Bilingual education policy in the United States*

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Approximately 4.5 million school-age children in the United States speak a language other than English at home, about two-thirds of them speaking Spanish.[1] Large numbers also come from Asian countries, and there are concentrations of American Indian, German, Italian, French, and central European children in certain areas of the country.

It is estimated that about 700,000 of these children—500,000 from Spanish-language backgrounds—do not speak English well, or not at all.[2] The involvement of the federal government in bilingual education in the United States began as a response to the educational problems faced by these children, to issues raised by the civil rights movement, and to the interest of ethnic groups in maintaining their language and culture. In general, the federal role grew out of the social programmes of the 1960s.[3] Although much has changed in the last twenty years, one clear fact remains: many children whose mother tongue is not English come from low socio-economic backgrounds and continue to have considerable difficulty in school. More than 30 per cent of students from Spanish-speaking homes are two years behind their age group by the end of high school, and about 45 per cent of the Spanish-speaking population between 14 and 25 years have not completed high school.[4]

In view of the varied premises underlying federal intervention and the economic implications of federal policies relating to the process of instruction and the selection of teachers and administrators in areas with large numbers of language-minority students, it is not surprising that federal policy in this area is controversial. Federal decisions greatly affect the autonomy of local school districts, educational and funding priorities, and hiring practices. For example, in the case of hiring practices, districts must decide whether teachers are selected primarily from the language-minority community or from the community at large.

Controversy about education programmes for language-minority children centres primarily on goals and appropriate strategies for achieving these goals. Some have argued that programmes should focus on English-language instruction so that children might compete more effectively for education and employment in an English-speaking society. Others believe that instructing

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language-minority children in English puts too many burdens on them and, furthermore, discourages the preservation of native language and culture. Still others believe that existing bilingual-bicultural programmes in the United States are so poorly designed or funded that they have little impact on language maintenance or cultural identity—assuming these goals to be appropriate for federal policy.[5] Federal policy, therefore, reflects a compromise between a strong social-assimilation policy and one that encourages the maintenance of children's native language and culture.

This paper considers the legal background of federal policy and the relevance of research findings to public policy in this highly politicized area. Although a number of political, social and economic factors are relevant to an evaluation of bilingual education, this article focuses on two topics: (a) federal policy in bilingual education since 1968; and (b) results of research which compares the effectiveness of various types of educational programmes for language-minority children.

Federal policy in bilingual education

State and local governments in the United States have the primary responsibility for providing funds and for setting educational policy for public elementary and secondary schools. Less than 10 per cent of educational funding comes from the federal government. The federal funds generally are intended to increase equality of educational opportunity by providing additional resources for areas of the country and for population groups with special needs. They respond to the fact that certain states and school districts have higher than average populations of low-income families and that certain children, either because of poverty, low achievement, limited proficiency in English, or physical and mental handicaps, require special educational services. The federal funds are used to provide supplementary educational programmes for these children over and above the conventional school curriculum. In addition to funding special educational programmes, the federal government also influences certain aspects of education at the local level by establishing requirements which, though not supported by federal funds, control the use of state and local funds. These requirements, like federally funded programmes, generally deal with matters of educational equity.[6]

The federal government has used both types of mechanisms—funds and requirements—to influence programmes for children with limited English. Congressional legislation, specifically the 1978 Amendments to Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965,[7] provides authority for federally funded bilingual education programmes; other federal requirements for the education of language-minority children are based on the 1974 Supreme Court decision in *Lau* v. *Nichols*.[8]

THE BILINGUAL EDUCATION ACT

The Title VII legislation, or the Bilingual Education Act, was first enacted by Congress in 1968.[9] It was one of several major pieces of education legislation passed by Congress during the 1960s and 1970s designed to serve students with special educational needs. Title VII provides funds to school districts to develop programmes for language-minority students. These programme funds have increased over the years from $7.5 million in fiscal year 1969 to $157.5 million in fiscal year 1981. The budget level for fiscal years 1982 and 1983 was $134.4 million—down from the 1981 appropriation.

The purpose of Title VII was to fund bilingual education programmes. Its educational philosophy encourages the use of 'bilingual educational practices, techniques, and methods'.[10] Children were to be taught both in the native language and in English until they were proficient in English.

