Article

# Preparing the Online Language Program Administrator: A Needs Analysis of Intensive English Programs in the United States

*Angel Steadman[1] and Rachel Kraut[2]*

## Abstract

*As fully-online classes continue to grow in popularity, administrators of language programs in higher education settings are increasingly responsible for implementing and overseeing online language teaching classes and curricula. However, few language program administrators have extensive experience in online education, and little training exists at the administrative level for this field. In this mixed-methods study, survey and interview data with Intensive English Program (IEP) administrators in the United States show that less formal training and experience in online education are correlated with lower perceived self-efficacy among IEP administrators faced with managing online programs, and that IEP administrators overwhelmingly believe additional training would be beneficial. This study examines the needs described by participants and provides recommendations for future training options based on the needs identified.*

KEYWORDS:  ADMINISTRATOR SELF-EFFICACY; ONLINE LANGUAGE TEACHING; ONLINE LANGUAGE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION; IEP ADMINISTRATION

## Introduction

In recent decades, the combination of an increased need for higher education and rapidly expanding Internet access worldwide has contributed to a boom

**Affiliation**

[1]University of Arizona.
email: amiller2@email.arizona.edu

[2]Rice University.
email: rachel.kraut@rice.edu

**equinox**online

in online education. According to Babson Research Group's most recent data, 5.8 million students were enrolled in at least one online course at a United States-based college or university in fall 2014. With lower face-to-face enrollments at many institutions, this number makes up a larger proportion of total students than ever before (Allen & Seaman, 2016). This trend is expected to continue into the future as well: in 2011, 50% of college presidents predicted that most of their students will be taking classes online in ten years (Parker, Lenhart, & Moore, 2011).

Increases in online enrollment are due to a number of factors, with flexibility (Aslanian & Clinefelter, 2013) and reduced cost (Wang, 2015) being chief among them from the perspective of the student. The popularity and reported success of online language learning programs and apps such as Duolingo (Vesselinov & Grego, 2012), point to a rising appeal in learning languages online among the "digital generation" (Durán-Cerda, 2010). In fact, researchers at Ambient Insight (Adkins, 2016) estimate that the global market for digital language learning will reach $51.9 billion by 2020. This greater demand for online education can be seen particularly among the larger public universities whose online enrollment makes up the lion's share of the overall online enrollment in the United States, at 72% (Allen & Seaman, 2016, p. 9). Although there is not currently data available about the percentage of language classes being taken online at the university level, enrollment in these classes is almost certainly growing as well.

Many intensive English programs (IEPs), especially those in major public universities, have begun feeling pressure to move classes online. IEPs serve a unique purpose within institutions of higher education by preparing international students with English for academic purposes for subsequent study in American universities (Kraut, 2017). These English programs serve as one of the major avenues for recruiting international students; as a result, they are tightly connected to the recruitment of students from new markets associated with the turn toward online education. Within these IEPs, it falls to administrators to make decisions regarding aspects of online classes that may overlap with face-to-face programs, such as marketing and curricular development, as well as aspects unique to online education, such as additional teacher training and professional development, learning management system (LMS) and technology selection, and transitioning face-to-face content to the online setting.

These administrators, typically with backgrounds in second language acquisition (SLA), applied linguistics, or education, rather than technology, may find themselves with little or no preparation in how to manage these online programs effectively. Nevertheless, very little training for IEP administrators managing online programs currently exists, and there is an absence of published research focusing on these administrators' diverse needs. This

study will provide a needs analysis for United States-based IEP administrators working with online programs through an examination of perspectives and perceived self-efficacy reported at various stages of implementing online programs. Following the needs analysis, a series of recommendations for administrator training will be given based on study data.

## Challenges of Administering Online Language Programs

To further illustrate the necessity of formal training for administrators of online language programs, a discussion of commonly-faced challenges is warranted. The increase in the number of online courses and corresponding increase in the need for faculty to teach online has been a source of controversy among both teachers and administrators for a number of reasons. Despite most studies demonstrating equal or superior attainment of student learning outcomes (SLOs) in online classes when compared with face-to-face classes (U.S. Department of Education, 2010; Shachar & Neumann, 2010), the percentage of academic leaders who believe the attainment of online SLOs is the same as or superior to face-to-face classes has actually dropped somewhat in recent years, following a ten-year trend of increasingly positive views. Likewise, although online enrollments have continued to grow, only 29.1% of academic leaders report believing that their faculty "accept the value and legitimacy of online education," a rate lower than reported in 2004 (Allen & Seaman, 2016). For administrators implementing online programs, therefore, achieving faculty and upper administration buy-in becomes a major component of the process.

