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Accepted Version

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Globalisation and MATESOL programmes in the UK

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Abstract

This article reports the results of a mixed-methods approach to investigating the association between globalisation and MATESOL in UK universities. Qualitative and quantitative data collected from academic staff through eight emails, four interviews and 41 questionnaires indicate that the globalised context of higher education have affected these programmes in a number of ways including an increasing interest in recruiting more international students and a growing awareness about the need for curriculum and content modifications. The analysis of the data suggests that although change has been an inherent characteristic of these MAs over the past decade, it has been implemented gradually and conservatively, often relying on a dialectic relationship between academic staff and universities' policies. The results imply that factors other than globalisation have also been at work. Many of the participants contend that globalisation has not lowered the quality of these MAs or standards of good practice.

Key words: globalisation; commodification of knowledge; MATESOL; internationalization of Higher Education; global education markets

Introduction

Internationalization of Higher Education (HE) in recent decades can be regarded as a 'policy measure designed to cope with the effects of globalisation' (Tarar 2006, p. 5080). The rise of international offices in UK universities, the rapid development of business schools around the country, and universities' efforts to establish branches in different countries are all examples of the widening scope of internationalizing HE. Like other programmes popular among foreign students, Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages (TESOL) in the UK, particularly those at postgraduate levels, are characterised by their majority international students and by playing a key role in internationalizing their respective departments. Despite the rapid development of MATESOL as an international programme in the UK, there has been very little research investigating such programmes in a globalised HE market, or the challenges they have encountered. The current paper is an attempt to fill this gap by exploring MATESOL programmes in this respect as experienced by academic staff in UK universities.

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Globalisation and Higher Education
The multifaceted nature of globalisation makes it difficult to define. Giddens defines globalisation as 'the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa' (1990, p. 64). While Gidden's definition focuses on social relations and their impact in shortening distances, Holtman (2005, p. 14) offers a more comprehensive account of globalisation encompassing economic, technological, and cultural aspects of globalisation, as follows: 'the intensified movement of goods, money, technology, information, people, ideas and cultural practice across political and cultural boundaries' (2005, p. 14). The latter definition is more germane to the context of HE where an influx of international students from different cultural contexts has created opportunities for a global exchange of information and cultural practices.

In a similar approach, Porter and Vidovich (2000) point out three aspects of globalisation: economic, cultural and political. As they explain, economic globalisation can be exemplified by the creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995 to foster and promote the smooth flow of commodities and services across national borders. Cultural globalisation refers to cultural integrations, which has been perceived differently across different countries. In most developing countries and even in western countries, concerns are raised about the spread of the American culture to other countries, a procedure referred to as McDonaldisation (Altbach 2004). Porter and Vidovich (2000, p. 452) further elaborate on centrifugal and centripetal forces at work in political globalisation that involves the breaking up of larger countries into smaller ones, and the union of other countries in economic and political respects, processes that could potentially affect HE with regard to policy measures at a national level. For instance, the Erasmus flagship mobility programme that started in 1987 as a European Union venture has been embraced by more than 4000 Higher Education institutions in 33 European countries. With an annual budget of 450 million Euros, this programme has enabled more that 3,000,000 university students and 300,000 HE teachers to participate in exchange programmes in various countries across Europe (European Commission Erasmus Programme 2014).

Of the above three types of globalisation, it seems that HE has been primarily affected by economic globalisation. This effect has been largely characterised by a redefinition of the role of universities. While the traditional view defined the university as a place to pursue theory and produce knowledge, the globalised view accords an applied function to universities by regarding them as centres for training professionals to join labour markets (Mazzarol and Soutar 2012, p. 720). Tarar (2006, p. 5080) explains that as a result of this change, universities are not only regarded as 'creators of knowledge and trainers of young minds ... but [also as] major agents of economic growth'. An important corollary of this redefined role is the engagement of universities with commercial and market-driven activities, a condition that we describe as the 'commercial turn' in HE, which is largely influenced by neoliberalism:

> 'Neoliberals call for an opening of national borders for the purpose of increased commodity and capital exchange, the creation of multiple regional markets, the elevation of free markets over state-controlled markets and interventions, the proliferation of fast-paced economic and financial transactions, and the presence of governing systems other than

nation-states. Neoliberalism seeks to privatize virtually every process or service that can possibly be turned over to private capital' (Torres and Rhoads 2006, p. 8).

