TEACHER EDUCATION

Impact and reactions to a blended MA course on Language Education and Technology

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Abstract

The subject of computers in language learning was not covered at a postgraduate level in Greece independently but as an add-on module in more broad programmes, such as *applied linguistics* or *TEFL*. In such programmes, this module was merely scratching the surface of the subject, leaving students with the impression that there was no more to it than learning to run a software programme or an application. The MA programme on *Language Education and Technology* (LET) was the first in the country that aimed to offer a specialised course with all its modules directly related to the area. Furthermore, the programme attempted to incorporate a number of novelties in the personnel involved (experts from six different countries), methods of teaching (blended, through face-to-face, and synchronous web teleconferencing), transparency (as to the use and allocation of the fees and student selection), systems of examination, modes of collaboration, and modules and seminars offered, all directly linked to its title.

The study described here aimed to shed light and estimate the impact of the course on the professional life of its participants through several open and closed questions included in a questionnaire, constructed to register student status before and after the programme, and their opinions on several other programme features. Students scored very positively a) module development, b) the instructors that were involved, c) the modules offered, and d) the knowledge they gained. Some of the students presented their final papers at international conferences, four were accepted in PhD studies in Spain, the UK and Austria, with scholarships from the host institution, while others increased their salaries, or found a new better paid job.

Keywords: Computer-assisted language learning, master's degree, teaching methods.

1. Introduction

A self-supporting programme is difficult to construct especially when it deals with a very specific area of language education. This is because most departments or faculties do not have the commodity of having a sufficient number of scholars working in the same scientific area so as to equip such a programme at an MA level. This explains the above claimed policy of most departments to offer MA programmes in very broad areas of study, which in some cases, resemble a BA degree instead of an MA. A solution to this problem would be to invite experts from other universities, a policy that creates other barriers

related to transportation, educational environment and culture, common language, and even administrative issues. This is where technologies become important, especially those which assist synchronous communication and support the creation of hybrid classes and offer assistance to the problem of transportation and educational environment. Big Blue Button (BBB), which is a web conferencing system, was the tool selected due to the ease with which it can engage remote students in online learning by providing real-time sharing of audio files, videos, presentation slides, chat, and desktop with students. The system includes a whiteboard tool that automatically displays annotations back to the students in real-time, while teachers can zoom, highlight, draw and write on presentations to clarify their points. Additionally, there is no limit to the number of webcams that can be connected, and students were able to send and receive instant messages to and from other students or the instructor, thus being able to ask questions orally or in writing. Lectures could be recorded and be made available for later review. Figure 1 illustrates a typical BBB screen.

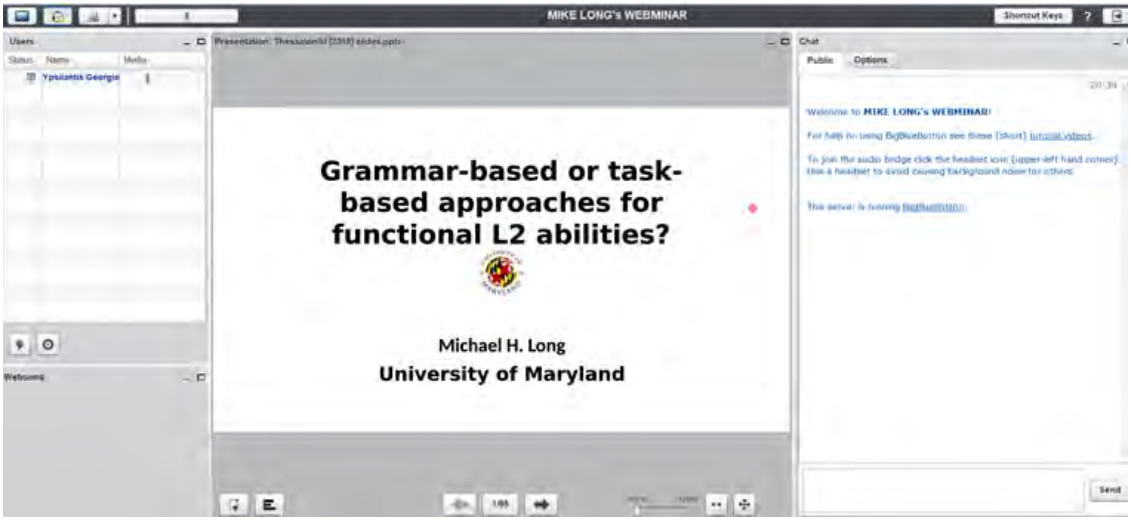

Figure 1. Sample BigBlueButton screen.

As we can see, the screen is divided into three sections. On the left-hand side, the names of the participants appear under the instructor's name; the middle section displays the presentation slides, and any written messages sent to the instructor appear on the right-hand side.

Given the two major problems discussed above, i.e., lack of highly specialised teaching staff and an appropriate educational setting, it was decided that the most suitable solution would be to adopt *blended learning*, allowing "a convergence between face-to-face and technology-mediated learning environments" (Naaj, Nachouki and Ankit, 2012). Thus, instructors from within the university or the country could offer their sessions (mainly practical) in a traditional classroom context, while the international lecturers offered a combination of BBB sessions and intensive face-to-face sessions during a one week visit to the host university, i.e., a form of a blended learning (Badawi, 2009; Naaj, Nachouki and Ankit, 2012). Students were asked to study some of the materials autonomously, through printed or electronic means, as suggested by their instructors.

This study presented here evaluates the master's degree programme on *Technology in Language Education*, by reporting any possible impact of the course on the students'

professional life, by requesting information about the participants' previous and current (at the time this paper was written) employment status, as well as their personal opinions regarding how well the programme modules and extra-curricular seminars related to their personal targets, appropriateness of the experts with regard to the modules taught, and the degree of assistance from administration. Finally, students were invited to offer their personal views as to how they felt the programme could be enriched. The outcomes of the study would be of value to both MA course organisers and students alike, as indirectly these would provide a set of criteria to use for MA course design and implementation.

