

Editor's Introduction

Leonard A. Valverde
Guest Editor

When Josué González approached me about doing a special issue of the *Bilingual Research Journal*, I quickly accepted, giving thought to what progress there has been in understanding the knowledge base and skills needed to administer bilingual programs. Since I had spent the past 12 years as an academic vice president and College of Education dean, I was most curious to learn of any advancements made. In conceiving the journal's focus, I hypothesized that, while much research and study had advanced the body of literature regarding bilingual education in general, the specific components of administration and supervision were under-developed and stagnant. Unfortunately, through my research for this article, and in reviewing other articles, it became clear that my hypothesis was more than just a presumption.

The major contribution in developing a body of knowledge regarding the administration of bilingual programs has come from doctoral dissertation studies. However, these dissertations are few in number because there are few faculty in departments of educational administration and policy studies who are available to stimulate and direct doctoral dissertations in this area. In addition, there are even fewer doctoral students in educational leadership departments who are interested in the management and leadership of bilingual programs. Most of the bilingual faculty are in curriculum and instruction departments, and their graduates who assume research positions in private centers or public organizations, such as the Center for Applied Linguistics, are specialists in learning, curriculum, and instructional aspects, not administration, supervision, or campus leadership.

Most recent doctoral studies typically focus on common aspects of administration and supervision, including the following: (1) Leadership issues, i.e., vision and mission statement; (2) staff development or in-service training of teaching personnel; (3) program management, such as scheduling; and (4) program support, i.e., budget and district support. Yet, there are still several other competencies that administrators of bilingual programs must have that regular school administrators do not necessarily have to emphasize. They include strategical training in three areas: (1) managing change and program evaluation, (2) influencing school and community politics for support and protection of bilingual education, and (3) public/community relations to gain more funds. The focus has also settled on the school's principal—whether his/her role is at the school or district level.

There is a consensus by practitioners that principals and bilingual program directors have to concentrate much time and effort in gaining support from other school administrators, teachers, and board members, as well as from parents, community groups, professional associations, and other significant public agencies. The reason for this is obvious: Bilingual education, from its

inception (circa 1960s), has been seen as a “political” program. There has been much activity at the legislative and congressional level to cut back funding, if not to eliminate bilingual education, (e.g., California’s Proposition 227). Therefore, administrators of such programs become responsible for protecting them from the constant attacks. They are achieving this by organizing advocacy groups, networking with sympathetic policy makers, and building coalitions.

Also, bilingual education was brought into existence in the hopes that non-English and limited English-speaking students would be provided with an educational program that would correct the mis-education that had been in place for decades. Hence, administrators of bilingual education programs are not only responsible for inserting a new instructional and curricular program, but making the necessary changes in the outmoded, regular school curriculum as well. Bilingual education inevitably necessitates change. Simply adding bilingual education without changing the “regular” operations will result in, and has produced, a weak and ineffective bilingual program. By simply performing their duties, i.e., doing what is necessary to make the program functional and effective, bilingual administrators are seen as disloyal to the school district and suspect for advancement. Why? By advocating district-wide changes, other administrators and teachers believe they have to admit to offering an otherwise poor education. Even with the abundance of research over the years, educators and the public are still debating the reasons for the dysfunctional education of LEP students.

The four articles of this special issue effectively inform practitioners of what is important and necessary in order to lead and administer dual language programs. Priority knowledge, critical skills, and key aspects for emphasis are presented. Some findings are explicitly stated, while others are implicit. Practitioners are provided with solid, concrete information about how to convert the most commonly implemented, but least productive (student learning outcomes), bilingual program (transitional) into an effective instructional program. Also, two maintenance models are described, one an integrated district in San Francisco, and the other, a district on the East coast with different populations, the Miami-Dade County dual language schools.

While the progress made over the past forty years has been uneven, minimal (in the eyes of advocates), and made under adverse conditions, advances have indeed occurred. A solid research base of what is effective has been laid, program designs have evolved with greater clarity of what is necessary, a foundation of knowledge in various categories has been established (i.e., curriculum, instructional techniques, learning modes, and administrative competencies), and teacher preparation programs have grown in relevancy. Even though there is still much progress to be made, and the end is nowhere in sight, the future looks hopeful. Children whose native language is something other than English are entering schools in greater percentages than English speakers. School boards are more representative of languages used in the district. There are several superintendents of large school districts (such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, Dallas, Phoenix, etc.) from many different

backgrounds. These factors alone can make a significant change. That is, adoption of bilingual programs will be based on ideology favorable toward people of color. Instead of boards and superintendents who harbor the assimilation and English only attitudes, there will be people in these critical roles who believe in cultural pluralism and biliteracy. With this philosophy in place, maintenance and dual language programs will be selected and supported instead of the less effective transitional and pullout programs.