In the case of online language teaching, with its focus on intercultural exchange and communicative competence, this debate is further amplified. In a comparison of SLOs in face-to-face and online language labs in an introductory college-level Spanish class, Salcedo (2010) found mixed results, with three of four trials showing better performance in the traditional classroom setting. Similarly, while Bruland (2013) found no difference between asynchronous online and face-to-face language instruction in the attainment of reading skills, oral proficiency was significantly higher among students in a face-to-face environment. Conversely, additional studies have found that language students interacting with one another in a computer-based environment performed significantly better than their peers in a face-to-face setting, possibly due to the anonymity the online setting affords (AbuSeileek, 2012) and the chance to spend more time crafting grammatically accurate assignments and responses (AbuSeileek & Qatawneh, 2013). Lawrence (2013) argues that, by following a pedagogical model that includes students' collaborative planning, investment in identity and community, and active work related to intercultural topics, online and hybrid learning provides an ideal space not only for language acquisition but for intercultural collaboration as well.

Another major challenge to administrators in charge of overseeing staffing and training for online programs is the management of online faculty. Although several studies report teachers' overall satisfaction with teaching online (Bolliger & Wasilik, 2009; Conceicao, 2006; Shea, Pickett, & Li, 2005) as well as potential positive effects for classroom-based pedagogy (Roblyer, Porter, Bielefeldt, & Donaldson, 2009), Hogan and McKnight (2007) found that online teachers may be at a higher risk of burnout than face-to-face teachers due to high levels of depersonalization and low levels of personal accomplishment reported in online settings. Online teachers also often report higher workloads associated with online teaching (Conceicao, 2006), although this additional time is generally uncompensated or provided for with course releases (Wickersham & McElhany, 2010).

Despite the wide range of research that identifies skills and approaches that are key to online faculty professional development (e.g., Hampel & Stickler, 2005; Ernest & Hopkins, 2006; Compton, 2009), most online faculty report receiving little or no training from their institutions in planning and teaching online courses (for an overview, see Travis & Rutherford, 2012–2013). Perhaps due to this lack of training and additional compensation for their time, many faculty members do not make full use of the features available to them technologically and express self-doubt about their abilities to effectively use technology in innovative ways, thereby limiting the communicative and collaborative potential of their online language classes (Cheng 2015; Godwin-Jones, 2012; O'Dowd, 2009).

Those teachers who do receive institutional support most frequently receive help not from colleagues in their own departments but from instructional designers hired centrally by the university to assist faculty members from a variety of departments in their development of online courses. In his dissertation study of online language teachers, Cheng (2015) found that one in three teachers did not develop their own courses, leading to a loss of autonomy that was concerning for some teachers. Kampov-Polevoi (2010) addresses this issue by stating that decisions related to technology and content form a "chicken and egg" problem in which content may at times dictate the technology, but the reverse is often also true. Her study provides examples of instructional designers pushing technologies on teachers who do not see them as being useful for the classes they are teaching, leading to the recommendation that faculty members remain the main decision-makers about how their online courses should be structured.

These challenges are some of the most common issues that arise in implementing online language programs, yet there is little guidance for administrators in how to address them. Dialogue among online administrators and researchers most often takes place in non-subject-specific outlets such as the

*Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*, which may not address the unique challenges that online language learning poses. In addition, the vast majority of research on online language learning has focused on the teaching of foreign languages rather than English as a second language: 81% of the research articles in this area published between 2005 and 2010 were based on foreign language distance learning (Vorobel & Kim, 2012).

## Research Questions

We hope to begin addressing this need for further guidance in this study. Conceived as a needs analysis for IEP administrators working with online English language programs in the United States, we begin by asking the following research questions:

1. How do IEP administrators perceive their current abilities to prepare and support their faculty for teaching language online?
2. How are these self-reported abilities influenced by prior experience in online teaching (language or other subjects), amount of formal training, and prior experience as an online student?
3. What training or assistance have administrators experienced in training teachers for online teaching/administering online language programs that they deemed beneficial?
4. What kinds of training do language program administrators believe would be useful for the administration of an online language program?

