UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT

"A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE THEORY AND THE PRACTICE ON THE EVALUATION PROCESS OF THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR; DURING SEMESTER I AND II, 2003"

TO OBTAIN THE DEGREE:

LICENCIATURA EN IDIOMA INGLES: OPCION ENSEÑANZA.

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Introduction

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we do not have enough time to meditate on the deep importance of the processes, the evaluation techniques and the people involved in the educational field.

For that reason the focus of this graduation project intends to expand, into some degree, the problematic that is taking place in the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador semester I and II, 2003, regarding the lack of criteria in the Policy of this institution. Essentially, they have to do with the type of training for professors, the contribution of tests results, and considerations on improving the teaching-learning process throughout the Evaluation techniques. Moreover, many opinions were included to have a reliable sample to be mixed with the bibliographical information.

In summary, it is expected that teachers, students as well as other people engaged in the foreign language teaching field take the most significant part of this argumentative essay.

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I. THESIS STATEMENT

The Evaluation process implies the four most known criteria: Testing-grading, Results analysis, Decisions making, Objectives readjustment to the programs. Besides, it can not be forgotten the students and personal psycho-social development aspects that contribute to the importance of those criteria.

In some universities of El Salvador, there is a conventional method of evaluating learners with assessment processes. In the "Tecnológica" University, and "Francisco Gavidia" University, there are several of those activities that include written reports, oral presentations, conferences, reading analysis, etc. If we compare it with the University of El Salvador, the Foreign Language Departments are doing the same thing, but at the end of the semester the results of those grades take a different way of interpretation.

Reinforcement to improve planning Instruction; To state the causes from the results; To show the results and to let the people, involved in the evaluation process, know the progress and to contribute to that; The teacher should give their self-evaluation and progress checklists of students; Then it is necessary to report the areas that were treated in the evaluation process, and so forth. Nevertheless, the grades obtained in the process are reported as part of measuring the Evaluation process. Then, there are a lot of reasons in which the observable evidence of the evaluation process is not

reported. It is due to many disadvantages as a result of the Institutional policy - mentioned before- that is not taken into account and its aspects that block the accomplishment of the Evaluation process as a whole at the Foreign Language Department in the University of El Salvador.

These circumstances, briefly explained, guide the essay to state the thesis:

"The Evaluation process used in the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador does not respond to an Institutional Policy because of the lack of criteria that it should fulfil"

This thesis statement is composed of three main ideas simplified in this way:

•**The continuous training** in which language teachers could improve their

Knowledge limitations and preferences in the teaching-learning process;

•**The contributions that tests results provide to improve students' learning;**

• **The considerations of students' interests as a resource for their progress.**

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The term Evaluation for Superior Education is used in many aspects as limited in some extend. The theory developed in here could answer indispensable questions to increase the knowledge of it and clarify reflections in the subject matter. Those questions are, for example: is this process being used or applied in the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador according to what the theory says? Is it that the professors do exactly year after year intending to improve students learning by analyzing the experiences in the evaluation field or without changing absolutely anything , because the system of evaluation is already given and nobody wants to go further?, because it means to work more, and that is not recognized monetarily or as rewarding by the institution ? If we go directly to the theory, we will find many different forms of expressing the meaning of evaluation. Now, it is necessary to revise all theories that may help us to present diverse authors' points of view and discuss the weaknesses of the Evaluation process of the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador and of course its strength.

It is necessary to clarify with the different approaches and definitions which concern the word Evaluation. That is why the relevant information is quoted to establish some meanings in relation with the thesis and ideas.

The Oxford dictionary defines the word "evaluation" as: "The value of something, to appreciate, to estimate the value of something, to appreciate". This definition seeks to establish a quantitative and qualitative approach while in an evaluative technique manner it can be defined as: "The educative process stage that has a goal proved in a systematic way, in the extend to how the proposal objectives had been reached understanding the education as a systematic process , meant to achieve positive and deep changes in the subject behavior". (P.D. Lafourcade)

"Evaluation is an act that consists on giving a judgment of value from gathering information about the progress of pupils' results, with the goal of looking for a decision." (B Maccario). But, as the previous way of thinking, another aspect appears like the need of searching for ways of making decisions by collecting the test results from students.

According to Nunan David and Clarice Lamb (1996) "evaluation is a systematic process to determine the extent to which instructional objectives are achieved by pupils."(Pag230). So, the evaluation is a way to find out what students can do in relation to what the curricular objectives say they may be able to do.

Language teachers consider necessary to know what aspects they have to consider at the time of evaluating students. Through evaluations, teachers can verify the objectives that were reached at the end of the semester and the ones that were not reached.

Another definition that is used to point out the term evaluation is mentioned by Pedro D. Lafourcade (1961). "Evaluation is an activity that helps the professors accomplish four important things: the first one is that evaluation allows teachers to know which objectives that were fulfilled throughout the semester. The second one is that evaluation allows teachers to try to analyse the course that could motivate the differences in the achievement of the goals; the third one is that evaluation allows teacher to adopt a decision in relation to the course that happens to reach the goals or objectives and the last one is that evaluation allows teachers to earn the experience and do not fall in the same errors in the future".

The definitions above could not be accomplished in some degree as a consequence of three important criteria. These criteria could get better results if they were immersed in the process of Evaluation. That is why Airasian, Peter W (2001) describes the influence on Evaluation in relation to planning instruction. He says, in particular, teacher's content knowledge, instructional preferences, personalities, and physical limitations are important in planning and delivering instruction (the first step to go through the Evaluation process). Also, Airasain says: "It is not impossible for all the teachers to have equal knowledge of all of the topics they teach, nor can they be expected to keep abreast of all advances in subject matter knowledge or pedagogy. Consequently, the topics teachers choose to teach, the accuracy and currency of their topical coverage, and their teaching methods are influenced by their knowledge limitations". He adds: "Some teachers feel uncomfortable using instructional

techniques and consequently avoid them. Some others leading with classroom discussions, others dislike independent projects or field trips, and still others avoid working with small groups. While individual preferences are to be expected among teachers, it is important to understand that when carried to the extreme, such preferences can result in an overly narrow repertoire of teaching methods, inhibiting the teacher's ability to choose the method best suited to a particular type of learning".

