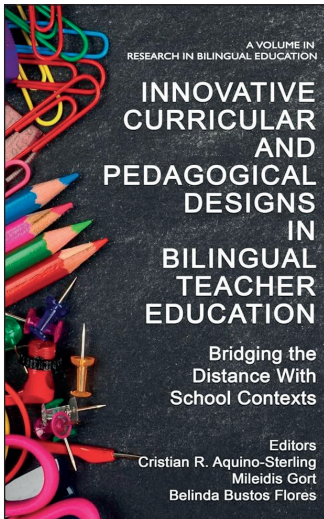


Innovative curricular and pedagogical designs in bilingual teacher education: Bridging the distance with school contexts

Aquino-Sterling, C., Gort, M. and Bustos Flores, C. B. (2022). *Innovative curricular and pedagogical designs in bilingual teacher education: Bridging the distance with school contexts*. NC, Information Age Publishing
181 pp. ISBN: 978-1-64802-894-6

<https://doi.org/10.58265/pulso.7214>

Lauren Tenneson Erikson
College of Education, Texas Tech University
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4297-4626>



In *Innovative Curricular and Pedagogical Designs in Bilingual Teacher Education: Bridging the Distance with School Contexts*, editors Cristian Aquino-Sterling, Mileidis Gort, and Belinda Bustos Flores offer an up-close look at the curriculum and pedagogy bilingual teacher education (BTE) scholar-practitioners from across the United States utilize in their classrooms as a way of adhering to the four pillars—bilingualism and biliteracy, academic achievement, sociocultural competence, and critical consciousness (p. xvii). A common thread throughout the book is the editors' belief in an *and/both* way of philosophizing, researching, and enacting rather than a *but/or* way of thinking.

To represent the various design stages of curricular and pedagogical practices, the book is organized in three strands: conceptual, implementation, and research. The

first part of the book, comprised of Chapters 1-4, invites us to interrogate how we think about BTE. In this section, the authors describe several ways that bilingual teacher educators have challenged the status quo by drawing upon theories or ideologies that refute deficit-based thinking. The second strand focuses on specific curricular and pedagogical practices that bilingual teacher educators use in their classrooms, while strand three underscores the impact that innovations have on bilingual/dual-language educators' learning and teaching practices. Throughout the book, the editors encourage us to adopt a “democratic and humanizing approach to advancing BTE” to promote social justice, inclusivity, and diversity.

Strand one, “Conceptualizing Curricular and Pedagogical Innovations in Bilingual Education”, encompasses the theoretical underpinnings used by the authors to call attention

to the importance of developing bilingual teacher education programs that lead to transformation; transformation of the bilingual teacher candidate, the classroom, and society. Zavala and Arce (Chapter 1) lead the way by describing the Spanish bilingual teacher preparation program they developed –Bilingual Education for Social Transformation (BEST)– in which bilingual teacher candidates critically examine and gain practice in implementing culturally responsive pedagogy before entering their own classroom. In creating the BEST program, the scholar-researchers aim to demonstrate how bilingual teacher candidates come to question power relations that have been embedded in their way of thinking and being. From a “Nepantla” perspective Barko-Alva and Zuniga (Chapter 2) propose that future bilingual teachers are explicitly taught the benefits of *dynamic bilingualism* by having opportunities to practice didactic strategies. As a way of combating white hegemonic curricular practices, as well as pointing out that more bilingual education literature should be written in the language in which educators and students teach/learn, Chapter 2 is written in Spanish. Chapter 3 focuses on the reconceptualization of preparing bilingual educators to teach STEM, while Chapter 4 sums up the first part of the book by highlighting the importance of building bilingual teacher candidates’ metalinguistic awareness and advocacy skills, as well as reiterating the potential for transformation in grounding practice in theory. More specifically, Alvarado and Proctor (Chapter 4) suggest a practice-embedded educational research (PEER) approach to bilingual teacher preparation.

