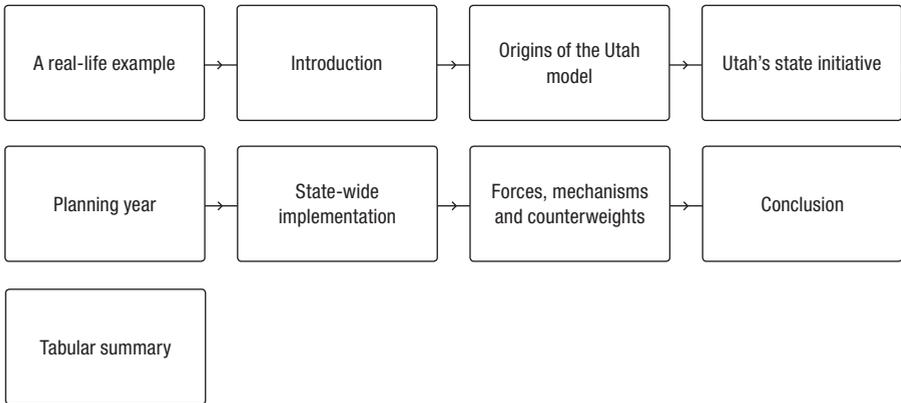

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UTAH: Making Immersion Mainstream

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CHAPTER NAVIGATOR



A REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE

In 1979, 11 first graders and 16 second graders, backed by highly supportive parents, entered Utah's first immersion programme at Cherry Hill Elementary School (Howe 1983). One family, whose child had already experienced immersion, helped launch the Spanish programme for English-speaking children by convincing the Alpine School District to provide \$2000 for supplies. Over the following 30 years, Alpine would offer similar programmes at eight other elementary schools. However, by 2009, only three programmes remained. State standardised testing, a lack of support in some secondary schools, and the departure of teachers and students contributed to the decline.

In addition to Alpine, other school districts in the state of Utah began creating immersion programmes. In 1999, concern for English language learners at Timpanogos Elementary School in Provo led administrators to establish a 50/50, two-way Spanish immersion programme. In the following years,

Salt Lake School District launched a similar programme at two schools, and Washington County School District started a whole-school Spanish immersion programme. Shortly thereafter, Davis and Granite School Districts also began to develop a Spanish immersion programme for four of their own schools.

For 30 years, between 1979 and 2009, immersion programmes throughout the state of Utah were established as the result of educator and parent groups lobbying their local school boards. The motivations of these groups varied from enrichment opportunities for gifted children, to bilingual support for immigrant children, to preparation for future missionary opportunities. However, these grassroots initiatives often lacked adequate financial resources, and educators did not have systematic access to professional development. Although some collaboration took place, schools, individual teachers and principals had to assume the responsibility for creating curriculum, teaching and advocating for immersion with little external support.

This environment changed in 2008 when mechanisms such as legislation and funding came together in support of a state-sponsored language immersion model. By the autumn of 2014, Utah had made immersion a mainstream option in 118 public schools across the state, with over 25 000 students enrolled in five languages: Chinese, French, German, Portuguese and Spanish. This was the first and largest state-supported immersion initiative in the United States.¹ As a religiously and politically conservative state with fewer than three million inhabitants, Utah is a surprising location for such a rapidly growing state-funded programme. However, despite its conservative nature, Utah is becoming a model for the expansion of dual-language immersion across the country.²

INTRODUCTION

This chapter traces the origins of the Utah model of immersion, which grew from a series of separate grassroots programmes into a state-wide language initiative. It discusses how this initiative led to the creation of a state-approved 50/50 immersion model, starting in Grade 1 and continuing throughout high school and into local universities. Finally, the chapter examines the forces, mechanisms and counterweights that are influencing the development of the Utah immersion programme.

ORIGINS OF THE UTAH MODEL

In 2004, at the invitation of Davis School District Assistant Superintendent Craig Poll, Principals Becky Hunt and Ofelia Wade accepted the challenge of integrating Spanish immersion into their schools. They began by contacting renowned immersion academics and were directed to Tara Fortune at the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) at the University of Minnesota. Under Fortune's guidance, Hunt and Wade delved into the literature on language education and began visiting immersion programmes. They developed a proposal outlining a 50/50 immersion model in which students would learn curriculum with an English-speaking teacher for half the day and a Spanish-speaking teacher for the other half of the day. The Davis school board approved the proposal in 2005, pledged \$20 000 for programme development and set aside a year for planning.

