

Introduction

Coinciding with a global movement for learning English, Taiwan has implemented a “Bilingual 2030” policy through their National Development Council. This study explores how the strong emphasis on learning English is affecting teaching and learning, with a focus on Indigenous students. The purpose of this study is to see how teachers and school administrators feel about implementing both the Indigenous language and bilingual Mandarin Chinese and English language policies in a school with a majority Indigenous student population, located within the Indigenous Paiwanese community of Laiyi Township.

Research Questions

1. How do elementary school teachers and staff perceive the current language education policies (Indigenous language education and bilingual English/Mandarin policies) in Taiwan?
2. To what extent do teachers’ personal experiences and perspectives about the current language education policies affect their students’ learning under these policies?

Methodology

Method: Qualitative study; virtual semi-structured 1:1 interviews (on LINE); analysis of interview transcripts

Participants: 1 English teacher, 1 Paiwanese (Indigenous language) teacher, 2 subject teachers, 3 homeroom teachers, 1 school director

Conceptual Frameworks: Human Capital Theory and Above-Below-Side Policy Change Framework

Findings

Bilingual 2030 Policy’s Impact on Paiwanese

- 1 participant - positive; 2 participants - negative; 5 participants - no impact

Difficulties for Maintaining Paiwanese

- Too few instructional hours in Paiwanese (only taught once a week).
- Lack of a home language environment; some elderly have learned Mandarin to communicate with the younger generation.
- Ethnic languages are not considered core subjects → students do not take it as seriously as Mandarin Chinese and English.
- If students do not have a good image of using Paiwanese, it will be hard for the language to be used in school.

Discussion

- Bilingual 2030 policy was created with good intentions but is too ideal.
- If there are no changes to how the policy is currently being implemented, it will neither be effective nor beneficial for students.
- Paiwanese and English both use the Latin alphabet; students can get confused because pronunciation of certain letters are different.
- School needs to create a more immersive learning environment.

References

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