

7-1-2010

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iRepository Citation

Aziz, S. A., Ahmed, S. N., & Amin, R. (2010). Improving English language institutions using SWAT analysis. *Business Review*, 5(2), 149-158. Retrieved from <https://ir.iba.edu.pk/businessreview/vol5/iss2/9>

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DISCUSSION

IMPROVING ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTITUTIONS USING SWAT ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The objective of language teaching is effective communication. The role of English as an international language has led to this language being accepted as a symbol of modernity, development and empowerment.

However, what is of critical importance is that language teaching itself is not as effective as it should have been. This article is based on the findings of a pilot study “SWOT analysis of English Language Institutions in Karachi” conducted by the faculty of Hamdard Institute of Education and Social Sciences, Hamdard University Karachi. The study indicates that most of the English Language Institutions in Karachi are;

- *not fully equipped;*
- *managed by non-technical or less-qualified persons or groups;*
- *working without any approved curriculum and teaching plans;*
- *run with a high profit motives and adopting short-cuts of learning English language offering courses and guaranteed learning within a span of only three months;*
- *not fully aware about their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; The study recommends the setting up of an accreditation body for the registration of English language institution all over the country; arranging training programs for the professional development of the heads and faculty of these institutions; introduction of a comprehensive test for the student of these institutions by third party to ensure the quality of learning process. A detailed SWOT analysis will be required to confirm the findings of the pilot study and a proper plan should be chalked out for the improvement of English Language Teaching institutions in Karachi/Pakistan.*

Keyword : Effective, Communication, Symbol of Modernity, Limited English Proficiency, SWOT, Scan Analysis.

INTRODUCTION

The role of English as an international language has led to this language being accepted as a symbol of modernity, development and empowerment. The world over, societies, even those with traditional cultures and ancient languages of their own, have begun to absorb this European language as a potent agent of contemporary change, and as a tool for upward society mobility. This perception, in turn, has impacted on the teaching and learning of English. English is now seen as a language that re-constructs and re-positions people's identities and their role in society.

Newsweek has an excellent feature article in the 7 March 2005 issue of its international edition on how the English language is evolving and changing the way we communicate. The article says "non-native English-speakers" worldwide now outnumber native ones 3 to 1. In Asia alone, Newsweek says, the number of English users has topped 350 million - roughly the combined populations of the United States, the UK and Canada. There are more Chinese children studying English - about 100 million - than there are Britons (that's nearly twice as many).

The objective of language teaching is effective communication. In this context, English is the medium of empowerment for businesses, academics, & students and has evolved with a number of local modifications as a living language. Besides, it reflects changing societal needs in the new geo political context, which is a good reason to teach and learn English in the developing societies.

However, what is of critical importance is that language teaching itself is not as effective as it should have been. For students entering a tertiary educational institution, writing is an essential skill. In an academic environment and later in career, being able to communicate ideas through the written medium is crucial for effective learning, assimilation of ideas and expression of opinion. But the question is that how many English language teaching centers are offering courses in writing skills?

Another issue is many used in the field of English teaching and learning may be confusing. English is a language with great reach and influence; it is taught all over the world under many different circumstances. In English-speaking countries, English language teaching has essentially evolved in two broad directions: instructions for people who intend to live in an English-speaking country and for those who don't. These divisions have grown firmer as the instructors of these two "industries" have used different , followed distinct training qualifications, formed separate , and so on. ESL (English as a second language), ELT (English language teaching, ESOL (English for speakers of other languages), and EFL (English as a foreign language) all refer to the use or study of by speakers with a different . Other terms used in this field include EAL (English as an additional language), EIL (), ELF (English as a), ESP (English for special purposes, or), EAP (). Some terms that refer to those who are learning English are ELL

(English language learner), LEP (limited English proficiency) and CLD (culturally and linguistically diverse).