In Chapters 5-7, or strand two, the editors have compiled articles that focus on specific curricular and pedagogical designs that have recently been implemented in BTE classrooms. Rodríguez, Cárdenas Curiel, and Saenz (Chapter 5) outline a partnership they created with an art museum near the university in which they teach, with the goal of giving BTE students the opportunity to strengthen their Spanish oral language skills. Through coteaching with graduate art students, the BTE candidates were able to learn to embrace their linguistic ability. In Chapter 6, the authors draw on Paulo Freire’s thinking, as well as Moll et al.’s (1992) funds of knowledge, to emphasize the importance of bridging theory and practice in BTE. Furthermore, Franco, Minkoff, and Faulstich Orellano (Chapter 6) summarize the way in which they guide bilingual teacher candidates to “recognize diverse forms of language and languaging and to try out practices that diverge from the dominant, teacher-centric approaches” (p. 84) in an after-school program as a method of transformation. This strand of the book is rounded out by Chapter 7, which is written in Spanish by one of the editors, Cristian Aquino-Sterling. Aquino-Sterling discusses the development of *competencias en lenguaje pedagógico* (CLP) in BTE and outlines two examples from an activity that he implemented during one of his preparation courses. The innovation gave students the opportunity to acquire new CLP “para continuar el proceso de transformación en seres multidimensionales, capaces de navegar *dentro y entre* mundos lingüísticos sin tener que pedir permiso y o hacer apologias” (p. 107).

In the final strand, “Researching Curricular and Pedagogical Innovations” in BTE, scholars shared studies they have recently conducted in bilingual education with the aim of, once again, connecting theory to practice for bilingual teacher candidates. All of the articles in this section of the book focus on the transformational possibilities of creating coursework in which teacher candidates gain experience utilizing students’ home language and culture to plan for instruction. For example, Lynch and Morphis (Chapter 8) create opportunities for bilingual teacher candidates to observe more experienced teachers, who drew upon students’ background knowledge by incorporating meaningful children’s literature. The authors of this chapter also note how bilingual teacher candidates came to see themselves as advocates for their future students. Rather than literacy pedagogical innovations, in Chapter 9, Krause & Maldonado Rodriguez focus on elementary mathematics methods by describing the way they structured a bilingual teacher preparation course to include activities in which teacher candidates enact a student-centered approach to teaching mathematics. Bilingual teacher candidates were given the opportunity to plan mathematics instruction using students’ mathematical thinking strengths and their home language (Spanish). The researcher-scholars found that, while some bilingual teacher candidates came to see the value of acknowledging students’ thinking, as well as partnering with parents, other candidates struggled. Finally, in Chapter 10, Johnson discusses his creation of a funds of knowledge survey to conduct a research study with bilingual/dual-language teachers and teacher candidates. In the study, teachers and teacher candidates created a lesson *with* their students as a way of positioning them as experts. The pedagogical innovations in the last strand of the book remind us as (bilingual) teachers of the criticalness of acknowledging our students’ knowledge and skills as a method of transformation.

This book would be useful across multiple contexts. The specific examples of curricular and pedagogical innovations the authors describe would allow educational researchers and scholars to gain a better understanding of current practices in bilingual teacher education. Additionally, bilingual teacher educators might want to consider how the innovations laid out in the book could be integrated into their own classrooms. Moreover, the studies discussed in this book could be utilized as a jumping block for other scholar-researchers and bilingual teacher educators. Furthermore, this volume would be useful to practitioners in bilingual education, including bilingual teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators. More specifically, practitioners may find the chapter (Chapter 10) written by Johnson particularly helpful in understanding how to gather funds of knowledge using an inventory.

Innovative Curricular and Pedagogical Designs in Bilingual Teacher Education: Bridging the Distance with School Contexts contributes to the research on bilingual teacher education in several ways. Throughout the book, the authors highlight the importance of creating spaces where preservice bilingual teachers can explore their identity; Zavala

and Arce (Chapter 1) refer to this identity exploration as aspirantes. The book also adds to the literature on reflection as a mechanism for transformation in education, and not only for bilingual teachers, but for bilingual teacher educators as well. Editors Aquino-Sterling, Gort, and Bustos Flores also contribute to the literature on bilingual curricular and pedagogical practices by including a variety of real-life examples being implemented in contexts across the nation.

There were several aspects of the book that I, personally, as an elementary school district new (bilingual) teacher support person, as well as a budding scholar-researcher, appreciated. In reading this book I was challenged to question my thinking on the innovations currently being utilized by bilingual teacher educators in several contexts. The reflection questions at the end of each chapter also aided me in processing the ideas presented and helped extend my thinking. I respected the two chapters written in Spanish for “practicing what they preach” by highlighting the importance of valuing the knowledge, skills, and capital of bilingual educators and their students. However, this book details BTE classrooms in the U.S., therefore I would suggest future research on preparing bilingual teachers consider contexts in other languages (Chinese/Mandarin, indigenous languages, etc.), as well as classrooms in other countries.

Overall, this volume effectively provides a well-rounded breadth of current innovative pedagogical and curricular practices in BTE that demonstrate how relating theory to practice can lead to transformation. Furthermore, the layout of this book and the connections drawn between and within the strands allows researchers, scholars, and practitioners alike to gain a better understanding of the “four pillars” and beyond.