

Secciones Europeas – Promoting Bilingual Programmes in Castilla-La Mancha, Spain

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Abstract

Our paper is the result of a first stage analysis into the perception of introducing bilingual programmes in Primary schools in the region of Castilla-La Mancha, Spain. Since 1996 a small selection of schools have successfully integrated bilingual teaching through a project instigated between the British Council and the Spanish Ministry of Education, and since 2005 the regional educational authority, the Junta de Comunidades de Castilla-La Mancha, has been promoting its continuance through a project called Secciones Europeas. This project aims to meet the requirements of the European Action Plan 2004-2006 to achieve bilingualism for all citizens by introducing a foreign language from the early ages of infant and primary education. Our study has focussed initially on schools in the area of Cuenca, the province with the lowest number of primary education centres who are currently involved in the project – only 3 out of a possible 67 - to try to determine the reasons why so few schools have adopted the programme. Our survey was designed to discover whether the low rate of involvement was due to lack of information, or to lack of expertise and linguistic knowledge, with a view to providing the necessary means to redress the situation. The results of our analysis so far indicate a strong need to improve primary teachers' foreign language skills in English and to create the provision for training and resources for CLIL classroom practice. Another notable aspect which our survey revealed was a general opinion among generalist teachers that only foreign language specialists are responsible for and capable of conducting Content and Language Integrated Learning. In the light of these results our plans are to further negotiate with the regional authority and generate the provision of information and training sessions to help improve the number of schools participating in the future.