

Bridging Languages and Cultures: The Evolving Landscape of Dual Language Immersion Programs

Jenifer Crawford, Robert Filback, Emmy Min

Professors of Clinical Education, Rossier School of Education, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California, USA

Email: jenifeac@usc.edu, filback@usc.edu, emmymin@usc.edu

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Setting

This case traces the cross-continental educational journey of the Global Language Education Initiative (GLEI), which is designed to address the critical shortage of highly-qualified bilingual teachers, particularly in the U.S. Following a period in which educational policy severely limited teaching in immigrant students' native languages by focusing on "English only" as the medium of instruction, policies began to shift back to allowing and encouraging bilingual education. The U.S. is now experiencing a burgeoning dual language movement, but there is a serious gap in the supply of multilingual teachers. California, for example, has experienced a decline in certification of bilingual teachers over the years, from as many as 1,800 teachers annually in the 1990s to around 1,000 in 2019. The state's bilingual agenda, in contrast, calls for the preparation of more than 2,000 bilingual teachers annually by 2030. While most California school districts want to expand bilingual education, over 80% of them say that a shortage of bilingual teachers is an impediment to expansion.

In the Education Department at a large urban university in California, a new dual degree program called the Global Language Education Initiative (GLEI) is launched in response to this need. Drawing from the challenges and successes of similar initiatives, GLEI represents an innovative approach to addressing the acute shortage of bilingual educators worldwide through the establishment of dual degree programs with partner universities in

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South Korea, Mexico, and Hong Kong. In these programs, students spend half of their semesters studying at the U.S. campus and half of their semesters at the partner institutions. Students can elect to conduct their student teaching placement abroad. This method has been recognized for its effectiveness and equity in fostering bilingualism and biliteracy, and prepares bilingual teachers in Korean, Spanish, or Mandarin. The initial goal of the program is to enroll at least 15 students per language track.

The cross-cultural academic exchange that is integral to the dual degree programs not only internationalizes the student body but also lays the groundwork for innovative credentialing and certification pathways. The GLEI aims to cultivate educators who are not only linguistically proficient but also culturally versatile, ready to navigate and contribute to multilingual and multicultural classrooms around the world. The collaboration between GLEI and its international partners has spurred a rethinking of curriculum internationalization and instructional inclusivity, highlighting the program's role as a catalyst for educational innovation.

Case

By the program's third year, GLEI has seen its inaugural graduates, marking a promising milestone in its development. GLEI attracts participants from a wide range of geographical, racial, and linguistic backgrounds. This diversity not only enriches the learning environment, but also mirrors the global landscape of language education that it seeks to impact. The collaboration between GLEI and its international partners has spurred a rethinking of curriculum internationalization and instructional inclusivity on their campuses, highlighting the program's role as a catalyst for educational innovation.

Students in the GLEI program have learned language teaching methodologies from their home institutions as well as from the partner universities, reflecting the approaches to teaching common in each culture. This range of experiences equips them with a comprehensive understanding of language teaching approaches, encouraging a critical analysis that enhances their effectiveness as educators across diverse settings. One graduate, for example, developed an innovative approach to teaching Korean by augmenting their instruction with English using a dual-language learning focus. This method, honed during an international internship, is now part of this graduate's teaching practice at a leading research university in the United States, showcasing the program's success in fostering adaptable, globally-minded educators.

The collaborative efforts also highlight the program's commitment to breaking down barriers and fostering an inclusive environment where students from various linguistic backgrounds and countries learn together, engaging in extensive fieldwork that spans the U.S. and their partner country. The ongoing dialogue between faculty and staff across partnering institutions emphasizes the importance of continuous innovation and adaptation in program design to meet the evolving needs of the global teaching community. This approach not only enriches students' understanding of language teaching in different cultural contexts but also contributes to the internationalization of the curriculum and the campuses.

However, GLEI's ambition to broaden the scope of bilingual teacher education faces challenges, notably in affordability and sustainability. Despite a commitment by all partner institutions to mitigate financial burdens—such as through unit waivers and alignment with U.S. federal financial aid requirements—the cost of the dual degree is high in relation to more traditional teacher preparation programs. Thus, achieving the enrollment goals of 15 students per track remains elusive. Also, the dual degree program has been very labor intensive to develop and nurture. The program involves deep integration of curricula, teaching sequences, and fieldwork across

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continents, ensuring that students can immerse themselves in and critically evaluate language education traditions from diverse perspectives. This complex integration of policies, practices, and procedures across institutions makes the program administratively intensive for all universities involved.

Looking forward, the GLEI partners recognize the program's promise to develop culturally responsive and inclusive teachers who can address the dire need for qualified bilingual educators in California and beyond. At the same time, they must consider the complexities of the program as they plan for the future.

Discussion Questions

As you consider this case, discuss:

- How might the GLEI program support students to engage in reflective practices to identify and challenge their own biases, particularly those related to language and cultural differences? How will this foster more inclusive primary and secondary classrooms in the future?
- What strategies can be employed to ensure that the teaching placement abroad maximize opportunities for intercultural learning and teaching innovation?
- What specific initiatives might programs like GLEI implement to elevate access and inclusion for underrepresented and underserved groups in bilingual teacher education programs?
- How should programs like GLEI adapt their curriculum to address rapid changes in global education landscapes, such as the integration of digital literacy and remote teaching methodologies?
- What creative financial models could be proposed to increase program accessibility while maintaining educational quality in programs like GLEI?
- What key elements contribute to longevity and resilience of educational partnerships, especially in the face of socio-political shifts?
- What general principles can be distilled from GLEI's experiences for broader application in international education?