



Needs Analysis

Session 3

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Why needs analysis should be conducted ?

- It can be best answered by simply stating ‘what needs analysis’ is.
- Berwick (1989:52) suggests a basic definition of need: a need is a “gap or measurable discrepancy between a current state of affairs and a desired future state.”
- Accordingly, the term “analysis of needs” was first used.

History of Needs analysis

- Needs analysis procedure in the field of language teaching was first used by Michael West in a survey report published in 1926 (White, 1988).
- In the following decades, however, little if any attention was given to needs analysis.
- This can be explained largely by the influence that the traditional structural view of the language continued to exert on the field of English language teaching (ELT).
- The term “Need Analysis” re-emerged during the 1970’s as a result of intensive studies conducted by the Council of Europe team.
- Research and studies conducted by the Council of Europe team resulted in the emergence of the communicative approach to language learning which replaced the situational approach dominant in language teaching and learning at that time.

History of Needs analysis

- The Council of Europe team felt that successful language learning resulted not from mastering linguistic elements, but from determining exactly what the learner needed to do with the target language.
- One of the terms, which the team came up with, was the “Common Core”.
- The common core suggests that language learners share certain interests despite their different goals in learning foreign languages.
- “The team recognised that there will be areas of interest common to all students, whatever their particular situation and specialisation” (Johnson, K 1982:42).
- The ‘common core’ provides a basis one can rely on in conducting needs analysis in the general English classroom.
- Needs analysis has been neglected in the general English classroom and emphasised in ESP as Hutchinson and Waters (1987) suggested.

“Objective” and “Subjective” needs

- Nunan (1988) classified needs analysis under two headings: “Objective” needs and “Subjective” needs.
- He assigned objective needs to be diagnosed by the teacher on the basis of the personal data of the learners. In the light of this data, the teacher can select or plan a suitable syllabus.
- Subjective needs are derived from the learners themselves and influence the teaching methodology of the syllabus.

