



Students` Satisfaction with their Achievement in English Program in the Junior High Schools

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ABSTRACT

Educational programs, wherever they take place and whomever the content and the results are intended for, are in constant need of revisions and decisions to be made as to the effectiveness of the program. Alderson and Genesee on the one hand and Upshur on the others maintain that the result of assessment can be used by different people and for different purposes. These assessments can measure learners` satisfaction as well which can be shown as the result of program evaluation and the very topic under study here. Although satisfaction has been introduced differently, it can be observed as an index of achievement and accomplishment in different learning environment which can lead to more engaged, motivated, and responsive learners. The sample in this study consisted of the students aged 13 to 15 and included both males and females. Stufflebeam`s CIPP-based questionnaire was used in this study. The data collected through the questionnaires were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 21.00). The chi-square result indicated dissatisfaction of the students with their achievement in the region

Keywords: Evaluation; Students` satisfaction; Achieved knowledge; , Iran`s junior high schools .

1. Introduction

In every context, educational or non-educational ones, the positive feeling as a result of accomplishing a task known as satisfaction is a sufficiently exciting subject. To help educationalists and stakeholders revise and reconsider the context of education and the decisions, students` satisfaction information can present useful hints (Witowski, 2008). To make the program more efficient, researchers should evaluate the program repeatedly and regularly (Aman, 2009). This can be materialized through using direct performance criteria such as comprehensive exams or by indirect ones like students` satisfaction with the curriculum (Jamelske, 2009). This article intends to focus on the second approach by assessing satisfaction with the curriculum.

Educational programs are in constant need of decisions to be made as to the effectiveness of the program. To be useful and effective, any evaluation requires planning. Alderson (1992) and Genesee and Upshur (1996) maintain that the result of the assessment can be used by different people for different purposes.

Teachers are the main users of this information, primarily to make decisions about ongoing instruction, about students' current learning needs, instructional activities and so on. As cited by Mal Amiri (2008), Alderson and Scott (1992) believe that both insiders and outsiders should be involved at all stages in the process. However, as Alderson (1992) points out, there are situations where it is acceptable that an outsider is asked to evaluate a program. He believes that the content of any evaluation must relate to its purpose. There is a wide range of content that an evaluation can focus on, like the learning outcomes of the program, or attitudes to the language, its speakers and culture, etc. Alderson (1992) asserts that how one is to evaluate will depend upon what is to be evaluated. There is no one-to-one relationship between the content and the method of evaluation.

Legitimate and trustworthy program evaluation studies of teachers and students development programs are essential for education in general and foreign language teaching in particular. What can be witnessed as a significant model all over the literature on professional development is that only partial awareness is given to evaluating the program in spite of the fact that a lot of value is dedicated to the program design and its execution process. This is problematic since evaluation is a fundamental module in specifying the advantages of any professional development process. This discrepancy is ascribed to the stakeholders by Guskey (2000), in which it is believed that evaluation as a waste of time and considering its impact as trivial on the daily tasks. Dufour and Eaker (1998) believe most of evaluation efforts lack a strong structure and framework in design and planning and are far from meaningfulness. Just mere perceptions of "happiness quotient" are quoted inadequately. Guskey (2000, p. 92) puts it clearly:

A lot of good things have been done in the name of professional development; so have a lot of rotten things. What professional developers have not done is provide evidence to document the difference between the good and the rotten. Evaluation is the key, not only making those distinctions but also to explaining how and why they occurred. To do this, we must recognize the critical summative purposes that evaluation serves, as well as its vital planning and formative purposes.

Schools are required to get involved in a systematic and ongoing evaluation of programs which may provide relevant information for the policy making educational authorities.

Program evaluation produces a sort of formative feedback that helps the implementation of the curriculum as it was intended (Madaus & Stufflebeam, 2002). It simultaneously assists the administrators of the curriculum in seeing if they are progressing in the path which was anticipated and determined by the objectives and whether the learners themselves are satisfied with the course outcome. Without practical evaluation, the program staff may fail to document substantial impacts the program has on its participants (Llosa & Slayton, 2009). It may also fail to recognize how different components in the program are affecting the participants or participating institutions. Besides, evaluation helps focus the staff's efforts and project resources on the specific goals of the program. Without written goals and specific objectives, the staff members often direct their individual efforts toward slightly different goals, thereby reducing the efficiency of the overall program. Program evaluation has long been a useful technical tool for determining if programs are meeting their stated goals. Specialists submit reports that help administrators to decide changes in curriculum content or direction.