Then again, Airasian establishes the need for teacher self-assessment: "Teachers should carry out self-assessment for many reasons. First, as noted, it is a teacher's professional responsibility to examine, refine, and broaden his or her practice in a continuing basis. Second, self-assessment focuses on the classroom level where teachers have their great expertise and their greatest effects on pupils. Third, it recognizes that the most successful improvements occur when individuals change themselves and their own practice, rather than when change is mandated by others. Fourth, it makes teachers aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their practice, encouraging continual change and improvement, and thereby discouraging unexamined and unchanging classroom practices. Fifth, it treats the teacher as a professional who has a personal responsibility for improvement and it gives the teacher a "voice" or a stake in his or her practice. Sixth, if planned in advance, it can encourage and develop interactions and learning among groups of teachers".

On one hand, the evaluation in the Superior Teaching (Lafourcade, 1974) comments that the entry of the professors into the universities, is mainly conditioned by the

background that they have in research rather than by their real conditions as professors. Then to maintain the higher performance, it is necessary that each professor, once the role is known, he will play it in a higher way of quality. And, a course could not be useful if the professors miss professional training to put it into practice.

Furthermore, regarding to the way how Universities are seen, Pedro Lafourcade (1961) says: "In most universities organisms do not exist one institutionalized mechanism that is over a base of any accepted model to form systematically respect to the level of function of the multiple subsystem that integrate with precision the margins of discrepancies that there are between the preconceived goals and the obtained results". He assures that, in general, the Universities lack systems that permit them to know the quality and adequacy of all efforts done by the teachers as a consequence of all goals that are in their direct competence field. Commonly, when a professor denotes a marked deficiency in his specific preparation or is deficient in didactic aptitudes, acting in an arbitrary way is harmful to students′ interests to whom the course is finally addressed. The actions that in any occasion assume the University are only an exclusive consequence of students′ pushing promoted by themselves, and it is never a result of some special mechanism created to control and to lower the harmful divergences produced for a long time. On the other hand, the contributions of test results are related to the purpose of Evaluation in Classroom

Instruction. They are placed to help the teacher evaluate students in a certain stage of the teaching-learning process.

Some authors (R Tyler, B Bloom, and G Landsher B Maccario) group the different objectives and function of the evaluation in three big categories: "Predictive evaluation", "Formative evaluation", "Summative evaluation". Predictive evaluation is also called initial or diagnostic. This predicts a performance or determines the level of attitude before the educational process starts. It looks for student's characteristics before the initial program, with the objective of putting the pupils in the correct level; Formative evaluation is done at the end of any learning task. It has an objective to inform what goals were fulfilled and eventually to notice where and in what level the learning difficulties exist, permitting the search of new educational strategies. It gives a permanent review of the educational program in development; Summative evaluation is the one that has the structure of a balance. This is done after a period of learning at the end of a program. Its objectives are signed in functions of a performance, to give a certification, to determine and to inform about the level reached by every one that is involved in the process (pupils, parents, institutions, professors).

Those authors inform the professors about their decision on what to do concerning students' development and to   find out   if the educational program needs some changes in order to help pupils get better results at the end of the career .

Also, David and Clarice Lamb (1996) report "evaluation involves the collection of information for purposes for deciding what works and what does not work, this information is used to decide what aspects of an educational program should be left alone and what should be changed". They also comment about identifying what students can do and what they can not do as just one step of the evaluation process. The second step, according to David and Clarice Lamb, is that professors need to know also why pupils succeed in some things and why they fail in others, besides that, what might be done to improve these things in the future. And Groundlund, Norman E. specifies that the ultimate purpose of testing, as with all classroom procedures, is to improve students learning. Thus, as teachers construct classroom tests, they should keep in mind the extend to which is likely to contribute to this end. A well-constructed classroom test should increase both quantity and quality of students learning. His focus on improving Learning and Instruction considers three fundamental aspects:

1. "One way of ensuring that tests have a desirable influence on students learning is to pay particular attention to the wide variety of content and learning outcomes measured by the tests". When we select a representative sample of content from all of the areas covered in our instruction, we are emphasizing to our pupils that they must devote attention to all areas: they can not neglect some aspects of the course and do well on the test. Similarly, when our tests measure a variety of types of learning outcomes, the pupils soon learn that a mass of memorised factual information is not

sufficient. They must learn to interpret and apply facts, develop conceptual understandings, draw conclusions, recognize assumptions, identify cause-and-effect relations, and the like. This discourages them from depending solely on memorization as a basis for learning and encourages using more complex mental processes".

2. "The practice of constructing tests that measure a variety of learning outcomes should also lead to improved teaching procedures and, thus , indirectly to improved pupil learning . As we translate the various learning outcomes into the function of understanding test items, we develop a better notion of the mental process involved. Thus, the function of understanding, thinking skills, and other complex learning outcomes becomes clearer to us. This clarification of how achievement is reflected in mental processes enables us to plan more effectively the pupils' learning experiences. Furthermore, we are more apt to emphasize understanding, thinking skills and other complex learning outcomes in our teaching when we include them in our testing . This may seem a case of the cart pulling the horse, but well-constructed test frequently leads to a review of teaching procedures and to the abandonment of those that encourage rote learning (memorization by repetition).

