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Optimizing the Defense Language Institute English Language Center

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Summary

Introduction

The Defense Language Institute English Language Center (DLIELC) plays an important role in the broad spectrum of the U.S. Department of Defense's (DoD's) security cooperation objectives as a key enabler and strategic engagement tool by training U.S. military and foreign students in English. However, the U.S. Air Force (USAF)—which is the organization's executive agent—needs a better understanding of DLIELC's cost structure and a capability to measure the mid- and long-term demand[1] for English language training (ELT) across the DoD and foreign partners.

In September 2010, the Air Force Language, Region and Culture Program Office, Policy (AF/A1DG), and the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Defense Language Office (OSD(P&R)/(DLO)) asked PAF to examine DLIELC to ensure that it is appropriately tasked, organized, operated, resourced, and managed to produce the ELT capability needed to effectively and efficiently meet DoD mission requirements.

To accomplish those objectives, the study included four broad tasks: (1) review prior studies, authorities, and governing documents pertaining to DLIELC; (2) develop a requirements process to identify and predict all the sources of student throughput, in sufficient detail to program resource needs; (3) consider options to improve the organization, reporting, and resourcing structure; and (4) assist DLIELC in its strategic planning.

To accomplish these tasks, we relied on student data from DLIELC from 2001 to 2010. To gather data from DLIELC, we used a question-and-answer process in which the team submitted a question to a designated DLIELC official, the question was then researched, and the answer and accompanying data were provided to the study team in a timely manner. In addition, we interviewed relevant officials. To identify best practices, we also reviewed pertinent regulations, directives, instructions, and policy documents. Finally, we conducted a comparative analysis with 12 similar organizations that had a security cooperation focus.

Key Recommendations

Based on our analysis, we identified problems in eight critical management areas, which can be thought of in terms of the elements of effective organizations to which they correspond:

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[1] Mid-term demand is defined as Future Years Defense Program (FYDP) years. Long-term demand would start near the end of the FYDP and continue beyond.

1. **Policy.** DLIELC is governed by a maze of guidance. Additionally, that guidance does not necessarily reflect the reality of the circumstances within which it must operate and consequently inhibits effective oversight.
2. **Business Model/Requirements.** DLIELC lacks a robust requirements determination process, and the organization's business model is unable to meet variable demand.
3. **Financial Risk.** Current financial management practices expose ELT clients to needless financial risk.
4. **Technology.** DLIELC should introduce new technologies at a quicker rate; their successful use could lower fixed and variable costs.
5. **Identity.** DLIELC has conflicting priorities that have led to contradictory views on the institution's identity (i.e., is it an academic, military, or government/policy institution?).
6. **Assessment.** The lack of a formal and functioning assessment/evaluation process inhibits DLIELC from being able to define and assess its own performance.
7. **Manpower.** The hiring process is unable to respond quickly to short-term and cyclical demand.
8. **Organization/Advocacy.** Importantly, the organization has had no clear institutional advocate, resulting in a lack of focused oversight within the DoD as it relates to ensuring the effective and efficient execution of ELT.

Our recommendations in each of these eight areas are listed in Table S.1.

Implementation

Implementing changes in the above management areas will not only promote organizational effectiveness but will also help to ensure that DLIELC is provided with the resources it needs to fulfill its mission. An implementation plan is needed to integrate all the recommendations in a way that informs the leadership of Headquarters Air Education and Training Command (HQ AETC) and the DLIELC management of the implications of change throughout the organization (the matrix in Appendix C is provided for this purpose).

The implementation plan, shown in Table S.2, translates the study's key recommendations into 13 general outcomes. The key organization for most outcomes is DLIELC, but other agencies—the 37th Training Wing, HQ AETC, AF/A1DG, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), and the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD)—are responsible for specific inputs to achieve the outcomes. Chapter Ten discusses the implementation plan in more detail, while Appendix C provides a guiding matrix. We summarize the 13 key outcomes in terms of the critical area and priority in Table S.2.

