Becoming an EFL Teacher in a Developing Country

A Qualitative Case Study from the Republic of Niger

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Abstract

This research study examined the effectiveness of initial English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher education in a Sub-Saharan African context (Niger). It draws on theoretical perspectives from Stenhouse (1967; 1975), Schön (1987; 1991), Vygotsky (1978) and Freire (2000), who defined effective teaching as a process of sharing experience, posing problems, reflecting-in-action and creating meaningful interaction with and for learners. The study therefore situates effective teacher learning as a process of creating and reconstructing knowledge, taking into account student teachers' prior knowledge and experience rather than transmitting predefined knowledge to them. With these theoretical perspectives in mind, the research was carried out through a qualitative case study framework. An EFL programme was selected, and classroom observation, semi-structured interviews and documents review were undertaken based on a theoretical sampling process for data gathering. Consequently, three modules were observed over a full semester, and twenty-two participants (eighteen students, one part-time educator, one full-time educator and two other educators wearing the hats of administrators) offered interview data.

Using thematic analysis strategies, the study has revealed the predominance of traditional approaches of English language teacher education (ELTE) within the EFL programme. The latter offers linguistic and cultural knowledge as the key element for becoming an EFL teacher; it does not provide much in terms of professional pedagogical knowledge and skills. This situation is exacerbated by the predominant modes of course delivery and assessment through which memorisation and rote learning are emphasised. Other findings include students' attitude towards speaking English and reading as a form of resistance to practices established through educational borrowing, which characterises the review process in that context. The examination of certain institutional and contextual factors has also revealed the extent to which large classes, programme policy, shortage of academic staff and academic resources negatively affect teaching, learning and educators' professional development. These factors can be regarded as colonial legacies and the consequence of underdevelopment characterised by the lack of solid funding schemes for higher education institutions.

Overall findings suggest that the effectiveness of initial EFL teacher preparation within the studied programme is impeded by both pedagogical and institutional factors. Theoretically, findings confirm assumptions relating to the influence of English as an international language and globalisation on educational practices in diverse context. Methodologically, they raise issues pertaining to the need for customisation of research based on beliefs, norms and values of local contexts. To cater for these factors, possible improvements could be secured through a restructure of the ELTE curricula and establishment of an inquiry-based teaching and participatory review framework.

Acknowledgement

I, the academic adventurer #100042508
I looked through the window of my academic journey
I see several scenes of my difficult adventure
I see those days of fights with myself
I see those days my brain dictated me fear and complex
I see those days I forgot my fear and embraced my challenges

I, the academic adventurer #100042508
I looked through another window of my academic journey
I see Moons lighting the roads of my adventure
They made me theirs
They made my concerns their own
They cleared my path to the kingdom of knowledge

Now looking into the window of my future,
I see myself carrying books on a flying horse.

I use this poem as my deepest way to show gratitude for the tremendous support and guidance Professor Nalini Boodhoo and Professor John Elliott provided to me. They are the MOONS I referred to in my poem. Without their generous and constructive advice, this work would have not been produced. I will always be indebted to them.

Other Moons that provided support include my family (mainly my mother who never failed to express her concerns about my wellbeing away from home) and the participants who graciously offered time and data. There is also the EDU and PGR community with whom I constantly shared and gained many useful ideas. To all these, I am very grateful.

Beyond these, my utmost gratitude goes to the Faculty of Social Sciences who chose to trust my abilities and funded my studies for three years.

This poor Niger citizen will never forget this selfless and noble act.

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List of Abbreviations

APA…….. American Psychological Association
CAMES.... Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l'Enseignement (African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education)
CLT…….. Communicative Language Teaching
CM……... Cours Magistral (Lecture)
CPD…… Continuing Professional Development
DRC……. Democratic Republic of Congo
DUEJ…... Diplôme Universitaire d'Etudes Juridiques (Second year degree in law studies)
DUEL….. Diplôme Universitaire d'Etudes Littéraires (Second year degree in humanities and social sciences)
DUES….. Diplôme Universitaire d'Etudes Scientifique (Second year degree in science)
EFA……. Education for All
EFL/ESL.. English as a Second/Foreign Language
EIL…….. English as an International Language
ELF…… English as a Lingua Franca
ELT…… English Language Teaching
ELTE…... English Language Teacher Education
EU……… European Union
IBE…….. International Bureau of Education
ICT…….. Information and communication technology
IMF……. International Monetary Fund
LMD…… Licence-Master-Doctorat (Bachelor – Master – Doctorate)
MDG…… Millennium Development Goals
MLA…… Modern Language Association
NEPAD… New Partnership for Africa's Development
NS……… Native Speaker
NSS……. Non-Native Speaker
PDDE…... Programme Décennal pour le Développement de l'Education (10-year programme for educational development)
REESAO.. Réseau pour l'excellence de l'enseignement supérieur en Afrique de l'ouest (Network for Excellence in Higher Education in West Africa)
SAPs……. Structural Adjustment Programmes
SLA…….. Second Language Acquisition
SLTE…… Second Language Teacher Education
SSA…….. Sub-Saharan Africa
TBLT…… Task-Based Language Teaching
TEFL…… Teachers/Teaching of English as a Foreign Language
TOEFL…. Test of English as a Foreign Language
UE……… Unité d'Enseignement (course or group of courses)
UNDP…... United Nations Development Programme
USAID…. United States Agency for International Development
WHO…… World Health Organisation
ZPD…….. Zone of Proximal Development

Chapter 1

Background to the Study

1.1. Introduction

This thesis is an examination of factors that affect the effectiveness of initial preparation of teachers of English as a foreign language (TEFL) in a developing country (Niger) and argues for the need to restructure the ELTE curricula and establish an inquiry-based teaching and participatory review framework. In conducting this research, a qualitative case study framework was used to understand 1) the curricular practices of a selected EFL programme, 2) the way the programme curricula are reviewed, 3) the different opportunities offered to teacher educators for learning and development and 4) the contextual or institutional factors that influence the curricular practices.

In this chapter, I provide the preliminary information about the development of this research interest. This starts with an overview of the Nigerien social and economic contexts. Presenting these contexts is useful since Niger remains one of the less well-known countries. This assumption originated from my personal experiences and encounters with people, in different countries, who tend to take Niger for Nigeria. Second, I introduce the education system in order to underline its major characteristics. Due to the focus of the current research on initial EFL teacher education, a presentation about English language teaching (ELT) in Niger is embedded in this. Third, to extend the overview on the education system, I offer some analysis about the ongoing quality issues the country has been facing for almost two decades. The discussions about quality are necessary for understanding the reasons that guided my interest to examine the factors that affect the effectiveness of initial EFL teacher preparation in Niger. This is further explained through a presentation of the aim of the study, which highlights the main research questions. Other components to this chapter include the significance of the study and an overview of the nine upcoming chapters, which constitute the main body of the thesis.

1.2. General Background

Niger is a French-speaking country in West Africa. With 1.27 million sq km, it remains the largest country in that part of the continent. As reflected in *figure 1*, it is surrounded

by Nigeria and Benin in the south, Chad in the east, Algeria and Libya in the north, and Mali and Burkina Faso in the west. This geographical structure makes it a landlocked country. Its shortest access route to the sea goes through Benin, over 700 km. In terms of internal configuration, Niger is made of eight districts, namely Niamey (the capital city), Zinder, Maradi, Tahoua, Agadez, Diffa, Dosso and Tillaberi. Each of these districts has a governor who reports to the central administration.

Figure 1: Niger map

Despite its large size, Niger has a relatively small population. More than two thirds of the country is taken by the Sahara desert, which is hostile to habitation. A considerable part of the population lives in the south of the country where the climate conditions are more favourable. According to the most recent census, the population was officially estimated to 17,138,707 inhabitants (INS-Niger, 2012). Out of this number, the female population represents 50.3 percent. Another aspect of this population is the fact that its largest majority lives in rural areas (83.8 percent). Likewise, the population in Niger is very young (about 61 percent are below 20 years). This can be explained by the fact that Niger has the highest fertility rate in the world (The World Bank, 2016) – about 7.6 children per woman in 2015.

Historically, Niger was one of the French colonies, from the 1890s. It became independent on the 3rd of August 1960. It is home to several micro-cultures represented by eight tribes (Hausa, Djerma-Sonraï, Touareg, Peulh, Kanouri Manga, Toubou, Arab, and Gourmantché), each speaking a different language apart from the language of the colonizer – French – which is used as the official language. Due to the similarities of their cultural and historical heritage, these tribes have succeeded in breaking their boundaries in order to be present all over the country. This has allowed the emergence of a multilingual population. It is very common in Niger to find more than two languages within a family. According to Hovens (2002), there are more than 75 percent of the inhabitants in Niger who speak two languages or more. Additional to this, Niger is predominantly a Muslim country. The official proportion of the Muslim inhabitants is about 99 percent. The remaining 1 percent are Christians and those practising old religions.

In the political arena, Niger, as many other African countries, is still struggling to establish a credible and stable democratic system. From Independence to the present, Niger has experienced four military coups-d'états – in 1974, 1996, 1999 and 2010. These have always destabilised the country economically, despite the supposedly chanted purpose of the military juntas to establish social stability and justice. In fact, the so-called democracy started in 1991 following a national conference, which advocated and claimed for the introduction of multiparty system. The advent of the national conference gave birth to a radical activism, which forced the military junta to give power to a civilian transitional government. In 1993, the transitional government organised an election that brought to power the first president democratically elected.

Despite its size and a relatively small population, Niger remains the world's poorest country (UIS, 2014; UNDP, 2016) – with about only $938 GDP per capita compared to countries such as Norway where this is about $64,856. The territory is almost entirely arid and prone to severe climatic conditions. The only aspect that makes Niger well known in the world is its frequent droughts, which force the country to count on international support. The most disastrous droughts experienced by the country are the ones that occurred in the period of 1967 to 1983 and caused considerable damages to the country (Goumandakoye, 1992). The climate conditions in Niger are therefore never favourable for the citizens who heavily rely on agricultural activities, through farming

and grazing. In 2001, for example, it was estimated that about 80 percent of the active population in Niger were devoted to agricultural activities (INS-Niger, 2010). This may be regarded as logical since about 84 percent of the population live in rural areas. The large concentration of the population in agricultural activities is synonymous to a strong dependency of the national economy on that sector. Yet, it remains very traditional.

Beyond the Agricultural sector, the Economy in Niger also depends on the natural resources of the country. The number one natural resource is uranium, which is produced by a French company, Areva, since 1971. According to the World Nuclear Association (2016), Niger ranks the fourth in the world in terms of uranium resources and production. In 2009, the uranium cumulative production was estimated to 109,551 tons (INS-Niger, 2010). Other natural resources worth mentioning include gold, tin, and gypsum. Nonetheless, their production remains traditional. Improved ways of gold extraction are under implementation by some foreign companies in the Liptako area. The biggest growth prospects, today, lie in oil production commenced few years ago by China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC).

1.3. Education System in Niger

1.3.1. A Historical Overview

The education system in Niger has retained, for many years, the colonial legacy of the French system. It has remained elitist (Goumandakoye, 1992) and "limited to a few" (Chekaraou, 2011: 74). The colonial curriculum implemented in 1948 remained in use until the year 1987, despite the multiple initiatives through seminars and national debates held between the 1960s and 1980s. Some curricular reforms took place from 1960 to 1987 but only in terms of content. For example, in the 1970s, the exclusive teaching of French classics was replaced by African literature. The teaching of Niger history has also been introduced, as opposed to the history of France. The real reform of the colonial curricula happened only in 1987. This attempt was characterised by the need to contextualise the content and the methodology. Nonetheless, the resulting curricula were also found later to be over-general and their methods outdated (IBE, 2010). According to Goumandakoye (1992), one of the reasons for this failure was the lack of research in Niger about pedagogy and curricular practices (p. 6).

Another legacy the Nigerien schools maintained from the colonial era is the considerably low enrolment rate. Early attempts made to increase the rate included the use of audio-visual systems at school, but these were quickly abandoned after few experiments (Tanko, 2005). Geographical issues and negative attitudes towards the modern education (Goumandakoye, 1992), mainly in rural areas, have remained the biggest obstacles to schooling. As reported by UNESCO (1970), the structure of schools is affected by not only the lack of interest in education but also the low population density (p. 3). In some areas of the country, primary schools are operating based on two or more grades per classroom. Even though there have been noticeable improvements throughout the last 50 years of independence (1963 to 2013) due to demographic booms, the rate of enrolment is still low compared to many African countries. It has moved from 6.8 percent in 1963 (INS-Niger, 2010) to 70.6 percent in 2014 (UIS, 2014).

The most striking characteristic of the Nigerien education system that remained faithful to the colonial input was the fact that until the end of the 20th century, the country did not break with the colonial policy of education. All remained in conformity with the 1950's standards and guidelines (Goumandakoye, 1992). No attempt had ever been made to change and produce an original national policy. This might be due to the fact that, from 1960 to the 1980s, teachers were largely foreigners. Due to the lack of a higher education system in that era, there was no possibility to train enough local teachers. It was only in 1971 that the *Centre d'Enseignement Supérieur* (higher education centre) was created in order to reduce the number of students being trained abroad (Goumandakoye, 1992). This centre became a university in 1973 and was consisted of only two schools: the School of Science and the School of Pedagogy (Lingappa, 1977). It was only by the year 1985 that a comprehensive range of faculties were opened within the new university (Bloom et al., 2006). From 1958 to 1970, Niger students used to be sent to France and other neighbouring countries under the sponsorship of Niger government, international partners such as UNDP, WHO and UNESCO, and countries such as Russia, Germany, Algeria and the Great Britain (Lingappa, 1977). According to Lingappa, from 1974 to 1975, 583 students had been registered abroad. Only 180 were attending the new university.

It was only in 1998, under the wind of democracy, that a new education policy was developed. This policy, as stipulated in its first article, regulates the whole education

system in Niger. One of the major emphases of this regulation resides in the directives of the policy to link education to economic, social and cultural development (Tchitchi, 2003). It is from this new policy that the government developed the *Programme Décennal de Développement de l'Education* (PDDE – a 10-year programme for educational development) in 2003. This came as a reaction to the international pressure through the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and Education for All (EFA) to enhance access and quality of education as part of poverty reduction schemes (Bourdon et al., 2006). In fact, the focus of the PDDE had been exclusively made on basic education (primary and junior secondary levels). To a quantitative scale, one of the objectives of the PDDE had been to raise the rate of enrolment from 47.7 percent in 2002 to 100 percent in 2015 (Radi and Chang, 2005). Even though this objective was not attained in 2015, the current trends (about 72 percent) can be regarded as a significant progress compared to the rate in 1998 (32.4 percent) when the new policy was enacted.

In accordance to the new policy and the PDDE, several actions were initiated by the government. The first action consisted in increasing the number of schools and teachers all over the country. In 1998, the government introduced the system of contract teaching for the recruitment of low cost primary and secondary school teachers. This was reinforced in 2003 (IBE, 2010) for the purposes of PDDE. Already in 2002, the percentage of contract teachers at all the levels had exceeded 50 percent (Bourdon et al., 2006). The second action undertaken by the government consisted in reforming the curricula. Following from several forums that took place in 2005 (IBE, 2010), the curriculum developed in 1987 was judged irrelevant. Under the guidance of external consultants, a new curriculum development process was initiated in 2006 (Joannert et al., 2011). The resulting curricula are said to emphasise process learning rather than memorisation. Besides, it prioritises formative assessment, even though summative assessment remains in use to ensure progress from one level to another.

Recently, the PDDE had been subjected to several evaluations and adjustments to meet its objectives. In 2012 already, claims were formulated to revise the educational policy. The same year, the government passed the *Lettre de Politique Educative* (Directive for educational policy) to reinforce and extend the actions of the PDDE beyond the year 2015. Contrary to the PDDE, the letter of educational policy is not limited to basic

education; it covers senior secondary and higher education as well. Its targets are presented in *table 1* below.

Table 1: Key targets for 2020 (data from Le Sahel (2013)).

Level	Indicators	Actual	Objectives	
		2010	2015	2020
Preschool	Enrolment rate	4.6%	9.8%	15%
Basic School 1	Enrolment rate	64.8%	100%	100%
	Completion rate	49.3%	69.7%	90%
Basic School 2	Enrolment	17.8%	46%	81%
	Grade failure	19.8%	12.4%	5%
	Completion	35.3%	62.6%	90%
Vocational Schools	Enrolment	14.1%	19.6%	25%
Senior Secondary Schools	Enrolment	49.5%	62.2%	75%
	Completion	53.3%	71.7%	90%
	Contract teachers' %	67.2%	34%	0.8%
Higher Education	Student population	22,296	50,000	92,000

According to the official source (Le Sahel, 2013), achieving such an aggressive plan requires a budget of $5 billion. Niger is determined to contribute with one-fourth of its internal resources, which is equivalent to $3.3 billion. The remaining amount is expected to come from international donors. In 2012, a funding approval was made by the World Bank of an estimate of $84.2 million (The World Bank, 2013a) to contribute to that budget. It is of note that The World Bank has been financing several educational projects in Niger over the past years. The most recent project was the EFA Fast Track Initiative, which cost $8 million over three years, from 2009 to 2012 (The World Bank, 2013b). The current funding is supposed to cover the period of 2013 to 2020, and 70 percent will be devoted to primary education and the remaining 30 percent for secondary education.

1.3.2. The Structure of the System

There are three levels of education in Niger: primary, secondary and tertiary education. All of these exist as public or private institutions. They are separately managed by the Ministry of Primary Education, Ministry of Secondary Education, and Ministry of Higher Education and Research. Other types of school are run parallel to secondary schools but managed by the Ministry of Vocational and Technical Education. For primary level in Niger, compulsory education starts from seven years old. It takes six years to complete the full cycle. At the last stage (age 13), pupils are required to sit for a national exit examination. Based on the examination results, those who fail are required

to repeat the level for another year while those successful are admitted to secondary schools. The latter (except for normal schools and technical secondary schools) are made of two cycles: junior secondary schools (*collèges* in French) and senior secondary schools (*lycées*). The junior secondary school cycle lasts for four years while the senior level has three. It is upon successfully completing these two levels that students are given the possibility to undertake tertiary education.

Concerning tertiary public education, Niger has nine universities: Abdou Moumouni University of Niamey, Islamic University of Say, University of Zinder, University of Maradi, University of Tahoua, University of Diffa, University of Agadez, University of Dosso, and University of Tillabery. Abdou Moumouni University is the oldest university created in 1971. For the other universities, they have been created recently by the government in order to cope with the problem of access which is about 104 per 100,000 inhabitants (Le Sahel, 2014). Three of these were initially created as *Instituts Universitaires de Technologie* (IUT – Higher Education Institutes of Technology) in 2008 in upcountry districts. Each of them became a university in 2011 with the creation of one or two additional faculties. Concerning the five others, four were officially created in April 2014 as single-faculty universities and expected to open in October 2015. For the Islamic University of Say, it was created in 1974 under the leadership and funding of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). There is a tendency from Niger citizens to consider this university as an international institution due to its medium of instruction – Arabic – and the fact that it welcomes students from member countries of the OIC.

In terms of academic structures, universities in Niger (except the Islamic University of Say) offer the same curricula, because the new universities heavily relied on the first university of the country upon their creation. Their only difference lies in the fact that some courses offer higher qualifications than others do. In general, students are admitted upon obtaining their *baccalauréat* certificate from senior secondary schools. In the past, Abdou Moumouni University and Islamic University of Say used to offer four types of degrees: *Diplôme Universitaire d'Etudes Littéraires/Scientifiques/Juridiques* (DUEL/DUES/DUEJ – Second year degree in Humanities/Science/Law)*, Licence,*

Maitrise[1] and Doctorate. With the introduction of the *Licence-Master-Doctorat* system (LMD – Bachelor-Master-Doctorate) over the past five or six years, some degrees were cancelled (*DUEL/DUES/DUEJ* and Maitrise) and others have been introduced (Master).

1.3.3. ELT in Niger

As mentioned earlier, Niger is a country where French remains the official language. ELT mainly began in secondary schools. This commenced in the 1950s when French colonisers began to establish the secondary school system. It therefore stands as one of the colonial legacies and followed the same curricula as in France, where the teaching of English used to start only at secondary school level. This partly explains the lack of a well-articulated national policy in its regard. Similar to the colonial period, the goal attached to the teaching of English in Niger "is not meant for communication purposes among local citizens" (Ousseini, 2013) but rather for the preparation of interpreters and intermediaries for exchanges with the English-speaking countries. Today, ELT in Niger is also linked to the widespread use of English as an international language. However, for almost half a century, Niger had depended on other countries for the provision of English language teachers. For example, in 1975, the Nigerien government had to sign an agreement with Ghana in order to cope with a huge shortage. In 1978 already, there were more Ghanaian English language teachers than nationals (Goumandakoye, 1992). There exists no such agreement today due to the increase of capacity and access in the system of initial teacher education in Niger, but the shortage of EFL teachers is still apparent.

Pedagogically, ELT in Niger has experienced several changes since its inception. In the colonial era, ELT in Niger was carried out by French volunteers. Together with few nationals, they had used Grammar-Translation as their method of instruction. In the 1960s, the Direct Method was introduced with the arrival of some British volunteers sent by Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) (Goumandakoye, 1992). The Ghanaian teachers, who started in 1977 based on the 1975 agreement, also brought with them a method similar to Direct Method. The use of the Audio-Lingual Method and the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) came with the Peace Corps volunteers. Currently, CLT is the most predominant approach in the ELT curricula in that context.

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[1] These are degrees that universities in French speaking countries used to offer. DUEL/DUES/DUEJ after two years, Licence after three years, and Maitrise after four to five years. Maitrise here is different from Master's Degree. It is equated, most of times, to a Bachelor's Degree.

This is emphasised through trainings provided to in-service teachers by USAID, the American Cultural Centre and other partners.