## Methodology

A needs analysis assessment was chosen for this study due to its ability to help determine existing training needs to inform program development (Brown, 2002), assist with planning educational programs (Fay, 2006), identify resources or further support services needed to achieve short- and long-term goals (Badrul, 2001), and to shape curricula to best match the needs and wants of potential students (Lepetit & Cichocki, 2005). With the push towards online language learning and online education in general, a needs analysis assessment of IEP administrators will elucidate areas for improved performance in order to meet these demands.

### Research Design
To explore the four research questions, a mixed methods approach involving both quantitative and qualitative components was used. A mixed methods design was chosen for this study to allow the researchers to better capture data from both general and case-specific perspectives. Data were collected

through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire was administered to 28 current IEP administrators working within the United States. The data from this instrument afforded a more comprehensive view of perspectives and experiences from the field at large. The interviews were conducted with nine of the administrators who participated in the questionnaire and provided more detailed firsthand experiences, which supplemented the information gleaned from these participants' survey responses.

**Instruments**
The questionnaire was influenced by findings of previous studies (e.g. Buitrago, 2013; Compton, 2009). The questionnaire consisted of a total of 36 items tailored to collect data from administrators with varying degrees of experience with online education. A full copy of the questionnaire can be provided upon request from the authors.

The first section of questionnaire asked participants to report demographic information, such as gender, geographic location, age, and years of experience as an IEP adminstrator. The items in the following section served to collect data about the subjects' perceived self-efficacy in preparing and supporting faculty to teach English language online and administer online language programs. More specifically, participants were asked to rate their confidence level in the following areas:

- selecting appropriate software and other technology,
- troubleshooting technical problems related to online language teaching,
- applying language learning theories to the online environment,
- training teachers in the use of the online learning management system,
- training teachers in the use of third-party software,
- providing teachers with guidance for building community in the online environment,
- providing teachers with guidance for facilitating communicative competence and interaction in the online environment,
- developing assessments for online language classes,
- evaluating tasks in online language classes,
- evaluating online language courses as a whole.

The next section asked participants about their experiences teaching online and taking online classes as a student. Finally, the questionnaire concluded with a section which investigated the amount of formal training received to teach online and administer online language programs. As a part of this section, the participants were asked to list the components that made up their formal training, rate its usefulness, and select areas for further training that would be beneficial.

The questionnaire was found to be reliable, with a Cronbach's alpha of .702.

The semi-structured interviews consisted of 14 questions that generally paralleled those in the questionnaire but were tailored to individual participants' responses as a means of better understanding comments as well as potential connections. Their purpose was to gain further insight into the participants' self-perceived efficacy, beliefs about online language education, and experience with or training for online education. A list of the interview questions can be provided from the authors upon request.

### Procedure

An email containing an invitation to participate in the study and a link to the questionnaire was sent out to approximately 100 directors of university IEPs across the United States. The director could participate if they chose or forward the email on to another administrator. The questionnaire was administered online using Qualtrics during the 2016 fall semester and was left open for one month. Each subject was asked to give consent to participate in the study and indicate if they were willing to participate in a follow-up interview at the end of the first page of the questionnaire.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with the nine administrators who volunteered within a month following the close of the questionnaire. Each interview took place either over the phone or Skype, was recorded, and lasted approximately 45 minutes. Each participant was assigned a reference label known only to the researchers to ensure participant anonymity. All interviews were subsequently transcribed and the original recordings were destroyed.

### Data Analysis

The data derived from the questionnaires were analyzed by using descriptive statistical methods, an unpaired t-test, Pearson correlations, and multiple regression. Qualitative data from the interviews were coded by each researcher for the categories of participants' perceived self-efficacy, experience with online education, and formal training in online education. Within each of these, common response characteristics were clustered into themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to facilitate interpretation of the quantitative findings. Data were triangulated (Long, 2005) across the questionnaire and the interviews to improve the validity and reliability of the results.