3. Finally, "a test will contribute to improved teacher–pupil relation (with a beneficial effect on pupil learning) if pupils view the test as a fair and useful measure of their achievement. We can make fairness apparent by including a representative sample of the learning tasks that have been emphasized during instruction , by writing concise directions ,by making certain that the intent of each

test item is clear and free of any bias that would prevent a knowledgeable person from answering correctly, and by providing adequate time limits for the test. The pupils' recognition of usefulness, however, depends as much on what we do with the results of the test as on the characteristic of the test itself . We can make the usefulness apparent by using the results as a basis for guiding and improving learning".

As we have seen before, the main purpose of Evaluation is to improve learning and instruction, and other uses are supplementary. (Extra characteristics can be seen in annex A, Test Evaluation Checklist). After that, it is of importance to go from the generalization to the specific, with reference to the interests in the evaluation field. Mainly, the public interest on Evaluation is mentioned by House, Ernest R (1997).He analyses that the modern evaluation does not constitute a procedure of social decision, but it is a part of the resources assigned. It provides a kind of situation in which social decisions are taken. And he states that the evaluation has in itself the manipulation of facts and arguments in order to determine the convenience of something. On the other hand, he says, when we worry about the interest from others or from a specific group, these are prived. Then, the Evaluation could be seen as policy resulting from a common interest. And everything that is implicated in here will take advantage of the evaluation itself because of the program immersed is related to the criteria.

House, Ernest adds that the different approaches of the Evaluation reflect the interests in diverse ways. They are the utilitarian, pluralist/institutional. The utilitarian approach is when the most important interest in the evaluation process is more with the scores rather than with the satisfaction of learning and so the best program is the one that increases scores. The pluralist/institutional approach is Evaluation on the basis of a variety of principles, without specifying the priorities, and it has two secondary groups. The professional approach believes a well informed person on concrete field is the one that should clarify doubts and can make decisions. The participative approach that believes the best way to contribute to the interests consists of people's participation in a certain way on the Evaluation. Equally, "the institutional aims answer the question "what is the purpose of having a testing program at all? but needs are personal…; they are not necessarily as aims, needs ask the question "what does the individual learner stand to gain or lose from taking the test?" (Underhill, 1995). He contributes to this topic by saying that in ideal circumstances, the aims of the program match the needs of the learners so that the teaching-testing program provides just what the learners most need, and every body is happy. In real world, he compares, there is often a mismatch between institutional aims and personal needs, resulting on a test which is of little or no benefit to the learner, and may have a demotivating effect. Then making test relevant to the learners needs is not just an academic exercise. If the learner realizes that the teacher is sufficiently interested in his personal needs to adapt the test accordingly , he will

respond to that expression of interest. The learners will not necessarily perform better, but they will feel that the test is more relevant for them, and the assessment will be based on more representative sample of his language. Nevertheless, Testing as part of the evaluation process-measurement- is related to other processes like Teaching, Learning and the Evaluation process itself.

Norman E, assumes that although the independent nature of Teaching and Learning is beyond dispute, the interdependent nature of Teaching, Learning, and Evaluation is less often recognized. The interdependence of these three facets of education can be clearly seen in the following steps that the instructional process includes.

Preparing instructional Objectives in Terms of Desired learning Outcomes. The first step in both Teaching and Evaluation is determining the learning outcomes classroom to be expected from classroom instruction. What should students be like at the end of the learning experience? In other words, what kinds of learning product are being sought? What knowledge and understanding should students posses? What skills should they have acquired? What interests and attitudes should they have developed? What changes in thinking, feeling, and doing should have taken place?...Only in terms of desired outcomes we can provide direction to ,the teaching process and set the stage for ready Evaluation of students Learning.

Preassessing the Learners needs. It is usually desirable to make some assessment of the learners needs in relation to the learning outcomes to be achieved. Do the student possess the abilities and skills needed to proceed with the instruction? Have the

students already mastered some of the intended learning outcomes? Evaluating students knowledge and skill, the beginning of instruction enables us to answer such questions. This information is useful in planning remedial work for students who lack the prerequisite skills, in revising our list of instructional objectives, and in modifying our instructional plans to fit the learners needs.

Providing Relevant Instruction. Relevant instruction is the point to which course content and teaching methods integrated into planned instructional activities designed to help students achieve the intended learning outcomes. During this instructional phase, Testing and Evaluation provide a means of 1) monitoring learning progress and 2) diagnosing learning difficulties. Thus, periodic Evaluation during instruction provides type of feedback-corrective procedure that aids in continuously adapting instruction to group and individual needs.

Evaluating Intended Outcomes. The final step in the instructional process is to determine the extend to which the students achieved the instructional objectives. This is accomplished by using tests and other Evaluation instruments designed to measure the intended learning outcomes. Ideally, the instructional objectives will state the desired changes and the evaluation instruments will measure or describe the extend to which those changes have taken place. Matching tests and other evaluation instruments to instructional objectives is basic to effective classroom evaluation.

Using the Evaluation Results. Student Evaluation is often regarded as principally benefiting the teacher, an attitude that overlooks the direct contribution of evaluation

to students. Properly used, Evaluation procedures can contribute to improved students learning by 1) clarifying the intended learning outcomes, 2) providing short-term goals to work toward, 3) offering feedback concerning learning progress, and 4) providing information for overcoming learning difficulties and selecting future learning experiences.

Information from carefully developed evaluation techniques can also be used to assess and improve instruction. Such information can aid in judging 1) the appropriateness and attainability of the instructional objectives, 2) the usefulness of the instructional materials, and 3) the effectiveness of the instructional methods. Thus, Evaluation procedures can contribute to both improvements in the teaching-learning process itself and student learning. Evaluation results are, of course, also used for assigning marks and reporting students progress. Unfortunately, many teachers focus on these functions of Evaluation rather than on its use on improving learning and instruction. In addition to marking and reporting, Evaluation results are also used for various administrative and guidance functions.

