DYNAMICS OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' EMPLOYABILITY IN 21ST-CENTURY NIGERIA: A FOCUS ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN EKITI STATE

By
Bankole Olagunju Faloye
Department of Languages and Linguistics, Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti, Nigeria
Email: faloye.bankole@bouesti.edu.ng

Abstract: *This research sought to investigate the dynamics involved in employing pre-service English language teachers in public secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Specifically, the research investigated the dynamics involved assessment of the applicants' pedagogical skills, personality and classroom management traits in a 21st-century paradigm. The secondary data emanated from the Practical Teaching Assessment Rating Scale (PTARC) and Oral Competence Test (OCT) on 114 unemployed English language teachers. Four research questions and two hypotheses were formulated and raised to guide the research respectively. The research population consisted of 1,050 graduate English language teachers from Ekiti State University, Ado- Ekiti, College of Education, Ikere Ekiti and the affiliated degree programme of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Ekiti State, selected 114 English language teachers for the examination. The sample size of 114 was derived from the selection process aforementioned. The findings of the study revealed that the English language teachers were employable based on impressive performance in oral and theoretical assessments. The research provides recommendations on the need to include digital interactive courses in oral communication and instruction in spoken English while emphasizing earner-friendly strategies of teaching in Ekiti State public secondary schools*

INTRODUCTION

The clarion call for up-to-date training of graduates in various facets of life cannot be overemphasized. The spate of paradigm shifts from outdated to 21st-century professionals seems to increase, especially in education. In some parts of the world, developing countries strive to key into expected global standards in terms of quality and affordable education for all. To ensure the development of these goals, the Vision 2030 project encourages a paradigm shift from non-sensitive approaches to education to a more learner-friendly process. Furthermore, the push towards digital inclusion in almost every facet of education can be regarded as an evolutionary approach to improve the quality of human living through good educational services. Recently, at the Indus International School in India, the introduction of

Artificial Intelligence (AI) in teaching and learning contexts further reinforces the need for teachers to align with current employability demands from employers. Furthermore, the Eagle Robot was set up to teach students in a classroom through collaborative strategies similar to human teaching. The global higher education scenario, in line with the observations of Mainga et al. (2022), has continued to evolve while employability follows suit. The scenario presented in Indu's school context further reveals the relevance of teachers acquiring updated pedagogical skills and attaining digital competence in the 21st-century paradigm. Without prejudice to the teaching profession, English language teachers in some developing countries may perhaps confront peculiar challenges in getting jobs where the hiring criteria encompass massive reliance on digital skills and adequate pedagogical competence (Tatar, 2019). Various government establishments have placed premium standards on the requirements for employing teachers with an emphasis on the acquisition of digital and critical literacy skills relevant in a 21st-century context.

The significance of teacher development programmes designed to equip prospective teachers for future challenges cannot be overemphasized. In Nigeria, for example, teacher development programmes include training and retraining of teachers in colleges of education, faculties of education in universities, teacher training institutes and related affiliated government-approved institutions. However, despite the growing population of these aforementioned educational institutions and pre-service teachers, the output of qualified and 21st-century compliant teachers appears to concern stakeholders in the educational sector. These challenges encompass the inability, to some extent, for teachers to cope with evolving pedagogical trends and practices in the 21st-century paradigm. Consequently, the gap created in the curriculum designed for teacher education programmes requires urgent calibration in the area of digital cum pedagogical inclusions that would enhance employability. Without mincing words, teachers with adequate training in global educational strategies may be left out of the race for jobs.

The demand for qualified English language teachers comes with great expectations, especially with the rapid educational evolution to well-trained teachers. Digressing to the banking sector, the introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) in the banking hall has caused ripples among labour unions due to the premonition of job loss. The job opportunities for English language teachers is becoming competitive, as evidenced in the very recent change engineered by the National Commission for Universities (NUC) in the University curriculum just inaugurated in Nigeria. Going forward, the National Universities Commission (NUC) took a bold step in replacing the Benchmarks Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) with the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards for Nigerian University System (CCMAS) with the aim of repackaging courses to produce teachers for 21st-century classrooms (NUC, 2022). Among the list of inclusions recommended for the university curriculum is the emphasis on student employability in a 5IR currently making waves around the globe. A close comparison to teacher employability is the banking industry, where the number of automated/digital tools overwhelms the employment of manual staff: In some climes, a robot can be programmed to do the work of more than 50 humans. Similarly, 21st-century trained teachers are expected to be in tune with changing trends in language education, emphasizing gaining employment for a good living. The implication of employing unqualified English language teachers has far-reaching consequences on a nation's entire educational, economic and social

