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## ABSTRACT

A study of a St. Croix bilingual education program looked at parent involvement from the program's beginning to the present and at parent recommendations for more meaningful involvement. A random sample of parents representing students at all grade levels was drawn from school records. The parents were surveyed by questionnaire, and interviewed. The questionnaire asked about parent participation in the original needs analysis, knowledge of definite program aims, help in developing and setting up the program, participation in activities (trips, meetings, movies, workshops, and courses), input in the form of advice or opinion about the program, willingness to help further with the program, and comments. The scale provided for responses included these options: very much, much, some, a little, not at all, don't know, and no response. It was found that parents were not participating fully in the program; that a majority of parents had no involvement in the program's needs assessment or original planning; and that although parents had made an important contribution in other program areas, less than half of the total group had participated. It was also found that participation developed favorable attitudes toward the program and toward education in general. Increased efforts toward parent involvement are recommended, including a parent training component, home visits, a bilingual parent handbook, information dissemination through the media, and a variety of parent-oriented activities. (MSE)

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Parent-Client Participation in the  
Bilingual Education Program in St. Croix,  
United States Virgin Islands

By

Carmen H. A. Padgett

1983

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

Bilingual education has a long history in the United States. It has been said that the heyday of public bilingual education was before the Civil War.<sup>1</sup> In the private sector, bilingualism was also popular. German schools flourished around the country; French schools were common in Louisiana and later in New England; there were Spanish schools in New Mexico and many Scandinavian and Dutch schools in the Midwest (Cordasco, pp. 2-3). Modern bilingual education, however, has its beginnings in the civil rights movement of the nineteen sixties and the increasing search for identity and self assertion on the part of ethnic groups and low income classes (Cordasco, p. 7). Some ethnic groups found it necessary to form organizations where they could make their strength felt, and they have played a very active role in advocating legislation. The enactment of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, which marked a major breakthrough in the history of Federal aid to education, was a response to the civil rights movement.<sup>2</sup>

Another element that contributed to the rebirth of bilingual education was the influx of Cubans to Miami in the late fifties and early sixties as a result of the Cuban Revolution. As opposed to Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Native

Americans and Orientals, Cuban refugees succeeded against the intransigent monolingualism of American schools. Thus, the first bilingual program in the United States was born in Dade County, Florida in 1963. In the next seven years, several programs were born in Texas, California, Arizona, New Mexico, New Jersey and St. Croix, Virgin Islands (Cordasco, p. 7).

### Bilingual Education in St. Croix

The need for bilingual education in St. Croix arose in 1927 when Puerto Ricans began emigrating to the island as a result of the decaying economies in Vieques and Culebra. A recruiting campaign undertaken by the Crucian cane growers soon increased the number of Hispanics on this island. <sup>3</sup> It is difficult to estimate the numerical strength of Puerto Ricans in the Virgin Islands, but it is generally agreed that "something like 15 percent of the St. Thomas population and 35 percent of the St. Croix population are Puerto Ricans" (Lewis, p. 200). In spite of such a large Spanish-speaking population, no provisions were made for bilingual education until 1969, when the first program was established in the Charles H. Emanuel School. "Bilingual instruction was offered to help the Spanish-speaking children, and Spanish as a second language was provided to the English-speaking children. This locally-funded program merged with the Federal Bilingual Program in 1975." <sup>4</sup>

Early in the seventies the need for bilingual education in St. Croix was formally investigated and in March 1972 the Department of Education of the Government of the Virgin Islands submitted a "Preliminary Proposal for a Planning Grant for Bilingual Education" for the St. Croix Public Schools.<sup>5</sup> Later on, the same year, an initial plan for implementing a bilingual/bicultural program under the provisions of Title VII of the ESEA was also submitted.<sup>6</sup> As a result of these initiatives, a Federal grant was approved to establish a bilingual/bicultural education program in the island. The schools benefited from this program were The Alfredo Andrews School, the Alexander Henderson School and the Charles H. Emanuel School. In 1978 the program was institutionalized in the public schools system of the territory. At the present time this program continues to be part of the regular educational framework at the local level.

#### Statement of the Problem

Parental involvement is basic in the process of education. It is important in the regular setting of private or public schools; it becomes crucial in the case of children involved in bilingual education. The parents of these children, or "parent-clients," as Rodríguez calls them (p. 3), can and should make a meaningful contribution to their children's education. María Torres says it succinctly:

4

The state and federal regulations governing bilingual programs stipulate that parents of students in those programs should take part in making school decisions and should compose the majority of the bilingual advisory committee members. The focus on parents of students in bilingual programs rather than parents or citizens in general is an important one as it includes parents not usually involved...<sup>7</sup>

In the same article quoted above, María Torres states that "despite traditional and deep roots for citizen participation in American education, groups making decisions in schools are not representative of the minority populations served by the school" (IFG, 7).

The researcher believes that parent-client participation is indispensable if a bilingual program is to be successful. The United States Congress recognized this fact when they passed Public Law 93-380 (93rd Congress, 2nd Session, August 21, 1974), which made parent-client participation a legal mandate through the establishment of parent advisory councils. Although school districts are no longer forced to establish parent advisory councils, they will continue to be required to consult with parents and teachers (Education Daily, February 16, 1982, p. 2).

This study is designed to provide data on parent-client participation in the different areas of the bilingual education program in St. Croix.

#### Purpose of the Study

This study will elicit concrete recommendations

regarding parent-client participation in St. Croix after interviews with parents and personnel involved within the program, careful consideration of related literature and thorough analysis and interpretation of collected data.

