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On Alternative and Additional Certifications in English Language Teaching: The Case of Colombian EFL Teachers' Professional Development[*][1]

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National policies for English-Spanish bilingualism require the availability of more and better prepared EFL teachers in Colombia. This paper critically analyzes the use of two international models of teacher development that play the role of alternative and additional certifications for ELT professionals in the country. Through the review of literature in the field, the author argues that the current promotion of the use of the In-Service Certificate in English Language Teaching (ICELT) and the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT) as additional and alternative teaching certifications may represent some forms of standardization, exclusion, inequality, and businessification in the professional development of EFL teachers. Conclusions suggest the need for more critical voices from teacher educators, better communication strategies among different educational actors and the construction of a more pluralistic view of the professional development of EFL teachers that values local knowledge.

Key words: professional development, alternative certifications, EFL, bilingualism, language policies

La implementación de las políticas colombianas sobre el bilingüismo inglés-español requiere de un número mayor de docentes de inglés como lengua extranjera que estén mejor preparados. Este artículo analiza de manera crítica la utilización de dos modelos internacionales de desarrollo profesional, que desempeñan el papel de certificaciones alternativas y adicionales para los profesionales de la enseñanza del inglés en el país. A través de la revisión de la literatura, la autora argumenta que la promoción actual del *In-Service Certificate in English Language Teaching* (ICELT) y del *Teaching Knowledge Test* (TKT) puede representar formas de estandarización, exclusión, desigualdad y marketización en el desarrollo profesional de los docentes de inglés como lengua extranjera. Las conclusiones sugieren la necesidad de voces más críticas de parte de los formadores de docentes, mejores estrategias de comunicación entre los actores educativos y la construcción de una visión más pluralista del desarrollo profesional de los docentes de inglés como lengua extranjera, donde se valore el conocimiento local

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Palabras clave: desarrollo profesional, certificaciones en alternativas, inglés como lengua extranjera, bilingüismo, políticas lingüísticas

Les politiques nationales pour le bilinguisme anglais-espagnol requièrent la disponibilité en Colombie d'un nombre majeur d'enseignants d'anglais langue étrangère ayant une meilleure formation. Cet article analyse de manière critique l'utilisation de deux modèles internationaux de développement professionnel jouant le rôle de certifications alternatives et additionnelles pour les enseignants d'anglais. Au travers de la révision de la littérature, l'auteur avance l'argument que la promotion actuelle du *In-Service Certificate in English Language Teaching* (ICELT) et du *Teaching Knowledge Test* (TKT) peut représenter quelques formes de standardisation, d'exclusion, d'inégalité et de marchetisation dans le développement professionnel de l'anglais langue étrangère. Ces conclusions suggèrent la nécessité de voix plus critiques de la part des formateurs d'enseignants, de meilleures stratégies de communication parmi les acteurs éducatifs, ainsi que de la construction d'une conception plus pluraliste du développement professionnel des enseignants d'anglais langue étrangère dans laquelle la connaissance locale soit estimée.

Mots clés: développement professionnel, certifications alternatives, anglais langue étrangère, bilinguisme, politiques linguistiques

1. INTRODUCTION

The spread of English learning and use of all over the world is a phenomenon that nobody can deny or stop. The analysis of that spread has motivated opinions about it that range from "'imperialist', 'predatory' or 'killer' language that threatens linguistic diversity on one hand, to it being a great benefit and gift to the world enabling world citizens to communicate freely with one another" (Ives, 2006, pp. 121-122). Researchers in ELT (English Language Teaching) and Applied Linguistics have published a considerable amount of works that support both views. As a consequence of the English growing movement, more English teachers are required to educate prospective students. The response to the need of more English learning opportunities and more efficient professionals capable to respond to that demand is generally contained in a language educational policy issued by governments. A language education policy may include educational reforms that may comprise regulations on various aspects of the language learning and teaching such as desired standards, teachers' qualifications and professional development. It may also include as well as the possible ways to achieve the standards and obtain the qualifications expected.

This paper presents an analysis of the spread of two English teacher development models, the ICELT (In-service Certificate in English Language

Teaching) and the TKT (Teaching Knowledge Test) introduced by the "National Program of Bilingualism (NPB) Bilingual Colombia". I will argue that these two models have become mechanisms of alternative and additional teaching certifications for Colombian EFL teachers and that they have played a clear role in the standardization, exclusion, inequality, and businessification of their professional development.