well-being. As accepted global educational standards have become the measuring rod for employing teachers into schools, the responsibility of teacher development programmes is expected to ensure pre-service teachers meet global trends in pedagogy and knowledge acquisition to earn a reasonable living while ensuring quality education for all.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Odumuh and Famogbiyele (2018) declare that in most cases, teachers' employability depends on digital and pedagogical acumen culminating in robust teaching experience. Indeed, the current education trend reveals gaps in pre-service English language teachers' employability needs. Adeyemi, Adeyemi and Adeyemi (2021) affirm the inadequacies in the university's curricula towards ensuring pre-service English language teachers meet the employers' requirements for teaching jobs.

Teacher development programmes consist of various disciplines within the faculty of education residing in universities. Similarly, the colleges of education and universities are saddled with the responsibility, among others, to ensure that English language pre-service teachers are exposed to the core rudiments of translating the relevant course contents to employment realities. The Nigerian education space reveals a quantum of graduates trained as teachers for specific educational terrains at basic, primary, post–primary and tertiary levels of education. In Colleges of Education, teachers are exposed to a curriculum designed to train teachers admitted for the Nigeria Certificate of Education (NCE). In specific terms, undergraduates admitted to studying English as a single major undergo training in specialized areas such as pedagogy and communication skills in the language of instruction (English as a second language), which culminates in the teaching practice exercise in the final year of study. During the penultimate semester at the NCE level, the student teachers are finally prepared to teach in the higher primary school or the first tier in secondary schools.

Pre-service English language teachers will eventually find themselves contesting for employment in schools of their choice, mostly within the state of origin. In Nigeria, this employment assessment procedure varies from state to state. However, in Ekiti state, pre-service English language teachers seeking employment as English Language teachers are expected to undergo a series of assessment procedures such as certificate screening, teacher evaluation tests and oral interviews overseen by the Teachers Recruitment Exercise programme of the Ekiti State Teaching Service Commission (TESCOM). Generally, teacher recruitment occurs online (https://www.njps.com.ng/ekiti-state-teachers-recruitment/), while the assessment exercise comprises standardized theory and oral tests. In tandem with global practices, pre-service English language teachers will have to contend with global challenges and opportunities, including new technology trends within the evolving labour market. In addition, pre-service English language teachers are seeking employment in Ekiti state despite the deficiencies in adequate exposure to realistic trends in teacher development, such as digital teaching and learning, training and retraining in current interactive strategies in language instruction, among others. According to UNICEF (2019), there is an urgent need to provide, expand and rework educational curriculums to equip adolescent job seekers with quality opportunities to succeed at work. Similarly, pre-service English language teachers seeking employment would require transferrable teaching skills as a tool for recruitment and sustainable performance in the teaching profession.

Student employability refers to a graduate's ability to actualize the training in real-life

situations. In the same vein, pre-service English language teachers' employability suggests job performance requiring multi-dimensional pedagogical and communicative skills for teaching. Ossai and Ezinwa (2022) attest to employability as an instrument for satisfying requirements for job seekers. In addition, teacher development programmes for 21st-century delivery largely reveal a paradigm shift from conventional teaching frameworks to a more digitized and student-centred mode of instruction. In this sense, pre-service English language teachers without adequate pedagogical and communicative skills can remain unemployed. Unfortunately, Aina (2016) laments the high rate of teacher unemployment among pre-service English language teachers in Nigeria, perhaps due to poorly trained teachers in universities and colleges of education.

The need to relearn in the education sphere is becoming imperative for eventual employment exercises carried out by the government. The training model for English language teachers can be described as a paradigm shift from conventional to digital instructional strategies. In some cases, the government clearly emphasizes digital competence as a vital pre-requisite for employing teachers at various educational levels. In this era of teacher professionalism, Taiwo (2013) asserts that a major signal of graduate employability lies in their ability to conform to the needs of the 21st-century learner, often described as "the net generation". To this end, the recruitment of pre-service English language teachers can be considered a vital input that determines the quality of the entire education system in a nation or state, as the case may be.

