

The Future of Education is Bilingual! - An Analysis of the application of the ExC-ELL Program for Bilingual Education in Adult Learners

The “Space Race” that began in the 1950s and ended in the 1970s showed the world the importance of effective education processes for collective rights, such as national security and national leadership, and for individual rights, such as freedom of speech and the pursuit of happiness. In our time, where globalization has produced massive flow of goods, services, people, technologies, and other important needs, claims, and values, making sovereignty borders porous and building an ideology of Global Human Community, effective education processes become particularly important. Since its beginnings, bilingual education has been characterized by continued debates about their goals and effectiveness, in terms of assimilation and multiculturalism, and about the effects of these on national identity, ethnicity, and pedagogy. The bilingual education discourse was socially triggered by the Chinese and Puerto Rican population residing in California and New York during the 1950s and 1960s, legally triggered by a 1974 Supreme Court case, and then shaped and shared by a series of laws in New York City, and at the federal level, seeking for a more inclusive and equitable education based non-English speaking students. An analysis of the history and legal trajectory of bilingual education in United States, however, showed that from having the Lau Remedies for bilingualism, bilingual education became just a section within the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). And that although several proposals for bilingual education projects and programs have been presented, the long struggle for the goal of democratic equality it is still alive today. In this sense, this paper stresses that attention to bilingualism is long overdue, and thus, that the topic needs not only more attention, but also more narrowly tailored and successful measures, as well as stronger mechanisms of enforcement, for the assurance of transparency and accountability. The Expediting Comprehension for English Language Learners (ExC-ELL) faculty training, which was initiated in 2011 by Dr. Margarita Calderón, is a pioneer model of what is needed for the promotion of a relevant and efficient bilingual education. The main goal of this training was to support faculty in enhancing and/or developing the necessary skills to be successful in a dual language teaching and learning environment. The same was made possible with the collaboration of staff and faculty from Ana G. Méndez University System (AGMUS), which is the first and only university in the United States to offer all its academic programs in a dual language format. One of the institution’s targeted goals has been to strengthen the bilingual instructional practices required of exemplary and effective dual language programs. Within this context, the intent of the ExC-ELL program is to positively impact language acquisition, teaching instructional practices, and student learning in two languages.