During this planning year, Gregg Roberts, the world language specialist at Granite School District in Utah, visited the Davis School District. Roberts was inspired by plans to launch an immersion programme in two schools. In 2006, after Davis School District officially launched immersion at Eagle Bay and Sand Springs, Roberts received permission from Granite's school board to implement a pilot programme in two schools patterned after the one that Wade and Hunt had created. In the autumn of 2007, Granite School District began 50/50 Spanish immersion at Vista and William Penn Elementary Schools.

UTAH'S STATE INITIATIVE

While immersion was being developed in Davis and Granite, a small committee composed of world language specialists from Alpine, Davis, Granite and Murray School Districts began meeting with supervisors at the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) to discuss issues in language education. The group, which included Gregg Roberts, eventually became the Utah World Languages Coordinators' Committee. In late 2005, the state supervisor responsible for language education retired from the USOE, leaving the World Language Specialist position vacant. Because there were insufficient funds to hire someone full-time, Roberts initially filled the position on an informal basis and later began officially splitting his contract between Granite and the USOE. As an enthusiastic champion who believed in the value of

immersion, Roberts would become a key mechanism in launching a state-wide dual-language immersion programme.

Soon after Roberts transitioned into his new role at the USOE, the state governor's office requested a meeting with him to discuss language education. During that meeting, Governor Jon Huntsman, himself a Chinese speaker, and Senator Howard Stephenson, Chair of the Utah State Senate Education Committee, tasked Roberts with creating a distance-education programme that would introduce Chinese and Arabic into the state's high schools. In March 2007, using future economic growth as a selling point, Senator Stephenson helped pass two bills in the Utah legislature that were critical to the future development of these and other language programmes across the state. Senate Bill 2 provided \$100 000 of ongoing funding for a full-time world language specialist, a position that Roberts was soon offered; and Senate Bill 80 provided \$230 000 over six years to create the Critical Language Pilot Program for online Chinese and Arabic programmes in 20 secondary schools across Utah.

Once these programmes were functioning successfully, Roberts was able to draw on this political capital to convince Senator Stephenson that if legislators wished to increase the number of Utah citizens proficient in foreign languages, they would need to focus on younger learners and involve more students at a lower cost. Roberts proposed the state-wide replication of the type of Spanish immersion programme being offered by the Granite and Davis districts. Governor Huntsman and Senator Stephenson used their influence to help bring Roberts's vision of an elementary school language immersion programme into being. In 2008, Senate Bill 41 proposed the creation of a state-wide dual-language immersion programme. Several key individuals – State Senator Howard Stephenson, House sponsor Bradley Last and Deputy Superintendent Larry Shumway – played critical roles in convincing state legislators to vote for the bill, which was entitled *The International Education Initiative: Critical Languages Programs*. The law earmarked a total of \$750 000, with \$480 000 for the existing Critical Language Programme and \$270 000 for the dual-language immersion programme. In the 2008 general legislative session, Senate Bill 41 became law with a unanimous vote.

Following the Davis and Granite model, the law stated that the immersion programme would offer 50% of instruction through English and 50% through the target language, beginning in kindergarten or Grade 1, with the intention of adding one grade level each year. Though Huntsman and Stephenson initially intended for the immersion programme to be in Chinese, Roberts

lobbied for Spanish and French as well. The legislation foresaw 15 schools with immersion: six with Spanish, six with Chinese, one with Navajo and two with French. However, the Navajo reservation school chose not to participate and, surprisingly, 21 new schools applied for the programme. All were accepted and received grants of \$6000 to \$18000 each. In addition to these 21 schools, the four schools piloting immersion in the Davis and Granite School Districts also received state support.

Under the auspices of the governor's office and with the support of key stakeholders from the education and business communities, three summits served as a mechanism for creating a long-term language plan for the state. The first was the Governor's Language Summit, which focused on the link between language education and Utah's capacity to participate in the global economy. Attendees included state K-12 administrators, local university professors and renowned national language experts. Six months later, the Utah International Education Summit brought together influential K-12 and university educators from across the state to discuss the logistics of implementing language immersion in Utah's schools. Finally, the Salt Lake City Language Summit concentrated on the need for language skills among the workforce. This third summit was sponsored by the World Trade Center Utah and included 15 representatives from local businesses who provided their insights and ideas regarding the need for language and cultural skills in navigating a global economy.