All described before is accomplished by many international institutions,. They applied a well elaborated policy in which the achievement of students learning is involved, for instance, Varnier College. That is a contrast about the importance of the roles from the universities we mentioned (Francisco Gavidia, Don Bosco and the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador). And since the institutional policy can not be found clearly explained in those institutions, one model

from international institutions is "Varnier College"(Quebec, Canada). Some of its fundamental contributions are regarding to the creation of an "Institutional Policy".

III. "A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE THEORY AND THE PRACTICE ON THE EVALUATION PROCESS OF THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR; DURING SEMESTERS I AND II, 2003"

More than ever before, Evaluation is being relevant for many institutions as a means of learning results of an educational program. We can not deny that, these days, a lot of language teachers do not have training or at least experience on measuring, and even more, exposure to the analysis of the success or not of an institutional program by taking into consideration the course of action to be administered in those places. Besides, interpretation of the future teaching decisions making are on the basis of the Evaluation process without forgetting the interrelationship of the three processes involved-teaching, learning and evaluation techniques- that are guided by an institutional policy to reach desired goals. Evidently, the Foreign Language Department faces this situation semester after semester, and there are some discrepancies in its Evaluation System that could be improved in some aspects. But so often, *this Evaluation process of the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador does not respond to an institutional policy because of the lack of criteria that it should fulfill.*

The initial criterion responds to the continuous training that teachers should improve their knowledge limitations and preferences in the teaching-learning process at the Foreign Language Department. Particularly, teacher's content knowledge, instructional preferences, personality and limitations in the teaching language field are so important in delivering and planning instruction, and so with the Evaluation process. It has been impossible for language teachers, at the Foreign Language Department, to have equal knowledge of all of the subjects and topics they teach. Also, a wide variety of content knowledge in specific fields such as linguistics, philosophy, pedagogy, etc., that can be expected to put into practice are not taken into account. As a result, the topics teachers choose, the accuracy, the currency of their coverage, and their methods are affected by knowledge limitations. From those aspects, mentioned in the interviews with the teachers, it is noticed the emphasis in the evaluation process. The guidance of this makes the teachers perform poorly in the teaching field. Specifically, the deficiencies that the Foreign Language Department staff has are the result of the lack of well elaborated training in the language teaching field. So professors limit their teaching field to what the textbooks are supposed to achieve in the learning process. Moreover, according to what the teachers said in the interview, a high percent of them are devoted to follow certain issues in relation to the changes that could be made to reinforce the Evaluation process. Part of these reasons are due to the way they implement or administer exams. On one hand at the Basic Intensive Levels, as observed in the semester II 2003, the tests are taken from the ones that are standardized and tests that were used in other courses. Then, when

students fail the tests, the teacher does almost nothing to solve that phenomenon. On the other hand as observed, the only thing they do is to revise the tests together with the students, but as a matter of having the grades on time or giving the answer key. The language teachers are pleased to do the same every semester (something that is opposite to the improvement of the institution). The comment that calls the attention is when teachers say as follows: "why to do a job that nobody recognizes in a professional and monetary way in this University"… and the actions that call the attention, too, is that there exists individualism as part of the whole staff in the Foreign Language Department, their multiple interests and approaches that have not been unified to work as a team. Another contrast is the manner in which self assessment is carried out by the teachers. Part of this problem is traced to the nature of the language teachers' professional responsibility to do many things. Those responsibilities have to do with the examination, improvement, and expansion of their teaching practice in a continuing learning-teaching basis; also, the focus on the classroom language level in which teachers have the greatest psychological and social effects are not emphasized on students at this Department; besides, the recognition that the most important improvement happens when the teachers at this Department change themselves and their own teaching practice; they forget to be aware of what is wrong in their teaching, and therefore they do not discover classroom practice that is not being beneficial to help students in the Evaluation process, and of course, it provides the teacher to plan in advance, then it could help to develop learning interactions among teachers to improve the programs and curriculum. The thing in

here is that many of these responsibilities are the least involved in the Evaluation process.

Consequently, many divergences are conditioned by the background experiences the language teachers starring in the Evaluation process. As a contradiction in that way it is to deduce –from teachers′ points of view regarding a clear institutionalized mechanism- that the preconceived goals teachers already know that are stated in the curriculum have discrepancies with the results obtained. So the responsibilities are not emerged as part of the Evaluation process. That is why the quality and efforts done by the teachers, as a result of the goals, establish marked deficiencies in specific preparation are the teaching field. For instance, some of the opinions language teachers gave with respect were about motivation and rewarding factors, from the Institution, that could make them do a better job; the procedures prevail for a long time and nobody or at least few teachers get immersed to examine them; the teachers have an assigned course right after finishing the last one they taught, therefore the time to revise what was gathered from the interrelationship of Teaching-Learning-Evaluation processes can not be analyzed.

It can be said to summarize what the teachers expect to improve the institutional policy, and therefore the evaluation process: "To insist on appropriate attendance, appropriate class conduct and timely completion of course tasks by the students in their classes". But in contrast, the language teachers should respond to the following aspect gotten from the missing part of their interviews: To be available to students

outside of class and to post their office hours clearly, and to collaborate with other teachers when they are teaching the same course in different sections in order to maintain consistency and reliability.

