CURRICULUM EVALUATION : THE CASE OF THE ELT GRADUATE PROGRAM AT THE U DE A.

By Cristina Frodden

Introduction

Curriculum evaluation is rather new in our context. Only in 1995 did the Universidad de Antioquia establish evaluation as a continuous process in order to guarantee the quality of graduate programs and set the parameters for evaluating programs. The Acuerdo Académico 0056 of November 28, 1995 determines that the evaluation has to be participative and carried out initially by the university itself before resorting to external evaluation by peers. Following these directives, the coordinator of the ELT graduate program at the Universidad de Antioquia (*Especialización en Didáctica de las Lenguas Extranjeras*) planned and implemented the process of evaluating the curriculum by gathering information through observations, questionnaires and interviews with the participants throughout the course of studies and at the end of it. The findings were discussed by the committee in charge of the program and changes were introduced in the curriculum.

This process will be presented in the following report, which will be divided into five main sections. In the first section I will present the context of this evaluation research, i.e. the *Especialización*. In the second I will explain why and how the evaluation was conducted, and in the third I will present the findings. The changes introduced into the curriculum and the future developments will be dealt with in the fourth section. The fifth will present the difficulties ecountered during the process.

1. The ELT Graduate Program at the U de A

In this section I shall explain briefly the origins of the ELT graduate program (*Especialización en Didáctica de las Lenguas Extranjeras*) and the curriculum implemented as a result of the baseline study carried out in 1993.

1.1 Origins

In 1993 a group of teachers at our university started thinking of the idea of developing a graduate program that would give English

teachers the possibility to develop their knowledge in the field of applied linguistics. We had realized that there were many English teachers who were eager to develop professionally - as is evidenced, for example, in the massive attendance at the ELT Conference held yearly in Medellin. However, the only opportunities for pursuing advanced degrees in our region lay in fields such as administration, counselling or technology. We felt that they needed specific development in areas which would affect their classroom practice more directly, and make them better foreign language teachers.

In order to create a baseline for our innovative program we administered a questionnaire to 50 teachers who volunteered to answer it during the ELT Conference in Medellin that same year. The data gathered provided us with useful information about teachers' needs, their expectations, their qualifications, and their time availability. Which helped us make decisions about the aims of our syllabus, the content of the courses, the most appropriate methodology and the schedule for the program, among other aspects of the curriculum.

1.2 The students

In July 1996, after having passed a written exam and an interview, sixteen students - most of them graduates from either the programs on translation or on foreign language teaching of our university - started the *Especialización*. Six of them were teaching English to children or adolescents in private schools, two of them in public schools and seven were teaching English - mainly to adults - in two or three different institutions simultaneously. One student was not working as a teacher at the moment. Coping with the readings and assignments of the *Especialización* on top of all their workload as teachers was not easy, and, when the first semester had finished, two students withdrew.

1.3. THE CURRICULUM

1.3.1. OBJECTIVES:

Taking into account that the aim of the *graduate program* is to "profesionalize", that is to say to improve teachers' practice, we set out to accomplish the following objectives:

* To develop the student-teachers' theoretical knowledge in the field of learning and teaching a foreign language in order to improve classrroom practice;

* To improve the student-teachers' knowledge and use of the foreign language;

* To develop student-teachers' knowledge about teaching and learning a foreign language by carrying out action research in their own contexts;

* To enhance student-teachers' attitudes with respect to their possibilities for personal and professional development.

1.3.2 SYLLABUS

The program consisted of two semesters of course work . During the first semester the students started with an introductory seminar on theories of second language acquisition and methods; then they worked on written and oral discourse, linking these concepts to their role in developing reading and writing, and listening and speaking, respectively. The semester ended with a course on classroom research in which they were introduced to data gathering procedures and analysis. Based on their reflections on their classroom practice, which had started in the previous seminars, and the concepts and skills acquired in this seminar the students devised their action research project.