To develop my argument, this paper will include a literature review of language and language educational policies and their relation to teachers' professional development, alternative certifications and the new global search for teachers' effectiveness and accountability. Then, I will analyze the ICELT and the TKT implemented in Colombia as professional development models that award international certifications sponsored by Cambridge University through the British Council. Finally, I will draw some conclusions.

2. LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGE EDUCATION POLICIES

Language policies are interventions that take place to modify the use of a given language in a community. They are the expression of beliefs and ideologies that go beyond the academic sphere because they respond to economic and political agendas that may be open or hidden (Shohamy, 2006; Spolsky, 2004). Designed by politicians, but implemented by teachers, language policies are often top-down approaches. Spolsky (2004, p. 5) notes that policies are easily recognized when they "exist in the form of clear-cut labeled statements in official documents". The author identifies three components in the language policy of a speech community: its language practices, its language beliefs or ideology and the specific efforts to modify that practice. Shohamy (2006, p.48) says that it is "through language policies that decisions are made with regard to the preferred languages that should be used, where, when and by whom". Tollefson (1991) sees language policies as an instrument of inequality as they institutionalize the language as a basis for the establishment of differences among social groups. He includes power and social class as issues to consider in a language policy because any analysis must be embedded in a social and political context. Critical language policy sees the need to explore the relationship between language policies, social

justice, political and economic inequality, among other issues (See Ricento, 2006; Tollefson, 2006).

Shohamy (2006) argues that language policies often ignore their connection to actual language learning. A language policy is materialized in concrete actions that involve the curriculum, the assessment, the teacher standards and the materials, among other important aspects. She states that the failure of those policies may lie on the fact that they do not have a basis in reality, and thus, remain as good intentions on paper. She states that "such is the case when certain languages are imposed by policy makers on schools through different mechanisms, for a variety of political and social reasons, without attention being paid to the needs and wishes of those who are affected by the policy, without including those who are expected to carry it out and without examining whether it is feasible" (p. 143).

Shohamy (2006, p.76) defines language education policies as a concept more specific than language policies. She says that:

> Language education policies are mechanisms used to create *de facto* language practices in educational institutions, especially in centralized educational systems. Language education policy is considered a form of imposition and manipulation of language policy as it is used by those in authority to turn ideology into practice through formal education.

As part of the promotion of certain language practices, education language policies tend to propose standards that are a response to the low achievement of students, and later move to the teaching profession to raise the quality of education through accountability and standardization policies (Watanabe, 2007). Language teachers are generally involved in the development of a language policy in actions related to the professionalization of teaching, increasing teachers' effectiveness and improving the teachers' knowledge base (Libman, in press).

In Colombia, some language education policies have been issued to reform and improve ELT. Valencia (2006, p.13) recalls some of them: the 1982 "*Programa de Inglés*" (English Syllabus), the 1994 "*Ley General de Educación*" (General Law of Education), the 1997 "*Proyecto Educativo Institucional*" (Institutional

Educational Project), the 1999 "*Indicadores de Logros*" (Attainment Targets), and the 2000 "*Revolución Educativa*" (Educational Revolution) and concludes that they "have not produced the changes expected". In addition to those language policies, in 1991, a group of Colombian universities sponsored by the British government designed the COFE (Colombian Framework for English). This project "was the result of a complementary arrangement […] concerning technical cooperation for the improvement in the teaching of English" (Rubiano et al., 2000, p.38).

3. BILINGUAL COLOMBIA: THE LATEST LANGUAGE EDUCATIONAL POLICY

Bilingual Colombia is one of the strongest initiatives ever taken to promote foreign English learning in the country. The monetary investment and advertising have been quite considerable for this program which has been presented as a major strategy to contribute to the competitiveness of the Colombian population in a globalized world (Usma, 2009). Two main components of the policy are directly related to English teachers: the promotion of national standards for English teaching and professional development programs. In both actions EFL teachers play an important role as they are seen as responsible for the success of the national language education policy of bilingualism through their commitment to the achievement of the standards and their engagement in shaping the quality of teaching (González, 2007; Sanchez & Obando, 2008). Sánchez & Obando (2008) claim that "if the most essential tools are not at hand, no commitment on the part of the teachers will be enough for developing successful foreign language programs; needless to say, the goal of bilingualism looks more like an utopia than a feasible plan" (p. 192).

The Ministry of Education considers these two actions as valid mechanisms to improve the level of English in Colombian students' (Hernández, 2007) because a massive assessment of their English skills placed the majority of them at the A1 level of the CEF (Cely, 2007). A logical consequence was to target the EFL teachers' competence because if teachers have better standards, as a logical consequence, students will have them.

