**Procedures for conducting needs analysis**

**Introduction:**

A variety of procedures can be used in conducting needs analysis and the kind of information obtained is often dependent on the type of procedure selected. Since any one source of information is likely to be incomplete or partial**, a triangular approach** ( i.e.; collecting information from two or more sources) is advisable. to put it in a simple way, by procedure we are actually referring to the different sources used for gathering information about students’ needs.

**1/ defining the target population:**

The target population in needs analysis refers to the people about whom information will be collected. Typically, in language programs these will be language learners or potential language learners, but others are so often involved depending on whether they can provide information useful in meeting the purposes of needs analysis. For example, in conducting a needs analysis to determine the focus of an English program in business department at a university, the target population might include:

Students

Teachers

Academic specialists or staff

Ministry of education officials

Policy makers

Within each target group, respondents might be needed to provide different perspectives on needs.

**2/ Data collection techniques: (choosing sources of information)**

Needsanalysis can take a number of forms for collecting information **including questionnaires, interviews,** **observation of interactions** and analysis of language use in the target situation**, tests of performance** to evaluate their English level. Most needs analyses include the use of either questionnaires or interviews, Kumar (1996) discusses the advantages and drawbacks of questionnaires and interviews. Questionnaires do not take long to administer and it is often possible to get information from a larger number of respondents. The respondents are anonymous and thus will hopefully offer their opinions and ideas frankly. Interviews are time consuming and because of this the investigator can often only interview a few people. However, in an interview the investigator can probe responses and thus gain an in-depth understanding of the opinions and information offered. Additionally, unclear questions or questions can be clarified during an interview. **(Check again appendixes A,B, C)**

**Example: procedures for conducting needs analysis**

In investigating the writing problems encountered by foreign students enrolled in American universities, information could be obtained from the following sources:

**Samples of students writing**

Test data on student performance (to evaluate their level)

Reports by teachers on typical problems students face

Opinions of experts

Information from students via interviews and questionnaires

Analysis of textbooks teaching academic writing

Survey or related literature

Examples of writing programs from other institutions

Examples of writing assignments given to first year university students

**3/ Making use of the information obtained:**

The results of needs analysis will generally consist of information taken from several different sources and summarized in the form of ranked lists of different kinds. For example, it might result in lists of the following kind

Situations in which English is frequently used

Situations in which difficulties are encountered

Perceived difficulties with different aspects of language use

Preferences for different kinds of activities in teaching

Frequencies of errors made in different types of situations or activities

Common communication problems in different stations

Suggestions and opinions about different aspects of learners’ problems

Frequencies of linguistic items or units in different texts or situations

**Example**:

**One of the findings of a needs analysis of problems of ESL students attending university lectures was a list of the frequency with which students experienced difficulties with speaking and listening skills. The most common difficulties reported were**

1. Large group discussions
2. Class discussions
3. Interactions with native speakers
4. Out of class projects
5. Small group work
6. Class participation