences and employing them full time under the Teachers' Charter, as well as the tendency to close rural schools, where other forms of employment were more often used with educators.

Changes in rural education can also be a partial effect of the decrease in the number of institutions at the mandatory study level – of not only primary but even secondary schools – also when it comes to the growing number of students.⁵ They were associated with the collapse of rural education in the 1990s, which was particularly acute in the autonomous regions, as they were poorer and had a low urbanization rate. As a result of these processes, the number of students per school increased rapidly: for primary schools – from 1194 in 1978 to 3024 in 2009 and for secondary schools – 4777 and 10,806, respectively.

According to the collected data, education in Inner Mongolia compares favourably to other autonomous regions. The conclusions are also consistent with field studies, where, apart from Inner Mongolia, education in Xinjiang and, to a limited extent, Tibet was analysed.

5 G. A. Postiglione, *Schooling and inequality in China*, [in:] *Social change in China. Inequality in a market economy*, ed. G. A. Postiglione, An East Gate Book, M. E. Sharpe, Armonk–New York–London 2006, p. 3.

Table 2. Education in autonomous regions by level

Level	Year	Schools	Students (mln)	Graduates (mln)	Full-time teachers (mln)
Primary schools	1978	142,865	170.5	25.4	.
	1985	121,712	183.7	22.8	6.0
	1997	90,704	206.2	27.9	8.6
	2000	84,710	188.6	32.5	8.6
	2005	67,056	166.8	28.9	8.8
	2009	52,283	158.1	27.0	9.1
Secondary schools in total	1978	14,277	68.2	1.8	3.8
	1985	11,644	57.3	14.3	3.4
	1997	13,466	81.9	21.4	5.3
	2000	12,841	97.8	22.5	5.5
	2005	12,975	138.7	35.8	6.7
	2009	11,334	122.5	37.7	7.2
Higher education schools	1978	56	0.6	0.1	0.1
	1985	86	1.0	0.2	0.2
	1997	92	2.0	0.5	0.3
	2000	97	3.4	0.6	0.4
	2005	155	10.0	1.9	0.6
	2009	196	14.9	3.3	0.9

Source: Figures and calculations based on data by: 统全国社会会计年鉴 (2011 年)
[‘The National China Yearbook of Social Statistics (2011)’]

An analysis of the subsidies paid to the regional governments of the autonomous regions from the central budget for education of all levels shows that in 2010 Inner Mongolia received the largest pool of funds for education from among the four autonomous regions,⁶ and its share made up 18.2% of the budget allocated to all education in autonomous units at all levels. Xinjiang, which has a comparable population to Inner Mongolia, received considerably lower funding for public education. This is surprising when one considers the far greater ethnic diversity in the Xinjiang region, and, above all – the ratio of native nationalities to the Han Chinese, as well as the level of education of the native population. Whereas in Inner Mongolia, the Chinese constitute about 80% of the population and minorities mostly speak Chinese, in Xinjiang the non-Chinese peoples comprise about half the population, and their level of illiteracy and lack of competence in Chinese remains much higher than in Inner Mongolia. Bearing this mind, it would

6 Published statistics did not show a separate amount for the populated region of Guangxi.

be particularly valuable to analyse the structure of educational expenditure on Chinese schools and on classes taught in minority languages. This would make it possible to draw broader conclusions on government aid for ethnic education, which despite numerous problems, is developing in Inner Mongolia, while at the same time being limited, at least for the titular Uyghur minority, in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

In comparison with other autonomous regions, Inner Mongolia had a relatively low proportion of primary education, especially in the group of graduates. The only outstanding element was the relatively high number of full-time teachers at this level. We should pay attention to the importance of secondary vocational education,⁷ as well as of higher education. This may be partly explained by the fact that the Mongolian educational system is very extensive, not only in terms of standard primary and secondary schools, but also of vocational and higher education institutions; especially that Mongolian-language education at higher levels attracts Mongolian youths from provinces also outside Inner Mongolia, as well as from the Republic of Mongolia.

A significant number of full-time teachers and the development of expensive vocational and higher education can account for the educational expenditure in Inner Mongolia, which was 5046.6 yuan per student in 2010, so quite high.

