Recommendations to Mitigate the Challenges in Cambridge Language Testing Centre that would Benefit Universidad de Guayaquil

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SUMMARY: *This paper states that if the University of Guayaquil creates the effective LTC, it would add more value of the educational services. However, the language assessment techniques and teaching process may create obstacles in providing effective educational services to the students. Nevertheless, by implementing effective strategies the university can overcome the challenges of the language testing process that would significantly benefit the students. To increase the effectiveness of the programs before installing it, teachers of the university must ensure about its reliability, validity, and authenticity. Additionally, the faculty of the university must examine how the program would help the university to achieve its long-term goal as well as short-term goals. Along with that, maintaining consistency in the test and evaluation method would ensure the reliability as well as validity of the result, which would in-turn increase the chances of acceptance of the outcomes of the program.*

Keywords*: reliability, validity, practicality, discrimination, authenticity, knowledge hub, monitoring, innovative techniques, challenges.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Language Testing Centre (LTC) is a platform, which provides effective educational benefits to the students or other individuals in terms of a particular language. The main objective behind this kind of centre is to educate people about a particular language in an efficient manner, so that they can gain full fluency while communicating. Among the different LTCs, Cambridge English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) centre has been one of the most globally recognized. Cambridge ESOL conducts several exams such as Cambridge English: First (FCE), Cambridge English: Advanced (CAE), Cambridge English: Proficiency (CPE) and Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT) to test the language proficiency of the students as well as other individuals. Contextually, to increase the speaking, writing and listening skills of the students of the university as well as others in English Language, University of Guayaquil intends to construct an 'Internal Cambridge Language Testing Centre' (Meien, 2007).

Cambridge ESOL centre is categorized in to two sub centers such as internal as well as open. In this regard, internal centers only provide English language learning benefits within a particular school, university or other institutions. However, open centers were intended to provide language-learning benefits to overall people of the country or city including schools and universities (Goldstein, 2014). Accordingly, University of Guayaquil wanted to create such a learning platform of English, where along with the students from university or schools, people of Guayas province and wide areas of Ecuador can gain proficiency in English language. In this context, University of Guayaquil proposed effective educational venture program, which will conduct exams such as FCE, TKT, CPE and CAE. Accordingly, this center would prepare students for the exam so that within a limited time as well as cost they can obtain fluency in English language and compete with others in terms of English language proficiency. Contextually, the paper intends to highlight the benefits of testing centre and identify how it can add more benefits and value to University of Guayaquil.

II. METHOD

After the economic as well as the social reform in Guayaquil, the employment conditions, people's lifestyle, educational and healthcare requirement have largely improved. Additionally, to keep pace with the external changes and grab the educational and employment opportunities, there is a significant demand of the LTC. This would enhance the proficiency of the students and others in English language, which boosts their communication skills. According to this, people were able to enhance their educational knowledge in the international examinations, which would help them to shape their career. This can be further justified by the fact that English has been the most popular language throughout the world. Moreover, to continue further study or to establish career people need to be trained in English language. These in one hand boost the educational growth of the country, and on the other hand boost the economic condition of the country. Thus, it is apparent that the introduction of an internal Cambridge LTC at the University of Guayaquil, as an efficient method to test students, would significantly lead to the development of lifestyle of the region (Pineo, 1996).

III. RESULTS

As the University of Guayaquil is planning for incorporating LTC in the university, it needs to be aware of its features so that in future by utilizing the programs huge benefit can be obtained. As the process of language testing and analyzing the proficiency of English language is a quite complex tasks, so these programs need to be conducted under effective principles and practices. The main motive of the language testing centre is to identify the English proficiency level at which the students or others can meet their education or other communicational requirements efficiently. In the phase of globalization, gradually the people are more conscious about the quality and integrity of the language testing programs rather than only focusing on the scores obtained from the programs. In this context, the LTC includes five main integral features, to ensure the superiority of this educational platform, which in turn would benefit the University of Guayaquil (Rajhy, 2014). These features have been illustrated in the underlying subheadings.