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4. Critical issues concerning bilingual Colombia

The model of bilingualism proposed by the Ministry of Education has been questioned by different scholars, mainly because it seems to see English as the only additional language for Colombians (Mejía, 2006 a,b; González, 2007; Guerrero, 2008; Usma, 2009). Ordóñez (2004) states that bilingualism in Colombia is a desirable educational outcome and that there are political and social pressures to introduce English at an early age. Her research shows that the introduction of English into the curriculum for content-based teaching and having apparently fluent children "has been an urban, middle-class, private school phenomenon" (2004:450). She also highlights the fact that some successful experiences in the use of English in Colombian elite schools have motivated policy makers to introduce early bilingualism in the public school system disregarding the differences in the private and public school settings.

Regarding the concept of bilingualism, de Mejía (2006 a, b), warns professionals in ELT about the need to propose a national language policy that includes other foreign languages besides English and the recognition of the indigenous languages of the country. González (2007) citing Mejía (2006 a, b) criticizes the reduction of bilingualism to English-Spanish and the perpetuation of social inequalities based on language prestige. Regarding the need to construct a more tolerant and inclusive society, Mejía (2006a) states that "restricting the notion of bilingualism to Spanish/English bilingualism leads to a distorted view of the complex relationships between languages, cultures, and identities in the Colombian context" (p.165).

Guerrero (2008) questions some aspects of the NPB, mainly the definition of a bilingual person implied in the Colombian Standards for English based in the CEF. She highlights the fact that the writers of the national standards "set up the goals of the PNB as a packed whole, implying that the proficiency level must be the same for everybody regardless of the needs, resources, context, socio-economic situation, and/or motivation of students" (pp. 40-41). Additionally, the author highlights the inadequacy of the standards' conception

of "an ideal group of students who differ greatly from the real students who attend schools" (p. 42).

Usma (2009) also questions the borrowing of a global discourse about bilingualism because it uses the notion of learning another language as an ultimate component of competitiveness for the labor market.

González (2007) expressed the following epistemological concerns about Bilingual Colombia:

a. The leading role of a multinational academic empire (Wilson, 2005) in the advisory participation of the British Council and the British publishing industry.
b. The lack of the analysis of the Colombian linguistic situation as a country placed in the expanding circle of World Englishes (Kachru, 1992; Norton, 1997).
c. The traditional view of the native speakers and their supremacy and ownership in the use of the language (Brutt-Griffler and Samimy, 1999, 2001; Graddol, 1999; Pennycook 1997, 1998) and the absence of analysis of the development of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) (Jenkins, 2006).
d. The scarce discussion on the growing role of non-native speaker teachers in the TESOL profession (Liu, 1999; LLurda, 2005) and their new roles in post-colonial discourses (Chacón et al. 2003).
e. The use of central knowledge disregarding the value of locally constructed knowledge (Canagarajah, 2005a) on teacher development and language teaching.
f. The non-critical view of English as an instrument of political power and domination (Pennycook, 1998; Phillipson, 1992, 2006).
g. The promotion of models of teacher training and English teaching that ignore approaches within the framework of post-method pedagogies (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, 2003, 2006).
h. The absence of counterdiscourses and critical pedagogy arguments (Pennycook, 1994, 1997, 1998).
i. The limited view of teacher development as teacher training (Woodward, 1991; Ur, 1997; Diaz-Maggioli, 2003, 2004).

5. Two new professional development models of bilingual Colombia: the ICELT and the TKT

Bilingual Colombia has its foundations of professional development programs on the results of the administration the QPT (Quick Placement Test), an instrument promoted by ESOL Cambridge examinations to assess the language proficiency of teachers. The test administration protocol and analysis of this massive testing strategy are not available to the academic community, but the Ministry of Education openly states that the majority of English teachers in Colombia do not have the language level required to teach English as they are placed at the A1 and A2 levels of the CEF (Cely, 2007). That all Colombian teachers of English achieve the desired B2 level is a major target for the government. In fact, the Ministry has determined that there is a desirable number of hours of teacher development activities to attain that level. When universities are invited to propose some in-service and professional development programs, local educational authorities often ask if these institutions can guarantee that all teachers will achieve the B2 level, how long it will take the teachers to do so, and if we can make it happen faster.

5.1. The ICELT

As part of the professional development actions promoted by Bilingual Colombia, the ICELT was introduced in Colombia by the British Council and it is advertised as one of the University of Cambridge teacher resources (See Appendix 1). The ICELT requires that non-native speaker candidates have at least a B2 level of proficiency in English in the CEF to guarantee some basic mastery of the content. This certification is globally accepted as it is sponsored by an institution that provides "quality teacher training" (University of Cambridge).