A recent survey shows that Title VII projects throughout the United States are highly varied, reflecting differences in state policies and in

language groups, resources and preferences in local communities. The majority of bilingual projects serve Spanish-speaking students, although there have been recent increases in numbers of projects serving Asian and American Indian children. Typical bilingual education classrooms include both language-minority children and children whose native language is English, with students generally working below both national and local academic norms. Most Title VII projects use both English and the native language but place the major emphasis on English; there are, however, a substantial number of projects that use both languages to teach all subjects. The relative emphasis on English and the native language differs for different population groups: the native language usually is used to teach beginning reading in programmes for Spanish-speaking children, while English is the more likely choice for other language groups.[11]

In March 1983, the Secretary of Education, Terrell H. Bell, proposed to Congress amendments to the Bilingual Education Act designed to give school districts more flexibility in the choice of instructional approach.[12] Under the proposed amendments, instruction in the child's mother tongue would no longer be required. School districts could

> select the approach that they consider best for their limited English proficient children, as long as they provide evidence in their application that the method selected is the most desirable for the children to be served.[13]

In proposing these amendments, the Education Department noted that

> research studies in bilingual education seem to indicate that no single approach to serving limited English-proficient children is applicable in all circumstances. Different approaches, such as structured immersion or using English as a second language, work for some children. Certain child and classroom factors may make the required use of the native language instruction infeasible. For example, children whose proficiency in English is superior to their proficiency in their native language might not benefit from an emphasis on the native language. In districts with multiple language groups or where qualified teachers are unavailable (such as for uncommon languages), reliance on the native language may not be feasible.[14]

The proposed amendments are currently under consideration by Congress.

SUPREME COURT DECISION IN LAU V. NICHOLS

In 1980, between 160,000 and 200,000 language-minority children, most in the lower elementary grades, were served by the Title VII programme.[15] The majority of language-minority children in the United States depend on state and local funds for special language services. However, the federal government has developed certain requirements, based on the Supreme Court decision in *Lau* v. *Nichols*, which define the responsibilities of local jurisdictions in providing these services.

The *Lau* decision was based on Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which states:

> No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.[16]

The Supreme Court concluded that Chinese-American, non-English speaking students were denied equal educational opportunity under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act when instructed in English, a language they did not understand. The Court ordered that schools must 'rectify the language deficiency', but did not specify how that should be accomplished. Indeed, the Court recognized that there were several alternatives: 'Teaching English to the students of Chinese ancestry who do not speak the language is one choice. Giving instructions to this group in Chinese is another. There may be others.'[17]

In 1973 a task force appointed by the then Commissioner of Education T. H. Bell, now Secretary of Education, issued a report which specified procedures for eliminating the educational deficiencies cited by *Lau* v. *Nichols*.[18] The task force recommendations, known as the

Lau Remedies, went well beyond a requirement that school districts develop language programmes to serve non-English-speaking students; they prescribed specific guidelines about the content of these programmes and how they should be designed and implemented. The remedies stated that students should be taught in their native language—only one of the possible alternatives noted by the Supreme Court. They also proposed that students should receive instruction about their indigenous culture, an issue not addressed by the Court.

The remedies also provided direction on a number of other issues, including the identification of students' primary or home language, curriculum design, teacher selection and training, and evaluation. For example, school districts were required to determine the language most often spoken in students' homes as well as to observe the language spoken by students between classes and in other informal school settings. After students were identified, districts had to diagnose their needs and assess 'the responsiveness of students to different types of cognitive learning styles and incentive motivational styles—e.g., competitive *v.* cooperative learning patterns'.[19]

It is not surprising that many school districts considered the detailed observational, diagnostic and programmatic requirements of the Lau Remedies unworkable. As an alternative, in 1980, the former Secretary of Education, Shirley A. Hufstedler, proposed regulations intended to give more easily implemented guidance to educators.[20] The proposed regulations set forth procedures for assessing proficiency in English and for providing services. As in the Lau Remedies, the regulations required that students be taught in both languages in required subjects while simultaneously learning English. School districts believed that the proposed regulations, if implemented, would be burdensome and very costly, although some argued that the regulations were considerably less intrusive than the Lau Remedies.[21] In any case, both the Lau Remedies and the 1980 proposed regulations made programme design requirements that went well beyond the Supreme Court ruling. The original decision stated that a school district receiving federal funds 'must take affirmative steps to rectify the language deficiency in order to open its instructional programme to [language-minority] students'.[22]