Hypotheses
1. There is no significant difference in assessment means of graduates with NCE and B.A.(Ed) English qualifications in English Education
2. No significant difference in the oral assessment means of graduates with NCE and B.A.(Ed) English qualifications in English Education.

Research Questions
1. Do pre-service English language teachers possess relevant pedagogical and interactive skills for teaching English in the 21st-century work environment?
2. What category of pre-service English language teachers are considered employable to teach the English language in Ekiti State public secondary schools?
3. Do pre-service English language teachers possess effective communicative skills for teaching the English language in Ekiti State public secondary schools?
4. How many pre-service English language teachers are employable as English language teachers based on the current assessment exercise in Ekiti state?

METHODOLOGY
The research adopted a blend of quantitative and qualitative methods for data retrieval. The population of the study consisted of 1,050 English language pre-service English language teachers from Ekiti State University, Ado- Ekiti, College of Education, Ikere Ekiti and the affiliated degree programme of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The sample for the study comprised 114 NCE and B.A.(Ed) The Ekiti State Ministry of Education, Science and Technology screened and selected English graduates for assessment. One major criterion for selecting 114 unemployed English language teachers included information on the applicant's employment status. Applicants with teaching jobs were illegible for the teacher assessment

ISSN: 2807-8721 (Cetak)
ISSN: 2807-937X (Online)

1271
JOEL
Journal of Educational and Language Research
Vol.2, No.11, Juni 2023

exercise.

The performance assessment scores were derived from the administration of a. The PTARC was constructed and validated by language testing experts commissioned by the Ekiti State government. The candidates were grouped into special examination centres and instructed to prepare a comprehensive lesson note on selected topics related to the English language. The oral assessment comprised face–to–face interviews between interview experts and the selected candidates. The Practical Teaching Assessment Rating Scale (PTARC) was designed to assess the graduate English language teachers in preparation and presentation expected of a well-trained English language teacher in interactive teaching strategies within a 21st-century paradigm. In addition, the pre-service English language teachers' communicative skills and personality traits were assessed at a special interview panel comprising experts in Language education.

The scores obtained from the theory and oral assessments were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. T-tests were used in testing the hypotheses, while mean and standard deviation catered for answering the research questions raised for the study.

The research instruments used for the graduate English language teachers are shown in Figure 1(a) and Figure 1(b):
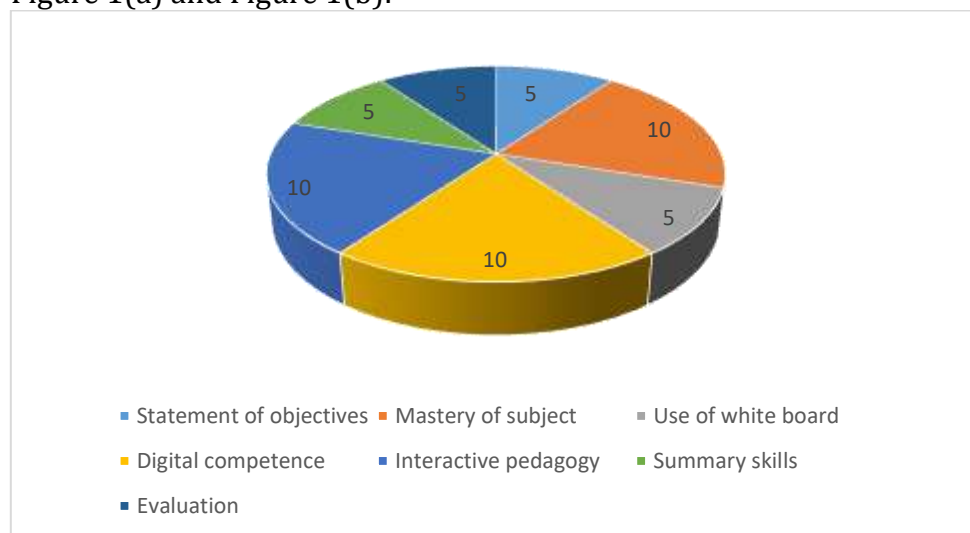