### Need and Significance of the Study

In recent years "formal collaboration between school authorities and parent-clients has attracted the attention of students. . . .and inspired inquiry into the nature and impact of the relationship" (Rodríguez, p. 3). This study, which is exploratory, will provide data for locally-based accountability, not only to insure school district compliance with government policies, but for the strengthening of the program itself. It has been suggested that "the extent to which meaningful community participation is realized in a program is a gauge of how accountable administrators are to the community." 8

### Delimitations

This study is confined to the bilingual education program in St. Croix. It focuses its attention on parent-client involvement in different areas. Aspects to be studied include assessment of needs before the program was established; definition of goals; participation in the establishment and development of the program; participation in activities such

trips, meetings, movies, workshops or courses; evaluation of the program; parent-client's feelings regarding the program and their recommendations for more meaningful involvement.

### Limitations

Although there is an abundance of literature regarding norms established by different bilingual programs in the United States, there is a scarcity of related literature regarding data of actual parent-client involvement. The researcher refers specifically to involvement in compensatory education. "Previous research on citizen participation provides evidence that people of high socio-economic status engage in more participatory activities than those of low socio-economic status" (IFG, p. 7).

### Assumptions

Although federal legislation mandates parent-client participation in bilingual programs, little has been recorded about what percentage of parents actually participates in the programs in St. Croix or elsewhere. At the present time the IFG is conducting a study on parent participation, but it will be sometime before it is finished.<sup>9</sup> Although some research has been done in St. Croix,<sup>10</sup> it was assumed that there has not been direct collection and analysis of data in terms of parental involvement taking into consideration all the areas

included in this study.

It was also assumed that parent-clients would be willing to participate in the study if it was done in a proper (scientific) manner.

### Hypotheses

1. Parent-clients are not participating fully in the bilingual program in St. Croix (See p. 9, #12).

2. Parental involvement in the bilingual program develops favorable attitudes towards the program among parents and this change in attitude reflects in their attitudes towards education in general.

### Definition of Terms

1. Accountability refers to the professional reporting and evaluating regarding the success or failure of a program.<sup>11</sup>

2. Bilingual Education Program as commonly accepted in the Virgin Islands is

the teaching of two languages and using them as mediums of instruction in all or all parts of the curriculum. Since language is inextricably bound to culture, the study of cultures is integral to bilingual education. Bilingual education is applicable to all children, regardless of native language; it is found worldwide and has been practiced for centuries. It recognizes the linguistic rationale underlying specialized techniques for teaching a second language and incorporates these into the programs. It also

encourages and develops the native languages of the children and at the same time introduces a second language which is given equal importance. It recognizes the inherent inseparability of cultures and language, and thus, in dealing with two languages, is essentially multicultural in nature.

A bilingual education program is specifically concerned with the creation and/or strengthening of a child's positive feelings about himself. It attempts to achieve this goal through the development in the child of a sense of appreciation of his language and culture and through improvement of his academic proficiency. 12

3. Curriculum refers to the educational plan for teaching certain skills and topics.

4. Data refers to all information collected in order to evaluate parent-client participation in the program.

5. Elementary and Secondary Education Act is a federal act passed by Congress in 1965 to provide help for educationally deprived children, expanding school library services, and establishing innovative programs. Later amendments provided for bilingual education.

6. Evaluation is a measure of the effectiveness of a program. Usually the impact that the program has on the children's learning is reported as well as the success of the process of program implementation.

7. Goals refer to the object or end that the bilingual education program strives to attain.

8. Institutionalization is a process by which demonstration, experimental or pilot programs become integrated into an established educational system while maintaining their quality and productivity.

9. Needs Assessment is a method of deciding what is needed in a project. Each school operating, or planning to operate, a bilingual education program must conduct a needs assessment to determine who the program should serve and what services are most important for them.

10. Parent Advisory Council (PAC) refers to the official committee or group of parents which up to now had been required by law to advise every school district in the planning, conduct and evaluation of its Title VII program.

11. Parent-client refers to parents whose children are involved in the bilingual education program.

12. Parent-client Participation is involvement on the part of parents when they work closely with the teachers to attain the educational goals. Full participation (Hypothesis I) is participation of the maximum or highest degree, of at least 80% of parent-clients.

13. Proposal refers to a document submitted to a federal or private agency which asks for money in order to start or maintain a program and explains the need for this program, its goals and evaluation procedures.

14. Territory refers to the American Virgin Islands which are an unincorporated territory of the United States.

15. Title VII refers to money from Washington to use for resource teachers, aides and for other activities aimed at bringing bilingual education to a district.

## Abbreviations

1. BEP refers to the Bilingual Education Program in St. Croix.
2. DEGVI refers to the Department of Education of the Government of the Virgin Islands.
3. ESEA refers to the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965.

## CHAPTER II

### Review of Related Literature

#### Parent Involvement

Responsibility for the educational development of the child begins with the parent. Each child is a unique human being who reflects parental attitudes toward learning.<sup>13</sup> According to Collins and Pagán, a child begins to learn at the moment of birth.<sup>14</sup> By their example, parents are automatically teaching the child about himself and his environment. These authors believe that children are eager to learn and that those years before the child goes to school should not be wasted. Many of the skills which a child is taught in school are first learned in the home. Through language a child learns concepts, thinking skills, self-understanding, self-expression, and how to communicate with others. Parents should help the child develop his oral language which will contribute significantly to his success in school.

Collins and Pagán further state that another important area of pre-school learning where parents can have major influence is the child's social and cultural customs from his family's lifestyle and example; he learns how to relate to other people; he develops a self-concept and learns how to deal with his environment. These factors contribute to the

child's character and to his attitude about learning.

Parents have an obligation to continue their involvement with the child's education when he enters school. They should become familiar with the teacher and the school environment, with what he is learning and how he behaves in class (Collins and Pagán, p. i). Parents should also be aware that what goes on in the home accounts for more variation in a student's ability to learn than any other factor (Ramos, pp. 24-25).