In terms of foci of the ELT curriculum, little has changed since its revision in 1987. It focuses on three goals:

> *Practical objectives based on the use of English as means of communication, exchange and information;*
>
> *Cultural objectives based on the initiation into the cultures and civilisations of the English speaking world;*
>
> *Educational objectives based on the development of the students' abilities which would lead them to a better understanding of themselves and the world surrounding them (Goumandakoye, 1992: 92-3).*

Upon the endorsement of the new policy in 1998, several attempts were made to revise the curricula but with minor modifications. The current curricula were revised in 2009, and the goals are the same. Only the materials have changed from one version to another, due to several initiatives of material development based on local realities.

1.4. The Quality Debate in the Nigerien Education System

Over the last decade, the quality of education has constituted one of the major elements on the agenda of the education authorities in Niger. There has been a general concern expressed not only by the government and its partners, such as UNESCO and The World Bank, but also by the population, teacher educators, researchers, teachers and students themselves (Teachers for EFA, 2015). Even though enrolment rates have considerably increased over the past few years, the high dropout rate of the country has been regarded as an issue of quality. According to a UNESCO report, more than half of children cease to attend school by grade 5 in Niger, and it is likely that the vast majority of them do not learn the basics (UNESCO, 2014). The same report indicated that about 75 percent of those who fail the 5th or final grade of primary school remain illiterate. Another UNESCO statistical source underlined the fact that almost 75 percent of out-of-school young people in Niger have spent fewer than four years in school.

Other indicators of quality in the Nigerien education system can be found in the transition rates from primary to secondary schools and from the latter to tertiary education. To take examples from the years 2011, 2012, and 2013, the average yearly rate of primary school children who passed the national examinations never reached 55

percent (INS-Niger, 2014). This has even been worse at the secondary school level where, as demonstrated in *figure 2*, the rates of failure exceed 50 percent.

Scondary School Examinations Achievement

■ Passed ■ failed

Year	Passed	failed
2009	38%	62%
2010	31%	69%
2011	37%	63%
2012	45%	55%
2013	44%	56%
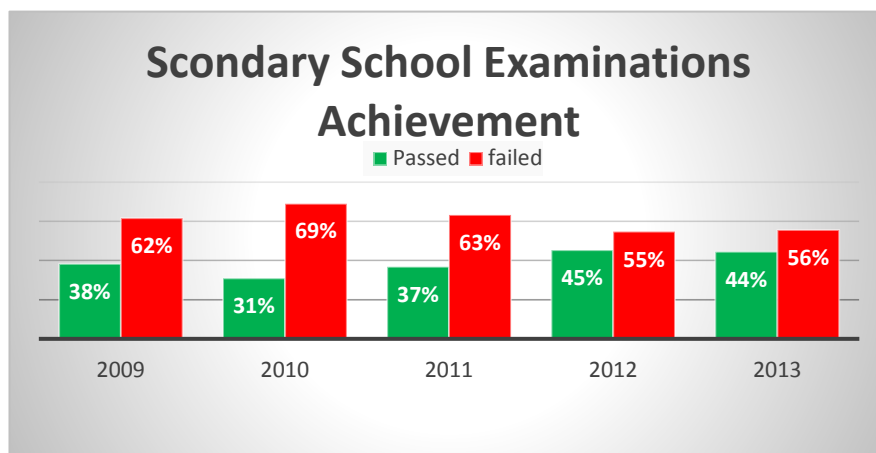
Figure 2: Exam achievements in secondary schools from 2009 to 2013

Even though this can be related to the elitist nature of the system (Chekaraou, 2011; Goumandakoye, 1992), much of it is attributed to the lack of quality in teaching. Analysts have tended to point at the limited financial resources of the country and, mainly, the introduction of contract teaching in Niger in order to meet some of the requirements set by the MDG and EFA summits.

The introduction of contract teaching in Niger has constituted a major milestone in relation to the downfall of quality in the education sector. After its introduction in 1998, it was reinforced in 2003. It came at a time when many governments around the world were facing financial crisis and looking for an alternative mechanism to replace the recruitment of permanent teachers whose salaries were judged to be more than six times the Gross National Product (GNP) per capita (Bourdon et al., 2010; Duthilleul, 2005; Fyfe, 2007; Pandey, 2009). Some of its main objectives, as reported by Duthilleul (2005), Fyfe (2007), and Pandey (2009), are to offer schooling opportunities to all children; to make schooling available in post-conflict and remote areas where there are no teachers; to enhance student teacher ratios; and to establish a cost effective strategy for increasing access.

As a consequence, the Nigerien government, through its PDDE, made the commitment to recruit 3000 contract teachers every year (Ousman et al., 2012). In 2010 already, contract teachers were representing 82 percent of the teaching force in primary schools and about 90 percent in secondary schools. From the beginning until 2006, contract

teachers used to be offered a quick training of 45 days upon recruitment (Abdelkader, 2014) and a salary of about $80 per month. With these measures, Niger was able to make the most significant increase of the world in terms of enrolment rate in five years (Fyfe, 2007). Its rate almost doubled "from 38 to 51 percent between 2002 and 2005" (Pandey, 2009: 57). This increase is illustrated in *figure 3* below.

Enrolment at Primary School

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Enrolment	48.3	48.9	49.5	52	55.9	59.7	63.4	67.3	69.4	70.2	70.6
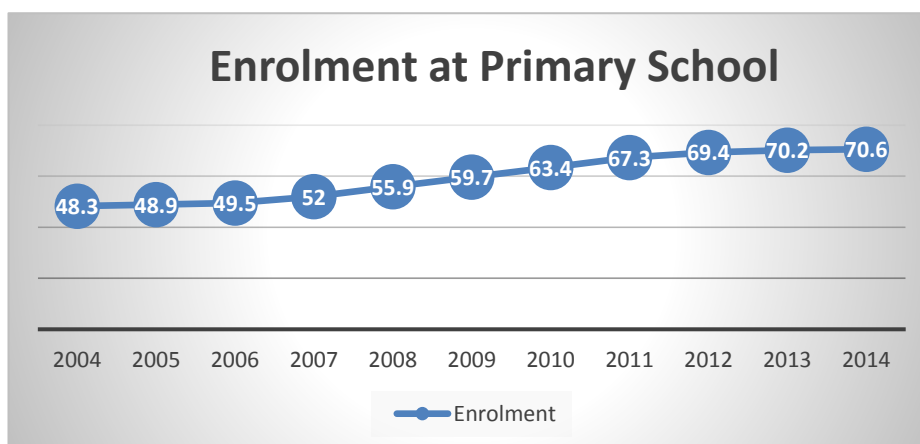
Figure 3: Enrolment rate evolution 2004 – 2014 (data from UIS (2014))

Taking this into account, contract teaching has enabled Niger to considerably increase access over the last decade (Abdelkader, 2014; Rabiou et al., 2010). It is also believed by certain analysts (Duthilleul, 2005; Fyfe, 2007) that this situation has enabled the government to address equity by providing schooling opportunities to many children who were not covered by the system before. This argument can however be challenged considering the growing concern around the quality of contract teaching. Equity may not be achieved if there is inequality as regards the quality of the teaching provided by permanent and contract teachers. Not all learners are taught by qualified and motivated teachers (Teachers for EFA, 2015).

Regardless of the achievement of access, many stakeholders have tended to view contract teaching as the main cause to the declining quality in the Nigerien education system. This view is supported by some studies conducted by local (Abdelkader, 2014; Rabiou et al., 2010) and foreign experts (Bourdon, 2010). Rabiou et al. (2010) tested and compared the achievement of primary school students in French and Math subjects at 2nd and 4th grades, and those taught by permanent teachers scored higher than those taught by contract teachers. The same study used interview data from stakeholders; their majority viewed contract teaching as the main reason of quality decrease. These findings have been confirmed by Bourdon et al. (2010) who analysed data on contract

teaching from Mali, Togo, and Niger and found that the case of Niger was showing a more negative impact.

The issue of quality is also acknowledged by the educational authorities themselves (Abdelkader, 2014; Chekaraou, 2011); many official reports underlined this. There is a growing realisation that the problems reside in the conditions surrounding the implementation of contract teaching (Rabiou et al., 2010). Initially, due to the shortage of qualified teachers, out-of-school individuals with secondary school certificates had been massively recruited and sent to schools after a short training of forty-five days. This has been central to discussions within the country, and many stakeholders believe this to be a reason enough for the decrease in quality provision. Not only do recruits lack sufficient content knowledge but also the appropriate pedagogical skills for teaching (UNESCO, 2014).

Another issue is the fact that teachers are generally recruited with low salaries on a two-year fixed term contract. Job insecurity attributable to the two-year contract and the low salary are two major factors which cause teachers to lack motivation (Bourdon et al., 2006; Pandey, 2009). In Niger, contract teachers are known as a category of teachers who lack commitment not only to improve teaching but also to grow in the profession (Ousseini, 2013: 61). Due to the fact that the majority of contract teachers – at least at primary level – have embraced the teaching career due to the lack of better job opportunities (Ousseini, 2013; Rabiou et al., 2010), their employment is likely to pose problems of attrition (Pandey, 2009). This is more likely to affect qualified and skilled contract teachers who, upon receiving better offers, generally vacate their positions.

Nonetheless, addressing teachers' lack of motivation due to non-attractive compensation schemes and short-term contracts has recently been a government target. As Abdelkader (2014) stated, the Nigerien educational authorities have taken some actions to alleviate this issue. Salaries have been increased at 51 percent (around $120 at primary school and $200 - $300 at secondary school level), and healthcare cover has been provided. In addition, contract teachers are now gradually being awarded the status of permanent teachers. The government's plan is to incorporate 2500 contract teachers every year into the permanent teacher force. Yet the question of quality is still unresolved. While the educational authorities are now formulating commitment to recruit contract teachers

from initial teacher education institutions only, the latter are regarded as another factor that contributes to the lack of quality in contract teaching.

Over the last five years, initial teacher education institutions in Niger have also received negative criticism from donors and other stakeholders in relation to the quality of teaching. Traditionally, the initial preparation of primary school teachers is ensured by normal schools. Upon independence, there existed only three normal schools (with the status of junior secondary schools) admitting people with primary school certificates (Abdelkader, 2014). The duration of initial teacher preparation was then of three years and one year for practicum. In the 1970s, normal schools were given the status of senior secondary schools, and in 1980, they started to admit only students who passed the senior secondary school examinations. From that period, the preparation of primary school teachers became of one or two years duration (see *figure 4*). With the implementation of the PDDE in 2003, the duration of initial teacher preparation in normal schools was reduced to one year only in order to cater for the high demand of teachers. Presently, there exist seven normal schools (Ousman et al., 2012), and due to issues highlighted earlier the duration of training has recently been changed back to two years.
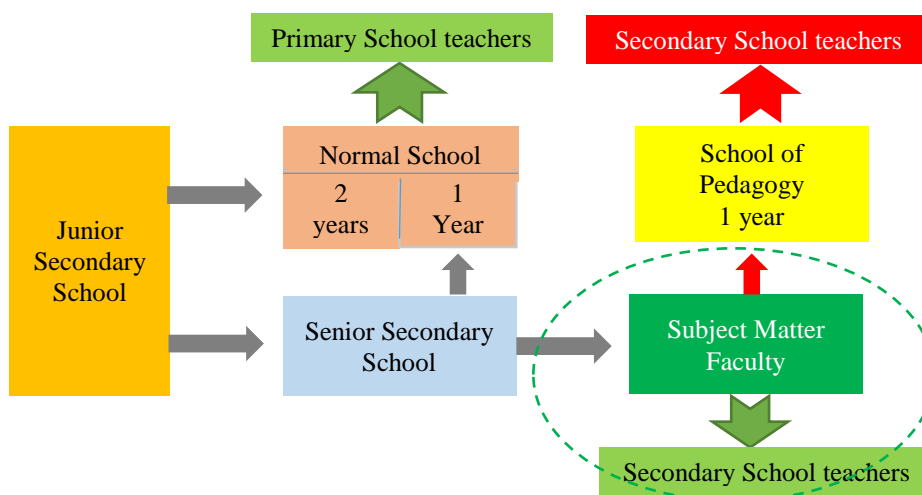
Figure 4: Initial Teacher Education System in Niger

The above history of constant changes in the duration of initial preparation of primary school teachers was a consequence of quality debates in which one-year preparation was viewed as insufficient (Abdelkader, 2014; Moussa, 2005). Graduates trained over one year are believed to lack enough teaching skills. This was expressed by Rabiou et al.

(2010) whose participants (contract teachers) showed a lack of teaching skills, and 75 percent of them were graduates of normal schools who received a one-year preparation after their secondary education.

However, the issue may not be solely attached to the brevity of initial preparation. As Rabiou et al. (2010) and Coulibaly (2010) underlined, preparation in normal schools is more theoretical and irrelevant to the context. Where practice is part of the programmes, trainees find themselves assigned to the supervision of contract teachers (Coulibaly, 2010: 41). In addition, teacher-trainers themselves are not skilled enough. Many of them are end-of-career primary school teachers (Moussa, 2005). These issues are the same as highlighted by directors of the Ministry of Education (OIT, 2006), and as Abdelkader (2014) indicated, measures from the government seem to be underway to reinforce the pedagogical aspects of initial teacher preparation within normal schools.

For secondary school teachers, their initial preparation used to be provided by the School of Pedagogy at Abdou Moumouni University. This institution also prepares school inspectors, advisors and normal school educators. Admission to the School of Pedagogy used to be based on a national test jointly organised by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour. The number of candidates to be trained was therefore based on a governmental decision and the budget available. To sit for the test, candidates were required to hold a degree from subject matter faculties – Faculty of Humanities and Faculty of Sciences. The duration of preparation was one year for all the disciplines and levels (see *figure 4*).

In 1998, however, upon the introduction of contract teaching, the School of Pedagogy stopped preparing secondary school teachers because of the government's decision to no longer recruit permanent teachers (Ousman et al., 2012) who were then judged costly to the national budget. This situation gave the opportunity to the subject matter faculties – faculty of humanities and faculty of sciences – to become the sole places where secondary school teachers are prepared. The newly created university – mainly those in Zinder and Maradi – have inherited this situation despite the recent re-opening of the School of Pedagogy under a special scheme to prepare junior secondary school teachers of combined disciplines – French-English for example – for remote rural areas of the country.

1.5. The Beginning of the Journey

The above discussions about quality of education in Niger justifies my interest for conducting the current study. First, I have noticed that the secondary education – at least the senior level – has not received much attention from partners and stakeholders, as has been the case of primary education. There is a considerable lack of projects focusing on this specific sector (Coulibaly, 2010). Second, the school of pedagogy had been inactive for more than a decade and its current focus on initial teacher preparation is rather special than regular. As mentioned above, it has recently resumed with the preparation of junior secondary school teachers for combined disciplines in rural areas. While this is a short-term initiative mandated by the government for opening new schools in remote areas, trainees are in majority in-service primary school teachers recruited through a test. Third, the majority of secondary school teachers originate from subject matter faculties, and most of them are judged to lack pedagogical skills and knowledge of secondary school curricula (OIT, 2006). Fourth, research into programmes of the subject matter faculties or other Nigerien higher education institutions is considerably lacking. It is a daunting task to retrieve academic publications about this context from a library search. Fifth, over the last decades, reform initiatives mandated by higher education authorities have taken place within those programmes in order to align their curricula to the demands of the market, but very little is known about the way these shape teacher learning.

Based on the above, several research directions can be identified. Having a background in ELT, my initial interest consisted in finding a sustainable way that may help improve EFL teaching in Niger. For this purpose, I was drawn to teacher action research, which is widely acknowledged in ELT for focusing on improving teaching and learning (Atay, 2008; Barkhuizen, 2009; Cullen et al., 2009; Firkins and Wong, 2005; Hahs-Vaughn and Yanowitz, 2009; Henson, 2001), ensuring teacher professional development (Capobianco et al., 2006; Gao et al., 2011; Gilles et al., 2010; Wyatt, 2011) and allowing teachers to construct personal theories and knowledge (Chou, 2011; Christianakis, 2008; Kumaravadivelu, 2001; Poon, 2008). With this in mind, the initial focus of the study aimed to develop collaborative action research within selected secondary schools in order to assess its effect on teachers and their teaching. Upon reading Stenhouse's (1975) *An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development*, I developed interest in placing the secondary school EFL curriculum at the heart of the

collaborative actions. However, the issue with this focus resides in the fact that access to participants could have been difficult due to the strict control the educational administration exerts on curriculum implementation in secondary schools. With my intention to have teachers challenge the curriculum, there was the possibility I would not gain permission from the educational administration to conduct fieldwork within schools.

Considering the issue of field access, the focus was changed to involve pre-service instead of in-service teachers. The new idea was rather to have student teachers implement small-scale action research projects as part of their practicum. What seemed challenging in the new focus was the innovatory idea for the practicum implementation. Knowing the rigidity of the higher education system in Niger, making such innovation happen would require a lot of power. Besides, I was not a member of faculty within the targeted EFL programme. Alternatively, the focus was shifted to either negotiate with teacher educators to undertake action research in their classes and involve their trainees in second-order action research projects or simply explore the possibility of action research in that context. The second option gained more precedence and consisted of two phases: 1) understanding practices of initial teacher preparation within the target EFL programme and 2) having teacher educators try action research in some of their classes in order to assess their experiences with its process. Unfortunately, due to unseen circumstances, only the first phase was achievable (see 5.5., p. 97).

1.6. Aim of the Research

Considering the issues highlighted above, the current study aimed to examine the practices of initial EFL teacher preparation in Niger in order to understand factors that affect its effectiveness. The focus on initial EFL teacher preparation has been a pragmatic choice. ELT and related areas, as mentioned earlier, constitute my main academic background in which I wish to pursue my career. The contextual issues of quality that motivated my interest are likely to exist in almost all the programmes, within higher education institutions, where teachers are prepared for secondary schools in Niger. In other words, the design of this study can be applied to other programmes, such as Geography, Physics, Mathematics, etc. With this in mind, the study was conducted to answer the following research questions:

1. *What is the predominant approach (principles and values) within programmes that prepare teachers of English as a foreign language? What are the practices that are indicative of this approach?*

2. *What are the procedures for reviewing and assessing EFL programmes? How frequent are reviews undertaken? How are they conducted? How are the resulting changes evaluated?*

3. *What are the opportunities for teacher educators' development? What provisions does the institution make to facilitate teacher educators' professional growth?*

4. *What are the contextual factors that affect teaching and learning within EFL programmes?*

Considering these questions, the focus of the study is on the initial teacher education curriculum. The main rationale is to understand *what* is being taught to prospective teachers and *how* it is delivered. In other words, the types of knowledge that characterise student teachers learning and also the principles that characterise teacher educators' modes of delivery (thus the word *approach* used in the first research question). Moreover, the above questions involve understanding the extent to which the *what* and the *how* of the curriculum are revisited or revised by stakeholders. There are also assumptions in these questions that continuing professional development (CPD) of teacher educators and other contextual factors affect, in one way or another, the way preservice teachers are prepared. It therefore appeared important to examine the realities about these in the Nigerien context. Taken together, the four research questions have allowed the collection of insights that helped to answer the overarching research question formulated as below:

> *What are the factors that affect the effectiveness of initial EFL teacher preparation in Niger?*

1.7. Significance of the Study

It is well acknowledged that the history of English language teacher education (ELTE) is quite recent. The first known ELTE programme started only in 1962 in London (Borg, 2011). Likewise, research interests in ELTE have constituted a very recent phenomenon. While ELT has been considerably marked and nourished for decades by fields of general education and research in second language acquisition (SLA), research interests in ELTE started only in the 1990s (Borg, 2011; Freeman, 2002; 2009). As

Borg indicated, the work of Richards and Nunan (1990) was prominent in highlighting the need for empirical research in ELTE. From the 1990s to the present, many publications, such as *The Cambridge Guide to Second Language Teacher Education* edited by Burns and Richards (2009), have come to life, but most of them have remained at a theoretical level (Nguyen, 2013). Little is still known about the realities of initial EFL teacher preparation in diverse contexts. For these reasons, the current study adds to the field of ELTE by constructing insights around ELTE practices from a Nigerien context.

Beyond the contribution to the current body of literature on ELTE, the significance of this study can be attached to the context where data were gathered. As mentioned earlier, research about programmes within subject matter faculties in Niger is lacking. This research is an attempt to fill this gap and serve as an example for future projects by other Nigerien scholars in order to expand understanding around issues that characterise higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa. It may also be of importance to higher education policy and decision makers since it highlights issues that go beyond the level of classrooms. While some of the aspects may draw the attention of international donors, this research also opens doors to multiple research interests, which include but are not limited to *educational borrowing, large size class, teacher educator development, students' reluctance to reading,* and *student teachers' cognition.*

The most important contribution of this research, in my view, is its intention to guide changes within the Sahel University (pseudonym) EFL programme where the majority of EFL teachers in Niger are prepared. Recommendations formulated based on the research findings are geared towards taking empirical and experimental steps to tackle certain pedagogical issues in terms of curricular content, delivery and assessment. Even though these changes largely depend on the institutional will, it is believed that a strategic dissemination of the findings and formulated recommendations will help raise the stakeholders' awareness of aspects that may need to be addressed in order to enhance the effectiveness of student teachers' learning.

1.8. The Structure of the Thesis

In order to present a comprehensive report of the current study, this thesis is structured in ten chapters. This **First Chapter** has not only offered a general overview of the Nigerien context and its education system but also presented the focus of the study and

reasons behind the interest. **Chapter Two** is a discussion of some theoretical perspectives and their relevance to the current research. Perspectives from Stenhouse (1967; 1975), Freire (2000) and Schön (1987; 1991) have been identified as meaningful to this research based on their emphasis on constructive processes, rather than objectives, for teacher learning. This is extended by other relevant perspectives grounded in Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theories of interaction and zone of proximal development (ZPD).

