

A Look at Teachers' Perceptions of the Bilingual Articulation between Secondary Education and Education for Work

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Abstract

Recognizing the importance of the English language to improve the quality of education and increase the competitiveness of young people in their work performance, it is imperative that students learn a second language, allowing them to be an active part in a globalized world that requires preparation and updating to remain at the forefront, overcoming the challenges of intercultural communication that demands new job skills. The present research is of an exploratory nature; with a documentary analysis on programs and policies of bilingualism present in Colombia, basing the research on educational pedagogical processes and school policies. Articulating strategies were identified in bilingualism between high school and education for work, identifying guidelines for the deepening of contextualized processes significant to the educational reality. A phenomenological design was chosen with a hermeneutic approach from the position of Paul Ricoeur; executing meaning matrices and interviews with experts to analyze the data obtained. As a result, the existence of limited educational policies and programs in charge of providing convergent spaces in the educational structure was verified, generating a wide gap between the different educational levels; which makes the development of the learning of a foreign language (LE) a late and monotonous practice, creating a great frustration on the part of the LE student. Finally, four revealing problems were identified when designing bilingualism policies and programs in Colombia. Through this research, guidelines were suggested to reinforce those already implemented in the country in order to articulate the transition between the levels of the educational system in line with the Fourth Goal of Sustainable Development (UNESCO, 2015), which is an instrument for the promotion of competitiveness in the global society.

Keywords: Educational Policies, Bilingualism for Work, Articulation, Technical and Technological Education, Pedagogical Guidelines

Introduction

This research paper was born as a response to the need to articulate bilingualism among the educational levels mentioned above. It can be identified as a nascent topic that has not yet been explored in depth in the field of research in Colombia. It is for this reason that this study generates reflection on the insufficient processes that exist in the articulation of language education in secondary education with technical and technological education.

The purposes of the project are to recognize the axes proposed by teachers and school principals for the integration of knowledge at different levels of education in Colombia, to identify educational policies and programs proposed for bilingual education in the country, and, furthermore, to propose mechanisms that favor an articulating exercise between the two levels of education in regard to the teaching of bilingualism.

Materials and Methods

The current proposal is an exploratory research with a qualitative approach, which provided significant details of the object of study. The main purpose of this publication is to propose the design of curricular guidelines that allow the articulation between the teaching of foreign languages from the secondary education level to the technical and technological education, oriented to the development of the communicative abilities, based on the Fundamental Theory of Corbin and Strauss (2002), and supported by the hermeneutic idea of Paul Ricoeur (2013).

Similarly, interviews were conducted with experts to collect and analyze the information, generating a proposal that allows the integration of the findings obtained in the research.

The study presented the use of sense matrices, with which the frequencies of appearance of each category were established, then; the data obtained through the interpretation of each selected theoretical quality were consolidated, which in the same way conform the variables of the investigation. Finally, the systematization and analysis of the collected information allowed the generation of the proposal, which is supported by the theoretical review that was developed for this project.

Sample

The selected population consists of five experts who are active players in the educational process in secondary education and technical and technological education institutions with at least a decade of work experience in teaching LE. Their perceptions of bilingualism programs and policies in Colombia were analyzed and validated.

The sample selected corresponds to a total of 20 documents among which were included official documents generated in Colombia in the period from 1991 to 2017.

Results

Through this project, the opportunity is presented to demonstrate the importance of teacher participation within the process of teaching an LE in the design of bilingualism plans and programs in the country, resulting in

1. The need to recognize the linguistic demands of individuals within the LE teaching process.
2. Integration of activities that allow for the promotion and social development of individuals in local and foreign cultural contexts.
3. Consolidation and empowerment of one's own culture.
4. Recognition of learning processes by students.
5. Update on methodologies and teaching processes for teachers.
6. Restructuring goals of bilingualism plans and policies in the country.
7. Expansion of coverage in continuous teacher training.
8. Demand for the mastery of an LE by the productive sectors.
9. Need to structurally strengthen the pillars for LE learning.
10. Creation of a profile and a function manual for language teachers.

