

Lesson 14: Evaluation

Introduction

Course evaluation is the last, but not the least, important stage in ESP course design. This inseparable part of course design aims at checking the effectiveness and the efficiency of the course. It helps to assess how well the needs that have created the demand for a course are being served. ESP course evaluation has a considerable importance is an ultimate measure for making decisions on curriculum changes and development. Actually, course evaluation can be done via the use of several data collection techniques, such as surveys or a summary of responses to questionnaires, formal or informal talks, interviews, observations, and checklists.

1. Defining Evaluation

Robinson (1991) defines evaluation as “the discovery of the value of something for some purpose” (p.65). It is a process that “begins with determining what information to gather and ends with bringing about change in current activities or influencing future ones” (Dudley-Evans and St John , 1998, p.128).

Richards (2001) suggests another kind of evaluation is illuminative evaluation that 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. (p.289)

2. Course Evaluation Models

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) suggested two levels of evaluation: Learners assessment and course evaluation. Generally speaking, these two forms of evaluation are not distinct. To a large extent assessing the students performance reflects on the effectiveness of the course designed. Thus, both learner and course evaluation are of equal importance in providing feedback on the ESP course.

In ESP context, it is of a crucial importance to assess the students' performance particularly their ability to perform given communicative tasks at the beginning and at the end of the course. Assessing the proficiency of learners reflects on how much language is required in the course. The second important step of evaluation is evaluating the ESP course itself to test whether the

determined objectives are being met, whether the course performed the job it was designed for, in a broader term.

Recently, Tsou & Chen (2014) suggested an updated framework for evaluation adopted from Hutchinson and waters model. It is an ESP program evaluation that informed by stakeholders' goals. It is based on three main components: Learners assessment, course evaluation, and teacher participation and empowerment.

The new framework incorporates important topics related to ESP, such as authenticity, learner autonomy, and learning transfer. It also emphasizes the learners' assessment through different types of tests. Furthermore, teachers' participation and empowerment is considered as another important aspect in the evaluation (Figure1).

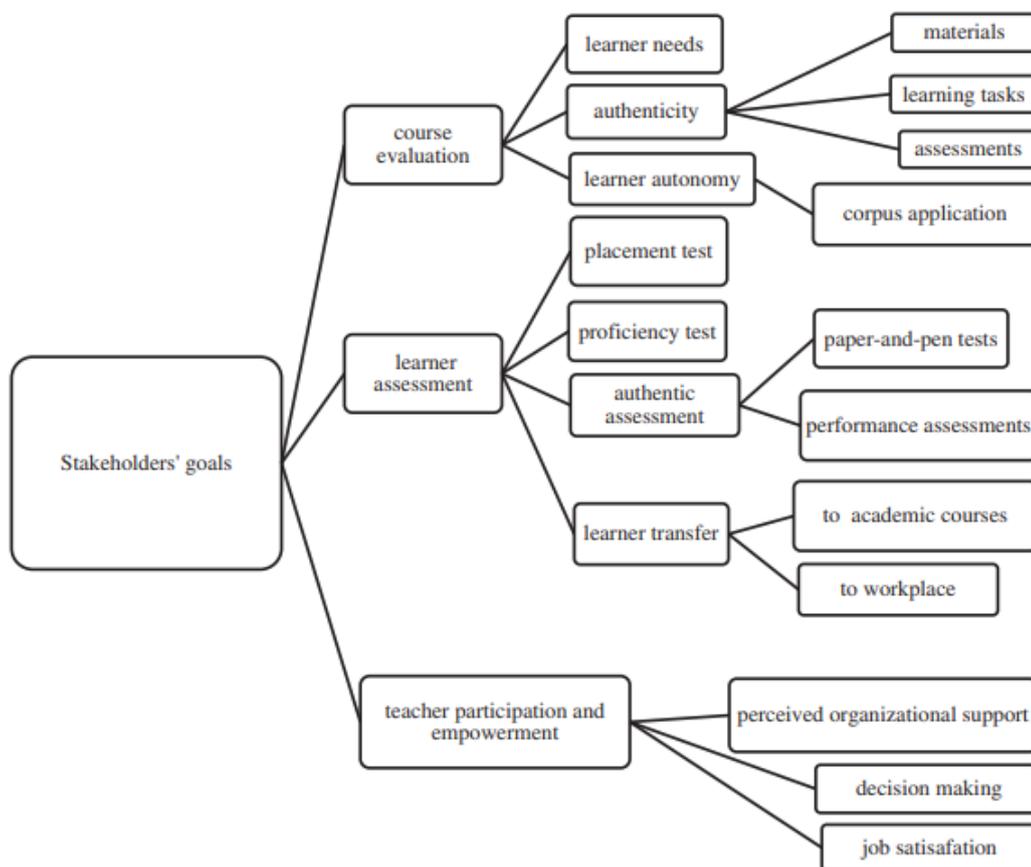


Figure. 1 The ESP program evaluation framework (Tsou & Chen ,2014, p.40) .

Conclusion

Course evaluation is a dynamic and an on-going process that may include the stakeholders such as the practitioner, learners, administrators or sponsors . The stakeholders contribute to a

multi-perspective evaluation that result in curriculum changes, such as revision and clarification of course objectives.

The present course presented a framework for developing ESP courses. It is development is an on-going process in which the teacher makes necessary changes to suite students interests and needs, even as the course is in progress. As illustrated, course-developing process starts with students analysis, which is followed by slecting the appropriate syllabus type or types, then integrate them in a comprehensive teaching programme. Selection of teaching materials and methodology is the next step, where the ESP practitioner attempts to reflect what he thinks about the learning process. Finally, course evaluation which involves both different perspectives.