Chapter Three is an analysis of the recent trends in ELT. It situates English as an international language and presents debates that have dominated the profession for decades. These includes issues surrounding the culture of English and methodological borrowing. An important part of this chapter is also devoted to postmethod perspectives, which extend discussions about the drawbacks of methods in ELT. Ideas presented in chapter three are necessary for understanding some contextual insights that emerged from this study. These ideas are extended in **Chapter Four** with issues of higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa. The education of EFL teachers being provided by higher education institutions in Niger, I judged it worthy to look at the general issues these institutions are facing. In addition, the current study was conducted at a time Sub-Saharan African countries were implementing reforms, which are considerably grounded in the Bologna Process.

Chapter Five describes the methodological framework used to conduct the current study. It presents the researcher's ontological and epistemological perspectives and the methods of data collection and analysis. It situates this research in the qualitative case study framework based on which data were collected through observation, interview and document reviews. This is followed by **Chapters Six**, **Seven** and **Eight** in which I present findings based on the research questions presented earlier. These chapters are complemented by **Chapter Nine**, which draws further interpretations of the findings based on the overarching research questions, and **Chapter Ten**, which concludes the thesis and identifies useful and meaningful ways to improve ELTE in Niger.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Perspectives on Teacher Learning

2.1. Introduction

The previous chapter has offered an overview of the Nigerien context and the purpose attached to this research. It has shown the characteristics of education in Niger and some of the issues that motivated the conduct of this research. The current chapter situates the research endeavour within theoretical perspectives from Lawrence Stenhouse (1967; 1975), Donald Schön (1987; 1991), Paolo Freire (2000) and Lev Vygotsky (1978). These perspectives have played a central role in the formulation of the research questions that guided this study. This could be regarded as a positioning with which I have approached the findings. In relation to these, this chapter presents arguments that situate teacher learning as a process – of sharing experience, solving problems and reflection-in-action – rather than reception as grounded in behaviourist and other traditional approaches to teaching and learning. As the focus of this research is on language teachers' learning, the arguments are extended to associated socio-cultural perspectives of ZPD and interaction. In the last part of this chapter, I draw on the theoretical perspectives to situate conceptions of effectiveness in initial teacher Education and teacher learning.

2.2. Education as a Process of Sharing and Understanding

Education as a process of sharing and understanding constitutes one of the perspectives adopted in this research to understand the effectiveness of initial EFL teacher preparation in Niger. These perspectives originated from Stenhouse (1967; 1975) who proposes that education should serve the purpose of inducting individuals to enhance their individuality and creativity. Stenhouse's theorisation does not primarily focus on initial preparation of teachers (McIntyre, 1995), but I see a fit in it for understanding the predominant approach within the EFL programme in terms of teacher socialisation. By distinguishing his process from an objectives model, Stenhouse takes education as a way of increasing an individual's "freedom to create and develop ideas" (1967: 8).

Education, here, is expected to provide experiences towards individual growth and development. In Stenhouse's perspectives, the primary role of classrooms is to methodically and consciously help learners share and reconstruct their fragmentary social experiences. This presupposes that societies are made up of smaller communities or subgroups, which in general set the knowledge outside classroom. According to Stenhouse, these subgroups shape the hidden curriculum within institutions, and together with other institutional practices, such as policy, they influence the experiences of students and teachers. This is an acknowledgement of the fact that teaching and learning are always influenced by external and internal factors to the educational institution. Thus, the focus formulated in the fourth research question of this study (see 1.6., p. 27).

Aware of the influences that contextual factors exert on teachers and students, Stenhouse dismisses the quality of learning from any educational curricula targeting learner achievement based on objectives. For him, any inquiry about learning should take the class or the working group as the starting point rather than an individual. As he indicated,

> *The essence of the classroom situation may best be captured by asserting that the group is prior to the individual, that individuals are well educated because they take part in groups and share experiences which have an educative quality. (1967: 6)*

This situates learning as a social activity and places sharing as a fundamental element for individual growth. The perspectives of sharing experiences are founded in the idea that worthwhile knowledge is speculative and indeterminate. This presupposes that the use of objectives can neither encompass all the learning that occurs in classrooms nor take into account the internal and external factors that influence teaching and learning.

Taking the above into account, Stenhouse's process model suggests the formulation of educational curricula based on principles of procedures or praxiology (Elliott, 1991). A principle of procedure is not an objective but the means of teaching with which ends are constructed. As Elliott (1991; 2006a; 2006b) clarifies, ends cannot be specified independently or prior to practice. They are intrinsic to practice and cannot be defined in advance. Principles of procedure therefore define the process "in which the meaning and significance of structures are reconstructed in the historically conditioned consciousness of individuals as they try to make sense of their 'life situations'" (Elliott,

1991: 10). Based on this perspective, the effectiveness of teaching and learning depends on the effectiveness of the process rather than the achievement of pre-specified objectives (Elliott, 2007).

To link the above with initial teacher preparation, it suggests that teacher professional socialisation should be a process through which participants share and reconstruct their experiences in relation with the curricular content rather than memorise this for the purpose of examinations. This raises the problem of assessment in the traditional approach where student teachers are graded based on expected behaviours or the amount of knowledge they have retained form the transmission-based teaching. While this is one of the aspects targeted by the research questions in this study, assessment in Stenhouse's process model of education is attached to the purpose of improvement. This type of assessment positions the teacher educator not as a marker but as a critic:

> *...in its logically pure form I think that the process model implies that in assessment or appraisal the teacher ought to be a critic, not a marker. The worthwhile activity in which teacher and students are engaged has standards and criteria immanent in it and the task of appraisal is that of improving students' capacity to work to such criteria by critical reaction to work done (Stenhouse, 1975: 94-5).*

The process therefore enables the learners to discover their strengths and weaknesses through the criticism provided by the teacher. In this way, the process also enables the teacher to assess his/her own teaching. This view of assessment foregrounds the perspectives of formative assessment developed by contemporary scholars, such as Black and Wiliam (1998; 2009) and Harlen (2010).

However, Stenhouse's stance towards assessment is not synonymous to a total rejection of examinations in initial teacher education. He was aware of the importance attached to examinations which persists today. He rather posited that examination is possible in the process model, but it must not be allowed to influence students and divert them from their aspirations. In other words, examinations should not emphasise memorisation, which is central in objective-based curriculum. As Stenhouse (1975) rightly articulates,

> *The process-based curriculum pursues understanding rather than grades when the two conflict, and since grades are attainable without understanding, this penalises the limited student in terms of opportunity even though it is educationally advantageous to him (p. 96).*

From this, understanding constitutes the essence of learning. In Stenhouse's process model, both teacher and students are both learners and work towards challenging the curriculum based on situational understanding (Elliott, 1991). This equates the process model to a research model in which – as focused by one of the research questions – teacher educators are given the opportunity to develop professionally. Stenhouse's perspectives of teacher as a researcher are better understood through the works of Elliott (1991; 1993; 2001; 2003; 2005; 2006a; 2006b; 2007; 2009a; 2009b; 2010) on teacher action research, which is defined as a way of improving the quality of educational actions.

Core to Stenhouse and Elliott's view of teacher action research is a philosophy of education that rejects the dualism of theory and practice and suggests a process of conscious theorising about action and through action. This is fundamental to Elliott's practical philosophy conveyed by the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis*. The latter is a form of reasoning that involves "discerning the particularities of a situation from the standpoint of an ethical agent, and in the process, discriminating its practically relevant features" (Elliott, 2009a: 29). Phronesis is therefore a process in the search of situational understanding. It differs from the scientific form of reasoning which aims at producing absolute truths. It involves ethical judgements about the value of actions. As such, phronesis cannot be reduced to a simple state of mind; it leads to the implementation of valued actions for the realisation of conceived values. In this view, education is regarded as an ethical and enabling process (praxis) through which one achieves his/her ideals and values for a better life. In conformity with Stenhouse's process model, teacher action research is not a separate process from teaching. It defines the teaching process and allows coherence and continuity (Elliott, 1993), which are major determinants of effective curricular or programme review and renewal.

2.3. Education as a Problem-Posing Process

The perspectives of problem-posing education are also important for this research which strives to answer questions about the effectiveness of initial EFL teacher preparation, mainly those focusing on the process of programme reviews and the status of power relation in solving problems that emerge within the programme. Problem-posing education is grounded in Freire's (2000) philosophy of critical pedagogy. Similar to Stenhouse, Freire dismisses the traditional approach to education in which learners are treated as receivers or containers and teachers as absolute knowers. For him, education

grounded in traditional approaches is dehumanising and aims at widening the gap between the oppressor and the oppressed. He rather views the role of education in terms of raising awareness. In these perspectives, classroom realities are considered as "socially constructed and historically determined" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003a, p. 13). In other words, classrooms are viewed as representations of the society characterised by social inequalities and injustice.

From the above, the purpose of problem-posing education is to empower student teachers in order to challenge those inequalities and injustice (Hawkins and Norton, 2009: 31). It situates both student teachers and teacher educators as transformation or change agents and extends their roles beyond the classroom. It also requires educators to build adequate socio-political awareness. Consequently, educators, as transformative intellectuals, take up two tasks: that of advancing education and the task of personal transformation. For the purpose of personal transformation, they educate themselves as well as their students about the multiple social problems and how to address these. To advance education, educators strive to work as a community of change. They take up the tasks of creating knowledge, designing context-sensitive syllabi and curricula, and implementing them. It is in relation to this that the design of this study seeks to formulate questions about the extent to which educators from the EFL programme take responsibility for their development and educational changes within the programme. For, in problem-posing education, pedagogy is not simply a process for maximising learning but a life changing process. In this perspective, theory is valued when it is personal to the teacher, i.e. when it originates from teacher's "personal experience, robust commonsense, or a combination" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003a, p. 17).

It is based on the role of the educator as a transformation agent that the concept of social justice education has emerged. Social justice teacher education, therefore, takes the role of breaking power barriers at the institutional and individual levels for the purpose of raising student teachers' awareness and interest for social activism (Hawkins and Norton, 2009). According to Hawkins and Norton, problem-posing or social justice teacher education is dedicated to three central heuristics: critical awareness, critical self-reflection, and critical pedagogical relations. It strives to promote critical awareness in preservice teachers by helping them understand the ways in which power relations are built and practised in society. It encourages "teacher-learners to critically reflect on their own identities and positioning in society" (p. 34). As such, self-reflection opens up the

minds of preservice teachers to their relationship with the social world and consequently allows them to highlight challenges and opportunities for social change. Problem-posing teacher education also establishes fair and equal pedagogical relations between teacher educators and preservice teachers. It regulates power relations between them in ways that strive to enhance learning opportunities for preservice teachers. These are major elements, in my view, that ensure the effectiveness of initial teacher preparation because they position teacher educators as learners and student teachers as collaborators.

Central to problem-posing education is also the use of action research by teachers, teacher educators and students to explore their classroom realities and the wider context in which practice takes place. In this perspective, action research takes a participatory orientation and gives equal opportunities and rights to stakeholders in conducting changes within educational settings (see Shor, 1987). It interrupts the top-down approaches and replaces them with bottom-up processes in which decisions are sensitive to contextual particularities. Participatory action research is central to the works of Stephen Kemmis and others (2009; 2010a; 2010b; 2014) who tied its implementation to collaboration and emancipation.

Kemmis (2010a) sees participatory action research as a form of praxis, which "involves the morally informed and committed action of those who practise education" (p. 10). For him, action research serves three key purposes: changing practitioners' practices, changing their understanding of their practices and changing the conditions in which they practise (Kemmis, 2009). While these purposes are shaped by each other, they place action research as a critical and self-critical process. It requires practitioners to be critical in order to transform what they do, what they think and say and the way they relate to the context in which they practise.

2.4. Teaching as a Reflective Process

For conducting the current research and making sense of the findings, Schön's (1987; 1991) perspectives of teaching as a reflective process are pertinent. Schön's works are grounded in a criticism of traditional approaches – *Technical Rationality* – which views professional practice as a process of solving problems based on "the selection, from available means, of one best suited to established ends" (1991: 40). In Schön's view, this ignores the uniqueness of certain situations – *divergent situations* he called them. He argued that it is only through non-technical processes that ends and means can be

clarified and achieved for many educational situations. For this, he suggested an epistemology of practice grounded in the concept of reflection-in-action. The latter is an intuitive process carried out by practitioners experimenting with their practical knowledge – research-based professional knowledge or that generated through other reflection-in-action processes.

The most relevant aspect of Schön's perspectives to this research is the link he established between reflection-in-action and practicum. The latter constitutes one of the curricular characteristics targeted by the research question focused on the predominant approach within the EFL programme. Schön's theoretical position situates reflection as the best way to generate practical knowledge in the phase of initial teacher education. He saw in practicum an opportunity to prepare effective practitioners by initiating them to reflection-in-action. He argued that

> ...*professional schools must rethink both the epistemology of practice and the pedagogical assumptions on which their curricula are based and must bend their institutions to accommodate the reflective practicum as a key element of professional education (1987: 18).*

As such, practicum remains a core element for effective professional education. This, however, does not invalidate the usefulness of knowledge originating from applied science. The latter is necessary for the process of reflection-in-action in certain situations. As Schön added,

> ...*we learn to reflect-in-action by learning first to recognise and apply standard rules, facts, and operations; then to reason from general rules to problematic cases, in ways characteristic of the profession; and only then to develop and test new forms of understanding and action where familiar categories and ways of thinking fail (1987: 40).*

This expresses Schön's position towards combining the teaching of applied science to initiations in reflection-in-action in professional education. This position is important in ELTE in relation to the advocacy for eclecticism. As discussed in chapter three (see 3.4.3., p. 60), the diversity of methods and their limitations in some contexts require language teachers to draw on multiple methodological knowledge to adapt teaching to their realities (Bell, 2003; 2007; Ur, 2013).

Schön's perspectives as stated above are widely used in education under the umbrella of reflective practice. Advocates recognised the power of reflection for decision making by educators (Deyrich & Stunnel, 2014: 86) who continuously enhance their ability of self-

perception and critical awareness. According to Richard (1998), the main assumptions behind reflective practice in education are that:

> *Teachers, rather than methods, make a difference; that teachers are engaged in a complex process of planning, decision making, hypothesis testing, experimentation, and reflection; that these processes are often personal and situation-specific; and that they should form the focus of teacher education and teacher professional development (p. 3).*

It follows from this that teacher educators have the duty to initiate student teachers into how to approach the process of their teaching in a thoughtful and analytical way. This allows them to "bring about fresh and fruitful perspectives to the complexities of teaching that cannot be matched by experts who are far removed from classroom realities" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003a: 10). The reflective practice movement strives to take into account what preservice teachers bring to the classroom in terms of knowledge and beliefs. Advocates posited that "People seldom enter into professional training situations with blank minds and/or neutral attitudes" (Wallace, 1991: 50). The role of reflective teacher educators is therefore to tap into those attitudes in order to create meaningful experiences for preservice teachers. Based on the acknowledged importance of reflective practice (see Farrell, 2007a), this research examined the way teaching takes place in the EFL programme in order to understand whether student teachers are initiated to become reflective practitioners or not.

Even though reflective practice has received a wide acceptance in the field of teacher education today, its critiques seem to miss its concerns for the context of teaching. According to Borg (2011), the solid arguments provided by the reflective practice advocates do not take into account the conditions in which teachers work. He argued that an acute understanding of these conditions are necessary in order to integrate reflective practice within a wider scope (p. 220). As Kumaravadivelu (2003a) also stated, the shortcomings of reflective practice include its individualistic nature (as opposed to interactive or collaborative) and its sole focus on classroom life rather than the socio-political factors that affect teaching and learning.

Other scholars, such as Roberts (1998), regard Schön's conception of reflection as narrow, idealised and ambiguous. Some of these views are emphasised by Akbari (2007) who analysed several studies on reflective practice and revealed a lack of evidence on its impact on students' learning. As Akbari argued, it might contribute in improving teacher's satisfaction and self-efficacy, but very little is known on how it

affects achievement. Akbari also indicated that reflective practice is in contradiction with its motives. It has emerged as a way to counter the top-down imposition of traditional approaches on teachers but has ended up doing the same. It has originated from theories and arguments developed by academic experts and has consisted in a set of procedures teachers are expected to implement.

Akbari (2007) further posited that reflective practice has the tendency to ignore the teacher's personality. It also overemphasises practice instead of creating a balance between theory and practice. Besides, the literature on reflection amalgamates its meaning from John Dewey and that from Schön, while these are epistemologically different (see Roberts, 1998). It is arguable that the confusion comes from the existence of many movements in which reflection is a situated component. For example, the movements that situate education as either a process of sharing and understanding or a process of posing problems also use reflection as a component of action research. Even though Wallace (1991) considered action research as an "extension of the normal reflective practice of many teachers" but with more rigorous and effective outcomes (p. 57), reflection in those movements is grounded in different philosophical perspectives. Nonetheless, reflection remain a useful component of teaching for making interactive decisions and challenging detrimental beliefs. Even though, reflection might not be regarded as a research or teaching method, it is part of these and requires to be made systematic and consciously planned.

2.5. Learning through Interaction

Learning through interaction has been diversely conceptualised in general education. In this research, I used perspectives of interaction as conceptualised by Vygotsky (1978) around his Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) to understand the types of interaction that occur in classrooms of the EFL programme examined in this study. While ZPD originated from the fields of child development, its current use has gone beyond that level (Shepard, 2000). It is widely applied to many education sectors, such as initial teacher education, where adult learners are concerned (Fani and Ghaemi, 2011; Warford, 2011). ZPD, in Vygotsky's (1978) words, refers to

> *...the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (p. 86).*

From this, ZPD stands for the difference between what an individual can achieve alone and what he/she can achieve with the support of a mentor or another learner. This presupposes that learning is never an individualistic but a social process (Jaramillo, 1996). This is similar to Stenhouse's (1975) perspectives in that learning is more important through a group. Vygotsky's perspectives situate the role of others as essential for the induction or socialisation of the learner.

Furthermore, Vygotsky's perspectives situate culture as an undeniable component in the process of learning. He is convinced that "to study human beings means to study them both in terms of their social relationships and experiences and according to the cultural tools used" (Smidt, 2009: 7). Cultural tools are, therefore, seen to play a mediational role in the socialisation process of an individual (Moll, 2014). In terms of social experiences, Vygotsky's sociocultural perspectives take them as important factors that shape the ways learners think and interpret the world (Jaramillo, 1996). As he posited,

> *Any learning a child encounters in school always has a previous history.*
> *For example, children begin to study arithmetic in school, but long*
> *beforehand they have had some experience with quantity (Vygotsky, 1978:*
> *84)*

In this case, the role of a mentor or a peer is to understand the prior experiences of the learner and help him/her move to the possible advanced stage. In this sense, the role of the mentor or peer is to help the learner construct knowledge via his/her prior experiences, mental structures, and beliefs (Jaramillo, 1996: 135). As such, one of the purposes in examining the predominant approach in the EFL programme is not only to underline the types of classroom interaction but also to understand how educators help preservice teachers to construct and reconstruct their prior knowledge.

Another reason for using Vygotsky's perspectives in this research is their emphasis on language, which is regarded as "a means of communication between the child and the people in his environment" (p. 89). Due to the dependence of ZPD attainment on interaction, language development becomes both a means and an end. In the field of language teaching, Vygotsky's perspectives have considerably shifted the perspectives of language acquisition towards language learning, which is believed to be socially mediated (see Lantolf (1994; 2000a; 2000b) and Lantolf and Beckett (2009)). These perspectives situate language as one of the most pervasive symbolic artefacts that mediate human mental activity differently from animals. Since learning is a social

activity, according to Vygotsky, interaction between peers or learner and mentor remains fundamental to language learning. Interaction gives way to imitation, which in these perspectives replaces the psychometric-based tradition of memorising rules. Based on this position, an effective initial EFL teacher preparation programme would be one that creates adequate environments for interaction among student teachers and between educators and students. This is one of the aspects targeted through the research question focusing on contextual factors.

2.6. Situating Effectiveness in Initial Teacher Preparation

Considering the above theoretical perspectives, I conceptualise effectiveness in terms of learning and improvement opportunities made available to student teachers for sharing experiences, reflecting on practice, constructing personal knowledge and interacting with each other and educators without issues of power relation. I therefore contend that effective initial teacher preparation is more likely to be provided by programmes where teacher learning is viewed as "normative and lifelong, as emerging out of and through experiences in social contexts" (Johnson, 2006: 239). Such programmes are more concerned with understanding teacher-learners and how they learn to teach (Graves, 2009). In this view, initial teacher preparation is not based on the accumulation of knowledge but based on processes that acknowledge the complexity of teaching and the psychological processes prospective teachers bring to class or use when making decisions before, during and after teaching (Tsang, 2004). As Borg (2009) asserted, "we cannot properly understand teachers and teaching without understanding the thoughts, knowledge, and beliefs that influence what teachers do" (p. 163). It is believed that teachers use an array of unobservable factors to make decisions in their classrooms. Those factors are shaped by practitioners' prior experience, knowledge, and beliefs (Borg, 2011; Freeman, 2002).

Consequently, ignoring those factors is likely to affect negatively the effectiveness of initial teacher preparation. Because "teachers filter much of the content of SLTE programmes through their own belief systems" (Richards, 1998: 3), there is necessity for teacher educators to help student teachers to recognise and challenge their own beliefs and knowledge about learning and teaching (Borg, 2009; Graves, 2009; Tarone and Allwright, 2005). As Shulman (2000) added, the first important task of teacher educators is to bring out what students have inside their heads. In other words, to make

it external, public and explicit in order to test it, move it around, rearrange it, co-construct it and repair it if necessary. Therefore, providing knowledge of language and knowledge of pedagogy is not enough; preservice teachers must be helped to connect or integrate the two (Borg, 2011) based on a reflective process that involves their own personal theories.