The National Institute for Multicultural Education (NIME), an organization dedicated to promote equal quality education opportunity for all children, is a firm believer and promoter of parent and community participation in the educational process.<sup>15</sup> In its publication Parental Involvement and Participation in Bilingual Education (Chávez, 1980), parental involvement is divided into two kinds of activities: traditional and non-traditional. Among the traditional activities the author defines four categories: use of community expertise and resources; parents as assistants, participating in field trips; parents as supporters in clerical duties, booster clubs and fund drives; and parents as teacher-aides and tutors. Among the non-traditional activities the author mentions are development of a school council which could set school budget priorities, investigate student or parent complaints, participate in selection and evaluation of the principal, teachers and other staff, review new school programs, curricula and student activities, and evaluate

extra-curricular activities (Chávez, p. 11a).

Regarding levels of citizen-participation, Chávez mentions the following categories: window-dressing activities, designed to provide the appearance of an open and responsive school system with ample citizen participation but without real substance; soothing dissatisfied parents (e.g., hiring a complaining mother as a teacher aide); collaboration in decision making and two-way communication; and delegating authority or transferring control (p. 12a).

Waetjen stated that evidence has appeared in research literature to indicate that the more active parents become in school educational programs, the greater the positive influence on the learning behavior of the children (Ramos, p. 23).

### The Legal Mandate

With the implementation of federally subsidized programs in the 1960's, the minority parent had the opportunity to become involved in public education for the first time in the history of the United States. However, citizen participation was seen "as merely one aspect of the broader need for improving the livelihood. . . of the poor, the less educated, and racial and ethnic minorities." <sup>16</sup> Until 1974, requirements for community involvement were not officially mandated. In the April 1971 guidelines for Title VII, school authorities were required to consult with parents and other

community members in planning the bilingual program

(Rodríguez, p. 8). The guidelines read in part:

Needs cannot be adequately assessed without consultation with the parents and community representatives, the people who have "been there" and who live with the first-hand knowledge of their children's problems in an English-speaking environment. Nor can long range goals be postulated without the knowledge of parents' aspirations for their children. Without the active support of the parents and the community, the goals will be inadequately achieved. . . 17

In 1974, the U.S. Congress recognized the indispensability of parental involvement when it passed Public Law 93-380 (93rd Congress, 2nd Session, August 21, 1976) which made parent-client participation a legal mandate. Later on, in 1978, the ESEA was amended to require local education agencies to comply with provisions for involvement and participation of parents and community members. It partly read:

An application for a program of bilingual education shall. . . contain assurances that, after the application has been approved the applicant will provide for the continuing consultation with, and participation by, the committee of parents. . . . Parents of children participating in a program of bilingual education shall be informed of the instructional goals of the program and the progress of their children. . . 18

#### Parent-Client Participation in St. Croix

In "A Parent Advisory Council Design for the United States Virgin Islands," Cora Ramos states the following:

The degree of parental involvement in the Virgin Islands has been confined for the most part to the Parent Teachers Association, and the employment

of a limited number of parents as teacher aides. Other involvement has been dependent upon the attitudes of administrators and teachers, who have encouraged parent involvement on an individual basis. Until now, the parents' role in the educational process has not been a part of the ordinary educational process. Richardson (1972), also mentioned that the degree of parental involvement was dependent upon the encouragement of teachers and administrators (p. 2).

According to records of final evaluation reports and personal interviews, <sup>19</sup> the administrators of the bilingual program have complied with the legal provisions for involvement and participation of parents. I. James, who has done a descriptive analysis of the St. Croix program, states that by 1973 "a citizen's committee for bilingual education was organized, neighborhood meetings for parents and other citizens were held; and parents were involved in school-related activities" (p. 46). A summary of activities through the years 1973 to 1978, when the BEP was institutionalized (See n. 12), includes the organization of advisory groups, classes for parents in English and Spanish as second languages, field trips for the children in the program with the participation of parents, parents' advisory meetings, and home school activities.

Since February 2, 1982, the Bowdoin Method Manual has been introduced to guide parents in a more effective involvement in their children's education. <sup>20</sup>

## CHAPTER III

### Procedures

#### Population

The United States Virgin Islands are a territory of the United States. They are part of a chain of islands that separate the Atlantic Ocean from the Caribbean Sea. There are three of these islands: St. Thomas, St. Croix and St. John (See map, Appendix A). St. Croix is the largest of the three islands with 84 square miles. It has a population of 48,918.

Parents in the Virgin Islands are a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural group who are the descendants of various migrant peoples such as the Africans, the Spanish, the French, the Dutch, the Danes, the Puerto Ricans, and other West Indians and Americans. Because of such a diverse background and interaction, the educational needs are different from those of the Continental United States (Ramos, p. 5).

The island of St. Croix has the only bilingual education program in the Virgin Islands. Since the researcher lives in this territory, St. Croix was the logical setting for her study. At the present time, close to nine hundred

students are registered in the program, which involves seven schools. The schools served by the program are the Evelyn Williams Elementary School, the Alfredo Andrews, the Charles H. Emanuel and the Alexander Henderson elementary schools, the Elena Christian and the Arthur A. Richards junior high schools; and the St. Croix Central High School. The number of parent-clients is unknown since many families have several children participating in the program.<sup>21</sup> Except for the Arthur A. Richards Junior High School, whose bilingual enrollment is negligible (1.5%), parent-clients from all of the schools represented in the program were included in the study.

#### Sample Selection

The selection of the sample was defined as a representation of the total number of parent-clients. The sample group was selected at random from the school records. All grades represented in the BEP were included.

One hundred parent-clients were selected. But only eighty-seven whose questionnaires were fully answered were utilized.

#### Sources of Data

The researcher received authorization from the Commissioner of Education, Dr. Charles Turnbull, to review records in the Department of Education and thus obtain the addresses of parent-clients (Appendix B).