Shortly after his appointment by President Reagan in 1981, the Secretary of Education, T. H. Bell, withdrew the proposed regulations issued by the former secretary, Shirley Hufstedler, and announced that school districts would be given more flexibility on how best to educate language-minority students.[23] Under current policy, 'existing Lau plans are enforced as required by law, but school districts can alter or amend existing plans'.[24] This means that school districts are not required to use a particular educational approach; a school district plan is considered acceptable if it 'proves workable or seems likely to work in meeting the educational needs of language minority students'.[25]

Research findings

There is little controversy about the need to provide children with limited proficiency in English with special services to enable them to participate in the conventional school programme or about the federal government's responsibility under the Supreme Court's Lau decision to ensure that school districts provide appropriate services. There is disagreement, however, about how federal programmes should be designed and the specific instructional approaches that should or should not be required.

The main bone of contention is whether emphasis should be placed on English-language instruction or on bilingual/bicultural education. Deciding whether the goal of federal education programmes should be to teach children their native language and culture or to encourage assimilation is a political and value judgement, not a research question. However, research can help to determine whether or not a bilingual/bicultural approach is the most effective way to teach children English and other academic skills. Studies have been conducted to assess the effects

of various instructional models on student achievement as well as on other policy considerations, such as student integration, cost and feasibility, and the extent to which needy children are served. This paper does not address other issues, some of which have evoked great controversy, for example, whether bilingual education programmes will or should assist in the preservation of native languages or cultures.[26]

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

There is an extensive international literature which compares the effectiveness of various types of educational programmes for language-minority children. One of the most comprehensive overviews is presented by Christina Bratt Paulston, who concludes that 'at the world level, the field of research on bilingual education is characterized by disparate findings and inconclusive results'.[27] The studies compare programmes where instruction is given in both the child's mother tongue and the second language, initially in the mother tongue until the child is fully functional in the second language, and primarily in the second language. The studies evaluate the effect of the programmes on language and reading skills, achievement in other subjects, such as mathematics, science and social studies, and general cognitive development. Paulston concludes that 'a study can be found to support virtually every possible opinion'.[28]

This conclusion is supported by a number of other researchers who have analysed the results of international studies and concluded that it is not possible to select an optimum educational approach for all situations.[29] A World Bank review of selected international case studies found that

> there is not one answer to the question of what language to use for primary school, but several answers, depending on the characteristics of the child, of the parents and the local community, and of the wider community.[30]

Similar inconclusive results were reported in 1978 in the American Institutes for Research (AIR) national evaluation of Title VII programmes for the 1975/76 academic year.[31] As of autumn 1975, AIR evaluated all Title VII Spanish–English projects in either their fourth or fifth year of funding. The study compared students enrolled in Title VII projects with a control group of students not enrolled in these projects. In general, across grades, Title-VII students performed slightly lower in English-language arts than did non-Title-VII students and at about the same level as the non-Title-VII students in mathematics. Relative to national norms, Title-VII Hispanic students scored at about the twentieth percentile in English reading and at the thirtieth percentile in mathematics.

Although unusually large achievement gains were reported in certain classrooms in the AIR evaluation, these gains were found in both Title-VII and non-Title-VII classrooms. There was also evidence that students in some bilingual classes did not do as well as language-minority students in more traditional courses. Critics of the AIR evaluation have argued that the research unfairly estimated the potential value of transitional bilingual education: Title-VII and non-Title-VII students and programmes may not have been comparable; students may not have participated in bilingual programmes for a long enough time to determine any positive effects; and there were problems with programme implementation, teacher training and the availability of appropriate curricula.[32] Certainly, these problems existed. The achievement results of Title VII programmes which were evaluated in their fourth or fifth year of operation, however, do not show that transitional bilingual education programmes—as implemented by school districts—were better or appreciably worse than conventional school programmes.