The above argument, however, does not invalidate the importance of content knowledge in initial teacher education. It simply means that content knowledge alone does not guarantee effective teaching (Borg, 2011: 220). It is agreed by many that subject matter knowledge has a considerable importance for teaching (Shulman, 1986). It is one of the powerful elements that determine quality in teaching (Birello, 2012: 92). This is mainly the case for EFL teachers who are primordially required to have a reasonable proficiency about the English language and also the different SLA theories (Johnson, 2009; Tarone and Allwright, 2005). Most of the current trends in EFL/ESL teacher education rarely exclude content knowledge but appeals generally for more attention on teacher beliefs and the socio-cultural inputs teachers and learners bring to the classroom.

The above ideas are central to one of the key research questions in this study. By examining the approach that is predominant in the EFL programme, the research is making an explicit emphasis on the curriculum and the knowledge base of ELTE (Nguyen, 2013). It stands as an examination within the programme of the *who* being taught, the *what* being taught, the *how* this is being taught and the *how* student teachers are being assessed (Graves, 2009). In relation to the ELTE knowledge base, the work of Richards (1998) offers six knowledge domains initial teacher preparation programmes should strive to develop in preservice teachers. These include the theories of teaching, teaching skills, communication skills, subject matter knowledge, pedagogical reasoning and decision making skills, and contextual knowledge.

While the first four match well with what Shulman (1999) called content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and knowledge of educational ends, they are propositional in nature (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). Their inclusion in ELTE curriculum is quite a traditional and frequent scenario guided by behaviourist models. The last two domains are those most believed to reinforce the effectiveness of initial teacher education. They foster the importance of

teacher beliefs and the outer context. Pedagogical reasoning is the cognitive skill teachers use to make interactive decisions. It is what Tarone and Allwright (2005) and Johnson (2009) referred to as practitioner knowledge. Teaching as a dynamic and unpredictable activity, it requires teachers to adapt accordingly by devising appropriate reactions. For contextual knowledge, it refers to the understanding of the educational contexts (Shulman, 1999) and other factors that influence language teaching. These may include language policies, teaching policies, community factors, sociocultural factors, type of school, administrative factors, school culture, school programme, level of class, age of learners, learning factors, learning resources, teaching resources, testing factors, etc. What is missing from Richard's (1998) knowledge domains is probably what Shulman (1999) described as knowledge of learners and their characteristics. Even though this is a challenging element to be provided by ELTE programmes, raising teacher-learners' awareness and inducting them in ways that help discover learners' learning strategies are necessary components of initial teacher preparation.

Considering the above, effective ELTE curricula are those shaped by "what teachers need to learn and by how they learn"(Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden, 2007: 115). In order to establish these, processes similar to those suggested by Stenhouse, Schön, Freire and Vygotsky constitute a key requirement. Initial Teacher preparation then becomes a professional socialisation process, which emphasises teacher development rather than training. Training is generally attached to traditional approaches. It is fed by technical rationality perspectives for which "teaching can be defined in terms of a specified set of effective teaching practices and competencies, that these can be taught and tested, and that their application is sufficient to produce good second language teaching" (Richards, 1998: xiv). Competencies here are skills for managing class, planning lessons, strategies for setting activities, opening lessons, closing lessons, giving feedback…

Development, on the contrary, is an ongoing process through inquiry and reflection. It suggests finding ways in initial teacher education programmes that help student teachers to "learn about practice *in* practice, so that concrete applications can be made and problems of practice can be raised, analysed, and addressed" (Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden, 2007: 115). As such, development in initial teacher education supports the constructivist position that "knowledge cannot be passed intact from one person to another" (Deyrich and Stunnel, 2014: 90) and applied as it is. Cognitive and affective

factors of involved student teachers, the relation between educators and students and the way interaction takes place in the classroom setting always affect the teacher learning process. These arguments justify the focus of the research questions on what is taught, how student teachers are taught and assessed and how these offer opportunities for CPD. For, the notion of teacher development goes beyond the phase of initial teacher preparation (Roberts, 1998). It is a lifelong learning process (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden, 2007; Elliott, 1993), which begins at initial teacher education. Learning to teach does not therefore end upon obtaining a degree from a teacher education programme (Kumaravadivelu, 2003a).

2.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented my conception of effective initial teacher preparation, which is largely informed by my interaction with current literature. This conception has embraced the view that teacher learning is not a process of knowledge consumption but a dialogical process in which the cognition of participants is valued and reconstructed. In order to formulate this position, I have drawn from the perspectives of Stenhouse who takes learning as effective when undertaken based on a process model where learners, as a group, prioritise understanding and sharing. These perspectives are close to those I saw fit from Vygotsky due to their relevance to language learning and classroom interaction. Vygotskian perspectives, in this chapter, have been articulated mainly around this notion of interaction, which is linked to learners' attainment of ZDP. Other theoretical perspectives used to support this research include Freire's problem-posing education and Schön's reflection-in-action. The former builds on issues of social justice and suggests a teacher education approach that emphasises empowerment and professional development while dismantling power relations between teacher educators and student teachers. For Schön's reflection-in-action, it orientates initial teacher preparation to an epistemology of practice that values reflection through experimentation of knowledge-in-action.

Issues and Perspectives in English Language Teaching

3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter has presented the theoretical perspectives that were considered in undertaking this research and making sense of the findings. The current chapter proposes to review and discuss issues surrounding the field of English language education. It is an attempt to provide some inputs not only for supporting the theoretical positioning of the study but also for understanding insights about the practices of initial EFL teacher education that emerged from the data. First, I present perspectives about the internationality of the English language and the consequences attached to this. Second, I extend these perspectives with debates in ELT about the appropriate culture for teaching English in non-native speaker contexts. The third focal issue concerns the controversies surrounding the use of methods in ELT. This is presented through 1) an overview of the major methods used in the profession, 2) the divide that emerged from the use of these methods and 3) an introduction to the postmethod perspectives, which has become prominent since the end of the 20th century.

3.2. English as an International Language

Over the last three decades or so, debates in areas of ELT have considerably been focused on the internationality of the English language and its implications for ESL/EFL education (Kumaravadivelu, 2003a; McKay, 2003; McKay and Bokhorst-Heng, 2008; Savignon, 2005). There exists a large number of studies from diverse contexts investigating the attitude of citizens towards the English language (Aliakbari and Monfared, 2014; Hasanova and Shadieva, 2008; Pan and Block, 2011; Sasaki et al., 2006; Vodopija-Krstanoviæ and Brala-Vukanoviæ, 2012). In these studies, a considerable interest, which people attach to this language, has been reported. Pan and Block (2011), for example, explained the beliefs of some university students and English teaching professionals that favour English as a global and international language compared to the Chinese language.

Regardless of the controversy surrounding the role and place of English as an international language (EIL), the current study embraces the fact that English is the language that is most spoken around the globe and the most used for communication purposes (Ahmad and Ahmad, 2015; Clyne and Sharifian, 2008; McKay, 2002). Suffice it to acknowledge that English is "at the centre of the paradoxes which arise from globalisation" (Graddol, 2006: 66) characterised by borderless expansions of business, media (Warschauer, 2000) and technological ventures. According to Gray (2002), the global widespread usage of English has been engendered by three factors: the increase of transnational businesses, the creation of world organisations, and the widespread use of the internet.

Used for communication and exchange purposes (Kubota, 2002), English is regarded internationally as the most appropriate language to disseminate research (Anderson, 2013; Kerklaan et al., 2008). It is the language imposed by most international publication institutions (Cianflone, 2014; Larsen and Von Ins, 2010). English, therefore, is increasingly becoming the academic language around the world (Faber, 2010; Ljosland, 2011). In many countries, such as Norway, universities are progressively adopting English as the medium of instruction at certain levels of their programmes. As Ljosland (2011) indicated, this is mainly due to the internationalisation of higher education systems, which started with the Bologna Process and required many European countries to adopt the Anglo-American systems. As presented in the next chapter, this internationalisation of higher education is characterised by ongoing reforms in Sub-Saharan African countries, mainly where English remains a foreign language.

It is also widely accepted that English constitutes a key job requirement worldwide (McKay and Bokhorst-Heng, 2008; Warschauer, 2000). This is mainly due to the collapse of borders between nations and the increasing establishment of multinational companies that generally use English as their corporate language (Swift and Wallace, 2011). Even though some scholars, such as Park (2011) and Pennycook (2007), have tended to believe that the 'promise of English' is a fallacy, many studies have revealed the extent to which leaning English is generally attached to success (Botez, 2015; Egan, 2004; Hilliard, 2015). As exemplified by Egan (2004), Toyota worldwide requires it

employees to achieve a certain TOEFL score for advancement or promotion from one managerial level to the next higher level (p. 56).

The above elements are worth examining from the Nigerien contexts where EFL learners speak multiple languages. The characteristics of English presented above constitute, in one way or another, the main reason behind the increasing demand of English language teachers in many countries (Deyrich and Stunnel, 2014; Richards, 2008). In Niger, in particular, this demand is partly exacerbated by the demand of access stressed by the MDGs. These reasons have made ELT in those contexts an emerging business through which institution of EFL/ESL training certification are required to produce qualified teachers (Egan, 2004). Even though there exist a historical controversy around the preference of native-speaker (NS) teachers over non-native-speakers (NNS) in certain contexts (Ali, 2009; Kumaravadivelu, 2003a), the underlined situations place ELT as a venture which contributes to the creation of employment. However, due to political reasons (Kubota, 2002), this adds pressure to governments and pushes them to constantly borrow ESL or EFL curricula from inner circle[2] contexts (Canagarajah, 2002; Gray, 2002).

While there is no intention in this analysis to point out whether the widespread use of English is positive or negative, these arguments strive to indicate that the economic and capitalistic orientations of globalisation (Elliott, 2009b) are among the major phenomena that made the English language a necessity for nations and citizens around the world. Furthermore, despite its internationality, English remains a foreign language in many contexts like Niger, where French and other local languages remain the major medium of communication between citizens. Such contexts are therefore characterised by norms different than those in native-speaker contexts (McKay and Bokhorst-Heng, 2008; Tomlinson, 2005). Due to the multiplicity of those norms in EFL contexts and classrooms, the challenge for initial teacher education programmes are likely to be numerous. There is a growing call from scholars, such as Canagarajah (2002; 2006) and Kumaravadivelu (2003a; 2003b; 2006), to contextualise teaching practices and provide

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[2] The term Inner Circle is generally defined based on Kachru's (2006) concentric circles, which identifies three categories of country in relation to the place and role of English: Inner circle, Outer circle and Expanding circle. Inner circle refers to countries, such as UK and USA, where English is a native language. Outer circle countries, on the contrary, are those settings (India, Nigeria…) where English was brought as the consequence of colonisation and remains the official language. For Expanding circle countries (Niger, China…), English is neither a product of colonisation nor a native language. It is rather a foreign language adopted for exchange due to global phenomena.

tools that empower educators to adapt decisions to their realities and achieve teaching innovatively. They support the argument that "teaching is embedded in the sociocultural context and decisions relative to the teaching and learning of English are influenced by tradition and socially situated beliefs and practices" (Vodopija-Krstanoviæ and Brala-Vukanoviæ, 2012: 289). This is one of the reasons for the inclusion of a focus on contextual knowledge (Richards, 1998; Shulman, 1999) in the ELTE curriculum as mentioned in the previous chapter.

3.3. Which Culture for ELT and ELTE?

This extends the previous review and situates culture as a very important component of ELT and ELTE. Implicitly or explicitly, teachers and teacher educators use culture in their classroom activities (Atkinson, 1999; Stigler and Hiebert, 2009). Contrary to the structuralist views that language is culturally neutral, many scholars (Byram et al., 2002; Jiang, 2000; Pennycook, 1994; Risager, 2007), despite their differing perspectives, seem to agree that language and culture have a strong relationship. This situates teaching as a cultural endeavour. In his analysis, Jiang (2000) offered three perspectives about the relationship between language and culture: philosophical, communicative, and pragmatic. Firstly, language and culture are constituents of a living organism in which the former is the flesh and the latter its blood. Without one or the other, the organism remains lifeless. Secondly, language and culture provide a meaningful flow together. Without language, the level of communication is drastically restricted; and without culture, communication is non-existent. Thirdly, language is the vehicle of communication while culture stands as its regulator.

Another view of the relationship between language and culture is offered by Risager (2007; 2010) who posited that language and culture can be separated, and that language is never culturally neutral. Risager believes that the English language can be separated from its native culture following two dimensions: context and content. When culture is seen as 'context', the emphasis is put on language use. It follows the perspectives that "Linguistic practice spreads or flows across cultural contexts all over the world" (Risager, 2007: 6). In this case, the use of English in non-native contexts is made in accordance with the cultures of those contexts. About the dimension of language as 'content', Risager relates it to the practice of teaching which is based on the choice of topics linked to certain selected texts. In this view, the English text cannot be restricted

to native-speaker topics but about any topic in the world. Following from these, the English language is never neutral. It always carries a culture to convey meaning.

Either from Jiang or from Risager, cultural elements are always existent in any communication. The major controversy in ELT has been about whether English in non-native contexts should be taught through the cultures of its NS or the cultures of the NNS. Multiple perspectives on this are offered by the existing literature. The most adopted position supports the view that NS culture is inappropriate because language always takes the culture of its users (Risager, 2007), be it first, second or foreign language. The advocates of this position have argued that the English language no longer belongs to the centre (Baker, 2009) and can be adapted to any context different from its NS contexts. This appropriation or adaptation to local contexts is called *nativization* (Canagarajah, 2002; Kumaravadivelu, 2003a). It involves the "process of indigenising the phonological, syntactic and pragmatic aspects of the linguistic system of the English language" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003a: 540). This position seems to also receive Savignon's (2007) agreement in that language cannot be dissociated from the individual's identity and social behaviour.

To illustrate the extent to which language takes the culture of its users, Jiang (2000) conducted a study using 28 Chinese native speakers and 28 English native speakers through a survey in which the participants were given a list of ten general words (food, clothes, family, friend, job, money, culture, success, happiness and love) and asked to write six other words or expressions relevant to those word categories. The researcher found that the Chinese native speakers' choices of words and expressions were indicative of Chinese culture while the choices of English native speakers were entirely based on NS culture. This finding translates what Sharifian (2009) described as cultural conceptualisations or units of schema and conceptual metaphors developed by learners as part of their socialisation.

However, this does not presuppose a complete separation of English from its culture when being appropriated by another context. Nativization seems to result from a conflict between the foreign and dominant culture where in the end a hybrid culture emerges – a mix of elements from the dominant and the foreign culture. Learners always use their judgement to lose some aspects of their culture and replace them by those of the new culture. As such, it may be appropriate to acknowledge that cultures

are unstable, and no culture can dominate another (Canagarajah, 2002: 134). It is also worth considering that cultural replacement does not exist but cultural re-adaptation (Pennycook, 2007).

The major controversy in relation to which culture English should reflect arises mainly in debates focused on English as a lingua franca (ELF), i.e. "the common language of choice, among speakers who come from different linguacultural backgrounds" (Jenkins, 2009: 201). While some among the scholars (Cogo and Dewey, 2006; Jenkins, 2009; Seidlhofer, 2004) are concerned with developing codes and standards, through empirical research extensively driven in diverse corpora, such as VOICE (Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English), to identify common phonological, pragmatic, and lexical issues occurring in international communication, others (Baker, 2009; 2012; Canagarajah, 2007; Roberts and Canagarajah, 2009; Sharifian, 2009) view this project as unrealistic. As demonstrated by Baker (2009), international communication is considerably influenced by the backgrounds of the speakers. As such, it is not appropriate "to turn the whole world into a 'homogenous' speech community" (Sharifian, 2009: 246) but rather to find ways that help speakers develop intercultural awareness (Baker, 2012). The notion of intercultural awareness is fundamental to this research. Around it have been formulated some useful analytical questions to understand whether cultural knowledge is part of the ELTE curriculum and the extent to which it contributes to developing student teachers' intercultural awareness.

One way to help leaners develop intercultural awareness, according to Byram et al. (2002), is by making them acquire communicative competence. The latter is "the ability to use the language in socially and culturally appropriate ways" (p. 7). According to these scholars, intercultural awareness is a component of communicative competence; it requires the learner to build understanding on the fact that individuals from every society have multiple identities. In cross-cultural communication, every interlocutor should therefore be perceived "as an individual whose qualities are to be discovered, rather than as a representative of an externally ascribed identity" (p. 9). These views are in line with Roberts and Canagarajah's (2009) idea of building learners' negotiation strategies. The latter are also referred to as procedural knowledge (Canagarajah, 2014), which "focuses on the resourcefulness of speakers to negotiate diverse codes, values, and identities of the speakers and texts they encounter" (p. 771). Either from Byram et

al. (2002) or from Canagarajah (2014), the notion of identities emphasises the notion of a personal culture – as opposed to a uniform culture, which is shared by individuals in a society. This is in harmony with a globalised world in which individuals claim memberships to several communities and where the notion of cultural boundary is non-existent and gives way to hybrid or interconnected cultures. As Byram et al. added, in such globalised world,

> *The 'best' teacher is neither the native nor the non-native speaker, but the person who can help learners see relationships between their own and other cultures, can help them acquire interest in and curiosity about 'otherness', and an awareness of themselves and their own cultures seen from other people's perspectives (p. 10).*

Notwithstanding, discussions around the culture of English do not settle the issues that arise in particular classrooms where individual teachers and learners have their own preferences, expectations, needs, and attitudes towards the foreign language (Tomlinson, 2005). This, undoubtedly, brings forth the problems attached to the transmission and implementation, in EFL contexts, of methodological knowledge and materials developed by SLA researchers from NS contexts.

3.4. The Method Debates in ELT

Methods debates in ELT have spanned over decades. In order to ensure coherence in presenting the scopes of these debates, this section is structured in three parts. The first part presents an overview about the methods that constitute the major component of the theoretical and pedagogical content knowledge generally imparted to prospective teachers during their initial preparation. This is followed by discussions about the gaps engendered by the reliance on theoretical knowledge in ELT and the issues surrounding methodological borrowing.

3.4.1. Major Methods and their Grounding Approaches in ELT

In the field of teaching English as a second or foreign language, methods have generally been attached to traditional approaches. In fact, ELT methods are numerous and there is no clarity on their exact number (Kumaravadivelu, 2006: 90). Most of these are attributed to the behaviourist school of psychology, which "derives its authority from the achievement of empirical science" (Wallace, 1991: 8). Interests in SLA, over the last half-century, have also allowed the emergence of cognitivist and socio-psychological theories and their methods (Richards, 2008). Contrary to the behaviourist approach,

some ELT methods are not grounded in empirical research. Richards (1998), in his seminal work titled *Beyond Training*, offered two conceptions that guided the development of ELT methods used in many contexts. These include science-research and theory-philosophy conceptions.

In science-research conception, teaching is viewed as a scientifically grounded activity; it is informed by experiments and other empirical inquiries. It stands as an application of theoretical knowledge that emerged from behavioural research. In general, it relies on principles constructed from "research on the psychology of learning, specifically memory, transfer, motivation and other factors believed to be important in learning" (Richards, 1998: 34). It is based on this perspective that methods, such as Audiolingualism and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), are judged as pure application of research on learning. Audiolingual Method, for example, originated from a learning theory in which advocates argued that "A second language could be learned through a process of habit formation and overlearning" (p. 35). The prescribed application of this theory in class goes through drills, mimicry, and memorisation of linguistic patterns. For TBLT, its origin can be linked to SLA research and experiments, which support the idea that "successful language learning involves learners in negotiation of meaning" (p. 35). As such, TBLT practices rely on tasks derived from research to create better input for learning. In so doing, TBLT proponents have opposed the use of presentation, syllabus and other forms of teaching that are central to other methods. In audiolingualism as well as TBLT, research output of how learning takes place has therefore constituted the foundation of how teachers should behave in their classrooms.

Contrary to science-research conception, theory-philosophy conception has no research foundation. As Richard (1998) put it, this orientation is built on "data-free theories and principles that are justified on logical, philosophical, political, moral, or other grounds" (p. 38). This conception, with its two trends – rational approaches and value-based approaches – seems to be more predominant in ELT today than the science-research conception. Through its rational approaches, this conception tends to apply theories of language or language learning to teaching, without any prior research. The case of CLT follows this approach. It derived from the theory of communicative competence and challenged the grammar-oriented teaching. As Richards explained, it is an innovative method accepted due to "the compelling nature of its underlying principles and the

status and influence of its proponents" (p. 40). In other words, the foundational literature of CLT is grounded in persuasive arguments developed around communicative principles rather than linked to any empirical research or findings.

In terms of the value-based approach, teaching methods have been developed based on values held about teaching, learning, classroom life and the role education should play in society. This is where moral, ethical, ideological, and political perspectives of teaching and learning are emphasised. The value-based approach has given birth to several trends and movements in the field of education. These include the humanistic approach to teaching, which, in ELT, remains the foundation of methods such as Community Language Learning. Humanistic methods foster "the development of human values, growth in self-awareness and in the understanding of others, sensitivity to human feelings and emotions, and active student involvement in learning and in the way human learning takes place" (p. 42). They therefore emphasise the sense of life and respect to the individual and his/her needs of learning.

Taking different lenses of analysis, Kumaravadivelu (2006) classified ELT methods into three categories: language-centred, learner-centred, and learning-centred. Language-centred methods are those derived from theories that emphasise language forms and structures. Audiolingual Method is one of them. They provide a range of selection of language structures and patterns and foster the accumulation of linguistic knowledge by learners. They are grounded on the belief that language use outside of class cannot be guaranteed until learners have mastered the language repertoire intentionally planned and provided by the teacher. Advocates of language-centred methods posited that "the linguistic system is simple enough and our explanatory power clear enough to provide explicit rules of thumb, and explain them to learners in such a way that they can understand and internalise them" (p. 91).

