

Characteristics of Selected Multilingual Education Programs from around the
World:
A Review of the Literature

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Someone once said, “It’s not the destination, but how you get there that matters”.

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Abstract

During the past several years, the debate on how best to educate the increasing number of linguistically and culturally diverse students in the United States has intensified. Second language learners in this country are not achieving grade level proficiency in English as required by current federal mandates (Callahan, Unz & Vega, 1998). 'English-Only' and 'bilingual education' policies have dominated the discourse of policy makers, educators and the body public as the two primary possibilities to deal with the challenges facing educators in classrooms across the U. S. at the present time. Some scholars have suggested that the United States should look at education systems from around the world with a successful history of multilingual education to derive solutions to its current challenges and enable all students; including second language learners achieve the required grade level proficiency in English. This review of the literature in multilingual education collects and organizes the scholarship over the last twenty years from selected countries representing each continent in the world.

The face of The United States of America is changing. According to the National Census Bureau (2000), if the trend continues, by the year 2050, forty-nine percent of the population will be other than “white”. Minority groups will be getting closer to being the majority in this country (Day, 1996, p. 190). “This in part is caused by the constant migration of people around the world that come to The United States in search of better opportunities for them and their families” (Day, 1996, p.191). While there are a significant number of immigrants who come from countries in Eastern Europe and other parts of the world, in recent times, most immigrants have come from Mexico, Central and South America (Crawford, 2000; Hollman, 2000).

One of the sectors most affected by the increase in the number of immigrants in the United States is the education system. Teachers across the United States are facing challenges to teach in an environment that is becoming increasingly more diverse, and notably one in which more languages are being spoken in schools and classrooms everywhere. These challenges demand that changes be made in curriculum development and delivery of instruction in U. S schools (Jama, 1992).

As a result of the increasing number of second language learners entering U. S classrooms, second language acquisition has become a theme for debate amongst researchers, politicians and people in the teaching profession. The political debate about how to best educate second language learners in this country is far from new (Cos, 1999).

In the midst of this debate and the tremendous educational challenges facing the United States, Proposition 227 was passed in California in 1998. The legislature mandates the virtual elimination of bilingual education programs in the state and called for instruction primarily in English as a requirement after only one year of bilingual

instruction for all students for whom English is not their native language. Some researchers on second language acquisition advised and even protested against the passing of this law. These researchers talked about the repercussions the law might have on second language acquisition across the nation (Bergan & D' Amelio, 1998; Crawford, 1999).

Moreover, some educators have expressed their dissatisfaction with the current education policies of this nation and noted that the education system in the United States is ill prepared to help the demands of second language learners in this country (Quezada, 2000). "Education policy makers are ignoring best practices for learners of English as a second language. As a result, second language learners are failing in schools today, and there is no question that literacy programs for diverse student populations need reform" (Quezada, 2000, p. 7).

The often-unfavorable lens through which U.S policy makers view the international research on bilingual education could prove to be counter-productive if this country intends to help all its students achieve grade level proficiency (Holmes, 2001). Further, the United States is currently not looking at research internationally to find solutions to the challenges of teaching in an increasingly diverse linguistic setting and this could prove costly (Holmes, 1991; Rhodes, 2001; Tucker, 1999).

My interest on the subject of second language acquisition comes from my own experience as a second language learner. Furthermore, the implications of second language acquisition in today's classrooms are directly related to my profession as an elementary school teacher.

I was born in The United States but I moved to a Spanish speaking country in South America at a very young age. Years later, I returned to the United States and had to learn a new language, English. I did not have access to an education program, which could have facilitated an easier way of achieving grade level proficiency in English. It was only after I received extra-school tutoring and expended countless hours of practice during after school hours that I was able to grasp the English language. Today, I am an elementary school teacher who works with third grade second language learners. I noticed that the students who are now in my classroom exhibit some of the same difficulties I had while attempting to achieve grade level proficiency in English.

It is because of my curiosity about second language acquisition in elementary grades that I have decided to learn more about the subject of multilingual education. My desire to help second language learners achieve grade level proficiency in English while maintaining their native tongues has prompted me to embark on this review of literature.

This literature review focused on collecting, identifying and organizing information on multilingual education from selected countries based on their linguistic situation and their history of multilingual education respectively. The literature review attempted to select and identify multilingual programs that have been successfully implemented in other countries from around the world, and thematically organize their characteristics and features. The review attempted to select and organize the scholarship on successful multilingual education programs from nations that represent each continent on the globe. Success of a multilingual education program as defined herein as: the quantity and quality of the positive scholarship written about these programs based on

longitudinal studies that have been published in the last twenty years, in addition to the graduation rate of students in such programs.

This review of the scholarship on multilingual education from selected countries could be used to advance applications that better prepare teachers and enable education policies in the U.S. that address the language teaching and learning challenges that teachers and bilingual students face respectively. It can be argued that educators and policy makers in the United States will be better off seeking alternatives to the constant polemics of “Bilingual Education” versus “English Only” positions in order to meaningfully address educational preparation for the increasing numbers of students who speak languages other than English. More research and collections of such scholarships centered on how other countries are successfully dealing with the issue of multiple language acquisition at the elementary school level could help confront and possibly alleviate some of the policy stagnation and challenge prevailing educational practices in the U. S.

Statement of the Problem

Bilingual education has been a topic for debate amongst educators, researchers and policy makers dating back many years (Cummins, 1989; Cos, 1999). More recently, increasing immigration to the United States by people who speak languages other than English has challenged its education system and has further exacerbated this debate even more (Jama, 1992; Crawford, 2000; Quezada, 2000). Supporters of bilingual education speak of the extensive research conducted to explain its benefits on second language

learners trying to achieve grade level proficiency in the United States (Cummins, 1989; Hakuta, 2000; de Atilas, 2002).

However, experts on second language acquisition point to the gap in research on early multilingual literacy training at the elementary school level. Research studies on multilingual education in areas such as reading and writing in elementary schools are far and few in between "...there are no materials available for initial literacy training [in the U.S.]" (Tucker, 1999, p. 7). Furthermore, some researchers speak of the small number of studies on the subject of multilingual education in general "Despite several decades of extensive sociolinguistic fieldwork in many areas, there remains much to be done to describe the language situation in many parts of the world" (Tucker, 1999, p. 7).

The problem is while the scholarship itself is scarce as evidenced above; the dearth of literature reviews that collect and represent such scholarship is even more acute. This literature review attempted to fill this gap by collecting and organizing the available scholarship on the characteristics and features of successful multilingual education programs from selected countries in each continent from around the world. This review of literature on the characteristics of successful multilingual education could enhance our understanding on how some nations around the world value multilingual education as a way to enable language learning for all their citizens.

The following definitions of terms are used in this literature review.