Neoliberalist ideas and globalisation have influenced HE in two important ways: establishment of offshore branches of often English speaking countries in developing countries (Wilkins and Huisman 2012), and provisions to attract overseas students in universities at home. The first, referred to as multinationalisation (Altbach 2004, p. 6), has raised concerns about the potential 'lack of quality assurance' in offshore western colleges and universities (Ross 2008, p. 34), an important area that merits further investigation. The establishment of offshore western HE institutions has been supported by extending international treaties on free trade to education. For example, Altbach explains that GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Service) perceives knowledge as a 'commodity like any other ... [that] should be freely traded around the world' (2004, p. 22).

Although this 'commodity' approach to HE has received harsh criticism (see Aronowitz and Giroux 2000), the treatment of 'knowledge as commodity' has been the driving force of the second impact of globalisation in HE, namely the expansion of HE programmes at home to attract more international students to generate revenue. This trend is in sharp contrast with earlier humanitarian, ideological, and political motivations to subsidise education for overseas students. For instance, the Colombo Plan in Australia that started in the 1950s used to subsidise education for international students from neighboring Asian countries mainly to support economic development in these countries (Davis 2009, p. 754). This trend changed with the introduction of full-fee overseas students in the 1980's when Australian universities put aside the Colombo Plan and regarded international students as a source of income to compensate for budget and funding cuts.

Altbach (2004) reports a similar account of the changing policies of the US and the Soviet Union before and after the Cold War. Both these countries offered HE to recipients during the Cold War era for political and ideological motivations, but this trend changed after the cold war and 'politics and ideology [took] a subordinate role to profit and market driven policies', leading to the development of 'neocolonists – seeking to dominate not for ideological or political reasons but rather for commercial gain' (Altbach 2004, p. 9). While the discussion above predominantly applies to Anglophone countries, it is important to note that globalisation and internationalisation of HE operate differently not only in non-Anglophone countries but even within the Anglophone world. Marginson and Van der Wenden (2007), for example, argue that although American tradition of HE has been different to that of the other Anglophone nations, in the last two decades changes in system-organisation and financing have brought Australia, New Zealand and the UK closer to United States' practice.

Internationalization of HE: Challenges and Issues
Although internationalisation of HE may not be a totally new phenomenon (Blok 1995; Jiang 2008), globalisation and knowledge economy have undoubtedly accelerated its pace and extended its scope over the past two decades. The global HE market is now estimated to be over $50 billion, not much less than the market for the financial services sector (Ross 2008, p. 34). The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has reported a 56%

increase in the number of foreign students in the OECD area from 2000 to 2006 (OECD 2009), and a 70% increase in foreign tertiary level students enrolled worldwide between 2000 and 2010 (OECD 2010). Given that internationalization of HE involves 'the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institutions' (Knight 1997, p. 8), it is foreseeable that the process would not be free from challenges and predicaments in hosting this phenomenon.

Despite the abundance of research on political, economic and social factors linked with internationalisation (Jaing 2008; Svensson and Wihlborg 2010; Yang 2002), there has been little research on pedagogic challenges. While economic and political rationales affect HE, "there is a risk that 'internationalization' is seen as mainly a political and economic objective, rather than an educational goal" (Svensson and Wihlborg 2010, p. 597; Ryan 2011; Brandenburg and de Wit 2012).

MATESOL in the UK context
The earliest MAs in English Language Teaching (ELT) in the UK can be traced back to the 1960s, when the first School of Applied Linguistics was established at the University of Edinburgh (Howatt 1984). In the next few years, a number of other UK universities launched more MAs in ELT and Applied Linguistics to provide a more specialised and research-oriented training to the teachers in this rapidly-developing discipline. These MAs were a one-year full-time or two-year part-time programme for ELT practitioners who needed to develop professionally, were about to pursue to a higher research degree or were planning to become a university academic. Although there is no formal demographic information about the students on those programmes, the earliest staff working on such programmes report that the students were typically native-speakers of English and mainly from Britain. Currently, there are more than 60 such programmes in the UK under different names, including MA ELT, MA TEFL, MATESOL and MA Applied Linguistics.

While for the purpose of this paper we have used MATESOL as a category to represent all MAs in ELT and Applied Linguistics, we are aware that these MAs might be rather different in terms of their content, objectives and foci. In the current study MATESOL represents a PG course in the UK, one-year full-time (or two-year part time), attended by current or future teachers of English with varying degrees of experience, and various language and professional backgrounds. MATESOL investigated in the current study does not include distance-study MAs that are taught online, normally over a period of a few years.