For learner-centred methods, Kumaravadivelu (2006) presented them as those "concerned with learner needs, wants, and situations" (p. 91). Those methods are primarily committed to offer the learner both language forms and communicative contexts. There is therefore a focus on both language accuracy and fluency. CLT, for example, can be aligned to this category, despite the fact that certain scholars view its focus to be solely on communication skills (Savignon, 2007). Founding theories of CLT emphasise the use of notional and functional activities to facilitate learning of language

structures. Methods in the learner-centred category are not different from language-centred methods in some aspects, mainly because language development is based on consciously planned processes.

In terms of the learning-centred category, Kumaravadivelu (2006) posited that methods are grounded in the belief that language learning is a cognitive but unconscious process. As such, teachers are expected to involve learners in "open-ended meaningful interaction through problem-solving tasks in class" (p. 91). There is an assumption that involving learners in meaning-making activities will yield positive results in terms of language mastery. As such, there is no need from the teacher to preselect language input; he/she is only required to create conditions of meaningful activities. These characteristics apply well to the Natural Approach, which advocates the focus on learners' "understanding, saying, and doing something with the language" (p. 92) instead of engaging them in the mastery of linguistic patterns. Proponents of learning-centred methods see language as a complex system, which cannot be put into fragments for presentation to the learner.

There also exists a range of methods which Kumaravadivelu (2006) did not include in the above categories due to the fact he did not consider them as full-fledged methods. He put them under the label of 'Designer Nonmethods' and posited that they are nothing but procedures that emerged under the humanistic approach and "consistent with the theoretical underpinnings of a learner-centred pedagogy" (p. 94). This concerns Community Language Learning, the Silent Way, Suggestopedia, and Total Physical Response. This is in line with Richards (1998) who underlined that some of these methods are grounded in values and other ethical consideration instead of theories of language or empirical research.

Taking these categorisations of ELT methods by Richards (1998) and Kumaravadivelu (2006) into account, this research examines not only the types of methodological knowledge student teachers in Niger receive during their preparation but the way this is delivered. For, it is generally assumed that in the phase of initial teacher preparation, methods are presented to student teachers in the form of "content knowledge that consisted mostly of a verified and verifiable set of facts and clearly articulated rules" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003b: 8). In this way, teachers are viewed as rational-autonomous professionals (Elliott, 1993) whose effectiveness is judged based on how well they

consciously apply theory in their practice. Evaluation of teachers or student teachers is therefore tied to the way they apply the theoretical and empirical knowledge imparted to them. If they fail, "it is perhaps because they haven't understood the findings properly, or because they have not properly applied the findings, or whatever" attached to those methods (Wallace, 1991: 9). The failure might be due to some problem with the research findings or theory, but the blame will be put on the teachers. This is among the situations that led to the divide between theory and practice.

3.4.2. The Theory-Practice Divide

The review about the divide between theory and practice presented in this section provides additional reasons to the position adopted in the previous chapter (see 2.6., p. 40) in relation to effectiveness in initial teacher preparation. The divide between theory and practice is generally attributed to the traditional approaches of ELTE in which the knowledge of methods is central to the teaching process. These approaches view practitioners as passive consumers of transmitted knowledge rather than active participants in the production of meaning (Crandall, 2000: 35). They give privilege to professional experts and put teachers to the position of technicians (Kumaravadivelu, 2003b). There is therefore a separation of labour where practising EFL or ESL teachers take the lower position in the top-down practice inherited from the behaviourist approach. According to Kumaravadivelu, this is reflected in the three-tier framework of Approach-Design-Procedure where developing approaches and principles of teaching remains the job of expert researchers and theorists, and designing is left to material and syllabus designers. Only procedures are entrusted to teachers for successful implementations of developed principles and designed materials. It is also believed that the divide between theory and practice in ELT originated from methodological generalisation and failure to consider individual differences (Westbrook et al., 2013).

Wallace (1991) identified two other situations that characterise the divide between theory and practice in ELT. The first situation resides in the possibility of mutual contempt and antipathy between language teachers and researchers. "Researchers can be contemptuous of teachers because 'they never read'. Teachers can be antipathetic to researchers because the latter are seen as 'refugees from the classroom" (p. 11). Second, the theory-practice divide is also exemplified through the fact that even when a method is judged irrelevant to practice, such claims never emanate from practitioners. On the case of Audiolingualism, Wallace indicated that the revolution that led to its demise was

rather started at the academic level upon the introduction of the Transformational Generative Grammar by Chomsky. Teachers who undergo the pressure and damages of those methods never hold the authority to challenge them.

The theory-practice divide in ELT is further rejected by the perspectives adopted for this research, which acknowledge the complexities and dynamism of contexts and the multiplicity of roles played by teachers. As Kumaravadivelu (2006) pointed out,

> *The division of labour among the three groups of people involved in language learning and teaching operations, the division implicit in the three-tier frameworks, is acceptable to some extent in a traditional educational system in which a centrally planned educational agenda was handed down to the teacher. It is inadequate in the current pedagogic environment in which the teacher is increasingly playing, at the local level, multiple roles of teacher, researcher, syllabus designer, and material producer (p. 88).*

While the division of labour underlined by Kumaravadivelu already exists in the Nigerien context, the main interest in this research is to understand the extent to which student teachers are equipped by ELTE programmes to deliver effectively in the pedagogic environment shaped by forces of globalisation. In this environment, teaching never happens as prescribed by methods (Canagarajah, 2002). Classroom contingencies and other external factors always remain a challenge to methodological prescription. This is the reason behind Kumaravadivelu's (2006) differentiation between method and methodology. For him, method is what expert researchers or theorists have designed for teachers, and methodology stands for what teachers really do in classrooms.

Notwithstanding, research in ELTE about how teachers learn to cope with contextual factors is very scarce. The most dominant trend today seems to rather focus on teacher cognition (Freeman, 2002). This trend has allowed many scholars, such as Borg (2003; 2011; 2015), to extensively explore how teacher cognition – beliefs, knowledge and previous experiences – affects student teachers' learning and prevents ELT practitioners from implementing methods and procedures as prescribed by teacher education authorities. To exemplify on these research foci and therefore highlight the theory-practice divide, two subsections are incorporated to this section. The first subsection presents a review of research conducted on teacher beliefs within initial EFL/ESL teacher education programmes. It is followed by another review of studies about the implementation of ELT methods by in-service teachers. This is made around CLT – the

most current and discussed method in ELT over the last three decades – to show how teacher beliefs, knowledge, and contexts have always constituted obstacles to the top-down practices in ELT and therefore contributed in widening the gap between theory and practice. The focus on CLT research is also due to the emphasis, in the Nigerien secondary school curricula, on the use of this method in EFL classrooms.

3.4.2.1. Teacher Cognition in ELTE

Studies focusing on EFL teacher cognition during initial teacher preparation are various and insightful. While some of them have researched the extent to which teacher beliefs change over the period of initial preparation, others have explored how those beliefs are affected by practicum. Peacock (2001), for example, investigated the beliefs of 146 preservice ESL teachers from an initial teacher education programme in Hong Kong. Using both quantitative and qualitative instruments, the study was formulated on the assumption that preservice ESL teachers hold detrimental beliefs about learning but which change throughout the initial preparation period. Findings from the study have confirmed the existence of those beliefs, which, on the contrary, did not considerably change over the three years of the study. For example, a large number of trainees maintained the belief that learning a language was synonymous to the acquisition of vocabulary and grammatical rules. As the researcher indicated, a corrective package was implemented afterwards; this was useful in changing some targeted beliefs held by the student teachers. The study therefore supports the ideas that initial language teacher education has little impact on teacher learning unless measures are taken to challenge preservice teachers' beliefs. However, there is no clarity from this study about the criteria used by the researcher to characterise certain beliefs as detrimental or not.

A similar research by Inozu (2011) focused on the impact of initial teacher preparation on beliefs held by 326 preservice EFL teachers from a Turkish institution. The researcher found that the preservice EFL teachers' beliefs remained largely the same over the four years of preparation. Even though the validity of the study can be challenged due to the fact the research questionnaire was based on a list of key belief statements – which may not encompass all the possible human beliefs about learning, the diversity of responses collected are indicative of the fact that each individual student teacher had a certain number of beliefs shaped by his/her socialisation, i.e. his/her lived experiences. This study supports findings from Peacock (2001) and suggests to initial

EFL teacher education programmes the need to build understanding about their student teachers' beliefs and challenge them over time.

The issue of teacher beliefs in ELTE was also studied by Farrell (2006) who collected and analysed reflective and interview data from three preservice teachers of English enrolled in a higher education programme in Singapore. Based on a six-week practicum, he found that two of the participants have maintained their beliefs unaltered while the third participant had changed some of his views about teaching constructed previously based on a part-time teaching experience. Taking into account the situation of the second participant, the study is signalling the fact that beliefs held by teachers are not static. Findings support the importance of reflection as a means to uncover teachers' hidden beliefs in order to determine their appropriateness and create challenging opportunities. Teacher educators also need to challenge their own beliefs regularly before challenging those of trainees.

Similar to Farrell (2006), Tsang (2004) conducted a study focusing on three Hong Kong preservice English language teachers' use of personal practical knowledge in interactive decisions during practicum. The study set out to explore the roles of teachers' maxims through their unplanned actions. It is built on the assumptions that teachers' thinking and beliefs guide their learning to teach as well as the actions they take in their classrooms. According to the researcher, teachers' maxims or beliefs are constructed through practice, their upbringing and their socialisation as language learners. In this study, Tsang demonstrated that teachers' maxims sometimes conflict with one another. They also change and are used by teachers in post- and pre-active decisions. Teacher beliefs or maxims are therefore never static; they are fed by experience. This further justifies the need to provide pre-service teachers with constructive experiences that challenge those beliefs and help shape them in a better way.

The studies by Tsang (2004), Farrell (2006), Peacock (2001), and Inozu (2011) suggest for the current research endeavour the need to examine the procedures, if any, that are used by Nigerien EFL teacher educators in their classrooms to challenge the beliefs and maxims held by student teachers. Even though teacher cognition is not examined in this research, the above studies constitute an empirical argument suggesting the existence of such situations within the researched ELTE programme. There is therefore the need to understand the extent to which the ELTE curriculum cope with them. The above studies

also support the view that initial EFL/ESL teacher preparation programmes that solely emphasise the use of methods are likely to ignore the power of teacher beliefs and therefore unlikely to ensure the coherence and continuity of teacher professional development, which necessitates teachers to be reflective practitioners and action researchers who use situational understanding to challenge their own beliefs in order to improve teaching and learning. The next subsection provides examples of studies that explored the use of CLT in in-service EFL/ESL contexts and how that was influenced by teacher cognition and socio-political factors.

3.4.2.2. Teacher Cognition and Context in CLT Implementation

In the field of ELT, CLT has benefited from a wide interest around the world. Even though TBLT seems to conquer progressively some of its fallen kingdoms, CLT remains the methods of choice in many countries. Its decline in many contexts have shaped the research interests of some scholars who tended to focus on its implementation. Most of the existing studies have tended to put forward the arguments about the influence of contextual factors and teacher cognition. The study by Sakui (2004) provides examples from a Japanese context. She used a situated evaluation theory, not only to explore EFL teachers' beliefs, but mainly to discover the mismatches between the prescribed CLT curriculum and the implemented classroom activities. Using interviews, observation and documents, the researcher collected data from a group of fourteen secondary school teachers of English. She discovered the existence of a hidden curriculum oriented towards entrance examinations and focused on the mastery of grammar. This had been creating a dilemma in the mind of teachers who were required by policy, on the one hand, to implement CLT and, on the other, to prepare students for structure-based high stakes examinations. This dichotomy is reinforced not only through the imposed textbooks, which make more focus on grammar, but also through teachers' attitudes, by believing that students should master grammar before any attempt is made to introduce them to communicative tasks. Further issues that hinder CLT implementation in the context studied by Sakui include teachers' lack of confidence, classroom management, and lack of time due to curricular pressure.

Using interviews and classroom observation strategies, Hiep (2007) also examined the beliefs held by three Vietnamese teachers and their use of CLT in their practices. While participants had acknowledged the importance of CLT for teaching, their hopes seem to

be shattered by several issues they encounter. Those issues are in general tied to the context of practice. One of them is the contradiction between the requirement of the education system about CLT and the emphasis through examinations to evaluate students' mastery of grammatical knowledge. This is to some extent a similar finding with the previous study from a Japanese context. The remaining issues include students' resistance and conflicts through group work, teachers' attitude and limited knowledge of CLT, large class size, and students' refusal to use English in class.

Findings in the above studies are likely to be supported by practices in the Nigerien secondary school contexts where the curriculum stresses the use of objectives and grammar-based examinations. They also confirm the claims made earlier, that methods are elements of prescriptions and therefore subject to challenges from teachers and the context of practice. In fact, it is the influence of contextual realities that most explains the failures of methodological implementation. On this concern, the studies from Sakui (2004) and Hiep (2007) validate the analysis of other scholars from Chile, China, and Uzbekistan. McKay (2003) in her project, for example, realised that Chilean teachers have issues with students working in groups because the latter tend to leave one or two students do the work. She also reported issues related to large class size and discipline. Hasanova and Shadieva (2008) have evoked the fact that Uzbek EFL teachers lack theoretical understanding of CLT. They view CLT as a simple oral method and tend to prefer focusing on grammar for examination purposes. In Yu (2001), additional to large classes in China, there exists a clash with Confucian learning culture, which pushes teachers to trust more the traditional grammar-focused methods. These insights further suggest the need to look at factors, within the Nigerien ELTE programmes, that are likely to reinforce or help cater with contextual issues and, most importantly, the extent to which student teachers are inducted to CLT practices taking into account the local realities.

In a side note, the problems raised in the studies above are not entirely core to CLT. As Hiep (2007) argued, the issues with CLT implementation in certain contexts cannot "negate the potential usefulness of the CLT theory" (p. 197). In view of arguments presented by Savignon (2005), one may argue that CLT allows room to contextual customisations. As she indicated,

> *...CLT is an approach that understands language to be inseparable from individual identity and social behaviour. Not only does language define a*

community; a community, in turn, defines the forms and uses of language. The norms and goals appropriate for learners in given setting, and the means for attaining these goals, are the concern of those directly involved. (p. 648)

The above statement therefore acknowledges the degree of sensitivity of CLT towards the uniqueness of contexts, teachers and learners. What is probably missing in Savignon's statement is an attention to the global phenomena, which impose new rules to the field of ELT and ELTE by dismantling borders, hybridising cultures and reshaping contextual dynamics. To further understand the theory-practice divide presented here, it is worth discussing the postmethod perspectives, which dominated discussions in ELT for three decades or so.

3.4.3. The Postmethod Perspectives

The postmethod movement constitutes one of the most current and relevant trends in ELT debates. It can be viewed as a postcolonial criticism towards methodological transfer in ELT, which has always been characterised by the NS and NNS dichotomy tainted with cultural perspectives. While colonial tenets have used the ideology of native-speakerism in certain contexts to justify and market their methods, proponents of post-structural and postcolonial ideals have seen this as an imperialistic attitude through which indigenous cultures and knowledge are being devalued (Kumaravadivelu, 2003a). As Phillipson (1996) indicated, the NS ideal is still pervasive through the global hegemonic practice in which ELT publishers "seek to market their products" (p. 27). Because of globalisation, outer and expanding circle countries (see Kachru, 2006) have tended to view pedagogical tools from NS contexts with admiration (Canagarajah, 2002). In the globalised world, methods and materials have therefore become products of fashion to the point that the emergence of a new method is synonymous to the outdating of others (Masouleh, 2012). This has constituted an opportunity for British and American experts and publishers to maintain a business monopoly in those countries (Gray, 2002).

The above situation seem to have huge consequences on educators and governments who, as Canagarajah (2002) indicated, have to frequently spend their budgets and energy for implementation and hiring foreign experts for retraining. Furthermore, methods and materials developed in the inner circle countries are similar to "Levi's jean and Coca Cola, commodities which are imbued with cultural promise" (Gray, 2000:

274) and raise doubts about their effectiveness and legitimacy for "contexts with cultural, linguistic, and pedagogic universes" (Phillipson, 1996: 28). These situations constitute one of the justifications in Kumaravadivelu (2003a) who characterised methods as colonial constructs used in periphery contexts as "a one-size-fits-all-cookie-cutter approach that assumes a common clientele with common goals" (p. 544). Methods implementations, generally, ignore the socio-political and economic realities of local contexts (Bax, 2003a; 2003b; Halbach, 2002). First, methods ignore the local learning culture (Ur, 2013), i.e. the beliefs and values held by learners about the normal process of learning, and tend to convey the learning culture of the context from which they are developed (Canagarajah, 2002). Second, methods are generally oblivious of the fact that any classroom is unique and involve diverse backgrounds brought by individual learners (Sowden, 2007). As such, learners in one classroom may have different needs, goals, expectations, attitudes and strategies towards teaching and learning (Bax, 2003b; Tomlinson, 2005). A third issue with methods is the fact that they do not take into account teachers' beliefs, which, as evidenced earlier, guide teachers' actions and decisions in class.

For the issues raised above, McKay (2003) suggested each nation to adopt a contextually relevant method. This, however, may not help the classroom teacher. The pressure of methods (Bax, 2003b; Gupta, 2004), through top-down canons, will still be there "to mould teacher and student roles and activities" (Canagarajah, 2002: 142). One of the reasons methods do not work comes from the fact that they are generally decided for teachers and not chosen by teachers (Ur, 2013). This is the reason Kumaravadivelu (2003b) also characterised methods as constructs of marginality and proposed three guiding principles – *particularity*, *practicality*, and *possibility* – for contextualising language pedagogy. Those principles and the resulting macro-strategies (Kumaravadivelu, 1994; 2001; 2003a; 2003b; 2006; 2012) have largely been discussed in the ELT sphere. Without taking position in favour of postmethod pedagogy, it should be noted that the interest for the current study originally stemmed from my encounter with Kumaravadivelu's works. Arguments provided by this scholar are appealing and applicable to the Nigerien context, not only because of its colonial history, but mainly its reliance on foreign experts to lead educational changes (Goumandakoye, 1992; Joannert et al., 2011).

To understand the three principles of *particularity*, *practicality*, and *possibility* suggested by Kumaravadivelu (2006; 2012), these should be seen as complementary to one-another. Each of them has a different implication and together they constitute a strong argument against ELT methods. The principle of *particularity* is a valuation of the context in which teaching takes place. As Kumaravadivelu (2001; 2003b; 2006) argued, for any pedagogy to be useful, it must take into account the uniqueness of the context, the uniqueness of the individual teacher, and that of the individual learner. This principle originates from Elliott's (1993) situational understanding, which suggests teaching to be grounded on insights built from particular situations.

For the principle of *practicality*, its purpose is to have teachers develop acute understanding of their situations by conducting action research in order to change their practice and develop personal practical theories. This is in opposition to traditional approaches where teachers are receivers of products developed by expert theorists (Rajagopalan, 2008). To develop a contextualised pedagogy, teachers need autonomy to build and use their personal theories from and for their practice. Based on their developed knowledge, teachers become empowered to transform their classrooms and the possibilities learners bring to class. Possibilities consist of learner experiences shaped by the socio-political and economic conditions both teachers and learners live in. This leads to the principle of *possibility*, which is grounded in the Freirean philosophy of social justice. This principle requires postmethod teachers to pay much attention to learner experiences since they "have the potential to alter pedagogic practices in ways unintended and unexpected by policy planners, curriculum designers, or textbook producers" (Kumaravadivelu, 2001: 543). In its simplest, the principle of possibility carries the perspective of appropriating the English language through a critical and dialogic process fed by learner-situated issues.

While the above principles seem largely linked to the theoretical perspectives presented in the previous chapter and therefore relevant for understanding findings that emerged in this study, it is worth noting the diverse criticisms formulated on their concern. Kumaravadivelu's critics argued that the principles and the resulting strategies are not different from methods (Akbari, 2008; Ur, 2013). This has raised controversies in ELT and led to the redefinition of *method* and the distinction between *method* and *methodology* and between *method* and *approach*. It is not the aim of this review to

wander in these controversies but to highlight some arguments developed against the idea that postmethod is synonymous to the 'death of method' and to raise awareness about some possible weaknesses of the postmethod perspectives.

In a qualitative study, Bell (2007) explored the views of 30 preservice English language teachers from a U.S. institution on whether method is dead or not. This involved understanding their conceptions of method, their preferred way of teaching, and the importance they attach to methods for their future class activities. Findings revealed preservice teachers' views of method in terms of techniques they use to attain certain goals. The majority of them asserted their preference in eclecticism in order to accommodate their practical issues. For them, methods are not dead; they constitute a useful set of options they resort to for solving particular problems. Based on these findings, Bell equated postmethod to eclecticism. He suggested that postmethod is not "the end of methods but rather an understanding of the limitations of the notion of method" (Bell, 2003: 334). This argument is supported by Ur (2013) who claimed that before the advent of postmethod, teachers were already adapting methods and diluting them according to their needs and preferences (p. 469).

The above is also supported by Canagarajah (2002). He posited that postmethod does not mean methodless teaching; it simply means that teaching should not be conditioned by one single approach or method. However, Canagarajah reiterated the central claim to postmethod, that methods are cultural and ideological constructs that bear socio-political consequences. Despite the lack of evidence on whether learners and teachers in periphery contexts are against them or not, scholars should remain aware of the fact that methods and materials imported from the West are not culturally neutral. For him, methods are products of monopoly "Just as the technologically and economically developed nations of the West (or centre) hold an unfair monopoly over less developed (or periphery) communities in industrial products" (p. 135).

