

Do You Know... Which Qualification to get Next?

Interviews by Paul Meier

Qualification inflation, needing ever higher levels of degrees, diplomas and certificates, is something that affects most modern professions, English teaching included. Whereas up until a few years ago a CELTA was enough for most English teachers to get an EFL job in China, schools and universities, driven by ever stiffer visa requirements, are increasingly demanding qualifications at or above MA level. So, when choosing to study for a postgraduate qualification, what should you consider? ETiC's Paul Meier interviewed four XJTLU Language Centre tutors who have done or are doing a variety of postgraduate qualifications to get an insight into what's involved. Here's what they had to say...



DELTA

Nick McIntosh, LC Tutor, discusses studying for a DELTA with Bell Online

<http://www.bellenglish.com/Courses/77035/Online-Delta/>

Why did you choose to study a DELTA?

At this point, what I have been lucky enough to do is to get into university teaching with just undergraduate degrees and a CELTA. However, the game has changed. You now need a Master's level qualification. The DELTA, according to Ofqual, is now recognised as one of those. It's much more practical, much more hands-on than, say, an Applied Linguistics Masters. It's been recommended to me by a number of people whose teaching style and knowledge I respect, so that was a big part of it.

How long do you think it will take to complete the DELTA?

In total, it requires about a year to get done. There are three different modules, each

running about two to three months in length, but because of the way that it is offered by Bell, by the time I finish in November it will be approximately a year.

How much does it cost?

Quite a lot! The different modules have different costs associated with them. The observed teaching practice, for instance, is the most intensive in terms of labour requirements from Bell's point of view. That costs £1800 by itself. All up, £2400–£2500 is about right, possibly a bit more.

How much work does it involve?

That depends on the module. For example, Module 1 is an exam and it's heavily taught,

whereby what Bell will do is assign you certain tutors and you will have a number of tasks you need to complete. Over the course of a given week, you would need to make a submission and everything else, so you could be looking at one or two hours a night. Or, if you put your work into the weekend, you could be looking at investing pretty much your entire weekend on that. Module 3, for instance, has just a single assignment of 4500 words, so there were periods where I would have been putting in a good 15 hours per week and seeing that as being quite reasonable.

Why did you choose to do it with Bell and online?

It was more online than Bell in particular. In China there are limited places that will offer the DELTA. Bell was the best candidate in terms of what they were offering. Having completed Module 1 with them, they were excellent. Very good advice from tutors around improving

work and study needs and so on. I have since done Module 3 with them as well, and the tutors, the set-up, they've been excellent. I would not hesitate to recommend them to anyone.

Would you recommend doing the DELTA to others?

Definitely! I would fairly confidently say that it has had a massive impact on my teaching in terms of pedagogical knowledge, in terms of approaches in the class, in terms of teaching meta-knowledge, however you want to phrase it. Where the CELTA teaches you a few tricks you can use in the classroom, the DELTA gets you thinking much more deeply. Are those good tricks in terms of learner requirements? It has an immediate and very positive impact on teaching. The online facet I would recommend as well. Bell has done a really good job and it means that you can juggle it with a full-time job.



Doctor of Education - Higher Education (EdD)

Eoin Jordan, LC Year 1 Manager, discusses studying online for a Doctor of Education – Higher Education (EdD) with the University of Liverpool

http://www.liv.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/taught_courses/laureate_online_doctor_of_education_-_higher_education

Why did you choose to do a doctorate?

I was interested in pursuing further study for career reasons and I felt it might open doors in different areas. The reason I chose this specific course was because my background has been very much in English teaching and my MA was in Applied Linguistics, and I had thought about doing further study in that specific area but didn't want to specialize greatly. I wanted to gain a more general understanding of education, and higher education particular, and to have a qualification that would then also potentially allow me more flexibility in job choice.

So, why choose a doctorate over a PhD?

I think the professional doctorates, as they're

often referred to, like the Doctor of Education, were largely constructed in response to some criticisms of the traditional PhD. I think that there is more of an emphasis in the EdD on transferrable skills and teamwork. A criticism of some PhDs is that they can be very specialized pieces of study which are less transferrable to other environments.

What is the structure of the course?

There are nine initial modules, and that's followed-up by your thesis, which would be about 50,000 words.

How long do you think it will take you to complete the EdD?

I don't know for sure. The standard time to

complete it is four and a half years, and that's what I'm aiming to do. If I need over five years I'd need to apply for an extension.

Is it part-time or full-time?

It's part-time, as in I'm doing a full-time job while doing this. They recommend that people spend 12 to 20 hours per week and I'm probably spending around 15 hours a week on the course on average.

Doing what?

It's very structured. Almost every week I will do a discussion task, whereby I've got to write five hundred words, referenced, based on some set readings and further reading on the topic. During the second half of the week, I need to make follow-up responses to other people's posts. And so we, basically, have an online discussion.

On top of that, over the course of each module, which is typically ten weeks long, I

have to produce two written assignments, usually two to three thousand words each. As well as that, parallel to each module there is a developmental module, which basically involves keeping a learning-log, having at least one online Skype tutorial with a mentor, and then at the end producing a two or three thousand word reflective assignment.

Why did you choose the University of Liverpool to study with?

