

## INTERNATIONALISATION AS A STRATEGY OF EDUCATING FUTURE TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

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*Abstract.* The close relationship between internationalisation and the employability of university graduates is increasingly viewed as not merely an aspirational agenda, but a strategic one for any HE institution. This transnational perspective has become even more relevant in the period of global challenges for traditional ways of working and educating – with the teaching profession profoundly included. The present article encompasses the theme of the future role of teachers and, in particular, introduces a current 2020–2023 project *Teachers of English for Future Europe (TEFE)*. Fundamentally, the project is viewed as one of Applied Linguistics and much of its inspiration is couched in addressing real-world issues and creating practical relevance for research. By introducing the project vision, methodology and planned outputs, the article argues that the impetus of international mobilities is shifting from the well-understood focus on developing linguistic competence of teachers of English to a more comprehensive, practice-oriented teacher education. Specifically, the trend is to transform traditional environment of taught courses by embedding international experience – be it physical, blended or fully online – into the study programmes of future teachers of English. The TEFE project methodology integrates the vision of English teacher preparation change with collaborative working of linguists, methodologists, student teachers and teacher mentors and uses as a basis the action-oriented approach. As part of the present TEFE report, experiential learning and reflexivity are advocated as the key drivers in arriving at four main outputs of the project: internationalisation of teaching practice, international employability skills, online evaluation and diagnostic tools, communication strategies on TEFE COIL (collaborative online international learning) platform. A case is also made in support of harnessing both existing and emerging technology to create platforms for collaboration, continued learning and self-development as an inherent part of any internationalisation package. The resources produced by the project are useful for HE institutions educating future teachers of English as they will help in preparation for international mobility in an effective way.

The contribution of each author in this research is the following: H. Lohrová – 50%, A. Prošková – 50%.

*Keywords:* higher education; teacher education; English language teaching; internationalisation; mobility; graduate employability; TEFE project.

## ИНТЕРНАЦИОНАЛИЗАЦИЯ КАК СТРАТЕГИЯ ПОДГОТОВКИ

### БУДУЩИХ ПРЕПОДАВАТЕЛЕЙ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА

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*Аннотация.* Тесная связь интернационализации и востребованности выпускников университета все больше рассматривается не как желаемый ориентир, а в качестве стратегической линии в работе вуза. Эта транснациональная перспектива стала даже более значимой в период серьезных испытаний для традиционных способов работы и организации процесса обучения, что глубоко затрагивает профессию преподавателя. Данная статья охватывает тему будущей роли преподавателей, в частности представляя про-

ект, реализующийся в 2020–2023 гг. под названием *Преподаватели английского языка для будущей Европы / Teachers of English for Future Europe (TEFE)*. В основе своей проект рассматривается с точки зрения прикладной лингвистики и имеет дело с соответствующей терминологией, а также ориентирует данное исследование на получение практически значимых результатов. Представляя идею проекта, его методологию и планируемые результаты, авторы в статье утверждают, что происходит смещение фокуса международных обменов с развития иноязычной компетенции преподавателей английского языка на более комплексное, практико-ориентированное профессиональное образование. Особенно выделяется направление деятельности, связанное с трансформацией традиционной среды обучения за счет включения компонента по получению международного опыта взаимодействия – будь он физический, смешанный или исключительно дистанционный – в программы обучения будущих преподавателей английского языка. Методология проекта *TEFE* включает в себя пересмотр взгляда на подготовку учителя английского языка с точки зрения лингвистов, методистов, студентов – будущих педагогов и их наставников, и в основе лежит деятельностный подход. В качестве отчета по реализации проекта *TEFE* приводятся эмпирические данные процесса обучения и рефлексивного анализа как ключевые стимулы, ведущие к получению четырех главных результатов проекта: интернационализация практики преподавания, международные навыки трудоустройства, онлайн-инструментарий оценивания и диагностики, коммуникативные стратегии на платформе *TEFE COIL* (collaborative online international learning / совместное онлайн международное обучение). Также создан кейс в поддержку использования как существующих, так и вновь появляющихся технологий для создания платформ сотрудничества, постоянного обучения и саморазвития как неотъемлемой части любого пакета по интернационализации. Ресурсы, произведенные в результате реализации проекта, полезны для вузов, готовящих будущих преподавателей английского языка, т. е. на их основе можно эффективно подготовить будущих учителей к международной мобильности.