During the second semester, the first two courses focused on the analysis of the formal aspects of the language and on the

development of accuracy. Students reflected on their own language performance and on approaches to teaching grammar and pronunciation.In the next course they examined procedures used in curriculum evaluation and in the design of tests, and alternative possibilities of assessing students' performance. In the last seminar students became familiarized with the factors that have to be taken into account when designing a course, and when choosing and adapting materials. As students were attending seminars they were also working on their action research with the support of their monograph advisor. By the end of the semester they were supposed to have written their research reports.

The following table shows the timing of the courses in the *Especialización*:

First Semester
Theories of Second Language Acquisition and Methods
Analysis of Written Discourse
Analysis of Oral Discourse
Classroom Research

Second Semester
Grammar : Learning/Teaching
Phonetics : Learning/Teaching
Evaluation, Testing and Assessment
Course Design and Materials Development

1.3.3 METHODOLOGY

Seminar sessions were programmed Tuesday and Thursday from 6 to 9 pm and Saturday from 9 to 12 m for students to have time between sessions for collaborative work through peer-observation and discussions, and for bibliographical research. Each seminar lasted 4 weeks (36 hours per seminar) and students had a one-week recess between seminars. Seminar sessions included lectures and workshops lead by the teacher, and students' presentations. In these presentations students were encouraged to

share their personal teaching experience and their classroom observation with the group. Presentations had a dual objective : to improve language use and to develop teaching skills.

Students were required to write a monograph which would be the final report of a piece of action research. We decided on this approach to research due to several reasons. We think it is the most appropriate one to integrate theory and practice and to integrate course contents. Furthermore, student can research on their own practice and work collaboratively if they have similar interests.

Participants in the *Especialización* would have a multiplier effect on the foreign language teaching community a) by acting as a link between the *Especialización* and the *Licenciatura* by being cooperating teachers or supervisors in the undergraduates' teaching practice, and by *Licenciatura* students participating in their research projects, b) by involving the language department in their schools, and c) by participating in teacher training programs.

2. EVALUATION OF THE CURRICULUM

In this section I will explain the purposes for undertaking the evaluation of the program and the procedures used.

2.1 THE PURPOSES OF THIS EVALUATION

Having participated in the process evaluation of a course for teacher trainers in Cambridge sponsored by the British Council and directed by Keith Morrow, I had grown very interested in this type of evaluation for different reasons. First, I saw it as a means of creating a good learning environment by keeping constant track of students' feelings towards the course, and by giving the group the possibility to release tension by expressing their opinions in

personal interviews and discussions. Since I wanted this first cohort of students to be able to collaborate with each other and to view their teachers as facilitators in this collective effort, having good rapport was crucial.

I also saw evaluation as a tool for trouble-shooting. I wanted to be able to solve problems before they became unmanageable and to shift directions in the development of the course in time. These concerns dealt with trying to guarantee satisfaction with the program from the part of the students - accountability - and to make the implementation of this innovative program more effective and efficient - curriculum development.

2.1.1 ACCOUNTABILITY

"Accountability has often been taken to mean accountability to the client, who may be either the learner or the funding body. If somebody is paying for the service, they have the right to expect certain standards; otherwise, they may take their custom elsewhere."(Blue & Grundy 1996: 244). In our case, students pay a considerable amount of money each semester in order to make the course self-sustainable. Therefore, it is extremely important for them to receive high quality education, and this is guaranteed through evaluation.

The university is also interested in knowing if the program is successful in order to continue it or call it to a halt. For example, graduate students who teach at our university are eligible for tuition waiver, so that as a result, the university is subsidizing the participants' professional development. Why should the university open the course if it is not self-sustainable? Because the evaluation done during the first cohort showed that the effort made by the School of Languages will be payed back in qualified teachers. The focus for evaluating here was on the product.

2.1.2 CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Evaluation can be used to validate, i.e. to confirm and explain, the curriculum (Rea-Dickins & Germaine 1992). For example, when you feel that your class is functioning well, you may want to know the reasons for this in order to consider using those procedures in other similar contexts. Is it the new materials you are using ? Is it the way you give instructions ? Is it that you have been using collaborative group work ? Is it that these learners are specially motivated? Many factors may be working simultaneously to make your teaching successful.

