

12 Seeking Information to Promote Effective Curriculum Renewal in a Colombian School

Mónica Rodríguez-Bonces

Introduction

In Colombia, the promotion of bilingual education originates in national and institutional policy. The Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo: Colombia 2004–2019 [National Program of Bilingualism: Colombia 2004–2019] has as one of its goals the acquisition of at least one foreign language, with the aim of citizens becoming active members of a globalized and productive world (Ministerio de Educación, Gobierno de Colombia, 2005). The goal is for students to reach a basic level of English language proficiency in elementary school and an independent level in secondary school; A2 and B1, respectively, as determined by the user bands set by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR; Council of Europe, 2001).

In 2009, standardized tests administered across Colombia demonstrated that schools were not achieving the desired goals (see Banfi, this volume, for a summary of a variety of Colombian programs). To address this issue, several governmental policies were implemented. Specifically, the Colombian government designed the Proyecto de Fortalecimiento al Desarrollo de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras 2010–2014 [Project for Strengthening the Development of Competencies in a Foreign Language 2010–2014], whose main objective was to enhance teachers and students' communicative competence, as well as the English teaching and learning processes. In 2013, Law 1651 or Ley de Bilingüismo [Bilingual Law] favored the development of the four language skills and quality assurance through certifications (Senado de la Nación, Colombia, 2013). In 2014, the government launched the Programa Nacional de Inglés 2015–2025–Colombia Very Well [The 2015–2025 National English Program–Colombia Very Well] (Ministerio de Educación, Gobierno de Colombia, 2014a), designed to consolidate the teaching of English in the

country. More recently, in 2016, the Ministry of Education published the *Derechos Básicos de Aprendizaje* [The Basic Learning Rights] (Ministerio de Educación, Gobierno de Colombia, 2016a) and the *Esquema Curricular Sugerido* [English Curriculum] for Grades 6 to 11 (Ministerio de Educación, Gobierno de Colombia, 2016b), designed to provide information to a wide audience (parents, educators, students) on the scope and sequence, grade-level standards and syllabi for English language instruction.

The initiatives described in the previous paragraphs have crucial implications for the teaching and learning of English in Colombia. For instance, many private and public schools in Colombia have adopted various bilingual models by offering content learning, mostly in English, in the early years of school. However, little has been done to evaluate the effectiveness of such programs and understand the challenges that may be faced upon their implementation (Rodríguez-Boncos, 2011).

This chapter presents an evaluation study of a bilingual education program (BEP) that was gradually implemented from 2010 through 2014 in a private school in the Bogotá district. The school, Liceo Hermano Miguel La Salle – known as Lhemi Salle – is part of the LaSallian community, a Catholic teaching congregation of brothers who share the Lasallian education mission and call of St John Baptist De La Salle. The themes examined in this chapter reflect the situation of thousands of public and private schools that are in the process of implementing bilingual programs in Colombia and other South American countries. Therefore, this study has implications for the implementation of bilingual programs in the South American region.

The chapter presents a review of the literature focusing on government initiatives related to the implementation of BEPs in Colombia and research focusing on such programs in the Colombian context. Then, the chapter describes the data collection and analysis methods, the results of the study and the discussion and implications in light of the formulation of a bilingual education school policy.

Literature Review

The Colombian situation

As noted above, the 2016 Basic Learning Rights (Ministerio de Educación, Gobierno de Colombia, 2016a) and the English Curriculum (Ministerio de Educación, Gobierno de Colombia, 2016b) set the basic standards that students have to achieve at each grade level. These standards identify the scope and sequence of the English language curriculum for the different grade levels. The English Curriculum also provides recommendations on the pedagogical approaches to be implemented (e.g. task based, project based, inquiry based); the assessment principles guiding the instructional process; the characteristics of the language curriculum (e.g. flexible, contextual, cross-curricular and

sociocultural); and the classroom topics that lend themselves to the development of interdisciplinary projects (e.g. health, democracy, peace and sustainability). While these guidelines provide valuable information, Colombia has an education secretariat in each district (commonly known as 'departments') that is entitled to establish its own strategic plan to accomplish the Ministry of Education goals.

In order to further enhance English language instruction, as mandated by the national government, in 2006, the Consejo de Bogotá (2006) [Bogotá's Municipal Council] passed Acuerdo 253 [Agreement 253], designed to implement a program titled Bogotá Bilingüe [Bilingual Bogotá], whose goal was to produce bilingual citizens who would participate in the global economy. Acuerdo 559 [Agreement 559], also passed by the Consejo de Bogotá (2008) [Bogotá's Municipal Council, 2008], further contributed to elevating the role of bilingual education in Bogotá by promoting cooperation between the private and public sectors to strengthen English language education. As a result of these agreements, language institutes and schools engaged in collaborative professional development activities and private companies provided funding to schools.

Much like in the Bogotá district, other districts have set their own bilingual education policies. Valle Bilingüe, Antioquia Bilingüe and Manizales Bilingüe are some examples of government initiatives in relation to bilingual education. For example, the governorship of Valle del Cauca (Gobernación del Valle del Cauca, 2012) signed Agreement 345 to guarantee that teachers and students in Valle would reach the communicative competence required by the Ministry of Education according to the CEFR. In the case of Antioquia Bilingüe, the government promotes the social, cultural and educational development of the region. Manizales Bilingüe promotes economic development via tourism and export business along with private companies. Therefore, in order to meet their goals, the two departments engaged in a variety of privately/ publicly funded initiatives, involving but not limited to providing English language preparation through local binational centers.¹ In summary, regional programs cater to the needs of the region in which they function.

Besides the above initiatives, implemented at the local level, the national government created a variety of programs designed to further improve the teaching and learning of English in Colombia. Virtual learning environments include *Inglés para Todos* [English for Everybody] and *Yes! e-English for Teachers*, which are designed to provide online English language instruction for teachers. *Bunny Bonita* (Ministerio de Educación, Gobierno de Colombia, 2012) is an English video series for children ages 4–8; and *English for Colombia-ECO* (Ministerio de Educación, Gobierno de Colombia, 2014b) is an online program designed to prepare English language teachers who work with children in rural areas.