The dominance of a language always favors a certain conception of life. There has been an unprecedented and near unanimous demand for English in Pakistan. Even poor parents prefer to enroll their children in unrecognized English language teacher centers and institutions that offer various short-cuts of learning English within a span of 3 months. Posing the true picture Dr. Rehman in his book, *language and politics in Pakistan (2005)* stated that “*English was introduced in the areas now comprising Pakistan by the British colonial power in the nineteenth century. As it was the language of the domains of power—government, bureaucracy, judiciary, military, education, commerce, media etc., at the elitist level, it became a preserve of elite and a means of empowerment. It also became a status marker and a social asset, this functioning as a class differentiate.*”

Teaching of English as a Foreign or second language in Pakistan needs to be reviewed thoroughly concerning it all aspects. Our young generation and the generation before have struggled a lot to have full command on this language but unfortunately this target is not achieved by many students in schools and they join different Language Institutions. English Language coaching centers attract not only those who want to learn the language, but also people who are looking for better jobs.

The questions that arise here are:

- Are these institutions catering to the needs of our youth?
- Can our people afford their fees?
- Are these language institutions striving to work even in this recession?
- Do they get students to run their institutions?
- Do they have any threats in this market?
- Is the government playing any significant role to assist these institutions and students?
- Are these institutions justifying their roles?
- Is there any reluctance by parents in sending their daughters to such institutions?

The faculty at Hamdard Institute of Education and Social Sciences, Hamdard University, Karachi initiated a pilot study doing a SWOT analysis of English Language teaching institutions in Karachi to find out the answers of above mentioned questions.

SWOT ANALYSIS

SWOT analysis is a tool to find out the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats that are to be expected in a project or in a business venture or in something similar. It means that the marketing environment (internal and external to the organization or individual) is looked at. The technique was developed by Albert Humphrey, who led a research project at Stanford University in the 1960s and 1970s using data from the Fortune 500 companies.

Even today SWOT analysis is the part of the Harvard Policy Model, which has been developed as a part of the business policy courses taught at the Harvard Business School since 1920's.

SWOT analysis is fundamentally about discovering what you do well, how you could improve, whether you are making the most of the opportunities around you, and whether there are any changes in your market—such as technological developments, mergers of businesses, or unreliability of suppliers—that call for corresponding changes in your business.

Strategic and creative use of SWOT analysis

A SWOT analysis must first start with defining a desired end state or objective. A SWOT analysis may be incorporated into the strategic planning model. An example of a strategic planning technique that incorporates an objective-driven SWOT analysis is Strategic Creative Analysis. Strategic Planning, including SWOT and SCAN analysis, has been the subject of much research.

- Strengths: attributes of the person or company that is helpful to achieving the objective.
- Weaknesses: attributes of the person or company that is harmful to achieving the objective.
- Opportunities: external conditions that is helpful to achieving the objective.
- Threats: external conditions which could do damage to the business's performance.

Identification of SWOTs is essential because subsequent steps in the process of planning for achievement of the selected objective may be derived from the SWOTs. First, the decision makers have to determine whether the objective is attainable, given the SWOTs. If the objective is not attainable a different objective must be selected and the process repeated.

The SWOT analysis is often used in academia to highlight and identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. It is particularly helpful in identifying areas for development.

PROCEDURE AND METHODOLOGY

The population of the study was all the English language teaching institutions (either recognized or unrecognized) providing skill based training to different level of students. A comprehensive list of all the English language teaching institutions was made using newspapers advertisement and web resources. Initially the institutes were divided into three categories:

Category One—Institutes offering only training in speaking skills and grammar improvement

Category Two—Institutes offering General Proficiency and ESP courses

Category Three—Institutes offering General Proficiency, ESP, and taught programs in TEFL etc.

Total 42 institutes were initially contacted and 11 were selected using purposive and stratified sampling criteria (Table 1.1)

| Category of the Institute | Numbers of institute responded | Branches |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------|
| One | 05 | 10 |
| Two | 03 | 04 |
| Three | 03 | 06 |
| Total | 11 | 20 |

Table 1.1

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

A questionnaire containing 48 items (categories shown in table 1.2) was developed and administered to find out the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for English language institutions in Karachi. A factual information sheet was also used to find the relevant data and information.