Bilingualism: The ability to effectively communicate or understand thoughts and ideas through two languages' grammatical systems and vocabulary, using their written symbols (Hargett, 1998).

Bilingual education: An educational program in which two languages are used to provide content matter instruction. An important distinction is between those programs that use and promote two languages and those where bilingual children are present, but bilingualism is not fostered in the curriculum (Baker & Jones, 1998).

Bilingual education programs in the U. S: An educational program for limited English proficient students that makes instructional use of both English and a student's native language. Also, enables limited English proficient students to achieve English proficiency and academic mastery of subject matter content and higher order skills, including critical thinking, so as to meet age-appropriate grade-promotion and graduation standards in concert with the National Education Goals (CDE).

Grade level proficiency: Learner meets state standards for particular grade.

Multilingual education: The use of at least three languages in education-the mother tongue, a regional or national language and an international one (UNESCO, 1999).

Background and Need

Achieving grade level proficiency in English through the use of bilingual education in the United States has had many opponents (Cummins, 1989; Callahan & Unz, 1998; Cos, 1999). For example, in the state of California, opponents to bilingual education programs have argued that children in bilingual education programs are not moving to mainstream [English] classes fast enough. “The current system fails to teach children to read and write in English. Last year, only 6.7 percent of limited-English students in California learned enough English to be moved into mainstream classes” (Callahan, Unz & Vega, 1998, p. 1).

Moreover, some people attribute the lack of success of bilingual education in the U.S to the notion that it favors only one minority group (Unz, 2000). There is a perception in certain sectors of society in the United States that the only ones benefiting from bilingual education practices are Spanish speakers (Tapia, 2000). “... in 2002 California enrolled recently arrived immigrants from 136 different countries, but bilingual teachers were certified in only 17 languages, 96% of them in Spanish” (CDE, 2002). There are over 1,500,000,000 second language learners in the state of California and eighty percent of them speak Spanish (CDE, 2004).

Research speaks of increasing numbers of students in classrooms across the United States, who speak languages other than English and fail to achieve the required grade level proficiency in English, which state and federal standards demand (Callahan, 1998). Moreover, second language learners’ lack of success while trying to achieve grade level proficiency in English merits the research of alternative education policies

(Quezada, 2001; Reynolds, 2001). It is evident that a solution has to be found for this problem, by which most second language learners, regardless of the language they speak, achieve the required grade level proficiency in English.

In 1999 Richard Tucker in his report entitled, *A global Perspective on Bilingualism and Bilingual Education* noted how most studies on the subject of bilingual education have always looked to the bilingual education practices in U.S, but very little has been done to research multiple language acquisitions in successful education programs in other parts of world (Tucker, 1999). Information on how to better prepare educators and policy makers in the U. S attend to the needs of second language learners in this country may be found in such research (Rhodes, 2001).

Nancy Rhodes from The Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington DC published a study in 2001, on the subject of multilingual education entitled, *What We Can Learn from Foreign Language teaching in other Countries*. The study suggested that the U. S. learned a great deal by studying the successes of multiple language instruction in other countries. She further recommended the use of “the information to implement practices and policies that will support the development of better language education and higher level of language proficiency among our citizens” (Rhodes, 2001, p. 10).

Rhodes also noted that “The U.S education system can benefit greatly from the development of a long-term research agenda, which incorporates longitudinal studies of a variety of early language models of instruction in other countries” (Rhodes, 2001, p. 4). In addition, perhaps looking to other English-speaking countries, which face similar challenges, might prove particularly helpful to U.S. educators and policy-makers respectively (Rhodes, 2001).

Also in 2001, Dr. Ruth Reynolds in her report entitled *HSIE 7-10 Literature Review* argued that studies in the U. S regarding the area of global and multicultural education around the world are “...relatively new and suffer from a lack of definition and direction” (Reynolds, 2001, p.45). Moreover, scholarship suggests that applications of multilingual education in the United States school system are very rare. “Well-articulated elementary and secondary programs are still the exception rather than the rule, and intensive instruction that aims at a high level of proficiency, as outlined in the national standards document, is scarce”(Branaman, 2002, p. 7).

Currently, the education system is failing second language learners in the U. S (Quezada, 2001; de Atilas, 2002). Looking at what other countries are doing in regards to multiple language acquisition at the elementary level could provide policy-makers in the United States with some answers to this problem. “You definitely can benefit from other’s experiences [multilingual education] and then adjust them to the specifics in the U.S” (Tucker, 1999, p. 8).

Teachers and researchers in the U. S could benefit from the information obtained on the characteristics of successful multilingual education from selected countries. Multilingual education in these countries has been deemed successful because of the results obtained by their students in comparative studies conducted by different international organizations. This information could be used to better prepare educators and policy-makers in regards to the challenges posed by the increasing numbers of second language learners in our classrooms. In return, we could help facilitate those second language learners achieve grade level proficiency in English.

Furthermore, the information obtained through the review of literature on the subject of multilingual education could be later used to direct research toward studying the feasibility of a multilingual education policy in the U. S. as an alternative to the polarity in our current monolingual system of education. The review of scholarship regarding multilingual education uncovered some common themes. The themes offered connections to and perhaps alternatives regarding the challenges faced by teachers and second language learners in this country. Such research could present policy makers with information as well as an array of alternatives in education programs. It is up to the officials to look at the relevant alternatives that are available and perhaps choose a an education program, which could benefit all students in the United States, not just second language learners.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this literature review was to collect, identify and organize scholarship on the subject of multilingual education. The review attempted to identify and organize information that reveals the characteristics and features of successful multilingual education programs in other parts of the world. The review collected information on multilingual education from nations with a history of multilingual education, which represented each continent of the world. The review was undertaken with an explicit purpose to provide educators and policymakers in the United States with an enhanced understanding about how to enable language learning for all students regardless of the language they speak. Lastly, a review of the literature organized around the central concept of successful multilingual programs can provide an alternative basis

and direction for further research; an area that has been relatively neglected in the main body of scholarship in the U.S.

Questions for the Review of Literature

These questions for the review of literature on multilingual education arose from the authors' own curiosity regarding the new challenges facing educators as a result of increasing numbers of non-English speaking students, entering elementary public classrooms across the United States.

Specifically, the following questions prompted this literature review on multilingual education: What selected countries have a history of multilingual education programs deemed successful in the scholarship over the last twenty years? What characteristics and features do successful multilingual programs from these countries have in common regarding the achievement of grade level proficiency for second language learners in elementary grades? What does the scholarship over the last twenty years say about early multilingual literacy training for educators in elementary grades? More importantly, does the scholarship offer any insights to United States' school officials and policy makers in light of the increasing language diversity in U. S classrooms?