A cursory examination of the above policies and programs reveals a strong emphasis on the development of communicative competence from

a utilitarian perspective which justifies learning English on the basis of economic competitiveness and improved quality of life. The policies and programs have been criticized on the grounds that they emphasize the teaching of the English language (and the cultures associated with the language) to the detriment of native languages and local cultures (Galindo & Moreno, 2008; Pal Forero, 2010; Usma, 2009; Vargas *et al.*, 2008).

In addition, several studies have shown the mismatches between government policies, linguistic standards, curriculum guidelines and the actual educational system. For example, Fandiño-Parra (2014) explains that the implementation of BEPs doesn't necessarily contribute to narrowing the gaps between different socioeconomic groups. He also explains that despite the fact that time and money are invested in professional development and testing, teachers and students still show low performance on standardized tests and many teachers recruited to teach content areas in English lack certification for teaching subjects like science or math in a foreign language. Much like Fandiño-Parra, Usma (2009) argues that bilingual programs and bilingual projects only benefit certain social groups, resulting in social inequality.

López *et al.* (2011) identified several challenges related to the implementation of English language education and teachers and students' profiles. These challenges include the need for more time for teacher training and better teacher preparation in the area of methodologies for teaching content areas in a foreign language. These ideas were affirmed in a document analysis conducted by Sánchez Jabba (2013). In this study, the CEFR was used as a reference to measure how close students were to reaching the desired language proficiency levels of B1 and B2, respectively. Average scores obtained by Colombians on national and international standardized tests were analyzed. Results indicated that both teachers and students had low levels of proficiency in English and were unlikely to achieve the goals required per national policies. Sánchez Solarte and Obando Guerrero (2008) argue that rather than looking at teachers' language proficiency and their teaching methodologies, there is a need to look at the poor teaching conditions under which teachers have to function. They explain how in the Colombian educational system, many schools transitioning into BEPs do not offer the best teaching environment. Some of the negative aspects mentioned by the authors were associated with the school environment and included minimal contact hours, overcrowded classrooms, lack of didactic resources and heterogeneous groups. As Sánchez Solarte and Obando Guerrero (2008) explain, these factors have a negative effect on the learning situation, even if teachers have high English language proficiency.

Other researchers have studied the role of school administrators in improving the quality of education. For example, Miranda and Echeverry (2011) argue that the Colombian system should focus more on improving local contexts rather than incorporating international standards like the

CEFR. Torres-Martínez (2009) argues that governments plan according to international policies and forget about local contexts. European and Latin American contexts differ; for instance, when considering reasons for being bilingual, educational systems or mobility factors.

In conclusion, the literature reviewed in this section shows that while the Colombian government, both at the local and national level, is invested in the implementation of BEPs, recent studies have questioned the implementation of such programs since, oftentimes, they do not consider the local realities. In light of the literature reviewed, the next section describes the context of the bilingual program investigated for the purposes of this chapter.

Method

The school context

With the aim of following the directives of the Ministry of Education, Lhemi Salle implemented a model of English language instruction that integrated content-based instruction (CBI). As explained by Brinton *et al.* (1989), CBI involves the integration of language and content instruction. The literature has identified three models of CBI. The first model is the theme-based model, whose goal is to teach language through a variety of themes that are relevant to students' lives. The second model is the adjunct instruction model, in which language classes are 'adjuncted' to content classes (Brinton *et al.*, 1989); in this model the language teacher focuses on the linguistic demands of the content course and the content instructor is responsible for delivering content. Ideally, in this model, the content and the language instructors collaborate to enhance their teaching both in terms of language and content (Snow & Kamhi-Stein, 2002). The last model is the sheltered instruction (SI) model (Echevarria *et al.*, 2012). Lhemi Salle followed a pedagogical sequence that draws on SI: the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) (Echevarria *et al.*, 2012), a model designed to facilitate content and language learning for English language learners. The four stages in the pedagogical sequence implemented at Lhemi Salle were aligned to the eight SIOP components as shown in Table 12.1.

Additionally, the BEP at Lhemi Salle evolved over a period of four years, 2010–2014. Table 12.2 presents the evolution of the program.

Bearing in mind that Colombia is a diverse country and there are significant differences in access to and conditions of education, schools should adapt bilingual education models in accordance with institutional needs, student characteristics, personnel qualifications and previous experiences with language teaching. For example, private schools in rural vs urban areas have different educator profiles and even options for making personnel decisions; therefore, there are differences in how they implement

Table 12.1 Lemhi Salle's pedagogical sequence

<i>SIOP component</i>	<i>Lhemi Salle pedagogical sequence</i>	<i>Description</i>
Lesson preparation	Contextualization: – Motivación y Encuadre [Motivation and Setting Stage]	Objectives are set and the topic is presented by making connections to students' previous experiences and background. Concepts are applied to real-life situations. The chief indicators are expressing, demonstrating, explaining and stating.
Building background Comprehensible input	Structure of Content: – Enunciación [Enunciation/Presentation] – Modelación [Modeling]	Teachers make explicit and direct links between past learning, new concepts and current reality. The teacher models for students to understand what to do. The teacher needs to use a variety of techniques. The explanation of tasks should be made clear. The chief indicators at Lhemi are explaining, modeling, processing, exemplifying and organizing.
Strategies Interaction Practice and application	Application: – Simulación [Simulation] – Ejercitación [Practice]	Teachers use a variety of learning strategies and scaffolding techniques for students to apply and practice knowledge. The emphasis should be placed on the process rather than the product. Feedback is provided for students to adjust. The chief indicators are providing feedback, scaffolding, applying learning strategies, controlling time on task and interacting.
Review and assessment	Verification: – Síntesis y demostración [Synthesis and demonstration]	Teachers verify how well students have retained knowledge and understood. Providing feedback through clarification and reviewing main concepts allows the teacher to move on or reinforce. At Lhemi, teachers may assign homework. Instructional decisions are made based on students' responses.

