

## Program Evaluation: Utilizing Needs Analysis for Decision Making

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### 1. Definition of program evaluation from the literature

*“Program evaluation is the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs to make judgments about the program, improve program effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about future programming”* (Patton, 1997, p. 23).

*“[a] systematic collection and analysis of information necessary to improve a curriculum, assess its effectiveness and its efficiency, and determine participants’ attitudes within the context of a particular institution”* (Brown, 1995, p. 227).

*“systematic assessment of the operation and/or the outcomes of a program or policy, compared to explicit or implicit standards, in order to help improve the program or policy”* (Weiss, 1998, p. 18).

### 2. Purpose and use of program evaluation

Various evaluation purposes: Summative, formative, knowledge generation, & empowerment

### 3. Useful to who?

- Stakeholders: *People who have a stake in evaluation findings; Stakeholders include anyone who make decisions or desires information about a program.*
- Primary intended users: *A group or individuals who are in position to make decision about the program, intend to use the evaluation findings to inform their future actions, and are affected by the evaluation outcomes.*

### 4. Characteristics of useful program evaluation

Pragmatic, participatory, negotiated, responsive, clear & comprehensible, educational, transformative, manageable, feasible, action oriented, etc.

### 5. Two evaluation showcases that used needs analysis for different evaluation purposes:

#### (A) EFL general English education program at a private high school in Japan

- ❖ **Purpose:** Direction for curriculum reform (program planning)
- ❖ **Use:**
  - Set goals of the three-year general English education program
  - Advocate value of the program on the school web page
- ❖ **Primary intended users:** Lead teacher, full-time English teachers, & curriculum coordinator
- ❖ **Evaluation questions:**
  - What are the similarities and differences in English needs among students and teachers?
  - How do needs align with the national guidelines (MEXT, 2003ab), and the university’s expectation?
  - What topics are learners interested in? Are those topics introduced in the class either by a teacher or through textbooks?
- ❖ **Evaluation method:**
  - NA survey for students, NA survey for teachers
  - Document analysis: MEXT policy statements & existing curriculum info.
- ❖ **Key evaluation findings:**
  - Teachers = students = MEXT

- Prepare for the pre-2<sup>nd</sup> level STEP test
- Carry on a daily conversation in English (greetings, communicate with the foreign exchange students, provide direction to the foreigners when asked, etc.) and travel survival English (buying and negotiating price)
- Teachers = MEXT > students
  - Expressing opinions and thoughts were perceived as strongly necessary by teachers, while many students rated “telling or exchanging opinions” as low priority.
- University 1st & 2nd yr curriculum > students
  - Reading authentic texts (e.g., English magazines, newspaper articles, and internet resources)
- Students & teachers > textbook
  - More interactive writing tasks (e.g., emailing). Most writing tasks in the textbook were one-way tasks

❖ **Actual evaluation use:**

Writing goal statement

**(B) ESL course at a community school for adults in the U.S.**

- ❖ **Purpose:** Provide meaningful curriculum for learners that is aligned with school, state and federal standards
- ❖ **Use:** Integrate problems that adult ESL learners face in their daily lives into the curriculum to cooperatively problem solve
- ❖ **Primary intended users:** Adult ESL learners & instructors
- ❖ **Evaluation questions:**
  - What are some problems that adult ESL learners face in their daily lives that aren't addressed in the textbooks?
  - What authentic resources can be utilized to address those problems?
- ❖ **Evaluation method:**
  - Surveys (questionnaires, open-ended questions, informal interviews, focus groups, and ongoing self-assessments)
  - Classroom observations by a colleague
- ❖ **Key evaluation findings:**
  - Learners want
    - to speak in real world situations (e.g. at work, on the phone)
    - to improve pronunciation
    - more meaningful interactions
    - to understand their mail
  - Learners don't want
    - academic English
- ❖ **Actual evaluation use:**
  - Increased activities in speaking and pronunciation

- Authentic resource (e.g. bills, junk mail, and newspapers) utilization
- More dialogic focus groups to address specific concerns in subsequent class meetings

## 6. Online resources

### ❖ Program evaluation

- Foreign Language Program Evaluation Project: <http://www.nflrc.hawaii.edu/evaluation>
- Western Michigan Evaluation Center:
  - Checklist for evaluators, <http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/checklists/index.html>
- The International Development Research Centre:
  - Guideline for identifying intended users of an evaluation  
<http://www.idrc.ca/uploads/user-S/115645001817Guideline.pdf>
  - Guideline for identifying intended use(s) of an evaluation  
<http://www.idrc.ca/uploads/user-S/115644998416Guideline.pdf>
  - Evaluation principles  
[http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-58368-201-1-DO\\_TOPIC.html](http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-58368-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html)
- The Online Evaluation Resource Library
  - Professional development modules on key topics on evaluation  
<http://oerl.sri.com/instruments/cd/instrCD.html>
- American Evaluation Association: <http://www.eval.org>
  - Program Evaluation Standard, <http://www.eval.org/EvaluationDocuments/progeval.html>

