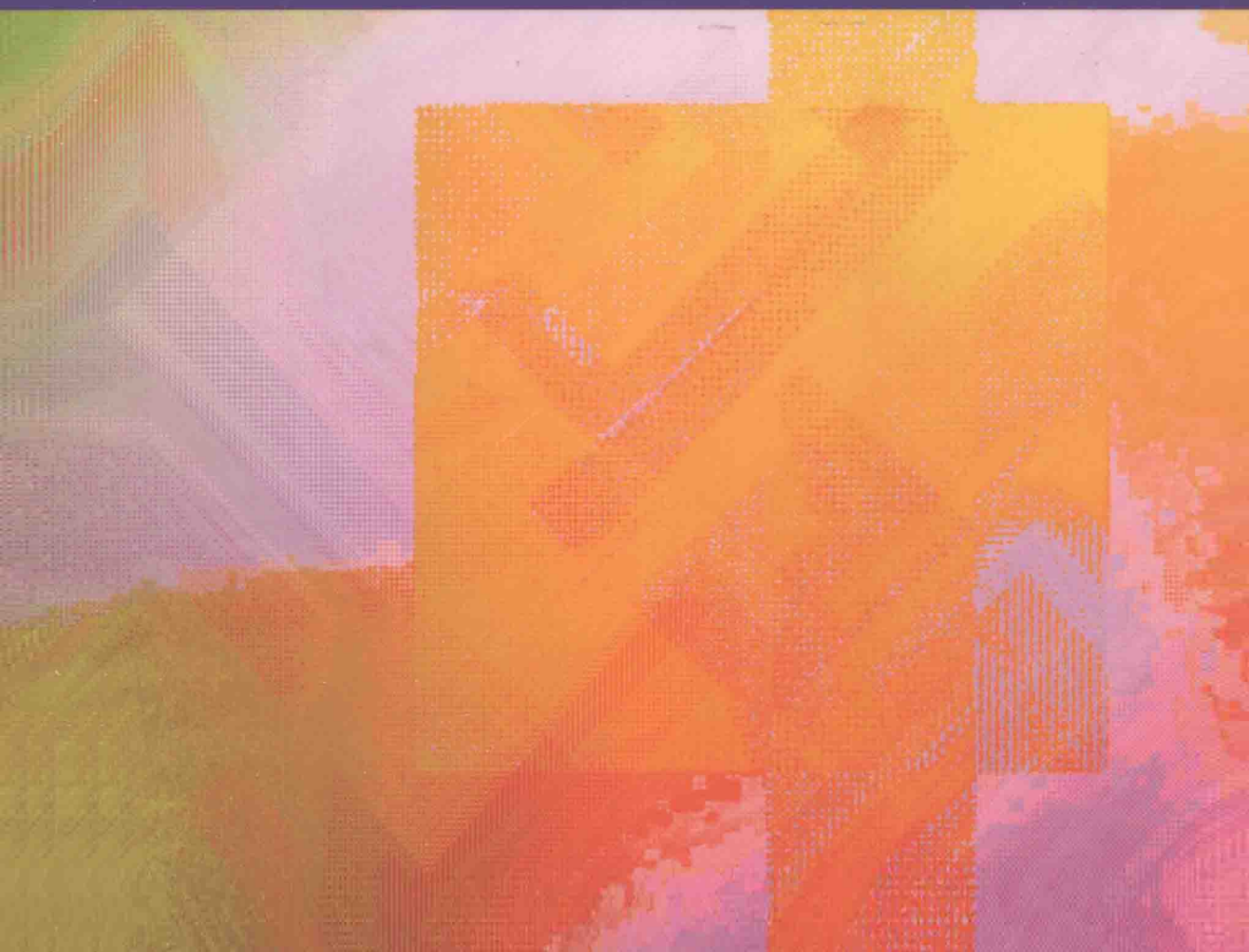
TESOL Language Curriculum Development Series
Kathleen Graves, Series Editor

Revitalizing an Established Program
for Adult Learners

Alison Rice, Editor



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Series Editor's Preface

The aim of TESOL's Language Curriculum Development Series is to provide real-world examples of how a language curriculum is developed, adapted, or renewed in order to encourage readers to carry out their own curriculum innovation. Curriculum development may not be the sexiest of topics in language teaching, but it is surely one of the most vital: At its core, a curriculum is what happens among learners and teachers in classrooms.

