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Problem-Solving Sample Essay (1)

Cheerleading- Yes or No?

All of the leaders, including the president and vice president of the Student Associate of each department in the College of Foreign Languages, and the chairmen, were sitting in SB201 having a meeting. Everyone looked serious and the seats were apparently arranged by the division of students and teachers. "I just don't understand why you students insist on this time and money consuming cheerleading contest." the chairman of the German department said. And he continued to say, "because of this contest that holds every year, my students have to work for it for at least two months, which limits their time for study and, worst of all, they might get hurt in practicing."

My fellow students all nodded mutely, for we've heard that our school sisters and brothers got hurt the other days. One of the students, the SA president of the French Department responded, "It's true that they might get hurt in practicing the skills, but there are things we can do to prevent and to reduce the risk." I, as the executive of the cheerleading contest this year, handed chairmen the proposal which each of the member in JEFIGS (Student Association of Foreign Language College) worked out together.

Safety, Tradition and Spirit are the key elements in an activity, and so is in the cheerleading contest. Safety is first rule; needless to say, there's no meaning of an activity if there's no safety. Chairmen and professors think that we shouldn't hold the contest because it's time-consuming and too dangerous. They also worry that it might take off the time students originally prepare for class work. However, any sport has its own risk and danger. What we can do is prevent and make the risk as low as possible. We can't cancel the Olympics simply because it might be dangerous. Practice makes perfect. It takes time to practice in order to make the final performance wonderful. The more practice, the more understanding between members; the more understanding they have to each other, the lower risk of getting hurt they are under.

I spoke when the chairmen were reading the proposal, "to ensure safety, what we have done this year is to add more restrictions. First, regulate the height for the acrobatics and the number of protectors. Second, ask for insurance certificates for every cheerleader that participates in the contest in the enrollment. The third one, ambulance car and first-aid personnel should stand by on the scene." The SA president of Japan Department continued, "there are actually some other things we can do, like to purchase pads for daily practice and for the contest. But it's a pity that we can't either afford the expense or borrow them from other places."

Strict regulations on moves prevent cheerleaders from making moves that are too

dangerous. What we do this year is to have at most one flyer (cheerleader whose feet are on other cheerleader's shoulders or hands) climb over two layers in each move. One layer means the height of one cheerleader stands, so at most we allow three layers this time. And a three-layer move needs two protectors. Under the same rules of moves, cheerleaders of each team have to think of other ways to win over the other competitors rather than triumph over danger. Protectors are also helping to lower the risk of getting hurt. Mostly we have protectors who are also cheerleaders, but now we have to make a distinction. Protectors cannot be cheerleaders, and all they have to do is to protect those cheerleaders whose feet are not on the ground. The second additional clause we can make is to require an insurance certificate for every cheerleader. The certificate ensures compensation of injures; that is, even if some one gets hurt while practicing the skills for the cheerleading contest, he/she won't have to shoulder up all the medical bills. As for the pads exclusively for gymnastic use, are the perfect protections for cheerleaders. Even if they fall, their bodies won't directly touch the solid ground, but the softer pads made of foam rubber.

"Why don't we replace cheerleading with traditional dancing," the chairman of Spanish Department claimed, "I think it is also workable and less risky." Teresa, president of English department SA answered, "I don't think it would be less risky, less time and money consuming; besides, the unity it lacks of might make it difficult to vote for a No.1." "It won't be easy to judge traditional dancing," one president went on, "since every traditional dancing represents different culture and each one of it is unique."

Is traditional dancing workable? Yes and why not. If we make effort on it, we surly can have a successful contest as well. And it seems to be a better solution that all the elements can be covered. Traditional dancing is no doubt traditional, maybe safer, and helps unite the students involved. However, will it be less time and money consuming? What kind of dance symbolizes each culture? Can we find a coach to teach that dancing? And how do we judge a dance that is a tradition? Some of them are naturally more spectacular and splendid, and some of them are naturally more serious and maybe boring. In a competition that bases on the splendor of the performances, traditional dancing doesn't seem to be a good choice.

Compared with traditional dancing, now the cheerleading contest seems to be a lot easier. They all take time to practice and cost money to hire a coach. Because of the peculiarity and the uniqueness of each dancing, coaches for traditional dancing might cost more, in comparison of the coaches for cheerleading. Normally a cheerleading coach charges one thousand to thirty thousand for a three-month training; while a coach for a traditional dancing, for example, a coach for Flamenco charges at least forty thousand for the same length of time.

The tradition we mean here, is to keep the tradition of holding this cheerleading

contest. It is the fifth time we have this contest, and it is becoming more and more famous around the universities. We can easily find discussions on our contest on BBS. We also have audience from Xin Zhu, coming north especially for viewing the performances. We also have high school cheerleaders as our audience to learn from the splendid performance. Why abandon it if it is successful? It's not true that only students in Britain or in America have cheerleading contests. Almost every high school or university in each country has cheerleaders, for basketball teams, for baseball teams or for football teams.

After the meeting, when Teresa and I were talking about the workability of cheerleading contest, one of the cheerleaders, Steve joined us. "I take part in it every time and I really enjoy the time I've spent and am spending on that. This is the third time I participates in and I am both glad and honor that I am one of them." Steve said in response. "Don't you think it is really exhausting to practice out of your leisure time?" I asked. "Of course it is, but it's worthy."

It is the spirit of cheerleading that keeps each cheerleader go on though extremely exhausted they are. Though the practices that take place almost every day, cheerleaders learn and fall together, try to create electricity and to make a most perfect performance, even if it is only a four-minute one. The most important thing in this contest is not win or lose, but the same ultimate goal that every cheerleader has to give a spectacular dance.

