

Effects of Political, Economic and Educational Considerations on Medium of Instruction (MOI) Policy in Asia: A Hong Kong Example

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Abstract : This paper exemplifies how the political and educational considerations have shaped the heavy-handed MOI policy in Hong Kong after its handover to China in 1997. Its result, a significant degeneration of English standard among the non-elite students, will be reported based on a detailed analysis of the public exam statistics available and other empirical studies. The remedial action taken by the Education Bureau out of the economic and educational considerations will be reported with reference to the official documents. The political, economic and educational considerations exemplified in different stages of Mother-tongue MOI policy in Hong Kong are found to be influential in the MOI policy in other Asian countries as well. For example, out of rapid internationalization and marketization, there has been increasing adoption of English as the MOI in post-secondary institutions in China, Japan & South Korea. On the other hand, while colonial languages were firmly made as the MOI in former colonies such as Vietnam and India, they were greatly retrieved upon independence for political and educational reasons. Malaysia also followed the same pattern upon independence but re-introduced partial English MOI policy in late 90s hoping to capitalize favourable globalization benefits. The short-lived policy was abandoned in 2009 because of the perceived political threat of national identity as well as the lack of educational effectiveness. Based on the great majority of Asian countries studied, this paper argues that MOI policy in Asia is much more than an educational issue, and that there is a clear pattern of how decisions of MOI matters are made. Studying the history and development of MOI in Hong Kong and other Asian countries provides a unique angle to view of how Asian countries prepare for the political, economic and educational challenges nowadays.

Keywords : economics, Hong Kong, medium of instruction, politics

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