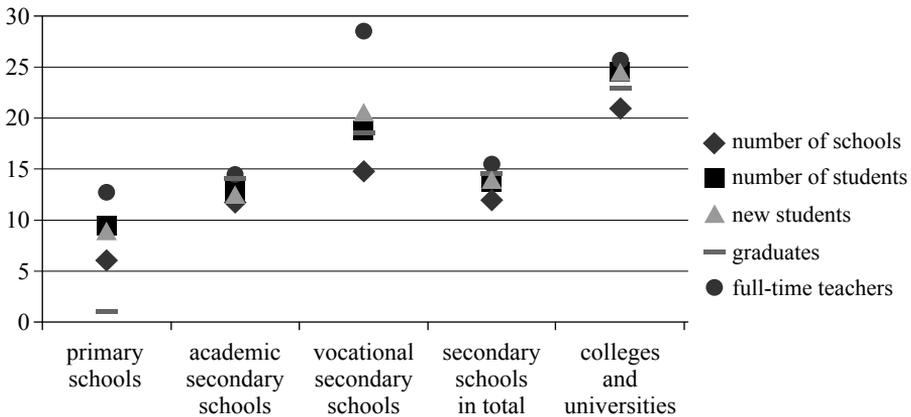


Figure 1. Proportion of Inner Mongolia education in the five autonomous regions (%)

Source: Figures and calculations based on data by: 全国社会统计年鉴 (2011 年) [‘The National China Yearbook of Social Statistics (2011)’]

7 Cf. 巴特尔 [Bateer], 呼和浩特职业教育志 [‘Description of vocational education in Hohhot’], 内蒙古人民出版社 [‘Inner Mongolia People’s Publishing House’], Hohhot 1996.

Official education models

According to the analysed documents, the education system in the PRC is divided into: Chinese and bilingual with Chinese and minority instruction languages. Sometimes there is also ethnic teaching, in which all classes are taught in the minority language. So theoretically three models can be distinguished. In fact, however, there are four models of education: Chinese, bilingual, monolingual and multilingual. The latter is offered to ethnic minorities who do not have their own system of writing and, at the same time, have undergone some acculturation towards another, already lettered minority. Not all peoples have a complete selection of all education paths. The terms describing these paths, apart from the first one mentioned, do not seem to be entirely intuitively self-evident and require some discussion.

In the case of Chinese-language education, one can speak of a teaching system providing instruction only in Chinese (except for foreign language lessons⁸), and integrated with the culture of the dominant Han group. Other models were dedicated primarily to national minorities. For Mongols, in later sections of this paper, Mongolian bilingual and monolingual teaching will be jointly referred to as ethnic, minority or Mongolian education, because – as it turns out – the education geared to this minority in Inner Mongolia is varied and the nomenclature used to describe it – erratic and imprecise.

The monolingual system consists in conducting all of the instruction and education, except for Chinese and foreign language classes, in the language of a given ethnic minority. This type of education can be implemented for peoples who have a system of writing, when textbooks for the minority do not need to resort to using Chinese or Latinised transcription. Several⁹ Chinese peoples have a written tradition and literature written in their languages, hence it was possible to design this type of education for them. Among the largest nations these are, e.g., the Uyghurs, Tibetans and Mongols. On the other hand, in the case of peoples who did not have their own system of writing, but who live in a common territory with larger minorities, with whom they integrated to a higher degree than with the Han Chinese, the solution was multilingual education. It involved creating classes in ethnic schools with the language of instruction intended for a minority deprived of their own system of writing. In this

8 In practice, taught in Chinese, with didactic methods dominated by learning grammar and vocabulary.

9 The administrative sources provide different numbers, usually between 8 and 14 nationalities.

way, the people received part of their education in their native language, some in the language of a close minority, sometimes also in Chinese, and learned Chinese and a foreign language. An example of such a solution are classes for the Evenks at Mongolian schools in Hölön Buir in Inner Mongolia.

Monolingual education is diverse due to the different time at which pupils begin learning Chinese. In different primary schools, the time of introducing state language lessons may vary: usually they start in the first or fourth grade. The year when children take up Chinese depends on different authorities and sometimes also on the parents' council. This system generally earned a bad reputation due to the low standards and non-compliance with the *gaokao* exam. However, it had the potential role of cultural transmission, which could enable the students to acquire high competences in their own language and culture. There was a chance to enhance the quality of teaching primarily by improving the teaching staff and textbooks. However, the poor condition of monolingual education served as an excuse for its termination. Since the 1990s this type of education has been in decline, especially in rural areas: the institutions conducting teaching programmes have been eliminated on a mass scale, and if they were combined or restored, this usually happened in a bilingual form.