**Ключевые слова:** высшее образование; педагогическое образование; обучение английскому языку; интернационализация; мобильность; востребованность выпускников; проект *TEFE*.

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**Introduction.** The present article examines the concept of internationalisation of teaching practice as a pathway to the teacher competences and employability skills of future teachers. The outline of the article is as follows. Section One frames the relationship between graduate employability and internationalisation and identifies some of the challenges and demands these place on higher education institutions. The focus of the text is subsequently narrowed down to teacher education and refined to the employability of future teachers of English. The theme of the future role of teachers is covered by introducing a current 2020-2023 Erasmus+ funded project *Teachers of English for Future Europe (TEFE): EU mobility and employability through the Internationalisation of Teaching Practice*. By outlining the project vision, methodology and planned outputs, the article presents a case study of a research-informed, yet predominantly practically oriented, international academic initiative undertaken in the area of teacher education.

**Graduate employability and internationalisation.** The employability of university graduates has been actively debated over the past few decades<sup>1</sup>, compelling universities all over the world to review and challenge their educational programmes. The reason for such a high level of sustained interest is that “the term ‘graduate employability’ has become synonymous with the ways in which the relationship between higher education and the economy is now understood” [Tomlinson and Holmes 2017: 1]. Although this relationship is logical and pragmatically sound, it has significant implications for how institutions of higher education structure, design, organise and run their study programmes. In other words, while “‘employability’ may be a British term”, the contribution of higher education to the graduate labour market has – through the

<sup>1</sup> See Chapters 1 and 2 in Tomlinson and Holmes [2017] for an overview of key themes in considering the topic of graduate employability.

lens of local, national and global economy – become an international issue [Knight and Yorke 2004: 1].

Graduate employability, i.e., suitability for graduate employment, has been conceptualised as:

[A] set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy [Yorke 2004: 8]<sup>1</sup>.

In teacher education specifically, this means that universities are not only responsible for producing a sufficient number of newly qualified teachers (NQTs), but that their teacher graduates will commence, sustain and continuously develop their teaching career. The professional work of such teachers subsequently becomes conducive to the personal, intellectual and socio-cultural development of the new generation of pupils and students, which fosters exactly the types of contributions economies require from teacher education to ensure sustainability and growth.

However, the higher education formula for generating highly successful teacher graduates is not that simple. The teaching environment is continuously changing, which places numerous demands on NQTs. These changes, to a varying degree in different countries, are dominated by both political and technical issues of modern teaching. Increasingly complex educational policies and teaching regulations, a high administrative load, low recognition of the teaching profession, unavailability of mentoring schemes for starting teachers, inadequate financial reward, a lack of Personal Development Programmes and career development schemes, and an academic inertia to do what is appropriate further complicate the situation, stifle proactivity, and inhibit innovation.

Within the EU area, the adverse effect of these issues has manifest itself in the teacher employment market. For example, in 2020 the Education and Training Monitor highlighted the following points:

– The teaching workforce is ageing in most Member States. In some countries (Estonia, Lithuania, Hungary, Portugal and Italy) more than half of the teachers are above the age of 50.

– Shortages of qualified teachers are emerging in the majority of Member States, which is largely due to the low attractiveness of the profession.

– The attractiveness of the teaching profession remains low. According to the TALIS<sup>2</sup> survey, only 18% of teachers think that the teaching profession is valued by society.

Therefore, in teacher education, developing both mobility and employability skills of future teachers involves more than fostering the appropriate attitudes and skills. It also requires preparing future graduates for the realities of the labour market, which may not always be favourable in terms of offering a degree of employment security in their country of graduation. Inevitably, the teachers' labour market will at times also reflect economic downturns and socio-demographic trends, which impact on the ability of future teacher graduates to apply themselves as teaching professionals.