Research Questions
In order to investigate MATESOL programmes in UK universities from the academic staff perspective, the following guiding questions were formulated:

1. In what ways (if any) are MATESOL courses changing?
2. In what ways (if any) are MATESOL dissertations changing?
3. Given the international context of HE in the UK, what are the staff assumptions about the importance of writing a dissertation?

4. Given the international context of HE in the UK, to what extent do they consider a dissertation a necessary component of these programmes?

Methodology

A sequential mixed-methods approach to data collection (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003; Riazi and Candlin 2014) was used to investigate the research questions. The three phases of data collection included eight detailed email correspondence, 41 questionnaires and four interviews. In the first phase, eight academic staff from five different universities with a minimum of 15 years of experience in teaching MATESOL and supervising dissertations were emailed two questions: a) whether over the past decade they had observed any changes in MATESOL in general and in its dissertation in particular, and b) why these changes had come about. Analysis of this set of data helped us understand the participants' assumptions on recent changes in MATESOL to finalise our questionnaire.

The questionnaire (see Appendix A) was designed to elicit both quantitative and qualitative data through various close-ended and open ended questions. It was piloted with 5 academic staff who completed and provided feedback on the clarity of the items. It was then revised and sent to academic staff in 30 universities in the UK. The final respondents reported here were 41 academics from 26 UK universities who at the time of the study had been teaching MATESOL courses and supervising MA dissertations for at least five years. All the participants held a PhD (or equivalent) in an area of Education or Applied Linguistics with a range of different research interests. They had on average 11 years experience of teaching and supervising dissertations on MATESOL programmes in UK universities, and they had supervised an average of 30 dissertations.

The last phase of data collection included four semi-structured interviews (Kvale 1996) to investigate the participants' opinions on an MA without a dissertation. Based on a convenience sampling, the four participants attending the interviews were selected because of a) their varied and rich experience in teaching MATESOL in different universities for more than a decade, and b) their experience of being a Programme Director of an MATESOL for a minimum of 6 years. The face-to-face interviews were conducted in a place of convenience to the participants and were recorded.

The project was subject to careful ethical considerations. The questionnaire was anonymous and the participants in all three phases of data collection had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. The ethics forms describing the project and eliciting informed consent were sent to the participants during data collection.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis (Creswell 2007) was used to analyse the qualitative data collected through emails, open-ended questions of the questionnaire and the interviews. While the email correspondence and the data from the questionnaires were already in written form, the interview data was transcribed before they were subjected to analysis. Given the sequential nature of the research design, the data were analysed separately in each phase, but they were pulled together at the final stage to answer the research questions. For each of the three data sets, we first read the data and coded them before clustering the codes to identify the main themes. We reviewed and

refined these themes to verify they accurately represented the participants' views. Finally, we pulled the analyses together and matched the themes with the research questions. During the process, we discussed any point of disagreement and resolved complications.

The quantitative data collected through the questionnaires was subjected to a number of statistical analyses using SPSS. For questions 2-15, frequencies and percentages were used to demonstrate the results, and for questions 1 and 16, the Friedman Test was used to rank the importance of the items. In the following section, we will report the data with regard to each of the four research questions. The quantitative data from the questionnaire will be complemented with comments from the participants' emails, comments and interviews wherever appropriate.

Analysis and Findings

RQ1: In what ways (if any) are MATESOL courses changing?
The participants reported a few sources of change in these programmes that can be divided to student-related, institutional, and curriculum-related changes.

Student-related changes: One of the areas of change frequently reported in the data is the student cohorts these MAs recruit. Although some of the participants believed that their programmes have always been international, many suggested that they now recruit students with a wider range of academic ability and teaching experience, more non-native-speakers, and students with a broad spectrum of academic and professional needs.

The quantitative data analysis also suggests that modification appears to be a distinct characteristic of these MAs with a majority of the participants contending that MATESOL programmes are being modified to accommodate for the increasing number of non-native students (n= 30, 73%) and less experienced teacher students (n= 32, 78%). Implicit to their comment was a reference to the limited infrastructure to support new students on these programmes.

> Accommodations to large cohorts of non-native and inexperienced students take place at the level of the teaching programme and research design in the dissertation, but not on the overall policies of the university. Support for accommodations (e.g. in terms of assessment procedures etc.) are frequently lacking.

> The other main change is to cater for pre-experience MA students, mainly from the middle east and China, who are a growing market – they need an academic course and qualification, but they also need and want basic training in ELT methodology, so we have adapted the course and dissertation accordingly, with more emphasis on practical issues and on professional reflection during and after the course.