Literature Review

There are numbers of journal articles, books and studies on the subject of bilingual education in the United States (Cummins, 1989; Crawford, 1999; Cos, 1999). Some of the existing scholarship deals with a number of arguments either in favor or

against the use of bilingual education programs in classrooms around the United States (Hakuta, 1991; Wong-Fillmore 1991; Crawford, 1999; Cos, 1999).

According to Cos (1999), “most of the research related to programs serving English language learners in the United States began in the early 1970’s, following the passage of the federal Bilingual Education Act of 1968” (Cos, 1999, p. 25). The law enacted two main goals for serving English learners in the U. S. The first goal was to enable English learners to become English proficient. The second is to provide students with equal access to the core curriculum (CDE, 1995).

Although the purpose of this literature review was not to compile scholarship on the history of bilingual education in the United States, it was necessary so to understand the parameters and the direction research on bilingual education has taken place during the last decade. Obando (2003) wrote that language ideology in the United States has shifted according to historical events. During the 1770s and 1880s a fair amount of tolerance existed in the United States, especially to languages of Northern European origins (Wiley, 1998). The period between the 1880s and 1960s a more restrictive period towards languages other than English followed as a result of increasing immigration to the U. S. (Obando, 2003). However, with increasing immigration, bilingual education programs began to appear more predominantly during the 1960’s and 1980’s (Gonzalez, 1975; Ovando-Cullier, 1998).

Currently, multiple researchers have written about the intolerant attitudes towards bilingual education programs in this country (Crawford, 2000; Fitzgerald, 1993) and one in particular, is the increasingly hostile attitude through which, bilingual education

programs are under attack by a number of English-only movements (Crawford, 1998; Obando, 2003). Everstz (1992) spoke of the refusal by some sectors of our society to acknowledge the cultural and ethnic diversity of students in classrooms across the United States.

As a result of the anti-bilingual education groups such as 'English-Only' and other like minded entities, an extensive amount of scholarship on the subject of bilingual education speaks directly to the arguments that anti-bilingual groups in the United States have presented on the subject (Crawford, 2000; Quezada, 2001). Researchers of bilingual education point to the lack of consistent language policies at the national level as being partly responsible for the current rise in the support against bilingual education in the U.S (Crawford, 2000).

Pepi Leistyna (2002), a researcher of the history of bilingual education in the United States commented succinctly on the current direction of bilingual education research in this way,

The on-going debate over bilingual education in the United States has been limited in that many prominent theorists, researchers and public speakers, both proponents and opponents, have focused their arguments on which language of instruction is best for a child to learn and prosper the native tongue and/or English (Bilingual Research Journal, 2002, p. 213).

One side of the on-going debate regarding bilingual education in the United States represents some influential sectors of our society. According to Crawford (1999), ever since the enactment of the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, it has come under attack from ideological enemies at the government and private level. Noel Epstein (1977), a

critic of bilingual education, argued that bilingual education "... is an instrument for maintaining ethno linguistic enclaves that someday would threaten the unity of the United States" (Obando, 2003, p.8). Critics of bilingual education have also maintained that bilingual education programs are dedicated to preserve the native language of students and never getting them adequately prepared in English (Crawford, 1999).

Opponents to bilingual education in the United States speak about the lack of success second language learners in bilingual education programs have in achieving grade level proficiency in English (Callahan, Unz & Vega, 1998). Furthermore, opponents to bilingual education attribute the lack of success of most second language learners to the notion that it favors only one minority group (Unz, 1998). Certain segments of the population in the United States perceive Spanish speakers as the only ones benefiting from bilingual education programs across the nation (Tapia, 2000).

According to the latest census (2000), in the United States, an estimated 14.6 million school-age children come from households where a language other than English is spoken. There are over 136 languages spoken in the California school system alone (CDE, 2000). People against the use of bilingual education programs in the United States have argued that developing a bilingual program that accommodates all languages spoken in the different school districts across the U. S is impractical (Cos, 1999).

On the contrary, all of those in favor of the use of bilingual education as a way to educate second language learners in the United States have pointed to a number of national and international studies that have proved how consistently bilingual education programs have promoted the academic success of second language learners (Cummins,

2000; Green, 1998; Obando 2003). Researchers have noted that quality bilingual education programs remain the best way for these children to learn English and to succeed academically (Robledo & Danini, 2002). “Language-minority children are achieving at or a near grade level by the time they leave well-designed bilingual programs, even in urban schools where failure was once the norm” (Crawford, 1999, p. 12). To this extent, the review of the scholarship on bilingual education in the U. S has identified a number of studies regarding the types of bilingual education programs that exist in this country, and their characteristics (Cos, 1999; Fitzgerald, 1993; Minami, 2004; Mora, 2001; Obando, 2003).

The existing scholarship describing the characteristics of successful bilingual education programs implemented in the United States suggests that most of them base their instruction on up to date research on language acquisition (Hakuta, 1998). Many of these studies have revolved around the importance of understanding cognitive models of processing and storing information, phonemic awareness, assessment and code-switching (August & Hakuta, 1998; Bialystock, 1991; Wei, 2000), community outreach efforts (Genesse, 1994; Torres-Guzman, 1995) and pedagogical competence when teaching linguistically diverse students (Ovando & Cullier, 1997).

Opponents to bilingual education in the United States have always argued that it takes too long for second language learners to move into mainstream [English] classes (Unz, 1998; Callahan, 1998). However, advocates of bilingual education in the U. S. indicate that it takes at least seven years for a second language learner to function with an adequate level of English proficiency (August & Hakuta, 1998; Bialystock, 1991; Wei,

2000), “a critical time period not allowed by the current education policies in this country” (Quezada, 2000, p. 25).

Jim Cummins (1986), an expert in bilingual education from Canada, noted that “second language learners developed Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills, that is, everyday conversational abilities, much faster than Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency that allowed them to understand and function on an academic level of proficiency” (Jama, 1992, p. 5).

Jama (1992) spoke of the challenges teachers in the United States face as a result of the increasing diversity of school. It is because of these challenges facing educators and policymakers in this country that Quinones-Benitez (2003) asserts that there are substantial implications for teacher training programs in understanding linguistic processes as intrinsic and imperative as a result of the growth of the number of English language learners in schools across the United States. They added that teaching linguistically diverse students requires well-trained professionals. Moreover, Hart-Lee (2003) wrote on the need for more professional development overall since the role teachers have in ensuring that all students, including second language learners achieve high academic standards.

Along those lines, researchers such as Karabenick & Clemens (2004) described the importance that a teacher’s attitude towards English language learners has on the success of any professional development they might take upon.

Teachers more accepting of English language learners in their classes are more likely to believe than an ELL’s first language proficiency promotes

school performance and does not impede learning a second language. They also believe that both bilingualism and bilingual education are beneficial; these teachers are open to professional development programs (Karabenick & Clemens, 2004, p. 56).