### Results

#### Participants in Questionnaire

The participants who took the questionnaire were 28 current administrators, representing IEPs across the United States. The majority of participants (46%)

were between the ages of 36–45 years old. A quarter reported an age range between 56–65 years, 17% at 26–35 years, and 12% at 46–55 years. On average, questionnaire participants had eight years of experience as an IEP administrator (range: 1–25 years), with a mean of one year (range: 0–11 years) overseeing the administration of an online language program.

21% of the questionnaire participants had prior experience teaching English language online (range: 0.5–15 years' experience). Of this group, there was an average of 2.8 years of teaching experience, with the two most commonly listed kinds of courses taught being academic English and English for professional purposes. 50% of survey respondents had experience teaching a subject other than English language online (range 1–10 years' experience). The most commonly taught courses within this category were online TEFL training courses, languages other than English, and subjects outside of language. Questionnaire participants had an average of six years of experience teaching online courses in subjects other than the English language.

Although just half of the questionnaire respondents had experience teaching online, far more had experience taking an online course as a student: 71%. The majority of the online courses taken were in the field of TEFL/ESL education or applied linguistics.

50% of the participants in this portion of the study reported having had formal training to teach online. Within this group, 58% had training specific to teaching language online. Only 12.5% indicated having received formal training to administer an online language program. A summary of these descriptive statistics can be found in Table 1.

**Table 1**
Questionnaire Participants' Descriptive Statistics

|                                                              | Mean      | Range           |
| ------------------------------------------------------------ | --------- | --------------- |
| Years as a language program administrator                    | 8 years   | 1–25 years      |
| Years administering an online language program               | 1 year    | 0–11 years      |
| Years teaching English language online                       | 2.8 years | 0.5–15 years    |
| Years teaching a subject other than English language online  | 6 years   | 1–10 years      |

**Table 2**
Questionnaire Participants' Previous Online Experience

|                                                | Yes  | No   |
| ---------------------------------------------- | ---- | ---- |
| Experience teaching English language online?   | 21%  | 79%  |
| Experience teaching another subject online?    | 50%  | 50%  |

|  | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| Experience taking an online course as a student? | 71% | 29% |
| Formal training to teach online? | 58% (of the 50% above) | 42% (of the 50% above) |
| Formal training to administer language programs online? | 12.5% | 87.5% |

## Participants in Interviews

Nine participants who had taken the survey volunteered to be interviewed. Although they had an average of 10.5 years of experience serving as an IEP administrator, they reported an average of only 0.25 years (range: 0–1 year) overseeing the administration of an online language program.

Prior experience in online educational settings varied widely among interview participants, with participants reporting greater experience as a student in online settings than as an instructor. The majority of the interview participants (78%) had taken an online course as a student, most commonly reporting TEFL/ESL education or applied linguistics courses. About half (four out of nine) of the interviewees had experience teaching a subject other than English language online, including online TEFL training courses, languages other than English, and subjects outside of language. Interview participants had an average of 3.75 years of experience teaching online courses other than English language. However, only two of the nine interviewees, or 22%, had prior experience teaching English language online. Between these two respondents, there was an average of 4.5 years of teaching experience. One had taught academic English online, and the other had taught English for professional purposes online.

Experience with formal training for online settings was also mixed. A little over half (56%) of interview participants reported having had formal training in teaching online, and for each of these participants, the training had been specific to teaching language online. However, only two out of the nine indicated having received formal training to administer an online language program. A summary of these descriptive statistics can be found in Table 3.

**Table 3**
Interview Participants' Descriptive Statistics

|  | Mean | Range |
|---|---|---|
| Years as a language program administrator | 10.5 years | 2–25 years |
| Years administering an online language program | 0.25 year | 0–1 year |
| Years teaching English language online | 4.5 years | 4–5 years |
| Years teaching a subject other than English language online | 3.75 years | 1–7 years |

**Table 4**
Interview Participants' Previous Online Experience

|  | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| Experience teaching English online? | 22% | 78% |
| Experience teaching another subject online? | 44% | 56% |
| Experience taking an online course as a student? | 78% | 22% |
| Formal training to teach online? | 56% | 44% |
| Formal training to teach languages online? | 100% (of the 56% above) | 0% (of the 56% above) |
| Formal training to administer language programs online? | 22% | 78% |

## Research Question 1 – How do IEP Administrators Perceive their Current Abilities to Prepare and Support their Faculty for Teaching Language Online?