The following sections include an overview of what is understood by *blended learning* and a detailed description of the MA programme, i.e., details of module titles and deployment methods, student selection procedures, etc. Data collected, which is statistically analysed, corresponds to participants who completed the course. The findings are reported and discussed in the last section.

2. The blended learning umbrella

Blended learning (BL) is considered to be an attempt to overcome the weaknesses of face-to-face and distance education (Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003) by offering the spontaneity of face-to-face education, waive the isolation and reduced motivation of distance education reported by Islam (2002), and expand the educational options to learners and teachers alike. The term BL is, to a certain extent, misleading as it suggests that the focus is on learning while most scholars (Garnham & Kaleta, 2002; Li & Zhao, 2004; Bonk & Graham, 2006; Chan, 2008) define it as a method combining different teaching methods and approaches (i.e., traditional teaching techniques), with the assistance of information technology (Gulbahar & Madran, 2009; Picciano, 2006) under a new pedagogical approach. BL is therefore proclaimed to have come about to support a traditional teaching paradigm, the effect of which has arguably increased. In this respect, we could conclude that BL focuses on teaching more than learning although both aspects of education are assumed to progress in harmony, with the latter (learning) being an outcome of the former (teaching). The above claim may also be seen in Delialioglu and Yildirim (2007), who state that BL focusses on the systematic usage of and strategic engagement with electronic devices to achieve *teaching* targets and individual *learning* goals of the students. Li and Zhao (2004), and Garrison and Kanuka (2004) also maintain that effectiveness of traditional *teaching* is increased in blended *learning* environments. This line of thought has been strongly debated in Ypsilandis (2005, 2006), and Oliver and Trigwell (2005) where, after a detailed contrastive discussion of the concepts of *teaching* and *learning*, Ypsilandis concludes that teaching does not always result in learning, while learning can be achieved without any formal blended instruction. Indeed, Oliver and Trigwell (2005) recommend that the term 'learning' in BL should be abandoned as "…learning from the perspective of the learner, is rarely, if ever, the subject of blended learning. What is actually being addressed are, forms of instruction, teaching, or at best, pedagogies." It is also suggested that most of the attention in BL is on the appropriate usage and application of technology, which evolves rapidly, and offers many tools, originally designed for educational purposes or for other commitments that can be also be pedagogically exploited. BL has also been thought of as an in-between stage, which was not going to last long, en-route to fully-fledged computer-based instruction, as technology was progressing fast. However, despite the rapid development of computerised technology and the vast number of applications constantly emerging, both dedicated and non-

dedicated, human involvement is still present in blended learning, which involves traditional teaching, in the form of lectures, seminars or workshops.

The theoretical background supporting BL comes from, and inevitably links to, learner autonomy, learner needs and tailored learning in which the individual learner's needs are met through increased and self-paced participation (Thorne 2003). Self-motivation, self-management and self-regulated learning are also thought to be improved (So & Brush, 2008), while different pedagogical models (constructivism, behaviourism and cognitivism) may underpin a BL educational setting (Driscoll, 2002). Finally, Singh (2001) proclaims a thoughtful and careful use of the 'right' learning technologies in association with the 'right' skills, time and personal learning style. In conclusion, BL cannot be seen as a methodology but rather as a teaching approach that attempts to optimise the use of technology to support both autonomous learning and teacher-led instruction, aiming to increase the amount and/or the quality of learning.

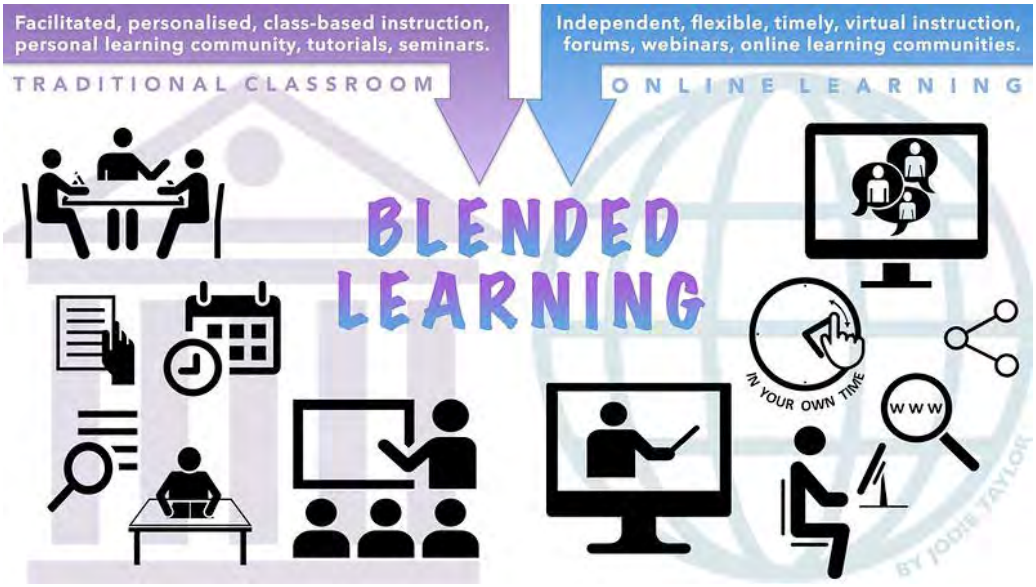

Figure 2. Blended learning
(Attribution: https://www.flickr.com/photos/jodieinblack/29155993523).

The MA programme on *Language Education and Technology* attempted to bring new potential to the concept of BL by combining the use of technological tools with the expertise of scholars from different cultural backgrounds and academic institutions who were willing to add a global perspective to its scope. The term *blended*, in this case, takes the form of not only a mix of traditional and electronic tools but also a blend of experts that contributed to the course without having to live in the location of the institution, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in Greece. Consequently, it was essential that the course be offered through an alternative mode of delivery, such as online or hybrid instruction, alternatively scheduled classes, in alternative locations (e.g. on and off-campus, face-to-face or virtual) to accommodate the instructors and the students, some of whom were in employment during their studies.

