

INTERCULTURAL CURRICULUM AND BILINGUALISM TO FOSTER INTERNATIONALIZATION: HOW TO PROMOTE MOBILITY. EDUCATIONAL TESTING SERVICE – TOEFL IBT

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Educational Testing Service has achieved in several countries to be an active and strategic participant in the establishment of guiding frameworks for Higher Education and at the same time has created alliances that have led to the improvement of the quality of Higher Education. In the strategic dimension proposed by multiple Ministries of Education of different countries, we continue to seek to cooperate with the creation of institutional plans and policies from HEIs and organizations that promote different local, national and international public policies, as a strategic process associated with the quality of higher education in the 21st century.

In many Universities around the world, there is a need to complement the current methodology used in most of the English classes with the strategies with which international exams are designed in each of the four skills of the language and that points at the opportunities that different organizations offer any university community in terms of international mobility.

The above mentioned information is definitely based on most of the documents demanded by Ministries of Education or institutional policies that aim at promoting the professionalization of Foreign Languages, internationalization, bilingualism and interculturality.

DEVELOPMENT

In 1947, our founders envisioned an organization devoted to educational research and assessment, making fundamental contributions to the progress of education worldwide. They believed a single organization devoted to research and testing could significantly advance education by expanding educational opportunity to include all learners, not just those with the resources and connections to pursue higher education.

OUR MISSION: ADVANCING QUALITY AND EQUITY IN EDUCATION WORLDWIDE:

- Produce fair, valid and reliable assessments
- Measure knowledge and skills
- Promote learning and educational performance
- Support education and professional development
- Lead in conducting world-class educational research

ADVANCING THE FIELD OF MEASUREMENT THROUGH EXPERIENCE, EXPERTISE AND EXCELLENCE:

Our world-class team includes:

- More than 3,000 employees worldwide
- 665 with advanced degrees; 310 with doctorates
- Experts in research, test development, psychometrics, statistical analysis, linguistics and global assessment
- Education policy specialists

PREPARING INDIVIDUALS FOR A BETTER TOMORROW:

During the last six years we have carried out projects and led initiatives in several countries that have contributed significantly to the development of new proposals that have made positive changes in the international mobility processes:

- Ministry of Higher Education, Cuba: ETS is now part of the new policies of international examination approved by the Ministry of Higher Education in Cuba. Universidad de Cienfuegos is now leading a TOEFL Training Initiative that will benefit all Cuban Universities. We currently have three TOEFL sites in the country: Universidad de Cienfuegos, Universidad de Oriente and the American Embassy. All Cuban candidates can register and take the exam in these sites.
- June 27, 2015: We had our first TOEFL iBT administration in Cuba at the US Embassy.
- November 19, 2015: We had our first GRE administration in Cuba at the US Embassy.
- Approximately 200 teachers have taken the Propel Workshop for TOEFL iBT in Cuba:

The Propell® workshop is a one-day professional development program designed to help English-language teachers meet the challenges of teaching English to students. The workshop uses examples from the Listening, Reading, Speaking and Writing sections of the TOEFL iBT® test. It provides instructional techniques and strategies for using the integrated-skills approach to teaching language and for preparing students for success.

Led by ETS approved trainers in an interactive, hands-on classroom setting, the Propell workshop opens the door to increased success in teaching students English as a second language. Teachers will receive a Propell workshop kit that will guide them through stimulating sessions on teaching techniques and activities and help them learn more about the benefits of the TOEFL iBT test. The workshop is also an opportunity to interact with peers and provide feedback to help us improve and develop assessments that meet their needs. This workshop, as well as the Propell Workshop kit, does not have any cost.