Source: Adapted from Echevarria *et al.* (2012).

Table 12.2 Evolution of the bilingual education program at Lhemi Salle

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
In preschool and first grade: Intensive English language instruction: 8 hours a week. Science: 3 hours a week. School shift: changes from a morning shift to a 7am–3pm shift.	Preschool to second grade: Intensive English language instruction: 8 hours a week. Science (3 hours), art (2 hours), social studies (3 hours) in English. These three core areas were taught by the same teacher. Secondary: Intensive English language instruction: 7 hours a week. An agreement was signed with an international university for teachers and seventh graders to participate in summer camps.	Curriculum evaluation took place. Partial immersion model, involving 50% of instruction in English, was extended to third grade.	Bilingual education school policy was formulated and distributed. Partial immersion model, involving 50% of instruction in English, was extended to fourth grade. Team teaching was implemented. School events were organized: Language Day, Spelling Bee Contest. SIOP implementation.	Curriculum evaluation took place and bilingual education school policy was modified. Technology was integrated into the teaching of science and English. Professional development activities related to BEP were conducted.

bilingual programs. In the case of Lhemi Salle, the models implemented were early partial immersion for the primary grades and maintenance of English for the secondary grades. Early partial immersion, which began in preschool, involved the use of English for at least 50% of the instructional time for at least five years, which is the length of primary school in Colombia. As both Spanish and English were used during instruction, the objective was to produce balanced bilinguals. English language instruction using scaffolding, language development strategies, vocabulary and explicit learning strategy instruction was incorporated into the curriculum. Project-based instruction and the teaching of arts and science were also included in the curriculum.

Despite the fact that most schools in Colombia support the immersion model at the elementary level, they face serious problems offering bilingual programs at the secondary level. Difficulties arise due to the lack of prepared bilingual teaching staff to teach content areas in English, the reduction in the number of hours of instruction in English and the time schools spend in extracurricular activities. As a consequence, secondary schools mainly implement a maintenance model. This was the case of Lhemi Salle. In the secondary school, a decision was made to adapt a US model of maintenance bilingualism since this model permitted the teaching of strategic competencies, such as note-taking, summarizing, time management and test-taking skills, among others; and, at the same time, reinforced academic language instruction. In fact, in the Colombian context, the objective of adopting such a model is to maintain the second language (L2) acquired in primary years. In the Lhemi Salle context, this was done through the intensification of English classes – eight hours a week – following a methodology of project-based instruction and the inclusion of readings in English in classes taught in Spanish. In the English class, language skills were reinforced through practice and explicit grammar instruction when necessary. Additionally, projects were interdisciplinary, meaning they were related to content areas such as science or social studies.

Without a doubt, the changes made in the school curriculum required the community (parents, administrative staff, teachers and students) to make a variety of adjustments related to practice. For example, some teachers had to refresh their knowledge of and take on the challenge of teaching content in English, while others had to begin taking English language classes. Content area teachers were not proficient in English, and this resulted in English teachers teaching subjects like science or social studies. At the same time, some language teachers were not certified to teach the grade level of the subject area they were asked to teach; therefore, they had to prepare themselves by studying the subject areas they were assigned to teach. Teachers did not necessarily become certified, but engaged in academic readings and team-teaching with a certified teacher in the core area being taught. If the school wanted to be certified as bilingual

by the Ministry of Education, all the teaching staff needed to demonstrate language proficiency according to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001), being A2 or basic user for teachers teaching subjects in Spanish and B2 or independent user for English teachers and teachers teaching subject areas in English.

The administration, in addition, incorporated new ways of working. First, Human Resources had to establish new teacher hiring criteria, which included the certification of English language proficiency and experience in bilingual schools. Second, principals and assistant principals in charge of professional development had to add a variety of workshops and discussion sessions focusing on bilingualism, bilingual education, SI, differentiated instruction, classroom management and science instruction in English. However, up to 2012, participants in these workshops and discussions were only English department teachers. Starting in 2013, the year in which the bilingual education policy was formulated, administrators and science and social studies department heads attended the meetings. In 2014, when the bilingual education policy was modified, the whole school staff and administration were involved in professional development activities. Last, the school underwent an internationalization process through the signing of agreements with universities and international schools.

Data collection and analysis

For the purposes of this study, designed to evaluate the BEP at Lhemi Salle, data were collected during one school-year. Data were synthesized and organized into major categories and examples through content analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The following data sources were used as a means of triangulation to determine the context in which the school operated.

Document analysis: A review of a variety of documents was conducted in order to delineate the institution's philosophy and the methodological approaches implemented by the teachers. These documents included curriculum guidelines, syllabi for the different content areas, as well as lesson plans and textbooks for the English and Spanish language classes. Additionally, an analysis of the Proyecto Educativo Institucional [the Institutional Educational Project, PEI] was conducted. This is a document used in Colombian educational institutions which lays out the mission, vision and broad guidelines explaining processes related to teaching, assessment and institutional goals. The document analysis was also used to determine what baseline knowledge students possessed in their first language (L1).

Parents' survey: A parents' survey was administered in order to determine parental perceptions regarding the needs of their children in relation to the study of English and the implementation of a BEP. This survey included seven closed questions and eight open-ended questions

and focused on three main topics: the importance of offering bilingual education; students' progress in the BEP; and the parents' degree of support of the BEP. A total of 120 surveys were administered to preschool and first-grade parents, 120 surveys were returned. These parents were chosen to participate in the study because by the time their children started school, the immersion program had been implemented for four years (2010–2014).