These results are not surprising when one considers the large number of variables that affect comparisons of this type.[33] Several important societal factors—values with respect to assimilation and cultural diversity, the language

of the surrounding community, and the status of language-minority groups in the country—affect the outcomes. Paulston argues that the instructional model selected is a result of these societal factors rather than the cause of children's academic achievement and that these factors are considerably more important in determining children's achievement than is the particular instructional approach used.[34]

In addition, a number of other variables affecting student achievement are difficult to control for in comparisons of different programme models. Students' socio-economic status, the length of time they have lived in the United States, their general language skills and their proficiency in various subjects clearly interact with the effects of alternative instructional models. Moreover, the models as actually implemented may be more alike than their labels imply. For instance, bilingual components are typically included even in programmes that stress English-language instruction, while almost every bilingual programme uses some English-as-a-second-language techniques.

Finally, programme characteristics generally associated with programme quality, such as time on task, clear instructional objectives, strong leadership by the school principal and well-trained teachers, clearly play a more important role in student achievement than does the initial language of instruction. As Paulston observes: 'It should be reassuring to educators that children do better in good programs.'[35]

These findings are consistent with results in other fields of education.[36] Few studies show one theoretical teaching technique to be clearly superior to another. All of this suggests that there is no educational basis for selecting an optimum instructional model for a country as large and diverse as the United States.

Analyses of different educational models, however, suggest that it may be possible to identify factors in certain communities which would favour one educational approach over another. For example, researchers have compared international studies that have produced apparently contradictory results—some favouring learning initial reading in the native language, others in the second language.[37] From these and similar studies, they have noted characteristics associated with students, programmes and communities which may account for the success of one or another educational approach in particular situations.

Studies which found initial learning in the second language to be effective include the following:

The St Lambert study in Canada.[38] The research evaluated an immersion programme for English-speaking Canadian children who were taught exclusively in French in kindergarten and first grade, and primarily in French from grades 2 to 4, except for one hour of English-language arts instruction each day. At the end of the fourth grade, the children read as well in English as the English control group. They also performed extremely well in French when compared with French-Canadian children in a normal French programme.

The Redwood City study in California.[39] The research examined a bilingual programme for Mexican-American children in which reading and other subjects, such as mathematics, science and social studies, were introduced in both Spanish and English. The children were compared with a control group taught exclusively in English, sometimes with English-as-a-second-language instruction. Results indicated that the bilingual group scored better in Spanish-language skills while the control group scored better in English-language skills. Results for mathematics were mixed.

The Rizal study in the Philippines.[40] Children in Tagolog-speaking areas were instructed in the local vernacular in the early grades. Results indicated that the grades at which English reading was introduced and the sequencing of vernacular and English reading made no difference in English reading achievement. However, English proficiency was directly related to the number of years English had been used has the medium of instruction. The group taught exclusively in English did best in all content areas.

Study of bilingual programmes in New York.[41] Hispanic students in bilingual programmes and in traditional English-language programmes were compared on several language measures. Students in the traditional programmes scored better in English, although their Spanish performance was lower.

Study of Mexican-American children in Texas.[42] Comparisons of children in bilingual and traditional educational programmes showed that students in the traditional programmes scored higher in reading comprehension, language skills and vocabulary at the end of grade 6. At the end of grade 7, students educated in traditional classrooms scored higher in language skills; the groups were equal on two other reading measures.

Study of Mexican-American children in California.[43] Results showed that Mexican-American children educated in regular programmes read better than children in bilingual programmes. There was no significant difference in arithmetic achievement.

Other studies favoured initial learning in the native language:

The Chiapas study in Mexico.[44] Indian children who learned to read in the vernacular and then in Spanish scored higher on tests of Spanish reading comprehension after third grade than those who had been taught in Spanish only.

The Rock Point Indian School in Arizona.[45] Indian children who received bilingual instruction with English reading introduced in grade two were compared with children given English-as-a-second-language instruction and then taught in English for all subjects. The children in the bilingual school did better than the controls in both English reading and in mathematics.

