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EXPLORING LEARNER NEEDS:
NEEDS ANALYSIS IN THE GLOBAL WORKPLACE

The increasingly diversified global workplace poses challenges to communication between different culture representatives. Thus the needs of workers should include intercultural skills, and this should be taken into consideration by teachers. The article looks at the evolution of the concept of needs and their assessment. It advocates for broadening the scope of needs analysis to include the needs related to intercultural communication. It reviews various approaches and practice of needs assessment and discusses needs in the global workplace.

KEYWORDS: needs analysis, global workplace, intercultural skills, intercultural communication, foreign language education

INTRODUCTION

Globalisation and the advance of new technologies have brought dramatic changes to the workplace and the way people interact there. Clearly, they have increased the amount and the intensity of intercultural encounters. The workplace in our increasingly complex and interconnected world has become more diverse and multicultural, requiring from workers specific skills in terms of navigating cultural norms and communication styles, values and beliefs. Furthermore, the process of globalisation has also had an enormous impact on our identities and sense of cultural belonging. This article examines the scope of needs analysis and advocates for broadening it to include needs related to intercultural competence. The first part deals with establishing what needs are and whose needs we should take into account, the second part describes different approaches to needs analysis and the third part describes research in this area. Needs in the global workplace and implications for preparing and conducting needs analysis are also addressed. The paper concludes that needs should be conceptualised in a broader context and proposes some measures to tailor them to the global workplace.

NEEDS AND RELATED CONCEPTS

In recent years a considerable amount of literature has been published on needs assessment. The concept of needs analysis or needs assessment (NA), which is viewed as "the cornerstone of ESP" (Dudley-Evans & St John 1998: 122), has evolved tremendously since the beginning of English for Specific Purposes. Needs related to workplace occupations are classified as a branch of ESP, namely English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). As Qing (2016: 14) puts it, "Workplace communication activities require employees to possess the ability to use English in 'context-specific environments' in all kinds of written and oral communication activities and across modern telecommunication channels".

The term *needs* appeared as early as the 1920s in India (West 1994: 1), when Michael West introduced the problem of what learners will do with a foreign language in the target situation. In the 1960s NA focused mainly on micro-analyses of elements in various discourses and on identifying dominant features within texts (Johns and Makalela 2011: 199). Currently, this approach has expanded into corpus linguistics and discourse analysis. Nevertheless, many researchers (Hutchinson and Waters 1987; Benesch 1999; Johns and Makalela 2011: 197) argue that needs assessment should concentrate on the learner, not the target discourses.

A further development in this area is connected with the communicative approach to language learning and the central role of a language learner in the learning process. In the 1970s and 80s needs analysis focused on language skills required for communicating effectively in specific settings. This narrow interpretation is currently challenged as being a product-oriented view and is contrasted with a broader, process-oriented view concentrated on the learner (Brindley 1989). The concept of learner needs has also evolved and has been extended to include, among other things, affective and cognitive variables which influence learning.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 53) emphasise that this awareness of the need is what distinguishes ESP from General English. Nevertheless, there has been a problem with establishing what the term *needs* involves. There have been several attempts to define this concept and the viewpoint from which the needs are perceived is closely connected with different approaches to conducting the NA and the ways of collecting relevant data.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 54–58) identify two categories: *target needs* and *learning needs*. The former concern what the learner needs to do in the target situation, and the latter concern what the learner needs to do in order to learn. They divide *target needs* into *necessities*, *lacks* and *wants*. This distinction is made based on the purpose, so that *necessities* are determined by the target situation, *lacks* are the gaps between the target and the existing proficiency of the learners, and *wants* are what the learners feel they need.

Brown (2016: 12–17) identifies four different categories of needs described in terms of views: i) the democratic view, i.e. what the majority of learners want;

ii) the discrepancy view, i.e. deficiencies and requirements; iii) the analytic view, i.e. elements that they should learn next based on theory and experience; and iv) the diagnostic view, i.e. elements that cause the most harm if missing. However, Brown (Ibid.: 16) calls for combining different conceptualisations of needs as appropriate for the different stages of the NA process.