Teachers' survey: A teachers' survey was also administered in order to determine the teachers' perceptions with regard to the needs and interests of students in relation to the study of English and the implementation of the BEP. The survey contained six closed and nine open-ended questions. Questions focused on bilingual education models, the school environment, methodologies, resources and quality assurance. The survey was administered by the counseling department during grade-level meetings for the primary-level teachers. Twenty-six questionnaires were given out, of which 22 were returned.

Teachers' interview: Ten content area and English teachers were interviewed in order to understand their beliefs about the process of students' L1 acquisition; to obtain information on the teachers' perceptions regarding bilingual education; and to identify mechanisms for professional development. These non-structured interviews were recorded via notes. Together with the document analysis, they were an important source of information regarding processes related to the acquisition of the L1, which is fundamental when beginning a transition into a bilingual model. The method for data analysis involved identifying emerging categories, as was done with the document analysis.

Classroom observations: Five teachers were observed five times each by four people (a research assistant, an international teacher, the assistant principal and an external consultant) for a total of 25 observations. The objective of these observations was to identify the methodological approach implemented by the content area teachers and the English teachers who taught content areas. An observation protocol, adapted from Echevarria *et al.* (2012), focusing on the stages of instruction emphasized by the school was used. As shown in Table 12.1, these stages were contextualization, structure of content, application and verification. Five teachers were observed five times each. The observations lasted between 30 minutes and an hour and were non-participatory, which means that the observer did not intervene in the classes and was limited to observing and filling out the observation protocol. Results were reached by calculating the means and overall standard deviation in Microsoft Excel.

The instruments and documents used in data collection can be organized into four main categories of analysis. The first one consisted of the BEP foundations, which refers to the principles guiding the BEP implementation. These foundations arose from the analysis of the BEP document and the teachers and parents' survey. The second category,

named Instructional Considerations, arose from the teachers and parents' survey responses pertaining to instructional issues, as well the teachers' classroom observations. The third category, named Bilingual Environment, made reference to the infrastructure, resources, school setting, L1 and L2 status and extra-curricular activities that promoted bilingual education. The last category, named Professional Development, focused on the teachers' responses to the interviews and survey, as well as the parents' survey.

Results

This section presents the results of the analysis. The section is organized into four subsections, including foundations or principles guiding the bilingual program; instructional considerations; the bilingual environment; and the professional development opportunities.

Foundations or principles guiding the BEP

The analysis of the BEP document, as well as the teachers' and parents' survey showed that the school has clear principles that guide bilingual education. Table 12.3 presents the documents analyzed and the results of the analysis.

As can be observed in Table 12.3, the documents analyzed clearly demonstrate that the institution's philosophy advocates for the development of not only communicative but also technological, entrepreneurial and scientific competencies in a globalized world. The curriculum guidelines provided by the administration state a four-stage pedagogical sequence that teachers should plan for, bearing in mind the incorporation of critical thinking skills and school assessment criteria. The Spanish and English languages share the same status; this means that they are both equally important.

Reasons to be bilingual

The results of the analysis of 120 parents and 22 teachers' surveys showed that, in general, both parents and teachers were largely positive about their children being bilingual. As shown in Figures 12.1 and 12.2, parents and teachers coincided in the reasons given for supporting bilingualism, naming students' future competitiveness in the labor market, as well as the potential to work or study abroad which may be facilitated when interacting with others. In terms of culture, there was a difference in teachers' and parents' perceptions in that only 8% of the parents as opposed to 17% of the teachers believed that bilingual education helped children value other people's culture.

Table 12.3 Summary of document analysis: BEP foundations

<i>Bilingual education program foundations</i>			
<i>Documents selected</i>	<i>School's mission and vision</i>	<i>Students' profile and outcomes</i>	<i>Teachers' profile</i>
The Institutional Educational Project (PEI)	Comprehensive management of quality control which requires the rigorous oversight of the implementation of any new program. The school contributes to research processes that favor the development of talents according to the regional, national and global needs.	The school is a space to develop communicative, scientific, technological and entrepreneurial competencies in the community.	Educators should promote critical thinking, values, scientific and technological competencies. Educators are seen as innovators in the sense that they renew practices, research and provide a safe environment for children.
Pedagogical Program	Social studies should emphasize national identity. The pedagogical sequence contains the cycle of <i>planear-hacer-verificar-y-actuar</i> [planning-doing-verifying-acting].	Lesson plans are used to determine mechanisms of assessment and match the course plan.	Spanish teachers emphasize critical thinking and English teachers emphasize vocabulary. Example: Write labels and describe pictures and people with basic vocabulary words (first-grade English teacher) vs create short narratives, descriptive and informative texts in which a clear point of view is stated and ethics of language use is shown (first-grade Spanish teacher).
Spanish and English textbooks		Four language skills are developed in both languages.	Teachers wrote the Spanish textbook.
Subject area documents	The subject area documents explain the communicative competency objectives of Spanish and the foreign language under two conceptual axes: linguistic and communicative.	The focus is on the development of scientific, critical and social thinking.	

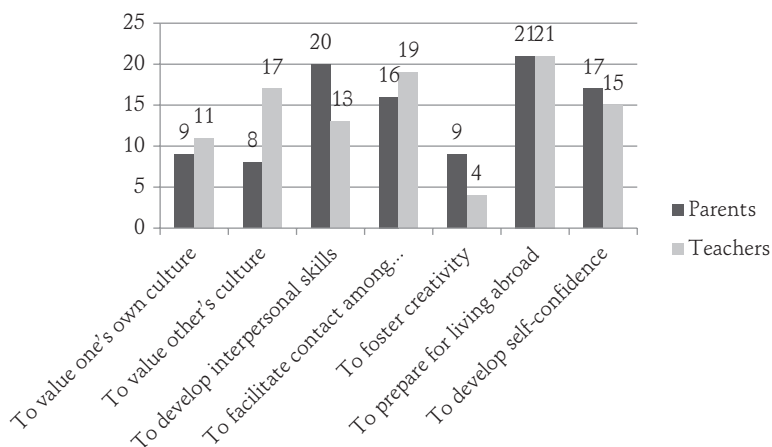


Figure 12.1 Parents' and teachers' reasons for children to be bilingual in percentages

When teachers and parents were asked about the advantages of offering a BEP, a low percentage, 5% of teachers and 8% of parents, respectively, believed it gives a higher status (Figure 12.2). In contrast, they agreed that quality education, academic exchanges, cognition and competitiveness are the main advantages of the program offered at the school.