According to Hernández (2007), the Ministry of Education chose this training model for the following reasons: One, the kind of English teacher sought by the ICELT. She says that the teachers participating in this in-service model

> will have some solid knowledge in the field of methodology, be able to support his/her teaching using theories formulated by widely known specialists. He/she as

to evidence ability to enrich his/her teaching practice based on the systematic and reflective study of what happens in his/her class. Moreover, he/she has to participate actively in sharing ideas with colleagues. (p. 33, own translation).

A second reason is the pertinence of the content addressed in the seven units. Hernández (2007) believes that the tasks proposed by the ICELT "establish a close connection between the concepts explored in the course, the teaching practice and the ability to reflect on and evaluate the processes of teaching and learning" (pp. 33-34, own translation). The third argument relies on "the enormous prestige and seriousness of the ICELT program, which has been implemented in other countries" (p. 34, own translation).

The Ministry of Education began the dissemination of this model of teachers' professional development by inviting teacher educators from different universities to take the course and obtain the corresponding certification. Professors from seven universities participated in this first group and representatives from five universities received the certification from the British Council endorsing them as certified tutors. The universities that obtained the ICELT certification could then train teachers using this framework so that a significant number of EFL teachers could benefit from this international in-service model. After this pilot program, 31 teachers finished the course and 21 obtained the certificate from the University of Cambridge (Hernández, 2007).

The arguments presented by Hernández (2007) and the subsequent assessment of the pilot program allowed the Ministry of Education to see the ICELT as an alternative to be replicated using a cascade model. The tutors would be the professionals that obtained the certificate in that initial program or those that were trained subsequently by them. Although Hayes (1995, 2000) questions this cascade training model as the initial benefits fade along the process of repetition, the certified ICELT tutors and their institutions are authorized to offer professional development programs with the recognition of the Ministry of Education. As a consequence of that government validation, the British Council and some other Colombian universities offer this certification to EFL teachers and non-teaching professionals that require the validation of their teaching skills.

5.2. The TKT

The TKT "tests professional knowledge about the teaching of English to speakers of other languages" rather than the ability to teach (University of Cambridge). The test includes three major components that deal with language and background to language teaching and learning; lesson planning and use of resources for language teaching; and managing the teaching and learning process (See Appendix 2). The test is described as a means to "increase teachers' confidence and enhance job prospects by focusing on the core teaching knowledge needed by teachers of primary, secondary or adult learners, anywhere in the world" or by people interested in entering the teaching profession (University of Cambridge). The University of Cambridge web page describes the test as "ideal for all teachers, whatever their background and teaching experience".

Candidates interested in taking the TKT may purchase the TKT materials package that contains a textbook designed to provide self-study opportunities and explanation of terms, and an optional test preparation program that enables teachers to move to higher teaching qualifications (University of Cambridge). The test preparation includes a handbook and a glossary booklet that presents the main concepts included in the exam.

Although there is not a clear indication that the TKT is officially recommended or promoted by the Ministry of Education, there is a growing demand for this certification. EFL teachers from private and public schools are aware of the fact that educational authorities require it as part of the teachers' recommended qualifications, mainly in private schools and English language institutes (González, 2008b). Likewise, there is a growing offer from various educational institutions such as universities and language centers, additional to the British Council, to prepare teachers to successfully pass the TKT and obtain the certification. As the test requires at least a B1 level of the CEFR in English or PET, IELTS band score of 4, there are also English preparation courses to complement the teachers' preparation.

Usma (2009:133) analyzes the National Program of Bilingualism as a reflection of global movements of the connection of education to notions such as

"development, competitiveness, human capital, and knowledge economy". As a consequence of this conception of education as a globalized phenomenon, the government adopted international models of professional development "which tested future teachers' professional competence based on normative and foreign models of what school teachers need to know and need to be able to do" (2009:130).

6. ALTERNATIVE AND ADDITIONAL CERTIFICATIONS FOR COLOMBIAN EFL TEACHERS

A closer look at the use of ICELT and the TKT in Colombia allows us to conclude that they operate as alternative certifications and as additional certifications for EFL teachers. In some cases, they are preferred to a Bachelor's degree in ELT obtained in Colombia. In other cases, they are required as a supplementary confirmation and validation of the professional knowledge acquired at a local university. This tendency of demanding that teachers obtain teaching certification through a competitive examination is growing globally. The completion of the teacher education component proposed traditionally by universities is not sufficient in itself in an increasing number of countries as documented by Libman (in press).