In this paper, as well as in the actual *Teachers of English for Future Europe (TEFE)* project, we subscribe to the idea that in today's education market alongside the essential core skills of becoming a teacher, the employability, mobility, and professional identity of future teachers must be developed with an international perspective in mind – and with due regard to the life-long career of teachers in the profession. This, in turn, may only be achieved when teacher education is focused on enhancing graduate employability by supporting holistic learning in an international context. In the preparation of future teachers, this means challenging teacher education and teacher training programmes to re-think the professional identity of future teachers. Specifically, future teachers need to be encouraged to become the ambassadors of global citizenship. The global professional mindset will subsequently help them apply themselves to react with flexibility to the supply and demand of

<sup>1</sup> This is one of the most quoted employability definitions. It has been adopted by the Enhancing Student Employability Co-ordination Team (ESECT), part of the UK's Higher Education Academy, and used in and cited in a number of publications by ESECT.

<sup>2</sup> The Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) asks teachers and school leaders about working conditions and learning environments at their schools to help countries face diverse challenges (see <https://www.oecd.org/education/talis/>).

the teaching profession across the EU and further afield. By implication, such a shift towards a new global paradigm of teaching as a profession cannot take place without the process of strategic internationalisation of higher education.

Internationalisation of higher education is included as a key topic in the majority of national and institutional educational strategies. The redefinition of internationalisation of higher education has also been accelerated in the recent period due to worldwide problems. The current impetus is to move away from the familiar and comfort of taught courses in educational establishments, increase the proportion of practical international pre-work experience, and adopt and utilise existing online technologies to maximise the effect of international learning [e.g., Johnson 2021; Lorber and Prem 2020].

Through internationalisation, institutions of higher education also increasingly recognise and acknowledge that education is a “public” rather than “private good” [Fakunle and Chan 2021]. The close alignment between the role of HE institutions and trans-national economic needs may be illustrated, for example, through the vision for the Czech national internationalisation strategy<sup>1</sup> [2021: 2] formulated as:

Due to the international dimension and the quality of education, research and the third role, Czech universities are preparing their graduates for a leading role in the global knowledge society, thereby contributing to the prosperity and sustainable development of communities at home and abroad.

Thus, the bottom line of any vision of international education is the development of global competences and high-quality education [Muscatelli and Gleason 2021].

*Teachers of English for Future Europe (TEFE)* envisages the future role of teachers and actively engages in developing an international platform to advance its concept. This paper sets out the project vision, methodology and planned outputs. In addition, the ambition of the project partners to internationalise teaching prac-

tice across their five<sup>2</sup> teaching institutions is explained and outlined, with a focus on developing a TEFE Employability Framework as a pathway to the mobility and employability skills of future teachers of English.

**TEFE Project: International initiative of six European universities.** *Teachers of English for Future Europe (TEFE): EU mobility and employability project* is a three-year international collaborative initiative of six European universities:

University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, Czech Republic (coordinating institution)  
Aston University, United Kingdom  
Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia  
Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland  
Public University of Navarra, Spain  
University of Passau, Germany

The partners have a shared interest in promoting and sustaining the internationalisation of teacher education. They all view this as a strategic objective, and it is one they have (to a greater or lesser extent) begun to implement. The six institutions have therefore come together to examine how they prepare pre-service and newly qualified teachers of the English language for employability and trans-mobility across the EU.

The project is funded under the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership scheme and coordinated by the University of South Bohemia in Ceske Budejovice, Czech Republic. The project commenced in September 2020 and is due to be completed in August 2023.

**Project Methodology.** Aligned with the applied linguistic principle of making research and field work practically relevant [Roberts 2002], the TEFE project methodology integrates the vision of teacher education change with collaborative working of linguists, educators, student teachers and teacher mentors. The research element of the project delivers centres on annual, cyclical data collection across the TEFE partner institutions. The ‘ac-

<sup>1</sup> Published as part of the *Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education for the Period from 2021*, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2021, available from <https://www.msmt.cz/areas-of-work/tertiary-education/strategic-plan-of-the-ministry-for-higher-education-for-the?lang=2>.