Institutional change: A large number of the participants (n=36; 88%) reported that their institutions are pushing for more admissions to these MAs, and about half of the participants agreed that their MAs are changing to recruit from new students markets (n= 21, 51%).

Money is the bottom line: we take more students to swell the coffers. Some of them are not of a high standard, but even the less able ones have to pass if they are to retain the grant from their home country. We are also afraid that if we get a reputation for being too hard, students will go elsewhere.

However, fewer participants suggested that their institutional policies are advocating new pathways to MAs (n=6; 17%) or a faster supervision process (n=12; 29%). Most participants further agreed that admission requirements have not become less strict with regard to English language proficiency (n=35; 85%), student previous disciplinary knowledge (n=34; 61%), or student experience and skills (n=20; 49%).

I have to 'disagree' with the propositions that admission requirements have become less strict with regard to English language proficiency or disciplinary knowledge, since formal requirements (e.g. minimum IELTS scores; level of first degree) have not changed. That said, those formal requirements have nevertheless somehow 'let through' increasingly large numbers of weak students.

Curriculum-related change: The participants believed that course content has somewhat changed to respond to students' needs, to address recent developments in the field, and to cater for staff research interests.

I think they (MAs) *have* changed over time, but I don't know if it's because of changes in the TESOL zeitgeist, or because I have become more adept at steering students towards/away from particular areas.

The change might reflect an increased professionalism and mobility amongst ELT practitioners: perhaps they no longer feel they are alone and isolated in their teaching context, and that they have to explain themselves to the rest of the uncomprehending world.

There is ample evidence in the data to suggest that such changes have not resulted in a lowering of the standards. Although student cohorts and their needs are changing, the academic staff believed that standards have not declined with regard to entry requirements, quality of work produced, or the knowledge and skills acquired by the students.

If in 'changes' you include the possibility of standards of dissertations falling, I wouldn't say that they are. I have supervised, first marked and second marked some real horrors in the last few years, but they are no worse than horrors I remember from the early 1990's. The important point is that the horrors of both eras were all given failing grades rather than passed.

In addition to the main changes referred to above, there were also some reference to changes in the philosophy of MATESOL education in general, which emphasized a more in depth approach to understanding research as part of the professionalism required in MATESOL programmes:

I do think that there is a stronger orientation to developing an understanding of research methods and methodology than when I did my Masters in Applied Linguistics around 16 years ago.

The growing importance of research (and appropriate training) is mainly due to the belief that professional knowledge should be evidence-based; it's not just TESOL but throughout the faculty (Social Sciences, Law, Education) that research skills are more prominent for Master's students, and the ability to read research critically is more important for undergraduates in many disciplines.

RQ2: In what ways (if any) are MATESOL dissertations changing?

The data analysis suggests that MA dissertations have changed in terms of focus and scope over the past years. The qualitative data suggests that a wider range of topics are acceptable, there is more emphasis on research training, and more attention is paid to ethical considerations. In addition, it seems that some institutions are starting to introduce new possibilities for replication studies and use of available data.

Most participants believed that MA programmes are putting more emphasis on research training (n=31; 76%). A smaller percentage of the participants suggested that there is more emphasis on classroom-based and action research (n= 21; 51%) and that MA programmes are putting more emphasis on student professional development (n=16, 39%).

When asked whether MA dissertations are becoming more substantial in scope, only four of the participants agreed. A large number (n= 37, 88%) either disagreed or were uncertain about it.

Most MA dissertations will not be original, nor contribute much to knowledge already existing. They should be an exercise in writing a successful dissertation: nothing more, nothing less.

Only a small number of the participants (n=5; 12%) suggested that the quality of MA dissertations is improving, or that the proportion of high quality dissertations is increasing (n= 7; 17%). When asked whether the criteria for marking MA dissertations are becoming stricter, the participants' views were divided, with about half of the group (n=21; 51.2%) disagreeing with the comment and the other half either agreeing or sitting on the fence about it.

More interest in qualitative research (n=36; 88%) and in examining social aspects of language teaching and learning (n=32; 78%) in MA dissertations were among the changes mentioned. In addition, a decline in using quantitative research designs and examining cognitive aspects of language teaching and learning were also suggested (n=23; 56% and n=18; 44% respectively).