3. The MA programme

In 2015, government regulations in Greece permitted state universities to prepare and offer self-supporting postgraduate programmes, at MA level, to serve full-time fee-paying registered students. This change of position was welcomed by most academics and students alike though it was not seen positively by left wing political parties, and their supporters within academic institutions, whose views were that education should be offered free of charge to all students. These new regulations offered the possibility for this programme to materialise based on two objectives: a) to facilitate Greek students' access to renowned instructors in the fields of applied linguistics and computer-assisted language learning (CALL), making use of the University's existing technological infrastructure, and b) put together a syllabus comprising cutting-edge technology and related pedagogies. Several scholars from around the world were invited and accepted the challenge. The MA programme was launched in October 2015 and the students who were selected were predominantly teaching professionals (from the public and private sector) who were either full-time employees, mid-career professionals or students with specialized goals who wished to pursue an academic research career. There was also a very small number of applicants from other backgrounds, i.e., theatrical studies, accounting, and education. Student selection was achieved through a set of criteria (i.e., BA grade, years of teaching experience, experience in academic writing, etc.) presented on an Excel file grid, which was then uploaded onto the Departmental intranet, with the applicants in a norm referenced mode to ensure transparency of decisions and fair treatment.

The programme aimed to cover two basic aspects related to language education and technology; the first was an introduction to academic research, for students wishing to pursue an academic career, and the second was the practical side, for those working as language teachers or software developers. The modules selected followed the above rationale and were distributed equally in two semesters (the taught part), while a third semester was devoted to writing the final MA dissertation (autonomous supervised research). The modules covered the following areas: experimental research methods and statistics, second language acquisition theories, mobile-assisted language learning, the internet and language education, internet technology, language teaching theories and CALL, learner autonomy, instructive vs incidental learning, databases and language applications, and massive open online language courses (Language MOOCs).

Figure 3. MA course flyer the year it was launched.

The entire programme offered 90 ECTS from the above modules and seminars. Additional seminars were also offered on topics related to language teaching methodologies with invited speakers. These seminars did not offer extra ECTS; however, students received a certificate of attendance. Finally, a practicum was arranged for interested parties at the ATLAS Research Group in the Departamento de Filologías Extranjeras y sus Lingüísticas, at the Faculty of Philology of the National Distance Education University based in Madrid (Spain), also known as UNED, through the ERASMUS mobility programme, under the supervision of Prof. Elena Bárcena. The instructors selected were some of the most renowned and highly acclaimed international scholars and researchers in the field of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL): Ana Gimeno-Sanz (Professor of English and Applied Linguistics at the Universitat Politècnica de València, Spain, and current President of WorldCALL, who also acted as co-coordinator of the programme), Mirjam Hauck (Senior Lecturer in the Department of Languages at the Open University, UK, and current President of EuroCALL), Prof. Glen Stockwell (Associate Dean of the Faculty of Law at Waseda University, Japan), Prof. Elena Bárcena (Professor of English at UNED, Spain) and five Greek nationals: Thomas Vougiouklis (Professor Emeritus at the Democritus University of Thrace), and from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki: Agneliki Psaltou-Joyey (Professor Emeritus), George Ypsilandis (Professor and programme coordinator), Panos Arvanitis and Panos Panagiotidis (Associate professors). Additional seminars, by well-known scholars who were invited to teach on campus or through webinars, were offered. Those who participated were Mike Long (USA), David Little (Ireland), Phil Hubbard (USA), Heiner Boettger (Germany), and Cornelia Illie (Sweden). The working language of the course was English.

The content of the various modules was uploaded onto the host university's learning management system, which is based on Moodle.

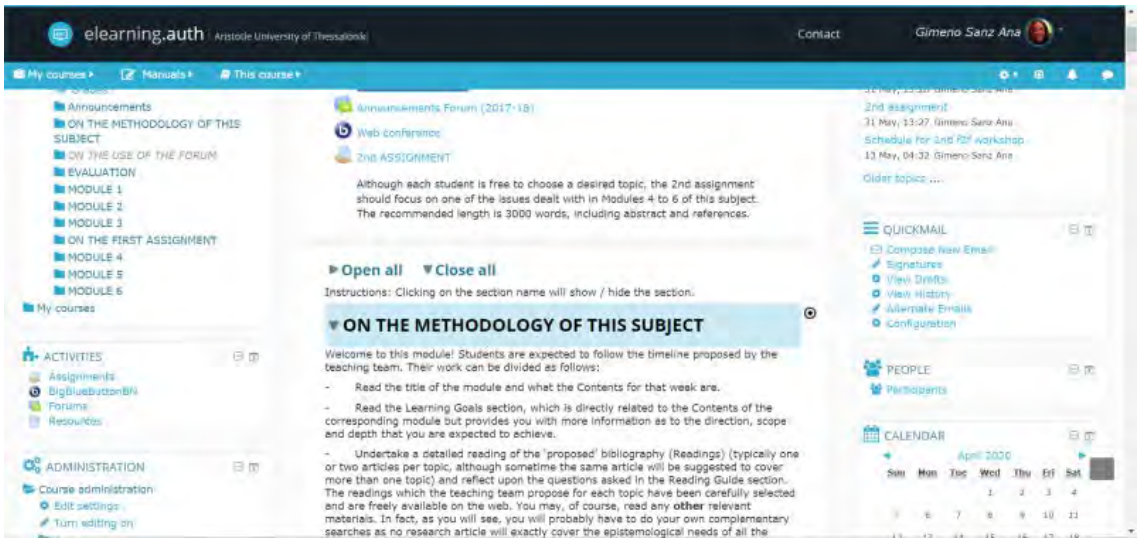

Figure 4. Moodle platform used for the course content.