According to Brindley (1989: 66) needs are perceived as instrumental, and the course content should reflect the purpose of the learner. Brindley (1989) identifies *objective* and *subjective needs* and suggests that students should be encouraged to reflect on their needs. *Objective needs* concern what learners or others may need them to be able to do, and *subjective needs* are what learners want to do with the language. Brindley (1989) emphasizes that there may be conflicting views about the learning process between the teacher and the learners. Brindley (1989: 65) also interprets needs as the gap between current and desired states in the context of motivation, confidence, and awareness.

It is worth noticing that Brindley (1989), in taking into account the conflicting views of the teacher and the learner, introduced a new perspective of analysing the problem of needs. Current needs are now discussed in the context of various stakeholders and thus have become more complex (Gollin-Kies et al. 2015: 77–84). The stakeholders are not only teachers, learners, and employers, but may also include parents, school principals, future professors, deans, politicians and journalists. However, as Brown (2016: 41) maintains, key stakeholders tend to be students, teachers, and local administrators. As teachers operate in an area that is under the influence of various forces, the relative power of influence of all stakeholders needs to be taken into account. The context has changed to be perceived as being more complex and ambiguous, thus it is critical to consider all influences in the given situation. However, there may be unexpected consequences of reconciling the competing demands of stakeholders.

This view is supported by Hall (1985, after Gollin-Kies et al. 2015: 82–83), who discussed the case of *The University of Malaya Spoken English Project* (UMSEP) commissioned by the University of Malaya in 1980, targeted at preparing students for an English-speaking workplace. The project encompassed recording authentic interactions at the workplace. At the end of the project, when the materials were shown to the Head of the Centre, the executive was shocked that the workers in the recordings were speaking a Malaysian variety of English. Soon afterwards, the Vice-Chancellor sent a handwritten memorandum to the project team stating that 'no Malaysian accent' should be used in the materials. The motivation underlying this action was the concern that young people were not speaking proper British English, the prestigious form, but a Malaysian variety of English. Furthermore, the expatriate members of the UMSEP were accused of keeping for themselves the prestigious form of the language and of being responsible for a situation in which young people leaving university were not speaking proper English. This is an example where competitive demands of stakeholders

can lead to serious clashes between them, and may not produce the desired outcome.

Another important issue is raised by Field (1990: 31, after Gollin-Kies et al. 2015: 85) who draws our attention to the fact that when assessing learner needs more intangible objectives tend to be overlooked, as they are not as easy to name as obvious surface skills. Field suggests the iceberg model due to the fact that there is a lot hidden below the surface, namely the social and political context. This is the reason why course design based on needs analysis must be more complex than just the initial needs assessment, due to the importance of taking into consideration the needs that are not obvious and easily stated.

As we can see, debate continues as to what needs are, nevertheless, this concept has indisputably evolved towards a broader and more complex perspective involving the influence of a combination of expectations and demands at individual, institutional, and societal levels. These influences are often contradictory and change dynamically over time and in various contexts, so a clear model for how to deal with them is needed. The next part focuses on these aspects in more detail.

THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO NEEDS ANALYSIS

This part synthetises the key approaches to needs analysis and provides an overview of current trends that enable us to understand learner needs in depth. As Gollin-Kies et al. (2015: 84) point out, early needs analysis (NA) focused mainly on the target language in a given situation. And although over the years there have been many developments in the approaches to NA, the underlying purpose of it has remained constant, i.e. to assist students in meeting the demands of the target situation and to fit into those situations. Brown (2005: 269) views NA as "the systematic collection and analysis of all information necessary for defining a defensible curriculum". However, there are new directions in the area of ESP and as Byram and Hu (2013: 503) put it "today, NA is moving beyond the development of language curriculum". So, what are the historical views and future directions?

One of the most frequently cited works and the earliest on needs analysis is Munby's model 'Communication needs processor' (CNP) (1978). CNP is composed of a series of questions about the needs of learners concerning among others topic, participants, medium etc. Referring to his work, Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 54) remarked that the outcome of the CNP is a list of the linguistic features. However, although Munby (1978) provides a detailed list of microfunctions, at the same time he fails to prioritise them which definitely contributes to the instrument's inflexibility. Moreover, his model has been criticised as internally inconsistent, unrealistic in terms of expectations, and not supported by empirical evidence or linguistic theory (Mead 1982: 74–76).