However, there are some scholars who have argued that educators in this country are not well-prepared to deal with the challenges posed by the increasing numbers of students of linguistically diverse backgrounds entering our schools (Cos, 1999; Jama, 1992; Quezada, 2001). Bellenger, (1999) noted that most classroom teachers in the United States do not receive special training in areas of second language teaching methodology and approaches to teach academic content to ELLs. Professional development has to move away from the one-shot training session and focus on training methods which provide teachers with the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to be an effective teacher in an English Language learner classroom (Villegas, 1991, p. 17).

In light of these factors, several scholars have underscored the invariable correlation between outstanding professional development programs for teachers and the success of bilingual education programs thereof in the U. S. (Quinones-Benitez, 2003; Obando, 2003). Carrier & Cohen (2003) spoke of the number of factors for a second language learner's success while attempting to learn a new language. Among these factors: the relationship well-trained teachers develop with their students by helping them with their needs, and the knowledge on how to assess the development of a second language learner. According to Robledo & Danini (2002), teachers with second language acquisition knowledge will set goals that define the achievement for all of their students. In addition, researchers spoke of the role teachers have in establishing a fair assessment

of a student's developing skills, thus driving their instruction and daily practice (Torres-Guzman, 2002).

This review of the literature on the subject of bilingual education in the United States found some evidence, which suggested multilingual approaches as a solution to the challenges facing teachers across the United States (Rhodes, 2001). The number of linguistically diverse students entering its classrooms merits the research of alternatives to the current education practices in the United States (Quezada, 2000; Rhodes, 2001). Empowering these children would make them feel as if society truly sees immigrants as equals. It will give second language learners equal access to education and perhaps enable these children to achieve the much needed grade level proficiency (De Atilas, 2002). Cummins (1989) argued that second language learners feel empowered by knowing that their native culture and language matter. Another argument suggested by Lestyna (2002) noted, "There are many supporters of bilingual education who have made important contributions in the theory, research, and practice necessary to establish multilingualism as the road to democracy in this country" (Bilingual Research Journal, 2002, p. 223). Furthermore, McLaren & Ovando (2000) speak of multilingual education as a third option to the 'English-Only' versus 'bilingual' debate that is antithetical to high academic achievement for all.

Richard Tucker (1999) wrote a review of literature that speaks directly to the common characteristics of multilingual education in many parts of the world. It explored common threads of successful multilingual programs in certain countries. The report indicated that in many parts of the world, practices of multilingual education constitute a

normal everyday experience (Dutcher, 1994). These multilingual education programs aimed at providing students with multiple language proficiencies and with access to multilingual academic content material (Tucker, 1999).

Furthermore, researchers speak of scholarship on multilingual education, which deals directly with successful applications of multilingual education in programs of certain countries around the world with comparable socio-economic and political realities to the U. S. (Christian, Pufahl & Rhodes, 2001). The multilingual education programs in these countries have enabled their students, regardless of the language they first speak, achieve the required grade level proficiency and graduation rates while learning content subjects in more than one language (Rhodes, 2001; Tucker, 1999). The scholarship on multiple language acquisition at the elementary level provides policy-makers and educators in the U. S. with information and recommendations based on first hand experiences of multilingual education successes in countries with similar language situations to the United States (Tucker, 1999).

This review of the literature attempted to identify and organize scholarship that described and analyzed the characteristics of successful multilingual programs from selected nations with a history of multilingual education.

Methodology

The initial search terms utilized for this review of scholarship regarding bilingual education and its characteristics were “bilingual education”, “elementary school” and “grade proficiency” to query the educational research database ERIC or Educational Resources Information Center for journal articles. The objective was to find current

scholarship regarding bilingual education practices and the characteristics of such education programs at the elementary school level that were deemed successful. The initial collection of scholarship on the subject of bilingual education in the United States uncovered a number of studies featuring topics such as the history of bilingual education in the U. S., and the variety of positions researchers, politicians, and educators have taken up regarding its implementation.

There exists a significant collection of literature favoring the use of bilingual education in the United States as a way to meet the needs of English language learners (Cos, 1999). The scholarship also speaks of the characteristics successful bilingual education programs across the U. S. possess. There are examples of bilingual education practice, classroom implications, the need for better teacher training, and the implications a national language policy has on any kind of bilingual education program (Cos, 1999; Crawford, 1999; Tucker, 1999).

Moreover, the initial search for and analysis of articles on bilingual education suggested the possibility of multilingual education as a viable option for second language learners in the United States. Many articles that spoke of multilingual education in the United States emerged with the researchers' own views and or critiques of its application in our classrooms. The scholarship that referred to multilingual education in the U. S. did not however link the possibilities of studying and or researching multilingual practices from around the world for possible applications within U. S. contexts. Utilizing 'multilingual education' and 'bilingual education' as search terms, in conjunction with 'education programs', the scholarship on bilingual and multilingual education programs and their characteristics from selected parts of the world were further explored. As the

scholarship on multilingual education programs accumulated, it also became apparent that there needed to be an organizational resolution on the selection criteria to be used to identify multilingual education programs that would fit the premise of success defined elsewhere in this paper. Additionally, given the presence of multiple programs from numerous multilingual countries, the scholarship also needed to be more representative so that the review would provide a wide range of scholarship about successful multilingual programs. This literature review attempted to solve this problem by selecting representative countries from each continent of the world.

In order to organize the scholarship obtained in a manner that would give the reader a way to connect all the information, this review of the literature attempted to find relationships within the numbers of articles and/ or reports by initially grouping all of the scholarship obtained in groups by program descriptions exhibiting similar features and characteristics. Secondly, the scholarship was further clustered within these groupings by identifying the type and basis of relationships that existed amongst them (intra-group relationship). Both of these grouping methods allowed for an organization of the literature that revealed several emergent themes of initial and general interest.

The review of scholarship revealed the possibility of direct correlations between some/or many of these sub-groupings. Amongst these correlations, it indicated the relationship existent between scholarship written about the latest research on multilingual acquisition methodology and on-going teacher preparation in multilingual education programs. This relationship was further explored as an emerging theme of great interest as a result of the challenges faced by educators in the United States because of the increasing language diversity in its classrooms. Furthermore, the literature reviewed

indicated that much has been written about the need for multilingual education around the world and the importance of sound language planning and policies as a result of the existent language diversity in many countries around the planet.