Problem-Solving Sample Essay (2)

The Government Should Take Complaints of Civil Service Level-four Exam Seriously

As far as we know, a test is made to provide examinees with chances to bring together what they have learned in their reading. The same with the examiners, a test is given in an attempt to find out exactly how much the testees have gained from the materials they read. A test becomes problematic if what is covered in the content is far beyond the test takers' knowledge and what follows are the misleading results for the examiners to have a clear idea of how much the examinees have really accomplished. The scenario just mentioned above truly happens in last year's (2003) nationwide civil service level-four exam on the subject of *History of the Republic of China*.

The exam IS a problem because previous tests were on the history of the Republic of China and that is the very subject that most people taking the test studied. What becomes controversial of the exam is that almost 96% of the questions on the test of *History of the Republic of China* were about Taiwan history. To be more specific, 37 of

the 40 test questions on national history were about Taiwan. This has caused uproars among the examinees because the test itself is quite standard and has not changed much over the past couple of years. In other words, making the changes without telling anyone is the biggest bias of the exam.

Some solutions or countermeasures should be made in response to the rising complaints. Four goals should be at least achieved for a good solution: fairness, validity, actuality and efficiency. No matter what measures are taken, a satisfying solution must reveal what an exam is supposed to accomplish and what it really covers in the text layout.

Speaking of “fairness”, it targets on the justice that a test should treat each person equally in a manner of reasonable impartiality. In this case, it is rather evident in the exam in which the changes have been secretly made without public announcement that the exam deprived the test takers of the right of a fair chance. As for “validity”, the main idea it deals with is that a test should measure what is intended to measure, no extraneous knowledge. Apparently in last year’s government test, making a test whose questions are beyond the examinees’ expectations as well as the teachers’ is invalid. “Actuality”, on the other hand, means that a test had better reflect the reality in order to be practical. It is said to be the main concern by the officers in their response to the complaints that only when the potential civil servants have a good idea of the history of the local people can they serve the people on the island well. With regard to “efficiency”, the assessment should produce a satisfactory result without wasting time or money. In other words, it aims at practical consideration like the cost, time and efforts required. By ranking and prioritizing the goals, the goals to be served in the order of importance are “fairness”, which counts to be the top one especially in the test delivery, “validity”, “actuality” and the last, “efficiency”.

It is true that examinees should be tested to prove themselves qualified and competent. Equally important, it is the examiners that possess the power to design the test format. Nevertheless, both conditions should be grounded on the base of fairness and justice. Thus, the coping measures shouldn’t include conditions that work against this principle. Three ways to do this as to the aftermath of the biased exam involve **another make-up test** with prior announcement on the proportion and the scope of test questions on Taiwan’s history, **a revised grading policy** about the section of Taiwan’s history as regard to score interpretation and **a deletion of the said-to-be biased subject** without taking it into account in the total scores.

The hardest part of figuring out a good make-up measure to eliminate the aroused controversy is coming up with something that should be complete enough and doesn’t have any loopholes. The merits of **the first solution** lie in that it enables the test takers to share a standard starting point to compete again in the test by a unified notification in

advance. Second, with a prior announcement on the scope of the test questions of Taiwan history, it definitely avoids discrepancy between testees' knowledge of the test subject and what is really covered in the test. That is to say, it accomplishes both face validity (the make-up test looks right to other testees) and content validity (the make-up one is in accordance with test plans or textbooks) in terms of the pedagogy. Additionally, by putting emphasis on Taiwan's history, the test can reflect the current political reality. The big problem with holding another make-up exam is that it indeed will cost our social resources, including re-stationing a whole group of invigilator, re-printing a good deal of test papers, not to mention wasting time for both examinees and the teachers to re-take the test and to re-comment on the test sheets.

Having **a revised grading policy** on the unbalanced test questions about Taiwan history might be another workable alternative. The advantages of this solution include the first top value, fairness. That is, we can see it a measure of accommodation attempting to alter injustice. Second, the test subject, which was set without notification in advance though, remains a reflection of the political reality. Despite the above two, it is the remedy that takes less effort and could save more of the social resources as to the cost and time in terms of practicality in comparison with the first one. The disadvantage, however, is that a remedial measure of the scoring system afterwards still cannot cover the loss of validity in the original test.

In addition to another make-up test and a revised grading policy, **deleting the said-to-be biased subject** without taking it into account the total scores is actually doable as well. As for the pros, the deletion provides the test takers with a fundamental justice. In addition, the decision to do without the subject also reveals the emphasis on the issue of validity. With regard to the cons it derives, the measure, to certain degree, still causes a waste of social resources such as the papers printed and the time spent during the exam. What is more, the deletion disregards the value of authenticity and does not reflect the current society in Taiwan.

Throughout the analysis of the solutions and screening according to the ranking criteria mentioned above (from fairness, validity, actuality to efficiency). We can clearly conclude that the best counterargument responding to the uproar is to hold another make-up test since it is the very one that encompasses three mentioned qualities just like the second solution. What is different in between the first and the second solution is that fairness, validity and actuality are the top 3 qualities the first solution embodies whereas the second is characterized by fairness, actuality and efficiency. What makes the second one stand out from our list is that it disclaims the criteria of validity, which is weighed as the second most important one in our screened specifications. As to the third solution, it by far ends up being our last choice since it provides the best solution with 2 qualities only; that is, fairness and validity.