In a 13-week semester, each instructor offered 39 hours of teaching based on one of the following or a combination of these: 1) through BBB used from home, 2) by traditional face-to-face class meetings, and 3) through autonomous study (up to four weeks per semester). Autonomous study weeks were used by the instructors to engage students in studying a specific topic independently and present it in class. Lastly, external instructors were scheduled to visit the host university for a week and offer a series of face-to-face seminars or workshops related to the module they were teaching. Information, such as *module description*, the *teaching targets* and *learning outcomes*, the *evaluation methods and the marking system* together with a *detailed plan of meetings*, *autonomous study weeks*, and *planned visits* for each module was presented to the students at the beginning of each semester. Programme modules were organised in one of, or in a combination of, the following three formats:

1) The serial development was a typical flow from A to B, to C, to D, etc. This was the type of development that was used by most instructors.

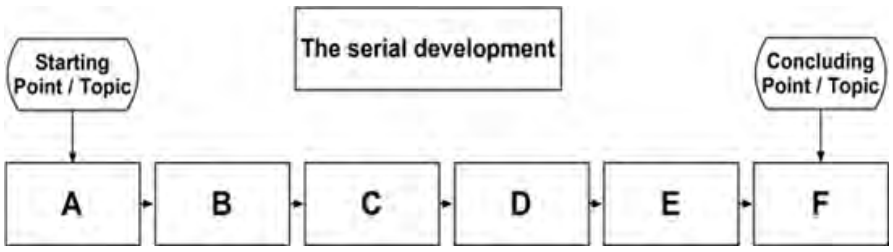

Figure 5. Serial development model.

In this module deployment, the starting and concluding points differ and students are expected to read or follow the material in a serial fashion, i.e., one was not advised to read material in D before having read materials in A, B, and C.

2) In a star development, where the main topic is in the centre and the relevant topics (that can be independent of each other) are presented in the form of a star. Students can therefore select a topic without necessarily having to read the other ones.

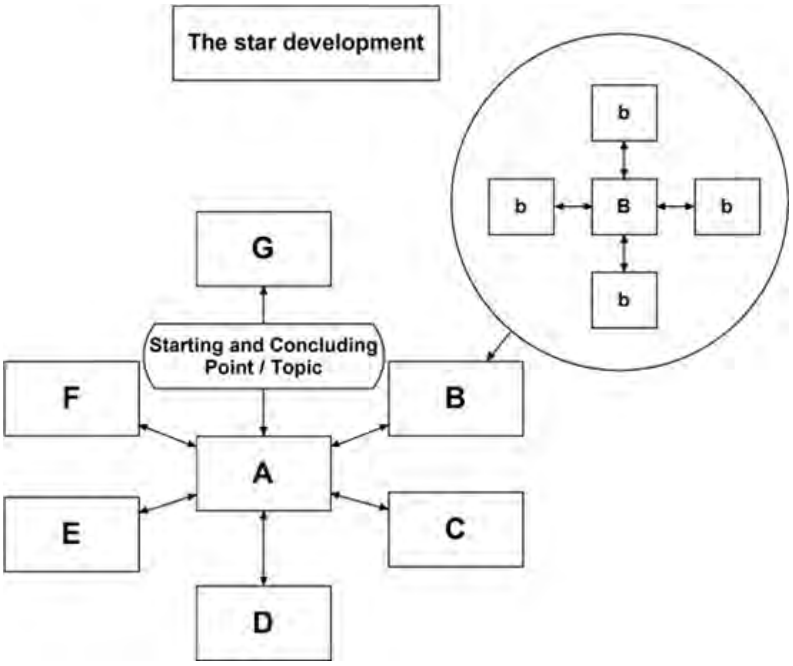

Figure 6. Star development model.

Here, there is no starting or ending point. The main topic lies in the centre and all the other topics are spread around and contribute to its understanding. Unlike the serial development, there was no need for the students to cover all the other related topics if they felt they were already equipped with the required knowledge. All the topics could be covered independently and one could start from any one a student wished. Furthermore, a topic (e.g. B) could include material developed in another star or even serial or cyclical developments.

3) The cyclical development was recommended for topics in which one could start from one point or topic and return to it with the added knowledge acquired in the circle.

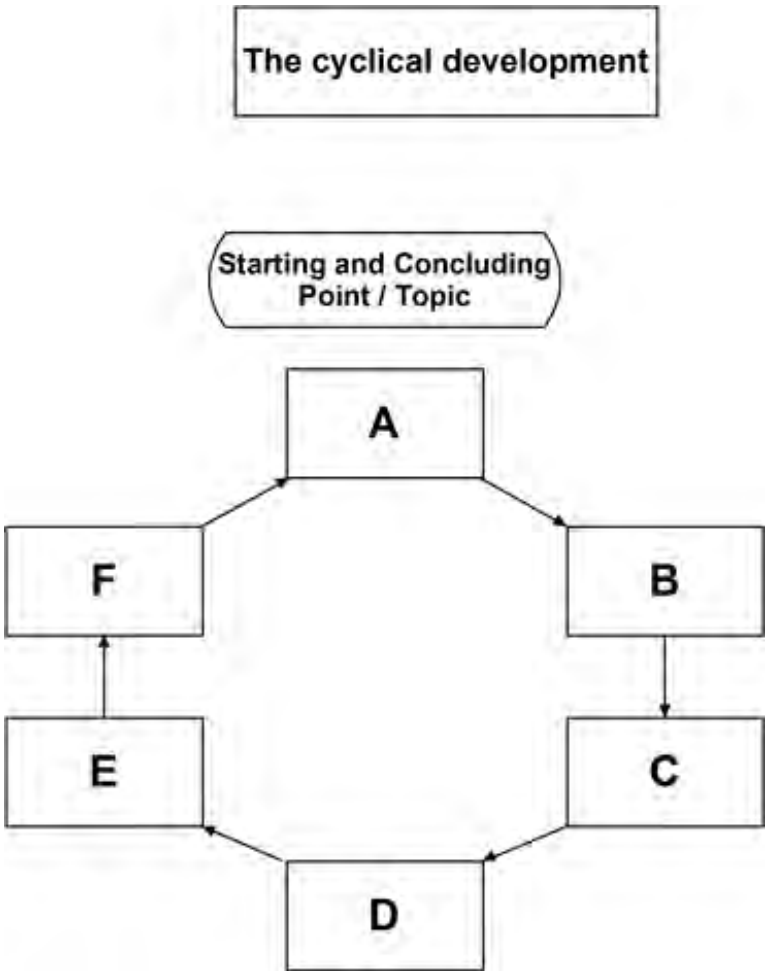

Figure 7. Cyclical development model.