This study aims at investigating the extent to which students feel happy when they are said to have finished the course at the junior high school. Considering the CIPP, which stands for context, input, process, and product and concerning the first phase of it, that is the context, the research question was formulated as:

Are the students satisfied with their achieved knowledge at the end of a three-year program of English that is taught in the Junior High Schools in Gilan?

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Students' satisfaction

Educational and non-educational contexts have both witnessed an interest in the influence of students' satisfaction in their further achievements. What causes this situation is the fact that

the performance of both organizations, people, and learners will undergo such effect (Decenzo & Robbins, 2010). Satisfaction has been clarified in quite a lot of forms. However, a rather reader-friendly definition of satisfaction that lies in the core of all the other definitions is the happy and constructive feeling or energy one gains as a result of a job and its evaluation. In professional contexts, and educational ones as well, full-scale studies have been carried out by different scholars both as independent and dependent variables (Ramayah & Nasurdin, 2006). In an occupational context, satisfaction is presented through salary, benefits, and status (Tessema, Ready, & Embaye, 2011). However, in educational contexts, the definition deals with positive feeling students gain as a result of the quality of instruction, class size and the usefulness of what they have learned.

2.2. The Benefits of Student Satisfaction

As mentioned above, satisfaction is one of the main themes in most educational studies. Students can deviate from the course of study, as all of us may have witnessed. However, the same learners could have followed the school curriculum and stay in the path that was planned for them if their satisfaction from the course had been thought about. Students' satisfaction has also been used by many scholars as an evaluation criterion for the whole course or program.

Many studies utilize student satisfaction as a measure of the quality of the program or department. In a study done by Corts, Lounsbury, Saudargas, and Tatum (2000), it was revealed that course satisfaction is closely tied with satisfaction with what the course offers, instructions presented by the course, and prospective occupational preparation. Therefore, what satisfies students can be regarded as a signal of the quality of the course.

Further, in another study on student satisfaction, Smock and Hake (1977) viewed satisfaction as a measure of proper working of the program or department in the form of a Program Evaluation Survey (PES). He administered the evaluation to college students to estimate their understanding and satisfaction with instruction, course, and the tasks and activities in their major department (Wise, Hengstler, & Braskamp, 1981). He had two principal aims in performing his so-called PES. First, to make judgments on the efficiency of departments for setting preferences for those departments, and second, to help the stakeholders find out the merits and demerits of departments, and paving the way for (Braskamp, Wise, & Hengstler, 1979).

2.3. An Analysis of Students' Need

In this study, however, satisfaction is conceptualized as "satisfaction with major curriculum application" and meeting learners' needs. Among the fundamental concepts underlying the considerations of curriculum that are believed to be essentially fundamental is the application of the principles of students' needs analysis. This can give one a measure to see how satisfied learners can be at the end of the course. In an attempt to explain the process of needs analysis, Brown strives to convey an established and widely acknowledged description and delineation of needs analysis by stating that it involves gathering the data which play a substantial role in evolving a curriculum which helps the realization of students' learning objectives and needs (1995, p. 35). Some of such needs can be being in touch with the native speakers and incorporating oneself with the target language. Needs analysis has also been touched upon by other scholars and researchers in much the same way. To Richards (1983), for instance, needs analysis assists to obtain the three main objectives of a) providing a gateway to acquire a more extensive input into the content, its scheme and application of the language instruction b) proliferating it in goal setting and content selection c) paving the way for continual revision and assessment of the instructional course

It is very profitable to think of developing a scheme to perform a needs analysis. Experts such as Robinson buttressed the idea of performing needs analysis; however, they tended to merge their emphasis on both the learners' needs and the course objectives (1991, p. 3). This facilitates the future real-world performance of the learners, which in turn may lead to their satisfaction.