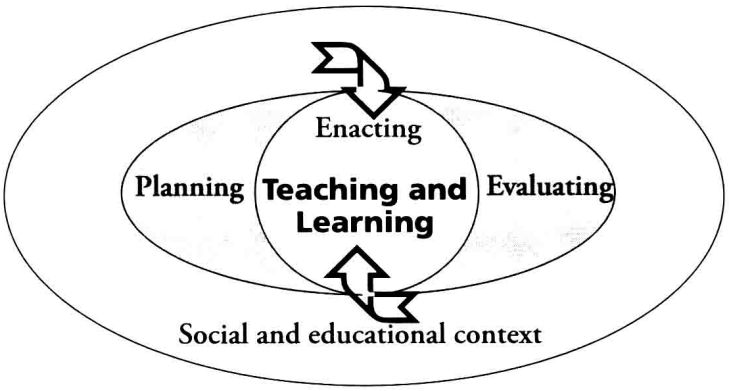
Curriculum as a Dynamic System

In its broadest sense, a curriculum is the nexus of educational decisions, activities, and outcomes in a particular setting. As such, it is affected by explicit and implicit social expectations, educational and institutional policies and norms, teachers' beliefs and understandings, and learners' needs and goals. It is not a set of documents or a textbook, although classroom activities may be guided, governed, or hindered by such documents. Rather, it is a dynamic system.

This system can be conceptualized as three interrelated processes: planning, enacting, and evaluating, as depicted in the figure.

Planning processes include

- analyzing the needs of learners, the expectations of the institution and other stakeholders, and the availability of resources
- deciding on the learning aims or goals and the steps needed to achieve them, and organizing them in a principled way
- translating the aims and steps into materials and activities



Teaching and learning processes include

- using the materials and doing the activities in the classroom
- adjusting them according to learners' needs, abilities, and interests
- learning with, about, and from each other

Evaluation processes include

- assessing learners' progress toward and achievement of the aims
- adjusting the aims in response to learners' abilities and needs
- gathering information about the effectiveness of the aims, organization, materials, and activities, and using this information in planning and teaching

These processes create a system that is at once stable, rooted in what has gone before, and evolving as it responds to change, to new ideas, and to the people involved. People plan, enact, and evaluate a curriculum.

The Series: Educators Bringing About Change

In these volumes, readers will encounter teachers, curriculum developers, and administrators from all over the world who sought to understand their learners' needs and capacities and respond to them in creative, realistic, and effective ways. The volumes focus on different ways in which curriculum is developed or renewed:

- Volume 1: Developing a new curriculum for school-age learners
- Volume 2: Planning and teaching creatively within a required curriculum for school-age learners
- Volume 3: Revitalizing a curriculum for school-age learners
- Volume 4: Developing a new course for adult learners
- Volume 5: Developing a new curriculum for adult learners
- Volume 6: Planning and teaching creatively within a required curriculum for adult learners
- Volume 7: Revitalizing an established program for adult learners

The boundaries between a program and a curriculum are blurred, as are the boundaries between a curriculum and a course. *Curriculum* is used in its broadest sense to mean planning, teaching, and evaluating a course of study (e.g., a Grade 2 curriculum or a university writing curriculum). A *course* is a stand-alone or a specific offering within a curriculum, such as a computer literacy course for intermediate students. A *program* is all of the courses or courses of study offered in a particular institution or department, for example, the high school ESL program.

The overarching theme of these volumes is how educators bring about change. Change is rarely straightforward or simple. It requires creative thinking, collaboration, problematizing, negotiation, and reflection. It involves trial and error, setbacks and breakthroughs, and occasional tearing out of hair. It takes time. The contributors to these volumes invite you into their educational context and describe how it affects their work. They introduce you to their learners—school-age children or adults—and explain the motivation for the curriculum change. They describe what they did, how they evaluated it, and what they learned from it. They allow you to see what is, at its heart, a creative human process. In so doing, they guide the way for you as a reader to set out on the path of your own curriculum innovation and learning.

This Volume

This volume provides accounts of 11 English language programs in Australia, Canada, Korea, Turkey, and the United States. These programs have sought solutions to issues such as increased competition for declining numbers of students, changing student populations and demands, and institutional requirements to better prepare future undergraduate or graduate students. The authors present strategies for long-range planning and situation and needs analysis as well as practical ideas for creating collaborative teams and solutions for working with stakeholders who, for a variety of reasons, are uncomfortable with change. The contributors provide valuable and frank insights into the complex process of innovation and provide the reader with thoughtful models for revitalizing an established program.

