
Professional Article Review

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Tables of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	3
LEGAL RATIONALE OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION.....	3
HISTORICAL RATIONALE OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION.....	5
BILINGUAL EDUCATION: LEGAL AND HISTORICAL RATIONALE.....	6
REFERENCES.....	8

Introduction

The 20th century remains as a century that saw a lot of transformation in most societies across the globe. The need to trade, live in other parts of the world apart from native homes in search of new opportunities, education and better life raised the need for different people across the world to learn new languages. Among the languages that featured most in the society as a result of globalization is English, with a lot of people who have immigrated to regions such as North America and specifically the United States being forced to learn English. In this line of thought, the United States was forced to introduce bilingual classes. However, there were various issues that emerged that either supported or disregarded the effort made by government of the United States to create an environment whereby immigrants would be able to learn English as a new language. This essay will examine three peer-reviewed journal articles that are related to the historical and legal rationale of Bilingual Education and how it is related to modern educational practice.

Legal Rationale of Bilingual Education

The article by Rosalie Pedalino Porter revisits the issue of bilingual

education for immigrants in the United States most of them from the Latin America. In his article, Porter explores how bilingual education came into being, and various challenges that emerged as a result of this. In this regard, the author of this article mentions the challenges such as the burden that such educational system exerted on the government, discrimination issues that emerged after this system was introduced in the United States and the reason this system was important for immigrant children or rather learners in the United States. In line with this, this articles focuses on questions that were raised in regard to the approach that was employed in teaching English with most immigrants standing against the issue of teaching native languages to children born to them for approximately three years as these children learned English. Among the arguments that were raised by these parents include the fact that it was easier for their children to learn English when they were young rather than being introduced to English language when they had grown up (Porter, 1998, p.32-37).

Teaching English and using this language as the main language in schools in the United States of America began in the 20th century after the World War. According to Porter (1998), prior to this period, the schools in the American society utilized different languages including English in teaching in schools (p.28-33). Languages such as Spanish, French and German were used in schools besides English. However, as has been exemplified in this article, the end of World War I saw German proscribed in schools that would later on result in a public outcry for the government to enact a legislation to ensure that American schools

used no other language apart from English (p.29-24).

In reference to Porter (1998), bilingual learning raised a lot of issues that resulted in the ineffectiveness or rather failure by the US education system to handle challenges that emerged as a result of this system of learning (p.34-39). Therefore, there was need to introduce a more pronounced system that would be above the challenges that were raised in an earlier system. The challenges that emerged as a result of a bilingual education system raised a lot of legal issues. For instance, Latin American families moved to court and protested on the streets, taking after the affirmative action of the 1960s to call the government of the United States to attention that bilingual education was ineffective for their children (p.32-37). For instance, due to a high level of opposition to bilingual education, the State of California failed to renew or rather reauthorize Bilingual Education Act in 1987, thus allowing this act to expire.

In reference to Porter's article, the brewing controversy on the effectiveness of bilingual language led to a critical analysis of how this system of learning among immigrants affected them and how the situation could be improved. In this regard therefore, the recent past has seen an introduction of a more goal oriented programs such as English Language Learners classes that have proved to be more effective than the initial bilingual education that only focused on implementing learning by use of native language for a certain period of time. For instance, Barnett et al. (2007) affirms that the introduction of

a Two Way Immersion, TWI, allowed students both the English Language Learners and the Native English speakers to learn effectively without losing focus on enhancing the English language skills that were needed for one to be effective in the American educational system (p.277-282).

Historical Rationale of Bilingual Education

There are various studies that have been carried out on the effectiveness of Bilingual Education among immigrants in the United States of America, with regard to challenging issues that were raised in the 1960s on this system of education for immigrants. As a result of this, a review by Jim Cummins on the Ramirez Report indicate that whereas the proponents of bilingual education stressed on the fact that English Learners were unable to perform well in an English learning environment, there was enough evidence that language was not a critical hindrance to learning in schools. Jim Cummins focuses on the arguments that were brought forward by the Ramirez Report and stresses on the opportunities that were missed by bilingual students due to lack of a consistent skills in English language, one of them being lack of expression in regard to social injustices that have been committed against them. In line with this, Cummings (1992) argue that there was need to strike a balance that would allow students with a

different language background apart from English to learn using English while still maintaining their proficiency in their native languages (96-101).

One of the educational practices that emerged as a result of the findings that were articulated in the Jim Cummins' article was the formulation of a Two Way Immersion program that allowed students to learn English as a second language while maintaining their ability and skills of their native language. This was as a result of the fact that students who attained their learning skills using their native language as a start were denied a chance to learn new skills and an opportunity to express themselves to the public. On the other hand, the strict use of English language in teaching was a disadvantage to student without an English background. Therefore, a formulation of a Two Way Immersion program acted as a perfect substitute to introducing non-English students to English classes and into the American society in general (Barnet et al, 2007, p.277-282).

Bilingual education: Legal and Historical Rationale

There were legal battles that have been fought in past as policymakers and the society at large worked on getting a balance point between native English learning and non-English learning. Peter D. Roos, in his

article 'Getting Back on the Horse: Reviving Bilingual Education Key Issues for Policymakers' draws out the experience that both the educational and the legal systems went through in finding an appropriate educational system for bilingual students. This article assumes that bilingual education had a role to play in the American educational system and as a result it could not be ignored. The article explored the process that bilingual education went through in trying to create for itself a niche in the American educational. The author also provides ways through which the opponents of bilingual could be waved off to create room for the existence of this form of learning among the immigrants, most from Latin America and other parts of the world (Roos, 2007, p.21-26).

There are various educational practices that continue to thrive due to the arguments that were drawn out in this article. It is important for one to understand that there was a lot of resistance in the second half of the 20th century toward bilingual education in the United States. However, as it had been explained by Roos (2007), bilingual education played an important role in enhancing the learning abilities of the Latin students and other students from other regions of the world who had no English background as a language. In this regard, the promotion of such programs as the English Language Learners and English as a Second Language promoted the learning process of these students. Among these educational practices is the Two Way Immersion as an alternative to total ban of bilingual education. In this regard therefore, there are various legal and historical rationales that have either

weighed down or promoted bilingual education as a way of dealing with the growing concerns of the literacy level among immigrants in the United States and especially of Latin America origin. In this sense, instead of completely banning bilingual education, modifications have been made to give these learners an opportunity to gain academic knowledge and skills that would raise their productivity level in the American society.