The results described in the previous paragraphs support the findings of the interviews of 10 teachers, who argued that the BEP enhanced students' cognitive potential, provided opportunities for the school to implement

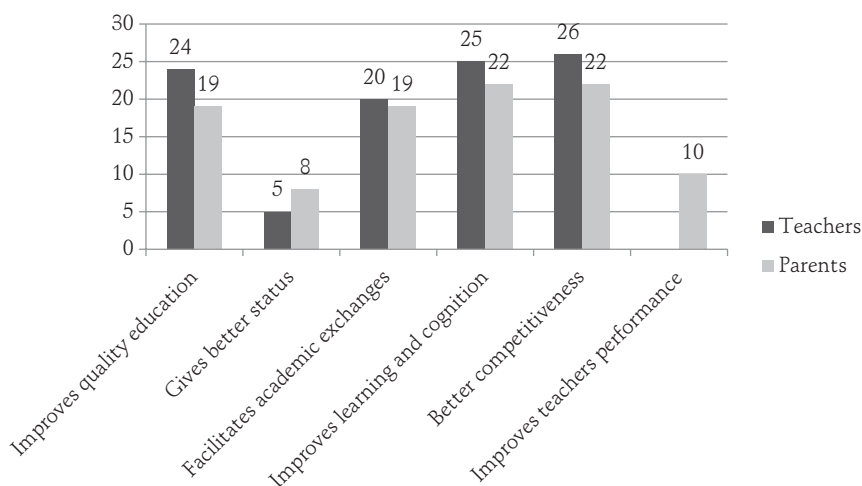


Figure 12.2 Parents' and teachers' perceptions of the advantages of a BEP in percentages

innovative practices and promoted strong student performance in the English language. Following are three teachers' quotations supporting this idea:

I believe students' brain is like a sponge and they are able to learn as many languages as they want. I wish I knew a language. (First-grade Spanish teacher)

Bilingual education is new in the Lasallian Community. Lhemi is making progress and a difference. (Foreign languages department head)

I always use English; my students understand, they even want to use more and more English. (Preschool science teacher)

Quality of the BEP

The parents' and teachers' surveys and the teachers' interview results showed different opinions on the quality of the BEP. The BEP was considered to be excellent or good by 35% and 64% of the parents, respectively. Some of the reasons given by the parents included the fact that 'teachers are using more English in class' and 'Children are happy in the English class'. In contrast to the high perceptions of parents, 32% of teachers revealed lack of knowledge about the program itself and only 9% considered the program excellent (Figure 12.3).

Effects of the English language on Spanish

During the interview, when primary-level teachers – including content and English language teachers – were asked about the quality of the BEP, they expressed concern about the effects of English on the students' Spanish

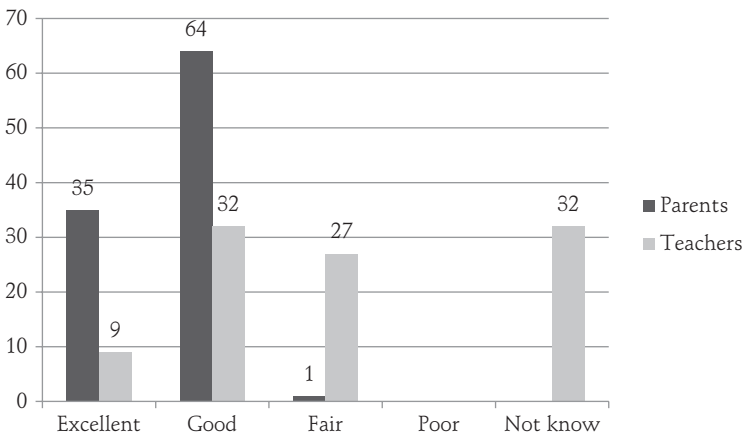


Figure 12.3 Parents' and teachers' opinion about the quality of the BEP

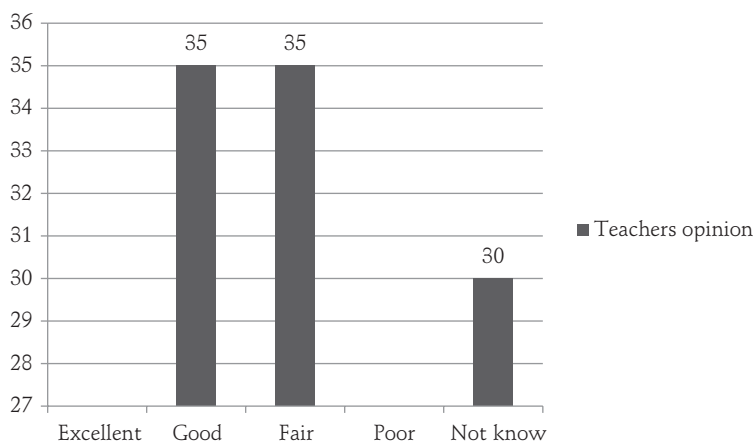


Figure 12.4 Students' performance in Spanish according to teachers in percentages

skills. In fact, 100% of the teachers agreed that the students' experiences and their levels of literacy in their native language should be taken into account when offering a BEP. Additionally, 80% of teachers expressed the opinion that parents should be actively involved in the process of teaching L2 literacy.

Teachers also expressed concern regarding the potential impact of a BEP on the development of children's native language. For example, 35% of the teachers reported that the students' level of Spanish was good and fair, while 30% affirmed that they did not know the quality of the students' performance in Spanish as shown in the survey results in Figure 12.4.

