Most current English language program administrators (ELPAs) received degrees in applied linguistics or TESOL and learned the administrative side through experience and self-study. No degrees are yet offered specifically in language program management, but certificates or diplomas may be earned at the School for International Training and the Monterey Institute of International Studies in the United States. Despite the fact that, for many years, courses in program administration have been proposed as essential to teacher development, only a few MA/MEd or PhD programs in North America offer them (University of Arizona, University of Utah, and Georgia State University are exceptions).

Because many English language teachers, both practicing and in preparation, may have the interest and skills to succeed in English language program administration, the approach taken in this book is to introduce this field through the concept of self-directed development. Whatever your level of experience with English language programs, the time is now to begin your preparation for a career as an ELPA. Enrollment of international and other ESL students in colleges and universities in North America is expected to continue to grow (IIE, 2011), creating a continuing need for administrators to manage these larger student bodies.

This book focuses on the administration of a single type of English language program, representative of more than 1,000 domestic sites and many international ones. These intensive English programs (IEPs) are self-supporting English language courses or programs offered for
a variety of purposes (vocational, academic, etc.) primarily for international students preparing to attend colleges and universities at the undergraduate and graduate levels. English as a second language (ESL) is the main subject taught in these programs, usually on a full-time and intensive basis (see Homeland Security for U.S. requirements) in anglophone countries, and at large universities internationally where English is the medium of instruction in degree programs.

Participation may be mandatory or voluntary, depending on the admission status to the receiving university. Ownership of IEPs may be public (i.e., state-owned) or commercial. Students attend IEPs for a variety of reasons, the most common being (a) to enhance their language skills for personal growth and development; (b) to prepare themselves for studies at U.S. high schools, colleges, universities, or other educational programs; (c) to augment their linguistic and cultural knowledge as exchange students for a limited period of time abroad; and (d) to acquire language/content-specific training (English for specific purposes) on a short-term basis.

Benefits of Becoming an ELPA

The culture of administration, in certain ways, can be far different from that of the classroom. For most teachers, it calls for new ways of communicating with others and of negotiating institutional politics. But many of the responsibilities of ELPAs are based on the content of English language teaching or extensions of teaching skills: planning, executing, evaluating. Still, many responsibilities go beyond teaching into management, policy making, marketing, negotiating, finance, and counseling, among other domains (White, Hockley, van der Horst Jansen, & Laughner, 2008; Christison & Stoller, 1997, 2012). Developing the breadth of knowledge and synthesis of skills and experience required to be a successful ELPA—in a word, personal growth—is perhaps the foremost benefit of a career in this area.

First, English language teachers often want to make a difference. Changing lives is at the heart of why teachers become teachers. Going beyond the walls of the classroom to effect the changes that improve policy, practice, and pedagogy is vital to accomplishing change. Second, conclusions about teaching and learning drawn from manage-
ment theory often differ radically from ideas and viewpoints that emerge from the practice of teaching and research in applied linguistics. Grounded in the classroom and teacher collaboration, English language teachers offer a distinct perspective on curricular planning, supervision, and policy making enacted in administrative roles. Third, the administration of English language programs is literally at the crossroads of cultures in a postsecondary environment which many teachers-becoming-administrators enjoy tremendously. Finally, too few teachers may immediately recognize the collaborative research opportunities afforded by an administrative position. Provided that research does not interfere with teaching and adheres strictly to ethical practices, it can greatly benefit the IEP.

Hence, taking on administrative functions, either part time or full time, should not be regarded as a burdensome distraction but as a valuable asset. Becoming an ELPA enables a teacher to promote cultural understanding, effect educational change, and grow personally and professionally.