Other personnel interviewed included Mrs. María Sanes,

Bilingual Education Specialist, Mrs. Eleanor Bennewith, Foreign Language Supervisor, and Mr. Harry Muñoz, Supervisor of Secondary Education. Ms. Isabel James and Dr. Cora Ramos, authors of unpublished dissertations related to the subject of this study, were contacted for authorization to use their work.

A survey of parent-clients through personal interviews following a questionnaire was also undertaken.

### The Questionnaire

The exploratory nature of the investigation necessitated a data collection instrument which would be flexible enough to collect the data necessary to prove or disprove the hypotheses and to allow for the collection of other pertinent data for future analysis and recommendations. The language used in the questionnaire had to be simple enough to be understood at any level by the educated parent-client as well as by the uneducated one. Dr. Frank Mills, Statistician at the College of the Virgin Islands, served as a consultant during the preparation of the questionnaire (For questionnaire, see Appendix C).

The questionnaire was constructed both in English and Spanish so that the investigator could use the dominant language of the parent-clients in the interview, thus facilitating their contributions.

The questionnaire included the following areas of

possible parent-client participation for analysis: need assessment, knowledge of definite aims, help in setting up the purpose of BEP and the program itself, development, activities such as trips, meetings, movies, workshops/seminars/courses, and other activities not mentioned; input in the form of advice or opinion about the program; willingness to help further with the program, and comments.

The last category provided for questions that parents might wish to raise regarding the BEP and which were not included in the questionnaire. It also gave parents an opportunity to make recommendations which might prove valuable in the future and made allowances for unexpected reactions in relation to the program.

A scale was prepared to cover almost every possible answer to the questionnaire. The seven items which were included were: very much, much, some, a little, not at all, don't know and no response.

## CHAPTER IV

### Presentation of Data

#### Information Gathered

At the present time the BEP employs ninety-seven teachers to serve a student population of eight hundred and seventy-five. (For total enrollment, total number of teaching personnel, and total number of personnel involved in BEP, see Appendix D). The bilingual teachers are generally inexperienced when they start teaching in St. Croix; however, they are trained through workshops. The majority of the teachers are very conscientious about their work and are sincerely interested in establishing contacts and offering guidance to parent-clients. They recognize that parent-client participation is essential for the success of the BEP. Apparently, their philosophy is that every child has the right to quality education, their main goal being to improve education in the island for every child. Teachers feel that though they may not have achieved a high degree of parent-client participation, parental involvement seems to be increasing due to new approaches on the part of educators, new materials being used, and the basic training of parents who serve as promoters to other parents to join in their activities (see n. 19).

Inspection of the questionnaires reveal that eighty-seven percent (87%) of the forms were completed in terms of questions asked, giving the researcher the opportunity to work with a sample of ten percent of the students involved in the BEP.<sup>22</sup> A brief evaluation of data gathered shows that most parent-clients interviewed did not participate at all in the assessment for the need of the BEP in St. Croix (90% so informed), or in setting up its purpose (as reported by 93.1%).

In areas more relevant at the present time, however, parent-clients seem to have made an important contribution to the program. Forty-eight percent (48%) reported having participated in setting up the BEP and forty-six percent (46%) reported that they had contributed to its development almost exclusively through meetings. A large number of parent-clients consider the program successful (Table I), and even a larger number (84%) are willing to help further with the program (see Table II). A total of sixty-six percent (66%) of the parent-clients volunteered comments regarding the BEP.

TABLE I

Question: Do you think this program has been successful or not successful?\*

| <u>Scale Level</u> | <u>%</u> |
|--------------------|----------|
| Very Much (4)      | 10.3     |
| Much (3)           | 52.9     |
| Some               | 17.4     |
| A Little (1)       | 3.4      |
| Not At All (0)     | 3.4      |
| Don't Know (DK)    | 11.5     |
| No Response (NR)   | 1.1      |

\*This question (No. 9 on the questionnaire) was posed in this manner to provide interviewees with the two alternatives in an effort to avoid guiding them towards one of the replies. However, it was understood beforehand that the answer "not successful" would be annotated as "not at all".

TABLE II

Question: Are you willing to help further with the program?

| <u>Scale Level</u> | <u>%</u> |
|--------------------|----------|
| Very Much (4)      | 19.5     |
| Much (3)           | 52.9     |
| Some (2)           | 11.5     |
| A Little (1)       | 1.4      |
| Not At All (0)     | 2.9      |
| Don't Know (DK)    | 11.5     |
| No Response (NR)   | 0.0      |

## Analysis of Data

Analysis of data indicates that most parent-clients are not indifferent to the BEP and that they are willing to get more involved if given the opportunity and training to do so. Apparently, parent-clients who are most familiar with the program (through participation as shown in the questionnaires), are most positive about its possibilities and are willing to contribute towards its success. Those who are less familiar with the program show less concern and are not as optimistic in terms of results. It is remarkable that only less than 4% believe that the program has not been successful at all, even though 11.5% answered that they did not know (Table I). Many of the parent-clients interviewed seem to have the idea that the only purpose of the program is for Hispanic children to learn English, as expressed in their observations.

In reference to past participation of parent-clients, the researcher is of the opinion that answers to Questions 7 and 8 are very significant.<sup>23</sup> To the first question (Has anyone in the program ever asked you for your advice or opinion about the program?), 61% of parent-clients' replies were positive and 39% negative. Answers to the second question mentioned are best illustrated through the following table (Table III).

