



ACCOMMODATING MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS IN CRITICAL EAP PROGRAMME DESIGN

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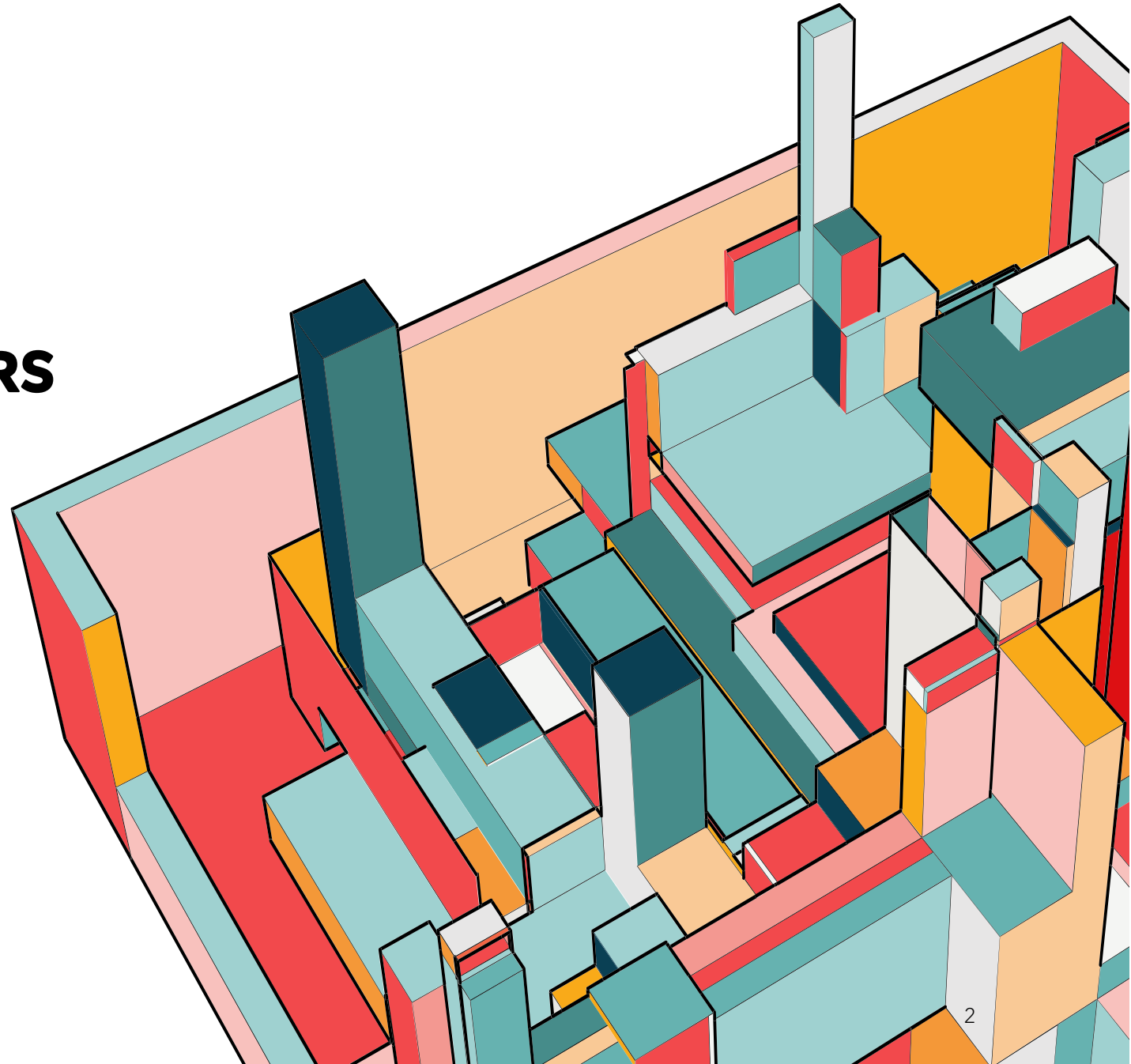
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WHAT DO STUDENTS NEED?
WHAT DOES THE INSTITUTION NEED?
WHAT DOES THE FIELD OF EAP NEED?

