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Examining Formative Evaluation of an English for Specific Purposes Program

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EXAMINING FORMATIVE EVALUATION OF AN ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC
PURPOSES PROGRAM

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of Doctor of Philosophy

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Title: Examining Formative Evaluation of an English for Specific Purposes Program

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The aim of this study is to examine the use of formative evaluation using a process-based model as a way of conceptualizing the parameters of an evaluation study. In particular, it examines the question of “Does formative program evaluation provide useful data for an ESP program? The Arabian Industrial College (AIC) English for specific purposes program was used as an example to conduct the current study. More specifically, a selective group of stakeholders’ perspectives—ESP teachers, students and alumni—of the various components of an ESP program were examined at the AIC. In order to achieve this aim, the following research questions were formulated: (1) How do ESP teachers, students and alumni perceive the various ways in which the ESP program is functioning compared to the aims and purposes set out in the AIC curriculum guidelines? (2) How do ESP teachers, students and alumni perceive the teaching methods and approaches in the current ESP program? (3) What are the ESP teachers’, students’ and alumni’s perceptions of the materials and textbooks used in the current ESP program? (4) How are the students’ language skills and literacy assessed in the current ESP program? and (5) What are the ESP teachers’, students’ and alumni’s perceptions of the assessment practices used in the current ESP program?

The data were obtained using three instruments: a survey, semi-structured interviews and program-related document analysis. The data were coded, analyzed and organized according to research questions mentioned above and taking into account the results of the literature review. The analysis identified participants’

perceptions of the various functions (goals) of the ESP program as stated in the AIC curriculum guidelines, the teaching methods, the textbooks and the assessment practices currently used in the program.

The results indicated that using a formative approach to evaluate an ESP program would not only help educators identify strengths of their language program and reinforce those strengths, but such approach would also help them examine practices and policies and to address them where necessary.