### ❖ Needs analysis/assessment

- Center for Education Integrating Science, Mathematics and Computing, Georgia Tech's College of Sciences, [http://www.ceismc.gatech.edu/MM\\_Tools/analysis.html](http://www.ceismc.gatech.edu/MM_Tools/analysis.html)
- Amie N. Casper's website on needs analysis in TESOL programs  
[http://linguistics.byu.edu/resources/volunteers/TESOLBYU\\_NeedsAnalysis.htm](http://linguistics.byu.edu/resources/volunteers/TESOLBYU_NeedsAnalysis.htm)
- Keita Kikuchi's article on "Triangulating perceptions of learners' needs: An alternate way of conducting needs analysis": <http://jalt.org/pansig/2004/HTML/Kikuchi.htm>

## 7. Books and articles (\* are recommended books)

### ❖ How-to books on program evaluation and needs analysis

- \*Alderson, J. C., & Beretta, A. *Evaluating second language education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- \*Altschuld, J. W., & Witkin, B. R. (2000). *From needs assessment to action: Transforming needs into solution strategies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Brown, J. D. (1989). Language program evaluation: A synthesis of existing possibilities. In R. K. Johnson (Ed.), *The second language curriculum* (pp. 222-241). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, J. D. (1995a). Language program evaluation: Decisions, problems and solutions. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 15, 227-248.

- \*Brown, J. D. (1995b). *The elements of language curriculum*. New York: Heinle & Heinle.
- \*Long, M. H. (Ed.). (2005). *Second language needs analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lynch, B. K. (1996). *Language program evaluation: Theory and practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McKillip, J. (1987). *Need Analysis: Tools for the Human Service and Education. Applied Social Research Methods Series*, Volume 10. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA.
- \*Patton, M. Q. (1997). *Utilization focused evaluation: The new century text*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rea-Dickins, P., & Germaine, K. (1992). *Evaluation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rea-Dickins, P., & Germaine, K., P. (Eds.). (1998). *Managing evaluation and innovation in language teaching: Building bridges*. London: Longman.
- Reviere, R., Berkowitz, S., Carter, C.C., Gergusan, C.G. (Eds.). (1996). *Needs assessment: A creative and practical guide for social scientists*. Washington, DC: Taylor and Francis.
- \*Weir, C., & Roberts, J. (1994). *Evaluation in ELT*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- \*Witkin, B. R., & Altschuld, J. W., (1995). *Planning and conducting needs assessments: A practical guide*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

#### ❖ Use of needs analysis in language program development and evaluation

- Blue, G. M. (1994). Self-assessment of foreign language skills: Does it work? *CLE Working Papers*, 3, 18–35. Southampton, UK: University of Southampton.
- Chaudron, C., Doughty, C., Kim, Y., Kong, D., Lee, J., Lee, Y., Long, M. H., Rivers, R., & Urano, K. (2005). A task-based needs analysis of a tertiary Korean as a foreign language program. In M. H. Long (Ed.), *Second language needs analysis* (pp. 105-124). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Iwai, T., Kondo, K., Lim, D.S.J., Ray, G.E., Shimizu, H., & Brown, J.D. (1999). *Japanese language needs assessment 1998-1999* (NFLRC NetWork #13) [HTML document]. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, Second Language Teaching & Curriculum Center. Retrieved January 15, 2007, from <http://www.nflrc.hawaii.edu/NetWorks/NW13/>
- Lett, J. A. (2005). Foreign language needs assessment in the US military. In M. H. Long (Ed.), *Second language needs analysis* (pp. 105-124). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mackay, R., & Bosquet, M. (1981). LSP curriculum development: From policy to practice. In R. Mackay & J. D. Palmer (Eds.), *Language for specific purposes: Program design and evaluation* (pp. 1-28). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Pennington, M. C., & Brown, J. D. (1991). Unifying curriculum process and curriculum outcomes: The key to excellence in language education. In M. C. Pennington (Ed.), *Building better English language programs: Perspectives on evaluation in ESL* (pp. 57-74). Washington, DC: NAFSA.
- Poehner, M., & Lantolf, J. (2005). Dynamic assessment in the language classroom. *Language Teaching Research*, 9(3), 233-265.