ACCOMMODATING MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS IN CRITICAL EAP PROGRAMME DESIGN

Guiding question:

How can we as EAP leaders counter the marginalized status of EAP programmes, teachers, students, and language work in the academy via the needs analysis and programme design processes, for the ultimate benefit of all?





MY CONTEXT

- Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada
 - U15 member
 - ~19000 students
 - 23% international
- Director, English Language Studies and University Access
 - Associate Director/Head Instructor, 2012-2021
 - Instructor, 2011-2012



DEPT. OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE STUDIES

- **Cost-Recovery Model.** Programs aren't funded by the university; all costs must be covered by the tuition brought in
- **Faculty of Open Learning and Career Development (Academic Unit)**
- **No official research mandate; No faculty members associated with the unit**
- **Programming**
 - **Year-round pre-session EAP Program.** ~300 students/year (500/year before pandemic). Direct pathway to admission. Non-credit.
 - **Credit-bearing EAP courses** for Dept. of Economics, Faculty of Computer Science. Non-credit.
 - **Short-term language programs.**
 - **PD for Faculty, language educators.** EMI Certificate.



NEEDS ANALYSIS IN ESP/EAP

Establish the “what” and the “how” of a course (Flowerdew, 2012)

Table 1.1 Four viewpoints on needs

<i>Needs viewpoints</i>	<i>Definition of needs</i>	<i>Related synonyms</i>
Democratic view	Whatever elements of the ESP majorities of all stakeholder groups want	<i>Wants; desires; expectations; requests; motivations</i>
Discrepancy view	The difference or discrepancy between what they should be able to do in the ESP and what they currently can do	<i>Deficiencies; lacks; gaps; requirements</i>
Analytic view	Whatever elements of the ESP students should learn next based on SLA theory and experience	<i>Next step; x + 1</i>
Diagnostic view	Whatever elements of the ESP will cause harm if they are missing	<i>Necessities; essentials; prerequisites</i>

“This [definition of a democratic needs analysis] still needs to be framed around what the students need, but from various stakeholders’ viewpoints, which will generally shape the needs into much more than just what the students want.” (p. 13)

Brown, J. D. (2016). *Introducing Needs Analysis and English for Specific Purposes*. Routledge.

MARGINALIZATION OF EAP

Neoliberal HE's marginalizing effect on EAP

- that English language centres must be financially self-sufficient and profit-generating;
- that they must attract increasing numbers of international students;
- These macro-influences constrain the role of EAP institutionally and limit it to an instrumental function: EAP is a tool to obtain revenue and increased international student enrolment numbers for the university.

(Bond, 2020; Ding and Bruce, 2017; Flowerdew, 2019; Hadley, 2015; MacDonald, 2020; MacDonald, 2017)

Marginalized programmes, structures and practitioners

- Often non-credit-bearing or adjunct programming
- Taught by precariously employed practitioners with unclear professional roles and identities
- Often taught in non-academic units and/or units which are strictly teaching-focused
- The efforts of language work are minimized

THE DIFFERING DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS OF EAP WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY

Contrasting Institutional and Language Centre Perspectives



INSTITUTION

- Centres are instruments of marketing, recruitment and enrolment of international students
- Instrumental view: "Revenue generator", "Pipeline", "Stepping stone"



LANGUAGE CENTRE

- Centres are sites for intercultural exchange, language skills development, transformation
- Instrumental view, given the commodification of English skills in the neoliberal HE environment:
 - "Prepare yourself for university success"



CRITICAL NEEDS ANALYSIS IN EAP

Benesch, S. (1996). Needs Analysis and Curriculum Development in EAP: An Example of a Critical Approach. *TESOL Quarterly*, 723-738.