<sup>2</sup> In the consortium of six partner universities, the role of Aston University is that of a “critical friend” who provides research expertise, external assessment and impartial feedback to the project. With a high degree of relevance to the project, Aston University has a fine track record in the development of soft skills and their transfer to specific institutional and business environments. In addition, the ELT and action research expert knowledge of Aston educators continuously help to inform the project and the delivery of its outcomes.

tion-orientated research paradigm' is promoted, drawing on the notion of 'doing research with and for, rather than on participants' [e.g., Cameron et al. 1992]. As an action-centred learning project [Carr and Kemmis 1986, Schön 1983], the partners regularly review the progress against the outputs, make changes, evaluate the impact, test and implement the results. Experiential learning and self-reflection are regularly practised "in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own [participants'] practices, their [participants'] understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out" [Carr and Kemmis 1986: 162]. Much of the work is undertaken online at regular review meetings as well as physically at the

planned visits to partner institutions. Students are also encouraged to actively participate in the achievement of the outputs by providing feedback and working on specific areas of the project.

The overall aim of the project is to develop a framework for the internationalisation of teaching practice (ITP). The project results rest on the successful delivery of four intellectual outputs, three intensive study programmes and three intensive staff training events. The project will conclude with an international conference held in the spring of 2023 at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland. The TEFE Project overview is provided in Figure 1 below.

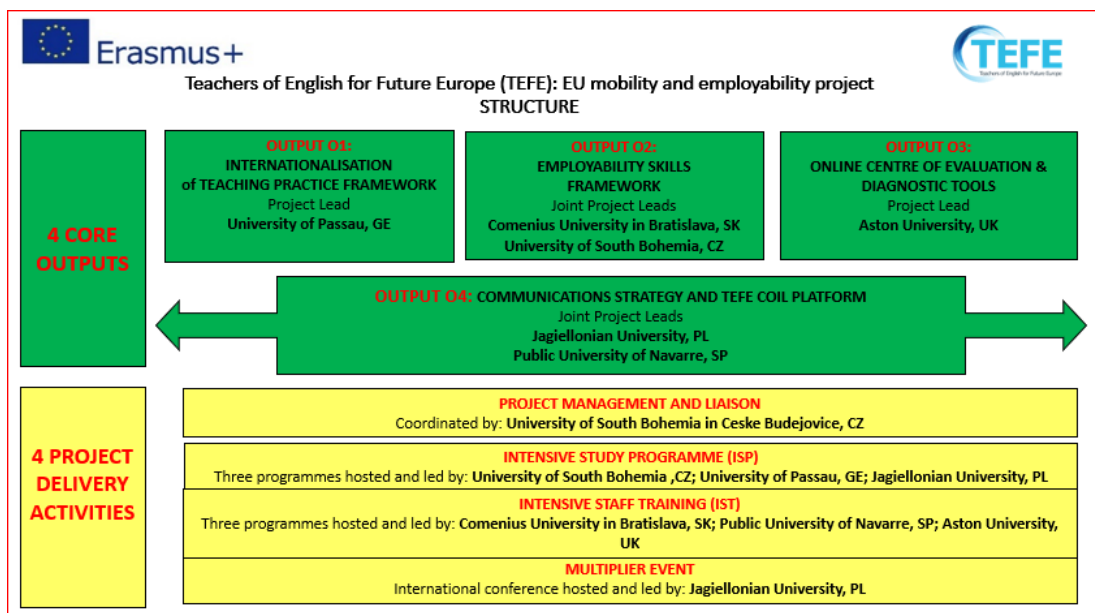


Figure 1: Teachers of English for Future Europe (TEFE) – Project Overview

The four intellectual outputs build towards the achievement of the project goal – the internationalisation of teaching practice. They include:

1. Output O1 – TEFE Internationalisation of Teaching Practice Framework (TEFE ITP Framework).
2. Output O2 – TEFE Employability Skills Framework.
3. Output O3 – TEFE Online Centre of Diagnostic and Evaluation Tools.
4. Output O4 – Communications Strategy and TEFE COIL Platform.

Individually, each output has a project

lead or joint project leads who are responsible for the management and achievement of the output and who direct the activities of the other partners in contributing towards this goal. As a package, outputs one and two lay the methodological groundwork to develop both mobility and the employability skills of future teachers of English across the TEFE consortium. Output three curates and creates a series of resources that partner institutions and their students can draw on when considering how to both reflect on and then implement internationalisation and the mobility of TEFE across the partner institutions. Finally, output

four sets up a *collaborative online international learning* (COIL) platform that will stimulate the creation of the TEFE community of practice, and will facilitate remote learning, virtual professional networking, and peer-to-peer network communication. The project website ([www.tefe.online](http://www.tefe.online)) will operate as the COIL hub from where these activities will be mediated.