Building on earlier work, West (1994: 77–83) analyses the early stages of the development of needs analysis and divides them into three stages. The earliest form, from the 1970s, is *target situation analysis* (TSA), a product-oriented model related to gathering information about target needs (Hutchinson and Waters 1987: 58–59). It consists of questions concerning the target situation and the attitudes to that situation in the learning process. Then there are other models from the 1980s, such as *deficiency analysis* which focuses on the gap between present proficiencies and target ones, *strategy analysis* which concerns learning styles, strategies, and teaching methods and *means analysis* involving the limitations and possibilities in a specific learning situation. According to West (Ibid.), from the 1990s another identifiable stage is one of *integrated* and *computer-based analyses*. There has been a lot of criticism with regard to all the models mentioned above, among others Brown (2005: 272) has indicated that all models in the 1980s overlap significantly with one another. However, some researchers (Gollin-Kies et al. 2015: 89) emphasise that the *integrated approach* has been identified correctly and that this trend has continued since the publication of the article, thus the development indicated by West was predicted with accuracy.

It is worth noticing that despite a lot of criticism towards the early models, some of them have remained in use even today in the business context. Language audits categorised by West (1994) as being from the 1980s are becoming more and more popular as commercial services carried out for a particular industry sector, for individual companies or for specific groups. As Brown (2016: 25–26) specifies, they tend to be applied to a global, large-scale assessment. However, as Gollin-Kies et al. (2015: 87–88) claim, the problem concerning language audits is twofold. First, there is often too much reliance on self-report and questionnaires. Secondly, the focus is mainly on the organisation, not the needs of individuals. In addition, Brown (2016: 26) points out that language audits may be used to promote bureaucratic language policies and standards.

Conversely, Benesch (2001: 61) draws our attention to the limitations of such an approach. In her view needs are incorrectly treated as "a psychological term suggesting that students require or want what the institution mandates. (…) It implies that students will be fulfilled if they follow these rules." Benesch (2001) highlights the distinction between institutional needs and individual needs and expresses the concern that the political and ideological nature of NA has been overlooked. Benesch (1999: 313) proposes a *rights analysis* in the EAP context which examines "how power is exercised and resisted in various aspects of an academic situation, including the pedagogy and the curriculum". The rights of students are more important than the target texts, their choice may be not to comply with requirements and to voice suggestions and objections. Benesch (1999: 315) also points out that the classroom is "a site of struggle", and that students are active participants and not just subjects. In her later work Benesch (2001: 43) argues for a *critical needs analysis* that examines who sets the goals, the reasons why they are formulated and calls for democratic

participation of the learners including recognising their rights to articulate opinions. In her opinion NA has been unjustly biased towards institutional viewpoints and it is vital to offer more power and priority to learners who are at the bottom of the hierarchy. The abovementioned problem of balancing between different needs, views, and expectations in unequal power relations is crucial for needs analysis and is closely related to the notion of power.

Power is a key concept both in intercultural communication and ESP, as it directly influences the communication process and language learning. Language learning has proved to be more than just a cognitive activity and is embedded in various contexts. As Kurylo (2013: 166) puts it, "power is the ability to control circumstances" and "all individual and social relationships operate within relations of power". Power should be considered when conducting the needs assessment and deciding whose needs should take precedence during curriculum development. Clearly, there is an on-going debate over whose views we should focus on when evaluating needs. On the one hand, Brown (2005: 286) points out that the most serious disadvantage of traditional needs analysis is that it focuses too much on the language needs of the students and ignores the views of parents, teachers, administrators etc. According to Brown, all these views should be respected and taken into consideration, only then should a consensus be formed regarding the perceived needs. On the other hand, Benesch (1999, 2001) maintains that learners should be helped to view their needs and position critically and should be empowered to, for example, negotiate the work they do.

The latter approach is supported by Basturkmen (2006: 145), who claims that previously it was taken for granted that ESP was pragmatically focused on assisting students to enter their chosen professional setting. This target environment was perceived as fixed. This view has been challenged, and the demand of the target situation can be changed to meet the needs of the students. These are teachers who are responsible for raising their awareness that the target situation can be modified and negotiated by students.