The three summits were central mechanisms in driving forward the language education agenda. A major outcome was the Utah Language Roadmap, which established an ambitious language education plan to prepare Utah students to enter a changing global economy for the benefit of Utah's businesses, education system, government agencies and citizens (Roberts and Talbot 2009). Written primarily by Gregg Roberts and Sandra Talbot, the roadmap was endorsed by the Governor, the State Superintendent of Schools and the World Trade Center Utah. Within the roadmap, eight languages were determined to be essential for Utah's economic future: Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish.

PLANNING YEAR

In preparation for the August 2009 launch of programmes, Roberts worked closely with Myriam Met, a consultant Roberts has described as 'the mother of Utah dual-language immersion', and a team including Ann Tollefson,

Sandra Talbot and Kaye Murdock. During the 2008–9 planning year, stakeholders visited immersion programmes throughout the United States. The ultimate goal was to balance established research and practice in language acquisition with the practicality of implementing immersion on a larger scale. Three of the most influential visits took place in Fairfax County Public Schools in Virginia, Montgomery County Public Schools in Maryland and Portland Public Schools in Oregon. After observing these programmes, the team decided to combine what they felt were the strengths of each. From Fairfax, they took the 50/50 model, which split content instruction between two languages. From Montgomery County, they replicated the scheduled time for explicit instruction in target language literacy. From Portland, they formed English and target language teacher teams at each grade level who would share a cohort of students and collaborate to ensure that each achieved academic and linguistic proficiency. The strength of the Utah team was its ability to compromise in an effort to maximise the benefits of immersion while pragmatically alleviating potential threats from those that might oppose the programme.

Roberts wanted the 50/50 model in Utah for several reasons. First, the model had been successfully implemented by Davis and Granite School Districts. Second, allotting 50% of the day for students to develop their English literacy skills with a certified English-speaking teacher acted as a counterweight to parental and administrative fears about any possible negative impact on English language proficiency that might have resulted from a more extended immersion component. Third, the 50/50 model involved two classrooms per grade, allowing twice as many students to be enrolled in immersion while only dedicating one full-time employee per grade to the target language. This practicality made the transition to the programme easy, inexpensive and marketable, with minimal effect on the rest of the school population. The model was also believed to be replicable and sustainable, with the ability to remain consistent across the state.

Highly qualified teachers with proficiency in the target languages were considered essential to the success of the future state-wide immersion programme. Accordingly, immersion programme teachers were, and continue to be, required to obtain at least an Advanced-Mid level score on the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), a proficiency test developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), in the target language. In subsequent years, additional testing requirements have been added to assess reading and writing.

To create the initial candidate pool of Spanish, French and Chinese immersion teachers, administrators looked to the local Utah population to find

licensed teachers with native or native-like language proficiency in the target languages. However, the demand outweighed the local supply, and the state needed to bring teachers in from outside the United States. Roberts began Utah's International Guest Teacher Programme by negotiating or renegotiating Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with agencies in five countries: China, France, Mexico, Spain and Taiwan. Each MoU was signed by the USOE and a foreign state or federal agency that was responsible for creating a candidate pool of experienced and credentialed foreign teachers with English proficiency. Under the leadership of Sydnee Dickson, specialists in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and staff in the Department of Educator Licensing at the USOE collaborated to facilitate licenses for international teachers to teach in Utah.

Today, guest teachers are granted a work visa for one to three years. USOE or district representatives interview candidates virtually or through in-person recorded sessions, creating a pool from which principals can choose their teachers. At the local level, international guest teachers provide students with an authentic connection to the target culture and language. As a counterweight to their inexperience in the American school system, guest teachers are paired with English partner teachers who have roots in the community and school. Across grade levels in the immersion programme, principals also attempt to balance the numbers of international guest teachers with local speakers of the target language.