As part of the 2010–2020 education reform programme, the bilingual education system was strongly promoted. It involves teaching social sciences and humanities in the minority language and nature and science courses – in Chinese. In practice, there may be differences between instruction languages for these subjects between different schools. Hence, there are different types of bilingual teaching, which at one extreme, may approximate Chinese-language teaching with few Mongolian lessons, and at the other – monolingual education, in which Chinese is alternatively taught in Mandarin (although also with possible derogations).

It is not explicitly written in government documents, but experience shows that bilingual teaching is promoted in place of closed monolingual schools. This means that a significant change is occurring in the ethnic minority education system. The repercussions of this change have not yet been thoroughly discussed in research, but there are doubts about this system, which is neither conducive to a high degree of skill in the ethnic language nor in Chinese.¹⁰

10 This view was expressed by a number of interlocutors among Mongolian teachers, while a headmaster of a Kazakh school verified this hypothesis through annual research on graduates educated in the three systems. Of these, students educated in a bilingual system had the worst results in the *gaokao* exam.

When there are different types of schools with different language of instruction available, parents can, if free places are available, enrol their child in any primary school, and then, contingent on exam results, apply to the selected junior high school or high school. The educational choices integrate various peoples, because it is not always possible or is the will of families and students to start studying in a school geared to a given ethnic group. First of all, national minorities are choosing Chinese education more and more often. There were also frequent cases – although on an incomparably smaller scale – of members of minorities attending schools of other peoples. For examples, in Inner Mongolia, the Evenks and the Dagur in Hölön Buir, who instead of participating in lessons in their own language, were known to attend classes in Mongolian. And in the Alxa League, apart from Chinese and Mongolian schools, the Mongols who are Muslim, could send a child to a school for Chinese Muslims (the Hui), which are nevertheless Chinese-speaking communities.¹¹ Currently, there is also Buddhist monastery education. However, it has marginal importance not only in comparison with the past,¹² but also with the Tibetans and the Thai people, where a larger percentage of the population receives it, and where it is institutionally coordinated with official education, and does not – as among the Mongols, remain on its margins.

Where there is a shortage of specialised education for the Mongolian minority or where the communities are Sinicised, students would not be able to attend schools with classes in Mongolian, even in another town.¹³ Under autonomy, schools are created for Sinicised Mongols who learn in Chinese in the early years, and later, after an intensive Mongolian course, move to a system of bilingual instruction. In non-governmental schools lacking local government aid for such initiatives, NGOs are established to organise Mongolian language courses free of charge.

This study focuses on the issue of official education, but we must also remember that there is also unofficial education, which is a token of a social organization that, in the case of Mongols, can influence local governments. Especially in a country where the dividing line between civic organizations and party

11 Apart from the teaching of Koranic Arabic, which, however, is more widely practised in schools centred around mosques.

12 特格舍 [Tegeshe], 周玉树 [Zhou Y.], *蒙古族教育史* [‘The history of Mongolian education’], 内蒙古人民出版社 [‘Inner Mongolia People’s Publishing House’], Hohhot 1995, chapter 1.

13 Which would, by the way, involve additional costs: first and foremost payment of tuition fees outside the place of residence.

committees is fluid, self-organization of Mongolian communities and grassroots movements for the education of this minority can shape the dynamics of local relationships.

Differentiation of priorities

The main purpose of formal education is the integration of ethnic minorities into Chinese society, as a result of which these peoples undergo acculturation. As a consequence of this gradual process, they absorb Chinese cultural elements, although they still treat them as foreign or external. In the course of replacing their own cultural system with the Chinese one, it is theoretically possible for minorities to assimilate in a strict sense, i.e. to lose not only their cultural attributes, but even all ethnos. Because of this, the minority education system is criticised by prof. Teng Xing from the Department of Nationality Education at the Central University for Nationalities, who is considered one of the most prominent researchers of the problems of ethnic minority education in the PRC. He draws attention to the fact that every education system is designed to pass on heritage, and reflect the ways of thinking and the values of the nation that created it. Thus, every education system is in fact ethnic education.¹⁴ The education of ethnic minorities in China, which is created by an external ethnic group, is therefore not adapted to the cultures of minorities. It may impede the preservation of their own cultures and transmitting them to future generations, hence it must lead to assimilation.¹⁵

Appropriate legal acts and official government documents can be regarded as officially announced goals. Ethnic education is to serve the integration of minorities into Chinese society, while preserving and developing ethnic minority cultures.¹⁶ Ethnic unity (民族团结) and protection of the integrity (or unification) of the country (维护国家统一),¹⁷ remain the priority of China's state policy on nationality issues, as does the propagation of socialist thought, which is also emphasised. Education in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism had been an objective stressed in legislation, especially until the mid-1990s.