The arguments from Bell (2007) and Canagarajah (2002) above do not seem to highlight the major drawbacks of Kumaravadivelu's principles as perceived by certain scholars. For Akbari (2008), the postmethod movement is based on abstract speculations and very unrealistic because of its indirect stress on teacher qualification. As he argued, methods are certainly neglectful of learning and learner contexts, but postmethod is ignorant of teacher and teaching conditions. For Akbari, postmethod

pedagogy is very demanding for teachers. It requires teachers to become "materials developers, test designers, revolutionaries, political analyst, social workers" (p. 648) and change the whole system. The question Akbari posed is 'where would teachers get the power and qualifications to deal with these?'

The surrealism of postmethod pedagogy seems to come from the fact it ignores that teachers, in many contexts, are like factory workers and generally more concerned about their living conditions. Not only do teachers have time constraints, they are also concerned about losing their jobs and their salaries. Akbari's arguments are legitimate, but the existence of those situational conditions and constraints may not be equated to a total inability of teachers to stand as transformation and change agents. Those living conditions are factors of social justice that teachers may challenge through action research, which is an important component of Kumaravadivelu's (2003a; 2003b; 2012) principle of *practicality*. This is justifiable by multiple studies in ELT that demonstrated the effect of participatory action research on practitioners' life conditions.

The arguments that method is dead are possibly exaggerated. It is arguable that methods are still in use by individual teachers in the form of particularised and contextualised versions. A single teacher may have his/her own personal method built from his/her personal theories. Even though this personal method has no common name, it will still be called method – a set of techniques and procedures fed by the teacher's beliefs, expectations and knowledge. This argument is close to Harmer's (2003) response to Bax (2003a; 2003b) about methodological irrelevance. It is also similar to Kumaravadivelu's (2006) definition of methodology.

It is worth underlining that in periphery contexts, such as the Nigerien context where this research was conducted, the use of methods is likely to continue until the imbalance of power between centre and periphery countries is reduced or annihilated. The lack of local methodological knowledge in the East is mainly characterised by the lack of capabilities. With the advent of globalisation, it is almost impossible "to identify indigenous teaching methods" (Canagarajah, 2002: 134). It has been mentioned earlier that initial teacher education systems that use pre-packaged courses from other contexts to transmit theoretical knowledge of practice to student teachers are fatally flawed; materials that work in one context do not necessarily work in all other contexts. Nonetheless, knowledge of methods cannot be excluded from initial teacher education

programmes, especially in developing countries like Niger where local knowledge for such purpose does not exist (see next chapter). Since most of the textbooks used in those countries are imported from abroad – generally from Western countries – the use of methods and pedagogical borrowing are likely to never end until local capabilities are developed, generally through educating experts in Western schools. As McMorrow (2007) raised, borrowing knowledge is necessary, at least to be used as an input on which student teachers may be helped to develop critical and reflective skills.

Considering all the perspectives presented on postmethod pedagogy, the current study does not reject the use of methods in the Nigerien EFL classrooms. It rather seeks to understand how student teachers are socialised to contextualise the methodological knowledge embedded to the ELTE curricula. Furthermore, this study embraces Kumaravadivelu's three principles of particularity, practicality and possibility because of their philosophical relevance, which suggests practitioners to improve their practice based on their personal theories.

3.5. Conclusion

The current chapter has offered a critical discussion about trends in ELT and ELTE. English as an international language has been situated in the scope of globalisation and the dynamics it creates in different contexts. It has been acknowledged that English is the preferred language of communication around the globe. Due to this situation, ELT is growing into a venture, which creates both pressure and opportunities for diverse contexts. In the attempt to embrace English as either a foreign or a second language, questions are however being raised in the scholarly milieu about the appropriateness of teaching English through its native culture and the use of ELT methods designed from inner circle countries. On these issues, discussions have offered perspectives about the relation between language and culture and the fallacy around native-speakerism. The chapter has also offered an overview about some major methods in ELT in order to allow a critical analysis about the theory-practice divide in ELT. This has been followed by a presentation of the postmethod movement, which emerged few decades ago due to the divide between expert theorists and ELT practitioners. This movement appeals for the contextualisation of practice. It has been largely connected to Kumaravadivelu (2001; 2003a; 2003b; 2006; 2012) based on his principles of particularity, practicality and possibility. To further highlight the issues that affect ELT and ELTE, the next

chapter presents a review of some general issues of higher education in Sub-Saharan African contexts that share similar historical, social, cultural, political and economic realities with the context in which this research was undertaken.

Chapter 4

Higher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa

4.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on some pertinent aspects of higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) in relation to the belief that the effectiveness of initial EFL teacher preparation is not affected by pedagogical factors alone but also by an array of contextual and institutional factors. This research was undertaken within a Nigerien higher education programme; it therefore necessitates a review of literature relevant to that context. However, as mentioned in chapter one (see 1.5., p. 25), there is a dearth of research or literature focused on the Nigerien higher education. To cater for this, the scope of the review has been extended to SSA contexts, which relatively share many characteristics. Considering this, the major issues identified from the existing literature include access to higher education, shortage of academic staff and resources and low research productivity. Most of these issues are linked to the financial crisis that hit the SSA in the 1970s and 1980s due to inflation and devaluation. They are discussed in this chapter after analysing the colonial legacy of the SSA higher education and issues around the structural adjustments that came with the financial crisis. The chapter ends with elements that characterise the context of reform in the SSA based on the Bologna Process. Discussing these issues provides a useful avenue for understanding the insights that emerged from this research conducted in Niger.

4.2. The Colonial Legacy of SSA Higher Education

Higher education in SSA has constituted for decades a topic of major discussions in academia and sectors of international development. These discussions have generally been focused on the expectation of the higher education system to help SSA countries achieve modernisation (Teferra and Altbach, 2004) and economic development (Lebeau, 2008). From their early stages, African higher education institutions have always been attached to goals of helping nations "build up their capacity to develop and manage their resources, alleviate the poverty of the majority of their people, and close

the gap between them and the developed world" (Sawyerr, 2004: 4). While analyses about the success of SSA higher education have tended to focus on these developmental aspects – thus ignoring the role played by universities in framing the emergence of civil societies, the facilitation of new cultural values and the preparation of members of new social elites (Lebeau, 2008: 141) – there is also need to situate the primary cause of the failure related to their colonial context.

Higher education in Africa has a very recent historic development. Despite the existence of the world's oldest university in the northern part of the continent (Al-Azhar university in Egypt) (Teferra and Altbach, 2004), until the 1960s, there existed only about eighteen universities in the Sub-Saharan part (Visser, 2008). This indicates that the first SSA universities were created during the colonial era, and most of them were shaped to the image of European universities for colonial motives (Visser, 2008). European colonisers, such as France, Britain, Belgium, Germany, Portugal and Italy, have left a legacy that continues to affect the functioning of higher education in Africa. According to Teferra and Altbach (2004), the problem of access, for example, can be tracked back to that period. As they indicated:

> *Colonial authorities feared widespread access to higher education. They were interested in training limited numbers of African nationals to assist in administering the colonies. Some colonial powers, notably the Belgians, forbade higher education in their colonies. Others, such as the Spanish and the Portuguese, kept enrolments very small. The French preferred to send small numbers of students from its colonies to study in France (p. 23).*

Upon independence, therefore, the number of universities and the access they provide has remained very limited. Even though this number has considerably increased throughout the post-colonial era, it still remains small (about three hundred) compared to the large population that needs higher education in SSA countries. Furthermore, there are some of these countries, including Djibouti, Gambia, and Guinea-Bissau, where universities started to exist only in the beginning of the 21st century. All these suggest for the current study the need to examine the way these legacies affect the functioning of the EFL programme, mainly in terms of content and curricular structure.

Beyond the scope of the colonial aspects above – and others discussed later – the major challenge of higher education in the SSA is financial. The limited financial resources – worsened by structural adjustments – in that part of the globe remain the main reason to explain the persisting problems of access, shortage of academic staff, low research

productivity and lack of academic and technological resources within faculties of higher education institutions.

4.3. The Financial Conundrum

Notwithstanding that financial constraints in higher education is a general issue worldwide, this is more severe in SSA countries. Budgets dedicated to higher education in these countries represent 0.78 percent of the GNP and around 20 percent of the public expenditure (Devarajan et al., 2011; The World Bank, 2010). The corresponding amounts are generally insignificant for the growing population that needs higher education. National higher education budgets in SSA are not even close to "the endowments of some of the richest universities in the United States" (Teferra and Altbach, 2004: 27), where the allocated budget is bigger than the combined higher education budget of many SSA countries. This financial limitation is caused by the heavy dependence of higher education institutions on funding from governments. In fact, higher education in SSA is highly subsidised. It is generally run based on a tuition-free system. When there exists a tuition fee, the amount is generally very small or symbolic. There are very few cases in SSA, such as in Lesotho, where the university's income comes from student fees (Teferra and Altbach, 2004). In most of the institutions, the income and costs of management are almost entirely the responsibility of the national treasury. Most often, the state's subsidy includes stipends paid to students who also receive free board and lodging (Visser, 2008).

Unfortunately, the changing economic frameworks around the world over the last four decades has constrained many SSA countries to reduce the already meagre budgets they offer to their higher education institutions. The 1970s is known as one of the worse periods for the SSA economies (Aina, 2010). In that period, "resources have actually declined, for a number of reasons: inflation, devaluation of the exchange rate, and economic and political turmoil" (Visser, 2008: 70). With these economic problems, many SSA countries remained even unable to regularly pay the salaries of their academic and increasing administrative personnel (Teferra and Altbach, 2004).

The changes in the fiscal climate created more pressure for SSA governments who found themselves unable to continue funding higher education in contexts where students are also unable to pay the tuition fees that will allow fiscal stability. This pushed governments to look for loans from Western partners such as the Bretton Woods

Institutions – the World Bank and the International Monetary Funds (IMF). As Aina (2010) clarified,

> *Many governments found themselves with serious balance-of-payment deficits, leading them to resort to bilateral, multilateral, and private international (predominantly Western) financiers for short- and long-term credit. As the indebtedness of the states grew, resolving the problem became an increasingly coordinated affair between a group of poor, heavily indebted countries and their creditors made up of national governments, international organisations, and private enterprises (p. 27).*

This situation made governments liable to international agreements and forced them to adopt several austerity measures. This kind of situation is almost similar within the Nigerien context but requires a closer look at programmes in order to understand how financial constraints affect their decisions. For, it is in the context of budget limitations that emerged a range of pressures that exacerbated the situation in SSA higher education institutions. Some of these pressures were exerted through the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) (Lebeau, 2008) coordinated by the World Bank and the IMF.

4.4. The Advent of SAPs

The advent of SAPs is entirely bound to the financial crisis of the 1970s but viewed by many scholars, such as Aina (2010) and Sawyerr (2004), as a globalising factor. According to Sawyerr, globalisation, in its neo-liberal form, reached the SSA in the 80s and 90s through the SAPs as an alternative to the economic crises. He added that "These programmes were intended, first to give a freer rein to market forces by removing rigidities in the production, pricing, marketing, and exchange rate regimes" (p. 10). The SAPs were therefore introduced as means of reforming the financial system. For Aina, the SAPs are simply a "battery of discourses, practices, and policies built on a set of predominantly neoliberal and market-driven assumptions, diagnoses, and prescriptions for a specific set of situations" (p. 26). Both positions, from Sawyerr and Aina, have situated the role of the SAPs, not in solving local problems, but in creating grounds for global competition. By introducing strategies such as privatisation and financial decentralisation, the SAPs were already breaking national borders for the global market.

In addition to the above, the SAPs were also dedicated to reducing social costs, such as university funding, and cutting back the role of the state and its control over social

policymaking (Sawyerr, 2004). In relation to these measures, the role of the SAPs have been negatively appreciated. For Aina (2010),

> *...the most significant challenge to the health of African universities came from the neoliberal policy package designed mainly by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in response to the economic and political crisis faced by African countries in the 1970s and 1980s (p. 29).*

These programmes of the Bretton Woods Institutions were therefore seen as simple magnifiers of the already existing problems faced by national institutions of higher education. By limiting the governmental policies to basic needs of population, they restricted governments to fulfil their main functions. They resulted, for example, in the downgrade of higher education funding in favour of basic education (Hayward, 2010; Lebeau, 2008; Sawyerr, 2004), which, as discussed later, created more problems of space to most of the SSA universities.

It is in the context of these structural reforms that many higher education institutions played the avant-gardist role for the establishment of democratic institutions in certain SSA countries. As acknowledged in certain literature (see Lebeau, 2008), SSA higher education institutions have always played the important role of preparing social elites and activists. They constitute a hub of resistance to unpopular governmental decisions (Aina, 2010). In other words, higher education institutions in SSA have the tendency to offer grounds to political positioning, which are rarely synonymous to constructive suggestions or appropriate solutions to certain problems. Furthermore, protests conducted by academics and students rarely concern issues of curriculum or quality of teaching and learning (Teferra and Altbach, 2004) but political or matters related to their subsidy.

The advent of SAPs has constituted a cornerstone in revealing the above characteristics. This has been more apparent in Francophone countries. As indicated by Sawyerr (2004), changes about tuitions fees, for example, took place progressively in certain countries except in many Francophone countries "where to this day student services absorb up to half of a university's recurrent budget in some instances, and where attempts to reduce or remove the subsidies have met with severe resistance from politically active student organisations" (p. 6). This suggests that in Francophone SSA contexts, student protests about poor services, delay of stipends payment, and cancelation of benefits are an ever-recurring phenomenon. Student organisations in

these contexts are strong and constitute barriers to any governmental attempts of cost sharing and university's budget autonomy.

In line with the above, the advent of SAPs has considerably exacerbated the political stability in the SSA. Student protests, in many countries, led to government instability and played a major role in shifting the political power (Teferra and Altbach, 2004). A good example of this is the case of Niger, where, in 1989, the government took the decisions to apply measures for budget reduction as dictated by the World Bank and the IMF. These measures included the reduction of stipends, which immediately led to protests by students. In 1990, the confrontations worsened and resulted in the death of students.

> *C'est à la suite d'une marche organisée pour rejeter les corolaires du PAS, à savoir le concours d'entrée à la fonction publique, la réduction de l'enveloppe des bourses,…. que le 9 février 1990, trois étudiants furent tués et plusieurs autres blessés par les forces de l'ordre (Gazibo, 1998: 129).*

> *As a consequence of a protest against the structural adjustments frameworks – civil service entry test and the reduction of student bursaries for example – three students were killed and many others injured on the 9th of February 1990 (my translation).*

This event extended the political unrest in that country and eventually led to the national conference of 1991. It constitutes a historical characteristic of the Nigerien context valued by this study, mainly in the attempt to understand the role students play in the recent process of educational changes and reviews.

4.5. Access to Higher Education

Earlier in this chapter, access has been presented as a colonial legacy. In this section, ideas are extended in relation to the financial problems faced by most of the SSA universities. With only around three hundred universities today, enrolment in SSA has remained the lowest in the world. It represents about five percent of the world tertiary education enrolment (Visser, 2008), which is equivalent to about five million students. This has partly been caused by the shift of funding imposed by austerity measures. As it can be recalled, upon request of the World Bank, many SSA countries reduced their higher education budgets and increased those of basic education, which has then constituted the new focus for decades (Oketch, 2003) – since the EFA world conference in 1990 and the subsequent MDG summit in the beginning of the 21st century.

The challenges created by the shift of budgets are of two forms. First, the increased investment in universal basic education has resulted in a steady increase of the number of students entering secondary schools. Due to this situation, the demand for access to higher education has also considerably increased (Lebeau, 2008; Oketch, 2003). Second, the shift of budgets created more obstacles to universities to expand in order to cope with the growing numbers of students. The emergence of private institutions in the SSA has been observed over the past few decades, but these do not help alleviate the problem of space. Most of these are secular or sectarian and receive their funding from external sources (Teferra and Altbach, 2004).

The consequence of the underfunding is, not only the deterioration of students' social conditions, but also the impoverishment of the facilities. As Sall and Ndjaye (2007) indicated,

> *The facilities proved too small with the massive student intake and equipment was rarely changed because of the prohibitive costs of purchasing new material and the priority given to the payment of teacher salaries (p. 45).*

Therefore, the problem of facilities has two facets. Firstly, there is a lack of equipment in most of the SSA higher education institutions. Facilities are rarely well furnished. Chairs and tables are either lacking or in bad condition, and there is always a hassle of looking for these due to their very limited number (Afemikhe, 2001). Secondly, facilities in most of the SSA universities are insufficient compared to the demand. Facilities have generally remained the same since the creation of the institution – in the colonial era for some and upon independence for others. The Université Cheikh Anta Diop in Senegal, for example, is now welcoming more than forty thousand students, but its facilities were initially built to receive only about fifteen thousand students (Goudiaby, 2009). The same situation occurs in DRC at the Université de Kinshasa, which was initially built for five thousand students but forced to provide access to a number of students approximating 28,000 (Ikando, 2009).

Considering the above, one of the major challenges of SSA universities is the lack of expansion to accommodate the flow of students (Yizengaw, 2008). While universities continue to receive pressure to increase access despite their dwindling budgets (Lebeau, 2008), students are those who suffer the most. At the Université de Yaoundé, for example, more than two thousand students are forced to take classes in lecture theatres

originally built for a thousand students (Feudjio, 2009: 143). In this condition, some students have to "take lessons standing, sometimes even in the halls outside the classrooms, because of lack of seating space within" (Sawyerr, 2004: 29). This situation poses problems of quality and raises interest for the current study to examine the extent to which this occurs within the EFL programme and the perception of stakeholders about it. According to Sawyerr, with such situation, small-group tutorials and fieldwork are hardly feasible. It also prevents science students, in certain institutions, to have hands-on experience of computers, scientific equipment and basic experiments.

4.6. Shortage of Academic and Technological Resources

The insufficiency of funding in SSA higher education institutions also constitutes a problem for the functioning of their libraries. In any institution of learning, libraries play a crucial role. It is widely acknowledged that providing ease of access to "indicators of the knowledge frontiers, such as journals, periodicals, and databases, is a major prerequisite to undertaking viable, sustainable, and meaningful research" (Teferra and Altbach, 2004: 38). However, in most of the SSA universities, these resources are greatly lacking or outdated (Feudjio, 2009; Sawyerr, 2004; Visser, 2008). Due to their limited financial resources, most universities do not have subscriptions to academic journals or have cancelled them because of their high costs. Furthermore, the financial stringency has constituted an obstacle for those universities to equip their libraries with computers and other technological learning devices. In certain cases, this obstacle is worsened by the existence of tax on educational facilities (Oketch, 2003).

The above difficulties contribute to the lack of quality of education in those institutions in a world where libraries play the role of information centres and provide end-users with access or develop their technological abilities to "identify, access, sift and determine the authenticity and validity of information" (Adeogun, 2006: 48). As such, SSA universities have the challenge to transform their libraries into buildings where lifelong learning takes place. In other words, they face the need to use technology in order to provide skills and access to digital resources necessary for independent learning. As Adeogun indicated, electronic tools that are made available and remotely accessible in a user-friendly network offer the advantage to students to learn independently and at their own pace (p. 49). Beyond electronic tools, the provision of access to external databases remains one of the biggest challenges of SSA higher

education institutions due to the limited access of African countries to international fibre-optic infrastructure (Shabani, 2010: 56). In institutions where information and communication technology (ICT) is in use, this seems to be heavily dependent on expensive satellite bandwidth.

The Status of ICT in SSA universities constituted the focus of a study conducted by Bon (2010). Eight universities from eight countries – DRC, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Uganda – were involved in the study. The researcher found that ICT improvements have been achieved in many of these universities, but there is still much to be done. Among the key challenges he identified are the lack of "reliable, fast and affordable internet connectivity" and the shortage of support staff in certain universities. A noticeable weakness of Bon (2010), however, is the predominance of its focus on former British colonies rather than on a balanced selection of cases from the diverse colonial legacies in the SSA. The current study – from a francophone context – has seen this gap as a window of opportunity for examining the use of technology within the EFL programme for providing access to digital academic resources in order to enhance the effectiveness of EFL student teachers' learning. This is aspect is examined through the research question focused on contextual factors that affect teaching and learning.

4.7. Shortage of Academic Staff

The shortage of academic staff is one of the major challenges experienced by most of the SSA universities (Aina, 2010; Charlier and Croché, 2009; Ikando, 2009; Teferra and Greijn, 2010). While these institutions may not be able to recruit as many academics as they need due to the financial limitations discussed earlier, their major difficulty seems to be in terms of retention and attraction. Since the 1980s, internal and external mobility have been notably and progressively observed in most of the institutions. Internal mobility is the type of attrition of academic staff "from the university to better-paying government agencies and private institutions and firms that may or may not be able to utilise their expertise and talent effectively" (Teferra and Altbach, 2004: 41). This is therefore a situation where a university loses its staff in favour of another institution due to poor remuneration.

In terms of external mobility, shortage of academic staff in SSA is generally attributed to a phenomenon called 'brain drain' (Alemu, 2014; Visser, 2008). This has many

characteristics. It can be described in terms of attrition observable from one SSA country to another, mainly to the southern part where the university system is fairly well established (Teferra and Altbach, 2004). It also applies to SSA academic staff who migrate to other countries outside the continent. Examples of these types of brain drain are provided by Teferra and Altbach, who, for example, identified a certain number of countries where Nigerian academic staff tend to migrate to. These countries include the United States, South Africa, Botswana, Saudi Arabia and EU member countries. Either in favour of other SSA institutions or in favour of those outside the continent, this type of mobility is most often motivated by financial reasons. It is this same reason, as Visser (2008) argued, that led to the decrease in the number of academic staff in Ivory Coast – from 828 to 412 academics – within five years (1995 – 2000).