About half the participants (n=21; 54%) disagreed with the suggestion that MA dissertations are less theoretically oriented. Many (n=25; 61%) contended that most students tend to address practical issues that suit their aims and needs in their dissertations. In their positions as

academic staff supervising MA dissertations, many participants agreed with the proposition that less conventional types of research are now accepted and valued (n=23; 56%).

RQ3: Given the international context of HE in the UK, what are staff assumptions about the importance of writing a Master's dissertation?
In Question 1 of the questionnaire, the participants were asked to rank the importance of the aims of writing a dissertation from 1 to 4 with 1 being not important and 4 being very important. The Friedman Test was used to find the significant ranking of the choices for the most important aims of writing a dissertation. The results of the test showed that there was a statistically significant difference in perceived importance attached to the main aims of writing a dissertation, [χ^2 (8, N=39) = 159.29, $p < 0.05$].

In order to examine where the main differences were, post hoc analyses with the Wilcoxon signed-rank tests were conducted for each adjacent pair. No significant difference was found between the following pairs: 1b and 1a, 1a and 1d, 1d and 1h, 1g and 1e, 1e and 1c, 1c and 1f. However, the differences were significant between 1h and 1g ($z = -2.697$, $p < 0.05$), and 1f and 1i ($z = -4.064$, $p < 0.05$). These results helped us identify two breaks in the rankings, which we subsequently used to categorise the assumptions into three groups, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Categorization of participants' assumptions on the aims for writing an MA dissertation, ranked ordered by the Wilcoxon test

	Most important aims for writing an MA dissertation	Wilcoxon Test Mean Rank
Group 1	1.b. Developing knowledge in a disciplinary area	7.55
	1.a. Developing skills in research methodology	7.09
	1.d. Learning to write a long piece of academic prose	6.19
	1.h. Taking a research approach to teaching	5.95
Group 2	1.g. Becoming a researcher	4.73
	1.e. Becoming a professional teacher	4.15
	1.c. Contributing to knowledge	3.86
	1.f. Researching an original topic	3.42
Group 3	1.i. Publishing the findings	2.05

Whereas aims pertaining to developing knowledge and skills were perceived as the most important aims for writing an MA dissertation, professionalism in research and teaching were identified as less important. The least important aim for writing an MA dissertation was found to be publication of the findings. This finding is interesting when compared with those in previous related studies in which publishing results are rated as highly important. Hasrati (2013a) in a study on publication practices of graduate students and academic staff found 'publication of research findings' to be the driving force for graduate education in the institution, motivated by institutional incentives for the faculty. In another study, Hasrati (2013b, 459) reported that MA

students in science departments in a Middle Eastern university believed that the main objective for writing a Masters dissertation was 'pushing boundaries of science'. In the context of that study, having publications was a prerequisite to entering PhD programmes, which explains why Masters students believed 'pushing boundaries of science', which could subsequently lead to publication, was perceived to be the most important aim for writing a Masters dissertation. While the differences across educational contexts to some extent reflect various educational policies that shape educational practices, they imply that globalisation has not exerted its influence in the same way in different cultural and educational settings (Marginson & Van der Wenden, 2007).

Question 16 asked the participants to rank the importance of the factors that determine the quality of a dissertation. After following the same procedures, a second Friedman test was used for Question 16 to determine the importance of the factors affecting the quality of a dissertation. The results of the test showed a statistically significant difference in perceived importance attached to the main factors affecting the quality of MA dissertations [χ^2 (8, N=38) = 89.83, $p < 0.05$]. In order to examine where the main differences were, post hoc analyses with the Wilcoxon signed-rank tests were conducted for each adjacent pair. No significant difference was found between the following pairs: 16d and 16f, 16f and 16g, 16g and 16h, 16a and 16e, 16e and 16i, 16i and 16b. However, the differences were significant between 16h and 16a (z = - 1.972, p < 0.05), and 16b and 16c (z = - 2.912, p < 0.05). As with Question 1, we identified two breaks in the rankings, which we subsequently used to categorise the assumptions into three groups (Table 2).

Table 2: Wilcoxon mean ranks for factors affecting the quality of MA dissertations as reported by the participants, rank ordered by the Wilcoxon test

	The most important factors affecting the quality of Masters dissertations	Wilcoxon Test Mean Rank
Group 1	16.d. Students' interest	6.92
	16.f Sound understanding of research methods	6.03
	16.g. Support from the supervisor	5.91
	16.h Resources (e.g. library or staffing)	5.89
Group 2	16.a. Language proficiency	5.08
	16.e Time to complete the thesis	4.61
	16.i Support systems at the university (e.g. writing support)	3.92
	16.b. Educational background	3.92
Group 3	16.c Students' teaching experience	2.72

The analysis suggests that the participants perceived the quality of a dissertation as a function of the interaction between the students' characteristics (her research understanding and interest), supervisor's support and the university resources. Issues such as student language proficiency and educational background, or time to complete the dissertation are only secondary.

