

current times of global economic crisis and budget restrictions. In this climate of uncertainty, the better a foreign language program can show its efficiency and competence, the more likely it is to survive and even expand. This is why Norris et al.'s collection of case studies on engaging in productive self-evaluation is a much-needed resource for any foreign language practitioner. Thus, the principal value of this bold enterprise lies in the fact that the editors provide not only a comprehensive analysis of how college foreign language programs conceptualize evaluation (ch. 1) but also seven concrete examples of how engaging in evaluation has actually improved the quality of different language programs (chs. 2 through 8). The last chapter (ch. 9) provides a general overview of program evaluation as a field of inquiry and reflects on its present and future value in overall academic life and the identity of those who perform it. The theory and experiences described in this volume are part of the Foreign Language Program Evaluation Project (FLPEP), which was developed at the University of Hawai'i and funded through a U.S. Department of Education International Research and Studies Grant between 2005 and 2008.

The book opens with Watanabe, Norris, and González-Lloret's report on a project aimed at understanding the priorities and needs that foreign language programs face regarding evaluation. Through open-ended interviews with foreign language educators and a Web-based survey, the authors identify some of the main concerns regarding evaluation: the external pressure that can cause programs to lessen the quality of their education, time and resource constraints, and lack of institutional and disciplinary support. In chapter 2, Milleret and Silveira explain the underpinnings of the evaluation of the Portuguese program at the University of New Mexico, which resulted not only in the creation of some new experimental courses, such as Portuguese for Spanish speakers, but also in improved course delivery. Perhaps more important, the program is growing and, as a result of the evaluation, administrators have been persuaded to support this growth. The third chapter is an example of evaluation undertaken to support curricular change. According to Loewensen and Gómez, one of the reasons for the low registration and retention of students in the undergraduate major in their department was that stakeholders did not understand its unique nature. Through a survey distributed to faculty, students, alumni, and employers, the authors could base the introduction of a major in Spanish on real data, instead

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Foreign language programs in the United States are under considerable pressure to show their effectiveness to different stakeholders—administrators, colleagues from other programs and departments, colleagues from other foreign language programs, parents, students, among others—and are now feeling growing pressure to engage in critical evaluation, particularly in the

of anecdotes, speculations, or individual preferences. In addition, the expertise acquired in this process will be used again to start an accreditation-mandated departmental program review.

In chapter 4, Zannirato and Sánchez-Serrano address the thorny issue of training foreign language teaching assistants whose main area of interest and research is literature, a common scenario in U.S. universities. The evaluation's main goal was to design a foreign language teaching methods class, and the evaluation process consisted of class observations and questionnaires directed at section heads, directors of graduate studies, language coordinators, and graduate students.

In chapter 5, Walther provides a detailed overview of the planning stages of an evaluation at Duke University to assess language proficiency, as well as cultural knowledge and understanding. In chapter 6, Grau Sempre, Mohn, and Pieroni provide a statement of 10 student learning outcomes, as well as the results of their innovative portfolio assessment procedure.

In chapter 7, Ramsay reports on the evaluation of two study abroad programs through classroom observations, meetings with directors and administrators, interviews with students, and analyses of teaching materials and graded assignments. The dissatisfaction revealed by the evaluation led to the cancellation of the programs. Finally, Pfeiffer and Byrnes summarize the evaluation of the German program at their institution through questionnaires addressed to alumni and enrolled students, which provided recommendations for future action.

The seven chapters illustrate the heterogeneity of experiences with evaluation in different foreign language departments. In each case, the impetus for starting the evaluation process and the defined goals differed, but all shared the desire to take a critical look at their practice and outcomes. In the final chapter, the authors argue that the optimal approach to conducting evaluation is characterized by local ownership of the undertaking—that is, evaluation done by and for people within the program (p. 211). This approach, however, was not followed in chapter 7, and that is probably why it had the most extreme and dramatic consequences of all the cases reported.

It is a brave act of honesty and ethics to inquire whether your program's performance is satisfactory or can be improved, but it is even braver to make the process and results public. Critical evaluations of foreign language programs usually take the form of an internal report that is rarely disseminated beyond the institution that generated it, which is why this volume is a particularly

refreshing novelty and a much-needed reference for professionals who are planning on engaging in program evaluation.

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