TABLE III

Question: How often have you been asked about how successful the program has been?

| <u>Scale Level</u> | <u>%</u> |
|--------------------|----------|
| Very Much (4)      | 0.0      |
| Much (3)           | 6.9      |
| Some (2)           | 16.1     |
| A Little (1)       | 27.6     |
| Not At All (0)     | 41.4     |
| Don't Know (DK)    | 8.0      |
| No Response (NR)   | 0.0      |

Comments of parent-clients, as shown in the questionnaires, are quite revealing and useful for future planning. There are a few parents who are utterly negative regarding the BEP. These parents believe that their children should only learn English since it is the "official" language in the islands. They also tend to think that learning in a bilingual situation is confusing to the children. Some of these parents feel somewhat ashamed that their children should need bilingual education; they seem to believe that lack of knowledge of the English language is a sign of ignorance which affects their social status. Therefore, not knowing English is a situation to be concealed. Besides, as they see it, if a child knows Spanish already, why should he/she keep on learning it in school? One mother went as

far as to deny that her child is enrolled in the BEP since, in her opinion, he can speak English and has no need for any kind of "special program". Another mother seemed sincerely ignorant of the fact that her child was attending the BEP.

A number of parents feel that they are not sufficiently informed about the program to be able to help their children, but the majority of them showed willingness to learn and interest in contributing to the program, thus helping in the education of their children. Other parents justified their lack of knowledge about their children's school activities by reporting that they work and have no time available to share in their children's education. In one case, a mother stated that she had received many notices from school but had never had time to attend anything. In another case, the justification was sickness.

Some parents pointed out the lack of communication between parents and teachers. Two parents went as far as to say that teachers do not send home any information whatsoever regarding the educational process of their children.

A slight majority of parent-clients' comments are positive (53%). These parents feel that their children are progressing in school at a faster pace due to the BEP and some of them believe that the program should be extended to the whole island. Some parents expressed their feelings that the BEP will bring Puerto Ricans and native Virgin Islanders

closer together. A few stated that English-speaking students should also participate in the program.

Although, as indicated above, only a slight majority of comments are positive, this by no means indicates that a majority of interviewees has a negative attitude towards the BEP, since from a total of 58 comments, merely 10, or 17%, could be considered negative. The rest of the comments, or 30%, expressed lack of information regarding the program or justification for lack of participation in it.

A very distressing observation came from a mother who, in expressing her belief that bilingual schooling was the only positive means of educating children who were not familiar with the language used in school, reported that her child had become temporarily mute when he first started attending kindergarten in St. Croix. This condition, she said, persisted for about a year, when the child could express himself both in Spanish and English.<sup>24</sup>

## CHAPTER V

### Summary and Conclusions

#### Summary

Parents have a responsibility for the educational development of their children. The learning process begins when a child is born. It is up to the parents to help a child develop his oral language, his self-concept and ways to deal with his environment. The family's lifestyle and example contribute to a child's character and to his attitude towards learning. When the child enters school, parents have the obligation to continue their involvement in his education. Family attitudes and their social and cultural customs affect the child's learning process.

Parental involvement is very important in the regular setting of private or public schools; it is crucial when children are involved in bilingual education. Congress recognized the indispensability of parental involvement when it passed Public Law 93-380, which made parent-client participation a legal mandate. The ESEA was later amended to require local education agencies to comply with provisions for involvement and participation of parents and

community members.

This study was designed to provide data on parent-client participation in different areas of the BEP in St. Croix. The study also provided data for locally based accountability. Two hypotheses were presented. The first one, that parents are not participating fully in the BEP, was proved through the survey, which showed that a majority of parents did not participate at all in the assessment for the need of the BEP in the island, or in setting up its purpose. Although parent-clients seem to have made an important contribution in other areas of the BEP, participation has not involved half of the total number of parent-clients.

The second hypothesis, that parental involvement in the bilingual program develops favorable attitudes toward the program among parents and this change of attitude reflects in their attitude towards education in general, was also proved true, not only through the data provided by the questionnaires, but through the study of related literature. Parent-clients who are most familiar with the BEP are most positive about its possibilities and are willing to contribute towards its success and to participate in the education of their children. This information is derived specifically from parental comments which showed that parents who had participated the most were also the most positive about the BEP and the ones wanting to assist further.

Literature studied reveals that "the most common

rationale advanced for parental involvement in bilingual education is the effect that this is believed to have on improving student achievement."<sup>25</sup> Although little has been written on the subject, studies "support the view that the success of bilingual education programs is related to parental involvement."<sup>26</sup>

### Conclusions

The main purpose of this study was to elicit concrete recommendations regarding parent-client participation in St. Croix. After interviews with personnel involved in the BEP, careful consideration of related literature, tabulation of questionnaires, and analysis of all data available, the researcher is ready to conclude that the St. Croix district has complied with government policies, and, that according to the opinion of a majority of parent-clients, the BEP has been successful. However, there is much left to be done regarding full participation of parent-clients which could make the program more effective.

Data compiled should be useful to teachers and other personnel involved in the BEP to improve methods of communication with and participation of parent-clients. It should serve to evaluate past performance and to guide future planning.

According to the results of the questionnaires, only 61% of parent-clients have been asked for advice or an opinion about the program and less than 25% have been asked about

the success of the program on a regular basis. These findings, together with parent's comments, are quite revealing. They point out the need for more involvement, from a basic level of information to the more sophisticated level of participation. They call for a new assessment of the BEP, not so much for the benefit of the personnel involved as for the benefit of parent-clients, who need to be made aware of the necessity of the BEP, what it can do for their children, and how it can transform their future through education.

Parent-clients must be helped to come to terms with the fact that their children cannot handle an all-English curriculum, and that denying the problem will not provide a solution. Parent-clients should also be taught to be proud of their heritage so that they will be able to transmit this pride to their children.

According to the definition generally accepted in the Virgin Islands, a bilingual education program is specifically concerned with the creation and/or strengthening of a child's positive feelings about himself; it attempts to achieve this goal through the development in the child of a sense of appreciation of his language and culture (n. 12). The Spanish-speaking children of St. Croix need to learn to be proud of who they are, of their language, their traditions and their culture. At the present time Crucians can enjoy the availability of the best role model, for the present governor of the Virgin Islands is a Puerto Rican by birth.<sup>27</sup> Those involved in bilingual education in the island

can use this opportunity to their advantage by stressing the fact that a member of a minority group can achieve a high position if he/she is ready for the task. There are other Spanish-speaking members of the community who could similarly be used as examples of success, among them lawyers, doctors, teachers and other professionals and businessmen. These community leaders have transcended the language barrier and gone beyond many obstacles to become outstanding Virgin Islanders.