On average, the administrators who participated in the questionnaire rated their overall current abilities to prepare and support their faculty for online language teaching moderately: 2.8 out of 4. The questionnaire contained four questions which asked participants to rate their current abilities in preparing and supporting faculty on matters pertaining to online course technology and six questions about pedagogy for online courses (see the Instruments section for a list of question areas). An unpaired t-test revealed a statistically significant difference (t = 2.02, p < .05) between self-reported ratings in technology (M = 2.55) versus pedagogy (M = 2.97), with pedagogy being higher.

A higher reported rate of self-efficacy for pedagogical support may stem from the fact that these administrators had all been language educators in face-to-face courses at one point and regularly continued to provide pedagogical support for face-to-face English teachers in their institutions. Although some participants had greater experience with and a greater sense of confidence in the technological side of online teaching than others, most still felt that their "expertise is in curriculum development and teaching." In this way, greater previous experience in an area weighed heavily for participants in both overall perceived expertise and confidence in providing support to faculty.

The moderate self-efficacy reported by questionnaire participants in being able to support instructors on matters pertaining to course technology was also echoed by the participants interviewed. One in particular discussed the feeling of "impostor syndrome" in having to advise faculty on course technology issues due to her own lack of experience with the field. The majority of participants were positive yet guarded in their responses, feeling that it was possible for them to provide technological support if they received support themselves.

All participants discussed the need to turn to their campus resources for technology and online learning for some training before they could successfully support their faculty in technological matters.

### Research Question 2 – How Are These Self-Reported Abilities Influenced by Prior Experience in Online Teaching (Language or Other Subjects), Amount of Formal Training, and Prior Experience as an Online Student?

A statistically significant multiple regression model was found for self-reported abilities with course technology as a function of each of the independent variables identified in the research question ($F(5, 17) = 2.76$, $p = .05$) with an $R^2$ value of .448. However, amount of formal training to teach online returned as the only significant predictor variable ($p < .05$). The second multiple regression model was statistically significant as well ($F(5, 17) = 2.91$, $p < .05$) with an $R^2$ value of .461. The number of years participants had taught online was found to be a statistically significant predictor of self-reported abilities with online pedagogy ($p < .05$).

The importance of formal training in self-reported abilities with course technology may be due to the specialized and behind-the-scenes nature of the technologies used in online teaching. Selecting, setting up, and managing online courses requires technological know-how and troubleshooting skills that are often invisible to online students. Because formal training in online teaching is likely to include concrete discussions of technological considerations, administrators and teachers with this training may have a better idea of how to use the available course technology to their best advantage, and therefore a greater sense of confidence in their abilities.

This is an important distinction from the finding that administrators' years of experience teaching online raised their levels of perceived self-efficacy in online teaching pedagogy. Unlike familiarity with and confidence in course technology, successful online pedagogy incorporates and adapts practices that transfer from face-to-face to online settings, such as managing student motivation and engagement, gauging students' learning, and developing sound activities and assessments that foster the essential communicative aspect of language learning. Administrators with experience teaching online are more familiar with the challenges that arise in online teaching as well as their potential solutions, which can provide them with a higher level of perceived self-efficacy when supporting online faculty. According to one participant, her experience of having created and taught online courses prior to online administration had informed not only her understanding of her faculty's online teaching needs, but also her understanding of online education as a whole: "If I had never had that experience," she stated, "I'm not sure if I'd be able to speak as comfortably or as loyally about online education as I can."

### Research Question 3 – What Training or Assistance have IEP Administrators Experienced in Training Teachers for Online Teaching/Administering Online Language Programs that they Deemed Beneficial?

As mentioned previously, half of the study participants reported having received formal training to teach online. Types of formal training included a course or workshop about online teaching (e.g., TESOL International's certificate in Developing an Online Teaching Program), readings from the current literature on best practices, tutorials for a learning management system (e.g., Canvas, Blackboard) and additional course software (e.g. Adobe Connect, software for screen-casting), and observations of a colleague's online teaching. Three participants indicated having taken university courses that focused on computer-assisted language learning. 36% of those who had received formal training for online teaching said the training was "extremely useful" for managing an online language program, while 54% felt it was "moderately useful." In other words, although the current study found that formal training for online teaching provided administrators with a greater sense of confidence in relation to course technology, other aspects of online teacher training do not appear to be as useful when tasked with administering online programs.