The second criterion is addressed to the way the Evaluation process does not respond to the contributions that test results provide to improve students learning at the Foreign Language Department. The main principle of the Evaluation process is seen as a means of an end not as an end itself. That is to say, this process has many advantages to be well thought-out in the teaching-learning process. Unfortunately, the circumstances demonstrate the opposite in the situation of The Foreign Language Department. Students' learning is periodically evaluated by tests and other evaluation devices as written reports, oral presentations, group processing, peer compositions, group projects, and so on, to mention some. But commonly Testing takes the place of the most useful tool so as to have an objective reference of students learning progress, and it is being limited as the report of students' progress and this report is presented as scores. However, the objectivity of the results gotten from tests –classroom instruction tests- should be focused more on the way tests help to improve students learning and instruction as one of the most important actions the Foreign Language Department should face.

One way to ensure that tests have a desirable influence on students learning is to the particularity that content and learning outcomes are measured by the tests. That is

something being forgotten in some areas at the Foreign Language Department, for example, in the Basic Intensive English, the tests are just made for measuring some reading techniques as Scanning, Skimming, or doing inference while students must also learn to interpret and apply facts, develop conceptual understandings, and the like. This does not help students to discourage from depending only on memorization of English structures, and encourage them to use more complex mental processes. A second aspect of importance the Foreign Language Department should implement is the practice of constructing tests that measure a variety of learning outcomes throughout the Evaluation process. It should lead to improve teaching procedures and, thus, indirectly improve students learning. Since, it was observed in this Department, specifically in the Basic Intensive English course, the various learning outcomes that are expected to have in these types of courses were not–in a high percent- translated into test items. It was because the tests administered did not develop a better notion of mental processes involved. Then, the functions of understanding, thinking skills, and other complex learning outcomes can not become clearer to the language teachers as a result of certain circumstances. This clarification on how achievement is reflected should enable the language teachers to plan more effectively the students' learning experiences. And when those aspects are included in testing, teachers are more apt to emphasize complex learning outcomes in the Evaluation process. Then a well constructed test usually leads to a review of teaching procedures and to avoid procedures that encourage memorization. Finally, tests should contribute to improve teacher-students relations (benefiting students' learning)

at the Foreign Language Department. Although, many students at this Department do not view the tests as fair and useful measure of their achievement, of course, it is due to the representative sample of learning tasks during the development of the courses. The comments of the students such as what has been tested was not emphasized in the classes, the directions were not too clear, and many items were not well made in the exam to answer correctly, and sometimes the limit of time was not adequate for the test. Consequently, those aspects make students feel uncomfortable with the teachers' actions regarding Evaluation techniques. Also, it is of importance to say that students' recognition of usefulness depended of what the teachers at the Foreign Language Department do with the results as on the characteristics of the test itself. But here after the semester ends, the teachers do not take advantage of the usefulness of test results. One reason is that when the semester finishes, other courses are already assigned to the teachers. They do not have time to elaborate a report about the results as well as the valorizations of the whole learning-teaching experiences in the evaluation process throughout the course. Therefore, tests results are not used as a basis for guiding future decision making for improving the teaching-learning process. Also, no reference is given for other teachers who will start over with the students that were assigned a grade and approved the Intensive English Course.

The third criterion responds to the considerations of students' interests as a resource to improve the teaching learning process at the Foreign Language department. Alike the teachers' preferences and limitations have to be seen

significative in the Institutional policy to be accomplished in the Evaluation process; the consideration of students have to be seen as resources for their progress, and as a help to this end. Mainly, the public interest at the Foreign Language Department should provide certain circumstances in which appropriate decisions are taken. In contrast, those decisions are not included in the Evaluation process at this Department. The majority of the students (from seminar II 2003) respond to this worry. As identified from students' points of view, it seems like the approach on the evaluation process reflects a particular interest from those members, the teachers and students. One is that they are more interested with the scores rather than with the satisfaction of learning; and, in an indirect way, for them the best program is the one that increases scores (the utilitarian approach). On the contrary, it should be put into practice an approach purely Institutional. But it occurs another contrast since a variety of principles –comprising the main principle explained before- should determine a well-informed person, in the case of professors; and the participative ones, in the case of students…to contribute to the continuous process of Evaluation. It consists to reformulate and evaluate future outcomes.

There also exist demotivating effects that students criticize from this Department. Those effects are in opposition of what should be the relationship students-professors with regard to the Evaluation process. The disagreements are that at the end of the course some topics were not clearly explained as expected to be; the knowledge and understanding were not sufficient to be ready for a type of classroom test, and so

forth. Unlike in terms of pre-assessing students' needs, students ensured they do not master some skills to perform desired behavior or development of a topic. And then in some courses throughout the career they have experienced testing more than relevant activities to improve language learning.

It is very important to mention a contrast among international institutions (like Varnier College). They consider a well organized policy to be followed in the evaluation of students achievement. As observed and gathered from the interviews at the Foreign Language Department, it can be summarized the rights that students from this department demand in the evaluation process. Those are, for example: To have their learning evaluated in a competent and on-going manner which includes access to their graded assignments and tests, an opportunity to discuss results of an evaluation with the teacher, and a midterm statement of progress. And as an important responsibility they assume to do the following: To respect the teacher's reasons to determine course content, methodology, evaluation procedures and attendance policies within the guidelines set by the Foreign Language Department.