The testing programs must be trustworthy so that large section of the people can utilize the program to enhance the efficiency of the people in English language. In terms of reliability, the programs must produce accurate result for each group for each test. However, if the programs produce different results for same group, it will not be perfect or reliable for testing language. To maintain the reliability of the program, appointed faculty must learn about how to administer the program perfectly. Contextually, to measure equivalence under reliability, teachers must compare the result for different group having same kinds of attributes. Accordingly, if the program produces same result then the program is reliable and along with that, it will ensure the stability of the programs. Another factor, which influences reliability of the program, is the internal consistency as per which faculties of the program must ensure the uniformity of the test formats, period of the exam, pattern of the questions, which will definitely maintain the consistency of the programs result. Therefore, University of Guayaquil must incorporate the programs after evaluating the reliability of the program that would determine its success leading to increase in English language proficiency among the students and others (Rajhy, 2014).

Validity is another characteristic of the language-testing program, which refers to what extent its result may be acceptable in future. Based on the result acquired from the language test programs, students prepare themselves to grab the international educational and employment opportunities, so that the validity of the result is very important. In this context, the faculties of the university must examine the 'face validity', 'content validity', 'empirical validity', and 'construct validity' among others. According to this, the set of questions, selection of appropriate test, predictable result of the tests, and measuring the psychological abilities of the people among other tasks must be structured in an accurate manner in order to ensure the validity of the results leading to the success of the program (Rajhy, 2014).

Faculty members of University of Guayaquil must monitor the practicality of the program. Practicality of language testing program refers to the ease of executing and administering the programs to produce accurate result for its candidates. Additionally, efficiency of evaluating and interpreting the result score of the students is very important and according to this, the faculty must be aware of the process of the same. In addition to this, cost and time are also important factors that help the faculty to measure the practicality of the language test programs (Cambridge English Language Assessment, 2013).

In the language testing programs, discrimination refers to the difference in the question set and interpreting method, which would impose great impacts on its result. Language testing session may be changed by the pattern of the question, length of the test; effectiveness of the interpreting skills of the faculty that may create difference in the language test results. To prevent this kind of discrimination teachers of the university need to maintain uniformity in the language testing process (Abstract in English, n.d.).The concept of authenticity in language testing centre is very important to ensure authenticity in the program, wherein faculties must formulate effective questions so that students can face intellectual challenges that will enhance their English educational skills. However, not only the structure and process of language test is important, but also the authenticity of the outcome of the language-testing program is crucial for improving English knowledge and proficiency among the students that considerably benefits the university (Lewkowicz, 2000).

English language testing programs helps in increasing the capabilities of the students to strengthen their fluency in English language. Accordingly, based on the performance, the programs will provide effective ranking system for the students and other members of the University of Guayaquil, which create positive and healthy competitive educational environment for them. As in one hand, it would increase their English proficiency while on the other; their educational knowledge would be enhanced, as they were capable of reading, writing and listening in English. The following are the benefits of language testing programs that would provide benefit to the University of Guayaquil (Council of Europe, 2011).Notably, the frequent English language testing practices increase the knowledge about English language, which would help the students in their overall performance. Along with that, it also increases the memory power of the students, as they can learn from their previous mistakes and evidence-based test practices. These tests includes English vocabulary, reading efficiency, listening skills in English, understanding the text in English language, which sharpen their language as well as communication skills. Therefore, English language testing is a continuous improvement process,