Dedication

This series is dedicated to Marilyn Kupetz, a gifted editor, a generous mentor, and a discerning colleague. The quality of TESOL publications, including this series, is due in no small part to her vision, attention to detail, and care.

Kathleen Graves

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English Language Programs and Change: Be Prepared

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ALISON RICE

An organization which fails to adapt and move with the times is one which will fall behind and eventually expire. (White, 1991, p. 19)

In the past few years, the world has learned some economic hard truths. "The world is flat," says Friedman. "People now have the communication and innovation tools to compete, connect and collaborate from anywhere" (Friedman, 2006, p. 25). He argues that suppliers of goods and services are no longer limited by national or temporal boundaries and that economic rewards and security will go to those who encourage creative thinking, flexibility, education, and openness to novel ideas. English language programs, whether ESL or EFL, supply an important service. Are they also subject to global market competition? If so, as program directors, coordinators, or faculty, do we need to develop business savvy as well as our academic knowledge?

The title for this volume in the Language Curriculum Development Series, *Revitalizing an Established Program for Adult Learners,* clearly reflects TESOL's belief that English language teaching (ELT) programs cannot remain stagnant. And so, although the chapters focus on curriculum change and development, the authors, most of whom hold administrative positions in addition to having teaching duties, implicitly agree with Friedman. It is clear that they are well aware that today's students are courted by many programs and that political and economic realities affect the number of students who enroll each semester and, thus, ultimately, their programs' survival.

Additionally, English programs are often seen not only as service programs to their institutions and local community, but also as sources of students and revenue. Whether for-profit or nonprofit, they must, at the very least, cover expenses in order to remain viable. The authors speak to this when they discuss mandates to adapt to new enrollment trends, improve service to their students and stakeholders, create new and innovative products, and find new markets—the faster, the better.

To accomplish these goals requires immense effort and persistence, and even so, success is not assured. A Delphi Group (2006) white paper on the topic of innovation states discouragingly that the introduction of innovative processes or products is not the natural or automatic result of "creatively thinking about a market challenge." Indeed, the report continues, "this is far from the truth. Most often innovation ends up involving high measures of serendipity and simple brute force" (p. 2). Even worse, Markee (1997, p. 6), quoting a 1981 study by Adams and Chan, writes that, at least at the time of their research, up to 75% of all educational innovations were ultimately unsuccessful. Why is this so? What can TESOL educators do to ameliorate this harsh assessment, as "brute force" is certainly not part of the TESOL culture?

Numerous authors (e.g., Curtis, 1999; Stoller, 1997; White, 1991) have looked at the process of change in education, and in language education in particular, in an attempt to find out why some innovations succeed while others fail. The consensus: School-based change can be frustrating, complex, time-consuming, difficult, exhausting, and energy draining. Moreover, implementation of new program procedures or curricula is expensive, both monetarily and emotionally. Stoynoff (1991) lays out the problem:

> *Any change in the status quo necessitates a reallocation of the increasingly limited resources in an institution. Resources such as space, money, and release time are scarce commodities in most schools. The implementation of a significant change or innovation of any kind is an immediate threat to secured positions and established allocation patterns in the organization. In most cases, it requires reductions in one area to fund disbursements in another. (p. 10)*

Teacher or student resistance can also hinder a proposed innovation. Not surprisingly, new, supposedly improved ways of thinking and novel or revamped procedures urged by program directors or higher levels of institutional administration are not necessarily viewed as better by the users, who often find proposed change unrealistic, if not threatening. Here Curtis (1999) provides some hopeful insights, spotting two positive themes running through the published literature:

- Effective, targeted support for teachers through the change process, based on their self-identified support needs, positively affects the likelihood of acceptance of new procedures or policies.
- Effective support through the change process plays an important role in teachers' professional development.

So what can change agents do to promote buy-in? Curtis (1999) stresses listening to teachers' ideas—their input, based on classroom experience, and involvement in all stages of educational change can make the difference between true acceptance and implementation of an innovation versus superficial, short-term lip service and quick reversion to older habits. Honesty and trust between administration and teachers are absolutely vital—teachers need clear and truthful explanations of higher-ups' reasons for wanting change. Curtis cites Churchill et al. (1997) when pointing out that teachers who sense ulterior motives for educational initiatives (e.g., motives related to economic savings for the program rather than to the introduction of superior pedagogy) are likely to resist. Above all, Markee (1997) stresses that "teachers must perceive change to be relatively advantageous to them if they are to accept it" (p. 15). These points, discussed more fully below, are exemplified in this volume by Rawley and Roemer (chapter 5) as well as Beuster and Graupensperger (chapter 2), who discuss issues of faculty buy-in or lack thereof, and of crises caused by lack of trust.