Having outlined the methodology for the entire project, this paper reflects on the plans to achieve Output O2 – TEFE Employability Skills Framework.

**Through Internationalisation to Employability of Future Teachers of English.** The question to be answered is: *In what principled way can an internationalisation project such as the TEFE assist in the development of graduate employability of future teachers of English?* To outline the TEFE standpoint, there are three important lines of argument to be considered.

Firstly, the employability arena for future teachers of English clearly spans beyond the national boundaries of the teachers' home country. Reflecting this competently in the structure and delivery of teacher education programmes requires a strategic and coordinated international initiative. In TEFE, such an initiative has been enabled through the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership. The challenge faced by the consortium partners is in maximising the opportunities of teacher graduates in the international teaching market, which requires them to determine how their individual "institutions might exploit, through their curricula, the commonalities of good learning and employability" [Knight and Yorke 2004: 197].

The TEFE project pursues this challenge through designing a variety of practical learning opportunities that will be available in the co-curriculum of the partners and which student teachers will undertake as part of their international pre-work teaching experience. Over the three years of the project, these internationalisation teaching activities are developed collaboratively by teacher educators, student teachers and teacher mentors. They are also piloted during the core project activities of intensive study programmes and intensive staff training events (see Figure 1). The ultimate aim of the partners is to create a portfolio of such internationalisation activities that will directly underpin the undertaking of international teaching practice, the delivery of which will be sustainable in the life course of

the partner universities. Hence, the activities must be embedded within the institutional teaching context of the consortium universities. To sustain the running of the TEFE activities in the future, standard Erasmus+ funding streams are considered in addition to institutional funding – which may or may not be always available to all consortium institutions.

The second argument that underscores the education of future teachers of English is that good quality language teaching surpassed the mere development of linguistic competence a long time ago. Teachers of English – and even more so those teachers who use English as a language of instruction to mediate disciplinary learning – also foster multicultural respect with a view that students should become socialised into living successfully in a global society [Bosio 2019]. In relation to graduate employability, teaching through English thus affects "the entire range of competencies – knowledge, skills and attributes – as well as the values, behaviours and attitudes underpinned by international, intercultural and global perspectives" [Bowles and Murphy 2020: 261]. To prepare future teachers of English both for the demands, opportunities and challenges of teaching in the European or international territory, teacher education must not be confined to an exclusively national initiative or be embedded (as is often the case) in national stereotypes.

To illustrate the gravity of this point, in 2019 the six TEFE partners undertook across their institutions a short needs analysis focusing on internationalisation and mobility of future teachers of English. Although most respondents understood the existing opportunities in terms of internationalisation and mobility, they could rarely relate it to their own professional teacher development. In other words, the exchanges and experiences student teachers took part in seldom developed their transition-to-employment skills explicitly and strategically. Only in the minority of cases, did the respondents undertake their teaching practice or its respective part as teachers of English or teaching assistants in ELT/TESOL classes at institutions other than their home university. For the TEFE partners, the needs analysis survey thus confirmed what may be a more widespread phenomenon: the lagging of teacher education and general ignorance of the need to incorporate the international perspective into

the teacher study and training programmes.

In the TEFE project, we take up this challenge as part of the Internationalisation of Teaching Practice Framework (see Figure 1, output O1). Although we agree that individually we deliver high quality teacher education/training programmes and understand the changing employment market across the EU, through our TEFE initiative we want to be more proactive and systematic in innovating our existing teacher education/training programmes by internationalising the practical part of our respective teacher education/training programmes. The core elements of this change will be: experiential learning and competence development through self-reflection. Procedurally, participating student teachers will be introduced throughout their studies to a structured set of internationalisation activities combining physical and virtual mobility. These activities will provide first-hand pre-work experience of international teaching practice. Secondly, the authentic international experience will stimulate the development of global (transferable) teaching competences.