However, if the evaluation showed that there are some weaknesses, you will most likely want to introduce some changes in order to improve. In this case evaluation and innovation will go hand in hand, "evaluation forming the basis for subsequent change or modification within the curriculum" (Rea-Dickins & Germaine 1992: 8). As will be seen in the findings, since evaluation was an ongoing process, many of the problems that we encountered in this program were tackled as they appeared, which meant being flexible and quick enough to make decisions and introduce changes.

2.1.3 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Especially if the teachers are involved in the evaluation of the curriculum, i.e. are implementing insider evaluation, their knowledge about the process of teaching and learning will be extended. Teachers will be reflecting on what is actually happening in their particular educational context and will compare that with what is supposed to occur. In this case the focus of the evaluation will be more on the process with the aim of understanding it better and improving practice (Rea-Dickins & Germaine 1992).
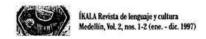
Collaboration among peers, which is built on observing and reflecting on our own practice is perhaps the most effective and least expensive way of developing professionally. If we want to move forward in this way we will have to start by self-evaluating what we do and questioning our long-standing practices[1]. In the process of trying to solve problems as they appear, a dialog had to be established with the teachers, which was intended to jointly analyze what was happening and provide alternative actions. This function of the evaluation process, which was not envisioned from the beginning, has to do with professional development, with the idea of "a group of staff learning together and contributing to one another's professional development." (Blue and Grundy 1996: 245).

2.2 PROCEDURE

Ongoing and post-course evaluation was carried out from July 1996 to June 1997 by the coordinator of the program and included the following data gathering procedures. For the first two courses almost all classes were observed , but this proved to be too ambitious and time-consuming. Therefore for the rest of the courses a minimum of at least four class sections per course were observed, totalling about 120 hours. Students chosen at random were informally interviewed about the development of the course and asked specific questions concerning the difficulties observed in class. When deemed necessary the coordinator held informal conversations with the teacher in order to discuss the problems encountered and propose solutions. Sometimes teachers approached the coordinator with the same purpose.

At the end of each course, every five weeks, the students anonymously answered a questionnaire (see Annex) with open questions about the course, the teacher and the organization of the *Especialización*, and a scale in which to rate the teacher's performance. The questionnaire was filled out in the last session of each course. Key issues taken by the coordinator from students' responses were discussed by the group. The information gathered through the questionnaires was analyzed taking into account fre-

quency of mention and saliency, and recurrent themes were identified. The results of all this process were then discussed in the *Especialización* Committee and decisions were made regarding curricular changes.

At the end of the first semester and at the end of all the courses there was a special meeting with the students. Teachers were also invited, but only one attended the last meeting. In this meeting the discussion was prompted by asking participants if it was worthwhile opening the *Especialización* to a second cohort. From the discussion we gained useful information regarding the assets and problems we had had. Furthermore, the students validated a proposal the committee had developed for changing the syllabus.

3. FINDINGS

I will present the findings in terms of the recurring themes encountered in the process.

3.1 THE TEACHERS

In general, teachers were found to be updated and well qualified - all of them have at least a Master's degree.

> Es muy clara en los conceptos que emite, está muy bien preparada... (1)[2]

> Explica con propiedad y argumentos las dudas presentadas en clase. (5)

> ... toma una posición específica frente a lo que cree, la sustenta y la defiende. Además da información valiosa y actual. (8)

Some students, however, complained about a teacher because of his poor selection of readings and his lack of clarity:

> (El profesor podría) seleccionar bibliografía que es totalmente relevante o que ilustra un tema de una manera completa. (Tuvimos muchos documentos hablando de lo mismo). (7)

> En ocasiones no entendí las explicaciones, me confundía más. (7)

The teachers' skills as facilitators were also highlighted:

> Hace que los estudiantes reflexionen más profundamente sobre los temas vistos. También hace que todos los estudiantes participen. (8)

> Dinamiza la clase, actividades muy participativas. Genera discusiones relevantes a la práctica docente.(7)

> Utiliza ideas que se generan dentro del salón como un instrumento esencial de enseñanza.(6)

However, some students commented on a teacher's problem managing time and giving clear, precise instructions and explanations.