Teachers and parents agreed that it was necessary to reinforce students' native language so that the English language learning process did not interfere with it. Teachers manifested that if there was a balance between the two languages – what they called 'real bilingualism' – a foreign language should not be viewed as a threat to Spanish.

Instructional considerations

The second category of analysis, named Instructional Considerations, arose from the teachers' and parents' survey responses pertaining to instructional issues, as well the teachers' classroom observations.

Content areas in English and English language instruction

The interviews of 10 English and content area teachers showed that, in general, teachers were cautious regarding which subjects should be taught in English and how long it would take to train teachers to implement instruction in English. This is shown in the following teachers' comments:

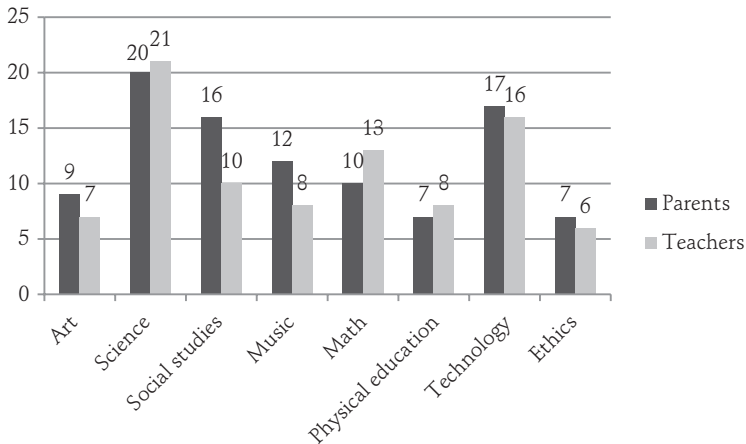


Figure 12.5 Parents’ and teachers’ opinion on which subjects should be taught in English in percentages

The school can no expect bilingualism in one year, it takes time.
(Preschool coordinator)

Math teachers are doing a great job, what happens if Math is taught in English? (First-grade teacher)

As shown in Figure 12.5, survey results for both parents and teachers showed that technology and the natural sciences were the best choices for the implementation of the BEP. However, regarding the subjects that should not be taught in English, more teachers selected those that were related to values, such as ethics and social studies. In contrast, 72% of the parents chose mathematics (Figure 12.6). Most likely, the teachers’ response was related to the close association between values (e.g. patriotism, appreciation of national and cultural identity) and the use of the L1. Also, the teachers’ responses could be attributed to the fact that it is undeniable that the teaching of values in an L2 places high linguistic and cognitive demands on students.

Students’ background

One theme that stood out in the interviews was the teachers’ perception that new students, especially first graders, sometimes fell behind in English because the background with which they arrived from other institutions was not as strong as the background of the students who began their education at Lhemi Salle. ‘If students do preschool at la Salle, it is OK but if they come from other schools I have to reinforce, even teach them numbers’ (First-grade teacher).

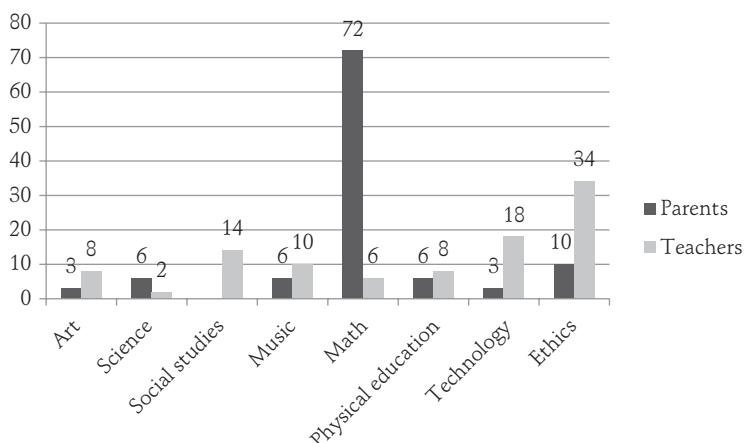


Figure 12.6 Parents' and teachers' opinion on which subjects should not be taught in English in percentages

Pedagogical sequence

In order to assess the extent to which the pedagogical sequence was implemented by the teachers, five teachers – two science teachers and three English teachers – were observed. The former were chosen because they were teaching content areas in English in second and third grades; grades whose students had participated in the BEP since its initiation in 2010. The latter were chosen because they had been teaching in the school since 2010.

Classroom observations focused on the four stages of the pedagogical sequence already presented in Table 12.1. For each area of observation (contextualization, structure of content, application and verification), the rating scores were: 0, non-observed; 1, did not meet expectations; 2, barely met expectations; 3, met expectations; and 4, surpassed expectations.

As shown in Table 12.4, there was a wide range in the teachers' implementation of the stages of the sequence adapted from the SIOP model (Echevarria *et al.*, 2012). Given this range, a couple of relevant points need to be highlighted. Specifically, in the area of contextualization, while the observers found that the content was mostly appropriate for the age and previous knowledge of the students, at times, the use of materials was limited to having students make drawings, fill in the blanks or copy vocabulary from the board. Additionally, several of the observers' comments addressed the fact that oftentimes the examples given in support of a new concept were not meaningful for the students.