Although this may resemble a serial development, this type of development differs in that the starting and concluding points are the same and the students arrive there with the added knowledge of the subject, e.g., if one were to teach the use of *Hot Potatoes* one may start from a textbook (A), spot exercises and drills in it (B) think what specific POTATO to use (C), make the necessary adaptions to fit in the POTATO (D), input the material in the POTATO selected (E), run it to see if it works properly and make corrections (F), look at the final product and integrate the material in his/her teaching in relation to the textbook in a relevant manner (A). All intervals in the circle may include materials to develop the necessary skills to complete them.

4. Method

4.1. Participants

Fifty students, who were registered in the first two years of the course, were initially targeted; 6 of those had not completed the programme at the time of the study and were excluded from the sample. A final sample of 44 subjects were approached and 20 of those responded to the appeal (return rate of 45.4%).

4.2. Design and procedure

The study proceeded with the administration of a questionnaire to students of the first two years who had completed the programme. Participants were approached by email and were asked to fill in the survey, designed for the purpose of the study, with a student acting as a mediator to collect responses and thus ensure anonymity.

4.3. Instruments and materials

The instrument used was a questionnaire with 13 questions: 8 open and 5 based on a ratio scale –*ravdos*– (Kambakis-Vougiouklis & Vougiouklis, 2008; Kambakis-Vougiouklis, Nikolaidou, & Vougiouklis, 2017). The *ravdos* scale was chosen instead of the traditional Likert scale because the former offers a very precise continuum for measuring personal perceptions that takes into account not only integers but also decimals. The SPSS (v.25) statistical package was employed for data analysis.

5. Analysis

The first part of the analysis offers some general data concerning student participation in various conferences in Europe, supported with a 300 euro scholarship from the programme. The rest of the analysis follows the questions as they appeared in the survey. In particular, frequencies of the variables and correlations between them are offered, supported with graphs where deemed necessary. The percentages presented in the relevant tables are those without the missing items which were treated pairwise.

5.1. General data

Looking at the records kept by the financial manager, it was found that a total of 15 students (34%), out of the 44 who completed the course, presented their research findings in conferences in Europe (Belgium, France, Bosnia and Herzogavina, Spain and Austria). This detail supports the impact of the course on the students' academic life, described in another study by Ypsilandis (2018).

5.2. Frequencies and correlations between previous and current employment

Reporting on employment prior to and after taking the MA course allows us to assess the effect of the study programme on the subjects' professional career (Table 1).

Table 1. Students' pre- and post-course employment.

1		P. J.	C. J.
2	Unemployed	5	1
3	Language Teacher	11	12
4	Account assistant	1	0
5	Librarian	1	1
6	Researcher	1	1
7	Primary School Teacher	1	1
8	Human Resource Trainer	0	1
9	Student	0	3
10	Total	20	20

P.J. = Previous Job / C.J.= Current Job

As expected, most participants (11, 55%) were language teachers working in either the private or the public sector. Five (25%) were unemployed, while there was an accountant assistant, a librarian, a researcher, and a primary school teacher. It becomes clear (Table 1) that only one participant remained unemployed after completing the MA. The Population Pyramid (1) below, presents changes in subjects' employment before and after the programme schematically and in more detail.

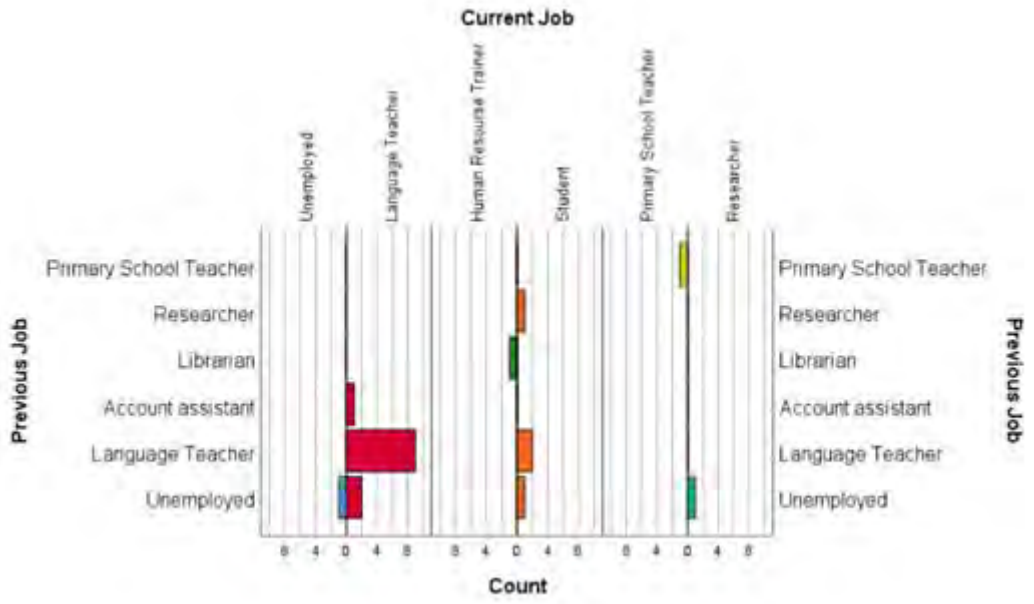

Figure 8. Population pyramid indicating previous and current jobs.