- Brings issues of **power and socio-politics** into consideration
- Shift from “descriptive” needs analyses to “a critical approach to [...leading to] a search for solutions to ESL students' linguistic and social marginalization.” (p. 727)
- Rather than simply identifying existing conditions and attempting to adapt students to them [...] **critical needs analysis** acknowledges existing forms, including power relations, while searching for possible areas of change [; ...] A curriculum development process that involved both the “understanding of necessity and the transformation of necessity” (Simon, as cited 1996, p.144 as cited by Benesch, 1996).



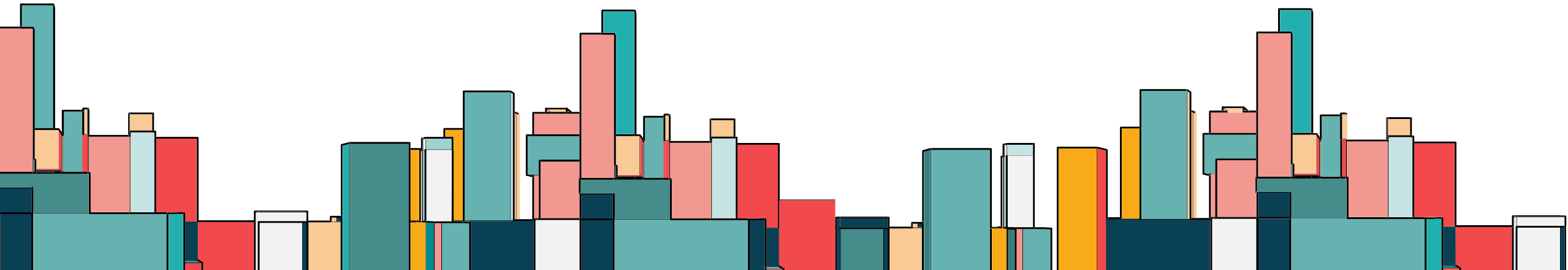
CRITICAL NEEDS ANALYSIS IN EAP

- Dealing with contradictory demands: large, survey course in psychology evaluated through MCQ exams vs. university-mandated essay exam
- Three types of activities:
 - those which helped students deal with the requirements (MCQ exam prep, review of lecture notes)
 - those which challenged the requirements (challenging the idea of the passive listener via addition of small tutorials with prof with student-generated questions)
 - those which worked outside the requirements to create possibilities for social awareness and action (political activism)
- Spectrum: Hard (students fully guide the needs analysis and programme design) and soft (some degree of input and negotiation from students) critical EAP (Flowerdew, 2019)

COUNTERING MARGINALIZATION OF EAP



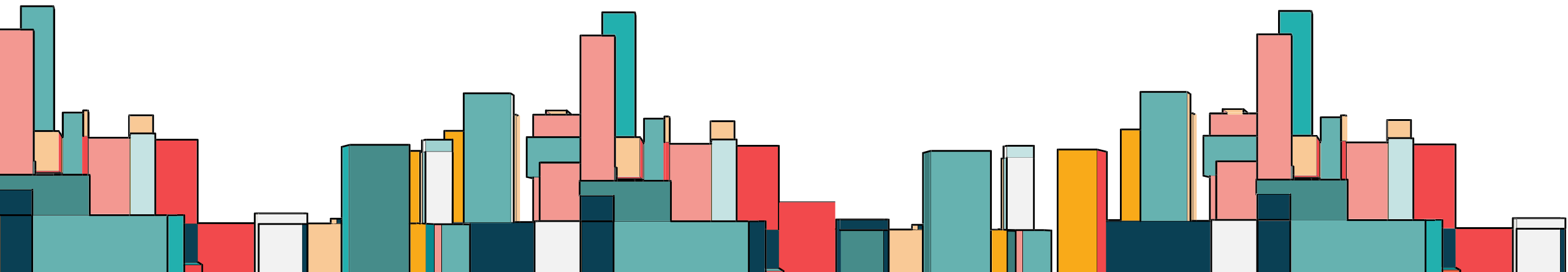
Alternatives to burning it all down?



