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Teaching English as a Foreign or Second Language (ELT)

M.A Students/ Methods of Teaching English

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Approaches to evaluation

The focus throughout has been analysis of the different factors that determine the successful design and implementation of language programs and language teaching materials. This overall and interlinked system of elements (i.e., needs, goals, teachers, learners, syllabuses, materials, and teaching) is known as the second language curriculum.

Curriculum evaluation is concerned with answering questions such as these. It focuses on collecting information about different aspects of a language program in order to understand how the program works, and how successfully it works, enabling different kinds of decisions to be made about the program, such as whether the program responds to learners' needs, whether further teacher training is required for teachers working in the program, or whether students are learning sufficiently from it.

The scope of evaluation has moved **from** a concern with **test results to the need to collect information** and make judgments about all aspects of the curriculum, from planning to **implementation** (Hewings and Dudley-Evans 1996).

Evaluation may focus on many different aspects of a language program, such as:

- 1- *curriculum design.*
- 2- *the syllabus and program content.*
- 3- *classroom processes.*
- 4- *materials of instruction.*
- 5- *the teachers.*
- 6- *teacher training the students.*
- 7- *monitoring of pupil progress.*
- 8- *learner motivation.*
- 9- *the institution.*
- 10- *learning environment*
- 11- *staff development*
- 12- *decision making.*

Accountability, that helped guide improvement of ongoing projects, and that documented what happened in curriculum projects.

Purposes of evaluation

Weir and Roberts (1994) distinguish between two major purposes for language program evaluation,

- 1- **program accountability,**
- 2- **program development.**

1- Accountability : refers to the extent to which those involved in a program are answerable for the quality of their work. Accountability-oriented evaluation usually examines the effects of a program or project at significant end points of an educational cycle and is usually conducted for the benefit of an external audience or decision maker.

2-Development-oriented evaluation, by contrast, is designed to improve the quality of a program as it is being implemented. It may involve **staff who are involved in the program** as well as **others who are not and may have a teacher-development focus** (Weir and Roberts 1994, 5).

The different purposes for evaluation are referred to as formative, illuminative, and summative evaluation.

1-Formative evaluation

This type of evaluation is generally known as *formative evaluation*. It focuses on ongoing development and improvement of the program.

Information collected during formative evaluation is used **to address problems that have been identified and to improve the delivery of the program.**

Example 1: During the implementation of a new primary course in an EFL context it is found that rather than using the task-oriented communicative methodology that provides the framework for the course, a number of teachers are resorting to a teacher-dominated drill and practice mode of teaching that is not in harmony with the course philosophy. In order to address this problem a series of Saturday morning workshops are held to identify the kinds of problems teachers are having with the materials. Videos are used to model more appropriate teaching strategies and teachers agree to attempt to implement in their classrooms some of the techniques they have seen demonstrated and to report back on their experiences at subsequent workshops.

2- Illuminative evaluation

Another type of evaluation can be described as *illuminative evaluation*. This refers to evaluation that seeks to find out how different aspects of the program work or are being implemented. It seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the processes of teaching and learning that occur in the program, without necessarily seeking to change the course in any way as a result.

Example: A teacher wants to find out more about how students carry out group work and whether he is sufficiently preparing students for group-work tasks. He arranges to record different groups of students carrying out a group-work task and reviews the recordings to find out the extent to which students participate in group discussions and the kind of language they use. On reviewing the recordings, the teacher is pleased to note that the strategy of assigning each member of a group a different role during group tasks – such as coordinator, language monitor, or summarizer – is proving effective in ensuring that group members participate actively in tasks.

3- Summative evaluation

A third approach to evaluation is the type of evaluation with which most teachers and program administrators are familiar and which seeks to make decisions about the worth or value of different aspects of the curriculum. This is known as *summative evaluation*. **Summative evaluation** is concerned with determining the effectiveness of a program, its efficiency, and to some extent with its acceptability. It takes place after a program has been implemented .

In order to decide if a course is effective, criteria for effectiveness need to be identified. There are many different measures of a course's effectiveness and each measure can be used for different purposes. **For example**

1-Mastery of objectives: One way of measuring the effectiveness of a course is to ask "How far have the objectives been achieved?" Each objective in the course is examined and criteria for successful achievement of each objective are chosen.

2-Performance on tests: formal tests are probably the commonest means used to measure achievement. Such tests might be unit tests given at the end of each unit of teaching materials, class tests or quizzes devised by teachers and administered at various stages throughout the course. Weir (1995) points out that achievement tests can have an important washback effect on teaching and learning. They can help in the making of decisions about needed changes to a program, such as which objectives need more attention or revision.

3-Measures of acceptability: Acceptability can be determined by assessments of teachers and students. Reasons for a course being considered acceptable or unacceptable might relate to such factors as

- time-tabling,
- class size,
- choice of materials,
- teachers' teaching styles.

4- Retention rate or reenrollment rate: A measure of a course's effectiveness that may be important from an institution's point of view is the extent to which students continue in the course throughout its duration and the percentage of students who reenroll for another course at the end.

5-Efficiency of the course: Another measure of the success of a course is how straightforward the course was to develop and implement.

Quantitative and qualitative evaluation

Quantitative measurement : refers to the measurement of something that can be expressed numerically. Many tests are designed to collect information that can be readily counted and presented in terms of frequencies, rankings, or percentages.

Qualitative measurement : refers to measurement of something that cannot be expressed numerically and that depends more on subjective judgment or observation.

Procedures used in conducting evaluations

Many of the procedures used in conducting evaluation discusses a number of the procedures mentioned here from the perspective of needs analysis. Here we will consider their role in evaluation and possible advantages or limitations of each procedure.

1-T
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2- Interviews

Interviews with teachers and students can be used to get their views on any aspect of the course. Normally, structured interviews provide more useful information than unstructured interviews.

Advantages: In-depth information can be obtained on specific questions.

Disadvantages: Interviews are very time-consuming and only a sample of teachers or students can normally be interviewed in depth; hence the representativeness of their views may be questionable.

3- Questionnaires

These can be used to elicit teachers' and students' comments on a wide range of issues.

Advantages: Questionnaires are easy to administer and information can be obtained from large numbers of respondents.

Disadvantages: Questionnaires need to be carefully designed if they are to elicit unbiased answers, and information may be difficult to interpret.

For example, if students indicate that they found a particular unit in a course difficult, follow-up investigation may be needed to determine exactly why they perceived it to be difficult. Was it the unit itself or was it badly taught?

4-Teachers' written evaluation

Teachers can complete a course evaluation using a structured feedback form that elicits comments on all aspects of the course.

Advantages: Teachers are in a good position to report on a course and a well-designed evaluation form provides information quickly in a way that is easy to summarize.

Disadvantages: The information obtained may be impressionistic and biased, because it presents only the teacher's point of view.

5-Diaries and journals

6-Teachers' records

7-Student logs

8-Case study.

9-Student evaluations

10-Audio- or video-recording

11- Observation.