#### Implications and Recommendations

To achieve effective parental involvement, schools and parent-clients need to develop a partnership to improve the learning process by complementing each other in their effort to provide for the needs of the child. Learning is a continuous process which does not stop when the child leaves the classroom. If teachers are aware of this fact, they will recognize that the parent-client is a valuable source of information and advice, that he/she, better than anybody else, knows his child's strengths and weaknesses and can be a valuable partner in his/her child's education. The development of a partnership in education should then be the goal to be achieved by both teachers and parent-clients if every child is to be guaranteed quality education. It is up to school personnel (teachers, principals, supervisors, etc.) to educate parent-clients and to provide them with the necessary tools

to share in their children's education; it is up to parent-clients to take advantage of the opportunity and respond to the needs of their children by making every effort to participate in the educational process.

Some recommendations regarding attitudes and activities may be useful toward the achievement of effective partnership. The researcher will suggest that:<sup>28</sup>

1. Schools take the initiative in fostering parental involvement and every effort be made to implement a parent training component in the BEP.
2. Schools make use of the materials available through National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education (see n. 28). There are excellent materials which have already proven effective; teachers will not have to create as much as to adapt programs and activities to the local setting.
3. School personnel visit the home briefly before a child is enrolled in the BEP and a line of communication be established and maintained throughout the school year.
4. A handbook written in both Spanish and English be used for parent-clients to learn as much as possible about the BEP, individually or in groups.
5. Parents share this understanding of BEP with other families who may not know about the program.
6. Media resources (T.V., radio, newspapers) be used to divulge and enhance attitudes towards the BEP.
7. Parent-clients be informed and consulted regularly through circulars, meetings, and other activities provided by the school.
8. Schools celebrate open houses once or twice a year in days of special importance to the Puerto Rican community (e.g. Puerto Rico-Virgin Islands Friendship Week).
9. Parent-clients be encouraged to attend training courses and even to enroll in high school equivalency programs when adequate.
10. Parent-clients be encouraged to promote bilingualism/biculturalism among their children through workshops led

33

by teachers and minority community leaders and other professionals to develop a sense of pride and improve self-concept.

11. Parent-clients be hired as classroom aides whenever possible.

12. Parental training through the Bowdoin Method be continued and extended to all schools since it has been proven successful.

13. BEP teachers work together as a group and serve as trainers for parents as a service to the community.

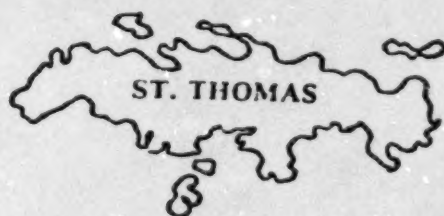
14. Assistance for parental training be requested from regional resource centers.

One of the major purposes of bilingual education is to bridge the gap between the home and school experience of a child to establish a healthy balance between the child's private world and the larger one outside the home. Teachers and parents can bridge the gap and establish the balance if they work as partners in the educational process of their children.

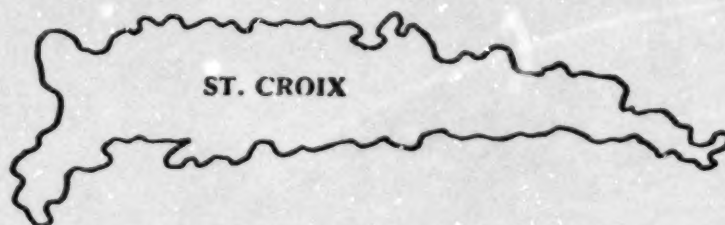
APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

## U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS



CARIBBEAN SEA



# APPENDIX C

## PARENT-CLIENT PARTICIPATION IN THE BILINGUAL EDUCATION PROGRAM (BEP) IN ST. CROIX, U.S.V.I.

QUESTIONNAIRE: Your views are very important in the preparation of this study. Your answers to the following questions will help in our common effort for better education in the Virgin Islands. Your answers will serve as a guide in the revision of an important aspect of the Bilingual Education Program (BEP): parental involvement. Your name will not appear in this questionnaire and all your answers will be kept strictly confidential. Thank you very much for your valuable cooperation.

BEP School \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Circle one rating number, or the letters to the right, or Yes or No, as needed for each of the following questions:

- |                                                                                             | Very Much<br>4 | Much<br>3 | Some<br>2 | A Little<br>1 | Not At All<br>0 | Don't Know<br>DK | No Response<br>NR |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------|-----------|---------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1. How much did you participate in the assessment for the need of the BEP in St. Croix?     | 4              | 3         | 2         | 1             | 0               | DK               | NR                |
| 2. Do you know if the program has definite aims?                                            |                |           |           |               |                 | Yes              | No                |
| 3. Did you give any help in setting up the purpose of the BEP?                              | 4              | 3         | 2         | 1             | 0               | DK               | NR                |
| 4. Did you give any help in setting up the BEP (through meetings, talks w/personnel, etc.)? | 4              | 3         | 2         | 1             | 0               | DK               | NR                |
| 5. Have you participated in the development of the BEP (through meetings, talks, etc.)?     | 4              | 3         | 2         | 1             | 0               | DK               | NR                |
| 6. Have you attended activities such as <u>trips</u> ,                                      | 4              | 3         | 2         | 1             | 0               | DK               | NR                |
| <u>meetings</u> ,                                                                           | 4              | 3         | 2         | 1             | 0               | DK               | NR                |
| <u>movies</u>                                                                               | 4              | 3         | 2         | 1             | 0               | DK               | NR                |
| <u>workshops, seminars, courses</u> ,                                                       | 4              | 3         | 2         | 1             | 0               | DK               | NR                |
| <u>other activities not mentioned?</u>                                                      | 4              | 3         | 2         | 1             | 0               | DK               | NR                |