COUNTERING MARGINALIZATION OF EAP VIA CRITICAL NEEDS ANALYSIS

Introducing criticality not only to benefit students,
but to benefit EAP more widely

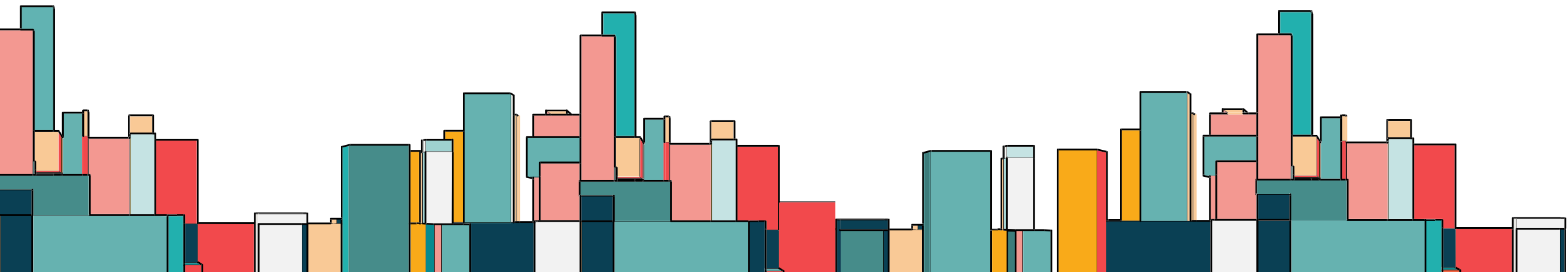
"Critical needs analysis entails a shift from "descriptive" needs analyses to "a critical approach to [...leading to] a search for solutions to ~~ESL students'~~ [EAP students', practitioners, programmes'] linguistic and social marginalization."



COUNTERING MARGINALIZATION OF EAP VIA CRITICAL NEEDS ANALYSIS

Introducing criticality not only to benefit students,
but to benefit EAP more widely

Or in other words, finding a middle ground between student and
institutional needs. Do they have to be mutually exclusive?



WHAT ARE SOME INSTITUTIONAL NEEDS WITHIN NEOLIBERAL HE?

Institution: Recruitment.

Large # of int'l students.

Is the EAP Program attracting sufficient numbers of int'l students to the university?

Institution: Admissions.

Students who meet the language proficiency reqs for admission.

Does this program prepare students to meet this standard? What is the standard?

Institution: Retention.

EAL Int'l students who finish their degrees.

Is what students learn in EAP preparing them for academic success at uni?

