

A Handbook for Language Program Administrators

Review by Glen Alan Penrod

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A HANDBOOK FOR LANGUAGE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS. Mary Ann Christison and Fredricka L. Stoller (Editors). Burlingame, CA: Alta Book Center Publishers, 1997. \$32.50.

Because of the nature of their jobs, ESL program administrators have to wear many different hats. They are called on to be supervisors, organizers, advocates, and oftentimes trouble-shooters. They have to deal with competing pressures from above and below while trying to balance the various goals of a sponsoring institution with the needs of teachers and students. More often than not, program administrators have nothing but their own experience to guide them as they learn what works and what doesn't. For such administrators, this book is a godsend. It addresses many of the daily hassles program directors put up with and offers practical and concrete suggestions to those who find themselves, by choice or default, with the unenviable task of running an ESL program.

The book, a collection of articles by respected experts in the field, recognizes that an administrator's job is multi-faceted. Each section explores individually the roles that directors are required to play: Leader, Promoter, Organizer, Visionary. The editors have a good understanding of the challenges administrators face, and through carefully selected articles, provide useful insights into a wide variety of situations program directors will inevitably encounter. Each chapter focuses on a different aspect of a director's job, whether it be strategic planning, budgeting, reporting, or communicating with an academic community which may not clearly see how the goals of an ESL program relate to the overall mission of their institution.

The sections on leadership, time, and personnel management are, in my opinion, the most useful because they provide a common sense approach to the everyday problems which are the lot of program administrators. The book emphasizes planning, decision making, and negotiation skills as a practical alternative to crisis management, which can result when program directors are placed in administrative positions with neither the tools nor the experience they need to cope with the tasks thrust upon them. The profession has needed a book like this for a long time.

While no book can sufficiently prepare a program administrator for every situation he or she may come across, *A Handbook for Language Program Administrators* goes a long way in addressing the major issues and concerns ESL program directors have to deal with and should be required reading for anyone contemplating a position or career in program administration, particularly at a U.S. institution of higher learning.

About the Reviewer

Glen Alan Penrod has taught for 15 years in Hong Kong, Taiwan, the United States and Korea. He holds degrees from BYU—Hawaii (B.A. TESL) and its sister institution in Provo, Utah (M.A. Applied Linguistics). He has held administrative positions in both Taiwan and South Korea, where he served as English Program Director at the Samsung Human Resources Development Center at the time of this writing.