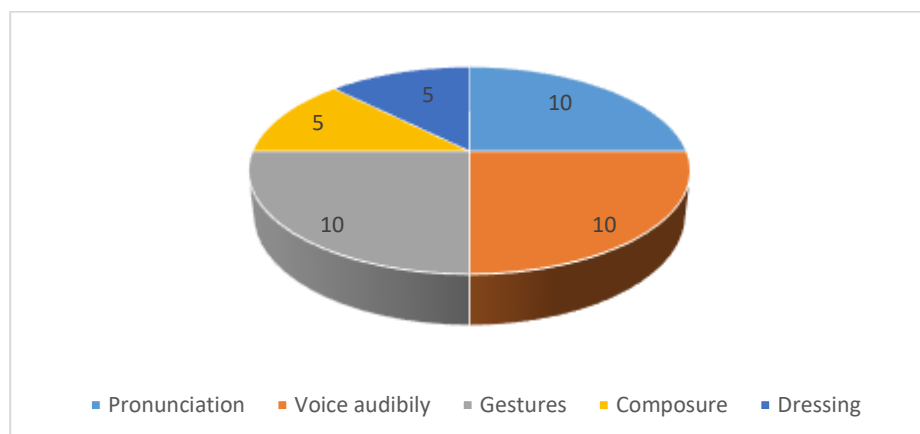Figure 1(a): Practical Teaching Assessment Rating Scale: Theory aspect.

Figure 1(b): Practical Teaching Assessment Rating Scale: Oral Assessment

RESULTS

Research question 1: Do pre-service English language teachers possess relevant pedagogical and interactive skills for teaching jobs in the 21st-century work environment?

Table 1: Assessment of English language Pre-service English language teachers' Employability in Ekiti State

Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-service English language teachers	114	179		
Total_sum	114	5715	50.13	15.31
Valid N (listwise)	114			

Decision rule: Employable = > 49, unemployable = < 50.

Information in Table 1 shows that English language pre-service English language teachers (114) had an assessment performance mean score of 50.13. Based on the decision rule for employability, the graduates obtained a mean score suggesting employability status as English language teachers.

Research question 2: What category of pre-service English language teachers are considered employable to teach the English language in Ekiti State public secondary schools?

Table 2: Performance of English language Pre-service English language teachers in Ekiti State: NCE and B.A. (Ed)

Descriptive Statistics					
	Pre-service English language teachers	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Score for Oral examination	NCE	49	23.14	9.120	1.303
	B.A.(Ed) English	65	22.49	8.277	1.027
Score for Theory	NCE	49	25.49	7.811	1.116
	B.A.(Ed) English	65	28.77	8.231	1.021

Table 2 reveals that NCE English language graduates obtained a mean score (23.14) while B.A. (Ed) English language graduates had a mean score (22.49) in the oral examination. In the theory aspect of the examination, NCE English language graduates obtained a mean score (25.49) while their B.A. (Ed.) counterparts had a mean score (28.77). The result implies that NCE English language graduates performed slightly better in oral examinations than their B.A. (Ed.) programme counterparts. However, in the theory examination, the B.A. (Ed.) English language graduates showed better performance than their counterparts in the NCE programme.

Research question 3: Do pre-service English language teachers possess effective communicative skills for teaching the English language in Ekiti State public secondary schools?

Table 3: Descriptive statistics on pre-service English language teachers' performance in oral communication skills in English

	Pre-service English language teachers	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Score for Oral examination	NCE	49	23.14	9.120	1.303
	B.A.(Ed) English	65	22.49	8.277	1.027
		114	45.63		

Table 3 reveals that pre-service English language teachers (n=114) had oral assessment means (23.14 and 22.49) for NCE and B.A.(Ed) English language graduates in Ekiti state respectively. The table also shows that Pre-service English language teachers obtained a weighted mean (45.63) in the oral assessment. The decision rule for employability (< 50 = unemployable, > 49 = employable) shows that pre-service English language teachers' assessment mean (45.63) indicates a below-average performance in oral assessment.

Research question 4: How many pre-service English language teachers are employable as English language teachers based on the current assessment exercise in Ekiti state?

Table 4: Frequency of scores obtained during Teachers Assessment Exercise in Ekiti state: 2021-2022.

