Abstract

The Colombian National Bilingual Education Program is intended to improve the learning of English as a foreign language at the various levels of schooling. Yet, very few systematic studies have been done within schools to reveal their true circumstances with respect to that program. Our study, conducted in the city of Santiago de Cali, used surveys, interviews and an international test to ascertain what academic directors have done from an administrative standpoint and to identify the level of teachers’ proficiency in English, among other aspects designed to reveal the profile of the faculty involved in the program. The sample was comprised of 56 schools that represent the 22 municipal districts into which the city is divided administratively. They are located in low and middle-income neighborhoods. The management of resources and human talent was found to be insufficient to support the processes devised to implement this educational policy. Furthermore, the levels of language proficiency on the part of the teachers generally fall short of the GDP targets, which call for professionally active teachers to have a vantage or upper intermediate level of proficiency (B2) by 2019, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Moreover, there is a gap between English teaching in private and public schools, which goes against the spirit of the policy on education. These findings point to the need for an urgent review of the conditions in which a foreign language is taught, so action for improvement can be taken if the goal is for students to become more proficient in English.

Keywords

Educational policy, language policy, bilingualism, private education, public education, education.