As can be estimated from the above discussion, the proliferation of needs analysis and benefitting from its findings can be done at different stages, namely before, during, and even

after the course begins. The knowledge about the assets available to the learners, their goals, and what their favorites can be are the pieces of information revealed by the needs analysis done prior to the beginning of the course. Occurring during the course, this process can confirm or disconfirm whether things are going on as they were planned, and in the case of disapproval is that methodology, assessment or even the resources which are responsible for learners' failure or attainment of goals. All the above necessitates a careful and well-planned procedure. In so doing, a few suggestions were made by Brown (1995). He contends that a sound procedure must follow the procedure of a) making substantial decision to initiate the process, b) data collection and c) using the information (p. 36). The first phase of the procedure requires the policy makers and stakeholders to make significant decisions regarding the participants, what sort of information is expected, the viewpoints, how to merge and interrelate the viewpoints and theoretical aspects of the course. Brown (1995) stated that four more groups of people are engaged in the story, also known as the needs analysis.

The target group is the first. It refers to the people from which the information is supposed to be collected also known as the students, though teachers and administrators might be involved, too. Next is the audience which embraces the people ultimately required to follow the upshots of the analysis and benefit from it in one way or another. Third comes the analysts themselves. All those who tie up themselves in the factual process of analysis. Who these people will be hinges on nature and certain steps taken in the process. These may be instructors from universities who play the role of advisors. This partnership makes the process more workable and achievable. Finally, there is the resource group. Considering the situation, this group is a very heterogeneous one and may range from family members to even future employers. This model presented by Brown is rather sophisticated; however, with some minor variations, it could turn into a more feasible model.

2.4. Goals and Objectives

Using Grave's analogy (2000), a comprehensible definition for what constitutes the goal and objectives can be presented (p. 75). He uses the analogy of a trip in which the trip itself is the educational course and the destination is the goal while objectives are the rest areas where people stop for a while. The final outcomes of a needs analysis form the cornerstones for the development of goals and objectives. In so doing, Brown (1995) proposes some consideration in devising the goals (p.71) when the needs are understood. First, he emphasized that the purposes should be general. He, next, mentioned that purposes should be futuristic and real-life based. Then he strives to say that goals help us set the objective, as well. Finally, he goes on saying that goals are of a dynamic nature and are not fixed. Confusion might have arisen by the above mentioning of goals and objectives. To distinguish between the two, Brown views goals as a more general concept and labels them as the final, anticipated, and achievable ends as far as the curriculum is regarded; whereas, objectives are more specific.

Furthermore, certain knowledge, behavior, and skills are expected as a result of illustrating the objectives. A learning outcome is specified in terms of objectives. In Richard's words, "objectives are thought of as the changes which are expected to be brought about as a result of the instructional program" (2001, p. 122). In other words, objectives help operationalize the goals and let them become teachable. Once the objectives are attained, goals will be achieved, as well. It can be concluded that there is a causal relationship between objectives and goals in which the first causes the second. Graves also believes in the generality of goals and specificity of objectives (2000). To further distinguish between goals and objectives, Brown (1995) believes the major distinction between them is the level of specifications. He continues to say that objectives are rather short term and that the objectives constitute the goals.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

Since the present study was going to take place in the province of Gilan, Iran, the participants

were students of Junior High Schools in the same province. They were the students aged 13 to 15 and included both males and females. Generally, the sample size needed was determined based on what the researchers are seeking to find (Scheuren, 2004). In that case also there is no clear-cut method. Analysts maintain that a moderate sample size is sufficient statistically and operationally.

Five hundred students were randomly selected from schools throughout 13 cities in the province of Gilan. The students who were considered to form the sample of this study were chosen through cluster sampling procedure. Cluster sampling is a probability sampling in which making random sampling is more practical especially when the target population is widely dispersed (Dornyei, 2007). The dispersion in this study might be due to many factors such as the geographical location, students' entry-level of knowledge, that is, their background knowledge in English, and also teachers' teaching experience which may vary from one to several years. Since the subjects were all Junior High School students and their teachers, such factors as age and sex were not accounted for in this study.

3.2. Instruments

As it has become evident so far, we intended to investigate and evaluate the Junior High School English teaching program in Gilan by using CIPP. To do so, a CIPP-based questionnaire was needed right at the beginning of the study. This became possible by using the ideas and views of experts in the field of education in general and language teaching and learning in particular. Some other CIPP-based questionnaires that had previously been used such as the ones by Birjandi and Nosratinia (2009) and Karatash (2011) were also consulted by the researcher. The questionnaires were designed with some subcategories consisting of language needs, course-book content, pedagogic tasks, and students' satisfaction from the program. The questionnaires were given to students with different content. The student questionnaires were all prepared in Farsi so that respondents would feel more comfortable in expressing their ideas precisely.