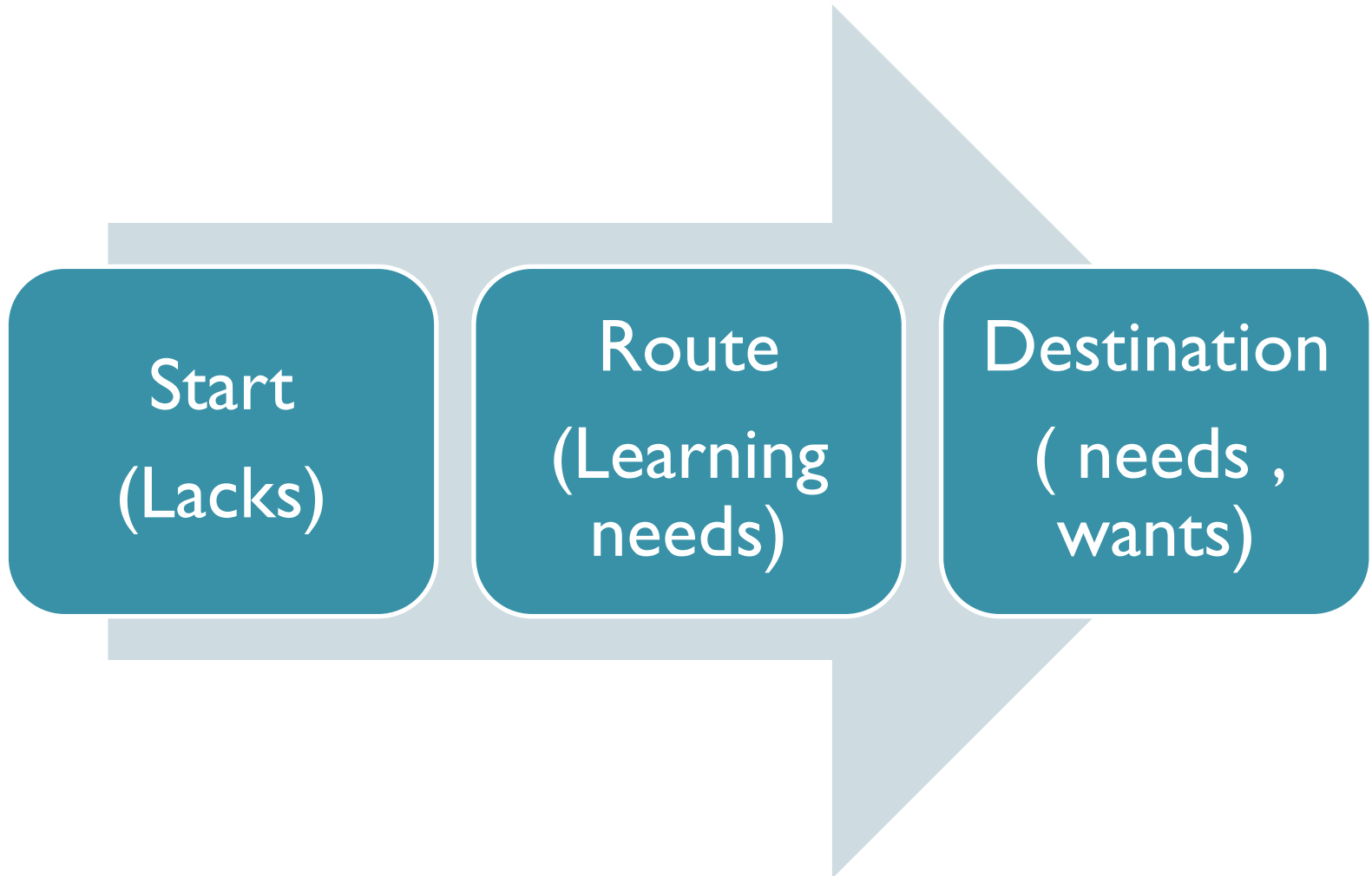
“Objective” and “Subjective” needs

- “Objective data is that factual information which does not require the attitudes and views of the learners to be taken into account. Thus, biographical information on age, nationality, home language, etc. is said to be ‘objective’.
- Subjective information, on the other hand, reflects the perceptions, goals, and priorities of the learner. It will include, among other things, information on why the learner has undertaken to learn a second language, and the classroom tasks and activities which the learner prefers.” (Nunan, 1988: 18)

“Objective” and “Subjective” needs

- Classify the following definitions of needs analysis according to Nunan (1988) classification of subjective or objective needs.

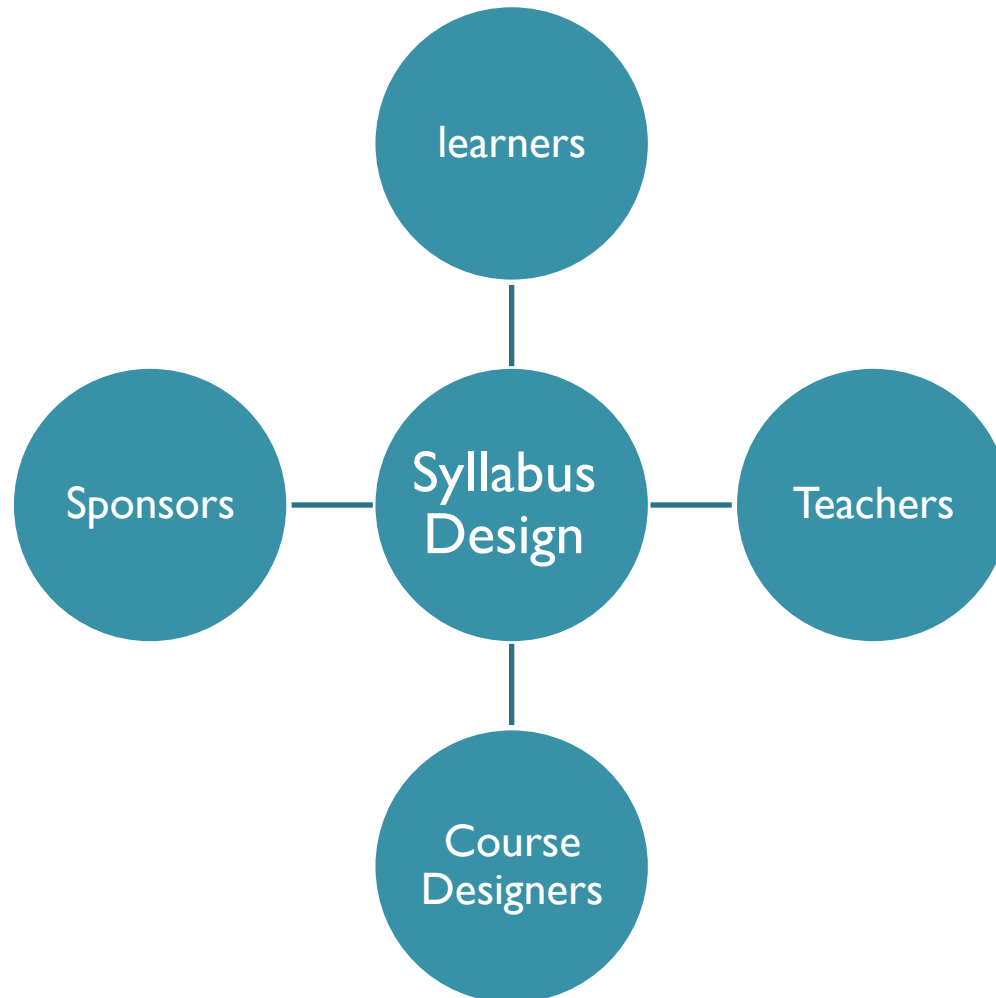
Journey of Needs Analysis



Issues in Need Analysis

- Can Needs Analysis ever be objective?
- At what point are learning needs assessed/decided on?
- Conflict between wants and necessities?
- What tools do we use to assess needs, are they objective?
- How reliable are these tools?

Issues in Need Analysis



In conducting Needs Analysis

+ Pros	- Cons
May Motivate learners	Learners reactions to conducting needs analysis
Values Learner Contribution	May raise false expectations in learners
May help in setting more realistic objectives	Conflicts between expectations of learners, course designers, sponsors and teachers
Very useful where many resources available	Needs analysis is basically subjective-influenced by perceptions of person conducting it
Greater awareness + motivation may lead to develop greater competence	More problematic with lower proficiency/ younger learners
May help pupils to assess own needs better	Time Consuming
	Learner perceptions of needs may be unrealistic