Studies of Finnish migrant children in Sweden.[46] Two studies compared the effects of programmes taught only in Swedish with programmes taught in both Finnish and Swedish. Finnish achievement was best for students who had some instruction in Finnish, whereas Swedish achievement was lowest for those who had no instruction in Finnish. The results of the second study also favoured bilingual instruction. Children who were taught primarily in Finnish in grades 1 to 3 and in Swedish in grades 4 to 6 achieved well in both Finnish and Swedish.

Study of migrant children.[47] Spanish-speaking migrant students who participated in a programme of bilingual individualized instruction performed better in English and Spanish reading and in mathematics than a comparison group. Length of attendance was positively related to student performance.

Study of Spanish-speaking children in Wisconsin.[48] Students participating in bilingual education programmes generally scored higher in both English and Spanish verbal measures than students in English monolingual programmes.

Study of bilingual education programmes in Colorado.[49] An evaluation of bilingual education programme for Mexican American students in Colorado showed that these programmes were effective in improving students' English reading skills.

The inconsistent findings illustrated by these studies have led researchers to hypothesize that certain conditions may be related to the success of particular programme models. Programmes that teach initially in the second language may be more likely to succeed when: (a) children come from middle- or upper-class homes; (b) children's linguistic development in the native language is high; (c) the home language has high status in the community; (d) there is a strong incentive for the children to learn a second language; (e) there are positive expectations for student success; (f) there is strong community and parent support for the programme; (g) children remain in school past the first few grades; (h) programme quality is high and is specifically designed for children who are learning a second language.

Conversely, some observers suggest that initial learning in the native language might be more desirable, both academically and psychologically, for children who come from low-income families and who are not proficient in their mother tongue; in communities where the

home language has low status; for students likely to leave school in the early grades; and where teachers are not members of the same ethnic group as the students and may be insensitive to their values and traditions.[50]

Typically cited as evidence for these hypotheses are the Canadian immersion programmes, which teach using the second language, and programmes like those for Indian and for Finnish immigrant children which favour initial native-language instruction. The Canadian immersion programmes are considered effective for children from high socio-economic backgrounds, and the programmes for Indian and Finnish children thought to be more appropriate for children from low socio-economic backgrounds and with initially low levels of language development.

However, the distinction is not always clear. For instance, the Canadian immersion programmes were successfully replicated for low-ability children and for children from working-class families. Similarly, in some studies, low-income Mexican-American children, taught exclusively in English, performed better in English-language skills than children in bilingual programmes. Neither finding would have been predicted from the generalizations drawn above. However, these generalizations, if not taken too literally, can be helpful to communities considering alternative educational programmes for language-minority children. They certainly do not support one particular approach for the entire country.

Given that research results are ambiguous, it may be useful to determine whether particular educational models produce results other than achievement, such as increased self-concept or decreased absenteeism and drop-out rates, student integration, and greater economy and feasibility.

ATTITUDINAL AND BEHAVIOURAL RESULTS

Discussions about the educational benefits of different instructional approaches often refer to measures other than achievement scores —such as attitudes toward school, self-concept, retention in grade, absenteeism, and drop-out rates—as important reasons for advocating bilingual/bicultural programmes. José Cardenas, for example, noted:

> Though few studies document the success of bilingual education, there is an abundance of studies which adequately evaluate the effects of past immersion programs [i.e. conventional classroom programmes]. In such programs, anywhere from 50 percent to 100 percent of the language minorities dropped out of school prior to the completion of the 12th grade. . . . In Texas, the result of immersion programs produced such a high level of [grade] retentions that 86 percent of all Mexican-American children in that state had repeated at least one grade prior to the completion of the third grade.[51]

Cardenas also feared that such programmes might adversely affect children's psychological adjustment:

> In my opinion, and not contradicted by research findings, such immersion programs, although adequate for adults and for higher grade levels, produce too much of a psychological trauma in young children. Placement in a language immersion program today would constitute for me a fun activity, though I can still remember the horror of this experience when I was six years old.[52]

It is one thing to note real and distressing educational problems; it is quite another to trace their cause to a particular instructional model and to introduce as a solution an alternative model such as bilingual education. Studies in attitudinal and behavioural effects encounter the same problems as research on student achievement. Not unexpectedly, societal factors appear to be more important in determining students' attitudes and adjustment than does choice of instructional approach.[53] According to Norman Segalowitz, 'Many factors determine what the language chosen as medium of instruction will mean to the student—personality, home attitudes, community sentiments, political environment.'[54]

Moreover, very few attitudinal studies have adequate control groups, and there are added difficulties in measuring outcomes such as

students' psychological well-being.[55] No clear pattern emerges from the research. Some researchers have reported positive findings for students in bilingual programmes, where others have found negative effects or little difference in students' attitudes or behaviour.