Regarding alternative certifications, Zeichner (2006) also states that they are supported by national policies; can provide fast solutions for teachers; defend accountability and high-stake standards; use tests to demonstrate competences; promote test preparation and material packages use; and are related to profitable businesses.

The promotion of alternative certifications in teacher's professional development urges for the adoption of standards in teacher knowledge. Both ICELT and TKT state the knowledge teachers require and prepare them to acquire it through the use of certain materials. In the case of the TKT, teachers study and memorize some concepts to succeed in the test as if teaching could be defined as a limited number of items applied universally. This standardization of knowledge may bring consequences such as the encouragement of teaching to the test (Shohamy, 2001). One may see that the urge to teach to the test

moved from the assessment of students' language skills to the assessment of teachers' professional knowledge and competences.

Alternative teacher certifications or licensing are new means to prepare teachers without the requirement of traditional teacher preparation work in teacher colleges or universities. These alternative certification programs are increasing in number in the United States as they represent a solution to face the shortage and attrition of qualified teachers in critical content areas in urban schools where the population is composed mainly of minority and disadvantaged students and attract professionals from other disciplines into teaching (Salyer, 2003; Wayman et al., 2003; Malow-Iroff et al., 2007). Malow-Iroff et al. (2007) justify the spread of alternative teacher certifications saying that "in general, teacher turnover, whether alternatively certified or traditionally certified, creates a continuing need for alternative certification programs to recruit and staff the most difficult schools" (p. 272).

Zeichner (2006) says that alternative certifications challenge the role and expertise of university-based teacher education programs because they prepare teachers in relatively little time providing them with the expertise required to solve diverse school problems. As in many other countries, the debate on these alternative certifications is taking place in Colombia.

Alternative certifications include exams that assess the teachers' competences. These examinations have been the center of academic debates in favor of and against them. Libman (in press) presents four main arguments that support teacher licensing examinations: One, that they are based on standards that emphasize the essential goals, success, and quality assurance in teaching; two, that they select the best candidates and raise the status of the profession; three, that they become motivational to teachers and determine the outputs and designated objectives; and four, that they are based on standards that create a common language and bring a consensus assuring quality. On the other hand, the author presents three arguments against licensing examinations: One, the search for efficiency and fee competition of the academic market as a clear sign of the marketization of education; two, the public demands of accountability and the difficulty to validly assess teachers' performance; and

three, the discourse on teachers' competence distracts attention from the need to improve the school system as a whole.

The growing demand of English teachers in Colombia is not fulfilled by the graduates from university teacher education programs causing the shortage of qualified teachers in all the educational levels. The deficiency of English teachers is often solved in public elementary schools with the presence of home teachers that must teach all the subjects, including English, even if they do not possess the training to do so. Cadavid et al. (2004) reports that the majority of elementary school teachers in Medellín does not have a university degree in language teaching and therefore, do not possess the linguistic and pedagogical training to teach the language. This is not a condition restricted to Medellín. The whole country is experiencing the lack of trained teachers to provide children with English even at a basic level. High school public education has more trained teachers to teach English, but this resource is more likely to exist in urban settings. Private schools experience the teachers' shortage in a less striking way because they can attract teachers more easily than public schools. Their salaries are often better and teaching is less stressful. Private schools and language centers also solve the problem of English teachers' shortage by hiring the best graduates from teacher universities, professionals from other disciplines, and native speakers that hold international certifications such as the ICELT and the TKT. These two certifications are often seen as a favorable condition because they bring international prestige and quality to schools. Currently, many private schools advertise their teachers' certifications as a way to attract future students.

Within the framework of the NPB, the promotion of the desirable levels of English proficiency for students and teachers raises the question of whether university-based teacher education programs actually prepare the teachers required to attain the standards sought for the country. Alternative and additional certifications such as the ICELT and the TKT are seen as an opportunity to achieve those language standards through the use of appropriate methodologies that have been proven to work internationally. According to Libman (in press), licensing and certification systems "generally exist where the graduates of training programs are considered problematic as far as quality is concerned" (in press, p.3). In the case of Colombia, some educational authorities and school principals believe that

the level of English proficiency and the methodology used by teachers graduating from local universities may not have the desired quality. For that reason, the endorsement of an international organization like the British Council assures the attainment of that proficiency. This assumption has its origin in the popular belief that English and its methodologies of teaching belong to the "real owners" of the language, the native speakers, and more precisely, the British.