There were some problems with 'external' teachers because they are not easily available for consultation with students. For some of the courses which had external teachers the coordinator was available for students' consultation; for others, they worked as a team not just in order to tutor students but also to discuss course content, methodology and the development of the classes:

> I learned a lot from team-teaching, to the point that I reevaluated my "old" ways of teaching pronunciation and phonetics. (The coordinator's) cooperation and support were very important during this course, both for the teacher and students.

3.2 THE COURSES

All courses were found to be relevant, and the contents in each course necessary and useful.

> (Destacaría) la relevancia de este curso (Course Design and Materials Development) en nuestro quehacer diario.

> (El curso Second Language Acquisition) nos creó muchas inquietudes y nos solucionó otras tantas.

> (El curso Classroom Research) sirvió muchísimo para centrarnos en conceptos y prácticas necesarias para la realización del proyecto (de investigación).

Pienso que (Evaluation, Testing and Assessment) ha sido uno de los seminarios más valiosos en cuanto a aplicabilidad en nuestro quehacer diario, puesto que abre muchos caminos para hacer las cosas bien...

(Destacaría la) aplicación inmediata de la teoría y la relación con la realidad de nuestra labor (en Course Design and Materials Development)...

(El curso Oral Discourse fue) bueno (por) lo práctico de las tareas, la aplicabilidad de la teoría y la organización de la clase.

3.3 THEORY AND PRACTICE

Since the beginning of the program teachers asked students to reflect on their practice and relate the concepts learned to their actual teaching. However, since the bibliography is all written in English, it usually refers to what happens in other countries in which English is spoken, that is to say to a second language context. During the first semester there were discrepancies on the suitability of the concepts and the activities developed in class, because some students could establish the necessary relationships, but others felt that courses should be more related to our reality, to our classroom setting in which English is a foreign language.

(Lo) bueno (del curso son) lo práctico de las tareas, la aplicabilidad de la teoría...

No se estudió o analizó lo que estabamos haciendo en la práctica en relación con los temas que se vieron.

The second semester an effort was made in trying to integrate theory (readings) and practice (teaching) by including peer-teaching and finding the rationale behind what had happened in the lesson taught.

Este curso fue valioso para mi desempeño profesional... ahora tengo la parte teórica y práctica en pronunciación. Fue 100% valioso para mí.

In this process students also started learning how to give and receive feedback, which is something they will need if they become cooperating teachers.

(El curso) sirvió como entrenamiento para aprender a dar y recibir "feedback" a/de los compañeros.

Actually doing in class what we expected them to do in their teaching and research practice was another way of making the relationship between theory and practice clear. For example, students criticized and improved the questionnaire used to evaluate courses in the *Especialización* and analyzed information gathered through a questionnaire.

(El curso Evaluation, Testing and Assessment) me ha motivado a poner en práctica lo aprendido a nivel de salón de clase y de institución.

By the end of the second semester students were very satisfied with the balance between theory and practice in their courses.

(El curso Course Design and Materials Development) es práctico y se ajusta a las exigencias del medio.

3.4 THE MONOGRAPH

In the discussions we had regarding the practical application of theories drawn from second language contexts, students became aware that it is precisely our job to do research in our classrooms and to build our own grounded theory. However, starting to do research is not easy. Students had difficulties, for example, in establishing clear goals for their research, in the design of questionnaires and tests, and in the analysis of the information.They expressed their need for more support to develop the research proposal because they felt that the course on Classroom Research was not enough to be able to design their action research project. They asked for the assignment of the monograph advisor well in advance.

El trabajo de los asesores no es el de recibir un proyecto de grado ya terminado y avalarlo. Creo que ellos deben convivir con nuestras limitaciones y no esperar que se les presente un "trabajo perfecto" para sólo avalarlo.