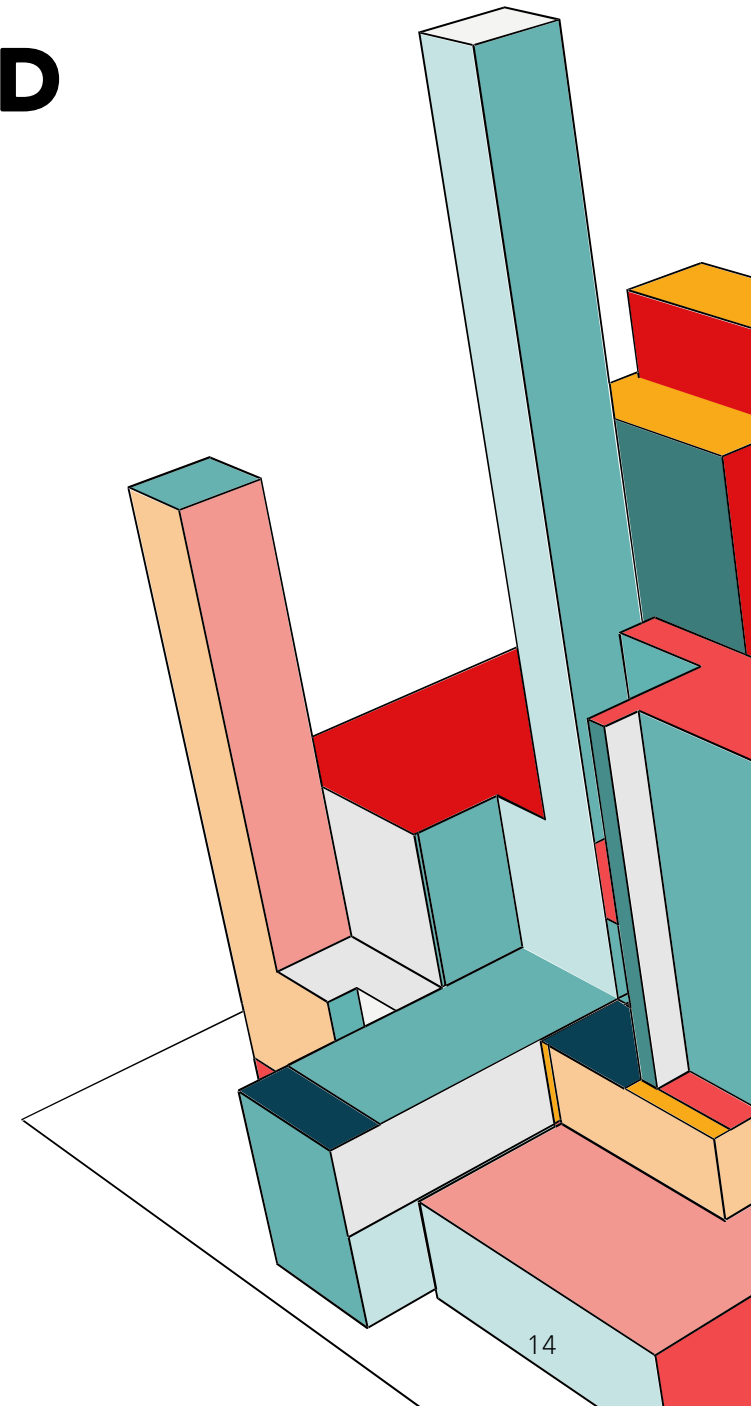
Institution: Faculty or Depart.

Sufficient revenue to maintain program and staff (and maybe invest in curric and PD?)

Are students satisfied with the program?
Are program costs and revenue in balance? Does tuition align with the market?

EMPOWERED, CRITICALLY-ENGAGED STUDENTS WHO ARE CONFIDENT LANGUAGE USERS:

- Are more likely to be successful academically: they are prepared for what awaits them but also to challenge the status quo
 - Retention
- Are less likely to have academic integrity issues
 - Retention
- Can challenge marginalizing stereotypes about multilingual users of EAL
 - Retention
- Are more likely to be satisfied with their EAP Programme, and spread the word to friends, family and other prospective students
 - Recruitment, retention, enrollment numbers/revenue





WHAT CAN BOOST ENROLLMENT NUMBERS IN AN EAP PROGRAM?

- Academic credit!
- Direct pathway status
- Curriculum that can help students prepare for academic success via preparing for the linguistic requirements of academic study, as well as how to challenge those requirements

FROM UNDERSTANDING PERSPECTIVES...

"Doing a [democratic] needs analysis that will successfully lead to a defensible curriculum can depend in great part on knowing what people are thinking about the English language, ESP, language learning, and language teaching. That last point is true whether those people agree or not. Indeed, when there is a disagreement, it may be more important than ever to understand the thinking of the various stakeholder groups, so that negotiations among them can proceed early and successfully." (Brown, 2016, p. 13)