The review of literature utilized a number of sources to obtain information on multilingual education, and its characteristics on successful education programs from selected countries from around the world. The first search for information of catalog archives for educational journals was conducted at the Dominican University of California's Archbishop Alemany Library. At the library, multiple literature reviews on bilingual education in the United States were reviewed. In addition, journal articles were reviewed for information on bilingual education by using the ERIC database. The intention was to look for scholarship that evaluated bilingual education programs in comparison to multilingual education programs and what constituted program success for each. Annotations were made from copies of full text documents that were used as references. This extensive library and ERIC database search produced scarcely two research articles related to the subject at hand. The second step used a different vehicle for obtaining information for this review. It was conducted via the Internet. Search engines such as 'Google, Mozilla and Ask Jeeves' were used to access information. Twenty-five articles resulted from this search. Seven of these articles made at least one reference to multilingual education in other parts of the world.

The next step undertaken was to electronically search databases such as the United Nations Website, The California Department of Education and its resources section, and The National Center for Education Statistics among others. The review undertaken was for comparative studies conducted by these different organizations

regarding multilingual education programs around the world. This search method produced multiple sources of scholarship and information relevant to the specific questions for this review of literature. The search for information for the literature review led this researcher to approximately 40 articles containing references to multilingual education programs from around the world. Not every article was used for the final review. Some of the articles did not speak directly of the use of multilingual education at the elementary level; the basis for the research, but the use of multilingual programs for adult education. However, the scholarship that did speak directly of the advances and or successes of multilingual education in primary schools helped guide the organizational aspect of this project. The review of scholarship encountered enough information that fulfilled the author's curiosity on the subject of multilingual education based on the questions for this review. There was enough literature to review the education programs at the elementary level for at least one country in each continent of the world with a successful history of multilingual education. The review found some commonalities in all of these countries that defined the success of their programs. In addition, the review of literature found similar characteristics in all of these countries' multilingual education programs (Rhodes, 2001; Tucker, 1999). These similar characteristics helped organize the scholarship encountered on the basis of common themes.

Analysis and Discussion

This review of literature about multilingual education programs from around the world resulted from the researcher's curiosity about how to enable educators in the U. S. face the numerous challenges of teaching in linguistically diverse classrooms. The

literature review attempted to identify and organize scholarship on the characteristics of multilingual education in nations with a history of successful multilingual education programs over the last twenty years. The review of literature focused on research scholarship from around the world since scholarship regarding the application of multilingual programs in schools across the United States appeared to be minimal (Brannaman, 2002).

The review was organized by collating the common characteristics of multilingual education programs that published scholarship has deemed successful in the research literature. Furthermore, comparative studies conducted by diverse international organizations in areas such as: reading, math and science (Rhodes, 2001; Dixon, 2003 & Kapinus, 2003) also revealed additional literature that both confirmed and expanded scholarship based on the definition of “success” for this review.

Four major emergent themes were evidenced through the review of the literature on the characteristics of successful multilingual education programs in selected countries from around the world. They are:

- 1) The need for multilingual education as a result of evolving language situations in different parts of the world.
- 2) The importance placed by selected countries on the languages of instruction used in multilingual education programs around the world.
- 3) The successful use of multilingual education programs at the elementary level.
- 4) The importance of teacher preparation and further professional development as important means for implementing language policies in countries where multilingual education is taught.

The next section analyses these emergent and recurrent themes in greater detail in the following pages.

Analysis of Themes

The need for multilingual education

Almost every book, educational document or journal article regarding multilingual educational practices from around the world emphasize the need for multilingual education programs due to the ever-present growth of cultural and linguistic diversity in every continent. The vast majority of scholarship points to the connectivity multilingual education brings to a community (McCroarty, 1986); the formation of people's identity ((UNESCO, 2001), and the cognitive and emotional values multilingual education programs bring to students involved in those types of programs (Dutcher, 1994). Wright wrote that multilingualism is "... essential to the survival of the individual and the smooth functioning of the social dynamic" (Wright, 2000, p.389).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in its position paper entitled *Education in a Multilingual World*, (2003) supported the need for a more inclusive view on education by adopting the term 'multilingual education' in 1999. The General Conference conducted that year adopted Resolution 12, which stated that "... the requirements of global and national participation, and the specific needs of particular, culturally and linguistically distinct communities can only be addressed by multilingual education " (UNESCO, 1999, Part I). The Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity (2001) recognizes the importance of languages in

promoting cultural awareness and diversity, in addition to being an important element of a person's identity (UNESCO, 2003).

Richard Tucker (1999) attributed the need for multilingual education around the world to the challenges facing nations with increasingly culturally and linguistically populations. He argued that multilingual education in some cases is needed because of “the linguistic heterogeneity of a country or region, specific social or religious attributes, or the desire to promote national identity” (Tucker, 1999, p. 3). Trueba (1992) spoke of multicultural and multilingual education as an important instrument by which all children are educated to co-exist peacefully and to develop intercultural skills and tolerance (Schulter, 2004). Furthermore, nations around the world need to make full use of appropriate methods of communication and transmission of knowledge. The quest for quality education today is inextricably bound up with the impact of globalization (UNESCO, 2001, Resolution, 12). Lüdi (2003) and Sasaki (2000) spoke of the individual, economic and political needs that have brought multilingualism to places such as Europe, Asia and parts of the Americas.

More importantly, many educators and researchers see multilingual education as a medium for the full participation of all students, immigrants and non-immigrants, in their own academic and linguistic development in the United States context (Trueba, Rodriguez, Zou & Cintron, 1993). Moreover, Everstz (1992) linked multilingual and multicultural education to acknowledging the contributions of “...diverse ethnic and cultural groups in the forming of the United States, economically, socially, and ideologically” (Everstz, 1992, p. 4).

A number of researchers have written about the advantages and possibilities multilingual education programs bring to children who are encouraged to keep their mother tongue while learning new languages. “When [people] respect and promote the development of the first language and encourage maintenance of the home culture, children feel cared for and connected to their family, school and community” (McCroarty, 1986, p. 5). Wong-Fillmore, (1991) and Gibson, (1998) have maintained that the consequences of losing a mother tongue for language minority children are often extensive and severe “in many homes where parents do not communicate with children in their mother tongue, family communication may deteriorate” (Wong-Fillmore, 1991, p. 17).

Pattanayak (1990) described mother tongue as the "expression of primary identity and of group solidarity". People are identified with certain linguistic, ethnic, religious or cultural groups through ones mother tongue. He added, "Mother tongue anchors the child to culture" (Pattanayak 1990: viii-xii). In addition, the review of scholarship seemed to suggest that if a second language learner's native tongue is welcomed they might be apt to speak and learn another language more readily (IAMME, 2002).

On the contrary, educational programs that stress a rapid transition to English, and do not provide the sufficient support to the development of the native language of second language learners have proven ineffective for their linguistic and academic achievement (August & Hakuta, 1998). The current educational practices in the United States in which there is not sufficient support available to develop the native language of students have failed second language learners (Quezada, 2001), they provide limited access to language

and learning (Spener, 1999), and in the opinion of many scholars, “prevent most linguistic-minority children for attaining academic fluency in either their native language or in English” (Bilingual Research Journal, 2002, p. 220).