Another issue raised by researchers is the problem that there may be needs that are hard to articulate for learners or that learners are not aware of, and some researchers propose an approach to deepen our understanding of this problem. Belcher and Lukkarila (Belcher et al. 2011: 74) maintain that identity construction may broaden and deepen our view of the learner by taking into account the multiple roles that learners play in various contexts. Learning a language is inextricably linked to the culture of the community of speakers, a community of practice (Wenger 1998). A cultural view of students may assist us in understanding their language learning and their needs. A person has different identities, and as Norton puts it (2014: 76) "every individual can play more than one role in the communities that they belong to", therefore the identities are multiple, shifting, and incessantly negotiated. In order to construe who we are and what we do in the society we need to see ourselves in relation to other people and within different communities

(Wenger 1998). In viewing needs from the prism of an identity approach, Belcher and Lukkarila (Belcher et al. 2011: 78) suggest that students' awareness of their self-defined cultural identity may be useful in understanding learner needs. The researchers (Ibid.) argue for listening to learners' voices, to their complex views of themselves as language learners, and taking into account how they see themselves functioning with the use of a foreign language. This greater attention to students' multilingual cultural identity may contribute to understanding their needs and may be a means to increase the efficacy of needs analysis. As needs analysis has always been practical in nature, let us now look at the practice of it and its implications.

PRACTICE IN THE AREA OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT

As far as practice is concerned, the design, methods, and procedures seem to have improved over the past 30 years (Serafini et al. 2015: 11). When comparing earlier research (1984–1999) with later research (2000–2014) we can see that there is a growing awareness and sophistication among researchers, as well as essential methodological improvements. Positive aspects of the research in both periods that increase its reliability and validity include: consultation of domain experts and triangulation by sources or methods. In the later period there are more mixed-method designs comprising both qualitative and quantitative methods and more often NA concentrates on in-service learners. However, there are negative aspects as well, as most studies in the meta-analysis by Serafini et al. (2015) failed to explain the sampling procedures, or to use of these procedures in the recommended order, i.e. from open to closed or from inductive to deductive, and few researchers pilot-tested the data. Pilot-testing is vital especially in case of questionnaires in order to avoid irrelevant items, overly complex and technical wording or ambiguity (Long 2005a: 38).

Serafini et al. (2015) point out some methodological limitations of previously conducted needs analyses and suggest some improvements in this area concerning reliability and validity. The researchers propose employing a thorough task-based analysis to create course content. In terms of sources of information, data should be collected from two or more sources: insider and outsider; in the case of larger populations the sample should be stratified and random instead of being one of convenience. The assessment should not be constrained to consulting learners only, but also domain experts. Also, as far as the methods are concerned, two or more methods ought to be used, both qualitative and quantitative, such as: expert and non-expert intuitions, interviews, questionnaire surveys, ethnographic methods, journals etc. First, open-ended procedures should be employed, e.g. unstructured interviews, to enable discovering needs that would not be considered otherwise,

and only then should a structured interview be conducted and questionnaires and surveys be carried out.

All in all, other critics also question the previous research in the area of needs analysis due to a number of inadequacies (inter alia Jasso-Aguilar 2005; Long 2005a). Serafini et al. (2015: 11) argue that the majority of the research published from 1984 to 2014 has had the tendency to neglect the discussion of reliability and validity of methodology and to concentrate on findings. Serafini et al. (2015: 24) conclude that "common standards for reliability and validity have yet to be established". Nevertheless, some proposals on how to prepare NA in a more appropriate way have been formulated by the researchers. Additionally, Benesch (2001) points out that individuals who conduct NAs cannot be neutral as they bring pre-conceived notions, assumptions, and theories to the assessment which may influence their work.

In order to conduct reliable NAs it is vital, first of all, to invite multiple perspectives through, for example, a triangulated needs assessment that would allow one to take into account various views. Some researchers argue for a much more triangulated needs assessment which involves approaching the issue in various ways in order to validate findings (Long 2005a; Jasso-Aguillar 2005: 128). Long (2005a: 28) defines triangulation as "[involving] comparisons among two or more different sources, methods, investigations, theories – and sometimes combinations thereof". At the same time, Brown (2005: 284) emphasises that "simply using multiple measures and triangulation does not guarantee that a qualitative NA will be dependable and credible". This combination of multiple approaches must be carefully planned in order to cross-validate each other. Also, sequencing the procedures should be conducted in such a way that each builds on the previous one and provides added value to the general understanding.