Students also felt that the course on Evaluation, Testing and Assessment had been very useful for their research projects and wondered if this course could not be scheduled earlier.

(Lo malo del curso es que es) muy tarde para la utilidad que brinda para la realización de la monografía.

(Se debería) reorganizar el orden de los cursos. Por ejemplo, este curso debía haberse dictado antes.

However, one of the students' biggest concerns is the university's requirement for the monograph to be done along the course work, unless students are willing to register for another semester.

El trabajo de monografía debería ser al final de los cursos, cuando se le pueda dedicar el máximo de tiempo.

3.5 TIME CONSTRAINTS

Students and teachers were aware of the problems we have managing time. Sometimes more time than had been expected had to be devoted to the discussion of some difficult documents, or students took more time for their presentations. Therefore, teachers had to add sessions to be able to carry out the activities programmed. As a consequence, the break students were supposed to have between courses was eliminated and the last sessions instead of being three hours were usually extended to four to allow for students' presentations and to be able to evaluate the course. There was the feeling that even though no classes were missed and some hours had been added, some courses should be longer.

(Habría que) tratar de ajustar las actividades planeadas al tiempo disponible.

Lo malo es que cuando hay cosas nuevas e interesantes como esta, siempre falta tiempo.

El curso brinda muy buenos elementos teóricos pero por la rapidez de éste no hay oportunidad de profundizar mucho.

Especially at the beginning of the program it was apparent that either the teachers were too ambitious when they selected the readings to be done for the course, or the students have so much professional workload that they have difficulty coping with the readings.

El tiempo es demasiado corto para el material propuesto.

No tuvimos tiempo de discutir todos los artículos que leímos.

Besides, some students felt that they would get more out of the readings if all the articles are discussed in class, for which there is not enough time.

Creo que la discusión explícita y directa de los documentos propuestos para lectura podría ser una excelente técnica para aprovechar más los contenidos.

The problem of excessive readings was partly overcome during the second semester. There was one teacher, however, who could not be persuaded to reduce the number of reading assignments. The reduction in another course, on the other hand, was such that some students even complained!

Considero negativo la cantidad tan reducida de las lecturas.

3.6 STUDENTS' AND TEACHERS' ROLES

Although students valued learner-centered classes, they did not agree concerning the time allotted to students' presentations.

Some would have liked to have more input from the teacher and shorter and less students' presentations.

> Se centró todo (o casi todo) en exposiciones por parte de los alumnos. Creo que se pudo aprovechar mucho más a la profesora.

This was analyzed and we agreed that those who complained did so because the quality of students' presentations was not good enough. For the second semester special tutoring was provided on how to present new input and facilitate discussions, and students gave their peers feedback on their presentations for further improvement.

Trying to involve students more in their development and to avoid the teachers's subjectivity in assessing their participation in class, we introduced peer-evaluation. However, questions were raised as to the fairness of judging a classmate poorly if he/she did not speak up in the whole class activities, and as to the impossibility of judging everybody's participation in small group discussions. Some people felt it was not appropriate to assess students contributions in class because shy students would be at a disadvantage. Another question dealt with the criteria for evaluating classroom participation. Should they take into account quantity or quality of participation? We thought these questions were valuable because they raised issues we all face as teachers. We tried to improve this scheme by asking students themselves what the parameters for assessing classroom participation should be and asking each one to evaluate him/herself, instead of their peers. However, this procedure was also rejected.

3.7 ASSESSMENT

Most students want to have formative assessment, i.e. to be assessed throughout the course, not just at the end of it. There is confusion among them whether they want feedback on their performance in order to guide them and improve, or whether they want to have different grades to be averaged and so have more chances of having a better grade.

They valued the fact that most teachers give students the opportunity to rewrite their papers taking into account the written feedback given. However, some complained that teachers took too long to correct their papers and/or were not strict enough in setting deadlines for students to hand in their work.

> (Se debería) ser más precisos con todo lo que corresponda a entrega de notas.

Having qualitative assessment through journals and portfolios for which the teacher gave written feedback was appreciated for the opportunity it provided to develop students' reflection and critical thinking.