Prior employment is registered on the left-hand side of the vertical lines while post programme occupation is shown on the right-hand side. Note that, the accountant assistant found a teaching position, and the same was true for 2 of the previously unemployed. Two of the participants previously registered as language teachers continued on a PhD programme and the same was found for 1 previously unemployed person. In addition, one changed profession, as she found a job as a human-resource trainer and one subject remained a language teacher though in a much more promising and better paid position as a language teacher in China (and also pursued a PhD). The others remained in their previous professions. In Figure 8, we can see that students mainly aspired to become a language teacher or pursue a PhD.

A cross-tabulation test was used to explore the correlation between the two nominal variables, i.e., previous and current employment (Table, 2).

Table 2. Correlation between previous and current employment.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)	Point Probability
Pearson Chi-Square	51.091[a]	25	.002	.027		
Likelihood Ratio	25.348	25	.443	.038		
Fisher's Exact Test	41.648			.034		
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.967[b]	1	.161	.165	.103	.014
N of Valid Cases	20					

a. 35 cells (97.2%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .05.

b. The standardized statistic is 1.403.

A statistically significant correlation between the two variables was detected (Fisher's Exact Test = .03, p= <.05, Chi Square = 51, DF=25). Cramer's V (V= .71) statistic, which shows the strength of the relationship between the tested variables, shows that this was particularly strong, at the level of *probably measuring the same concept*. This means that, those who were already in the teaching profession stayed in it after the MA programme with three more persons becoming language teachers. The results for a related closed question as to whether they found the programme had added to their professional development may be further enlightening (Table 3).

Table 3. Question enquiring whether the MA course had had an effect on the students' professional development.

Has MA added to Professional Development

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	3	15.0	15.0	15.0
	Yes	17	85.0	85.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

Seventeen subjects (85%) selected 'yes' while 3 (15%) answered a categorical 'no' to this question. A further open question, which explored the opinions of the subjects asking them to declare the exact gained knowledge or skills they had acquired after completing the programme, is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Skills or knowledge acquired after taking the MA course.

How did it Help?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Innovative Approaches	5	25,0	31,3	31,3
	Apply Research	3	15,0	18,8	50,0
	Got a job	4	20,0	25,0	75,0
	Extra Degree	2	10,0	12,5	87,5
	Did not help	1	5,0	6,3	93,8
	Got more money	1	5,0	6,3	100,0
	Total	16	80,0	100,0	
Missing	999,00	4	20,0		
Total		20	100,0		

Looking at the frequencies of the answers provided, it is possible to conclude that the opinions were quite spread. Five (31.3%) declared that the programme enriched their professional profile with innovative language teaching approaches, 4 (25%) found a job (not necessarily a teaching position), 3 (18.8%) reported they had learned how to apply research to their profession, 2 (12.5%) declared that they had simply added another qualification to their portfolio, and 1 (6.3%) increased her salary. There was only 1 (6.3%) subject who clearly stated that the programme did not help her professional career while 4 (25%) did not provide an answer to this question.

5.3. Relationship between programme modules and personal targets

A ratio-scored question based on Kambakis-Vougiouklis and Vougiouklis (2008) ravdos scale (from 1 to 10) was used to record the subjects' opinions to the question as to whether the course modules were relevant to their personal targets (Table 5). Students reported the following:

Table 5. Correlation between course modules and students' learning target.

Statistics

Association of Modules with Learning Target

N	Valid	20
	Missing	0
Mean		8.0000
Median		8.0000
Mode		8.00
Std. Deviation		1.45095

The mean, median (score which splits the sample in half) and the mode (most recorded score) were all found to be very high at 8/10 (N=20). Standard deviation, which quantifies the amount of variation of a set of data values, was found to be at 1.4, which confirms the positive reaction to this question. Figure 9 provides the exact frequencies.

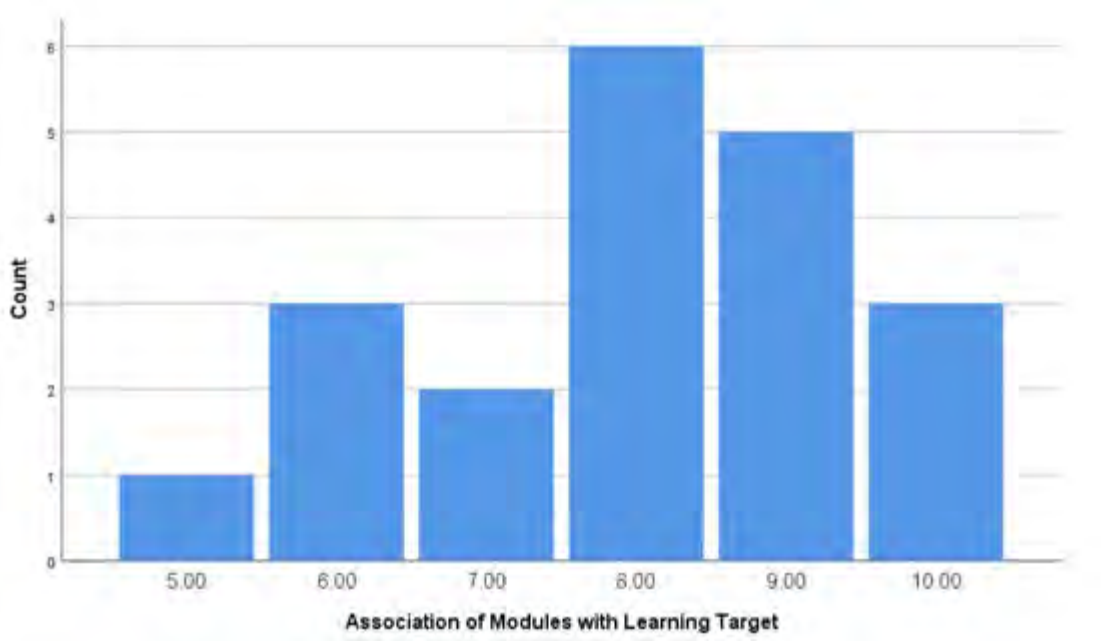

Figure 9. Alignment between the modules and the learning target.

