



Part-time distance study for many students involves juggling family, work and study. And doesn't Racquel Warner know this. She has just finished her Master of Education TESOL via distance while juggling two children and managing her English teaching position in Dubai

How did your family cope with you returning to study?

My decision to start studying was only made after we all resolved that I would need time to get this course done. I arranged a day out each week for the kids so that I would have time by myself to study. My children understood that Mommy was doing her very important homework. I would also try to spend each evening with my family, so they did not feel neglected.

There were tense moments at times when I could not study because of my daughter's illness or her extra curricular activities, but those hurdles made finishing the degree all the more rewarding.

What was the worst and best time during your study?

The worst time was when I missed a deadline to submit my assignment because I felt that I had reneged on a promise. The best time was when the penny dropped and I realized the significance of what I was studying and was able to apply the theories to my practices in the classroom. It all made sense in light of what I was doing as an ESL teacher.

What advice would you give to someone just starting?

Stick with it even when it seems you cannot get your papers in. Talk to your tutors, request help and advice. Do not try to resolve difficulties by internalizing them. Tell you tutors what you find most difficult and they will help you through it.

What would you have done differently if you were doing it again?

I would not take a break. I had to take a long break from studying during my difficult pregnancy. After weaning the baby I went back to work and study. This was difficult but again I had the encouragement of my family, my course tutor and my boss to get the degree finished. I felt very encouraged to have all that support so I started studying again.

What did you gain most from the study?

Apart from headaches? (laughs). I gained confidence in craft. I now know without a doubt that what I am doing works because of the theoretical framework within which I now operate. In addition, I can better analyze my students' abilities and response appropriately to achieve success in teaching them English as a foreign or second language.

What is your strongest memory from studying during the course?

When I was about to give up on studying after my pregnancy, I received an email from Dr. Ken Cruickshank encouraging me not to quit but to forge ahead. I found this quite encouraging that there was someone at UOW who took a personal interest in whether I finished or not.

Do you feel any different now?

I feel a sense of accomplishment and fulfilment in the fact that I now have an advanced qualification in my field of work and I am equipped with the skills to carry out continued research to improve my practice. I have had the opportunity to advance my career into a management position.

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