> Especialmente bueno fue la idea de llevar un portafolio con todas las ideas, observaciones, reflexiones, etc. que se nos ocurriera...

> Me gustó mucho la manera como me dio retroalimentación en el portafolio... pudimos reflexionar y darnos cuenta de nuestras dificultades y fortalezas...

Students and teachers agreed that most of the rewriting was due to the students' lack of academic writing skills. For the first cohort we decided they should work on their improvement by writing and rewriting their papers. For the second cohort, we included specific instruction in the access course (*Curso de Nivelación*), the one semester course offered to applicants before presenting the entrance exam.

3.8 STUDENTS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Dramatic changes regarding their views and attitudes about teaching and research were observed in most of the students. Some felt this program had changed their lives!

> Me comparo con el estudiante que fui en el primer semestre y estoy a años luz de volver a serlo.

Aquí empecé a investigar... Aún sin terminar la monografía ya queremos seguir con otra investigación.

Students and teachers agreed that the work done as part of the program was worthwhile sharing among the community of English teachers. As a consequence, ten students and two teachers of the *Especialización* presented papers and facilitated workshops in the ELT Conference in Medellín in August 1997.

3.9 MANAGEMENT

In general, students felt that the program was well managed, and that their problems were tackled in time and appropriately.

Creo que la *Especialización* en general ha sido buena pero un poco ambiciosa.

However, some students complained about the fact that some 'external' teachers who had been programed well in advance, dropped out at the last minute, causing uncertainty and giving the students the feeling of improvisation.

El cambio de profesores da una imagen de desorganización. Deberíamos tener confirmada la presencia del profesor antes de anunciarlo.

Regarding the monograph, there was dissatisfaction because the regulations were set up too late.

(Se deberían) aclarar parámetros en cuanto a la distribución del tiempo para el trabajo de grado.

Creo que hay que ser más específicos desde el principio en cuanto al reglamento de monografía.

4. DEVELOPMENTS

In this section I will refer to the changes introduced in the curriculum and the future developments envisioned in our School of Languages.

4.1 THE NEW CURRICULUM

Besides the changes that were introduced during the development of the first year of studies, which I already mentioned, we introduced the following changes for the second cohort. '
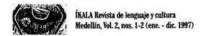
4.1.1 COURSE CONTENT

Some contents which were in two different courses were integrated into one. The course contents of Analysis of Oral Discourse and Analysis of Written Discourse were integrated into one course: Discourse Analysis. The contents of Evaluation in Evaluation, Testing and Assessment were incorporated into the course on Classroom Research, leaving more time to be devoted to Assessment in the new course: Testing and Assessment. The similarities in the approach of Phonetics and Grammar lead to the integration of both courses into a new one: Linguistic Systems, with the possibility of adding other topics such as lexicon, semantics, which had been neglected before.

An effort was made to relate practice and theory, even in a course such as Theories of Second Language Acquisition. Students are now involved with the new concepts as they analyze their practice and find out about the assumptions underlying it.

4.1.2 TIMING

As a result of these changes the timing of the courses and the time allotted to the different courses varied. The seminar on Classroom Research was programmed right after Theories of Second Language Acquisition in order for students to start thinking on defining a research topic to develop during their second semester. In the following seminar - Discourse Analysis - they can refine the problem to be addressed and the action strategies they will propose to take. Courses which will support their actions directly are programmed at the begining of the second semester, as can be seen below :

First Semester
Theories of Second Language Acuisition and Methods   36 hours
Classroom Research   48 hours
(Students start developing their research proposal)
Discourse Analysis   60 hours
(Students present their research proposal)

Second Semester
(Students start doing their AR with the guidance of an advisor)
Testing and Assessment   36 hours
Course Design and Materials Development   48 hours
Linguistic Systems   60 hours
(Students present their AR report)

Instead of including a third semester to do the monograph, we decided to time courses better, and to direct students' interests in the courses to the development of their particular research ideas. We also decided to assign advisors by the end of the first semester so that students can start working on their research with more security. We thought that adding a new semester to the *Especialización* would make it too expensive for low-paid teachers.