Most of the subjects stated that the programme modules were relevant to their personal targets and selected the highest scores on the ravdos scale (8-9-10). Although all the scores are above the 5-median level, it appears that not all personal targets were covered. In Ypsilandis (2018), the non-covered personal targets of the programme were specified to be: a) increasing quality of learning in their classes, and b) making their classes more interesting.

5.4. Association of extra-curricular seminars to personal targets

As in the previous question, the same ravdos scale was used to register the subjects' views regarding the relevance of the extra-curricular seminars to their personal targets (Table 6).

Table 6. Relevance of the extra-curricular seminars in relation to personal targets.

Statistics

Association of Seminars to Learning Targets

N	Valid	20
	Missing	0
Mean		6.9000
Median		7.5000
Mode		8.00
Std. Deviation		2.07491

In this case, the mean is much lower (mean=6.9) than the one in the previous section, closer to the middle of the ravdos scale. Similarly, the median is at 7.5, while mode was

found at 8. Standard deviation is at 2 which reflects a wider dispersion of data values. Table 7 offers the details of students' scores.

Table 7. Correlation between the seminars and the students' learning targets.

Association of Seminars to Learning Targets

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2.00	1	5.0	5.0	5.0
	3.00	1	5.0	5.0	10.0
	5.00	3	15.0	15.0	25.0
	6.00	2	10.0	10.0	35.0
	7.00	3	15.0	15.0	50.0
	8.00	6	30.0	30.0	80.0
	9.00	3	15.0	15.0	95.0
	10.00	1	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

Note that the spread of responses is wider than the one in the previous section (as indicated above by a higher standard deviation), despite the fact that most responses are, again, in the higher part of the ravdos scale. There are two particularly negative responses (scoring 2 and 3 on the ravdos scale) and 3 responses in the middle of the scale. This means that the students did not feel that the extra-curricular seminars were as relevant for them as the modules offered within the course. This is depicted in Figure 10.

Figure 10. Correlation between the seminars and the students' learning targets.

As we can see, most responses were above the middle section of the scale although the distribution is not symmetrical. There seem to be two concentration points; the first is

found at point 8 of the ravdos scale, while the second is around point 5, which confirms earlier claims that the extra-curricular seminars and the modules were not equally relevant for the students.

5.5. Adequacy of the experts and the modules taught

Another question related to the adequacy of the experts selected to deliver the modules offered within the course. This question was also scored on the same ravdos scale (Table 8).

Table 8. Satisfaction with the experts who delivered the modules.

Statistics

Association of Personnel with Taught Modules

N	Valid	20
	Missing	0
Mean		9.1000
Median		9.0000
Mode		10.00
Std. Deviation		.85224

Mean, median and mode were all above point 9 of the ravdos scale and thus extremely positive. Standard deviation was at .85, which confirms this positive reaction. Table 9 is more illuminating.

Table 9. Adequacy of the experts in relation to the modules they delivered.

Association of Personnel with Taught Modules

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	8.00	6	30.0	30.0	30.0
	9.00	6	30.0	30.0	60.0
	10.00	8	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	20	100.0	100.0	

Notice that the majority of the students' votes are at the maximum of the scale and the rest are equally distributed between points 8 and 9 (6 responses each). This is also portrayed in Figure 11.

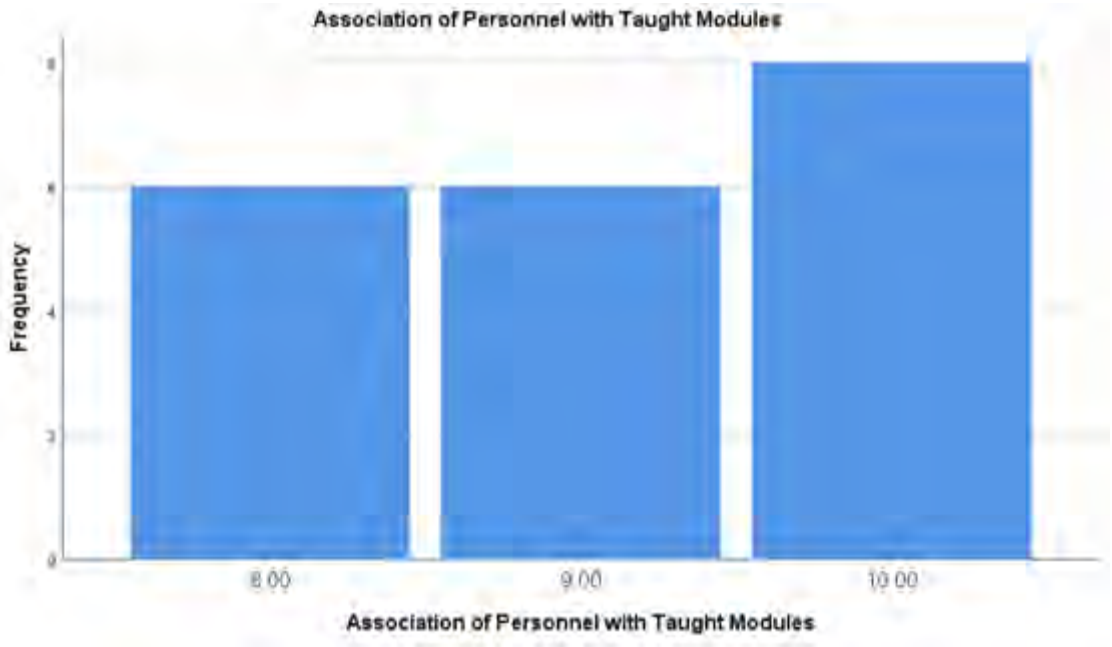

Figure 11. Satisfaction with the experts in relation to the modules they delivered.