Secondly, while a variety of sometimes contradictory approaches have been suggested many researchers agree that the approach to needs analysis has evolved towards a more integrated (West 1994; Gollin-Kies et al. 2015) and process-oriented one (Gollin-Kies et al. 2015). The process-oriented aspects encompass, among others, the negotiation of the needs between the various stakeholders that was discussed earlier. The integration manifests itself, among others, in timing. In the early approaches to ESP there was a tendency to understand needs analysis as the task prior to design and delivery of the course. Currently, needs analysis is perceived as a continuous process not restricted in terms of timing, and Belcher (2009: 8), among others, maintains that needs analysis should be on-going and not limited to the pre-curriculum stage. There is a justified reason to include for example end-of-course evaluation as part of needs analysis, as it is likely that it contributes to the next course. Eggly (2002, after Belcher 2009: 6) reports on an NA that took place after an ESP course had ended. Extended post-course videotaping of interactions between medical residents and their patients in a US clinic helped the residents to address their on-going needs in the context of developing a reflexive practice model.

Thirdly, the traditional needs analysis is considered as too ideologically narrow. The reconceptualisation is connected with the recognition that the target discourse community is situated in larger political and socioeconomic realities (Belcher 2009: 7). This, in turn, can lead to identifying the needs too pragmatically and can fail to prepare for the global workplace. This problem will be discussed in detail in the next part.

NEEDS IN THE GLOBAL WORKPLACE

In the 21st century, interaction with people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds has become more important than ever. The impact of globalisation is related to the fact that "patterns of human interaction, interconnectedness and awareness are reconstituting the world as a single social space" (McGrew 1992: 65). As Sorrels (2010: 174) puts it "Globalisation has dramatically altered the context for understanding, theorising and engaging in intercultural communication". Due to the increased mobility and globalisation there is definitely an issue of needs connected with intercultural communication that goes beyond the concept of culture reduced to nationality. According to Gollin-Kies et al. (2015: 52) globalisation is connected to three main issues: intercultural or cross-cultural communication, issues of identity and authenticity and critical approaches.

The term *cross-cultural* is often used interchangeably with *intercultural*, but the former refers to the comparison of two or more cultural communication patterns (Jackson 2014: 3).

Hua (2011: 422) defined intercultural communication as

"a situation where people from different cultural backgrounds come into contact with each other; or a subject of study that is concerned with interactions among people of different cultural and ethnic groups and comparative studies of communication patterns across culture".

Liddicoat and Scarino (2013: 143–144) argue that needs are dynamic in nature and change when both context and learners change, which is a challenge to traditional needs analysis. Moreover, when planning curricula and programs we cannot focus solely on content. Content is not as important as interaction, meaning-making, relationships, diversity, and individuality. The researchers emphasise that traditional planning and programming originated within a view of learning as accumulating knowledge that is taught explicitly. Also the needs understood in the traditional way were limited to the categories of the programme such as topics and grammatical items. As Liddicoat and Scarino (2013: 144) claim, developing programs from intercultural perspective is a challenge to these views due to the fact that the content of language and the needs analysis represent only a part of intercultural

language learning. The learning from the intercultural perspective focuses on the interpretation, the exchanging of meanings in interactions. However, such an approach tends to overlook the fact that learners often are aware of intercultural problems and the needs based on them. If we conduct needs analysis in a way that it takes into account those needs then we do not constrain our research simply to linguistic items.

There are examples of including an intercultural perspective in NA. Describing the results of NA for an intensive English course at Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Cowling (2007: 433) identifies cultural differences as a high priority. During interviews the informants described intercultural problems they had had to overcome in areas such as negotiations, meetings, introductions and greetings, hosting business visitors, and small talk. Moreover, many respondents described embarrassing situations involving associations with foreign guests. It seemed that learners needed a grounding in initial contact and more confidence in culturally demanding situations. The syllabus that was prepared for the intensive course included cultural aspects, which were highlighted as "a useful and important part of the course" (Cowling 2007: 435). Another example is provided by Planken and Nickerson (after Belcher 2009: 115) and relates to introducing English as a corporate language for Finnish and Swedish employees working together for a merged company. Although the communication routines were quite similar respondents from both nationalities reported intercultural problems in the area of telephoning, meetings, small talk, and spoken communication generally. Swedish communication was "discussive", "wordy" and people "talked endlessly", while Finnish communication was "direct", "economical with words" and people were "blunt" and "few-worded" as reported by the other nationality. The same traits were perceived by the respective nationalities as advantages: Finns considered themselves "direct" and "factual" while Swedes talked about themselves as being "discussive" and "democratic communicators", while all of them perceived themselves as being effective communicators. These were the standards and viewpoints that differed. Planken and Nickerson (after Belcher 2009: 116) suggest that participants bring their cultural background and culturally determined practices to any interaction. That is why learner needs should probably encompass awareness of how to use contextual clues and their own and others' cultural patterns of communication in order to survive in today's turbulent, global business community.