Scores for theory assessment (50 marks)		Frequency	Scores for oral assessment (50 marks)	Frequency
Valid	10	2	8	2
	12	5	10	5
	14	5	12	17
	18	3	14	6
	20	6	16	5
	22	15	18	3
	24	7	20	8
	25	1	22	10
	26	8	24	14
	28	17	26	4
	30	7	28	13
	32	10	30	6
	34	8	32	7
	35	2	34	5
	36	6	36	1
	38	4	38	5
	40	2	40	2
	44	5	44	1
	48	1		
	100.0	114	100.0	114

Table 4 reveals that 44 candidates scored above 24 in the oral examination, while 71 scored above 24 in theory examinations. A total of 62 candidates scored above 49 out of a total of 100 in the theory and oral assessment exercise in the English language. Based on the decision rule for employability (> 49 = employable, < 50 = unemployable), 62 graduate English language teachers in Ekiti state may be considered employable as English language teachers.

Ho 1: There is no significant difference in assessment means of graduates with NCE and B.A. (Ed) English qualifications in English Education.

Table 5: T-test showing the difference in overall assessment mean scores of graduate English language teachers

Pre-service English teachers	N	Mean	SD	D	]	P	t-cal	Decision
NCE	49	48.63	15.669					
				112	.124	.366	.907	Accept
B.A.(Ed) English	65	51.26	15.051					

Table 5 shows a difference in the mean scores of the NCE (mean =48.63, SD = 15.669) and B.A.(Ed) English graduates (mean= 51.26, SD=15.051) indicating that the B.A.(Ed) English graduates performed slightly better than NCE graduates. The table also shows that (t_{112} = .907 p= .366). Since the p-value is more than 0.05, the hypothesis is refused to be rejected. This implies no significant difference in the assessment exercise's overall performance means scores of NCE and B.A. (Ed) English graduates.

Ho2: No significant difference exists in the oral assessment means of graduates with NCE and B.A. (Ed) English.

Table 6: T-test showing the difference in oral assessment mean scores of English Language pre-service English language teachers

Pre-service Englis teachers	N	Mean	SD	df	p	t-cal	f-cal	Decision
NCE	49	23.14	9.12					
				112	.692	.39	.546	Accept
B.A.(Ed) English	65	22.49	8.28					

Table 5 shows that pre-service English language teachers with NCE and B.A. (Ed) English qualifications have mean scores of 23.14 and 22.49 in oral assessment, respectively. The mean scores obtained by the graduates indicate that NCE graduates performed minimally better than their counterparts with B.A. (Ed) English in oral competence assessment in the English language. However, the table also shows that (t_{112} = .398, p= .692). Since the p-value is more than 0.05, the hypothesis is refused to be rejected. This implies no significant difference in the performance means scores of NCE and B.A. (Ed) English graduates in the oral assessment in the English language.

DISCUSSION

This study revealed the assessment and employment of qualified pre-service English language teachers of English into the teaching service at various levels in Ekiti State in relation to teacher assessment requirements for employment in Ekiti State teaching service. The parameters for employment of graduate English language teachers require a demonstration of adequate knowledge of skills ranging from pedagogy to personal traits associated with the 21st-century teacher. In this study, the findings on the impressive number of graduates with adequate pedagogical skills were in line with a study by Taiwo (2013) on the necessity of teachers' competence in learner-centred interactions. From this finding, it can be deduced that English language teachers in Ekiti State appear to be employable for teaching services, considering their previous training in teacher education. However, the findings in this study in the area of pre-service English language teachers' low performance in oral communication are contrary to the study by Ahmed (2015) that stressed the encouraging performance of pre-service English language teachers in English.

The tertiary education system in Nigeria comprises teacher development programmes split in to the Nigeria Certificate of Education (NCE) and degree programmes in education (B.A.(Ed) in specializes subject areas. In this regard, findings from this study revealed slight disparity between the performance of these category of teachers. The NCE teachers , to some extent, performed better in oral communication skills than their counterparts trained as degree holders of teaching qualifications(B.A.(Ed.) in English. Furthermore, a major finding in this study revealed the overall above-average performance in the theoretical assessment of English language graduates in the NCE and B.A. (Ed.) programme. Consequently, this finding negates revelations in a study by Okolie et al. (2018) that discovered a turnout of incompetent pre-service English language teachers in tertiary institutions. In the case of the pre-service English language teachers in Ekiti State, findings showed a significant level of performance in the assessment exercise for job selection and eventual employment in the Ekiti State teacher service. This revelation suggests that the NCE teachers showed more dexterity than their degree counterparts in teacher development programmes.