In my own role as director of a large, urban intensive English program (IEP), I have been strongly influenced by Stoller's (1997) appeal to program directors to serve as "catalysts for change and innovation." Strong leadership, she declares, will let us "enhance many aspects of our programs, creating greater job satisfaction among faculty and staff, better learning conditions for students, improved reputations for our programs, and more effective management of program resources" (p. 33).

The program directors, coordinators, and faculty who have contributed to this volume clearly agree with Stoller and see themselves as successful change agents. Their chapters document long-term initiatives, albeit with much angst and myriad setbacks along the way, to introduce new procedures, curricula, and methods that meet the needs of their students. Some chapters, such as Byleen's (chapter 11) description of a long-term curriculum documentation project at the Applied English Center at the University of Kansas, Bonfanti and Watkin's (chapter 3) work on developing a new curriculum along with marketing and expansion efforts at the English as a Second Language Center at Mississippi State University, and Beuster and Graupensperger's chapter on the challenge of a teamwork approach to curriculum reform, narrate internal IEP projects that affect only their programs' curricula or procedures. Others, such as the contributions by Royal, White,

and McIntosh (chapter 4), Kırkgöz (chapter 8), Altman (chapter 9), and Potts and Park (chapter 10), draw connections between the needs of university academic departments and those who prepare students for a wide variety of undergraduate majors or graduate programs. Still other contributors, such as Rawley and Roemer (chapter 5) and Petro (chapter 7), consider how credit-bearing ESL courses should fit into the overall university curriculum. Their chapters document the extraordinarily complex process of introducing and managing innovative curricula and procedures.

Because most change occurs under pressure, it is easy to get caught up in the immediate demands of the process and not take time to consult research. In fact, one particularly important tip from many of the contributors to this volume is to know what researchers have to say before embarking on an ambitious project. The following section highlights some of the major findings in the introduction, management, and evaluation of educational innovation and diffusion, research done primarily in the 1980s–1990s (other than that related to technology). I hope that this brief survey and its accompanying bibliographic references, along with the very pragmatic information in this volume, proves beneficial (or precautionary) as you face the challenges of revitalizing your established program for adults.

A Framework for Successful Educational Innovation

Within the English language classroom, teachers may start with *yes-no* questions but quickly introduce those beginning with *wh-*: *who, what, where, when,* and *why.* These words are equally important in looking at how the literature of educational innovation attempts to answer these complex questions:

- Why do English language programs decide to innovate?
- Who should be involved?
- What factors stimulate or hinder implementation of a new curriculum or new procedures?
- How do you start a significant innovative project?
- How do you manage the actual process?
- How do you evaluate long-term results?
- What are the keys to successful management of the process?

This section addresses each of these questions.

WHY DO ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROGRAMS DECIDE TO INNOVATE?

If, as Markee (1997) reports, the majority of attempted innovations eventually fail, why should administrators and faculty in English language pro-

grams make a huge commitment in time, energy, and budget to the implementation of innovative projects? Like it or not, White (1987) says, ELT "is a service industry, supplying people with a service—English language teaching—and a commodity—the English language" (p. 211). English language programs, like other service industries, are subject to internal and external stresses that compel them to change. Competition, supply of qualified faculty, changes in student enrollment figures related to world political and economic climates, different educational preparation of new generations of students, demands of stakeholders, and so on are forces that act against comfortable, status-quo complacency and inertia. If that is the case, then it makes sense to understand what contributes to successful change before setting off on a journey fraught with potential pitfalls.

According to De Lano, Riley, and Crookes (1994, p. 491) and Stoller (1995, 1997), a decision to implement innovation may stem from, or be initiated by, multiple sources:

1. dissatisfaction with program management practices (e.g., placement, testing, recruitment)
2. dissatisfaction with current teaching methodology (skills or function based) or an awareness of new and supposedly better teaching practices, curriculum, or materials gained through attendance at conferences or exposure to research in language acquisition and teaching
3. change agents (who may be administrators, faculty, students, outside consultants, or evaluators) whose "task is often to encourage, persuade or push people to change, to adopt an innovation and use it in an appropriate context" (De Lano et al., 1994, p. 491)
4. student needs and desires, expressed formally through mechanisms such as program evaluations and surveys or informally through vocal suggestions or complaints to teachers or coordinators
5. faculty interests, often driven by new hires who have taught different types of courses in previous jobs
6. the need to respond to mandates for change from parent institutions, government regulations, market demands, and so on

Although all of these reasons are to some extent reflected in the chapters in this volume, perceived student needs and demands for change from academic departments in home institutions are paramount. The authors of the chapters clearly served as change agents: Their dedicated service was instrumental in the success of their projects.

WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED?

As faculty and administrative workloads can increase exponentially when programs are overhauled in the name of progress, it is vital for change agents to develop strategies that encourage broad acceptance and willingness to implement long-term projects. Collaboration, communication, and cooperation are key. Teachers, naturally, are on the front line, and they, along with other stakeholders (including students, heads of departments, sponsors, curriculum developers, and others) play complex roles in ultimately deciding to adopt or resist innovation.

The most important factor researchers point out is that lasting innovation cannot be imposed by higher authority. Bottom-up participation in the change process of all stakeholders, especially faculty and students, is of vital importance. In fact, every contributor to this volume states that involving faculty in developing curricular goals is of utmost importance. Byleen talks of tapping into "the collective experience and wisdom" (p. 214) of the faculty stakeholders, as does Altman. Rawley and Roemer welcome multiple faculty perspectives and differing expertise; Bonfanti and Watkins made satisfying instructor needs part of the curriculum renewal process. Markee (1997), citing Brindley and Hood (1991), says that "teachers must experience innovations firsthand if they are to adopt and incorporate these changes into their pedagogical practice" (p. 43).

White (1987, 1991) stresses the need for a collegial school culture that nurtures staff initiatives and the building of team participation, open communication, and personal investment in curriculum decision making. This claim is supported by De Lano et al. (1994), who state that participants who see a direct benefit from an innovation outweighing personal cost are more apt to support change. They suggest that increased motivation can result from creating incentives "which promote cooperation, as teachers may quickly become disillusioned without evidence that any tangible rewards will be forthcoming for their time and effort" (p. 491). Several rewards discussed in this volume include significant professional development opportunities for faculty (see the chapters by Kırkgöz and by Royal et al.); the development of a communal bank of teaching materials resulting in less pressure on faculty (see Belchamber's chapter); confidence and personal satisfaction gained by presenting work at TESOL (see Rawley and Roemer's chapter); and, in general, program growth leading to greater job security and opportunities to develop and teach elective or content-based courses of particular interest to individual teachers (see Bonfanti and Watkins' chapter). Unfortunately, increased faculty salaries do not appear to be a common result of increased voluntary workload.

Also vital, and often overlooked, is support from higher administration.

Kennedy (1988), mentioned in De Lano et al. (1994), states, "If the head of an educational culture is committed to a change, chances of success can be increased" (p. 491). This often translates into budgetary help and increased support services, plus pressure on the larger academic community to cooperate with a department (e.g., a noncredit IEP) that has lower academic status. Bonfanti and Watkins' chapter details work done in response to the dean of continuing education's desire for their program to grow.

WHAT FACTORS STIMULATE ACCEPTANCE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A NEW CURRICULUM OR NEW PROCEDURES?

Stoynoff (1991) and Stoller (1997) discuss a 1971 analysis by Rogers and Shoemaker of 1,500 studies of innovation from which they extracted five attributes of innovation that affect whether or not a new idea is successfully adopted:

1. relative advantage: How much better is the new approach than the one it is replacing?
2. compatibility: Is the new practice a consistent outgrowth from past practices, or is it radically different?
3. complexity: Is the innovation easy for faculty or staff to understand and use?
4. trialability: Can the innovation be experimented with for a limited time before the need for widespread adoption?
5. observability: Can others outside the department see the results of the innovation?

Stoller (1997) also speaks of a balanced divergence factor made up of six attributes that help or hinder innovation diffusion. This factor includes two of the above attributes (compatibility with past practice and complexity) along with explicitness, flexibility, originality, and visibility. In her advice to program directors, she looks at all of the above attributes and suggests that a Goldilocks syndrome affects acceptance or rejection of an innovation. When attributes are "sufficiently present—'not too much, not too little, but just right'—and fall comfortably within a perceived zone of innovation, adoption rates are likely to increase" (pp. 43–44). Stoller adds that program administrators should keep in mind two additional factors that help lead to positive results: dissatisfaction with the status quo and viability between the proposed innovation, institutional resources, and student needs. Her trenchant advice: *Practical* and *useful* are key words to keep in mind when trying to persuade faculty to embrace change.