The second stage in the sequence observed was structure of content. Observations in this area focused on how content was presented and modeled to the students. Much like in the previous area, there was a range

Table 12.4 Teacher observation means

<i>Teachers/pedagogical sequence</i>	<i>Preschool English teachers (M)</i>	<i>Second- grade science teacher (M)</i>	<i>Third- grade English teacher (M)</i>	<i>Third- grade science teacher (M)</i>	<i>Fourth- grade English teacher (M)</i>	<i>Overall mean</i>	<i>Overall SD</i>
Contextualization	3.50	2.50	2.50	1.00	1.00	2.10	0.96
Structure of content	4.00	2.50	2.00	1.00	1.00	2.10	1.1
Application	2.50	2.00	2.00	2.50	1.00	2.00	0.55
Verification	4.00	4.00	3.50	3.00	.00	2.90	1.50

Note: Rating scores: 0, non-observed; 1, did not meet expectations; 2, barely met expectations; 3, met expectations; and 4, surpassed expectations.

in how teachers structured content and no clear differences were observed for the English and content teachers. In the application stage, there was more consistency in that the range in means was not as big as it was for the first stage of the lesson. However, as shown in Table 12.4, the application stage means ranged from 1.00, reflecting that the teachers did not meet expectations, to 2.50, reflecting that the teachers’ practices were between barely met expectations and met expectations. The low average means observed for the application stage could be attributed, at least in part, to the fact that while teachers made use of learning strategies to help students apply information, their utilization was inconsistent and scaffolding techniques were only sometimes applied. Additionally, the observations also showed that, in general, class activities within the application stage followed the same format, namely fill-in-the-blanks or drawing exercises. In other words, application tasks were used, but with limited variety in some cases. Furthermore, the classroom observations showed that error correction and activities related to higher-order thinking skills were only done at the knowledge level in Bloom’s Taxonomy (Huitt, 2011). This means that students focused on direct recall of information and the activities completed included listing, naming and defining ideas.

Teachers provided opportunities for interaction; however, the observers’ comments on the observation protocol revealed that the interaction was mostly teacher–student; as shown in the following comment by two of the observers: ‘The teacher organized groups, however students continued working individually and the teacher monitored’. ‘Students work in pairs, the teacher asks students to approach her if they have any questions’.

Language skills were integrated by most of the teachers. However, the information gathered in relation to the development of communicative skills showed disparities. While there was a focus on communicative skills in the lessons, the observers’ remarks pointed to the fact that teachers

showed a strong inclination toward writing activities, with little emphasis on speaking.

Appropriate pacing and student engagement were observed. Pacing was assessed as appropriate due to the fact that teachers controlled class time, although all the observers agreed that teachers provided more time than necessary for the completion of activities.

The last stage in the pedagogical sequence at Lhemi is verification. This was the teachers' strongest area since the means ranged from 3.00, met expectations, to 4.00, surpassed expectations, though in several cases, the observers noted that while the teachers had students review vocabulary, they did not necessarily have students make connections between vocabulary words and the ideas those words reflected.

In conclusion, the observations showed that rigorous work remains to be done in order to incorporate methodologies and strategies that support language and content learning.

Bilingual environment

Bilingual environment at home and at school

The third category of analysis, the bilingual environment, focused on the bilingual resources available to students. The results of the parents' survey showed that the most popular resource available to parents was music (30%), followed by television in English (26%), websites (25%) and, finally, CDs (14%). This finding shows that student input is not limited to the input received at the school.

The teachers' interviews showed that the teachers felt they had resources to foster bilingualism. Some of the resources included online platforms, overhead projectors, CDs, videos and CD players. During the interview, it could be inferred that preschoolers displayed their classwork and made posters in English and that announcements were made in English. However, this was not the case for high school students. Following is what a teacher had to say about this: 'I love the information displayed in English in the preschool area; however we do not have any information in English in high school area'.

Professional development

The last category of analysis identified was professional development. As shown in the parents' and teachers' surveys, professional development was an area of concern for both groups. Specifically, 35% of teachers and 34% parents explained that for a bilingual program to succeed, teachers need training. At the same time, 26% of parents and 30% of teachers stated that parental involvement is necessary in a bilingual program (Figure 12.7).

As shown in Figure 12.7, parents also showed concern regarding the need to invest in new teachers; although they acknowledged the investment

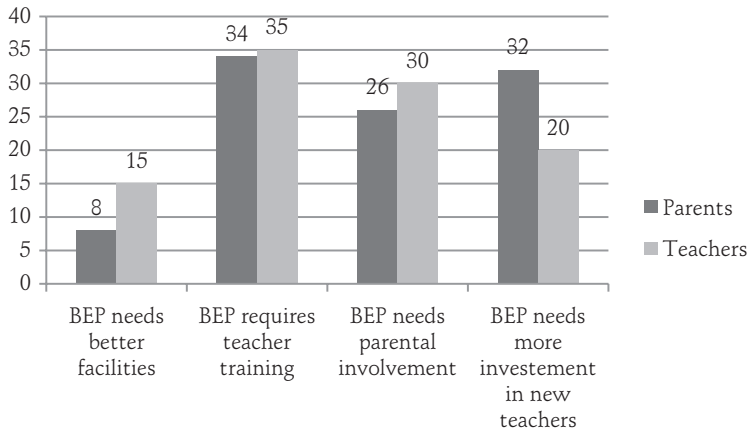


Figure 12.7 Challenges when offering BEPs, as expressed in percentages in the parents and teachers' survey

the school made in training teachers in bilingual education topics and the resources made available in order to carry out the program.

When teachers were asked about opportunities for teamwork, such as co-planning or co-teaching, the results of the interviews revealed that teachers only formally interacted with their colleagues in weekly department meetings. Knowledge of what other content area teachers were doing was obtained informally, through hallway conversations, or through questions about resources other teachers used. In fact, there was no academic space for teachers to work as a team. In relation to this, one of the teachers stated, 'I usually ask what the others are going to do this week and that's how I plan my own classes'.

The interviews showed that the teachers strongly agreed on the idea that it was important to have opportunities to work as a team. When asked if they would like to plan together, one of the teachers stated: 'It would be great to sit down together to plan', and another teacher said: 'The truth is I don't ever work with the first grade teachers, but it would be a great opportunity, and also I've taught that class'. All the teachers agreed that they would like to have the opportunity to collaborate.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the evaluation study described in this chapter prompt several considerations in regard to the development of BEPs in Colombia, in particular, and in other South American countries, more generally. Specifically, in countries as diverse as Colombia, it is difficult to state that *one size fits all*. The study presented in this chapter serves as an example

of the type of information that school administrators and policymakers should consider before and after they establish a BEP. While national policies (e.g. National Program of Bilingualism: Colombia 2004–2019, Ministerio de Educación, Gobierno de Colombia, 2005) provide guidelines for curriculum implementation, they do not consider the voices of teachers, who are responsible for developing and imparting instruction, and parents, whose involvement can further contribute to the BEP.