Advocates for the use of multilingual education in the United States point to the above mentioned facts and the demands of a global society that is becoming more culturally and linguistically diverse for its implementation in this country (Cummins, 2003; IAMME, 2002; Trueba, 1992). These demands manifest themselves on the challenges facing teachers in the U. S where schools have an increasing number of culturally and linguistically diverse students (Cos, 1999; Jama, 1992).

Language of Instruction

The language of instruction used in schools is seen as a medium of communication for the transmission of knowledge for all people (Gadellii, 2003). Much of the literature reviewed on multilingual education spoke of the importance certain countries have placed on the number and types of languages of instruction used in their school systems. Many studies noted the apparent effects these languages have on promoting multicultural diversity, which takes increasing importance at the elementary school level (Tucker, 1991; Gadellii, 2003; Scrimgeour, 2004). In addition, the existing scholarship also argued that the use of several languages of instruction is a challenge in the development of quality of education around the world (Sasaki, 2000; UNESCO, 2003). As a result, many documents which present the reader with information regarding guidelines and principles to promote cultural and linguistic diversity in the world have

been produced by a number of international organizations (UNESCO PRESS, 1953; World Bank, 2003).

The scholarship suggested that the concepts of language planning and language policies are particularly important while discussing the success of multilingual education programs around the world (Bangbose, 1991; Noss, 1975; Fishman, 1974; Gadelii, 2003). Some scholars have characterized language planning as “the organized pursuit of solution to the language problems” (Fishman, 1974, p. 79). To this extent, language policy was defined as the implementation of comprehensive language planning (Bangbose, 1991). The scholarship also mentioned that language planning and language policies around the world exist at three different levels: official (language or languages at the governmental level), educational (languages used at the school level) and general (mass communication level), (Noss, 1975). In some cases language policies have become constitutional requirements (Hoffman, 2005). For instance, in South Africa, the Department of Education has determined that learners must be taught in their first language until the age of nine years, or until they reach the third grade. After this point, the learning of a second language can begin (Martin, 2004). To some degree, countries like Canada and Germany give official and educational language programs supplementary federal funding (Dixon, 2003 & Kapinus, 2003; Rhodes, 2001; Sasaki, 2000).

Platt (1984) distinguished the often-interchangeable terms national and official languages for further understanding:

National language is a language that is considered representative of a nation or nationality. The term connotes belonging to a nation, of ethnic and/or cultural identity. Usually it is a local language spoken as native language by at least some of the population of a nation (Platt 1984, p. 19). Official language -- language generally used for government administration and the Higher Courts of Law, in the media and as one of the languages of education, at least of secondary and higher education on a nationwide basis (ibid, 19).

There are many examples of the principles promoting multilingualism and their successful application in multilingual education programs around the world (Rhodes, 2001; Tucker, 1999). India comes to mind as an example of a multilingual society in which different languages are used for different functions; more importantly in its education system (Pattanayak, 1990). D. P. Pattanayak of India argued that "... multilingualism, can be successful only if there is respect for multiplicity", and "respect for the different", in a society (Pattanayak 1990: viii-xii).

India has a national and official language recognized by most of its territories- Hindi, and an associate official language, English (Official Languages Act of 1963, as amended in 1967.) English is recognized as the official language in four states (Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Tripura) and in eight Union territories (Schulter, 2004). There are also a number of other languages used interchangeably across India's territories depending on the prestige, socio-political and historical contexts in which the population lives (Ramamoorthy, 2004; Schulter, 2004). In India, there is an enormous pressure to develop a sound language policy, which required extensive and meticulous language

planning by most sectors of society (Ramamoorthy, 2004). In reference to the mounting pressure and challenges faced by policymakers while developing a sound and comprehensive language policy, some scholars have stated that education is the strongest weapon for enforcing the language policy of a nation (Spolsky, 1978).

Spolsky (1978) argued that language policy at a national level in general, and at the educational level in particular, only comes after comprehensive planning with the people that involves participating in the decision-making process. On these pressures, he wrote,

There are many pressures having an effect on language planning in a society: family (attitudes at home), religion (if the maintenance of a language is based on a belief in a "holy tongue"), ethnicity, political pressures (aiming at establishing national unity; a language tradition is acknowledged as a powerful force within a nationalist movement), cultural pressures, economic pressures (which include commerce, advanced science and technology: the idea is that not all languages have modern technological vocabulary and it is more rational to adopt a language such as English for this purpose), the mass media (e.g., if there is no media in a particular language, there will be strong pressure to learn another language which is better provided), legal pressures (lack of the official language can often become the basis for discrimination), military pressure (desirability to use one common language) (Spolsky, 1978, p. 63).

However, here in the United States, policy makers, educators and the general public have long been debating the issue of increasing numbers of immigrant children and the language of instruction in the different school systems across its territory without finding a clear solution (Cos, 1999). There is not a unified language policy at a national level, which could help with these challenges (Sasaki, 2000). Some scholars in the U. S. have argued in favor of the use of multilingual education programs in this country (Leistyna, 2002; Rhodes, 2001; Tucker, 1999), and see multilingual education "...as one

of the key instruments to maintaining American democratic principles of equal treatment for all under the law” (Trueba, 1992, p. 98). Moreover, the use of the mother tongue as one of the languages of instruction in multilingual education programs in the

U. S. could create an environment within a community where people could have opportunities to share aspects of their cultures and countries of origins amongst each other (Cummins & Schecter, 2003).

Multilingual education in elementary grades

In an effort to collect information about multilingual education, different international organizations have conducted multiple studies of particular school systems from around the world (UNESCO, 2003; World Bank, 2003). The World Bank Organization (2003) with its global review and country profiles has organized nations by regions and gives detailed information regarding the types of language arts programs in elementary grades.

Scholars such as Extra and Yagmur (2002) have written studies regarding education policies at schools in the northern region of Germany where starting in the year 2000, “...optional language courses were offered to all primary and secondary pupils, for a maximum of five hours a week” (Extra & Yagmur, 2002, p. 15). In elementary schools in Germany most school children start leaning a new language or languages by the time they are six years old (Sasaki, 2000). Multiple language instruction formally starts in the first year of primary school (Housen, 2002). In North Rhine-Westphalia region, children are expected to achieve a spoken and written language proficiency that is adequate for various language use contexts (Extra & Yagmur, 2002).

Andrew Scrimgeour (2004) described multilingual education programs in elementary schools in South Wales, and The United Kingdom. He argued that consistent internal and external assessment of their students across all languages taught as one of the main characteristics of those programs. In addition, multilingual education programs in these two countries drive their instruction from/while conducting on going developing linguistic and cultural studies regarding their target populations.