After an extensive study of the literature, the data collection instrument, namely the questionnaires, was developed by the researcher himself. The researcher made a comprehensive examination of the points posed through the analysis of the related articles, books, journals which were conducted both in Iran and worldwide. Afterwards, in accordance with the relevant literature, the researcher designed a self-reported questionnaire for the students consisting of four parts. Students' questionnaire, along with students' demographic information, served for the purpose to find out the Junior High School students' perceived linguistic needs, their perceptions on content, pedagogic tasks, and students' satisfaction.

Part 1 (Demographic Information): This part of the questionnaire aimed to obtain information on the students' age, gender, name of the junior high school, and family background.

Part 2 (Overall perceptions of linguistic needs): This part, which was composed of fifteen items, was designed in order to find out the students' perceptions of linguistic needs. It consisted of five-point scale items. The values ranged from 1-5 indicating 5 for *I agree*, 4 for *I partly agree*, 3 for *No idea*, 2 for *I partly disagree* and 1 for *I disagree*. It's once more repeated that the questionnaires were in Farsi, and so were the points and the ratings.

Once the researcher's developing of the questionnaire finished, it was evaluated by four English instructors and one statistics expert from the Department of Foreign Languages of Tabriz and Astara Islamic Azad Universities to ensure its content and face validity. Once the views of the professors were considered, to measure the reliability coefficient using alpha Cronbach's Alpha, thirty students, who did not attend in the sampling, participated in pilot testing. The reason behind conducting the pilot study was to show whether or not the instrument was reliable, the items were understandable, and the wording was appropriate.

3.3. Procedure

Qualitative and quantitative data collection methods were employed in this evaluation study. Quantitative research is one of the research methodologies relying heavily on numbers

in reporting results, sampling, and provision of the estimated instrument, reliability, and validity. Similarly, quantitative researchers seek to establish relationships between variables and look for and sometimes explain the causes of such relationships (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2005).

To gather the data, the researcher-made questionnaire was piloted and consequently validated. Its reliability concerns also had to be determined through the pilot study of the questionnaires, as well. As it was mentioned before, previously produced questionnaires such as the ones applied by Birjandi and Nosratinia (2009) and Karatash (2011) were used to form new questionnaires to elicit information from both students and the teachers. To get the information needed, it was essential to get permission from the Education Organization in Rasht, the capital city of Gilan province. After determining the nature of the questions, the researcher prepared the final draft of the questionnaires to be delivered. Getting the consent of the teachers was another step before the questionnaires were delivered to students. Then the questionnaires were presented to the participants of this study by either the researcher or by the team cooperating with him. The participants, in turn, were required to fill and return the questionnaire to the researcher and his team. Using SPSS software, the data were analyzed, and findings were reported. As it was mentioned above, a Cambridge University Young Learners Flyer's Test[®] was also administered at the end of the course to see how competent the students were at the end of the instruction and how well they could communicatively engage in a test.

3.4. Data Analysis

To begin with, the researcher used descriptive statistics to describe the identified features of the data in the study. The frequencies, means, percentages, and standard deviations for the items were determined. The researcher also employed inferential statistics to find out if any meaningful differences among variables existed.

The data collected through the questionnaires were compiled and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 21.0) program was employed to analyze the data. The students' answers in the questionnaire were examined for abnormalities and missing data. Since the data gathered from 9 students who participated in the study were incomplete, they were excluded from the analysis. Subsequently, the data were analyzed through both descriptive and inferential statistics. Tables 1 to Table 4 below display the gathered numerical data.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics of Satisfaction over the Class Condition*

Survey questions	Mean	SD
1. I don't look forward to getting new lessons.	3.17	1.34
2. I don't feel that relaxed when expressing my opinions in the class.	3.2	1.57
3. I am hardly relieved while attending the lessons.	4.02	1.07
4. The condition in classes isn't happy.	3.4	1.27
5. I gained less self-confidence in learning	3.82	1.29
6. I want to stop this way of learning.	3.05	1.34
7. Teachers are not focused on learners' questions in classes.	3.83	1.19
8. Learning through traditional classroom teaching is less inspiring.	3.61	1.26
9. It is not that easy to learn through interaction with the teacher.	3.18	1.25
10. In our classes, there is hardly ever any tendency to learn.	3.86	1.37
11. It is so satisfying to have new methods in learning.	3.36	1.52

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Satisfaction over Teacher-Student Interaction