Paulston concluded from a survey of several American studies that

> all of the researchers reported that bilingually-taught children showed self-concepts as positive as—and, more often, more positive than—monolingually-instructed pupils. This was true of minority group children as well as of Anglo children.[56]

Paulston noted that American Indian students attending a bilingual/bicultural school in Chicago had considerably lower drop-out rates than Indian students in Chicago public schools.[57] Joshua Fishman found positive results in school attendance, attitudes and self-concept for students in bilingual programmes in several studies conducted in the United States and Canada.[58]

The AIR study, however, found no difference in attitudes towards school and school-related activities between students in Title-VII and non-Title-VII classes.[59] Similarly, a study of a comprehensive bilingual/bicultural programme for Mexican-American students in Texas, specifically designed to increase student's psychological as well as cognitive development, found no difference between experimental and comparison students on a range of measures including attitudes, self-concept, motivation, social values, absenteeism, grade retention and drop-out rates.[60] Ricardo Chapa also found no difference in self-concept between children in a bilingual programme and a control group; Wendy Oxman found that students from bilingual schools scored significantly higher on tests of alienation than did those in a limited bilingual or a non-bilingual school;[61] and Ann Seligson reported that Mexican-American students in conventional programmes scored higher on tests of self-concept than students in bilingual programmes.[62]

The important point is that in most studies the ambiguities in research design, outcome measures, and in the results themselves, do not support generalizations from the research that has been conducted. In her review of attitudinal studies, cited above, Paulston noted:

> Two important factors must be considered in evaluating these conclusions. First of all, each researcher has a particular bias which influences his research design (e.g. in terms of his choice of experimental and control groups, independent and dependent variables, testing instruments and procedures, etc.). Whether it is due to faulty research design or merely an inadvertent omission in the dissertation, important background information (e.g. children's previous educational experience, parents' education, children's degree of bilingualism and sociolinguistic factors) frequently is not included. Secondly, the authors themselves admit that the favorable results of innovative educational programs, such as bilingual ones, may be nothing more than manifestations of the 'halo' or Hawthorne effect.[63]

STUDENT INTEGRATION

The 1970 Office of Civil Rights memorandum previously noted specifically advised school districts to avoid programmes that resulted in a 'permanent track' for language-minority students. Recent work by Peter Rossi has suggested that, for some school systems, Title VII may in fact have become another segregated track for Hispanic students. Districts may prefer to place students in these programmes instead of in conventional classrooms.[64] The AIR Title VII evaluation reported that, although 75 per cent of the students enrolled in the Title VII Spanish-English classes were Hispanic, fewer than a third of the students were there because of limited proficiency in English as judged by the classroom teacher.[65] Students appear to have been assigned to classes based on their home language or ethnic background rather than on their proficiency in English; many were already more fluent in English than in Spanish.

Some support for this hypothesis is also provided by Gary Orfield, who cites statistics showing that by 1974 Hispanic children were more likely to attend predominantly minority schools than were blacks.[66] Although segre-

gation of blacks has declined significantly during the 1970s, segregation of Hispanics has been increasing.[67] In 1976, for example, more than two-thirds of Hispanic students attended public schools in which at least half were minority students.[68] In a study of federal programmes, Jackie Kimbrough and Paul Hill also found that segregation was particularly pronounced in schools with large enrolments of Hispanic children.[69] Although the causal relationship between bilingual programmes and Hispanic segregation has not yet been fully researched, the 1978 Title VII Amendments recognized a potential problem:

> In order to prevent the segregation of children on the basis of national origin in programs assisted under this title, and in order to broaden the understanding of children about languages and cultural heritages other than their own, a program of bilingual instruction may include the participation of children whose language is English, but in no event shall the percentage of such children exceed 40 per centum.[70]