Although Colombian universities have the necessary academic experience and substantial professional knowledge to provide in-service programs for EFL teachers, they do not seem to be enough for certain decision makers in cities or states. In many cases, universities must show compliance with the national policy of bilingualism to have access to funding obtained from selling academic services to local governments or private schools (González, 2008a). In my experience as a teacher educator and administrator in a public research university, I have experienced the rejections of academic proposals from local educational authorities because we do not design programs that guarantee the achievement of the goals set by the NPB. The submission to the mandates of governments regarding content taught or materials used is certainly a way to be part of the global tendencies of marketization of higher education and the loss of autonomy and decision making (Giroux, 2001), but it generates profits in the educational field.

The professional development models promoted by Bilingual Colombia respond to what Cochran-Smith (2001) calls outcomes, long term or general impacts on teacher education. In Colombia, like in many countries, the government seeks to obtain outcomes such as teacher candidates' scores on high stakes teacher tests, the professional performances of teacher candidates, and particularly, their ability to influence student learning. Cochran-Smith (2001) argues that the "[c]onstructions of outcomes that are embedded within market approaches to education reform legitimize the dominance of 'private goods' and undermine the view that public education is an enterprise for the public good in a democratic society." In our case, it is through the participation of private businesses such as the British Council and Cambridge University Press that the professional development of Colombian teachers is guaranteed (Usma, 2009), not through the academic agendas constructed by public universities.

7. CRITICAL ISSUES IN THESE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES

The models of professional development such as the ICELT and the TKT represent critical issues that deserve our attention and reaction as teacher educators. I will argue that the risks of standardization, exclusion, inequality and businessification are evident and will definitely have a negative impact on the quality of the ELT profession in Colombia. Although it is quite difficult to separate conceptually these issues, I will try to describe them individually in their relationship to EFL teachers.

7.1. Standardization

The ICELT and the TKT promote the standardization of teachers' English teaching, English learning and professional development aligned to the national policy of standards for English teaching. Standardization is defended as the adoption of internationally validated models that are adequate for all contexts. This belief of a panacea for English teaching imported from unrealistic settings through academic colonial discourses (González, 2007) goes against the principle of particularity proposed in post-method pedagogies (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). The dangers of homogeneous discourses in teacher education and professional development programs are portrayed clearly in the benefits of the TKT (Cambridge University Press). This test is "adequate for all kinds of teachers, regardless of their origin and teaching experience". The web page of the University of Cambridge presents the advantages for institutions whose teachers take the TKT. I highlight the following:

- "Teachers speak **the same language** about language teaching
- Count on an internationally certified tool to **standardize the recruiting processes and professional requirements.**
- The results of the TKT are **valid and precise indicators** of the basic knowledge to teach English.
- Institutional prestige for parents, teachers, owners, and the general public counting on teachers that hold an internationally valid certification.
- It generates **value, credibility and quality** to the teacher training courses.

- It counts on the support of a wide variety of materials provided by the British Council and ESOL Cambridge.

Anagnostopoulos (2007) says that in the United States the rhetoric of equity is linked to accountability "arguing that standardization and testing will raise school achievement among the racial minority and low-income students who attend urban schools by focusing teachers' work on clearly defined and testing learning standards" (2007, p. 121).

Under this apparently beneficial standardization of teachers' professional development that may improve the university-based teacher education, one can see an evident rejection of teachers as knowledge producers and the ratification of their status as knowledge consumers. Standardized knowledge is the result of the defense of colonial and centralized discourses that disregard peripheral and local knowledge (See Canagarajah, 2005).

7.2. Exclusion

Bilingual Colombia has made public the idea that learning English is not only possible but easy because the policy has a democratic spirit. The same idea applies to EFL teachers in the plethora of professional development options available through the NPB. Nevertheless, the reality of EFL teachers unveils an opposite side, one of exclusion. As stated below, the high prices and limited access to professional development programs is not beneficial for all EFL teachers. The "democratic" policy of Bilingual Colombia is really an example of exclusion for public school teachers and those who work as hourly-paid instructors. Private school teachers and professionals interested in switching careers may access the academic credentials promoted by the policy. Fattah (2002) says that in the United States there are higher probabilities for working class and minority children to have classes with uncertified teachers. This reality is quite common in Colombia in rural and low-income areas where the majority of English teachers do not have a university degree. The lack of teachers having access to in-service programs will be more striking because the certifications lauded by the language policy makers are not easily available to teachers located outside big urban cities. In many cases, the professional development opportunities are restricted to publishers' training

sessions and ELT congresses in major cities, but the impact on EFL teachers' teaching is not substantial or really pertinent (González, 2003).