However, there are other types of reason for external mobility in the SSA context, which are beyond the lure of better salary. First, there are cases of external mobility purely motivated by the search of safety. Due to social and political turmoil, which sometimes remains a threat to their lives, certain academics over the years were forced to migrate to neighbouring or western countries. This was a recurring situation in times of conflicts in Africa (Teferra and Altbach, 2004) and in countries with problems of freedom of speech (Feudjio, 2009; Hayward, 2010). Second, there are cases of brain drain that are linked to studies abroad. It is known that SSA has the highest number of citizens studying outside the continent (Chalier and Croché, 2009). Unfortunately, most of SSA students who undertake research or postgraduate studies in Western countries never return home (Alemu, 2014: 6). They generally stay in those countries due to better living conditions and other academic opportunities.

All the situations above are creating a huge shortage of faculty members with PhD (Yizengaw, 2008) in SSA higher education institutions. This contributes to the decrease of quality of education due to the heavy reliance on people with Master's Degrees to fill the gaps. In other cases, this situation pushes SSA institutions to "hire expensive foreign workers when there aren't enough qualified Africans to do the same job, thus depriving their countries of highly skilled personnel to develop the new nation" (Bulfin, 2009: 3). While this is a common problem for most of the SSA universities, there is need to examine this situation within the programme of this study and the extent to which it affects the curricular implementation and other important matters in the life of the

institution. It is believed, to a certain extent, that the shortage of academic staff contributes negatively to the research productivity of SSA academic staff (as discussed next) and that this situation may not change until SSA institution leaders at all levels are provided with strategic planning and human resources management skills, which are significantly lacking (Yizengaw, 2008: 10).

4.8. Low Research Productivity

Research in SSA has constituted an important topic of discussion in the context of knowledge economy (Oyewole, 2010; Sall and Ndjaye, 2007; Woldegiorgis et al., 2015). In that part of the African continent, research remains a daunting task for academic staff (Alemu, 2014). According to Teferra and Greijn (2010), it is the "weakest and most neglected component of higher education" (p. 6), despite the fact that publishing still constitutes a key element for academic promotion (Teferra and Altbach, 2004). In fact, SSA has the world lowest number of researchers, and their publications account for only 1.5 percent of the world research production (Oyewole, 2010).

Following from the above, the contribution of SSA higher education to the global knowledge is quite insignificant (Aarts and Greijn, 2010). Over the last twenty five years, the output of scholars from this continent has considerably declined (Hayward, 2010; Tijssen, 2007). This has consequently positioned those academics and their institutions in a dependency situation. Since they cannot produce their own knowledge, their teaching gives way to a knowledge produced in Western countries and often regarded as universal truth (Visser, 2008). As rightly ascertained by Teferra and Altbach (2004),

> *Academic institutions in many countries are frequently linked by their participation in an international system of knowledge distribution. Universities in the large industrialised nations are the major producers and distributors of scholarly knowledge. Academic institutions in other countries, particularly in developing countries, are largely consumers of scholarly materials and research produced elsewhere (p. 39).*

As such, the limited research production in SSA universities is a marginalising situation which places them as mere consumers of products, such as books, journals and monographs, published in Western countries by companies, such as Palgrave Macmillan and Routledge, whose academic interests lie with their constituencies in Europe and North America (Teferra and Greijn, 2010: 1).

Considering the above, the current study does not explicitly seek to examine EFL teacher educators' research production but rather to understand the types of provision made to facilitate this for the purpose of learning and development. Yet, in the conduct of this research, there was also the need to understand the factors, if any, that might create barriers to research productivity. In the existing literature about higher education in SSA, these factors seem to be diverse. First, they have been situated as a colonial legacy. Immediately after independence, SSA universities started their activities without a research culture. "Most universities started as teaching institutions often affiliated with a metropolitan university of a colonial power" (Zeelen, 2012: 160). As such, the majority of them have been established as teaching-oriented institutions. Second, the major factor remains financial. Universities in SSA do not have enough funding for their research agenda. The amount generally dedicated to research by national governments is very small. They spend only about 0.3 percent of their GNP (Oyewole, 2010), which is the world lowest financial investment in research. This forces academic researchers to rely on external funding, which already represents 70 to 90 percent of the total research funding (Teferra and Altbach, 2004).

For making contribution to the global knowledge economy, the SSA higher education has recently established networks and partnerships (Bulfin, 2009; Shabani, 2010; Woldegiorgis et al., 2015) – such as the NEPAD – with international donors, but this does not seem to solve the problem of underfunding. Research infrastructures remain poor or severely inadequate (Teferra and Altbach, 2004). International partners themselves are now urging SSA countries to invest in their higher education institutions through research in order to ensure their economic and social development (Shabani, 2010).

In addition to the financial conundrum, some scholars tend to link the problem of research productivity to the research skills of academic staff in SSA universities. According to Oyewole (2010), SSA academics lack confidence to undertake research. Many among them "find it difficult to compete for research grants" (p. 24). As such, they lack knowledge on how to design strong research proposals. This raises questions about their ability to train other researchers. For Hayward (2010) and Zeelen (2012), even those academics who hold advanced degrees seem to lack research experience and therefore lack expertise for supervising postgraduate research projects. This can be

regarded as a serious lack of human capacity, which prevents institutions in developed countries to show interests for research collaboration with SSA countries (Shabani, 2010).

A non-negligible factor that also prevents research productivity in SSA is the shortage of academic staff in most of the higher education institutions. While the existing staff are over-burdened with teaching tasks (Ikando, 2009), in certain contexts they seem to hold multiple jobs (Teferra and Altbach, 2004) in both public and private universities (Zeelen, 2012). This is accented by the lack of "well-defined research policies or adequate research management structures" (Oyewole, 2010: 24).

4.9. Higher Education Reform in SSA

A very important aspect of higher education in SSA is its recent attempt to implement changes that affect its architecture. As mentioned earlier, SSA universities are mere consumers of knowledge produced by Western scholars. The current section extends this discussion mainly in terms of how these universities continue to be affected by changes in Western countries. This is generally characterised by various initiatives conducted in diverse contexts to increase the performativity of educational systems for the purpose of economic growth (Goudiaby, 2009; Jegede, 2012). While early reforms of higher education in SSA were structural and focused on financial reduction, as mentioned above, the most recent phenomenon is rather a focus on harmonisation. In other words, the scope of the reform goes beyond policy and touches more upon the field of professional practice.

Historically, higher education in SSA has been 'internationalised' since its inception in the colonial era (Alemu, 2014). Related institutions have always been a reflection of universities in Western countries. This predisposes them to copy changes undertaken in European universities or otherwise be judged non-competitive. In other words, those institutions remain at the mercy of globalisation, which imposes on nations the need to be competitive in the global market (Tatto, 2006). Consequently, this puts "pressure on higher education institutions to be relevant not only for national demands but also international market forces" (Woldegiorgis and Doevenspeck, 2013: 42). It is for this reason that the Bologna Process became a source of attraction for many SSA universities.

The Bologna Process is one of the world largest examples of educational borrowing (Brøgger, 2014; Eta, 2015). Originally, this was a reform conducted by forty European countries in their attempt to harmonise and align the architecture of their higher education programmes to the Anglo-Saxon models. Afterwards, this became subject to adoption by many SSA countries in order to enhance their economic development by preparing workers to the image of the labour market demands dictated by multinational organisations. The adoption of the Bologna Process came at a time when SSA public universities were criticised for offering general and academic preparation (Éyébiyi, 2011) rather than professional training. These universities and governments were therefore pushed to recognise the demand and reform their programmes based on skills required in the new growing global economies. This remains a major educational borrowing, which is likely to encounter resistance from different contexts. It is therefore worthwhile in the context of this research to examine the practices of the Bologna Process and understand not only the extent of their implementation within the EFL programme but also how stakeholders react to them implicitly or explicitly.

In fact, it was during the first decade of the 21st century that SSA universities started to adopt a system called LMD/BMD (Bachelor-Master-Doctorate) – entirely based on Bologna Process – to harmonise their degree structures and curricula. Similar attempts were made in the past through the Arusha Convention (Obasi and Olutayo, 2009), but these most entirely involved only Anglophone countries where the three-cycle system existed already. This presupposes that the LMD reform concerns mostly the non-English speaking countries. Its main objectives include

> *…the establishment of a credit system, the promotion of student mobility nationally and internationally, the development of professionalisation of studies for the socio-economic integration of students and the improvement and modernisation of the curriculum (Eta, 2015: 168-9).*

Based on the above, the LMD reform aims at changing academic offers in order to match the global practices. This is for the purpose of allowing mobility between institutions and professionalising programmes in order to comply with the job market demands. Employability is therefore central to this reform.

Notwithstanding, the adoption of the LMD system in SSA has recently raised multiple criticism. While this system remains under-researched by African academics (Ikando, 2009), many have seen it as a colonial enterprise (Khelfaoui, 2009). In some

Francophone contexts it is judged to be a replication of the French higher education reform (Éyébiyi, 2011); most of its process and procedures have been copied by higher educational decision makers from what works in universities of the former colonising country. According to Khelfaoui (2009), that is the reasons why

> *'Experts' are sent to the African continent to help set up programmes claiming compliance with the standards of Bologna, while African academics and administrators go to Europe to immerse themselves in the techniques and methods of the reform (p. 26).*

As such, the reform is seen to perpetuate the hegemony and academic practices of Western higher education institutions in SSA universities.

Other critics of the LMD system see its problem mainly in the so-called mobility it aims to promote. Due to their multiple problems, SSA universities may not be able to attract overseas students, because they are already overcrowded. On the contrary, the LMD system may reinforce the unidirectional flow of students from SSA to European universities (Charlier and Croché, 2009; Obasi and Olutayo, 2009), and this is not beneficial to SSA institutions. As Goudiaby (2009) clarified,

> *…la mobilité est synonyme de 'retour' et non de migration, c'est-à-dire qu'elle suppose un ancrage dans le territoire ou dans l'université d'origine, un bref séjour dans un autre pays ou une autre université et un retour dans le pays ou l'université de départ (exemple du programme ERASMUS en Europe)… Or beaucoup d'étudiants du Sud (le Sénégal n'échappe pas à la règle), une fois leurs études terminées, ne rentrent pas dans leurs pays d'origine (pp. 89-90).*

> *Mobility is synonymous to 'returning back' instead of migration. It assumes an anchorage to a home country or a home university, a brief stay in a different country or a different university and a return back to the home country or home university (as in the ERASMUS programme in Europe)… But most of the students from the South (Senegal included) do not return to their home countries once they finish their studies (my translation).*

As such, the LMD system is likely to exacerbate the brain drain issue already experienced by SSA institutions.

For some scholars, the LMD reform does not take into account much of the realities of SSA universities. The system seems to emphasise the use of student-centred and outcome-based modes of course delivery (Eta, 2015) and targets learning to take place through tutorials and practicums. The latter constitute at 60 to 70 percent of the

requirement for professionalisation (Bres, 2011), but higher education in SSA is characterised by a high level of massification, which is judged incompatible with professionalisation. This is further worsened by issues, such as the shortage of academic staff and shortage of academic resources needed for learning, caused by previous reforms focused on structural adjustments and financial austerity.

4.10. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed some key challenges of the SSA higher education. It has offered an analysis of the colonial legacy of most of the institutions in this continent. It has also highlighted the financial difficulties, which have been largely linked to the problems of funding for space expansion, funding for research and infrastructure, funding for providing access to academic and technological resources and funding for attracting and retaining talents. While these difficulties are in some cases interrelated, their occurrence in the SSA countries seems to have been heightened by global factors engendered by structural adjustment programmes. The chapter has also presented ideas about the recent reform ventures in the SSA based on models of the Bologna Process, which according to certain analysts may reinforce rather than solve the problems SSA higher education institutions already experience.

The review offered by this chapter draws attention to issues of quality that characterise the higher education system in SSA. While these issues have existed in that context for decades, their complexity would pose a continuous challenge to the Nigerien context and therefore necessitates consistent and coherent plans and actions to address them. Even though Niger is one of the lowest economies in the world, coping with these issues requires more governmental commitment. There is also the need for more commitment from stakeholders and research to develop extensive understanding of the issues within higher education programmes. The current research ascribes to this endeavour by examining factors within an EFL programme that affect preservice teacher learning and professional socialisation.

<center>**Chapter 5**</center>

<center>*Examining the EFL Programme through a Qualitative Case Study Approach*</center>

5.1. Introduction

As previously mentioned, this study is an examination of factors that affect the effectiveness of initial EFL teacher preparation in Niger in which qualitative case study strategies have been used to construct insights around 1) the curricular practices of an EFL programme, 2) the way reviews take place in that programme, 3) the development opportunities offered to educators and 4) the contextual or institutional factors that influence the curricular practices. In this chapter, I provide details about the qualitative case study framework used to conduct the research. These details include 1) some definitions of a case (study), 2) the epistemological stance of the study and 3) a description of the procedures conducted in the field. The latter encompasses the ethical arrangements and the procedures for data collection and analysis. The chapter is ended with a presentation of some strategies used to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings.

5.2. What is a Case (Study)?

There are many ways to define a case. Its study or usage varies according to contexts and research foci. In general, a case is an instance or a unit from which the researcher strives to build insights. The study of a case is therefore "the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (Stake, 1995: xi). It is an attempt to raise understanding about a particular context or individual being. It is also the celebration of the uniqueness of an instance by putting light on its known and unknown characteristics and circumstances. As Creswell (2014) put it, the study of a case is synonymous to the exploration of a bounded system (p. 181). The word 'bounded', in this definition, draws attention on the fact that a case is determined in space and in time (Hancock and Algozzine, 2006). In

other words, a case is a dynamic or a changing instance. What is found from a case at a certain period of time may be different at another (Flyvbjerg, 2013).

In the context of programme evaluation, which might be associated to the current study, the dimension of case study research is emphasized through its purpose for generating in-depth understanding and knowledge that inform "policy development, professional practice and civil or community action" (Simons, 2009: 21). As Simons argued, every case offers information about its foundation, growth and accomplishments. It is the role of the case researcher to record and interpret complex experiences of individuals and their environment (Simons, 1996). These perspectives are linked to the research tradition developed by Macdonald (1977; 1978) who viewed the study of a case as "the examination of an instance in action" (MacDonald and Walker, 1977: 181). The word 'action', here, supports the idea mentioned earlier about the dynamic state of a case. The purpose of examining an instance is to reveal the properties of the class to which it belongs. This is close to Stenhouse's (1982) position that "cases are always cases of something" and exemplary of a class (p. 10). He argued, however, that a case is not representative of a class since its relationship to the latter is problematic. The realities of the case may be different from the realities of the class from which it emerged. This argument is formulated in opposition to the psycho-statistical tradition of representative sampling, which neglects the particular experiences and actions from a case for the sake of achieving reliability and generalisability.

Considering the above characteristics, case study in educational evaluation is used for making judgements about the worthwhileness of programmes (MacDonald, 1977; 1978). It is used to illuminate decision makers about how a programme works, how it is affected by institutional factors and how stakeholders view its strength and weaknesses (Parlett and Hamilton, 1977: 10). According to MacDonald and Walker (1977), this endeavour takes the researcher in a "complex set of politically sensitive relationships" and therefore requires a solid code of practice. For them, there is no value-free evaluation research. Case study, which is their most favourable method, should involve and inform all the stakeholders for the purpose of fairness and trustworthiness.

In addition to the definitions of a case presented so far, it is important to put forward that case study research is not a methodology, even though in certain literature, such as Creswell (2014), it is presented under the umbrella of ethnographic design. In this

research, I take the position that case study research is methodologically open and not restricted to "principles derived from a theory of knowledge" (Elliott and Lukes, 2008: 88). In other words, methods in case study research are pragmatically determined in relation to the purpose of the study and the realities on the ground. Even though there are more tendencies to use qualitative strategies in case works, this does not exclude the use of quantitative strategies (Elliott and Lukes, 2008; Gerring, 2007; Simons, 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). As highlighted by Flyvbjerg (2013), a case is an individual unit, which "may be studied in a number of ways, for instance qualitatively or quantitatively, analytically or hermeneutically, or by mixed methods" (p. 170).

Case study as methodologically open is also emphasised by Bassey (1999) who identified three ways for using a case in educational research. Firstly, a case can be used to develop or test a theory. In such situation, the research issue determines the use of the case for the purpose of testing hypotheses or developing substantive theories. Secondly, a case can be used for constructing "analytical accounts of educational events, projects, programmes or systems aimed at illuminating theory" (p. 62). In other words, researchers may use cases to contribute to knowledge in a discursive manner different from the scope of testing or developing theory. Thirdly, a case can also be used for judging the worthwhileness of educational programmes.

Other reasons that support the above arguments around the study of a case can be found in its flexibility to either shape the research foci or simply accommodate the latter. Based on a typology developed by Stake (2006), in case study research, the case may be obligatory because of a particular situation it offers. Here, the case determines the focus of the study and the fieldwork procedures. This is different in other situations where the research issue is primary to the selection of a case and confines the choice of the case to the provision of insights on something (Simons, 2009). In this case, the researcher is guided by his/her interest when choosing a case out of many.

According to Stake (2006) and Bassey (1999), the variability of purpose and flexibility in the use of case study research give way to the implementation of various strategies underpinned by diverse paradigms. For example, testing hypothesis generally requires statistical and experimental procedures while obligatory cases may simply welcome interpretative frameworks. This flexibility and diversity of usage may not be possible if case study research is restricted to a certain theory of knowledge. Other supporting

perspectives on this can be found in the work of Stenhouse (1978) who advocated a view of case study research grounded in contemporary history combined at times with anthropological traditions. Even though approaches in history and anthropology may share few characteristics, they are completely guided by different worldviews and practices.

> *History assumes familiarity on the part of the community of discourse with much of the situation described – it is the history of us. Anthropology assumes unfamiliarity – it is the anthropology of them. Much of the difference between the approaches derives from this. (Stenhouse, 1978: 36)*

Bringing historical and anthropological methods together within case study research, therefore, requires flexibility and theoretical openness of the latter. It is therefore safer to regard case study research as an umbrella approach that accommodates various research methods – either qualitative or quantitative or both – but focusing on an instance (Simons, 2009).

Considering all the above characteristics of case study research, the current endeavour examines a Nigerien higher education programme where EFL teachers receive their initial preparation. In this study, the primary aim was not to evaluate the programme but to inductively construct insights about the factors and practices that affect the effectiveness of initial teacher education. Officially, Niger has three higher education programmes that offer training to EFL teachers. The studied case was purposively selected (Miles et al., 2014) out of these three programmes for three reasons. First, the selected case remains the programme where more than 80 percent of Nigerien EFL teachers are prepared. Second, one of the two other programmes is no longer operational as it used to be in the 1990s. Third, the last of the two other programmes is quite new and located in a non-authorised area due to security problems. These reasons had placed the selected case as both intrinsic and instrumental (Simon, 2009; Stake, 2006) to the research.

5.3. An Interpretative Case Study Approach

Having presented a case study as a non-methodology, it is necessary to situate the epistemological and ontological perspectives that guided my use of it for the conduct of this research. In this endeavour, I resorted to the interpretative-constructivist epistemology in which researchers "study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them"

(Denzin and Lincoln, 2013: 7). This research therefore subscribes to the view that reality is not an independent phenomenon from individuals (Grix, 2010). It takes reality as multiple and constructed by individuals based on their personal and social experiences. Because interpretative research strives to value subjectivity, it usually aims at addressing "how members of society understand their own actions" (Travers, 2001: 10). As such, building understanding and creating meaning has been at the heart of the interactions I had with participants in the course of the study. Consequently, this research relies on verbal data – rather than statistical – constructed through a qualitative methodology.

One of the main reasons for adopting the above stance is the possibility it offers to privilege the voice of participants. Moreover, there is no interest in this study to predict results or develop some scientific laws. The case used for this study did not result from a random sampling, as needed in positivistic research, to control variables and use inferential statistics in drawing conclusions. It was rather chosen based on a process meant to acknowledge the socio-historical factors of the setting and the variability of the participants (Stenhouse, 1993), which are generally excluded by experimental and statistical research. This idea of individual variability raises the issue of subjectivity, which is impossible to avoid when dealing with human beings. Individuals in educational settings have feelings and varying socio-historical backgrounds; they cannot be reduced to machines or plants. Intersubjectivity is thus given room in this research since it strives to showcase the experiences of the participants and invite critical judgments of others (Granek, 2013).

The above suggests the lack of interest in this research to make any formal generalisation from the findings. Yet, this is not synonymous to the impossibility for this study to allow generalisation. There are various ways to achieve this in interpretative frameworks but differently from the process of positivistic grand generalisation (Stake, 1995). An important form of this is suggested in the works of Stenhouse arguing that case study research can be used for generalisation but retrospectively, as opposed to prediction. Stenhouse's retrospective generalisation is grounded in the tradition of contemporary history, which makes data available to the reader for criticism and utilisation. This justifies his claim that in case study research verification and cumulation are achievable through the development of case records to

allow critical intersubjectivity. A case record, in Stenhouse (1978), is "a theoretically parsimonious condensation of the case data" (p. 37).

Even though a case record may serve to accomplish several purposes, in this sense, it is regarded as the evidence readers and case researchers will refer to, either for critical appraisal or for analytical survey of cases. For verification to take place, however, accessibility to the evidence must be established. According to Stenhouse, the case record must be made public. The researcher has the responsibility to share his/her case records with any interested and relevant community. By making the record accessible, the researcher is making the evidence ready for utilisation and criticism by others. By cumulating and giving electronic access to case records, researchers are submitting their evidence to the scrutiny of the public and allowing cross-case retrospective generalisation. In this report, a case record is included (see Appendix A) to provide readers with additional evidence (raw data) for drawing further interpretations.