Note that there are no responses lower than 8 on the ravdos scale, a reaction that confirms the positive attitude towards the specialists involved in the programme.

5.6. Assistance from administrative staff

The administrative tasks of the programme were shared between two individuals. One who was in charge of departmental administrative tasks, carried out by the secretary of the department running the MA course, and the other in charge of financial issues, who was also responsible for liaising with the students whenever necessary regarding the study programme. Two separate questions registered the students' reactions to administration. The first reflected their opinion in relation to the secretary of the department and the second their views regarding the finance officer (Table 10).

Table 10. Degree of satisfaction with administration.

Statistics

		Secretariat Helpful	Financial Office Helpful
N	Valid	20	20
	Missing	0	0
Mean		4.7500	9.5000
Median		5.0000	10.0000
Mode		1.00	10.00
Std. Deviation		2.69258	1.10024

The difference in the students' reactions regarding administration is striking. While secretarial duties were deemed average on the ravdos scale (mean=4.7, mode=1),

financial and communication tasks received a very high score (mean=9.5), with the mode value being at 10. Note, also that the standard deviation for the secretarial duties is at 2.6 confirming the higher dispersion of the data while it is at 1.1 for finance and communication, which shows the concentration of the data at the two highest possible points of the ravdos scale.

5.7. Additions to the course

The final open question reflects the students' recommendations for improvement. Table 11 displays the details.

Table 11. Recommended additions to the MA programme.

What would I add?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	More Seminars	3	15.0	15.8	15.8
	More Practical Courses	5	25.0	26.3	42.1
	More choice of modules	3	15.0	15.8	57.9
	Seminars and Practice	6	30.0	31.6	89.5
	More Practice and Modules	1	5.0	5.3	94.7
	Better Equipment	1	5.0	5.3	100.0
	Total	19	95.0	100.0	
Missing	999.00	1	5.0		
Total		20	100.0		

The majority of the students claimed that they would have liked to have had more seminars and modules devoted to practical topics (6-31.6% and 5-26.3% respectively). Students also pointed out that they would have liked to have had more optional modules to choose from (3, 15.8% for both preferences).

The correlation between the seminars with regard to the learning targets of the programme was not clear to all subjects. Seminars were intended to provide a more in-depth knowledge of the theoretical background related to language education. This was not clear for the students possibly due to lack of information linking the two (educational technologies and language teaching). This finding relates to claims registered in Table 9 where we can see that 23.6% of the respondents clearly stated that they would have wished more modules that are practical in focus based on applications for language teaching. This reaction could be due to the enthusiasm felt by new teachers for practical activities immediately useable in class.

6. Summary and conclusions

The MA course on *Language Education and Technology* delivered at the Aristotle University in Thessaloniki (Greece) was found to have a significant impact on the professional careers of its participants. It either opened job opportunities to those

unemployed or increased their professional skills qualitatively with innovative approaches and research skills. Despite the positive claims of module relevance to their personal targets, the subjects were not all equally convinced about the relevance of the extra-curricular seminars to the course. This was possibly due to the lack of information and guidance compared to that received about the course modules, i.e., information about instructor, description of module, learning outcomes, structure, methodology, assessment, and bibliography. Had this information been provided, reactions may have been different and more positive.

Results as to the specialised instructors who participated in the MA were very positive indeed, similar to that reported in Ypsilandis (2018), where the quality of instructors was registered as the main strength of the course and received the highest score of the variables selected to be evaluated. Reactions to this variable reinforce the idea of the benefits of organising a blended learning programme with scholars who can bring their expertise to the programme regardless of their location, rather than only relying on departmental staff, something that can easily be supported by educational technology to make it feasible. Ideas for additions to the programme related to practical modules and seminars to increase the choices from which students could select. This opinion is probably due to the fact that most of the students were in-service language teachers seeking new ideas for their teaching practices.

The fact that the administrative duties conducted by the department scored low supports the idea that, especially in an MA course where many of the enrolees may be simultaneously working and studying, students need to be well-informed of all the administrative procedures and need a clear idea of the bureaucratic requirements.

We can therefore conclude that the programme provided an overall positive experience for its participants, opened new professional directions for them, provided them with opportunities to present at international conferences, undertake a follow-up practicum, or continue conducting research in an international PhD programme.

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Appendix

Questionnaire used to collect data.

1. What was your job before you started the MA programme?

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2. What is your job now?

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3. Do you think the MA programme has assisted you in:

YES, in my job		NOT in my job	
Please, write in what way.			
YES, academically		NOT academically	
Please, write in what way.			

4. Please state 3 strong points of the programme.

1	
2	
3	

5. Before I started the programme, my personal aims were to:

1	
2	
3	

6. When I completed the programme, I learned:

1	
2	
3	

7. Were the modules of the programme related to your personal goals? (Please mark selected cell with an X. Left is negative and right is positive)

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8. Were the seminars offered during the programme related to your personal goals? (Please mark selected cell with an X. Left is negative and right is positive)

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9. Were the personnel of the programme suitable to teach the modules? (Please mark selected cell with an X. Left is negative and right is positive)

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10. In terms of administrative tasks, was the department secretariat helpful? (Please mark selected cell with an X. Left is negative and right is positive)

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11. In terms of financial management, was the department financial service helpful? (Please mark selected cell with an X. Left is negative and right is positive)

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12. The skills I have acquired during the course are:

1	
2	
3	

13. I would add the following modules to the course:

1	
2	
3	

Websites

BigBlueButton https://bigbluebutton.org/

EuroCALL https://eurocall-languages.org/

Hot Potatoes https://hotpot.uvic.ca/

Moodle https://moodle.org/?lang=en

WorldCALL http://www.worldcall.org