STATE-WIDE IMPLEMENTATION

In the autumn of 2009, at the time of the programme's launch, several significant events occurred at the state level. Governor Jon Huntsman became the American Ambassador to China and Lieutenant Governor Gary Herbert, another supporter of immersion, became governor. Larry Shumway, a significant force in the passing of Senate Bill 41, became the State Superintendent of Schools. These three individuals would have an impact on the development of immersion by serving as mechanisms for growth.

Prior to the start of the programme, the first Annual Utah Dual Immersion Institute (AUDII) was held in August 2009. Over 150 teachers and administrators attended the one-day event. Myriam Met and Tara Fortune were keynote speakers. Twenty-five schools in ten districts around the state participated in the event as members of the initiative: the four original Granite and Davis District schools, eight additional schools with Spanish immersion, five schools with French and eight with Chinese.

During this first year, consultant Greg Duncan used the ACTFL proficiency scale to develop state-level language proficiency benchmarks for each language in listening, speaking, reading and writing. The proficiency standards now guide instruction at all levels of dual-language immersion in Utah. Teachers receive training regarding language proficiency and use standardised proficiency reports at parent-teacher conferences to assess and report to parents on the progress of each student. Standardised formative and summative assessments have also been selected by the state team.

FORCES, COUNTERWEIGHTS AND MECHANISMS

Forces:

Since 2009, the initiative has grown to support more than 25 000 students in over 100 schools in five languages. While the original impetus for the initiative was economic, the sustaining force has been the public's favourable attitude towards language learning. Though politically and religiously conservative, one-third of Utah's workforce is bilingual (Sterling 2012). This multilingual and well-educated workforce is arguably the reason the state recovered from the recent economic recessions faster than the rest of the nation.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, headquartered in Salt Lake City, contributes to the high number of bilinguals. As part of their missionary efforts, the 'Mormon' church sends young men and women around the globe to learn and then to teach through foreign languages. Utah becomes home to many of these former bilingual missionaries, many of whom believe in the value of language education. Governor Jon Huntsman's former experience as a Chinese-speaking missionary led to his conviction that language learning is of great value.

Counterweights:

The implementation of dual-language immersion in Utah did not happen without opposition. Some parents refused to put their children in Chinese immersion citing ideological differences with China, its history or its political leanings towards communism. When Spanish was introduced in other schools, some criticised it as being supportive of illegal immigration by lowering the standards of English instruction for English language learners. Later, after Spanish and Chinese immersion programmes became more prevalent,

some parents opposed the introduction of new immersion languages such as Portuguese. Beyond concerns about the chosen immersion language, many worried that dual-language immersion would have a negative impact on the schools in which programmes were housed. They felt that immersion would harm academic performance, detract attention from English-medium classrooms or act as elitist programmes by drawing academically advanced students. Many teachers saw immersion as a threat to their employment or their school atmosphere.

This sizable number of fears had the potential to act as a negative counterweight to the fledgling immersion programme. To counter concerns and misinformation, state and local administrators made communication a priority by disseminating information through parents' nights, faculty meetings, emails, websites and newsletters. The state team advocated for dual-language immersion as a mainstream and general education option, rather than a gifted programme, that would be appropriate for students of varying backgrounds and all ability levels (Fortune and Menke 2010). They shared research findings regarding the benefit of continued support in a student's native language and emphasised that dual-language immersion could increase academic rigour by closing the achievement gap between English language learners and native English speakers (Thomas and Collier 2012). Principals also worked to assure teachers that they would not lose their jobs because of immersion. Public opinion continues to slowly change as a result of the continued efforts of supportive school administrators, teachers and parents who raise awareness of the programme, its goals and its results.

During the first year, student applications to participate in the immersion programme came in slowly but steadily around the state as principals advertised and invested in public relations efforts. Though some believed that the immersion programme was destined to fail, within a year schools had waiting lists as they could not meet the demand. Most schools give preference to students with a sibling in the programme or to heritage learners whose parents or family members may be native speakers of the language. Beyond these exceptions, students are chosen through a lottery. No students are precluded from participation based on their learning profile. After the first year, students are only admitted to the programme if they have the requisite second language skills.

Mechanisms:

In 2010, Governor Gary Herbert and State Superintendent Larry Shumway's goal was to implement the immersion programme in 100 schools, enrolling

30 000 students by 2015. Table 1 shows the number of schools participating in dual-language immersion across the state from August 2009 to August 2014.