4.1.3 METHODOLOGY :

In order to prepare students for their future role as disseminators in their institutions and in conferences, they are given more opportunities in class to develop their public speaking skills by means of peer-teaching and by developing flexibility regarding their roles. They learn to take up a facilitating role in class presentations rather than just a narrator/explainer one. They also learn how to give and receive feedback in order to promote dialogue among colleagues and to develop the skills necessary for becoming teacher educators.

4.1.4 MANAGEMENT

An evaluation and organization session is programmed after each course so as not to take time of class sessions. In this session, be-

sides evaluating the course, issues which affect students' achievement, such as access to resources, study habits, academic writing, etc. are discussed. The recess between courses is longer for the students to have time enough to write their final paper and is scheduled in accordance with academic and educational events in our community, for example, ELT Conference and ASOCOPI National Congress.

Regarding teachers, starting 1998 we will have two new highly qualified full-time teachers in the Teacher Education Area. This will solve the problem of time for students' consultancy and will also support the development of research necessary to open up a Master's program.
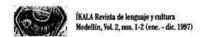
4.2 THE FUTURE

4.2.1 TRACER STUDY

I think this evaluation should go on, and besides observing and analyzing what goes on during the course of studies at the university, we also have to take into account what our students are doing after graduation. Has anything changed in the way they teach ? Are they using evaluation and research as a tool for professional development and empowerment ? Have they taken up new responsibilities as a result of their qualifications ? When I told students of the first cohort about doing a tracer study, they were very enthusiastic about participating in it and opening their classrooms to an external observer.

4.2.2 MASTER'S PROGRAM

Steps are being taken in order to get international accreditation for our *Especialización*. Having done this internal evaluation we have taken the first step before external evaluation and accreditation, so that it can be recognized as a Diploma. We are also working hard in order to develop research that will support open-

ing a Master's program, hopefully with international links. Many students of the first cohort are looking forward to it.

La calidad de esta Especialización fue excelente. A partir de la evaluación de esta cohorte y de la apertura de la segunda se gana experiencia para abrir más adelante la Maestría.

5. PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED CARRYING OUT THIS EVALUATION

In this section I will present and discuss some of the factors we need to consider when doing evaluation so as to make it more participative and efficient.

5.1 INSUFFICIENT COMMUNICATION

Internal self-evaluation has many advantages. Blue & Grundy see it as "a particularly effective way of enabling groups of professional, dedicated teachers to co-operate in peer-assessment and evaluation of their own courses. It has the additional advantage of giving them a stakeholder's share in their own teaching programmes" (1996: 245). However, in our case the responsability of evaluating the program was not sufficiently shared by the team. The reasons for this could be the following:

a) the organizational culture of our *Especialización* Commitee is that of a club culture. This is an organization in which the members of the club are an extension of the head, "who would do everything him- or herself, if that was possible" (Murphy 1996a: 15).

b) Even though I was aware that "all stakeholders need to know what is being done, and what the implications of the activity are for them, as well as the potential benefits" (Murphy 1996b: 334) and I did communicate to the teachers and students my intention of carrying out the evaluation, the announcement was not clear enough, was done orally and in an inappropriate setting, where it was difficult for stakeholders to discuss what was going to be involved.

c) Most students were rather indifferent towards the evaluation process because of their previous experience in which no actions had been taken as a consequence of their responses to questionnaires. This was so particularly at the beginning of the program, however, things started to change when they took Evaluation. I was not aware of the "need to convince stakeholders that evaluation has a role to play in the way they implement and manage programs." (Murphy 1996b: 334)

5.2 POWER

The insider doing the evaluation has the advantage of sharing the knowledge and experience of those being evaluated. In our case I was well received and did not have trouble being trusted by most of the teachers. However, since not all the teachers were familiarized with the concept of appraisal, and with its purpose of professional development, and since evaluation involves knowledge and "power to act on the findings of the evaluation" (Murphy 1996a : 42)) a teacher who had lived through a negative experience with colleagues and superiors did not feel at ease being observed and did not welcome my feedback on and suggestions for improving her classes.