Advocates of bilingual/bicultural education, however, say that bilingual programmes have been more successful than traditional approaches for language-minority students. They refer to historical patterns of discrimination and harassment against language-minority children in which children received little or no help in the conventional school programme, were punished for speaking Spanish, or were assigned to classes for the mentally retarded. They believe that a trend away from bilingual education to English-as-a-second-language would simply revive these old patterns. Cardenas put it this way:

> Perhaps Hispanic minorities are so overwhelmingly in favor of bilingual education regardless of lack of evidence of its success because the experiences with past programs have been so negative that any alternative is a step in the right direction. If, as documented by the Texas Education Agency, the dropout rate of Mexican-American children in a South Texas school system is 90 percent, the parents cannot be blamed for strongly recommending an untested alternative.[71]

Further, he suggested that certain school districts have highly segregated bilingual education programmes because the districts themselves are highly segregated.

None the less, the objectives of bilingual education and school desegregation may be inconsistent in certain circumstances; in many school districts Spanish-speaking students must choose between segregated bilingual education or integration without bilingual education.[72] From a legal point of view, there currently is no clear Supreme Court statement on what approaches are permissible, and federal courts have handed down inconsistent decisions.[73] Clearly, further research is needed to assess the effects of different types of programmes for language-minority children on student integration and to identify programmatic options for educating language-minority children in desegregated settings.

COST AND FEASIBILITY

Bilingual programmes have practical implications for school districts beyond their effects on student achievement, attitudes and integration. There is at present no nationally representative information which describes the cost and practical implications of implementing different types of programmes for language-minority children, though there are studies of selected programmes. The Title VII classrooms in the AIR study, for example, received an average of $376 more per student when compared with classrooms in the control groups.[74] However, this figure reflects the comparison between students in bilingual and conventional programmes and does not indicate the comparative costs of different types of special services for language-minority children. A recently completed study of six school districts conducted by the Rand Corporation estimated that the added cost of special programmes for language-minority children ranged from $200 to $700 per student.[75] These estimates include instructional, administrative and staff development costs. The added costs depend on average teachers' salaries, the extent to which children are taught outside the normal classroom and

the extent to which aides are added to bilingual, self-contained classrooms. The study found no clear relationship between instructional methods—English-as-a-second-language or bilingual instruction—and cost.

In addition to fiscal considerations, there are practical problems in selecting and training teachers and designing appropriate curricula.[76] Because existing tests of language proficiency are of questionable value and reliability,[77] school districts also face difficult problems in establishing criteria for selecting and retaining students in programmes. Districts with multiple-language groups have more problems. Chicago, for example, must provide programmes not only for Spanish-speaking students, but for students from many other language backgrounds including Persian, Gujarati, Indic and Serbo-Croatian.[78] The difficulty of staffing these programmes is illustrated by a study conducted in New Mexico in 1976.[79] A random sample of 136 bilingual education teachers and aides, many of whom had done university work in bilingual education, was tested on a standard third-grade curriculum from Mexico. Only 13 of the 136 teachers could read and write Spanish at the third-grade level.

Implications for federal policy and research

The preceding review of legal and research issues has rather direct implications for federal policy in the United States. It points to several important findings indicating: (a) that there is no requirement under the Lau decision, nor is there research evidence, to support a federal requirement that school districts use a particular instructional approach; (b) that the federal government does have a clear responsibility under the Lau decision to ensure that language-minority children receive some type of assistance to enable them to take part in the normal school programme; and (c) that nationally representative research is needed on the experience of different kinds of programmes for language-minority children to provide a research base for Congress, for those who draft regulations, for state and local administrators and for teachers to assist in the decision-making process.

FLEXIBILITY IN CHOICE OF APPROACH

From 1968 to 1981, federal policy showed a strong preference for bilingual/bicultural programmes over alternative approaches which rely primarily on English-language instruction. In the case of the Lau Remedies, this policy considerably extended the 1974 Supreme Court decision on which the remedies were based. During the past two years, the Reagan Administration has supported changes in the Title VII legislation and in the interpretation of the Lau decision to give school districts nore flexibility in the choice of instructional approach.