Based on these results, the proposal was created, articulating bilingualism between secondary education and technical and technological education, in order to strengthen the teaching-learning processes of LE in the country, generating an opportunity for teachers and students to implement the development of communication skills in mother tongue and LE, which will allow them to have new tools to increase their competitiveness at a work level, managing to expand their expectations and work opportunities by demonstrating the management of an LE not only in the social field but also in the labor field, a situation that is currently urgent to improve the interests and qualifications that individuals have in the face of the demands of global mobility.

Discussion

In relation to the findings found, the proposal was designed with the objective of strengthening the deficiencies identified during the research process to support a more consistent proposal in obtaining the objectives set by the government in terms of the level of development of communication skills in an LE. Using as a vehicle the integration of the own culture within the teaching processes of LE from the secondary education, projected to the technical and technological education with the purpose of maintaining the continuity of the educational process with a wider world vision for the subject, allowing him to go from the local to the global creating a real impact in the life of the students.

It is recommended that this proposal be applied over a period of 5 years, covering the phases of generation, design, socialization, application and evaluation of these, in order to establish plans for continuous improvement and updating to achieve its contextualization in accordance with social dynamics and the changes that are generated during the application of this call. Emphasizing the importance of socialization to more teachers since they are an essential part of the teaching process, and must be updated to contribute their knowledge to the continuous improvement in the area of bilingualism and the programs to be developed in the future.

Conclusions

In view of the recognition of the perception of teachers and school managers, the importance of recognizing the language needs of individuals learning English through critical and in-depth reflection on the social environment based on the characteristics of the language of communication in all its spheres of interaction is stressed first.

Therefore, the experts recommend the design of bilingualism policies and programs that are locally based and, through this, project the application and development of increasingly higher levels of mastery, which integrate and articulate the different levels of the education system, in order to achieve continuity within the processes and greater development in individuals.

Consequently, there is an urgent need for regional integration between government, teachers, school principals and cultural entities to unify the educational programs on bilingualism that will be implemented in the future. This is in order to achieve cohesion of the communicative requirements in the mother tongue and in the foreign language, thus contextualizing the programs that are designed to meet real expectations according to the social and labor shortages that are generated in our country.

The research as part of the reflection on what to do as a teacher will allow to obtain the systematization and codification of the teaching practice and as it is done in Colombia, from this collection a pedagogical reflection can be carried out in which the teacher in a critical way manages to analyze and improve his teaching practice through an understanding of the facts and the way to enunciate each of the problems faced by the trainer (Aguilar Peralta, 2017) allowing for a process of evaluation and self-evaluation within which the evolution of educational practice is aimed at achieving an improvement in the quality of education provided to students. In this way, the quality of teachers in Colombia will be gradually equipped with more advanced foreign educational systems that will make it possible to achieve academic excellence for both teachers and students, giving rise to spaces for interaction and a change of paradigm in which autonomous individuals are formed who can perform competitively within society at the local or external level.

In this research process, the following were identified as the four articulating axes for the proposal of a bilingual articulation between secondary education and education for work

- ✓ Language as a cultural element
- ✓ Learning a foreign language
- ✓ Teacher training
- ✓ Technical and technological training

From the plans and policies of bilingualism that have been generated in Colombia it is demonstrated that the MEN has defined concepts for:

- ✓ Foreign language
- ✓ Second language
- ✓ Bilingualism

Acknowledging the linguistic diversity existing in the country, respecting the ethnic groups and Raizal people within the territory, selecting these concepts according to the purpose of the program that is being proposed and evidencing the decrease in the validity of each of the plans, without registering an update to Law 1651 of 2013 until 2017.

Finally, guidelines were proposed for the design of bilingualism policies in order to strengthen existing ones and achieve the objectives set by the government in the bilingualism plans generated, with a projection from school to work in line with the Fourth Goal of Sustainable Development (UNESCO, 2015), which will contribute to the consolidation of existing ones in order to articulate the Colombian education system, which is an important factor in the improvement and economic development of Colombia as an instrument for the competitiveness of citizens of this country globally.

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