7. Has anyone in the program ever asked you for your advice or opinion about the program?
- |   |   |   |   |   | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|---|---|-----|----|
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | DK  | NR |
8. How often have you been asked about how successful or unsuccessful the program has been?
- |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | DK | NR |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
9. Do you think the program has been successful or not successful?
- |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | DK | NR |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
10. Are you willing to help further with the program?
- |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | DK | NR |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|

COMMENTS:

Participación en el Programa de Educación Bilingüe (PEB) de los Padres de Niños Matriculados en el Programa

Questionario: Su opinión es muy importante en la preparación de este estudio. Sus respuestas nos ayudarán en el esfuerzo de lograr una educación mejor en las Islas Vírgenes, y nos servirán de guía en la revisión de un aspecto importante del Programa de Educación Bilingüe (PEB): la participación de los padres. Su nombre no aparecerá en este cuestionario y todas sus respuestas serán confidenciales. Muchas gracias por su valiosa cooperación.

Escuela (PEB) \_\_\_\_\_ Fecha \_\_\_\_\_

Haga un círculo alrededor del número, las letras a la derecha, o Sí o No, según sea necesario en cada una de las siguientes preguntas:

|           |       |          |         |                |       |               |
|-----------|-------|----------|---------|----------------|-------|---------------|
| Muchísimo | Mucho | Bastante | Un Poco | En lo absoluto | No Sé | Sin Responder |
| 4         | 3     | 2        | 1       | 0              | NS    | SR            |

1. ¿Participó Ud. en el proceso de decidir si hacía falta un PEB en Santa Cruz?

|   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NS | SR |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|

2. ¿Sabe Ud. si el programa tiene metas o propósitos específicos?

Si      No

3. ¿Ayudó Ud. a determinar esas metas o propósitos del PEB?

|   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NS | SR |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|

4. ¿Ayudó Ud. el el establecimiento del BEP (a través de reuniones, cartas, conversaciones, etc.)?

|   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NS | SR |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|

5. ¿Ha participado Ud. en el desarrollo del PEB (a través de reuniones, conversaciones, etc.)?

Si      No

6. ¿Ha participado Ud. en actividades tales como viajes,

|   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NS | SR |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|

reuniones,

|   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NS | SR |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|

películas,

|   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NS | SR |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|

talleres, seminarios,

|   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NS | SR |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|

cursos,

|   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NS | SR |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|

otras actividades?

|   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | NS | SR |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|

7. ¿Alguien del PEB le ha pedido su opinión o consejo acerca del programa?  
Si No

8. ¿Se le ha preguntado con frecuencia si el programa es efectivo o no?  
4 3 2 1 0 NS SR

9. ¿Cree Ud. que el programa ha sido efectivo o no?  
4 3 2 1 0 NS SR

10. ¿Está Ud. interesado en cooperar con el programa en el futuro?  
4 3 2 1 0 NS SR

Comentarios: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX D  
SCHOOLS OPERATING BILINGUAL P

| SCHOOL                                         | TOTAL<br>ENROLL-<br>MENT | BI-<br>LING-<br>UAL<br>ENROLL-<br>MENT | TOTAL<br>NO. OF<br>TEACHING<br>PERSON-<br>NEL | B<br>EL        |
|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------|
| ALEXANDER<br>HENDERSON<br>ELEMENTARY<br>SCHOOL | 756                      | 355                                    | 62                                            | 20             |
| EVELYN<br>WILLIAMS<br>ELEMENTARY<br>SCHOOL     | 076                      | 118                                    | 70                                            | 7              |
| CHARLES<br>EMANUEL<br>ELEMENTARY<br>SCHOOL     | 698                      | 139                                    | 48                                            | 9              |
| ALFREDO<br>ANDREWS<br>ELEMENTARY<br>SCHOOL     | 766                      | 114                                    | 60                                            | 9              |
| ST. CROIX<br>CENTRAL<br>HIGH<br>SCHOOL         | 2,471                    | 94                                     | 92                                            | 44             |
| ELENA<br>CHRISTIAN<br>JUNIOR HIGH              | 1,448                    | 40                                     | 87                                            | 8              |
| ARTHUR<br>RICHARDS                             | 1,304<br><u>7,519</u>    | 15<br><u>875</u>                       | 66<br><u>485</u>                              | 2<br><u>99</u> |

Provided by Mrs. María Sanes, Bilingual Education  
Specialist St. Croix, Virgin Islands.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Francesco Cordasco, Bilingual Schooling in the United States: A Sourcebook for Educational Personnel (McGraw Hill, 1976), p. 2. All further references to this work appear in the text.

<sup>2</sup> Rodolfo Rodríguez, "Citizen Participation in Selected Bilingual Education Advisory Committees," NABE Journal, V, No. 2 (Winter 1980-81), p. 2. All further references to this work appear in the text.

<sup>3</sup> Gordon K. Lewis, The Virgin Islands (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1972), pp. 199-200, 207. All further references to this work appear in the text.

<sup>4</sup> Isabel B. James, "A Descriptive Analysis of the St. Croix Title VII Bilingual Education Program," Diss. College of the Virgin Islands, 1980, p. 3. All further references to this work appear in the text.

<sup>5</sup> Virgin Islands Department of Education, Proposal for a Federally Funded Bilingual Program, 1973, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> -----, Initial Plan for the Implementation of a Bilingual Education Program, 1973, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> María Torres, "Current Research on Parents and Schools," Policy Notes, Institute for Research on Educational Finance and Governance (IFG), Vol. 2, No. 4 (Stanford U., Autumn 1981), p. 7. All further references to this work will appear abbreviated (IFG) in the text.