Summaries of research findings comparing the effects of alternative instructional approaches on student achievement have shown that bilingual programmes are neither better nor worse than other instructional methods. Similarly, the studies which have examined other implications of the approach used—such as effects on student integration, costs, or student attitudes towards school—do not provide clear evidence to support one model over another.

This review has shown that there is no legal necessity or research basis for the federal government to advocate or require a specific instructional approach. Moreover, past research on a range of federal education programmes has suggested that, regardless of the merits of a particular approach, it is not productive for the federal government to intervene in local decisions about instructional methods.[80] The evidence comes from a number of studies which show that regulations about specific instructional approaches do not increase the quality of education at the local level.[81] Further, federal involvement in local instructional methods may detract from more appropriate federal objectives of ensuring that intended students receive supplementary educational services. It may also weaken the political support of even carefully designed programmes.[82]

PROVISION OF APPROPRIATE SERVICES

Although the Supreme Court's Lau decision did not require a specific instructional approach, the federal government does have a responsibility under that decision to ensure that school districts provide appropriate services for language-minority children. However, emphasis on specific programme requirements may have detracted from this basic objective. There has been extended debate about the relative merits of English-as-a-second-language versus bilingual/bicultural approaches and about the perceived federal intrusion into local education policy. However, the essential requirement of the Lau decision that language-minority children receive some type of special assistance to enable them to participate in the conventional school programme has received considerably less attention.

We know from experience with other education programmes that the federal government can ensure that specific population groups receive services without extensive directives on how subject matter is taught.[83] However, we need a clear delineation of the federal role in particular educational matters and systematic research information which describes how the needs of language-minority children are served in the context of the Lau decision.

RESEARCH ISSUES

In addition to providing data on the extent to which language-minority children are currently being served, such research should examine the effects of alternative federal policies. Currently, in the United States, we do not know the implications of allowing school districts more flexibility in the way they serve students with limited English because nationally representative data are not available to describe what school districts are now doing or who is being served. We do not know what changes in programmes, staffing patterns or fiscal constraints will result from less federal intervention in programme design, nor do we know how demographic and political factors in different communities would affect those changes. The actions at the local level are also affected by court decisions and state laws limiting freedom of action which might otherwise result from more relaxed federal standards. Moreover, the unavailability of research data makes it difficult for state and local authorities to identify their options and to use this information to implement appropriate programmes. Much can be done to remedy these problems by describing the experiences of other school districts in a logical and comprehensive manner.

Although numerous individual studies of bilingual education have been conducted and some have produced useful information, there has not been a comprehensive evaluation of the type suggested here. Existing studies (such as the AIR Title VII evaluation[84] and the United States Department of Education survey[85] previously discussed) focus on Title VII programmes and do not provide an overview of the services received from all funding sources by language-minority children.

There is a need for national studies of school districts in the United States describing the actual operation of bilingual programmes and how they can be improved. Further research areas might include:

The extent to which language-minority children are served—characterictics of children receiving services, criteria used to place children in programmes, percentage of eligible children served.

The characteristics of services provided—type of instructional approaches used, instructional time in native language and in English, time spent on various subjects, grouping practices.

The language skills and training of teachers.

The distribution of resources to target populations.

The consequences of alternative federal policies, such as giving school districts more flexibility in instructional approaches.

The effects on student achievement of well-implemented programmes, and the characteristics of programmes that are effective for particular students and communities, both in the United States and other countries.

The effects on outcomes not directly related to student achievement, such as integration, cost and feasibility.

The description of effective programmes for language-minority children in integrated settings.

The identification of exemplary foreign-language instructional techniques in the United States and other countries, both in elementary and secondary schools and in selected foreign-language institutes and universities.

These studies would assist legislators, administrators and teachers in decision-making. Congress and state legislators would have descriptions of current programmes as they consider future legislation for funding bilingual education programmes. The executive branch would have data on the extent to which language-minority children are served, in order to assist in developing procedures for implementing the Lau decision. And, most important, research findings would be available to state and local educators about instructional alternatives and their implications for student achievement, integration and programme costs. This type of information will be essential to any re-examination of bilingual education policy during the next decade. ■

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