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Special Issue on

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS AND DISSERTATIONS IN DISTANCE LEARNING WITHIN THE TESOL CONTEXT

Section Four:

Links between written assignments, thematic modules and the classroom

Guest Editor: Maria Stathopoulou

Introduction

Written assignments are crucial components of the majority of postgraduate distance courses and programmes bridging the distance between instructors and students and involving them in a constant dialogue. Assignments promote learning helping students to process the content and to make connections between what they already know and the new material. They also reflect students' progress and help the instructor evaluate their strengths and weaknesses in order for him/her consider (further) remedial action. Given their importance for learning, this section focuses on the extent to which HOU written assignments are linked to the actual classroom. In other words, it focuses on this theory-practice interrelationship, which is a prominent issue in the field of teacher education and development. The papers investigate the extent to which the HOU assignments help teachers to be effective in their role.

Ms. Kataropoulou's paper presents the research of a study which focused on the teaching practices of students at the HOU M.Ed. in TEF/IL and investigates the extent to

which the written assignments affect these practices. In fact it sees the HOU written assignments as opportunities for teacher development and examines the degree to which the reflective nature of the course along with the assignments can inform or transform the classroom reality of the student teachers in terms of their methodological choices and their attitudes towards teaching and learning.

The paper by Glava and Stavraki, reports on the findings of a small-scale research, which explored the attitudes of foreign language teachers participating as M.Ed. students in the same programme. In fact, the research focused on their beliefs about the written assignments of the compulsory modules of the M.Ed. in TEF/IL course, namely, the 'Language Learning Skills and Materials – Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking' and the 'Course design, Implementation, and Evaluation in English Language Teaching'. The research also intended to discover participants' perceptions concerning the impact of the aforementioned assignments on the way they implement the Integrated Foreign Languages Curriculum (IFLC), the official curriculum adopted at schools in Greece.

Maria Stathopoulou