14 腾星 [Teng X.], 王军 [Wang J.], *20 世纪中国少数民族与教育* ['Twentieth-century Chinese national minorities and education'], 中央民族大学出版社 ['Central University for Nationalities'], Beijing 2001, p. 8–9.

15 Literally: 'common cultural groups' [共同文化群体]. Ibidem, p. 9–10.

16 Ibidem, p. 7.

17 陈立鹏 [Chen L.], *中国少数民族教育立法新论* ['The new theory of China's ethnic minority education legislation'], 中央民族大学出版社 ['Central University for Nationalities Publishing House'], Beijing 2007, p. 1–2.

Gradually, references to the thoughts of Lenin or Marx had begun to function as one of the ritualised formulas, becoming increasingly less exposed or giving way to the concepts of subsequent PRC leaders.¹⁸

In the discussion on the actual intentions of different institutions that make up the education system, it is first necessary to identify groups of entities participating in it. It so happens that the central government may have a different vision of the learning outcomes than the local governments implementing these policies, especially if they are representatives of minorities, who are trying to achieve their own goals.¹⁹ A discrepancy may arise especially in the degree of concentration on one of two main aims. From Beijing's point of view, the crucial element is the efficient management of the continental-scale state, for which it is necessary to maintain social cohesion and to reduce the socio-cultural, linguistic, etc. gaps in the level of education. Local governments in ethnic territories ensure raising the quality of human capital, actually or ostensibly, by improving access to and quality of education. The objectives related to enhancing the quality of education can also be understood in different ways. For minimalists, it is vital to improve official figures such as number of years of schooling or the percentage of illiterates, which can lead to their positive assessment and further career. Some local elites, especially among the Han Chinese, define progress as expanding Chinese-language education, whereas others as the opposite: developing and improving the conditions of education in minority languages. This element is extremely important in the context of pastoral communities.

To some extent, the integration of minorities into Chinese society must be accompanied by their Sinicisation. Basically, from the point of view of the Chinese state, a satisfactory outcome is achieving social cohesion by extending the sphere of use of the state language, strengthening the Chinese thought system in social contacts and public life, and instilling loyalty to the Chinese government. It is difficult to unequivocally assess the attitude to the distinctiveness in the private sphere of culture and language. At various times, the policy of the state was evidently oriented towards Sinicisation. However, some elements of the policy

18 The main concepts were presented in: Huang Ch., *Mandarin Monday: 8 political slogans that changed the course of China's history*, "The Beijinger" [online], 12 VIII 2019 [accessed: 4 X 2019], available at: <<https://www.thebeijinger.com/blog/2019/08/12/8-famous-political-slogans-changed-chinas-course-of-history>>.

19 There are also local authorities who care about the ethnic status, which gives access to government aid. However, the case of creating educational institutions to raise funds based on the appeal to the minority will not be considered here owing to lack of good materials and research.

remained ambiguous or self-contradictory. Chinese society is pluralistic, but because some peoples are significantly distinct and difficult to govern, they can be perceived as a threat by the Han Chinese. This leads to ambiguity in judging the intentions regarding the actual goals of minority education and the interpretation of its effects. Probably, a de-nationalization of certain communities is a not necessarily desirable but a well-received side effect of these processes.

Another realm of diversification of the minority education system stretches along the axis: the creator of the system (government agencies) and its recipient (society). Institutions established to enforce national policy, which includes educational institutions, implement the objectives of the state at the national and local levels. At the same time, their actual functioning depends on a number of factors. The education system, especially the obligatory one, is created by central institutions through local governments, i.e. with the top-down approach. Educational institutions aim to carry out the central government's policies on educating citizens. The local governments may be the decisive factors, because the implementation of the original guidelines may depend on their effectiveness or approach (on their own goals – either consistent or inconsistent with Beijing's intentions). The local authorities must also reckon with the priorities of bottom-up movements, which often co-create local power structures (e.g. the grassroots). Within this relationship, we can also expect a clash of different interests, but also cooperation of active communities with the political representation that they elected at the local level, which creates a system in direct contact with its recipient. Here, local players appear: representatives of local governments and local social structures that can penetrate each other. As entities responsible for the final enforcement of educational policies, they can have a profound impact on their realization in a given school, especially if they have their own well-defined goals regarding the educational system.