Survey questions	Mean	SD
1. Teachers cannot be a good model in how to communicate in a foreign language learners' real lives.	3.16	1.36
2. My teacher speaks less informally, which doesn't provide a real-life language experience.	3.97	1.1
3. I can't trust my teacher and share anything with him.	2.36	1.45
4. I hardly get useful knowledge about furthering my studies at the college level	3.22	1.42
5. I never get pronunciation practice from the teacher in the classroom.	3.32	1.17

The threats which might endanger the idea of learning satisfaction were also felt among most of the participants. There were such threats as high dropout rate, loneliness, weak educational designs, and technological drawbacks. However, the findings of descriptive statistics showed that some learners were also content with the usefulness of the course.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Satisfaction over Learning Outcomes

Survey questions	Mean	SD
1. I have a better comprehension of reading after the teacher's help.	3.28	1.51
2. When my teacher and I get involved in speaking the target language, it gets very frustrating	3.73	1.3
3. I have less noticing and awareness in the presence of my teacher.	3.4	1.36
4. Learning vocabulary through teachers' traditional technique is discouraging.	3.28	1.28
5. I don't necessarily have a better concentration when my teacher teaches in L1.	3.6	1.28
6. It becomes very routine to ask a question in communicative teaching.	2.77	1.25

Table 4. Students' Overall Satisfaction with their Course Achievement

	n	%	(O-E) ² /E	p	df
First grade satisfied	61	12.2	2.21	0.05	2
First grade dissatisfied	133	26.6	0.78	0.05	2
Second grade satisfied	42	8.4	1.41	0.05	2
Second grade dissatisfied	152	30.4	0.5	0.05	2
Third grade satisfied	27	5.4	0.15	0.05	2
Third grade dissatisfied	85	17	0.05	0.05	2

$$X^2 = 5.1$$

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study was carried out to find out whether or not junior high school students are satisfied and happy with their achievement at the end of a three-year program in Gilan, Iran. The response to the question of the present study has been presented in the tables in the previous section; however, they will be once more touched here.

Students in the study mainly revealed that with present approaches to language teaching, they are not adding anything to what they previously knew since the teacher-student interaction is based on traditional and rigid approaches of the past that causes a hindrance on the path of learning.

The findings also revealed that real-life experiences of language are significant to them, which, unfortunately, cannot be provided by their teachers mainly because the teachers in Iran are almost all non-native speakers and are consequently ignored. Nevertheless, the importance of real-life experiences is inseparable in present-day language teaching, as perceived by many experts (Ellis, 2012; Shrum & Glisan, 2009)

Students also remarked that the teaching environment including textbooks, teachers, teaching methods, and even school staff could not inspire them to further their study out of the school curriculum. Instead, they were demotivated whereas we know that motivated and enthusiastic teachers play a substantial role in pushing the students forth to learn (Mart, 2013)

Since the teaching environments and schools in general in Iran are based on a rather teacher-oriented approaches of education, students' views are not taken into account very much. They have to go through a pre-set path determined for them and even for the teachers. This will lead to their frustration (Freiberg, 1999; Peyton, More, & Young, 2010)

The percentages of students in the first, second and third years in Junior High School were 38.8%, 38.8%, and 22.4%, respectively. In other words, 194 were in the first, 194 in the second, and 112 in the third grade of Junior High School. To find out the answer to the question of the study, i.e. *Are the students satisfied with their achieved knowledge at the end of the program?*, chi-square was used to determine students' satisfaction over the program. The findings indicated that 74% of the students had little or no satisfaction concerning the overall achievement of the course. Also, the chi-square result ($\chi^2 = 5.1$) with the degree of freedom of 2 and the probability level of .05 indicated support for the dissatisfaction of the students with their achievement. Table 4 in the previous section displays the findings.

As revealed by the results of the study and discussions presented above, the researcher recommends some amendments to the program to make better use of existing opportunities. The following recommendations and proposals might contribute to the improvements and/or revisions in the objectives, content, teaching methods, materials, and assessment dimensions of the program.

In this study, it was found out that the learners showed dissatisfaction over the linguistic context component of the program. More specifically, they stated that learners' needs were not met through the program presented at Iranian junior high schools. To alleviate this, more frequent needs assessment is suggested by the researcher, scheduled to take place on different occasions so as to prevent inappropriate material development and consequently wasting years of progress towards learning English as a foreign language.

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