The growth in numbers, in part at least, came from pre-existing immersion programmes that joined the official state model since 2009. As a pioneer of immersion in Alpine School District, Principal Karl Bowman converted his school to the new state model in August 2010. Mechanisms such as financial and political support provided by state-wide infrastructure convinced him and other early developers to join the programme. Growth has also come as schools have expanded their programmes by offering several classes per grade level. Other schools have moved from offering a single strand to implementing a whole-school model in which all students participate in immersion. The number of languages offered by the state has also expanded to include Portuguese in 2012 and German in 2014, with plans for continued expansion.

Table 1: Dual-language immersion programme growth in Utah-

School Year	Chinese	French	German	Portuguese	Spanish	Total number of Programmes	Total number of Students
2009–10	8	5	0	0	12 total (6 one-way, 6 two-way)	25	1400
2010–11	14	6	0	0	20 total (10 one-way, 10 two-way)	40	5500
2011–12	17	9	0	0	30 total (16 one-way, 14 two-way)	56	9400
2012–13	25	10	0	2	40 total (20 one-way, 18 two-way, 2 secondary)	77	14 000
2013–14	28	11	0	5	54 total (24 one-way, 24 two-way, 6 secondary)	98	20 000
2014–15	33	14	2	6	63 total (26 one-way, 26 two-way, 11 secondary)	118	25 000

Schools that choose to participate in the state model receive special funds from the legislature – an obvious mechanism motivating schools' participation. In 2010, Utah allocated ongoing financing of immersion totalling

\$980 000 each year. Securing this funding has largely been the result of the continued efforts of Senator Howard Stephenson, who has been the mechanism in the state legislature advocating for the dual-language immersion programme. In March 2013, Stephenson successfully secured an increase in funding for the state's 100 immersion schools to approximately two million dollars. From these funds, approximately \$10 000 is awarded to each school annually with the remaining money allocated to the state team for curriculum development, professional development, assessments and salaries.

Throughout the growth of the programme, Roberts has developed committees for designing curriculum, preparing materials and offering professional development to teachers. Each language is led by a director who is supported by a number of language coordinators commensurate with the number of schools offering immersion in that language. The directors and coordinators are housed in school districts around the state, acting as counterweights between the state and districts. Consultants Myriam Met, Ann Tollefson, Greg Duncan and numerous university professors have been constant advisors to the development of the initiative. Together, the directors, coordinators and consultants have been responsible for developing and translating curriculum in each of the content areas. A core belief in the value of the programme and trust in each other's contributions has been a driving force that has allowed the team to resolve conflicts and work towards a common goal.

Another important mechanism is the Dual Language Immersion Advisory Council, which is composed of principals and administrators from every school and district involved in dual-language immersion for Grades 1–9. Although schools are required to follow the state model and target language curriculum in order to receive funding and materials, they retain some liberty in implementation. Principals are encouraged to take ownership of programme logistics with the support of their individual school districts.

Utah universities serve as fundamental mechanisms by preparing teachers for a dual-language immersion teaching credential. Local universities have also committed to continued language development by accepting the responsibility to develop and teach hybrid courses for Grades 10–12 of the secondary immersion programmes. They are also preparing to serve these students after high-school graduation through advanced language courses at the university level. These offerings should act as a counterweight to students' early withdrawal from the programme as there is a practical outlet for their immersion studies beyond K–12 education (see Genesee in this volume).

National grants have also helped Utah's dual-language immersion programmes by supplementing state funding. Utah was a recipient of a K–12 Chinese Flagship Grant in 2011 and Foreign Language Assistance Program

(FLAP) grants in 2009 and 2010. As a leader in K–12 Chinese immersion, Utah developed the Flagship – Chinese Acquisition Pipeline (F–CAP) Consortium for collaboration between universities and state and local education agencies across the country. Utah was also awarded national STARTALK grants for Chinese annually from 2009 to 2013, and for Portuguese from 2012 to 2014. These mechanisms have helped support the Chinese and Portuguese programmes by financing summer student camps and teacher training for less commonly taught languages.