Supplementing Formal Education

Because there is no single path to successful preparation as an ELPA, you may start with one or more degrees in diverse disciplines ranging from higher education to applied linguistics. Whatever your core education, you will need to supplement it with additional courses or training because this is an interdisciplinary area of study. For a teacher with a TESOL degree, the most frequently mentioned areas where coursework would be a benefit are organizational theory, budgeting, ethics, program design, marketing/promotion, immigration, human resources, employment, technology, immigration law, testing and assessment, leadership, higher education, curriculum development, personnel management, classroom observation, teacher supervision, interviewing, materials and purchasing management, social networking, grant writing, database management, intercultural training, and descriptive and predictive research methodologies. This list may seem long, so it is advisable to spread out this supplementary formal training over time.
Reflective Break

- Make a list of the courses you need, from most to least desirable. See if you find clusters of related courses. Which of these courses is accessible to you in your current situation?

Determining your mix of desirable supplementary courses encourages further growth and overcoming constraints that every student inevitably encounters (e.g., how many electives from each department can a graduate student take?). Here is a list of strategies to build the supplement:

(a) Search the course catalog for relevant courses available in departments other than your own. Talk to the instructor about your interest.
(b) Explore credit options within your degree and the resources available.
(c) Do an internship in a division of the university which deals with an area of relevance.
(d) Enroll in relevant courses under nondegree status at nearby institutions or online.
(e) Attend relevant workshops offered regularly by professional associations and commercial vendors.
(f) Design a research project under an existing course that focuses on topics within ELPA.
(g) Volunteer to work in a specific role (e.g., tutor) in order to observe or shadow an administrator.

Reflective Break

- Which of these strategies is the most feasible for you at this time?
- What do you need to do to implement your choice?
Roles of ELPAs

An administrator, broadly conceived, can be considered to be a person who has authority to lead and manage people, practices, materials, and policies in an educational unit. There are a wide variety of administrative roles which a teacher can take on—in part or in whole—within a language program environment. Every language program has a somewhat different configuration of roles, depending on its history, size, resources, mission, and so forth. Each of these roles requires some skills unique to the position, and each involves functions of varying complexity. Most programs advertise job descriptions which detail the required functions and the essential skills. The following list gives one perspective on role positions:

**Activities Coordinator**—International students want opportunities to visit places and meet people with whom they can use the language they are learning in a new country. Part travel agent, part cultural interpreter, this role allows much one-to-one interaction with students from a variety of cultures and relies on your local knowledge of American culture.

**Assistant Director**—This person usually serves in the absence of the director and, depending on the size and complexity of the IEP unit, may be responsible for one or more positions focused on finance, personnel, policy, teaching, record management, immigration, student performance and behavior, and so forth.

**Curriculum Coordinator**—Designs, organizes, coordinates, and evaluates courses at multiple levels of proficiency and instruction to fit the mission and the learning goals of the IEP. The coordinator must know what is effective in teaching students from various cultures and the state of the art in all matters of curriculum, including testing and evaluation at times as well.

**Director**—The leading figure in the IEP unit directly responsible to a higher administrator, whether department chair, dean, or vice-president in a university setting. The director must have a detailed knowledge of all internal aspects of the unit and must represent the unit in relation to the broader campus and community constituencies.
The director may have status as a faculty member, an administrator, or a combination of both, depending on specific institutions.

**Marketing Specialist**—When an IEP must recruit and balance its student population and maintain enrollment levels, often a specialist is needed who knows the principles and tools of marketing and understands English language education markets.

**Records Manager**—helps students enroll or change courses, enter the university computing system, check and pay bills, and seek financial assistance. Accurately records everything from student background information, prior education, test scores, placement information, and grades. Very important to this position are an orientation toward orderliness, accuracy, and detail as well as facility with databases and recognition of privacy and security of student information.

**Student Advisor**—This problem-focused position requires good local knowledge and a mature perception of what makes for a safe and enjoyable sojourn for students, whether focused on academic goals or on the inevitable contact issues of living in a new place with people one hardly knows and unfamiliar legal and cultural norms.