More importantly, the lowest ranking attributed to the student teaching experience may imply that there is no direct relationship between the MA students' professional skills and what they do for their dissertation. In other words, this major assessment component, i.e. one third of an MA degree, is not aligned to the skills the student brings to the learning context. This seems to be in contrast with the principles of constructive alignment (Biggs 2003) in curriculum in which learning outcomes and teaching activities are aligned to the assessment practices through which learning is evaluated.

RQ4: Given the international context of HE in the UK, to what extent do academic staff consider a dissertation as a necessary component of the MAs?
Analysis of the email and questionnaire data suggested that dissertations are perceived as an important component of the MAs.

> The growing importance of research (and appropriate training) is mainly due to the belief that professional knowledge should be evidence-based; it's not just TESOL but throughout the faculty (Social Sciences, Law, Education) that research skills are more prominent for Master's students, and the ability to read research critically is more important for undergraduates in many disciplines.

Although many of the participants were concerned about the students' limited opportunities to conduct quality research or to produce a valuable dissertation, only a couple of the participants discussed the need for rethinking and reconsidering the dissertation component. The analysis of the interviews indicated that the participants had contrasting views on this topic. Overall, all of them had questions and concerns about the value and practicality of an MA without a dissertation. Two of the participants believed that the dissertation is an invaluable part of the MAs, the marking criterion distinguishing an MA from a Diploma, or a component whose removal would affect the course coherence and value.

> A dissertation is a very important part of the MA; it's the only component that brings together everything else the students have done on the MA. The dissertation gives the course coherence and puts theory into practice. It helps the students learn how to do things in real life.

The other participants, although still defining the dissertation as a very important component, were more positive about the possibility of MAs without a dissertation. They recognised practical considerations such as international students' limited opportunities for collecting data, the fast-paced globalised market, and the students' needs for obtaining qualifications as important reasons for substituting dissertations with an alternative option. Although all the interviewees could see benefits for both staff and students in dissertation-free MAs, some were conscious of the practical and administrative challenges involved in seeking approval for an MA without a dissertation in their departments. This concern may highlight the lack of a sufficient infrastructure at universities to deal with the rapid growth of globalisation at HE.

The students might also like it because recently I can see that many students get stressed over the dissertation periods and many find it tough. If they don't do dissertations they can have a few more modules which might be very useful to them. It'd be great if we don't have to spend all our time and energy on guiding students on dissertations and reading their chapters.

Discussion and Conclusion

This work could be regarded among initial steps in investigating MATESOL programmes in the context of globalisation. While we have identified changes in the MAs in the context of a globalised market of HE, not all the change can be directly attributed to globalisation. Although this clearly suggests that globalisation is not the only factor leading to change in university programmes, in the present work our main concerns are changes that seem to be closely associated with globalisation.

In line with Porter and Vidovich (2000), our study attributes some of the changes in MATESOL programmes and their dissertations to economic globalisation. Evidence from both qualitative and quantitative data suggests that certain changes in these programmes in the UK are made in response to market driven factors. A great majority of the respondents (88%) reported institutional pressure for more admissions to their programmes. More than half of the participants (51.2%) believed that MATESOL programmes are being modified to recruit from new student markets, and around 73% believed that MATESOL programmes are being modified to accommodate the increasing number of non-native students. All these observations highlight the shaping influence of economic globalisation in MATESOL programmes in UK universities. Although the data in this study suggest that globalisation has exerted its influence on higher education to a large extent through the economic lens, it would be misleading to interpret the impact of globalisation on HE only from an economic perspective or to undermine the cultural, academic and social dimensions of globalisation. For example, the participants' references to the provision of diverse and multicultural student and staff bodies, to a more in-depth understanding and broader perspective to research, and to the ways they are responding to the new challenges of a globalised HE are evidence of the academic growth associated with globalisation. Two key points are worth noting here. First, it is not appropriate to perceive globalisation as the main driving force behind the changes in the HE sector; rather, globalisation should be viewed as the context in which the changes have occurred. Second, given the complex and multifaceted nature of globalisation, more research is needed to identify the reasons that have caused the changes in HE. The design of the study reported here has not allowed for a causal relationship to be established.