**Table S.1
Recommendations**

Critical Area	Recommendations
Policy	Fully review all applicable rules and regulations to ensure currency and appropriateness
	Create two instructions, a governing DoD instruction and a consolidated AF instruction, covering everything needed to grade, audit, govern, cost, and direct the organization
	Consider leveraging existing AETC processes and procedures where they may create opportunities to fully tap into AETC's resources and expertise
	Review existing rules and regulations to look for underutilized authorities and provisions that could be exercised to enhance DLIELC's effectiveness
Business model/ requirements	Institute a process to enable more accurate depiction of demand using the proposed model
	Reduce seasonal peaks by delaying certain categories of students
	Improve utilization of existing instructors by restricting leave during peak season
	Create "breathing space" within existing supply via possible relocation of U.S. Army students or by the creation of a "finishing class"
	Increase supply by utilizing proposed supply strategy
Financial risk	Form a task force of senior leadership from the 37th Training Wing, HQ AETC, and DLIELC to implement cost recovery reform
	Have the task force review proposed costing models to ensure methodological accuracy
	Once validated, fully cost DLIELC's activities
	After costing library is developed, review and reissue financial management policies and procedures as they relate to DLIELC
Technology	Explore where there may be cost-effective means to deliver some ELT through distance learning
	Explore computerized methods, such as OPIc®
	Consider using a collaborative platform approach to update SET textbooks
	Provide all students (not just SET students) with laptops
	Buy additional commercial bandwidth for Internet usage; add costs to fixed cost of operating schoolhouse
Identity	Deemphasize the academic character of the organization
	Look beyond ELT credentials in teacher recruitment process
	Have more military personnel interact with IMSs
	Consider creating an alumni program
	Consider involving IMSs in self-assessment for placement, progression, or curriculum
	Collaborate with Defense Language Testing Advisory Board to fully review the validity and reliability of the ECL
	Expand faculty PST to provide basic skills and understanding in security cooperation
	Reemphasize and develop field trips and cultural activities
Assessment	Leverage AETC's existing training assessment process including conformance to training development and evaluation policies
	Explore standard processes for training development and assessment, gaining access to lessons from similar training organizations
	Improve assessment of the FSP and coordinate with the Air Force Culture and Language Center to develop measures for assessing knowledge and comprehension of U.S. culture
	Reexamine balanced scorecard to fully represent each of the four performance measure perspectives
	Reevaluate current metrics to ensure they are clearly written, relevant, inclusive of academic, military, and building partnerships (BP) objectives, and primarily under DLIELC's control
	Include specific metrics geared toward measuring the long-term BP impact

Table S.1—Continued

Critical Area	Recommendations
Manpower	Utilize U.S. Code, Title 10, civilian academic hires provisions
	End the current practice of curriculum development, which unnecessarily consumes faculty manpower
	Establish a dedicated contracting vehicle to purchase English language instruction and support
	Have specialized military/technical language curricula requirements executed by knowledgeable experts in those fields
	Emphasize the importance of building partnerships by obtaining more military department personnel
	Use experts and consultants as a ready pool of language professionals who could be brought on to quickly fill gaps because of unforeseen student load fluctuations
Organization/ advocacy	Ensure that OSD and USAF leadership agree on clarified oversight responsibilities and functions for DLIELC
	Ensure that an advocate or champion in DoD is actively involved in the requirements process
	Fully implement principles, practices, and norms established by AETC to ensure DLIELC becomes more responsive and accountable to DoD policies and priorities

NOTES: SET = Specialized English training; IMS = international military student.

Table S.2
Recommendations to Address Problems in the Critical Areas Identified

Outcome (Critical Area)	Priority
1. Clarified mission statement/priorities in conformance with USAF, DSCA, OSD policies and priorities (**M/P; O/A**)	Immediate
2. Enhanced policies/procedures, implemented to increase managerial effectiveness (**M/P; O/A**)	Immediate
3. Policy to improve prediction of ELT demand (**R; I; M**)	Immediate
4. Policy to prioritize student flow by reducing seasonal demand peaks (**R**)	Mid-term
5. Policy that expands teaching capacity by existing labor supply and that introduces greater flexibility in managing labor to meet peak demand periods (**FM/M**)	Mid-term
6. Policy to manage increase in supply of ELT (**R**)	Long-term
7. Policy that overhauls existing management of finance system, practices, and key supporting tools (**MP; FM**)	Immediate
8. Policy that establishes that curriculum development will be undertaken only when reimbursable (**FM; I; M**)	Immediate
9. Policy that better exploits technology in support of ELT, with clear objective of reducing costs wherever possible (**FM; T; M**)	Long-term
10. Policy that clearly establishes that DLIELC is ELT organization and essential BPC instrument (**I; O/A**)	Long-term
11. Effective assessment process (**A**)	Mid-term
12. Policy to expand DLIELC's labor flexibility (**R; FM; I; M**)	Long-term
13. Policy that seeks to improve advocacy for DLIELC by senior sponsors (**O/A**)	Mid-term

NOTES: **M/P** = Mission/Policy; **R** = Requirements; **FM** = Financial Management; **T** = Technology; **I** = Identity; **M** = Manpower; **O/A** = Organization and Advocacy. Immediate refers to execution years. Mid-term refers to the FYDP. Long-term refers to FYDP and beyond.