To conclude the argument outlining how an internationalisation project such as the TEFE may assist in the development of graduate employability of future teachers of English, it is important to explain how the TEFE project operationalises the concept of “global competences” and the concept of the more general “teacher employability skills”. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD 2018: 7], global competences refer to:

[T]he capacity to examine local, global and intercultural issues, to understand and appreciate the perspectives and world views of others, to engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions with people from different cultures, and to act for collective well-being and sustainable development.

They therefore constitute general, underlying skills that work in the way of shaping attitudes, values and identities, professional teaching identity not excluded. Effectively, without these competencies no professional teacher can apply themselves internationally. To embrace the development of global competences as part of teacher professional education and training, the element of international teaching experience must therefore be in place.

Procedurally, as further maintained by

OECD (ibid.), global competencies can be acquired both through international mobility and internationalisation at home, through the internationalisation of the curriculum, the introduction of digital education, including virtual forms of international cooperation, and the presence of international students and university staff. In the TEFE project, we view these processes as central to the development of teacher competences, including both global as well as more generic, transferable employability skills. They will also be integrated into the setup of the internationalisation pre-work teaching experiences that the consortium will adopt and introduce to future teachers of English.

In the project, teacher employability skills are developed through the TEFE Employability Skills Framework (see Figure 1, output O2) introduced in the following section.

#### **Defining Teacher Competences: Towards the TEFE Employability Skills Framework.**

Defining teacher competences has become an integral part of the process of renegotiating and restructuring the educational standards to reflect the ever-changing needs of society. Educational policy makers all around the world have been publishing documents that focus on defining educational outputs rather than inputs for all types and levels of educational institutions and study programmes. The focus has been on determining precise measurable descriptors of learners’ knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours. In the 1990s, this tendency gradually turned into a worldwide movement which Richards and Rodgers [2015: 162] call the Standards Movement. New types of national curriculum documents, competence frameworks and (self-) assessment portfolios have been emerging since to systematise and monitor the teaching-learning-assessment process and teacher education in general.

This movement, as well as the contribution of educational documents and published frameworks, has been considered in the conception of the *TEFE Employability Skills Framework* (see Section 4 below). Conceptually, the most influential of these documents and frameworks have evolved along four tiers of employability and language education competences. A brief review of these documents follows.

The first level of competences is represented by the **global competences** as defined in 2018 *PISA Global Competence Framework* (as

discussed in Section 2) and by general concepts of transferable employability skills. Overall, this first tier of competences and skills promotes cultural awareness and respectful interactions in increasingly diverse societies, employability, effective use of modern information, communication technologies and social networks, and the ability to respond to social, political, economic and environmental challenges. By implication, global competences emphasise the crucial role of education in reaching sustainability goals as they are defined in the 2030 *Agenda for Sustainable Development* [United Nations 2015].

The second tier of **general employability skills** has been informed by a new and comprehensive *Skills Agenda for Europe* published in 2016 by the European Commission, which in 2020–2025 continues as the *European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience*. The purpose of this document is to ensure that people develop a broad set of skills including critical thinking, entrepreneurship competence, problem solving skills and digital competences early on in life. Only such development will make the most of Europe's human capital and ultimately boost employability, competitiveness and growth in Europe. In the USA, a similar initiative has been led by the Department of Education of the U.S. government and resulted in the creation of *PCRN Common Framework for Employability Skills (2015–2017)*. The focus on applied knowledge, development of professional identity as well as of interpersonal skills and personal qualities of students preparing for their profession has been the common denominator for both documents.

The third, teacher specific, tier of documents and frameworks addresses **teacher competences and standards**. Teacher competences, as Koster and Degerink [2008] emphasise, are critical to the successful undertaking of the teaching profession which is firmly embedded and heavily dependent on interpersonal interaction. The portfolio of teacher competences is therefore considerably complex as it entails a “combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and personal characteristics, empowering the teacher to act professionally and appropriately in a situation, deploying them in a coherent way” [ibid: 139].

