

Models of Bilingual Education in Majority Language Contexts: An Exploratory Study of Bilingual Programmes in Qatari Primary Schools

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Abstract : Following an ethnographic approach this study explored bilingual programmes offered by two types of primary schools in Qatar: international and Independent schools. Qatar with its unique linguistic and socio-economic situation launched a new initiative for educational development in 2001 but with hardly any research linked to these changes. The study reveals that the Qatari bilingual schools context was one of heteroglossia, with three codes in operation: Modern Standard Arabic, Colloquial Arabic dialects and English. The two schools adopted different models of bilingualism. The international school adopted a strict separation policy between the two languages following a monoglossic belief. The independent school was found to apply a flexible language policy. The study also highlighted the daily challenges produced from the diglossia situation in Qatar, the difference between students and teacher dialect as well as acquiring literacy in the formal language. In addition to an absence of a clear language policy in Schools, the study brought attention to the instructional methods utilised in language teaching which are mostly associated with successful bilingual education.

Keywords : diglossia, instructional methods, language policy, qatari primary schools

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