- Currently in conversations with Cuban Industry to certify their level of English with TOEFL iBT: Universidad de Cienfuegos is the University in charge of leading this project. The idea is to offer all Cuban Industry the possibility to be prepared for the exam and take it in Cuba.
- The *TOEFL iBT*® test is used in Ecuador to assess English-language skills of K-12 public school teachers. Approximately 3,000 teachers were tested in July/August 2012 and again two years later.
- ETS has provided SENESCYT (Secretaría Nacional de Educación Superior, Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación de Ecuador) with the EXADEP test program, a Spanish language general abilities test for admission into graduate study.
- TOEFL iBT is also used for admissions into university English teaching programs in Ecuador, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Brazil, Panama, Chile, and others worldwide.
- TOEFL iBT and ITP are used for the Proyecto 100,000 and Foro Bilateral sobre Educación Superior, Innovación e Investigación (FOBESII) in Mexico.
- Panamanian government's use of TOEFL for its Panama Bilingue program.
- Honduras Government, Public and Private Universities TOEFL iBT collaboration.
- The Ministry of Education of Costa Rica uses the TOEIC Listening and Reading test to assess teachers' English-language skills.
- The Ministry of Education of El Salvador uses the TOEFL ITP tests to assess the English-language skills of English teachers.
- Currently in discussions with the MOE in Nicaragua on similar projects.
- English Without Borders uses TOEFL ITP for students studying English in Brazil as well as outside of Brazil.
- The *TOEFL ITP*® and TOEFL iBT tests are used in Brazil as part of ministry-sponsored higher education English-language program to encourage skill enhancements and greater participation in national and international scholarships requiring knowledge of English. The TOEFL iBT was used by students applying for the Science Without Borders program. The

program's initial rollout included discussions with the US government, Brazilian MOE and ETS.

SOME OF OUR PARTNERS:

- Partners of the Americas
- American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU)
- Education USA
- Binational Centers
- NAFSA
- Civitas

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The international exams now have a definite importance in terms of the completion of an academic program and subsequent development of postgraduate courses not only at the national level but mostly at the international level. They are a mandatory requirement to give continuity to a comprehensive and successful academic life project.

The TOEFL exam is the most respected English language exam in the world and has been recognized by more than 10,000 study centers, universities and organizations in more than 150 countries, including Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and other countries. U.S. Whichever place you want to study, the TOEFL exam will help you enter there.

More than 10,000 universities, organizations and other institutions in more than 150 countries accept the TOEFL® qualifications. Other organizations also rely on TOEFL ratings:

- ♣ The immigration departments use them to issue residence and work visas.
- ♣ The medical and licensing agencies use them for professional certification purposes.
- ♣ People use them to measure their progress in learning English.

One of our tasks is to motivate the HEIs to create new methodologies that are aimed at the comprehensive training of professionals who must take the TOEFL IBT. In many Universities around the world, there is a need to complement the current methodology used in most of the English classes with the strategies with which international exams are designed in each of the four skills of the language and that points at the opportunities that different organizations offer any university community in terms of international mobility.

The above mentioned information is definitely based on most of the documents demanded by Ministries of Education or institutional policies that aim at promoting the professionalization of Foreign Languages, internationalization, bilingualism and interculturality.

At the same time, it is also mentioned on internal policies of most of the Universities that it is important to generate, appropriate, disseminate and apply knowledge through the curricular, investigative and projection processes that attempt to form comprehensive and globalized professionals. The

international exams are undoubtedly a definite tool in the professional and academic projection of any Higher Education Institution.

It is also important to remember that within the current requirements for the accreditation of High Quality not only of the Foreign Languages Programs but of the Universities, there is a need for all English teachers to certify a C1 level; graduates of Languages a B2 level and other careers a B1 level with a standardized test that evidences the competence for purposes of culmination of studies. This information varies from country to country.

It is also important to substantiate the importance of these initiatives based on recent historical references that have made Higher Education institutions from their Language Departments modify their methodology positively so that students can begin to familiarize themselves early with these exams and later being able to face them with more confidence.

In accordance with the increasingly interest in the internationalization of Higher Education, authorities of the Universities have been asking for clear public policies in the last two decades to guide this process. These same policies have been directly connected to the work that is being carried out by the Departments of Foreign Languages, as this is a transversal axis in most of the Universities.

Therefore, it turns out to be a strategic dimension in institutional plans and policies not only in the Universities but also in different local, national and international public policies, as a strategic process associated with the quality of higher education in the 21st century.

Many global events occurred in recent decades are proof of this:

- 1995: This year the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) were implemented. This implementation had profound implications for Higher Education since it implements a commercial reality of the education and the production of knowledge. In this way, the World Trade Organization sets four types of cross-border education and education is somehow identified as a private issue, a tradable service and, therefore, an agenda item in free trade agreements.