In brief, the usefulness that can be taken from the evaluation process in a program applied to a specific group, constitutes an activity that allows the language teachers to pay particular attention to the subsequent: a) to know what objectives were reached throughout the semester; b) to try an analysis of the causes that could have improved the deficiencies in the objectives stated; c) to adopt a decision in relation to the complexity to achieve what was planned from the objectives; c) to learn from the

experience and not to make mistakes in the future decision-making. In addition, it was found out the meaning of evaluation, and the significant theory related to the process itself, it is not too clear. Nowadays in the Foreign Language Department, the Evaluation process is taken as merely measurement of objectives, language knowledge, academic performance regarding students; and in the case of professors, as a requisite to improve their careers by knowing more about the concept, whether it is applied or not to the teaching-learning process. Moreover, language teachers and students view the evaluation, in an indirect way, as an aspect in which to assign grades. In general, the educational system only evaluates students' required knowledge and learning results. Afterward, limiting the Evaluation functions exclusively for grading, selecting, and controlling….then the information and learning experiences are field, if not thrown away, and never used again to improve students-teachers Language learning. In this manner, The Evaluation process is missing the vital Institutional Policy criterion, described above, without having a pedagogical sense. Thus, the Evaluation process is changed into a common activity that depends on the criteria of a person in charge of, so it becomes subjective and without institutionalization and interests from other people involved are forgotten.

Finally, it can be suggested some aspects that could define, or at least improve the Foreign Language Department Institutional Policy at the University of El Salvador. The policy of Varnier College serves as a guideline from which professors, students, deans and departments can take advantage. One aspect recommended can be taken

from " goals of the Policy". It can be seen in the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador that the teachers describe the procedures and set out the rights and responsibilities of students through the program, but occasionally teachers do not provide information to develop a procedural framework (as in the Varnier College) in which decisions can be made, for instance, most of the teachers tell students what they are expected to do in each course and in the overall program, but at the end of every course the teachers do not examine if they have set the evaluation process completely from the beginning to the end of the course, what types of teaching methods worked for specific groups, different evaluation tools, revision of programs – since it was found out that many teachers just adapt an old fashioned program to the updated circumstances-, etc. A second aspect recommended to put into practice has to do with responsibilities in general. In contrast from the ones that Varnier College establishes, the Foreign Language Department lacks the interrelationship among teachers, students and Department, in situations where " to take action to solve academic problems". For instance, the Department faculty needs a specialized library, to solve students complains, to stop dishonesty or deceptive behaviors with the collaboration of students and teachers. And very specific from teachers: to cooperate with specialized committees, evaluation meetings and students assessments revision, and to develop knowledge and other skills involved in the teaching field. Moreover, the department should be responsible of ensuring that the courses fulfill indispensable items such as objectives or at least the standards needed in a program. In contrast it can be said that the Foreign Language Department at the

University of El Salvador fulfills some requirements: The Marking Scheme that refers to the numerical/percentage marks to designate certain qualitative achievement ranges but mostly this is found as quantitative achievement ranges in the Foreign Language Department; and The Evaluation Tools like Formative, Summative, Placement, Diagnostic tools are not, in a certain way, well administered and used to identify weaknesses and provide a guideline and a motivating learning process.

Also as found in Varnier College Institutional Policy ,the Foreign Language Department is missing the "Rendement escolaire" . For example, the past/fail rates in courses and how to solve that problem is not yet discussed. Also, a well organized continuous curriculum committee (still in process at the F.L.D) to create guidelines to revise tasks and assessment from various levels and courses instead of keeping the data of the summative evaluations that only marking grades.

To conclude, an Institutional Policy on Evaluation must be the result of the work of the head of the Foreign Language Department and the board of teachers from the competence and performance set out by courses, departments and programs. Besides, students reach some sort of attitudes, mental , and technical skills. The Evaluation Policy codifies the process of matching goals with actual achievements and to accomplish this, the participation of the people involved is necessary. And not a merely isolated participation in the course assigned to the teachers each semester.

GLOSSARY

A

ABILITY What one have learned over period of time from both school and non school sources; one's general capability for performing tasks.

ACHIEVEMENT What one has learned from formal instruction, usually in school.

APTITUDE One's capability for performing particular task or skill; usually involves narrower skill than ability (e.g., foreign language aptitude).

ASSESSMENT The process of collecting, synthesizing, and interpreting information to classroom decision making; includes decision making gathering bout students, instruction, and classroom climate.

C

CHECKLIST   Written list of performance criteria associated with a particular activity or product on which an observer marks the performance required on each criterion using a scale that has some choices.

CONCEPTUAL KNOWLEDGE It demonstrates understanding of general concepts.

CURRICULUM the skills, performances, attitudes, and values students are expected to learn from the institution; includes statement of desired students outcomes, description of materials and the planned sequence that will be used to teach students.

E

EDUCATE To change the behavior of students; to teach students to do things they could not previously do.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES Statements that describe a student accomplishment that will result from instruction –specifically, the behavior students will learn to perform and the content on which it will be performed.

EVALUATION Judging the quality and quantity or goodness of a performance.

F

FACTUAL KNOWLEDGE It is based on remembering or recalling information.

FORM The particular version of a commercial test that has more than one equivalent version.

G

GRADES Symbols or numbers used by teachers to represent learner achievement in a subject area.

GRADING The process of judging the quality of a student performance.

I

INSTITUTIONAL POLICY Course of action to be accomplished by an institution.

INSTRUCTION The methods and processes by which students behaviors are changed.

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES Specific objectives used to plan daily lessons.

ITEMS Questions or problems on an assessment.

M

MEASUREMENT The process of quantifying or assigning numbers or categories to performance according to rules and standards.

P

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA The aspects of a performance or product that are observed and judged in performance assessment.

PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE The believes, prior experiences, and strategies that enable teacher to carry out classroom duties and activities.

PROCEDURAL KNOWLEDGE It demonstrate application of multistage processes.

R

RELIABILITY The extend to which an assessment consistently assess whatever it is assessing; if an assessment is reliable, it will yield the same or nearly the same information on retesting.

RESPONSE The answer choices given for matching item.

T

TEACHER SELF-ASSESSMENT The process of making decision bout one's own teaching performance based on evidence and reflection.

TEST A formal, systematic procedure for obtaining sample of learners behavior; the results of a test are used to make generalizations about how students would perform on similar but untested behavior.