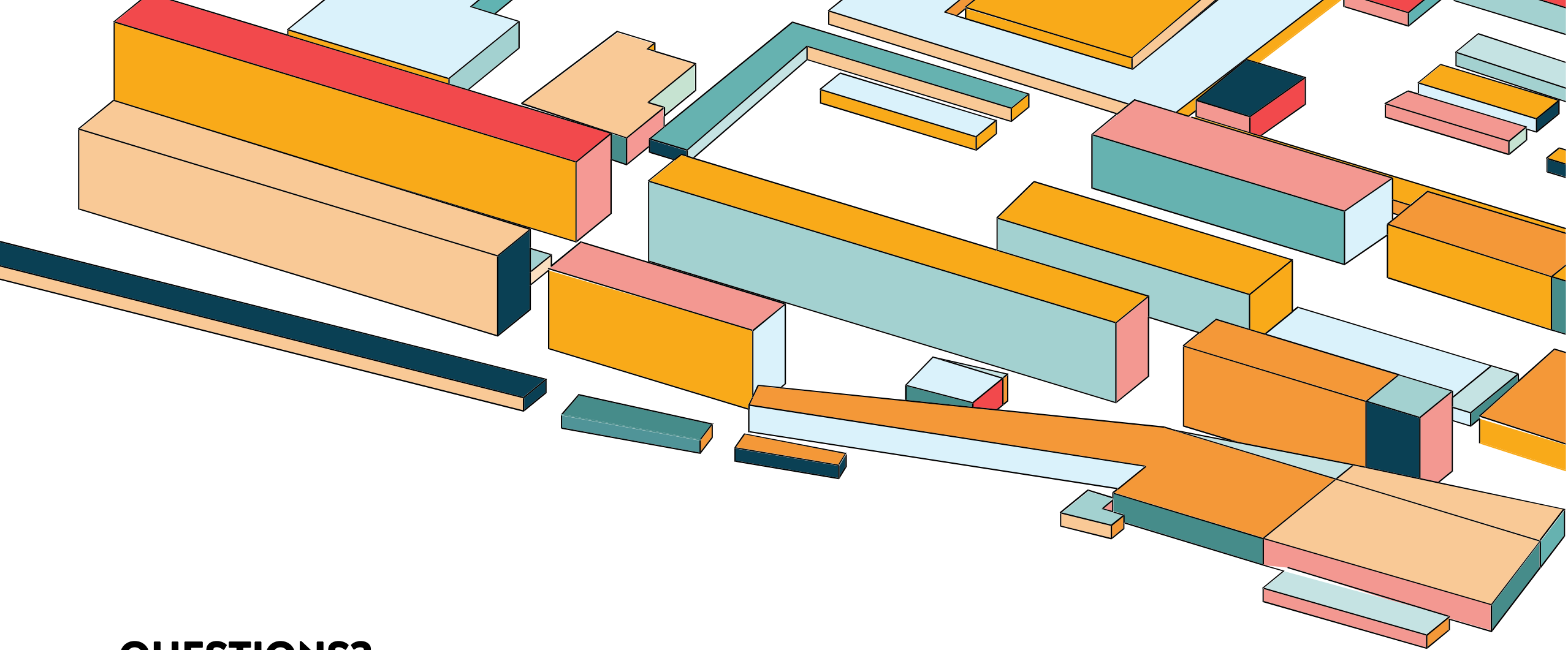
...TO BIDIRECTIONAL CRITICAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- Can work with institutional policy-makers and language stakeholders to re-examine and reimagine the linguistic policy environments on our campuses (MacDonald, 2020) and endeavour to push back where we can, for the benefit of all participants in EAP.
- Intentional critical linguistic and discursive awareness raising [...] can take place formally or informally, in the classroom, or through outreach to faculty and staff (and other stakeholders) via continuous professional development training or involvement in institutional committees and policy-making initiatives (MacDonald, 2020).
- Carrying out research (qualitative and quantitative; action research) on our EAP programs and disseminating it can show how they meet the institution's needs in recruitment, retention, admission and revenue.

BIDIRECTIONAL CRITICAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT



Sometimes stakeholders don't know what they don't know: needs analysis can go both ways and involve helping stakeholders understand new approaches, and re-examine entrenched beliefs about language and language education and EAP students, teachers and programmes.