Kennedy (1988, p. 338) speaks of more personal criteria. For an

innovation to have the likelihood of establishing itself and thus a chance to achieve long-term impact, participants must feel that the innovation belongs to them. The change agents described in Altman's chapter certainly felt this sense of ownership of the innovation—an updated program to prepare students for the University of Michigan's demanding master of business administration program—and were motivated to provide the best program possible for their clients.

Equally important is the gain/loss calculation, which "assumes that a positive decision to involve oneself actively in any innovation will only be taken if gains accrued as a result of participation outweigh losses" (Kennedy, 1988, p. 340). These gains may include increased job security, better relations with higher administration, improved service to students, or the teacher's desire for increased professional skills or training or for an intellectual challenge. However, not surprisingly, a tangible economic reward is the most important motivation. Losses, which may be significant, include extra hours of voluntary work, the need to learn new skills, and the potential loss of job security if the innovation reveals teacher inadequacies. These, in turn, lead to resistance. "That won't work in my classroom," according to Hutchinson (1992), has the subtext, "I'm scared of trying that in my classroom" (p. 21). The key to dealing with resistance, he says, is to make the first concern getting the process of change right rather than focusing on the ultimate product. Among his guidelines for doing so, he stresses encouraging participants to vocalize their feelings. "So long as resistance remains hidden," he states, "it remains a problem and a potential threat to the success of the change" (p. 21). In their chapter, Beuster and Graupensperger speak tellingly of problems encountered when faculty buy-in was missing, to some extent because faculty were unable to express their concerns and fears when facing a major reorganization of their department.

Sometimes support comes after the work is completed, an unexpected but greatly appreciated reward. For example, Petro's revised English Language Studies Program created such great enthusiasm on campus that the vice provost for graduate studies arranged a commitment for its entire following year's budget.

HOW DO YOU START A SIGNIFICANT INNOVATIVE PROJECT?

As most educators are aware, preparation is the key. White (1987) stresses the importance of allotting time for significant planning and information gathering before jumping into a major innovative project. He suggests starting the process by creating two lists, the first headed *What We Already Know* and the second headed *What We Need to Know*. The former, no small task, obtains information through examination of "existing syllabuses, teaching materi-

als, examination results and test scores, comments from students and other interested parties, ministry reports and proposals, etc." (p. 215). Equally vital in the discovery process is mining unwritten institutional knowledge. White emphasizes the centrality of faculty and administrative participation in the needs assessment stage, both as researchers and as sources of information: Their skills and expertise are "an important resource and, to ensure their involvement and commitment, should be drawn upon" (p. 215).

Many of the contributors to this volume have followed this advice, beginning their projects by conducting a significant needs assessment in order to provide solid evidence that their programs' future health demanded purposeful change. In doing so, they wanted to learn how their standard practices differed from what their stakeholders actually wanted or felt was lacking in current offerings. De Lano et al. (1994), citing Brown (unpublished manuscript) points out the twofold value of data collected during the diagnostic phase:

1. to provide convincing evidence of the need for a change
2. to provide baseline information against which changed program elements, such as goals, methods, or materials, can later be evaluated for effectiveness

Three chapters in this volume illustrate the discovery process. Altman describes a triangulation approach to obtain data from all stakeholders (students, instructors, and content-area faculty and staff). Petro, responding to the University of Rhode Island's newly instituted universitywide writing requirements, consulted extensively with faculty in the Writing Department before adapting an existing course for native speakers to ESL students. And Kırkgöz, whose discovery process survey targeted 1,000 current and former students along with three higher education departments offering English-medium instruction in Çukurova University, reaped an additional benefit: Being involved in data gathering helped faculty members become aware of the extent of existing problems and realize that they could play a role in making change decisions. Kırkgöz encouraged her faculty to review and rewrite the departmental mission statement based on the needs analysis findings. She further encouraged faculty participation in designing course goals and intended outcomes, based on their classroom experience of what progress students could reasonably achieve in a 1-year period.

In their report on recent work in the Philippines, Waters and Vilches (2005) highlight the efficacy of taking an additional step in the preparation process. They created a short in-service training course for senior change agents working on an educational reform initiative. Designed to raise awareness of the issues presented above, the course helped participants gain insight into theoretical and practical aspects of educational change