Well, I think that one of the most important things was the fact that it's an entirely distance learning programme, and that obviously means that there's no commitment from me to do a period of residency anywhere, which is useful for me. The other thing, obviously, is the fact that it's a Doctorate in Higher Education rather than the other option I would have considered, which would have been a PhD in Applied Linguistics. The fact that it has this broader overview of higher education was attractive to me.



PhD in Applied Linguistics

Xuelian Xu, LC Tutor, discusses the PhD in Applied Linguistics from the University of Nottingham she completed in the UK in 2007

<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/pgstudy/courses/english/modern-english-language-mphilphd.aspx>

Why did you choose to do a PhD?

Well, it was my life's dream. I just wanted to do it.

Was it also for career reasons?

Yes, part of the reason was because of my career. Before I studied abroad I was an English teacher in China, and my students' questions encouraged me to do further study. Then I started my master's degree and then I just went ahead for a PhD.

How much work was involved?

Well, in the UK, when you are a full-time research student you basically need to work every day. I wouldn't say eight hours a day, but usually at the beginning of each semester you need to plan out your work, your timetable. You need to say within three months I'm going to achieve this, for example finish my literature review, from when to when I'm going to do empirical studies and so on.

What was the overall structure of your PhD?

Just before I finished my MA, I wrote a proposal. After I started my PhD study, in the first year, basically, you need to read a lot to

work on your literature review, get your topics right and generate your research questions. Then, after that you need another, say, half a year for empirical studies. In my case, I did research on Chinese EFL learners, so I came back to China and chose a few universities to do the questionnaire with.

Then, when all the data are collected you need to focus on data analysis. And one of the most important things for PhD research is that you need to get some originality, because the examiners like to see originality in your research. After that, I spent a few months analysing the data using some advanced statistical methods, which also took me, maybe, a month to learn how to use. Then, after I'd got all of the data ready for writing up, I spent a year finishing the whole book. You

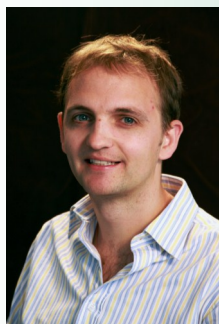
write chapter by chapter, which your supervisor gives you feedback on.

Do you think you could have done it part-time or distance, or do you think it was worth going to the UK to do it?

Personally, I don't regret being a full-time research student. I think I benefitted far more than being a part-time research student. You live there. You get more familiar with the culture, how people live, the lifestyle, because being an English language teacher I wanted to get familiar with many aspects of British life.

Would you recommend doing a PhD?

Yes, I would encourage them to do a PhD if they have a dream like me and want to be an academic.



Trinity Diploma in TESOL & MA TESOL

Mark Coyle, LC Continuing Support Manager, discusses the Trinity Diploma in TESOL he completed in 2006 and the MA TESOL he completed through distance learning in 2010 with Sheffield Hallam University

<http://www.trinitycollege.co.uk/site/?id=202>

<http://www.shu.ac.uk/prospectus/course/244/>

Let's discuss the Trinity Diploma in TESOL first. What was the structure of the course?

For the Trinity Diploma we had three modules, so each module had very specific teaching related outcomes. There was the observation, where we had to observe someone who has the qualification, and later on observations where we were observed. There was also a learner project where you had to make a course for some of your learners. Each week you had a topic which you had to research.

How long did it take?

The course was run over one year.

Do you think career-wise it's been worth it?

Before I did it, I didn't have any TESOL qualifications, so it was my first step, and

without it I wouldn't have got the job at XJTLU and wouldn't have got onto an MA TESOL.

So, would you recommend the Trinity Diploma in TESOL to others?

I would recommend it to tutors who might have an MA in something else because it really does improve your teaching. It's very much focused towards getting you to be a better teacher in the classroom, and making assessments, and making curriculum. However, if you've been doing ESL or EAP teaching for a few years, you might find it a little bit easy.

The qualification you did after the Trinity Diploma was an MA.

I waited two years then found a course where I would be able to use the credits from my Postgraduate Diploma from Trinity in the MA. Sheffield Hallam, where I did my TESOL online MA, had a three year course, and in the first

year you do the Cert., so if you've got the Diploma already you go into Year 2, which saves you a year.

And how would you evaluate the MA career-wise?

Very good. Sheffield Hallam is quite well-regarded for MA TESOL, and the feedback you get from the tutors is quite good. Career-wise, it was worthwhile.

Did you feel you got much support on the course?

The support was lacking during the online phase. But when you were putting in the essays, yes they were there. You had a supervisor assigned to you who would give you feedback on the essay, but on the online phase it was very easy when you compare it to the

Trinity.

How do you think the Diploma compared to the MA?

The Diploma is much more relevant to what you're doing in that class. One week you're doing assessments and the next week you'll be doing observations, and you'll just have seen a classroom management technique, and you're going straight in and using it there and then.

Would you recommend both courses to other people?

For different people, yes. For someone who's got a qualification, maybe Applied Linguistics, the Diploma would be much better. For someone who has just started teaching then it would make sense to do a cert and then carry on to the MA.

ETiC News!

ETiC at the Colloquium

Paul Meier and Sarah Butler gave a poster presentation at the first Annual XJTLU Learning and Teaching Staff Colloquium. They presented ETiC to non-ELT academics, explaining how it was created and what we had achieved so far. There was particular interest from academics teaching English literature and communication.