The key European Commission documents directly addressing teacher competences

include: *Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications* (2010) and *Supporting teacher competence development for better learning outcomes* (2012). In addition, the TEFE project has also drawn from four teacher competences frameworks. Two published by the British Council: *Continuing Professional Development Framework for Teachers* (2015), and *Continuing Professional Development Framework for teacher educators* (2017). And two Australian frameworks: *Competency Framework for Teachers* (2004), and *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (2018). Importantly, all of these documents advocate a shared vision of teacher competences that are developed through lifelong and experiential learning and are subdivided into domains of knowledge, skills, personal features (attributes) and professional engagement. The development of teacher competences and standards is then scaled against the individual teacher career stages, including stages of graduate teachers, proficient teachers, highly accomplished teachers and lead teachers (as is, for example, the case of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*).

Finally, the most specific level of competences – **English language teacher competences** – considered as a part of the elaboration of the *TEFE Employability Skills Framework* reaches towards the professional standards of English (foreign language) teachers. Here the following frameworks and portfolios have been reflected on:

- *A Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches* (FREPA) (2012) published by the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe.

- *ACTFL /CAEP Program Standards for the Preparation of Foreign Language Teachers* (2013–2015) published by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

- *Cambridge English Teaching Framework* (2018) published by Cambridge Assessment English.

- *European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages – EPOSTL* (2007) published by the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe.

- *European Profile for Language Teacher Education* (2004) published by the University of Southampton.

- *The Equals Framework for Language Teacher Training and Development* (2016) published by EAQUALS.



All frameworks of English language teacher competences logically focus on the target language competence and specific language abilities connected to the fact that the (often non-native) foreign language teacher serves as the principal model of the target language and constantly monitors learners' language outputs. The knowledge component, to give but a few examples, involves theories of foreign language learning and acquisition, knowledge of possible causes of communication difficulties and ways of overcoming them, as well as the knowledge of appropriate metalinguistic terminology. The skill component concerns mainly teacher-learner interactions and the abilities of the teacher to develop all language skills, as well as intercultural aspects of the communicative competence. The attributes (personal characteristics) and professional engagement component remains the same as in the case of general frameworks of teacher competences and employability competences.

The internationalisation of teaching practice has, through its element of experiential learning, a considerable potential to contribute to the development of general transferable skills, assist in gaining self-awareness of one's personal attributes, and support professional engagement and the forming of professional identity. Standard ELT methodology courses, didactics and teaching practicums then systematically develop and assess the so called "hard" professional skills and competences and are typically undertaken within the local national context. Hence, combining a standard teacher education programme with an international teaching practice represents the pathway to employability for future teachers of English.

#### **TEFE Employability Skills Framework.**

The *TEFE Employability Skills Framework* seeks to define a specific set of teacher competences, skills and attitudes required by teachers of English who are entering the global language teaching environment. The purpose of this document is therefore to, firstly, assist teacher graduates in gaining and maintaining employment in the teaching profession as a career for life; and secondly, to be ready for working as teachers of English abroad or within their home environment where culturally heterogeneous groups of learners are becoming the norm.

The *TEFE Employability Skills Framework* does not aspire to present an entirely new and

original set of descriptors. On the contrary, we have chosen to build up our outputs on existing and well-established documents and tailor the *Employability Skills Framework* to the local educational environment of the TEFE consortium institutions. Specifically, we draw from the four tiers of employability competences and skills introduced in Section 3 and seek to identify common intersections among them. The genesis of the *TEFE Employability Skills Framework* is developed jointly by all TEFE partner institutions by simultaneously applying the top-down and bottom-up approaches of research and field activity. The top-down approach comprises the following stages:

- conducting a literature review of existing competence frameworks, portfolios, curriculum documents and educational policies aimed at developing global competences, transferable and employability skills, teacher competences and language-teacher competences;
- producing a set of diagnostic and assessment tools which can be used to analyse existing employability practices and identify possible gaps in institutional employability policies;
- identifying and defining core TEFE mobility and employability competences with a focus on those transferable skills and personal attributes that can be efficiently developed through a variety of internationalisation activities;
- determining descriptors of the TEFE core competences;
- producing the methodology for the implementation of TEFE project internationalisation activities across all partner institutions;
- testing of the *TEFE Employability Skills Framework* to obtain both internal and external feedback;
- publishing the TEFE Glossary which will become an integral part of the *TEFE Employability Skills Framework*. This will ensure mutual understanding within the current TEFE consortium as well as simplify the integration of new future partners;
- compiling two visionary and value forming documents that all TEFE partners will adopt in fostering the *TEFE Employability Skills Framework – Charter of Newly Qualified Teachers of English* and *Charter of Teacher Training Educators*;
- dissemination of the material through TEFE project website, final conference, printed

publications as well as other media channels.