7.3. Inequality

The implementation of a language policy orchestrated by the Ministry of Education and the British Council is the legitimization of more inequality and exclusion of EFL teachers in the country. Tightly related to practices of exclusion, these professional development alternatives give EFL teachers another professional problem: Being labeled as "certified" or "uncertified", or in other words, making them "winners" or "losers" in this academic field (González, 2008b). Factors such as teachers' income, proximity to major cities, language proficiency required and access to professional materials cause unequal opportunities of professional development for Colombian teachers. In a broader sense, the bilingual policy for Colombia maintains unequal relations of power because local knowledge, local scholars, local publications, and local expertise are seen as less valuable in comparison with foreign knowledge, foreign scholars, foreign publications, and foreign expertise in the design and implementation of *Colombia Bilingüe* as a language education policy (Canagarajah, 2005; González, 2007).

7.4. Businessification

The professional development of teachers can not be separated from the global tendencies in education policies (Tatto, 2005). As a consequence, we experience the need to make education a profitable business. A quick look at the possibilities of access to certifications such as the ICELT and the TKT shows that only high-income EFL teachers may benefit from the prestige and value of the training. At the time I wrote this paper, I consulted various web pages that provided information about obtaining the TKT or the ICELT. These were the average prices in Colombia for these certifications:

TKT preparation course	$ 1'200.000 (US $ 667)
TKT exam	$ 350.000 (US $ 195)
ICELT training course	$ 4'070.000 (US $ 2,261)

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The average salary of a public school teacher is $800.000 Colombian pesos a month (US $ 445). A simple analysis will show that achieving these international certifications is unaffordable for many public school teachers. Even if employers paid half of the price of the course, as many private schools do, it would not allow the teachers to afford it. Usma (2009:136) analyzes the prices of the IELTS, an English test offered by the British Council and highlights the fact that

> in a country where the minimum salary for 2008 equaled $ 461, 500 [Colombian pesos, US $210], a person would require a full month to pay for this test, two months to pay for a course, and at least half a month to pay for the preparation materials and books.

It is easier for countries such as Colombia to set aside more financial resources to the advisory of the British Council, an international educational market empire, than to support research initiatives from local universities and scholars in the construction of language policies for bilingualism. The money paid for the advisory work in the National Program of Bilingualism is not the only huge price Colombian citizens pay. To support the plan, the British publishing industry provides teachers with the required materials for certification and the test preparation kits. The British testing market presents a full range of possibilities for showing accountability and performance in linguistic and pedagogical matters involved in the plan, and of course, they make a profitable business from the education and professional development of English teachers.

The language educational policies issued in Colombia, as in many other countries, respond to the needs of globalization, neoliberalism, and marketization of education (Giroux, 2001; Hill, 2006; Usma, 2009). The "Educational Revolution" in Colombia promotes the acquisition of labor competences through vocational cycles and technical colleges, making the access to higher education more difficult for people.

There is another imminent risk of businessification of the professional development of EFL teachers in the sense that university-based teacher education programs are also part of the budgetary cuts in education and the constant threat of privatization found globally (Hill, 2006; Nelson & Jones, 2007). The need to obtain funding has moved universities to adjust to the educational language

policy promoted by the Ministry of Education including the ICELT or the TKT, or some variations of these certifications, as part of their continuing education portfolio.

8. IS IT POSSIBLE TO RESIST THE INFLUENCE OF THE POLICY?

Even if the majority of Colombian teachers and teacher educators have been exposed to the theories of critical pedagogy, we are far from having a critical view of the national language policy. Pedagogy is a moral and political practice that requires an individual position. The danger of depoliticizing pedagogy by appealing to scientific objectivity may have serious consequences for education in a country. Educators need to become involved in questioning how and what they teach. Pedagogy is a critical and political practice. Pedagogy is not a commodity applied in any context. It needs to be situated and sensitive to principles of particularity, possibility and practicality (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, 2003). The need to respond to the particular needs of each context should be a commitment for teachers. As a consequence of this view of education as political action, Giroux (2001, p. 99) calls the educators' attention to "cast a critical eye on those forms of knowledge and social relations that define themselves through a conceptual purity and political innocence that clouds not only how they come into being but also ignores that the alleged neutrality on which they stand is already grounded in ethico-political choices."