Because the administrator role encompasses, but goes beyond, the everyday realities of online teaching, further training in the specifics of online program administration would cover a broader scope than is needed for training online teachers. However, this training is rare: only three study participants reported having received formal training for the administration of an online language program. One received training through their university's center for teaching excellence, another received training by taking courses through the Online Learning Consortium, and the third participant received their training through a highly-tailored in-house training program while working in the government sector. The components that made up their training consisted of instruction in best practices for the design and evaluation of online courses, ensuring accessibility in online courses, assessing student learning in online courses, and evaluating and supporting online faculty. All agreed that each of these components was "extremely useful" in the administration of an online language program.

### Research Question 4 – What Kinds of Training do Language Program Administrators Believe Would be Useful for the Administration of an Online Program?

A large majority of questionnaire participants reported that formal training could benefit their performance in the administration of an online language program. 83% indicated that formal training to teach online would "definitely"

or "probably" be beneficial for managing an online language program. 77% felt that formal training in the administration of an online program would "definitely" or "probably" be useful.

To gauge specific training needs, all questionnaire participants were asked to select from nine choices of possible training topics. They could select as many options as they liked, and they were also given an open-ended text box for an "other" category if a training need was not listed. Participants listed the following components as potentially most helpful in an administrative training program (in descending order): (1) assessing student learning in an online environment; (2) designing or evaluating online courses; (3) budgeting time and money for online courses; (4) evaluating online faculty; and (5) providing technical support for online faculty.

As part of the interview, each participant had the opportunity to discuss challenges they wished they had been better prepared for in administering an online language program. Several participants shared learning experiences about LMS platform compatibility, citing student difficulties in viewing or downloading instructional videos in areas with low bandwidth or accessing course content from countries with restrictive firewalls. One participant discussed the importance of learning about Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC) restrictions and licensing before offering online courses to students in certain countries, as online courses are considered exports from the United States (UPCEA, 2017). Another mentioned that she wished she'd had more training in marketing an online language program as it was quite different from her marketing strategies for face-to-face IEP or academic track programs.

These specifically identified training needs, as well as others that arose in our analysis of the questionnaire and interview data, are categorized and discussed in further detail below.

## Discussion and Recommendations

The results of this study point clearly to moderate levels of self-efficacy in online language program management self-reported by administrators, which can be positively affected by prior online teaching experience and formal training in both teaching and administrative areas. Nevertheless, responses demonstrate that as many as half of IEP administrators do not have formal training or online teaching experience to draw from.

Because online teaching experience is often not possible for administrators, this section will focus on training needs identified through questionnaire and interview responses. These training needs (see Table 5) are divided into three distinct yet overlapping categories, listed in order from most to least accessible based on administrator responses: technological, online pedagogy/instructional design, and business/administrative.

**Table 5**

Training Areas and Needs for Online Language Program Administrators

| Training area | Specific training needs |
| --- | --- |
| Technological training | Providing technical support for online faculty<br>Ensuring accessibility for students with disabilities<br>Troubleshooting for web and app accessibility for students located in countries with low bandwidth or restrictive firewalls |
| Online pedagogy/instructional design training | Assessing language student learning and attainments of SLOs in the online environment<br>Evaluating the setup of online language courses, including standardization of the design and presentation of material<br>Evaluating online faculty for effective language teaching practices |
| Business/administrative training | Achieving faculty and management buy-in for online programs<br>Determining hiring practices for online teachers<br>Budgeting time and money for online courses and faculty development<br>Marketing online ESL programs domestically and internationally<br>Understanding the implications of OFAC restrictions and licensing when selling online ESL programs internationally |

## Technological Training

Formal training in teaching online classes was shown to be positively corre-lated with higher confidence in using course technology, and given the ubiq-uity of this sort of training, online teacher training programs provide a limited yet ready source of useful information for administrators involved in online programs, even if they do not intend to teach in them. These non-subject-specific training courses, often provided by universities via a central depart-ment for technological support, may serve as the first level of support for the needs identified in this area. However, interview participants reported that technological skills were less central to IEP administrators' daily responsibili-ties, and because most teachers also have easy access to institutional techno-logical support, this area of training may be less important for administrators in institutions with central support systems.

