

On English Language Teaching and Teacher Education: Academic Disagreements in a Developing Country

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Quality in the education of teachers is often related to the quality of general education and students' achievements [1]. Although it is hard to argue against this idea, policies related to teacher education are shaped by political decisions and practices, mainly under the premises of teachers' professionalization agendas and accountability [2]. These interventions may generate disagreement among teachers and teacher educators because they tend to disempower these educational actors from their roles as decision makers and leaders [3] as well as critical intellectuals.

English language teaching and teacher education in Colombia have been affected by international movements of globalization, marketization, and competitiveness for the labor market presented in a national language education policy that promotes bilingualism. "Bilingual Colombia" has targeted the massive use of English in the country for 2019 based on the promotion of national standards for English teaching, the massive training of English teachers to raise their language proficiency and improve their teaching methodologies, and the alignment with testing proficiency levels across the school system. As with most language policies, Bilingual Colombia may remain as "good intentions on paper [4]".

In this oral presentation, we will explore the main points of disagreement that have arisen between policy makers and local teacher educators showing how the academic growth of universities and schools conflicts with the instrumental agendas proposed by the government in this language policy. The current views of the English teaching profession seem to ignore the body of knowledge constructed through research and teaching practices in the last 20 years and impose a simplistic analysis of English learning, teaching and teacher education. We will address issues such as the problematic notions of bilingualism proposed for a multilingual nation [5]; the academic colonialism of the language policy that praises the use of foreign materials, tests and models of teacher training [6]; the country's unreadiness to implement the language policy due to the diversity of socio-economic and educational conditions among the different regions of Colombia, the unrealistic language goals based on the Common European Framework of Reference [7], [8], [9]; the portrayal of English teachers as technicians that do not have the capacity to transform their realities [10]; and the importance of supporting local knowledge construction and dissemination through the work of academic communities, professional associations, and specialized journals published in the country [11]. Finally, as a conclusion we will propose that to attain a better future in our education, we must establish new agendas that provide teachers and teacher educators the possibility to become valid interlocutors in the definition and implementation of language education policies.