The different changes associated with globalisation, however, do not seem to have greatly affected the quality of MATESOL programmes and dissertations. There is evidence in the data to suggest that although not all students are capable of producing high quality work, quality of programmes and standards of good practice have been monitored and maintained.

These observations seem to point at the dialectic nature of policy making and policy implementation in HE institutions. While we have not conducted document analysis of HE policies in the present study, our data suggest that institutional policies have taken certain measures in response to globalisation forces, e.g. pushing for more international students intakes. These top-down policies, however, are enacted in interaction with value systems and beliefs of

the academic staff. Our observation that academic staff seemed to carefully monitor quality while accommodating more international and less experienced students can reflect the dialectic nature of how globalisation forces are mediated in action. This finding is in line with Marginson and Van der Wenden's (2007) claim that although higher education institutions often see themselves as objects of globalisation, they are also its agents. Following Clothey, Mills and Baumgarten's (2010), we argue that globalisation in this case both has shaped and is being shaped by external forces.

While dissertations have in large remained the same in nature and purpose, MATESOL programmes have experienced changes in course content and curriculum. UK universities, compared to their North American counterparts, seem to have been conservative in responding to the impact of globalisation and in developing new avenues to substitute MA dissertations. Only 17% of the participants in the current study report some sort of pressure from their institutions for new pathways to substitute MA dissertations. Though there were references to innovative forms of dissertation, such as replication studies and portfolios, it seems that dissertation remains the main and in many cases the only option for students to complete MATESOL programmes in the UK. Our preliminary findings from a related study on North American universities (Tavakoli and Hasrati, in preparation), however, indicate that most MATESOL programmes in the US have adopted a more pragmatic approach to addressing market driven forces of globalisation, and have opened up a number of possibilities to substitute dissertations, which would cater for students of different needs and abilities. Given that a distinctive characteristic of globalisation is continuous change (Lee and Caldwell 2011; Marginson and Van der Wenden 2007), it can be argued that in order to be effective in the global environment, HE institutions must be prepared to change.

We agree with Aronowitz and Giroux (2000) to distinguish between 'education' and 'training'. While training is usually associated with commodification of education, and is meant to provide students with specific skills that can be used in specific trades and professions, education 'should promote critical thinking' (2000, p. 338) among other values. We would like to draw on that distinction and argue that writing is a significant means of learning critical and analytic thinking, a skill on which many MAs in the UK draw on substantially. There is ample evidence in the literature to support the analytic and creative effects of writing (Russell 1991; Casanave 1995; Parry 2007; Hyland 1990; Hasrati 2013a; Mirzaee and Hasrati 2014), and in light of this evidence one can argue that the persistence of UK academic staff on keeping the dissertation is justified.

In our data, 'developing knowledge in a disciplinary area' was ranked as the most important aim for writing a dissertation. It would be interesting to investigate how this function of dissertation is compensated for in MATESOL programmes in North American universities. This would have important implications for conceptions of learning in Higher Education as a result of the commercial turn in HE referred to earlier. Student writing and staff feedback on it have for decades been the overarching mechanisms of learning in HE (Caffarella and Barnet

2000; Hyland 2003; Hasrati 2005; Mirzaee and Hasrati 2014). Deemphasising this powerful mechanism of learning would undoubtedly require replacement mechanisms that are faster and can keep pace with rapid changes in the globalisation era.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

Dear Colleagues

This questionnaire is part of a research project entitled "**MATESOL/ELT/TEFL dissertations in Anglophone countries"**, approved by the research committee of the Department of English Language and Applied Linguistics at the University of Reading, UK. A copy of the ethics document is provided with this email.

Although in different educational contexts there might be differences between MAs in TESOL, ELT and TEFL, in this questionnaire we use the generic term "MATESOL" to refer to all MAs in the area of English Language Teaching that are run on campus to educate English language teachers.

We thank you very much for your assistance in advance.

Parvaneh Tavakoli & Mostafa Hasrati

Section One

Please **embolden** or change the color of your answer.