V

VALIDITY The extend to which assessment information is appropriate for making the desired decision bout students, instruction, or classroom climate; the degree to which assessment information permits correct interpretation of the desired kind; the most important characteristic of assessment information.

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INSTITUTIONAL POLICY ON THE EVALUATION OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT (IPESA)
VANIER COLLEGE
Approved by the Board of Directors
November 12, 2002

1.   Goals and Objectives of the Vanier College Institutional Policy on the Evaluation of Student Achievement

A well-defined Institutional Policy on Evaluation of Student Achievement (IPESA) is central to this mission. The learning goals are the competencies as set out by teachers, departments and programs in accordance with Ministerial policies. In the course of their studies the students attain certain mental, physical and technical skills.   Evaluation policy codifies the process of matching goals with actual achievements.

The official college policies, as listed in this appendix, take precedence over the summaries presented in this IPESA.

Evaluation of student achievement is a necessarily delicate and partly subjective process. This is all the more reason why a definite policy is necessary. It must be clear. It must be fair (and *perceived* to be fair by both students and faculty). It must be accepted and well publicized within the College community. And finally it must lead to the granting of diplomas and attestations in an unambiguous and orderly way.

Students must be told clearly what is expected of them in each course and in their overall program. They must receive regular feedback on their progress in meeting the standards, and in case of disagreement they must have access to well-defined procedures for settling disputes.

On the other hand, teachers, departments and programs must continually examine the standards they set and the evaluation process they use. Different courses and teaching methods will demand different evaluation tools. Changing student populations and revised programs may also require changes to both the teaching and the evaluation process. In all cases, teachers (individually and collectively) have an ongoing obligation to ensure that the evaluation procedure is fair, relevant and efficient.

The College administration must oversee the whole process, and ensure that the resulting policy on evaluation is properly publicized to all students. It must also deal with formal requirements such as recording course grades, checking student compliance with program requirements, generating transcripts, and communicating student records to Quebec.

Finally, the government has an obligation to ensure that the College has a clear policy on this activity so central to the purpose of the institution, and that the policy is amended as circumstances dictate. The students of Vanier College are thus assured the best possible education that our talented and dedicated staff can provide.

1.2 Goals of the Policy

1. To set out and explain the general principles followed at Vanier College in the evaluation of student achievement.

2. To describe the procedures required to translate these general principles into practice.

3. To set out the rights and responsibilities of students, teachers, departments, programs, and administrators with regard to the evaluation process.

4. To provide information which will allow each student to become an effective participant in his/her educational experience at Vanier.

5. To create an atmosphere of openness and transparency around the evaluation process, so that it is understood and accepted by all segments of the College community.

6. To provide a coherent procedural framework within which decisions and professional judgments must be rendered, free of bias, inconsistency, and arbitrary practices.

7. To ensure that Vanier College is accountable for its standards of learning and its awarding of course grades, transcripts, diplomas and attestations.

8. To ensure that diversity in evaluation methods is permitted while simultaneously maintaining fairness.

9. To ensure that these evaluation policies and procedures are periodically reviewed, and any required changes addressed in a timely manner.

10. To provide an Appendix in which all pertinent College Policies are listed by title and policy number, so that they can be studied in detail on the Vanier web-page.

2. Evaluation Measures and Regulations

2.1 Grading Responsibilities and Marking Scheme

The teacher is responsible for implementing assessment measures and for assigning grades in accordance with Ministry and College regulations and program and departmental policies. The College entrusts to the departments and programs the supervision of assessment measures appropriate to specific courses. These measures might include common texts, common marking criteria, and common assignments or exams for the same or similar courses taught by different teachers. Where common measures are not in place, the department, program or course committee determines the principles regarding the design, weighting, and marking of assessment instruments used to evaluate student learning. Discussion of marking practices and student achievement averages (*rendement scolaire*) in different sections of the same course are part of the on-going business of the department and /or program. (See further definition of responsibilities in #3 below.)

The **Marking Scheme** is as follows:

1. Numerical/percentage marks are assigned to designate certain qualitative achievement ranges. These mark ranges are as follows:

90% - 100%   Excellent mastery of objectives

80% - 89%   Very good mastery of   objectives

65% - 79%   Good mastery of objectives

60% - 64%   Fair mastery of objectives   0% - 59% Poor mastery of objectives

2.2. Evaluation Tools

It is the responsibility of departments, faculty and programs to implement appropriate methods of evaluating student learning. There are two basic types of evaluation; teachers are encouraged to use both types.

Formative assessment is aimed at providing feedback to the student in the course, identifying weaknesses and misunderstandings, and guiding and motivating the learning process. In addition, formative assessment gives the teacher ongoing feedback on what concepts or skills are not being grasped; this allows modifying the teaching strategy in order to clarify topics which seem to be poorly understood.

Formative evaluation may include the following assessment tools: written, oral or practical short quizzes, pretests, informal lab reports, reaction essays, journals, structured queries, oral presentations, assignments (both in-class or take-home),

volunteer work, and participation in seminars, workshops, panels, class discussions or debates.

Summative evaluation is the principal means in each course of arriving at a final grade for the student; the grade is a quantitative measure of how well the student has achieved the specified competencies of the course. The final grade is then communicated to the Registrar and becomes part of the students record at the College.

Summative evaluation normally uses one or more of the following measurement tools: unit tests (usually 3 to 4 per semester), comprehensive examinations (mid-term exams and/or final exams) which may be written, oral or practical, major essays, formal lab reports, and term papers or term projects (often including an oral presentation).

Whatever tools are used, the aim is to ensure that the students receive the education necessary to satisfy the objectives and standards defined in their programs of study. The knowledge and skills acquired are designed to help them in their various future endeavours.