5.3 EXTRA WORK

As a consequence of not involving stakeholders more in the process of evaluating the program, I took over most of the work. This meant that the evaluation was very time-consuming and I felt overloaded.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper I have shown the curriculum of the *Especializacion*, the purposes and procedures of this evaluation, the issues that emerged from the evaluation, and the changes undertaken. I would like to highlight that in terms of accountability, the program

was found to be of excellent quality, since the aims we had set for the *Especialización* were overall achieved by the students. In terms of curricular development, we have made the necessary changes and the second cohort is profiting from the findings of this evaluation. Regarding professional development, teachers in the *Especialización* are carrying out research projects and have improved in their capacity to work collaboratively.

Finally, I have also analyzed the problems encountered by the evaluator in the process. I think that the experience and knowledge gained doing this evaluation is worthwhile all the extra hours of work. As with other types of learning you learn how to do evaluation by doing it, which has been acknowledged by other evaluator apprentices who agreed that "actually carrying out evaluations was (...) the main way in which they acquired skills and understanding" (Murphy 1996b: 328). My idea here has been to show the readers our experience and, in so doing, encourage them to use evaluation for professional and curriculum development. I hope I have reached this goal.

NOTES

1. This idea of building a collaborative is also present in the way we have organized the teaching practicum in our university's undergraduate teacher education program (*Licenciatura*) (See Frodden, Areiza and López 1997).

2. In order to preserve teachers' anonymity I will use a number to refer to him/her.

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NOTAS SOBRE LA AUTORA

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ANNEX

UNIVERSIDAD DE ANTIOQUIA
ESCUELA DE IDIOMAS
ESPECIALIZACION EN DIDACTICA DE LAS LENGUAS EXTRANJERAS
Segunda Promoción 1997/1998: Inglés

EVALUACION DE CURSO Y PROFESOR

Nombre del curso:

Código:

Nombre de la profesora:

Por favor responda las siguientes preguntas en forma honesta y objetiva:

I. LA PROFESORA:

1. ¿Qué es lo que mejor hace la profesora? (por favor especifique bien)

2. ¿En qué aspectos podría mejorar la profesora? (por favor especifique bien)

_____

_____

Marque con una x el número que mejor refleja su opinión. (1 totalmente de acuerdo - 7 totalmente en desacuerdo, NA no se aplica)

La Profesora:

1. Maneja los contenidos con propiedad   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 NA

2. Es organizada   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 NA

3. Hace que la materia sea clara   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 NA

4. Inspira entusiasmo   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 NA

5. Se interesa porque los estudiantes aprendan 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 NA

6. Es abierta a preguntas, inquietudes y sugerencias
                                            1 2 3 4 5 6 7 NA

7. Responde con precisión las inquietudes de los estudiantes.
                                            1 2 3 4 5 6 7 NA

8. Presta ayuda en las horas de atención a los estudiantes.
                                            1 2 3 4 5 6 7 NA

9. Tiene una buena relación con los estudiantes.
                                            1 2 3 4 5 6 7 NA

10. Prepara bien sus clases.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 NA

11. Demanda trabajo que es desafiante y valioso.
                                            1 2 3 4 5 6 7 NA

12. Evalúa con justicia el desempeño de los estudiantes.
                                            1 2 3 4 5 6 7 NA

13. Recomendaría esta profesora a un amigo. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 NA

14. He aprendido más con esta profesora que con otros en cursos de tamaño y nivel similar.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 NA

II. EL CURSO

1. ¿Qué aspectos positivos destacaría usted del curso?

_____

_____

2. ¿Qué aspectos negativos destacaría usted del curso?

_____

_____

3. En cuanto a su desempeño como estudiante, ¿Siente que aprovechó bien el curso? ¿Por qué?

_____

_____

III. EL PROGRAMA ACADEMICO:

En cuanto a la organización de la Especialización, ¿qué sugerencias podría hacer?

_____

_____