which routinely adds more value to the English knowledge of the students or other candidates (Roediger III, Putnam & Smith, 2011).Another crucial benefit of language testing programs is that these programs would assist the teachers of the university as well as the students to recognize the weakness and loopholes in their English knowledge. In this context, it is worth mentioning that in the foreign nations, lack of in-depth knowledge regarding English language create difficulties in communicating and expressing feelings appropriately along with difficulties in their writing and speaking skills. By conducting the test frequently, they can increase their knowledge about the English vocabulary, correct sense of grammar, words spellings, sentence framing, and proper uses of punctuations. Based on the results obtained from the test, candidates can recognize their mistakes, and learn from the same that would correspondingly prepare them for the next test to avoid such kind of mistakes and improve their knowledge proficiency in English language. This would further lead to personal and attitude development of the students, as the English language skills enable them to communicate with others appropriately and respond in an effective manner, which would accordingly increase their self-confidence (Roediger III *et. al.,* 2011).

By incorporating effective language testing programs, the University of Guayaquil would be able to create an efficient knowledge hub that would add more value to the learning and teaching process within it. As under the testing method, students restudy the English material and practice it practically in a frequent manner, it helps them to understand and memorize the substance of the English language. The knowledge hub provides effective materials for English language to the students, which they can use for bridging the knowledge gap. Additionally, the effective environment encourages the students to transfer their knowledge and skills to enhance their level of English understanding. It may also help the university to retrieve effective results on the untested material and identify the effect of the same in enhancing the quality of English language (Council of Europe, 2011).

The main motive behind incorporating language-testing program is to increase the knowledge of the students in English language and obtain a better control over the performance of the students under the particular program. By including the effective set of programs such as FCE, TKT, CPE and CAE exams, the university can strengthen the learning process among the students as well as the teaching process. Additionally effective control and suggestion from the teachers assist the students to enhance their cognitive ability towards learning English language and enable them to acquire in-depth knowledge about the subject by monitoring the outcome of the results (Read, 2015).

Apart from the above-mentioned benefits, , it is estimated that the new project of installing language testing programs in university will add wide range of benefits to the University of Guayaquil, which is apparent from the higher sales projection for the period of 2016-2018. Along with that, it would also reduce the cost of the university as innovative techniques would curtail the cost of traditional methods of language testing and accordingly it would reduce the length of the test time. This will provide more time to the university and students to increase their English knowledge base. Accordingly, it would also increase the reputation of the university, which would help it to attract more students towards it. Correspondingly, it would increase students' aptitude in English language, so that they are able to communicate, write and listen to others properly (Council of Europe, 2011).

To enhance the effectiveness of the language test program, the university may also incorporate effective and innovative technologies that would help the students as well as the teachers to gain effective knowledge about the English language. Moreover, online mock test of English language will assist the teachers to evaluate the performance of the students in an efficient manner within a limited period. This will also enables the students to download all the important material about the language and prepare themselves for the test to increase their proficiency in the particular language (Read, 2015).Therefore, the university would gain these benefits after incorporating effective language test centre within it. Additionally, effective management system and experienced faculty of the university would lead the program towards success by enhancing the performance of the students and maintaining consistency in the test procedures.

Several challenges have been observed in the language testing programs, especially in the area of its reliability and validity of the outcome. This will further reduce the demands of the testing programs in the schools, as if the program would not able to provide valid result, there is no point in installing the program in the university. Though the teachers and other faculty members of the university are enough experienced in English language, still they may have lack of proficiency regarding the appropriate method to execute the English language program. This would in turn impose a negative impact on the learning process and may hamper the language development process for students. Additionally, to set up the language-testing centre, the university will need huge amount of capital that will increase its cost. Conversely, inadequate entrepreneurial experience may create difficulties in conducting the test procedure or may produce inaccurate result from the test (Wolf, Kao, Herman, Bachman, Bailey, Bachman …Chang, 2008).Strict regulations by the Cambridge University bound other universities or institutions to adhere to the pre-determined and pre-specified norms. In this regard, the University of Guayaquil is liable to maintain the quality and effectiveness of the programs. On the other

hand, manipulation in the test method, structuring the questions based on discrimination and biasness while preparing outcome of the test may create challenges in providing efficient educational service to the students. Additionally, students can gain efficient knowledge of the grammatical components related to English language, textual knowledge, as well as the pragmatic knowledge through an effective strategic process, which need to continue under effective control. If the strategic process fails to coordinate all the steps of the language testing procedure, then it will create an issue for the university (Bailey & Wolf, 2012).

