



EDITORIAL

Distance education has fast become, from an alternative option for anyone wishing to pursue academic studies (at undergraduate or postgraduate level) on a part-time basis or at a distance to a viable and entirely competitive tertiary educational route that prioritises meeting the needs of different students while making the best of current ICT infrastructures. Among the elements that render distance education possible, written work, in the form of assignments and dissertations, is probably one of the cornerstones of distance education, not merely because it contributes to the grading of students' academic progress, but more importantly because it can prompt students' critical reflection and essential engagement with the subject matter.

The tenth issue of RPLTL is a celebration of the elements that make written assignments and dissertations carried out in the distance learning mode a unique aspect of distance education. We have invited the tutors of the M.Ed. In TESOL of the Hellenic Open University (HOU) to reflect on, carry out and present original research on the role and impact of written assignments and dissertations in distance learning, as perceived and experienced within the context of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. The issues that are raised refer to matters as diverse as the form, function and content of academic assignments, the role of feedback in students' written work, the role and impact of research in written academic work and the importance of carrying out academic research for teachers' professional development.

Due to the complex nature of the matter, this special issue has been divided into four main sections. The first section is titled «Academic writing» and presents students' perspectives on academic writing in distance learning within the TESOL context (Manoli, Zafiri and Zorbas), tutors' perspective on academic writing (Karavas and Zorbas), research on dissertation abstracts (Hatzitheodorou) and a passionate reflection on the true nature, scope and mission of the academic writing genre (Calfoglou). It also includes an extensive review of Sword's book on *Stylish Academic Writing*.

The next section focuses on feedback on academic assignments. The section kicks off with a very interesting, informative and informing interview that Christine Calfoglou took with Professor Dana Ferris and goes on to address concerns such as the interface between feedback, assessment and written assignments distance learning (papers by Tsagari and by Kofou), the intricacies of tutor feedback in distance education (papers by Karagianni and by Maliotaki), and students' perceptions of it (papers by Kreonidou and Kazamia, by Peroukidou and Kofou and by Trigonaki). There is also a paper on the fascinating dimension of peer feedback in distance education (Georgountzou and Calfoglou).

Section 3 addresses the link between written work (i.e., assignments and dissertations) and research. In this section, we read about many diverse issues in this regard, such how research feeds into written assignments (Kollatou), the different processes and practices involved in the assessment of language learners (Gorgogeta and Vlachos), the effect of online technology, like Moodle, toward EFL teachers' professional development (Theohari), implementations of specific practices in EFL context (Hasogia and Vlachos), insights on developing and implementing research tools in dissertations (papers by Gidarakou and by Peroukidou), as well as a research paper on HOU M.Ed. in TESOL students' perspectives about the impact of various distance learning processes and practices on their learning and professional development (Kofou). The final Section addresses the more idiosyncratic aspect of integrating written work within the different thematic modules of the M.Ed. in TESOL and linking it to the actual classroom and contains two papers, both exploring the impact of written assignments on student teachers' practices (papers by Glava and Stavradi and by Kataropoulou) and the other.

The issue is rounded up with two more papers that fall outside the realm of the special issue and refer to the impact of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) on EFL oral production (Paschalidou) and the interplay between of interdisciplinarity and "inter-scientificity" in ESP and EAP (Nikolarea).

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