Colombian national and regional policies advocate for the implementation of BEPs in the name of globalization, competitiveness and equity. However, several researchers (e.g. Fandiño-Parra, 2014; Usma, 2009) argue that these programs do not necessarily enhance social mobility and should not be implemented to the detriment of the local culture and language. The findings of this study both contradicted and supported the arguments made by researchers like Fandiño-Parra (2014) and Usma (2009) and Colombian national and regional policies. While parents and teachers agreed on the idea that BEPs contribute to enhanced academic achievement and access to the labor market – an instrumental motivation for the implementation of such programs advocated by national policies – the teachers favored the use of Spanish when the content taught was associated with issues of values, patriotism and national and cultural identity. These findings show that, in spite of the fact that researchers have argued that knowledge of an L2 does not necessarily contribute to social mobility, parents still continue to associate knowledge of the English language with economic competitiveness.

As noted in the previous paragraph, teachers expressed concern regarding the cognitive and linguistic demands placed on the students when English was used to present content related to issues of national and cultural identity. In response to these concerns, the school administration decided that subjects like science, art, problem-solving (part of math), current events (part of social studies) would be taught in English, while technology, PE, math, social studies and ethics would be taught in Spanish. In making decisions about what subjects were to be taught in the students' L1 or L2, consideration was given to the fact that the development of academic language proficiency is a more complex linguistic and cognitive endeavor than the development of communicative language proficiency. In addition, in making the decision, administrators took into account the national government's expectation that students will reach A2 level in primary school and B1 level in secondary school according to the CEFR and, at the same time, considered the human, financial and technical resources available to reach these levels.

This study also showed that the school documents analyzed were clear in terms of the school's philosophy of bilingual education, as well as in the four-stage pedagogical sequence that teachers were expected to implement. However, the implementation of the instructional sequence was not

consistent for the five teachers observed. As shown in this study, several of the teachers observed barely met instructional expectations. This finding supports the notion that there is a need for continuous in-service training and supervision for a BEP to succeed (a point made by Diaz Maggioli [2003]). In fact, this idea was supported by both parents and teachers' responses to the survey questions. Training should not only include workshops designed to prepare teachers in the implementation of the four-stage sequence, but it should also allow time for teacher-to-teacher communication. As shown in this study, one of the greatest areas of teacher concern was related to the limited opportunities for teacher-to-teacher communication and collaboration. Additionally, team-teaching opportunities should be formally promoted and communication among parents, teachers and administrators needs to be enhanced; otherwise, teachers and parents may manifest lack of knowledge of and involvement in bilingual education activities in the school setting, as shown in this study.

López *et al.* (2011) argue that teachers are an asset to a BEP. English teachers in Colombia are expected to have three main characteristics. First, they should have an expected command of the English language, as shown on the CEFR (A2 or basic user for teachers teaching subjects in Spanish and B2 or independent user for English teachers and teachers teaching subject areas in English) (Council of Europe, 2001). Second, they also need to have knowledge of bilingual methodologies and approaches. For instance, teachers should know about phonemic awareness, scaffolding, L1 and L2 literacy development, as well as the approaches identified in the Basic Learning Goals (Ministerio de Educación, Gobierno de Colombia, 2016a). Third, teachers should know about curriculum design and be able to adapt school curricula to meet international and national standards such as the Esquema Curricular Sugerido [English Curriculum]. Overall, it can be seen that these expectations are not only very high, but they seem to put the burden of the success of a bilingual program on teachers. Therefore, in the specific case of the school investigated, teachers would benefit from participating in professional development activities focusing on issues of curriculum design, lesson planning according to the SIOP model, etc. More broadly, strong consideration needs to be given not only to the teachers, but also to all the factors that need to be in place in order to contribute to the success of a BEP. These include, but are not limited to, classroom size, availability of instructional resources and an acknowledgment of teachers as professionals who deserve higher pay and societal recognition.

One area of teacher concern identified in the teachers' interviews was in relation to the effects of English on the students' Spanish skills. In the context of Colombian society, where – in spite of the government goals – the use of English has limited purposes, this concern seems to be irrelevant. However, what *is* important is the fact that teachers believe that in the

Colombian setting, English can have an effect on the students' Spanish skills. Therefore, it could be argued that teachers need to develop a better understanding of the goals of a BEP in Colombian society.

The results of this study also demonstrated that teachers were satisfied with the resources available to implement the BEP. As noted by Sánchez Solarte and Obando Guerrero (2008), the school environment is critical to the success of a BEP. In the case of the school investigated, the setting was conducive to the BEP success. Additionally, the resources provided by the parents at home were also meant to contribute to the program success. However, it remains to be seen if the same findings could be identified in public schools, where the teaching conditions are different from those offered in private institutions.

In summary, success in the implementation of a BEP relies on the interplay of a variety of factors. These factors involve, but are not limited to, developing clear principles guiding the implementation of a BEP that is designed to meet local needs and expectations; having the necessary infrastructure and financial and logistical resources to support the program; implementing a systematic approach to instruction; supporting teachers in their professional development so that instruction is successful; and creating a community in which the practices and values implemented in the BEP are clearly communicated among administrators, teachers and parents. These factors should be taken into account, regardless of whether a BEP is implemented in a public or private school. Only by considering how these factors interact with one another will BEPs in Colombia specifically, and other South American countries more generally, be successful in meeting local expectations.

Questions for Reflection

- (1) What type of data would you collect if you were to carry out a diagnosis to implement a national policy – a language learning policy – in your institution?
- (2) What considerations can be drawn from this chapter in regard to the development of bilingual programs in your country/region/city?

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