- Based on the previous information, the two World Conferences on Higher Education sponsored by UNESCO (1998 - 2009) recommended the implementation of internationalization and international cooperation processes at all levels of higher education (regional, national, institutional) not only as a means of overcoming social gaps between countries, between institutions and regions but also and mainly as a factor of higher education that today must be delivered in order to generate citizens and human resources capable of fully and successfully develop in the new economic, political and cultural contexts that raises the global reality.

- At the regional level, the Regional Conference on Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (CRES 2008) recommended the construction of ENLACES (Espacio Latinoamericano y Caribeño de Educación Superior) and the collaboration and harmonization with the higher education systems of other areas such as the European.

- In this way, different regional associations that involve internationalization were strengthened at the American, Latin American and Ibero-American levels in the region (UDUAL, OUI, RedMacro, AUIP, UNAMAZ, AUALCPI, among others)

These milestones have been definite for universities to implement policies, strategies, plans, services and investments in their internationalization processes since although, some countries still do not fully enter a performance budget scheme, the accreditation of high quality is giving access to different

stimuli and special programs led by both the Ministries of Higher Education and other public and private agencies that support higher education and internationalization.

Therefore, including the methodology of international exams in their four skills in English classes at the Universities is relevant and becomes a priority since it makes definitive contributions on three fronts:

- **TEACHING:** All universities must commit to the new policies of bilingualism demanded by the Governments and provide their students with all the possible tools that allow them have access to international opportunities. International exams are a tool to access academic mobility opportunities and it is the team of English professors who must be not only qualified but also fully familiar with the tests required.

- **RESEARCH:** It is important to strengthen academic links with recognized entities in the field of evaluation and methodology. Alliances with key agencies in the design of international exams such as: Educational testing Service - ETS, should be a door not only to negotiations that increase their volumes and give the real context of the level of English of the students, but they also should become facilitators of information that allow us to do deep and truthful analysis about the current context that we face at the Universities, real statistics of periodic results and student evolution over time. Only with this information it would be possible to make significant research proposals that focus on the real problems of the students and as a result intervene this problematic with the collaboration of the English professors and even think about interdisciplinary research projects.

- **PROJECTION:** This information covers not only the students of Languages – English - but all the undergraduate students in different areas, teachers and administrative personnel that require an international exam for academic or work purposes. The partnership with Educational Testing Service (ETS) facilitates all the community to have access to the exams not only by taking the exam at each Certified Site we have in Cuba but also in terms of preparation for it.

The impact of this kind of initiatives involves the entire community of the Universities due to the requirement to accredit a level of English according to the CEFR for graduation purposes.

It also makes relevant contributions to the quality and real language level of the graduates because of the use of standardized exams. At the same time, it offers teachers the opportunity to investigate in the area of assessment and finally it facilitates the possibility for students and teachers to access international opportunities through better scores on standardized tests.

It also has a social impact since the certified sites will continue providing the service of the administration of international exams within their facilities. This fact reduces expenses additional to the cost of the exam for candidates from each city.

To graduate students with a real level of the language can guarantee a positive impact in Programs of bilingualism and in the country. The positive effects of graduating professionals with a level of English certified by ETS will be visible in all schools, colleges and industry where they are hired in the near future.

Culturally the promotion of bilingualism in all universities will positively affect not only tourism in Cuba but industry in general.

In terms of technology, TOEFL IBT is currently providing relevant and cutting-edge technological tools in its design, administration, scoring and online preparation resources. Thanks to the active partnership with the company in charge of this examination, ETS, Universities in Cuba have constant support in terms of teacher training, updating tools of the platform for the Administrators of the exam or Test Center Administrators (TCAs) and Proctors, delivery of free equipment as hearing aids, metal detectors, external sound purifier for the laboratory, etc. As a result of this alliance, all professors of

the Universities can have access to the international exam administration protocol and take the e-learning so they can participate in the administration sessions.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, this initiative is relevant because in addition to integrating the most important pillars of any University in the world: Teaching, Research and Projection, it is actively linked with all the initiatives of Bilingualism of the Cuban Universities and some of them, Universidad de Cienfuegos, Universidad de Oriente and Universidad de Holguín keep on taking important progress on the development not only of effective strategies for Bilingualism but also on the promotion of international mobility.