Mongols in China adapt their curricula to toe Beijing's ideological line, at the same time creating an extensive Mongolian-language education system. Furthermore, their curricula are not simply a translation of Chinese-language content, as is probably the case for the majority of ethnic minorities: they prepare original materials that have no equivalent in Chinese education.

The unprecedented changes that China has gone through over the past three decades have also had an impact on education. The 1980s saw the rebuilding of the entire education system from the ground. This happened together with its simultaneous commercialization. In the 1990s, the next step was to transfer of responsibility for compulsory education to territorial governments, as well as to decentralise education funding. This resulted in the collapse of rural

education, which was particularly severe in the 2000s.²⁰ Part of the answer to these problems was the aforementioned 2010–2020 reform of Chinese education introduced in 2010.²¹

Changes in mandatory education have had a major impact on the Mongolian education. The most important element of liberalization in China was the reinstatement of ethnic language education in the 1980s. The quality of this education was rather low, and the curriculum was not adapted to the cultures of non-Chinese peoples. However, it should be underlined that the starting point was education for ethnic minorities that had been completely abolished during the Cultural Revolution. The teaching content has also been modified gradually. While the revolutionary themes continued in the 90s, their share clearly decreased in the following decades, replaced by the idea of building a community of the Chinese nation (*Zhonghua minzu*). It is noteworthy, however, that the problem of non-adaptation of some programme content to Mongolian culture and thought system persisted throughout the whole period of reform and opening up. First of all, there were no separate courses in Mongolian history, which led to the adoption of the concept of Chinese historiography (primarily teaching about the Chinese Ming dynasty while overlooking the concurrent Northern Yuan dynasty). In some of the studied institutions, elements of Mongolian history were introduced as part of other classes, predominantly as part of culture classes, where a lot of space is devoted to e.g. Genghis Khan.

Conclusion

Analysis of selected elements of the education system in autonomous regions and lower-level schools shows that education dedicated to minorities is a complex system and, in many respects, a quite decentralised one. For the above

20 Cf. Wang D., *Obowiązkowe szkolnictwo wiejskie w Chinach: obecna sytuacja, trudności, strategie rozwiązań* [‘Mandatory rural education in China: current situation, difficulties, solution strategies’], “Azja–Pacyfik” 2004, nr 7.

21 For the reform and its implementation see: K. Golik, *Implementacja reformy edukacji Chińskiej Republiki Ludowej 2010–2020 w Regionie Autonomicznym Mongolii Wewnętrznej – informacje wstępne* [‘Implementation of the 2010–2020 education reform of the People’s Republic of China in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region – preliminary findings’], [in:] *Local and global Asian perspectives: jubilee book for Professor Sławoj Szynkiewicz*, ed. K. Baraniecka-Olszewska, I. Kabzińska, O. Tangad, The Institute of Archeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Committee on Ethnological Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw 2018.

reasons, research on this topic must not be limited to the examination of general trends at the national level, since the specific nature of this education is the extraordinary abundance and diversity of the educational models that are implemented in practice at the county and township levels. The opportunities offered for local authorities by the autonomy of the education policy can manifest in the form of original projects and the creation of a high-quality education offer. In the case of the Mongols and some other peoples, the adaptation of the content and form of teaching to their cultural uniqueness is evident. However, more often local governments may treat ethnic education as expensive ballast, which, given the inability of local minority elites to prioritise it in local policies, may lead to a degeneration and atrophy of non-Chinese schools.

Education geared to ethnic minorities must have a Sinicizing effect in order to enable graduates to function in society, including in the Chinese labour market. What continues to be a challenge is the quality of the offer of the minority segment, which may provide at least a chance of survival, if not development, of the languages and cultures of the non-Chinese peoples. This problem particularly affects nations who do not have their own system of writing, who must use Chinese and Latin transcription to learn their own language and tradition, degrading it to the role of a foreign language. This also precludes full education in these languages, especially in the area of natural sciences. However, the matter also concerns old lettered cultures when graduates of minority schools are neither able to take full advantage of the legacy of Chinese civilization nor of their own people. This problem has been recognised as part of the nationwide 2010–2020 education reform, but the question is what solutions will be introduced. We will learn the answer after 2020, when a comprehensive evaluation of completed projects is possible.

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