Considering the fact that every student has different cognitive and educational skills, it might be possible that the result of the programs may be different according to the learning ability of students that in turn creates obstacles in teaching or learning process. The university must include a unitary method of language assessment and evaluation process, which can generate accurate and valid score for every student and enhance their efficacy in English language. Inadequate judgment ability of the faculty members may create deficiency in assessment process. Discrimination in the language testing process imposes negative impact on the outcome of the tests that may decrease the validation of the same. Apart from that, the teacher while providing effective learning material to the students in the classrooms several challenges might be faced. Lack in practical knowledge, non-availability of important English material, ineffective relationship with the students, prompt evaluation of their performance and providing educational services by understanding their native language and emotion might also decrease the effectiveness of the language testing procedure. At instances, teachers or faculty members of the program may ignore the intellectual ability of the students, as the programs produce score based on the available evidences of the students' performance. It might impose negative impact on the meta-cognitive skills of the students that may discourage them to participate in such types of exam (Brisk & Proctor, 2012).

To mitigate the aforementioned challenges, the University of Guayaquil must adopt some effective strategies and set standard rules through which they can provide effective educational facilities to its students. The faculty members of the university must incorporate innovative technologies to improve the English proficiency of the students whichever is easy to execute and provide accurate scores for the students. As there is no method to measure the extent students are adopting the new techniques and the learning materials, the university must conduct evaluation test frequently to ensure the effectiveness of the learning process of the students, which would automatically enhance the scores of the language test of the students. This in one hand keeps the interest of the students about the effective learning process, while on the other helps the teachers to control over the students performance (Wolf, Herman, Bachman, Bailey & Griffin, 2008).

By formulating effective and uniform question set and limiting the time of the test that would be reasonable for the students to take the exam would help the university to avoid discrimination to some extent. Additionally, monitoring and controlling the performance of the students in frequent manner would help the teachers of the university to check the status of the performance and capabilities of the students. By providing doubt clearing class before the examination would be helpful for the students, where they can learn from their mistakes. Additionally, by creating effective educational environment and providing efficient evidence based practice facilities to the students, it would increase the proficiency of the students in English language. Additionally, to motivate students to participate in the test and encourage them to implement their theoretical knowledge in the practical area would enhance their capabilities in English language. Effective interacting classes, arranging debates, conducting assignment in English would help students to widen their knowledge area in English (Young, 2013). In addition to the above recommendations, the university must adhere to the norms provided by the State Government and create effective internal control systems. This can measure the performance of the students as per the standards performance. After evaluating the performance, teachers must provide the respective students with appropriate suggestion that how they can improve their vocabulary; strengthen their sentence framing and proper usage of words in an effective manner. Inspiring the students to use integrated method for improving language skills and practice English vocabulary and grammar beyond their academic syllabus will enhance their performance in English language. Along with that, these would enable the students to communicate, write and express their feelings appropriately, that reflects significant benefit to the university and its students (Wolf, Herman & Dietel, 2011).

IV. CONCLUSION

From the overall discussion, it is eminent that if the University of Guayaquil creates the effective LTC, it would add more value of the educational services. However, the language assessment techniques and teaching process may create obstacles in providing effective educational services to the students. Nevertheless, by implementing effective strategies the university can overcome the challenges of the language testing process that would significantly benefit the students. To increase the effectiveness of the programs before installing the program, teachers of the university must ensure about its reliability, validity, and authenticity. Additionally, the faculty of the university must examine how the program would help the university to achieve its long-term goal as well as short-term goals.

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