2.3. Measures for Addressing Student Academic Complaints

Clarifying the Type of Complaint

Students should note that complaints that relate to a teachers failure to fulfill his or her contractual obligations (such as meeting classes) should be taken directly to the

Faculty Dean as soon as possible. Complaints may relate to any and all academic concerns about the teaching and learning experience. Typical complaints covered by this policy may include (but are not limited to) the following:

Teacher behavior that does not encourage a positive teaching-learning environment

Course outlines not being followed throughout the course, etc.

2.4. Grades Review

Regulations for a Grades Review process are as follows:

1. The first step in a Grades Review is always the Mark Update request, made within 15 working days of the transcript date of issue.

2. Students requesting a Grades Review for a particular course have until the mid-point of the following semester to file with the Registrar the request for Grades Review.

3. All departments will have a Grades Review Committee of two standing members and the teacher whose work is being reviewed (or a substitute for him or her).

4. Students may indicate on the Grades Review Request form the wish to make a presentation to the Grades Review Committee, and may be accompanied by anyone from the Vanier community. Both student and companion have the right to remain in the meeting while all information is being presented.

5. If the student has made such a request, the Grades Review Committee must organize a meeting to be held in a neutral place within 10 working days. Written notice of the meeting must be received at least 48 hours in advance and the meeting must take place within 5 working days of the notice.

3. Rights and Responsibilities of the Vanier Community with Respect to This Policy

Everyone in the community has a responsibility to be familiar with and to adhere to this policy. It is an important part of the students=education to learn how student achievement is evaluated, and to become an active participant in the process. All individuals and groups in the college have both rights and responsibilities in the system.

3.1.   Rights and Responsibilities of Students

At the college level, students bear the primary responsibility for their learning. Accordingly, they are afforded responsibilities with respect to the evaluation of their achievement. All students have the following responsibilities:

1. To follow the procedures and requirements specific to their programs of study to ensure the completion of their DEC or AEC.

2. To comply with the course requirements as given on course outlines.

3. To respect the teacher's right to determine course content, methodology, evaluation procedures and attendance policies within the guidelines set by the Ministry of Education and the College.

4. To take action to solve academic problems, which they may encounter in their courses, by communicating with their teachers or by seeking help through College services such as the Library, The Learning Centre, Counselling, Resource Centres, etc.

5. To be honest and to refrain from cheating, plagiarism and other dishonest or deceptive behaviours.

6. To arrive in class on time and remain for the duration of scheduled class time.

7. To wait for the teacher for 15 minutes after the scheduled beginning of a class, unless they have been notified otherwise.

8.To behave respectfully in class in accordance with appropriate classroom deportment.

9. To respect the rights of all members of the college community.

10. To observe and be aware of the Zero Tolerance Policy regarding the following: unauthorized use of alcohol/illegal drugs, violence, possession of weapons, verbal abuse or intimidation, and gambling.

11. To turn off all electronic communication devices (e.g., cell phones, pagers, etc.) while in class or leave them outside of class.

12. To take responsibility for the material covered in the classes and labs they miss.

3.2. Responsibilities of Teachers

Teachers play a major role in the students= assessments. Their responsibilities, if well-defined and followed, ensure that the students will be judged and assessed in a just and equitable way. All teachers have the following responsibilities:

1. To develop the course outlines for the courses they give. The course outlines must be consistent with the Ministerial and department/program requirements and objectives.

2. To check on the learning process of the students by giving the latter regular feedback.

3. To be available to students outside of class and to post their office hours clearly.

4. To teach during the designated class room period: to arrive on time, to conduct class for the entire period, and to allow an appropriate break at the end of the period so that everyone can get from class to class on time.

5. To assess students by using appropriate formative/summative assessments.

6. To collaborate with other teachers when they are teaching the same course in different sections in order to maintain consistency and reliability.

7. To provide students with written instructions for major assignments.

8. To define and communicate to students the marking criteria of each task in order to ensure reliability, validity and justice.

9. To mark their assessment tasks in a fair and just way to ensure that the students who pass a course have really achieved the standards defined by the appropriate department, following the guidelines of the Ministry of Education.

10. To submit final grades on or before the prescribed submission deadline.

11. To respond to Mark Update requests in a timely manner and to cooperate with the Grades Review Committee.

12. When the comprehensive assessment is part of the teacher's course, to cooperate in preparing the working or testing activities that will be used for the assessment.

13. When the comprehensive assessment is part of the teacher=s course, to mark comprehensive assessment activities in accordance with the objectives and standards of the program.

14. To keep up with the knowledge and skills involved in teaching and in his/her teaching discipline.

3.3. Responsibilities of Departments

The main role of the departments is to support the mechanisms used in the assessment process of the students studying in their respective programs. The departments have their own responsibilities as well. The department is responsible for the quality of education that is offered by its teachers. Each department has the following responsibilities: To ensure that the course outlines contain all the elements consistent with the objectives and standards defined for the program and the College in

accordance with the Ministry's guidelines; To verify that all the assessment tasks and evaluation systems described by the teachers are fair, follow accepted standards and are equitable for students in all sections; To monitor student success, including a review of the *rendement escolaire* (for example, pass/fail rates in courses); To establish a curriculum committee to create guidelines that will ensure that the courses and the assessment tasks are reviewed regularly and that there is coherence among the various courses in the program; To provide information about any changes made in the program to any other departments involved in the student learning process; To guide teachers, new or old, in preparing and organizing courses in accordance with the standards and policies of the department and the College.

UNIVESIDAD DE EL SALVADOR

FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS Y HUMANIDADES

DEPARTAMENTO DE IDIOMAS

SISTEMA DE EVALUACION DE TRABAJO DE GRADUACION

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