



Cyprus
University of
Technology

Faculty of Fine and
Applied Arts

Doctoral Dissertation

**ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES TEACHER
EDUCATION:**

AN INNOVATIVE ONLINE APPROACH

Elis Kakoulli Constantinou

Limassol, February 2021

CYPRUS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
FACULTY OF FINE AND APPLIED ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF MULTIMEDIA AND GRAPHIC ARTS

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Approval Form

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Presented by

Elis Kakoulli Constantinou

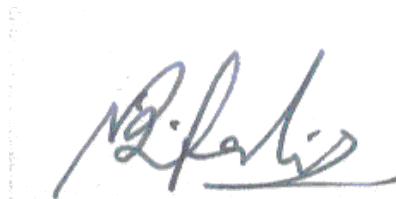
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*And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have fooled you.
Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,
you will have understood by then what these Ithakas mean¹.*

¹ The last three verses from the poem *Ithaka* by Constantine P. Kavafy. Translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard.

ABSTRACT

Despite the fact that the need for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programmes has grown exceedingly during the last decades, a literature review demonstrates that Teacher Education (TE) in ESP is under-researched. Most ESP educators are General English (GE) teachers with insufficient training in ESP. The necessity for ESP TE has been intensely reported in the literature over the years. This study is a Technical Action Research (TAR) investigation, which aims at addressing the gap that exists in the area of ESP TE, which concerns the lack of flexible online solutions outside the bounds of formal university education that can help ESP practitioners develop their teaching practices. More specifically, the study focuses on the neglected need for ESP TE among a group of 24 language instructors, consisting of ESP practitioners representing different ESP fields or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. These language instructors expressed interest in educating themselves on issues of ESP teaching methodology or updating their knowledge on the latest developments in ESP teaching practices. The 24 language instructors came from different countries and different educational contexts.

The study follows a cyclical pattern of continuous improvement evolving in two cycles, namely Stage 1 and Stage 2. Stage 1 begins with the identification of the problem, through a literature review, anecdotal evidence, and an analysis of the 24 language instructors' needs in terms of ESP TE. Based on the results, the researcher develops an intervention, the Online Reflective Teacher Education course in English for Specific Purposes (ReTEESP Online), founded on social constructivism, connectivism and a sociocultural perspective to TE with elements from the reflective model of TE and critical pedagogy. The course is designed following a backward approach as suggested by Wiggins and McTighe (2005) and principles of efficient online TE. After its pilot testing, the course is finalised and implemented with the 24 language instructors during February 26 – April 8, 2018. The tools used for the delivery of the course are the G Suite for Education, Skype (and later Zoom), Facebook, Messenger, and YouTube. Data are collected through an electronic questionnaire administered to the instructors at the beginning of the study, participants' reflective journals, the facilitator's field notes, discussions they have on Messenger and on Google Classroom and focus groups/ interviews that take place after the completion of the course. The findings of Stage 1 provide a basis for the refinement of the proposed course in Stage 2.

The reflection on the teachers' and facilitator's experience with the course leads to its refinement in Stage 2, which results in the creation of the ReTEESP Online: The Sequel. The sequel course is implemented during May 20 – May 31, 2019 with the same group of participants, and data are collected through the same tools. The thematic analysis in both stages reveals teachers' characteristics and professional experiences. It also shows many positive aspects of the course, such as the teachers' and facilitator's acquisition of new knowledge that they can apply in their teaching and development of networking. The analysis also reveals challenges, such as time constraints, tight deadlines and teachers' engagement with professional and personal obligations, which result in teachers' limited engagement with the course, in some cases, and lower participation in Stage 2. The analysis also shows that certain technical difficulties are encountered as well. The challenges faced in both stages are addressed with flexibility, and through the facilitator's continuous communication with the teachers. The changes introduced are based on the teachers' feedback, the researcher's own reflections and the pedagogies underlying the course. Suggestions for future improvements involve ideas for teachers' collaboration in teaching and research, exchange visits, preservation of the community of practice (CoP) that has been created, and inclusion of more challenging and collaborative tasks in the course. In addition, the results of the analysis show the need for ESP TE to be ongoing. The study yields important results in relation to what constitutes effective ESP TE in this context.

The study contributes to the body of knowledge in ESP TE and is useful to ESP practitioners, ESP teacher educators and course designers, stakeholders and professionals who wish to engage in TAR. It also generates ideas for future research.

Keywords: ESP, ESP Teacher Education, Technical Action Research, Social Constructivism, Connectivism, Reflection, Communities of Practice, Online Teacher Education