**Teacher Trainer/Supervisor**—The experienced classroom teacher can serve as a trainer or supervisor of other teachers in order to maintain uniformly high standards of instruction or to introduce new curriculum or new teachers to an existing curriculum. Often supervisors have the additional role of evaluating teachers on a periodic basis and providing feedback for their improvement. Thus, interpersonal as well as trained observation skills are essential.

**Testing Coordinator**—IEPs need to determine new students’ academic level, required courses, promotional guidelines, and graduation requirements. For this role the ELPA must know standardized as well as alternative testing procedures, how to train others in a coordinated effort when large numbers of students are involved, and accurate and secure record keeping procedures.

**Technology Coordinator**—Main role is to infuse technology into curriculum through the use of multiple media, Internet, and distance tools. May also work with curriculum coordinator to lead the profes-
sional development of teachers in the IEP environment as well as handle the direct training of students.

**Tutor Trainer/Supervisor**—Near-peer tutoring has been applied widely and effectively in university settings. For this role, ELPAs need an intuitive sense of the language as opposed to knowing “why” grammar is the way it is, for example. Although training varies by IEP site, it can include dealing with issues of cross-cultural interaction, materials appropriate in level and content, and other developmental issues when assisting ESL students to become more autonomous with the language. A proportionate use of nonnative-English-speaking tutors is an advantage.

**Reflective Break**

- Brainstorm a list of the top three ELPA roles that are most relevant to your current situation.
- Prioritize your list and think about why you have chosen each role.

### Teacher Self-Directed Development

Professional development is a process of continuous growth (Richards & Farrell, 2005). This statement applies to managing language learning education as well as to teaching. Self-directed development means the willingness to manage one’s self in the pursuit of this growth and to control one’s learning toward personal goals. A teacher’s development of administrative competence may begin during formal education, as discussed above, but will continue through self-directed development afforded by opportunities and experiences. Use the **wedge technique** in career development: enter where you have strength and learn lateral positions before moving up.

### Activities

One strategy that can help you self-direct your development as an ELPA is to seek out activities that have an administrative element, such as the following:
Apprenticeship or Internship—There may be no better way to understand the knowledge and skills required of an administrative position than to serve an apprenticeship or internship under a director, assistant director, or curriculum specialist.

Volunteer at Existing Sites—Spend time volunteering with a variety of offices or organizations involved with ESL students. For example, serve as a librarian in the teachers’ resource library in order to become familiar with resources, or volunteer to take students on an outing to a site you are familiar with in order to reinforce the skills they are currently learning.

On-the-Job Training—Seek out opportunities to gain some training officially or as an auditor in workshops and other venues as they become available. Sit in on methodology or technology demonstrations where permitted.

Offer Free Tutoring—Post a notice at the library or where ESL students congregate, indicating your availability to assist an ESL student with a specific task, such as editing a paper. Or volunteer at the IEP or to assist a teacher you like to develop your listening skills.

Join Special Interest Sections—Meeting with program administrator groups and joining the conversation lets you learn about practitioners’ concerns.

Tools
In addition to the activities above, some of the following tools for self-development will help you to evolve as an administrator.

Shadowing—Ask one or two administrative personnel to allow you (at their convenience) to shadow them for a day or two to learn what they do and how they do it. Shadowing is an unobtrusive way to closely observe.

Interviewing—Create a list of questions about a position, focused on a particular area (e.g., budgeting); email a couple of people in the same administrative position but in two locations and interview both via email. Compare their responses.

Observing—If an ELPA visits a classroom, ask to accompany unobtrusively or during individual student sessions in an advisor’s office.
Journaling—After you shadow, interview, and observe an ELPA, write descriptions as well as impressions as soon as possible afterwards. Make sure to create questions in your journal so you can follow up.

Teaming/Friendships—Team up with an administrator or teacher to discuss their work experience informally over coffee or a beer.

Reflective Break

• Review the lists of Activities and Tools above and choose which tools are best suited to accomplishing the activities.