The idea of selling competitiveness as a noble intention for the population represents a way to complement the World Bank Policies to maintain the inequality and classification of citizens. The educational revolution, instead of being an advancement in democratizing education, is a way to legitimate discrimination and inequality. McClaren et al (2004) citing Hill (2002) suggest that the bussinesification of education has had consequences on teacher education practices in capitalist countries producing sets of standards for students teachers and teachers, emphasizing technical and managerial skills rather than the critical reflection on educational processes and structures and their effects on reproducing capitalist models of economy, society and politics. Hall (2000, p. 3) states that even if the globalization of ELT is "often perceived

as an inevitable, unproblematic, and 'natural' development which contributes to people's lives and helps develop international communication", it may also serve the purposes of maintaining "unequal core: periphery relations in the capitalist world-economy, and of suppressing diversity of language and thought in the world".

Finally, it is important to highlight the need for political action and the search for better communication strategies to access equal participation of teachers, teacher educators and policy makers in decision making regarding ELT in Colombia (González, 2007). More analyses are coming from local scholars as the multiple sides of the NPB are currently part of the research of Colombian teacher educators (Ayala & Alvarez, 2005); Cárdenas, 2006; Cely, 2007; González, 2007; Guerrero, 2008; Hernández, 2007; Mejía, 2006 a,b; Sánchez & Obando, 2008; Usma, 2009). That critical academic production will definitely have an impact on the quality and transformation of ELT in the country. Even if these voices do not agree on the views of the NPB, we will take responsibility for the struggle to construct a pluralistic view of the professional development of English teachers.

9. CONCLUSIONS

In this paper I have argued that the NPB as a language education policy affects the professional development of EFL teachers in various ways through the implementation of standards, high stakes testing and accountability outcomes. I based my analysis on the promotion of the ICELT and the TKT as two main instruments of the international tendencies in education reforms and colonial academic discourses. I claimed that these professional development options also represent forms of alternative and additional certifications for Colombian teachers and that their use raises questions about the standardization, exclusion, inequality and businessification of the ELT profession. These issues represent serious problems in the professional lives of teachers as they represent a major detriment in the quality of education of the country. Finally, I welcomed the various analyses done in the country by Colombian scholars in an attempt to construct a pluralistic view of the promotion of English teaching.

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APPENDIX 1

http://www.cambridgeesol.org/exams/teaching-awards/icelt.html).

The Ministry of Education adopted this teacher development model because it was internationally proven and supported by the academic tradition and prestige of the British Council (Hernández, 2007).

According to the British Council web page, the ICELT "gives you insight into the principles of effective teaching and a range of practical skills for teaching English in your teaching context. You will:

• have hands-on teaching practice
• observe experienced teachers in the classroom
• complete four practical written assignments and four language tasks".

Lasting around 120 hours, this in-service model is composed of face to face sessions with a tutor and distance training support. It contains two modules that include three main components: Language for teachers, teaching and methodology that the candidate must pass in the evaluation proposed by Cambridge ESOL. The three modules address seven units of learning: There are seven units of learning:

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- Language knowledge and awareness
- The background to teaching and learning English
- Resources and materials
- Planning and management of teaching and learning
- Evaluation, monitoring and assessment
- Professional development
- Language for teachers.

APPENDIX 2

http://www.cambridgeesol.org/exams/teaching-awards/tkt.html

What is TKT?

The Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT) is a test from Cambridge ESOL about teaching English to speakers of other languages. It aims to increase teachers' confidence and enhance job prospects by focusing on the core teaching knowledge needed by teachers of primary, secondary or adult learners, anywhere in the world. This flexible and accessible award will help you to understand:

- different methodologies for teaching
- the 'language of teaching'
- the ways in which resources can be used
- the key aspects of lesson planning
- classroom management methods for different needs.

After taking TKT, teachers who want to develop their knowledge further can progress to Cambridge ESOL's well-established Teaching Awards, such as ICELT and CELTA.

What does TKT involve?

Most teachers are likely to follow a preparation course before taking the test but you can also prepare yourself through your own reading and study, if you prefer.

TKT has three core modules. These can be taken together in one exam session or separately, in any order, over three sessions. Each module consists of a test of 80 objective questions, lasting 80 minutes, which require you to select the correct answer and mark this on a computerised answer sheet.

Module 1 — Language and background to language learning and teaching:

• describing language and language skills
• background to language learning
• background to language teaching.

Module 2 — Planning lessons and use of resources for language teaching:

• planning and preparing a lesson or sequence of lessons
• selection and use of resources and materials.

Module 3 — Managing the teaching and learning process:

• teachers' and learners' language in the classroom
• classroom management.

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