## Online Pedagogy/Instructional Design Training

Although centrally-housed instructional designers and campus-wide training programs were listed as key sources of support for the administrators included in this study, technology specialists may not have the content knowledge needed to tailor online courses effectively for different subjects. In a subject such as language learning, which requires extended interaction and use rather

than pure content-based instruction, a deep understanding of the underlying pedagogical theory and methodology is essential in creating a successful online program.

Teachers and administrators of online language programs must ensure that their own technology, pedagogy, and content knowledge, collectively referred to as TPACK (Mishra & Koehler, 2006), are aligned in ways that allow them to make decisions thoughtfully and successfully. For this reason, external training resources, including the Quality Matters online course evaluation training program and the Online Learning Consortium's certificate programs in online teaching and instructional design, may be a good starting point for bolstering administrators' and teachers' abilities to use and evaluate software for online courses in general. TESOL International's certificate program in Developing an Online Teaching Program may provide more directed guidance for developing online courses in which the English language is the subject matter.

Administrators can also rely on the rich literature of best practices for online teaching as they help teachers develop their courses. Hampel and Stickler's (2005; updated in Stickler & Hampel, 2015) skills pyramid, for example, provides a framework for understanding the development of language teachers and tutors as they become accustomed to the online setting and offers a useful sequence from basic technological competence to personal teaching style that may inform training programs. Compton (2009) builds upon this model to propose key skills for novice, proficient, and expert online language teachers in areas related to technology, pedagogy, and evaluation. Likewise, the community of inquiry model (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000; 2001; Garrison, 2017), which locates successful online teaching of any subject at the crux of social, cognitive, and teaching presence, guides teachers and course developers to consider how different elements of the online environment work together.

However, these external training courses and frameworks for online faculty development only partially meet the needs of IEP administrators, as they do not address topics beyond the individual class setting, such as program-wide curriculum development and faculty evaluation practices. This lack, in addition to the low rate of participation in any sort of online administrative training, demonstrates a major gap in training opportunities in this area.

### Business/Administration for Online Programs Training

As the administrators in this study were well aware, their roles in relation to the online program go far beyond the specifics of what happens in the virtual classroom or how the curriculum is structured. Regardless, the most neglected area for training is that which encompasses the daily business decisions that require a deep knowledge of marketing, budgeting, staffing, and navigating legal issues that influence online program development on the local and global

scale. Although more general administrative training may take place via external sources geared toward the development of online educational leadership, such as the Online Learning Consortium's Institute for Emerging Leadership in Online Learning, this training does not address the specific needs identified by online IEP administrators in this study. In addition, because much of the training available through the Online Learning Consortium is general, more specific training may be necessary to apply these concepts to the individual institution.

Many of the intricacies unique to IEP administration are unlikely to be adequately addressed institutionally or through outside channels. As a result, there is almost no directed training available to many administrators as it relates to the business decisions that determine how and whether producing online classes can be done effectively and in line with institutional needs and budgets.

## Conclusion

For online ESL programs to succeed and, in many cases, for them to catch up with the already relatively advanced online programs in other fields, administrators must feel confident in their abilities to manage online programs, and directed training is needed to provide them with this confidence. However, these training opportunities are lacking in higher education settings nationwide, leading to a situation in which administrators must patch together training from a variety of internal and external sources that may not address their needs fully or efficiently. The needs analysis conducted in this study provides some insight into these training needs and highlights important gaps in training opportunities that exist currently. As online ESL classes become more prevalent in higher education settings, we recommend the development of more tailored training programs from both institutional and external sources that address the needs outlined in this study.

Because this study was limited to IEPs in the United States, we recognize that our findings are limited and may not be generalizable to educational settings outside of institutions of higher education in the United States. Nevertheless, the number of administrators of online language programs continues to grow, so we hope that this analysis will provide a starting point for research aimed at obtaining a fuller picture of the needs of online administrators in all educational settings.

## About the Authors

Angel Steadman is an instructor at the Center for English as a Second Language and a PhD student in Second Language Acquisition and Teaching at the University of Arizona. She previously oversaw noncredit and credit-bearing online courses in the university's TEFL certificate program.

Rachel Kraut is the Associate Director of Language Programs in the Glasscock School of Continuing Studies at Rice University. She also serves as a site reviewer for the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation.

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