In 2012, Delaware became the second state in the United States to implement a state-wide immersion initiative modelled after Utah. Georgia and Wyoming have followed suit by allocating state funds specifically for dual-language immersion programmes. Utah has opened the doors of its classrooms to national and international visitors interested in implementing similar programmes. Focused attention from national media has contributed to interest in Utah dual-language immersion, raising the prestige of the programme and further fuelling programme expansion in Utah and other states.

CONCLUSION: DUAL-LANGUAGE IMMERSION TODAY

This chapter has examined the development of state-wide dual-language immersion in Utah as well as the forces, mechanisms and counterweights that shaped the implementation of the programme. Forces in Utah, including a culture of language learning, interest in the state's economic future, local knowledge of languages and a positive attitude toward language learning, provided fertile ground for a movement that would be simultaneously grass-roots and top-down. Mechanisms in human form have included stakeholders from every sphere: politicians, lawmakers, educators, business people, parents and students. The concerted efforts of these stakeholders have provided counterweights that balance the concerns and challenges threatening future expansion. Moving into the future, Utah's challenge will be to sustain momentum as people in positions of authority are replaced with new leaders who may or may not have passion for dual-language immersion. These leaders will be required to prove that the benefits outweigh the costs of the programme. In particular, they will need to demonstrate that immersion will not adversely affect those students who are not in the programme.

In August 2014, students from Davis School District's original Spanish pilot programme entered Grade 9 and students from the first year of the state model entered Grade 6. As dual-language immersion students around the state continue to progress, Utah remains committed to offering them

articulated language instruction from Grade 1 onward, through to university education. Utah plans to sustain the continued expansion of the programme while further institutionalising it at the school, district and state levels. Gregg Roberts has stated that ‘monolingualism is the illiteracy of the 21st century’, and Utah hopes to stamp out this form of illiteracy by continuing to mainstream immersion in Utah and beyond.

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NOTES

- 1 For a history of immersion programmes in the broader context of the United States, see Tedick in this volume.
- 2 ‘Dual-language immersion’ is defined here as a language education model dedicated to additive bilingualism and biliteracy with a minimum of 50% of the daily subject matter taught in the target language at the elementary level (Christian 2011; Tedick and Fortune 2008). Utah has chosen to use the term ‘dual-language immersion’ as an umbrella term to characterise all of its immersion programmes. Within Utah’s official state model, two programme types may be found at the elementary level: (1) one-way or foreign language immersion, a model in which native English speakers learn a foreign or world language through immersion; and (2) two-way immersion, a model that pairs balanced numbers of native English speakers with native speakers of the target language, with instructional time divided between the two languages.

FORCES	MECHANISMS
Key values in human relations	People
Trust Respect	Committed parents High-status supporters (business, education, government) Networks
Principles for cooperation	Dedicated individuals Expert consultants
Stakeholder inclusion Power sharing Recognition of local expertise	Knowledge building and leadership
Goals	Utah World Languages Coordinators' Committee A series of summits under the auspices of the governor Dual Language Immersion Advisory Council Annual Utah Dual Immersion Institute A public information campaign Study visits to other states Committees for designing curriculum, preparing materials and offering professional development to teachers
Commitment to a vision that guides programme development Relationship building Construction of a coherent narrative common to key stakeholders	Directors and coordinators for each language
Beliefs	Agreements
A sense of mission A belief in immersion A belief in the value of building a multilingual workforce Fear (of a loss of proficiency in English, job losses) Prestige	Legislation Guest teacher programme Memoranda of understanding Language proficiency standards
Founding principles	Vehicles
Time for learning and discussion Learning for all Voluntary nature of programme Additive nature of programme (does not detract from L1 or subject learning)	State financing Centrally produced curricula Centrally produced learning materials STARTALK grants Teacher pre- and in-service training State-level office to coordinate programme
	Plans
	A one-year planning stage A pilot programme Targets Standardised assessment instruments
COUNTERWEIGHTS	
Fear	Information and public meetings
Lack of interest	Initial perceived success
Mormon conservatism	Mormon tradition of seeking converts
Monolingualism as sufficient	Monolingualism as illiteracy
Elitism	Access primarily through lottery
Central control or direction	Encouragement of local initiative
Centrally used funding	Locally used funding
Emphasising one language	Emphasising a wide variety of languages
Programme attrition	Primary through university articulation
Ideological differences	Information campaign