CONCLUSION

The 21st-century educational setting, from a global perspective, is expected to provide a working condition where employees need to become conversant with the productive expectations of the employer. The teaching profession also requires adequate training and re-training of in line with present-day interactive teaching strategies and digital skill applications geared towards the maximum output. In this regard, this study showcased various employment parameters in relation to pre-service English language teachers' yearnings for employment in the Ekiti state teaching service in Nigeria. In addition, the parameters set by the employer, such as effective communication skills, positive personality traits, adequate pedagogical knowledge and enhanced digital competence, guided designing an assessment format for selecting well-trained English language teachers for employment. Furthermore, the assessment process, to a large extent, is intended to ensure that quality instruction in the English language at the secondary school level is sustained. Ekiti state is known as a state where quality and knowledge abound. Consequently, the employment of quality teachers for educational services at all levels of education is expected to be competitive, unbiased and, most importantly, digitally compliant in line with globally accepted standards.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings in this study suggest that communication skills for formal instruction may be blended with knowledge of content to aid employment opportunities for the language teacher. Furthermore, findings suggest that the B.A.(Ed.) programme teachers may perform better in oral communication skills by rejigging the curriculum to accommodate more practical courses in spoken English. Consequently, teaching and learning would be enhanced through unbiased selection and eventual employment of 21st-century compliant English language teachers.

ISSN: 2807-8721 (Cetak)
ISSN: 2807-937X (Online)

1277
JOEL
Journal of Educational and Language Research
Vol.2, No.11, Juni 2023

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations include:

1. Pre-service English language graduates should be exposed to practical courses in oral communication and instruction in English;
2. Digital and interactive strategies of teaching should be emphasized in teacher development programmes, workshops and conferences;
3. The Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TeTFund) should sponsor digital literacy programmes for pre-service teachers in Colleges of Education and public Universities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

References

[1] Adeyemi, B., Adeyemi, B. B., & Adeyemi, I. D. (2021). Education for Employability in Nigeria: Stakeholders' Assessment of Missing Gaps in the Current Schools Curricula. *EAS Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies*, *3*(2), 97–102.
https://doi.org/10.36349/easjhcs.2021.v03i02.004

[2] Aina, J.K. (2016). Employment of untrained pre-service English language teachers in schools: The Nigeria case. Journal of Studies in Social Sciences and Humanities, 2 (2), 36-40).

[3] Mainga, W., Murphy-Braynen, M. B., Moxey, R., & Quddus, S. A. (2022). Graduate Employability of Business Students. *Administrative Sciences*, *12*(3), 72.
https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci12030072

[4] National Commission for Universities National Universities Commission. (2022). *Benchmark for Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS).* National Commission for Universities.

[5] Odumuh, T.O and Famogbiyele, O.T. (2018). Language Teaching in a Globalized and Digital Age: Implications for Teacher Preparation and Professional Development in Nigeria. *Elixir International Journal of educational technology,* 116, 50038-50042.

[6] Okolie, U.C., Nwosu, H.E. & Mlanga, S. (2018). Graduate employability: How the higher education institutions can meet the demand of labour market .Higher Education Work-base Learning, 9(4), 13-14.

[7] Ossai, A.G. & Ezinwa, O.I. (2022). Managing University Education for Employability in Nigeria: The Way Forward. British Journal of Education, 10,(6), 37-40.

[8] Taiwo, R. (2013). Language teaching and the 21st century teacher competencies. *Journal for Teachers of English and Communication Skills.* 10 (1), 2-6.

[9] Tatar, S. (2019). Employment of English Language Teachers in an EFL Context:

Perspectives   From School Administrators. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development, 21*(2), 45–61. https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v21n2.72648

[10] United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). (2019). Global Framework on Transferable Skills. New York,   UNICEF Education Section. www.unicef.org/education. Pp. x-ix.