1. Thinking of MATESOL students, how do you rate the importance of the following as a main aim in writing a Master's dissertation?

    a. Developing skills in research methodology

very important	important	somewhat important	not important

    b. Developing knowledge in a disciplinary area.

very important	important	somewhat important	not important

    c. Contributing to knowledge

very important	important	somewhat important	not important

    d. Learning to write a long piece of academic prose

very important	important	somewhat important	not important

    e. Becoming a professional teacher

very important	important	somewhat important	not important

    f. Researching an original topic

very important	important	somewhat important	not important

    g. Becoming a researcher

very important	important	somewhat important	not important

h. Taking a research approach to teaching

very important	important	somewhat important	not important

i. Publishing the findings

very important	important	somewhat important	not important

If you have any other comments, please write in the space below:

2. MATESOL programmes have been/are being modified to accommodate for the increasing number of non-native students.

strongly agree	agree	I am not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

3. MATESOL programmes have been/are being modified to accommodate for the increasing number of less experienced student teachers who join the programmes.

strongly agree	agree	I am not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

4. MATESOL dissertations are changing to accommodate for the less experienced student teachers who join the programmes.

strongly agree	agree	I am not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

If you have any other comments, please write in the space below.

5. In my university, admission requirements for new MATESOL students have become less strict with regard to …

a. Student English language proficiency.

strongly agree	agree	I am not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

b. Student previous disciplinary knowledge.

strongly agree	agree	I am not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

c. Student experience and skills.

strongly agree	agree	I am not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

6. MATESOL has been/is being modified to recruit from new student markets.

strongly agree	agree	I am not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

7. MATESOL dissertations have become less theoretically focused.

strongly agree	agree	I am not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

8. MA students tend to address practical issues in their dissertations.

strongly agree	agree	I am not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

9. Proficiency test results (IELTS/TOEFL) are good predictors of students' …

   a. proficiency in academic English.

strongly agree	agree	I am not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

   b. success in completing MA dissertations.

strongly agree	agree	I am not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

10. Academic staff spend more time on dissertations of non-native students.

strongly agree	agree	I am not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

11. A longer MA programme will lead to high-quality dissertations.

strongly agree	agree	I am not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

If you have any other comments, please write in the space below.

12. In recent years, MA programmes put more emphasis on …

a. research training.

strongly agree	agree	I am not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

b. professional development.

strongly agree	agree	I am not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

c. quantitative approaches to research for MA dissertations.

strongly agree	agree	I am not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

d. classroom-based and action research

strongly agree	agree	I am not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

13. In completing MA dissertations:

a. Qualitative research has become a popular research method.

strongly agree	agree	I am not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

b. Quantitative research is a more frequently used research method.

strongly agree	agree	I am not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

c. Less conventional approaches to research (e.g. Reflective Practice) have become acceptable.

strongly agree	agree	I am not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

d. There is more interest in investigating social aspects of language teaching and learning.

strongly agree	agree	I am not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

e. There is more interest in cognitive approaches to language teaching and learning.

strongly agree	agree	I am not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

14. Over the past years, institutional policies push for …

a. faster supervision processes.

yes	no	I am not sure

b. more admissions on MA programmes.

yes	no	I am not sure

c. new pathways to substitute MA dissertations.

yes	no	I am not sure

15. More recently:
    a. MA dissertations have become more substantial in scope.

strongly agree	agree	I am not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

    b. the proportion of high-quality dissertations is increasing.

strongly agree	agree	I am not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

    c. criteria for marking dissertations have become stricter.

strongly agree	agree	I am not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

    d. the quality of MA dissertations is improving.

strongly agree	agree	I am not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

If you have any other comments, please write in the space below.

16. How do you rate the importance of the following factors in the quality of MA dissertations?

    a. Language proficiency

very important	important	somewhat important	not important

    b. Educational background

very important	important	somewhat important	not important

    c. Students' teaching experience

very important	important	somewhat important	not important

    d. Students' interest

very important	important	somewhat important	not important

    e. Time to complete the dissertation

very important	important	somewhat important	not important

f. Sound understanding of research methods

very important	important	somewhat important	not important

g. Support from the supervisor

very important	important	somewhat important	not important

h. Resources (e.g. library or staffing)

very important	important	somewhat important	not important

i. Support systems at the university (e.g. writing support)

very important	important	somewhat important	not important

If you have any other comments, please write in the space below.

Section Two

Please answer the following questions in as much detail as you wish.

1. In your opinion, do you think MATESOL dissertations are changing or have changed over the past 10-15 years? If yes, how?

2. What do you think are the causes of these changes, if any?

Section Three

Please answer the following questions about your experience on MATESOL programmes.

1. How many years have you been teaching on MATESOL programmes?

2. How many years have you been supervising MATESOL dissertations?

3. How many MATESOL dissertations have you supervised?