Much scholarship on multilingual education suggest that for some time now, two international organizations have looked at the multilingual education programs of countries in Africa, Asia, Oceania and South America (UNESCO PRESS, 1953; World Bank, 2003). In Asia, countries such as Singapore, Thailand, India and Japan have multilingual education programs that enable students to achieve their educational goals without sacrificing their linguistic and cultural heritage. These programs have a common characteristic by which they provide strong educational foundation in the language the students know best, and encourage and enable students to use all the languages to continue learning (Malone, 2003).

The education system in India is using the so-called ‘three-language formula’ with its students in some of its territories for some time now. The formula deals with the acquisition planning and selection of languages to be taught as school subjects with the teaching of the mother tongue for ten years minimum and the second or third language for six years minimum also (Groff, 2004).

Malone (2003) described the multilingual education programs in Thailand where a child starts with one or two years of pre-primary classes in their native language, once primary education starts with after-school and weekend classes with the target languages

as the main components. Singapore embraces an official bilingual education policy in which English is the language of all content-area education from the start of schooling with the student's native language required as a single subject (Dixon, 2003). In Japan, most schools start teaching English in the first grade. However, many preschools offer English instruction already (Sasaki, 2000).

South Africa mirrors some of the successful applications of multilingual education programs in the African continent. Martin (2004) wrote,

In primary schools the mother tongue is used throughout with the foreign languages taught as a subject area. At a later period, usually at the end of primary school or start of secondary school, the instructional positions of the languages are inverted. When this occurs, the foreign language becomes the medium of instruction while local languages are taught as subjects (Martin, 2004, p. 2).

Moreover, in countries such as Nigeria and Zambia the use of local languages is planned for the first three years of schooling. English is introduced at third grade (UNESCO, 2005)

Other research has focused on describing multilingual education programs in Oceania (UNESCO, 2005). Dr. Ruth Reynolds (2001) has covered information on school systems with multilingual education programs in certain regions of New Zealand and Australia. The scholarship included features of the many programs they have to offer in areas such as: social studies, science and language arts. According to (Mangubhai, 1996), the multilingual education programs in the South Pacific vary depending on the levels of literacy. The initial language of instruction in many countries is in English or French whereas in Fiji it is a vernacular for the first three years and in Tonga and Samoa, Tongan and Samoan until Grade 6.

In the Americas, English as a second language is mandated in most elementary and secondary schools across South America and in some parts of Canada where their governments are committed to multilingualism (Sasaki, 2000; Scrimgeour, 2004; World Bank, 2003). In elementary grades for example, Quebec has English as mandatory from grades 4 to 11. The territory of British Columbia requires a second language from grades 5 to 8 (1994), and in most districts the second language is French (Reynolds, 2001; Sasaki, 2000; Scrimgeour, 2004). However, many scholars have noted the lack of interest of the economic and political giant of the region, (Honegger, McGivern & Sherman, 2003), the United States, to the extensive studies conducted elsewhere in the subject of multilingual education as a way to deal with its own challenges of an increasingly diverse school population (Rhodes, 2001; Tucker, 1999). These scholars have pointed to the lack of a national curriculum (Sasaki, 2000), comprehensive language planning for its school systems (Brannaman, 2003) and the refusal to acknowledge this cultural and linguistic diversity in its schools (Everstz, 1992).

Unfortunately, the scholarship on multilingual education also suggests that the extent of the efforts made by the United States to fine-tune its current education practices have been only to participate in a series of studies that compare its education system to others of education systems of the Group of Eight or industrialized nations (Honegger, McGivern & Sherman, 2003). For example, the United States Department of Education participated in a Reading Literacy Study in 1991. The study assessed the reading literacy level of 4th and 9th graders in 32 countries. U. S fourth graders did very well on that particular study. The results of the study prompted policy makers and education leaders to set high standards of performance in reading and math (U. S Department of Education,

2003). In addition, "...Many policy makers called for international studies to determine not only the achievement of U. S students but also to indicate how rigorous our standards were" (Kapinus, 2003, p. 2). Currently, these studies are being conducted by the NCES or National Center for Education Statistics which reports its findings every two years or so (Baldi, Khalaf & Perie, 1995; Honegger, McGivern & Sherman, 2003; Phillips, Sherman & Riggan, 2005).

The review of scholarship speaks greatly about the direction much of the research regarding education systems around the world has taken. However, to this date, this research has done very little to influence policymakers in the United States as to bringing radical changes to its current education policies (Binkley, 1991; Sherman, 2002; Sen, 2004).

Teacher preparation

According to Van de Craen & Perez-Vidal (2003), the importance of teacher training in general and of teachers for multilingual schools in particular, cannot be overestimated. Excellent teacher training and professional development are keys to successful multilingual education programs because of the challenges facing educators in countries where the populations are becoming increasingly diverse, and where students come in speaking different languages (Arias, 2001; Dixon, 2001; Gadelii, 2003; Karabenick & Noda, 2004). Montague (1997) noted that the most important aspect of any multilingual education program is teacher preparation related to pedagogical and theoretical aspects of language acquisition. Teachers ought to be able to analyze their students' responses so they could gain an understanding of how they learn best and adjust

their teaching practices accordingly (IAMME, 2002). Lopez (1990) spoke of the need for educators to use the results of the latest research in areas such as: Language planning and educational planning. He went on to recommend that “There is also a need for professionals to intervene in various aspects of curriculum development, from identification of skills which learners need to develop, to the preparation of textbooks and guides for teachers and pupils in each area” (Lopez, 1990, p. 27).

Peri & Herman (2005) wrote that the emphasis on teacher training and professional development varies from country to country. The average number of years teacher candidates must study is 16. However, in Germany, where multilingual education programs have been deemed successful (Extra & Yagmur, 2002), teacher candidates must study for 19 years for elementary and middle school and 20 for secondary school (Phillips, Sherman & Riggan, 2005). Teachers there come out with an equivalent to a U. S. master’s degree (NCES, 1996). Their salaries reflect the importance the federal government has placed on education and are 13 percent higher than their U. S. counterparts per se (Honegger, McGivern & Sherman, 2003). However, teacher training programs and methods of instruction are still somewhat dispersed throughout Europe. As a result, some local initiatives have been adopted as the first step in the creation of a European multilingual teacher-training program (Van de Craen & Perez-Vidal, 2003). In 2001 the Council of the European Union suggested that a European Qualified Language Teacher Status should be introduced, qualifying its holders to teach in any member state, and use the title ‘European Language Teacher’.

Asia is facing the same challenges in with its teacher training programs.