The bottom-up approach is based on a series of Intensive Study Programmes and Intensive Staff Training events designed for three target groups of recipients: student-teachers and newly qualified teachers, university educators, and teacher mentors. The events consist of a variety of collaborative tasks, lectures, workshops, questionnaire surveys and structured interviews. All of these activities are performed in trans-national workgroups. They are preparatory in nature and their objective is to develop the mobility and employability competences of all TEFE project participants. The ultimate internationalisation activity in the TEFE package is the International Teaching Practice (ITP), where the goal of the TEFE consortium is to enable student-teachers of English to experience a part of their practical teacher training in different foreign countries. The key processes in the bottom-up genesis of the *TEFE Employability Skills Framework* include:

- evaluation of existing pedagogical approaches and tools that actively develop employability skills and knowledge of future teachers of English across the TEFE consortium institutions;

- identification of “gap” employability skills and knowledge that the consortium partners either do not have as part of their current curriculum offer or are not able to advance through their existing study programmes;

- identification of good internationalisation and employability practices that could serve as showcases to be shared across TEFE partner institutions;

- compilation of the “*Preparing-to-go International Teaching Practice*” resource pack which is a set of self-learning, self-reflection and self-awareness ITP materials that the TEFE consortium will have designed as a pedagogic resource that teacher educators and teacher mentors will use to guide and elicit experiential learning from its student teachers.

Although the project is live and there is much to do, the project has value in informing the movement towards creating teachers of the future. Whether TEFE will stand the test of time is at this point – on completion of Year One of the project – impossible to determine. However, the enthusiasm of all project partners involved seems to indicate that there is lot of weight in the argument to re-think and

change teacher education of future teachers of English. This was further reinforced by students attending the first Intensive Training Programme (Sept 2021) and the positivity about their experiences and the partners’ approach to student development.

**Conclusion.** This article has provided information on a current Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project *Teachers of English for Future Europe (TEFE): EU mobility and employability through the Internationalisation of Teaching Practice*. By outlining the project vision, the set up and engagement of the partners in developing the TEFE Employability Framework, a number of relevant points were considered and discussed.

Firstly, the EU teaching reality is becoming increasingly multilingual and multicultural, which creates new employment opportunities for qualified and motivated teachers. To prepare new teachers to competently face the challenges of teaching internationally, teacher education itself needs to change.

Secondly, the paper has argued for the need to create strategic partnerships<sup>1</sup> between universities which share this educational vision. Such partnerships will jointly seek the support of their respective institutional infrastructures to redesign and innovate their existing teacher education programmes. Moreover, these partnerships will also place the development of global competences and employability skills at the heart of their educational curricula.

Thirdly, it has been argued that internationally facing teacher education would not be possible without incorporating experiential learning and reflexivity as these processes directly impact on the shaping of attitudes, values and professional identities of future teachers. In relation to employability, appropriate attitudes and professional outlook also crucially underpin the employability and success of teacher graduates.

Fourthly, the article argued to transform international mobility from the well-

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<sup>1</sup>This claim is in direct alignment with the European Commission initiative *European Universities* (see [https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-education-area/european-universities-initiative\\_en#:~:text=The%2041%20European%20University%20alliances%20will%20test%20different,scaled%20up%20under%20the%20next%20Erasmus%20programme%202021-2027](https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-education-area/european-universities-initiative_en#:~:text=The%2041%20European%20University%20alliances%20will%20test%20different,scaled%20up%20under%20the%20next%20Erasmus%20programme%202021-2027)).

understood environment of taught courses to more developmental and practice-oriented exchanges. This argument has gained even more emphasis after the 2019–2021 pandemic that has resulted in unprecedented changes undertaken in the field of education in Europe if not across the world. By harnessing both existing and emerging technology to create platforms for collaboration, continued learning

and self-development, educators will be able to stimulate the engagement of participating student teachers through internationalisation activities that will combine both physical and virtual mobility. Such learning and professional growth will subsequently nurture the development of the employability skills of future teachers in Europe.

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