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mission statement and vision/goals ● Edge on competitors/other businesses ● Qualification of the head/employees ● Strategies to boost the morale of employees/satisfaction of customers ● Total turn over of students ● Recognition or affiliation ● Any brand name ● Ways of marketing ● Major source of revenue/financial position ● Gender ratio ● Alumni ● Mechanism of internal evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Customer complain ● Unmet needs of the workforce ● Programs in deficit ● Biggest expenditure ● Cost pressure ● Turn over of staff ● Financial weaknesses ● Inability to take risks |

| Opportunities | Threats |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Emerging trends ● Unique service area ● Favorable circumstances ● Placing after five years ● Advancement in technology ● Funding projects ● Share in the market ● Help from public sector | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Competitors ● Emerging trends/inability to meet ● External forces ● Financial problems ● Development obstacles ● Government policies |

Table 1.2

FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The responses obtained was mostly in narrative form, hence comments were organized into smaller categories e.g., concerns, suggestions, strengths, weaknesses, similar experiences, institutional inputs, recommendations, outputs, outcome indicators etc. Patterns, associations and causal relationship in the themes were identified and organized, as follows;

- 8 out of 11 institutes have one or more branches shows clearly that establishing English language institution is a viable and growing business
- Only one institute out of eleven was recognized by Higher Education Commission Pakistan. This shows the need for the establishment of proper platform either in the form of any quality agency or accreditation body to check the reliability, validity, and quality of the skills provide by these institutes. This agency could set some kind of benchmarking or accountability standard and procedures.
- 10 out of 11 were established during the last two decades which indicates the raising demand of getting English language skills by the society in general and the students in particular.
- The data clearly shows that most of the institutes and their branches are established in lower middle and middle class areas which indicate the rising awareness of middle class population for learning English as a mean of empowerment.
- The institutes are charging a range of fee from Rs. 1200/- to Rs. 6000/- per month per level depending on the facilities, teacher quality and the area concerned

- Most of the heads of the institution were qualified up to master's level. However, only one head was qualified in TEFL that shows clearly the need of training for the heads of these institutions in applied linguistics.

STRENGTHS;

- When asked the question regarding the mission, vision, and goals of the institutes, most of the institutes have mentioned only general objectives. Not a single institute narrated SMART objectives. The major focus of the institutes was to offer job oriented course of English language to be completed in a short span of time. Only two institutes were offering recognized program of English language skills.
- Most of them showed the rate of fee as their strengths and uniqueness in the market.
- Data of only two institutes showed a range of skillful employees, most of them have joined within the last two years.
- The average turn over of students was 3000 to 12000 per annum. The ratio between male and female students was ranging from 60:40 percent respectively. Despite this high turn over, only one institute indicates some surplus in the budget of its institute.
- Only one institute has indicated a proper system of internal evaluation.

WEAKNESSES:

- When asked the question regarding the weaknesses of the institutes, most of them were reluctant to discuss or narrate any weakness of the institute. However, almost all have shown budget deficit as one of the weakness. Marketing, salary and utility bills have been indicated as the measure expenditure of the institutes.

OPPORTUNITIES:


- When asked most of the heads of the institutes have not been aware of any emerging trends in English language teaching. Only two institutes have planned themselves for the next five years. Most of them think themselves on top position as compared to their competitors

THREATS:

- Most of the institutions have seen 'security' as the greatest threat to their business. None of them see their competitors as threat. Most of them were

not aware of any policy of Government of Pakistan regarding English language teaching Institution and they don't expect any grant or help from the government.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A details SWOT analysis is required to confirm the findings of the pilot study and a proper plan should be chalk out for the improvement of English Language Teaching institutions in Karachi/Pakistan
- All institutes must be registered by an accredited body to assure the accountability and quality of these institutes.
- Certified and recognized program should be introduced to facilitate students in learning and placement
- A competitive exam should be introduced keeping in mind the context of English for Pakistan (both foreign and second language), and student must be assessed on a transparent criteria
- Heads and faculty of these institutions shall be given proper training so that they may develop themselves professionally and understand the emerging trends in the teaching of English language all over the world. A proper qualification and license shall be mandatory for the teachers of English Language. 

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Knowledge does not comprise all which is contained in the large term of education. The feelings are to be disciplined; the passions are to be restrained; true and worthy motives are to be inspired; a profound religious feeling is to be instilled, and pure morality inculcated under all circumstances. All this is comprised in education.

- Daniel Webster

Organization doesn't really accomplish anything. Plans don't accomplish anything, either. Theories of management don't much matter. Endeavors succeed or fail because of the people involved. Only by attracting the best people will you accomplish great deeds.

- Colin Powell