According to Malone (2003), there are too few mother tongue speakers qualified to teach in the schools of many countries in the continent. In her opinion, the best solution is to provide quality education in the minority communities so that minority language speakers can become professional teachers. Conversely, countries such as Japan and China have encouraged teachers to go abroad to study in educational institutes with a target language in mind (Honegger, McGivern & Sherman, 2003; Sasaki, 2000).

In Latin America, bilingual education teacher training programs had been a secondary concern, but in recent years have received considerably attention (Lopez, 2000). Efforts towards comprehensive professional training in bilingual education have been made in countries such as Bolivia (World Bank, 1990), Colombia (Ministry of National Education, 1998) and Peru (Peruvian Ministry of Education, 1993). Such efforts come as a result of many initiatives created to meet the demands of the multicultural and multilingual population of those countries (Lopez, 2000).

Additional research on teacher training in multilingual education suggests that teachers should have many attributes in order to work in a multilingual education setting; amongst them: proficiency in the target language, knowledge of the principles of language acquisition as well as pedagogical skills specifically adapted for teaching foreign languages to young children (Van de Craen & Perez-Vidal, 2003; Malone, 2003). However, these attributes might only be present in culturally and linguistically sensitive classroom teachers (IAMME, 2003).

Traditional teacher training programs have trainees that are mostly white, middle class females who are mostly prepared to work only with students who share their race class, and language (Zimpher & Asburn, 1991). Carrier & Cohen (2003) have suggested that the United States should do more to identify, recruit and retain bilingual teachers, especially minority bilingual teachers. Scholars have argued that much more effort should be made to guide minority students to careers such as teaching (Garcia & Baptiste, 1991). However, only through the combined effort from institutions and education agencies, teachers will be able to fulfill their responsibilities with a greater confidence. Teachers' roles and training in intercultural education (Alvarez & Garrido, 2003). Gonzales (1997) wrote that educating more minority teachers to work with second language learners could help with the much-needed culturally and linguistically sensitive classroom teachers.

Implications for Future Research

Scholars have written to a large extent about the importance of language planning, teacher preparation and well-articulated curriculum as keys to successful applications of multilingual education programs. However, the review of scholarship on multilingual education programs from around the world did not unveil much literature containing specific recommendations on how to apply these successful characteristics in the United States context. The areas of teacher preparation and multilingual professional development (Reynolds, 2001; Scrimgeour, 2004), consistent language planning at a national level (Noss, 1975; Bamgbose, 1991; Gadellii, 2003), and school funding need to be further addressed. More studies on how prospective teachers in the United States may be better prepared to recognize and respond to the diversity of social and linguistic

contexts in which their teaching will occur are necessary. At the same time, the United States could look for a way to make initial teacher training programs and in-service courses available to minority students aspiring to become teachers. Studies on how to provide aspiring minority teachers with the opportunity to a higher education should be a priority.

Conclusion

The review of literature on multilingual education written over the last twenty years has unveiled an extensive list of countries, which have a successful history of multilingual education at the elementary grade level. In Europe, Germany has very structured multilingual education programs in most of its regions (Extra & Yagmur, 2002). Canada has a long history of bilingual education in the Quebec region (Reynolds, 2001; Sasaki, 2000; Scrimgeour, 2004). The education system in India is using the so called 'three-language formula' with its students in some of its territories for some time now (Groff, 2004). In the South Pacific, New Zealand's students learn English and or French in addition to the vernacular languages spoken there (Mangubhai, 1996). South Africa has some of the successful applications of multilingual education programs in the African continent (Martin, 2004).

The scholarship also uncovered the common characteristics and features successful multilingual education programs have in other parts of the world. The end goal for these programs is the achievement of the required grade level proficiency by all of their students regardless of the languages being taught (Tucker, 1999). Successful multilingual education programs emphasize the importance of teacher preparation and

subsequent on-going professional development (Reynolds, 2001; Scrimgeour, 2004); language planning at a national level (Noss, 1975; Bamgbose, 1991; Gadelii, 2003); consistency of assessment to drive instruction at all grade levels (Dixon, 2001; Scrimgeour, 2004) and the importance of fomenting cultural diversity amongst the population of a particular nation (UNESCO, 2003). Furthermore, a well-articulated curriculum which follows national standards and it is based on the latest studies regarding language acquisition also characterized these successful multilingual education programs (Branaman & Nancy Rhodes, 1998; Christian, Pufahl & Rhodes, 2001).

According to Housen (2002), a well-organized bilingual/multilingual program has a well-thought out plan for its target population, the context in which the program is being implemented and most importantly a proclaimed philosophy and objectives. Most of these programs receive federal funding as part of a national language policy, in addition to the private sector providing funds for teachers to develop and maintain their foreign language skills and foreign language resources for schools (Sasaki, 2000).

The review of scholarship has also revealed that successful multilingual education programs have teachers who receive training at higher education schools for an extended number of years unlike their American counterparts. Some nations have teachers who graduate with an equivalent of a masters' degree before they set foot in a classroom (Phillips, Sherman & Riggan, 2005). In the United States, the only requirement to become a teacher is a bachelors' degree in some cases. Some teachers do not possess the qualifications on the subject they teach, thus, exacerbating the debate over lack of proper teacher training and further professional development in this country.

While many countries around the world have embraced multilingual education as a way to enable students of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds achieve grade level proficiency (Rhodes, 2001; Tucker, 1999), some researchers (Kapinus, 1991) have maintained for some time now that much of the scholarship on multilingual education written within the United States is based on the comparison of its school system against the ones of industrialized nations (Binkley, 1991; Sherman, 2002; Sen, 2004). However, the greatest gap in literature on multilingual education written in the U. S exists in the collection of multilingual education research accompanied with specific recommendations on how to apply some of the findings within its own educational system. Furthermore, the area of early multilingual literacy and its features at the elementary level needs more attention.

Some scholars have noted that perhaps, this lack of attention comes as a result of the type of environment created in the United States by the refusal to acknowledge the cultural and ethnic diversity in its classrooms (Everstz, 1992). Hornberger (2003) argued that educators and second language learners are poorly served in environments where the tension between the two views of the bilingual debate is left unaddressed.

Policy makers and educators in the United States are confronted with challenges to conventional wisdom and political ideologies. Perhaps looking at multilingual education as a viable option to the 'English-Only' or 'bilingual education' points of view could give them the answers. The challenge is to enable second language learners in this country achieve the needed grade level proficiency in English to succeed. However, the question that remains unexamined is about why we should stop there? Would it not be reasonable to ask for all children in the United States to speak more than one language in

the near future? The survival of the United States in this era of global economy and communications, and the rapidly growing culturally and linguistically diverse populations in this country command a new and creative option based on a multilingual education model. The conditions for education in the U.S. suggest that neither can we dare to wait until they demand it, nor can we afford to risk such an edge in global competitiveness in the future.

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