Another topic closely linked to globalisation is identity and language learning. Norton (2014: 61) draws our attention to the fact that contemporary theories of identity enable us to see the individual learner situated in a social world. This perception is not defined as it was earlier in binary terms, e.g. motivated/ unmotivated, introverted/extroverted, but constructed in relations of power, variable over time and space, and often multiple and struggling. Some identity positions may constrain learners in their learning, while some others enhance opportunities for social interaction. Belcher and Lukkarila (Belcher et al. 2011: 78–88) conducted

a small–scale qualitative study consisting of interviews with learners and their daily log of language use and related reflections for one month. They point out that learners' self-definitions of cultural identity were far more complex than expected. The choice of language seems, on the one hand, to constrain and, on the other, to enable the identities of the learners. English is viewed as more for academic and formal use, while their first language enables them to express emotions better and to be their "core" selves (Belcher and Lukkarila, in Belcher et al. 2011: 86). It is crucial to be aware of what matters to learners and how they see themselves as present and future learners. Language teachers may fail to consider what learners want to do with their target language and define their needs too narrowly. It is possible that learners wish not only to use the target language, but also to become somebody through this language.

As far as authenticity is concerned it is most often discussed in ESP in terms of authentic materials. Nevertheless, Belcher (2009: 9) argues that in fact we should focus rather on enhancing authenticity in connection with authentic tasks and the use of simulations, role-playing and tasks, especially as part of problem-based learning (PBL). As Wenger (1991: 53) puts it, "Activities, tasks, functions, and understanding do not exist in isolation; they are part of the broader system of relations in which they have meaning. (…) Learning them implies becoming a different person with respect to possibilities enabled by these systems of relations". Also, Kramsch and Sullivan (1996, after Gollin-Kies et al. 2015: 57) claim that authentic pedagogy is connected more with appropriate interactions in the classroom than "genuine" tasks and texts imported from Anglo-Saxon environments. This approach serves not only meeting communicative language needs, but also develops learners' problem-solving strategies and employability skills. Furthermore, it develops sensitivity to diversity when communicating across languages and cultures. Typically, these are the kind of needs that are not easily defined and tend to be overlooked during NA. The notions of authenticity and identity are closely connected with critical approaches.

There is a variety of critical approaches in English language teaching, yet they share some common characteristics. From a critical intercultural perspective culture is perceived as an ideological struggle between competing vested interests (Halualani and Nakayama 2010: 6) and is conceptualised through power. Thus, culture is no longer a neutral place, but a changeable place where individuals actively participate in creating and recreating meanings. Power is complex and plays a crucial role in all communication interactions. In this context Benesch (1999, 2001) discusses rights analysis and the empowerment of students to influence the decisions of other stakeholders. This topic was discussed in more detail in the previous part of this article. Moreover, Pennycook (2016: 29–33) draws our attention to the fact that English may play a role in the broader process of the dominance of global capital and the homogenisation of world culture. From this perspective it is more important for students to develop skills such as shifting between styles, discourses, genres,

and registers than to focus on how to be proficient in one variety of English. As Auerbach (1995: 12, after Pennycook 2016: 33) points out "dynamics of power and inequality show up in every aspect of classroom life, from physical setting to needs assessment, participant structures, curriculum development".

CONCLUSIONS

The past decade has seen the rapid development of the concept of needs and their assessment. On the one hand, this has changed in terms of procedures from one-time, pre-instruction study to on-going and complex analysis. On the other hand, needs are conceptualised in a broader social context. The context of globalisation requires that we revisit and extend the concept of needs and the practice should be grounded in critical engagement and democratic participation. It seems that in the case of effective preparation for the global workplace we need to redefine what and how needs are to be assessed and how to balance the needs, views, and expectations of various stakeholders. At the same time learners should be treated as active participants who are able to articulate their opinions. Furthermore, the understanding of the problem needs to be deepened by taking into account learners' multiple identities and by using more integrated, process-oriented and triangulated needs assessment targeted at skills that include shifting between styles, discourses and registers, and sensitivity to diversity when communicating across languages and cultures.

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