<sup>8</sup> James C. Cibulka, "Administrators as Representatives: The Role of Local Communities in an Urban School System," Diss. Univ. of Chicago, 1973, as quoted by Rodríguez, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> Sandra Kirkpatrick, Assistant Director of Dissemination, IFG. Letter to researcher, 19 May 1982. See n. 7.

<sup>10</sup> Cora M. Ramos, "A Model Parent Advisory Council Designed for the United States Virgin Islands," Diss. University of Sarasota, Florida, 1981 and Isabel B. James (See no. 4).

<sup>11</sup> Bernard Cohen et al., Project P.I.E. Parent Involvement in Evaluation (New York: Impact Institute, Inc., 1981), p. 44. For definitions 3, 5, 6, 10, 13 and 15, see pp. 44-48. All further references to this work will appear abbreviated (P.I.E.) in the text.

<sup>12</sup> Virgin Islands Department of Education, Institutionalization of Bilingual Education in the Public School System of the Virgin Islands: A Position Paper, 1978. Definition 8, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> Félix Mario Valbuena and Others, The Parents' Guide to Bilingual/Bicultural Education. Home, Child, School. (Detroit Public Schools, Michigan Department of Bilingual Education, 1978), pp. 15, 22 (ERIC ED 210 384). All further references to this work appear in the text.

<sup>14</sup> Lauren P. Collins and Margarita Obregón Pagán, La Participación de los Padres en la Educación de los Hijos: un Manual. (Parent Involvement in Education: A Planning Manual) (Mesa Community College, Arizona 1980), p. i (ERIC ED 206 353). All further references to this work appear in the text.

<sup>15</sup> Eliverio Chávez, Parental Involvement and Participation in Bilingual Education: A Guide. (El Involucramiento y la Participación de los Padres en la Educación Bilingüe: Una Guía) (National Institute for Multicultural Education, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1980), p. ia (ERIC ED 206 787). All further references to this work will appear in the text.

<sup>16</sup> Robert K. Yin, Citizen Organizations: Increasing Client-Control Over Services (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand Corp., 1973), p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Programs Under Bilingual Education Act (Title VII, ESEA: Manual for Project Applicants and Grantees (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1971).

<sup>18</sup> The Bilingual Education Act, Public Law 95-561, Education Amendments of 1978-Title VII (National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, January 1979), pp. 3-4.

<sup>19</sup> Virgin Island Department of Education, Final Evaluation Report, August 1974 to August, 1978. Interview with Mrs. E. Bennewith, Foreign Language Supervisor (April 29, 1982), and Mrs. María Sanes, Bilingual Education Specialist (April 29

and June 18, 1982).

<sup>20</sup>Ruth S. Bowdoin, The Bowdoin Method Manual (U.S.A.: Webster International, Inc., 1978). The Bowdoin Method intertwines both the cognitive and the affective areas in a program for effective parenting. Information regarding its use was obtained from Mrs. María Sanes.

<sup>21</sup>Interview with Mrs. Bennewith and Mrs. Sanes (See n. 19).

<sup>22</sup>One hundred families were interviewed but only eighty seven fully completed questionnaires were used. The researcher had the help of Mr. Osvaldo Parrilla, a bilingual student at the College of the Virgin Islands (St. Thomas campus) who lives in St. Croix. Mr. Parrilla assisted with the interviews after being trained by the researcher.

<sup>23</sup>The significance of the findings is discussed on conclusions and recommendations, Chapter V.

<sup>24</sup>Mr. Parrilla, the investigator, could not provide any other data, except that this woman's child attended Henderson School. At the time of the interview, he could not conceive her story possible and did not pursue it.

<sup>25</sup>Hermes T. Cervantes and Others, "Community Involvement in Bilingual Education: The Bilingual Educator as Parent Trainer," NABE Journal, III, No. 2 (Winter 1969), p. 73 (As reprinted by National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education).

<sup>26</sup>-----, "Community Involvement in Bilingual Education," p. 74. The authors mention four sources of reference: Gore, 1974; Ksoljeth, 1972; Kraft, 1972; and Moreno, 1974.

<sup>27</sup>The Honorable Juan Luis became governor of the Virgin Islands after Governor King's death in January 1977. He became governor in his own right when he was elected to the position in November 1978. He has been reelected (November, 1982) to serve another term.

<sup>28</sup>Many of the recommendations were adapted from materials provided by National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 1300 Wilson Boulevard, Suite B2-11, Rosslyn, Virginia 22209.

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## COLLEGE of the VIRGIN ISLANDS

13 May 1982

RECEIVED  
MAY 18 4 43 PM '82  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

Dr. Charles Turnbull  
Commissioner of Education  
Department of Education  
St. Thomas, USVI 00802

Dear Commissioner Turnbull;

I am hereby requesting your authorization to obtain names and addresses of parents with children enrolled in the Bilingual Program in St. Croix (both two-way and limited programs).

I am working on a study on parent-client participation in the Bilingual Education Program in St. Croix. The study will be exploratory and will reveal areas where parent-client involvement is lacking. The ultimate goal of the study is to make the Bilingual Program more effective by strengthening the role of parents. Although the study will be limited to the area of bilingual education, the findings will be useful to other areas of education.

Thank you very much for your consideration on this matter.

Respectfully yours,

*C.H.A. Padgett*

Carmen H.A. Padgett  
Chairperson  
Humanities Division

APPROVED

*Charles W. Turnbull*

Charles W. Turnbull Ph.D.  
Commissioner of Education

CHAP:mla

*Dr. Padgett  
Mrs. Canegata  
Mr. Munoz  
Mrs. Beneyto  
Dr. Murphy*