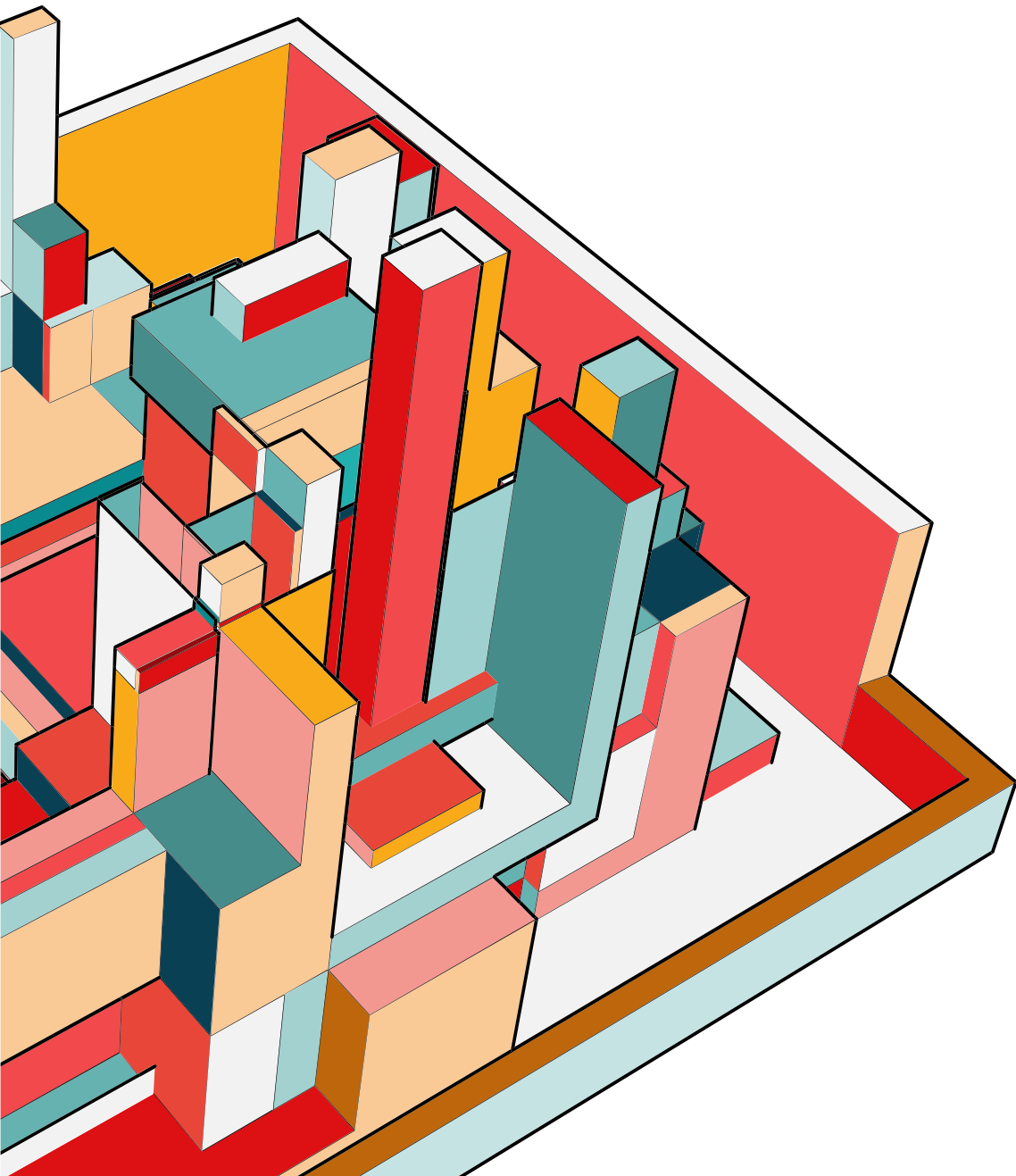
QUESTIONS?
HOW CAN YOU TRY TO COUNTER THE MARGINALIZATION OF EAP
VIA CRITICAL NEEDS ANALYSIS IN YOUR CONTEXT?

THANK YOU

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