The type of generalisation attributed above to Stenhouse is noticeably close to Stake's (1995) naturalistic generalisation. This type of generalisation is formulated in forms of conclusion reached through "personal engagement in life's affairs or by vicarious experience so well constructed that the person feels as if it happened to themselves" (p. 85). For Stake, this type of generalisation is made by readers based on personal experiences or comparisons with other cases. This relatively differs with Bassey's (1999) notion of 'fuzzy generalisation', which is a sort of "prediction, arising from empirical inquiry, that says that something may happen but without any measure of its probability" (p. 46). As such, 'fuzzy generalisation' is rather a qualified claim predicting possibilities but devoid of certainty. It leaves rooms for replications and readers to compare familiar cases in order to confirm the 'fuzzy' claims.

5.4. Fieldwork Procedures

Taking into account the characteristics of case study research and the stance adopted for this study, the methodological approach that guided my fieldwork was entirely qualitative. The purpose of this section is to introduce the main procedures implemented in the field. Yet, it is worth underlining that many of the procedures did not take place as planned due to some realities on the ground. A reflection is included in this chapter to provide details about these realities. To ensure the ethicality of the procedures in the field, negotiation had remained the key instrument.

5.4.1. The Case

The selected case, as introduced earlier, is an EFL programme within Sahel University, which is one of the eight national universities in Niger. It comprises about eight full-time professors and hundreds of students whose majority will embrace the career of EFL teaching in rural or urban areas. In terms of content, courses in that programme focus on literature (African, American and British), linguistics, composition, and ELT pedagogy (see Appendix D and E). Based on these, students who register are expected to earn their first degree (BA) within three years or the comprehensive degree (MA) within five years. To examine practices within this programme, I collected data from administrators, professors and students.

5.4.2. Restating the Research Questions

As mentioned earlier, the fieldwork for this study did not take place as planned. Only one of the two phases was carried out successfully. This situation imposed some changes to the focus of the study. Initially, I entered the field with two central research questions:

1. *What are the characteristics of the pedagogical practices within the EFL programme of Sahel University?*
2. *What are the attitudes and experiences of participants with action research?*

Each of these questions had been dedicated to a phase of the fieldwork: firstly to understand the practices within the case and secondly to conduct action research interventions. Due to the lack of participants (professors) to try action research in their classrooms and the inability to collect meaningful data during the workshop, I dropped the second question and refocused on the first one, which was afterwards reformulated into multiple research questions:

1. *What is the predominant approach (principles and values) within programmes that prepare teachers of English as a foreign language? What are the practices that are indicative of this approach?*
2. *What are the procedures for reviewing and assessing EFL programmes? How frequent are reviews undertaken? How are they conducted? How are the resulting changes evaluated?*

3. *What are the opportunities for teacher educators' development? What provisions does the institution make to facilitate teacher educators' professional growth?*

4. *What are the contextual factors that affect teaching and learning within EFL programmes?*

This is a dynamism of research accommodated by qualitative approaches. The latter acknowledge the fact that research is always influenced by the context within which it takes place. The overarching research question itself (see 1.6., p. 27) was not formulated until the process of data analysis was completed.

5.4.3. Field Entry and Access to Participants

This is about the ethical measures to which I was committed prior to the fieldwork and how some of them were put in practice. Site entry and access to participants constituted a key component of the fieldwork. It is therefore legitimate and necessary to provide details about them.

5.4.3.1. Ethical Predispositions

In any research, there exist ethical issues the researcher needs to anticipate. In qualitative studies, one of the ethical issues has to do with the level of control participants have on the data they provide to the researcher. Knowing that "all informants own and have rights in the information that they give to a fieldworker" (Stenhouse, 1982: 14), I have considered it a pre-requisite to clarify with participants the different ways the data are going to be used. This mainly concerns the ways research findings are going to be disseminated and the extent to which personal information will be disclosed. While one of the purposes of this research is to disseminate findings to the academic and other relevant communities, the need to weight this interest against the privacy of those who provided the data was very central to the procedures. There was therefore the need for both participants and myself as the researcher to negotiate ways that ensure confidentiality. This, as suggested by Hammersley and Traianou (2012), consisted in keeping the recorded data secret and inaccessible to third parties and anonymising the participants and the place where the research was conducted. Anonymization arises generally because certain personal information – through embedded quotes in the reports – are crucial for supporting the research findings.

Notwithstanding, anonymization in certain situations of qualitative research is generally difficult to achieve (Hammersley and Traianou, 2012), mainly when anonymising the case is difficult and where there is a strong relation between the case and the researcher. The current study is likely to confront this situation after dissemination. There are currently three higher education programmes that prepare EFL teachers in Niger, but the selected programme is the most likely to be guessed by readers – even when anonymised – because of its prevalence over the two other programmes, which are either new and unknown or dying due to past reforms. Furthermore, this is the programme where I was initially prepared to become an EFL teacher thirteen years ago. Those who know the researcher may easily identify the programme. However, actions were taken towards ensuring the report does not put the case at risk. This was achieved through the institutional verification procedure, which enabled the programme management to have a look at the report before dissemination (see Appendix C).

In addition to anonymization, the current study acknowledges the responsibility of the researcher in ensuring accuracy and credibility of the data collected by allowing participants to have control and edit the information they provided. This procedure is called member-check. During the fieldwork, it enabled participants to check the data they provide and "spot information that would identify them and thus threaten their interests" (Miles et al., 2014: 63). Moreover, it helped to avoid reporting data that do not match their experiences. Beyond these, negotiation was the main ethical instrument that I used throughout the fieldwork. The primary negotiation came through a contract or consent, which was normally a symbol of free will to participate or not to the study and a guarantee of anonymity and non-desired disclosure of data.

5.4.3.2. What Happened in Practice

In line with the procedures approved by the ethics committee of the School of Education and Lifelong Learning at University of East Anglia, I secured permission to conduct the fieldwork activities within the EFL programme of Sahel University through a formal letter (see Appendix A) I sent to the head of the programme one month in advance. Upon arrival to the field, an introductory meeting was convened with the head of the programme in order to explain the project and its requirements. Following from that, the head of the programme made the decision to announce the project to the academic staff during an upcoming meeting. Information sheets and consent forms (see

Appendix B) were afterwards printed and sent to the head of the programme's office in order to enhance communication with prospective participants.

At the beginning of the academic year, I was informed by the head of the programme that three professors had shown interest in the study. Initiative was then made to meet those professors individually in order to further clarify the intent of the study. For the purpose of recruiting more participants and creating more possibilities for observation and interviews, each of the professors introduced me to the students in some of their classes. I was then able to announce the research project to students and request their voluntary participation. In that process, I did not select participants based on any predefined criteria. It was entirely based on their availability.

Classes in the selected programme varied in size. The number of students in targeted classes varied from 60 to 400 students, and this constituted a challenge in the process of seeking consents. Due to the fear of taking a considerable amount of time in some classes, I did not request students to read the information sheets and sign their consent while in class. They were rather asked to take the document home in order to read carefully before making informed decisions. They were also told to underline any aspect of the research they wished the researcher to clarify. Few cases of such clarification request were received, and I responded instantly to individual students or to groups of them in class. Unfortunately, this process created more delay to the study than planned.

There was also the fact that the number of students was never static from one session to another. It was almost impossible for me to know the definite student number per level. This was further complicated by the lack of a control system to record the list of attendees. With that situation, in most classes, it had taken more than a month before I could start recording observation data. Nonetheless, the non-recorded sessions I attended constituted a good medium for reinforcing my familiarity with the classroom contexts. In Master's level classes, the familiarity with the context was accelerated by the presence of my former classmates among the students.

Overall, 294 members of the EFL programme gave favourable consent to the study. Twenty-two of them (conveniently selected) offered data through semi-structured interviews. Only these twenty-two participants are mentioned by name in this report due

to the need for incorporating excerpts in the analysis. To comply with confidentiality commitments, their names are used under pseudonyms as indicated in *table 2*.

Table 2: List of participants

#	Pseudonyms	Status
1	Dr Kadidja	Professor/ Administrator
2	Dr Paul	Professor
3	Dr Kader	Professor/ Administrator
4	Dr Sam	Part-time Professor
5	Aisha	2nd year student
6	Grace	2nd year student
7	Joseph	2nd year student
8	Emanuel	2nd year student
9	Alou	3rd year student
10	John	3rd year student
11	Haoua	3rd year student
12	Zalika	3rd year student
13	Zaharaou	3rd year student
14	Roukaya	MA student/ Literature
15	Oro	MA student/ Literature
16	Ika	MA student/ Literature
17	Minas	MA student/ Literature
18	Sheik	MA student/ Literature
19	Jacks	MA student/ Literature
20	Salim	MA student/ Applied Linguistics
21	Labo	MA student/ Applied Linguistics
22	Alice	MA student/ Applied Linguistics

5.4.4. Data Collection

Data collection, which spanned over almost the whole academic year (from October 2014 to May 2015) was initially planned to encompass two phases. As mentioned earlier, an adequate implementation of phase two was not possible. Only phase one was successfully conducted. This, as shown in *figure 5*, included classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documents review conducted in a concurrent way with data analysis. In other words, the three methods depended on each other for the generation of more insights.
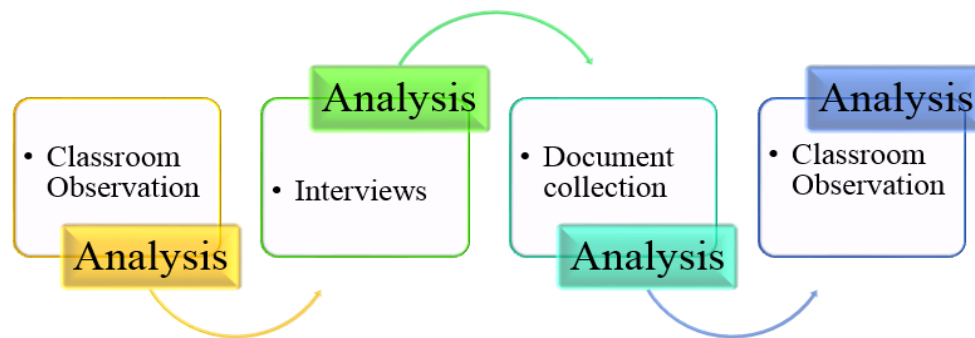
Figure 5: Concurrent process of data collection and analysis

Corbin and Strauss (2008) referred to this concurrent process of data collection and analysis as *theoretical sampling*. It is a strategy allowing a cumulative process and clarity of direction as well as enables the researcher to adapt unexpected situations. This differs from conventional procedures in which there is a time for gathering data and another for analysis (Miles et al., 2014). In theoretical sampling, analysis begins with the first data collected, and further collections are carried out based on the analyses. As such, any next step – which question to ask next, where to find the answer or how to get that answer – is determined by the data.

5.4.4.1. Classroom Observation

Classroom observation is the research method through which I recorded information as seen in the field. In qualitative classroom observation, the researcher "tries to see life as it really is" in the setting (Wragg, 2012: 56). Classroom observation, here, refers then to what Yin (2014) described as direct observation through which the researcher deals with the real-world setting of the case. It "can range from formal to casual" activities (p. 113). In other words, classroom observation can be unstructured, semi-structured, or structured (O'Leary, 2014). In semi-structured and structured observations, the researcher works with pre-established protocols while in unstructured observation he/she relies on his/her consciousness and the broad idea of his/her research. For the purpose of this study, I conducted classroom observation without any predefined protocol. The main objective was to underline the dominant instructional strategies used by professors and the types of situation that characterise classes in that programme.

During the fieldwork, I carried out classroom observations over the first semester, which spanned from October 2014 to January 2015. The three professors (Dr Kadidja, Dr Kader, and Dr Paul), who had shown interest to the study in the first place, accepted

I observe their sessions. During the first month, I conducted observations only for the purpose of establishing rapport with professors and students and gaining their consents. The data recorded over that period was not considered for analysis and interpretation. Over the three remaining months, observations were then undertaken two to three times in each class. Dr Kader's class was the first to be observed, and the other classes were progressively scheduled based on the theoretical sampling strategy.

For the purpose of classroom observation, I had initially planned and gained ethical clearance to use cameras in order to capture video data, but for some unexpected reasons this was impossible. First, classes were large and generally overcrowded. It would have required at least four cameras – run together in different angles – to cover the sessions. Due to budget limitations, I could not afford the expense for such a number of cameras. Second, it was impossible for me to identify those who consented to be videotaped and those who did not. Third, for fear of disrupting the professors' plans of activities, I judged it inconvenient to require non-participating students to sit apart. This was even impossible, knowing that students generally have to struggle for better seats due to some logistical problems in allocated facilities. Considering these ethical constraints, I resorted to note-taking strategies while observing the class sessions. In that process, I restrained from participating to class activities, except in classes taught by Dr Paul, who during certain sessions would request I expand on things related to the application of APA and MLA styles. This had actually helped in reinforcing my familiarity with students. Many of them showed openness and approached me after certain sessions to ask particular questions about APA or MLA formatting.

5.4.4.2. Interviewing

This is one of the key methods used to collect data in the field. As Yin (2014) underlined, it is "an essential source of case study evidence because most case studies are about human affairs and actions" (p. 113). As such, I used it to collect perspectives, knowledge and lived experiences held by individuals from a particular setting. It involved interaction between participants and myself, and data gathered were in verbal form. In fact, there are various ways to conduct interviews following a qualitative framework. In most of the relevant literature, qualitative interview is given three general characteristics: unstructured, semi-structured, and structured (Cohen et al., 2011; Tracy, 2013). Unstructured interviews are informal and require a high level of expertise due to

the fact that the researcher does not proceed with pre-planned questions but an aide-memoire. Semi-structured interviews, on the contrary, require a set of questions but asked in a non-strict order or modified in the process according to the circumstances and the dynamic needs of the research. For structured interviews, they are known for their rigidity through fixed questions. They are sometimes referred to or associated with qualitative or structured questionnaire (Yin, 2014).

In this study, I undertook semi-structured interviews because of the flexibility they offer to plan questions and change them if needed during the conversation. In line with theoretical sampling strategy, interview questions were continuously formulated based on the analysis of data from classroom observations, documents or other interviews. For example, upon observing Dr Kader's class, I coded the data and then formulated more questions to extend insights around the emerging issues. In general, interviews were conducted with 18 students and 4 professors. Two among the professors also held administrative responsibilities. Each of the participants was given freedom to choose the time that fits his/her calendar. Except the cases of Dr Kader and Emanuel, most of the interviews lasted around 30 minutes. All the interviews were conducted in English but occasionally switching to French to enable participants to understand the questions and respond with more ease. English was the main medium of interview for verifying student teachers' communicative competence, considering that CLT is the predominant ELT method in that context. In this process, a voice recorder was used to capture the conversations, which were later transcribed and translated where necessary for the purpose of analysis. Transcribed and translated interviews have been viewed and confirmed by participants before coding.

5.4.4.3. Documents

Documents also constituted a very useful source of information for the current study. As acknowledged by Grix (2010), documents are generally written with a purpose in mind (p. 133) or based on particular assumptions and behaviours beyond those of a particular individual (Hancock and Algozzine, 2006). In this research, documents included the programme course structure, syllabi, teaching materials and regulations of the institution. These provided me with details for corroborating information from other sources (Yin, 2014). I used some of those details to formulate questions or plan

additional classroom observations in order to build more understanding on certain issues.

5.4.5. Data Analysis

The purpose of any data analysis is to organise and draw interpretations from the information collected. In this study, as mentioned earlier, I conducted initial data analysis concurrently with data collection. After the initial observation was undertaken, resulting field notes were coded and questions or guidelines for the next data collection steps were built based on the emerging ideas in order to expand meaning and insight. I carried out the two procedures this way until a point of saturation was attained (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). In order to facilitate the analysis, I regularly took some actions to make the collected data workable. As recommended by Miles et al. (2014), raw classroom observation notes had to be converted into expanded write-ups (p. 71) before I was able to apply codes on them. Recorded interviews were also transcribed and edited by both participants and myself prior to coding. This enabled me to build a set of printable verbal data on which I carried out manual coding.

Despite the use of theoretical sampling in this research, data analysis did not aim at developing concepts, as would be the case in grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The process was rather similar to what Clarke and Braun (2013) called thematic analysis. The latter is a process of identifying themes within the data. It has six core steps: Familiarisation with the data, coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and writing-up (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 87). In line with these steps, I opted to generate *descriptive* and *in vivo* codes from the data. Descriptive codes are labels that summarise a data chunk in one word or phrase. In vivo codes are rather participants' own words extracted from the data to honour their voice (Miles et al., 2014). My initial preference at this stage was to generate and work with in vivo codes only. Unfortunately, there were situations in which this was not possible; I had to include descriptive codes as well. Upon completion of the fieldwork, all the initially analysed data sets were compiled in the same document for a second cycle analysis. This resulted in a matrix where chunks of data had been grouped under themes for further analysis. This enabled me to shuttle across the data searching for interrelations prior to reporting.

5.5. What Did not Work: Reflection on Phase Two

The conduct of *phase two*, as mentioned several times earlier, did not successfully take place as planned. Even though all the professors who participated in the research in *phase one* had also consented to participate in *phase two*, only one among them was able to attend the action research workshop at its closing stage. I made further attempts to contact the professors to check whether they were still available for trying action research, but these did not yield favourable outcomes. I understood that those participants were extremely busy, and two among them were even having additional responsibilities as programme administrators. In addition, some of them had put the argument forward that they were not familiar with action research and could therefore not commit to use something they did not know much about. While I was available to walk them individually through the process of action research and, if necessary, work collaboratively with them, the issue might be linked to the fact that my research was not mandated or sponsored by the programme and may therefore not contribute to their promotion.

Other than the above, the failure of phase two was foreshadowed by the organisation of the workshop, which was supposed to introduce the philosophy and process of action research to students and professors. Due to the lack of participants, I had been constrained to modify the format of the workshop and postpone it to a different date. The initially retained dates were Monday 30th and Tuesday 31st of March 2015, but these were changed to Sunday 4th of April. Upon discussing the matter with the head of the programme, I understood that students' reluctance to participate was caused by two situations: the lack of transportation and the workshop reading tasks.

In fact, the initial dates for the workshop coincided with the Easter holidays. Unfortunately, the majority of students at Sahel University rely on the university buses, which are generally unavailable during school break. This unavailability of transportation partly prevented the majority of students to offer their consents. The other situation that altered their participation was my requirement for students to read some materials and do some tasks prior to the workshop. This was planned in order to have discussions – in groups – about the process and importance of action research based on case studies they should have read. Seemingly, this was not welcome by students who saw the requirement as an extra burden to their curricular activities. To cater with these

situations, I provided participants with transportation fees and cancelled the reading task. Consequently, more than twenty students decided to participate.

The workshop, as mentioned above, did not see the attendance of professors, and data collected from students were very poor. This was caused by a noticeable lack of interaction between students working in groups and with the facilitator. Very few among the students were occasionally volunteering to answer my questions. However, the non-participation of professors and students' reluctance to interact had constituted useful insights and key learnings that are further interpreted and linked to factors of effective teacher learning in the subsequent analysis chapters.

5.6. Research Validation

Validation here does not stand for the use of certain procedures to ensure the validity and reliability of the research. While the latter are more positivistic in their nature, validation in this research is used in the sense of ensuring the trustworthiness and credibility of findings (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013). In qualitative case study research, there exist many ways to achieve these. Triangulation is one of them. It refers to the use of multiple data sources or collection procedures to enhance interpretation and meaning. In fact, there are many ways to use triangulation. Simons (2009) underlined four types of triangulations: methodological triangulation, data triangulation, theory triangulation and investigator triangulation. Nonetheless, methodological triangulation and data triangulation seem to be the most frequent in case study research, through the use of observation, interview and documents review. In this research, I used triangulation at different levels. First, interviews and documents were used to triangulate observations. Second, the interview data had been collected from three different informants (Remenyi, 2012): professors, students and administrators.

However, triangulation does not always help to reach confirmation, as many tend to believe. This strategy may simply help reach data variability (Elliott, 1991; 1993). In other words, it may reinforce the intersubjective nature of the data and, thus, leave the researcher with multiple and varying perspectives from participants. This is however not a problem in qualitative case studies. I argue that this situation is still an aspect of data validation. One of the objectives of qualitative fieldwork being the attainment of data saturation, triangulation – through data or methods – may allow researchers to expand dimensions of ideas emerging from their data.

Other ways to ensure validation in this study included member-check and the provision of in-depth description of the field procedures. A detailed description of procedures, including ethical measures, has been provided in this chapter to allow other researchers to see the strengths and weaknesses of the process. Even though there is no perfect blueprint of how to conduct qualitative research (Miles et al., 2014), there are vital aspects that always influence the findings of a study and that need to be reported in order to enhance appreciation of the latter. I also used member-check in this study in order to minimise bias and misinterpretations. This is more important for validating observation data through which, as claimed by Stenhouse (1978), the researcher sees things with his/her own perspectives rather the perspectives of the participants. Throughout the data collection process, I had regularly shared field notes and interview transcripts with concerned participants in order to amend the information given.

5.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the methodological procedures that guided the conduct of the current study. Being an interpretative case study research, its main procedures have been characterised by flexibility and rigour to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. The fieldwork – carried out over ten months in an initial EFL teacher education programme – had yielded observation and interview data complemented by some useful documents. Despite the triangulation involved in the fieldwork, these data had been subjected to member-check, and their analysis followed the process of thematic analysis. While the scope of the initial research plan had considerably shifted due to contextual constraints, the latter have constituted a source of reflection based on which future research actions can be better implemented. In the next four chapters, findings from this research are presented in accordance with the main research questions.

Chapter 6

Curricular Characteristics of the EFL Programme

6.1. Introduction

As highlighted in the methodology chapter, the current study was conducted following a qualitative case study framework. It focuses on an EFL programme in a Nigerien university and offers a diversity of insights and experiences as seen and lived by students, teacher educators, and administrators. Data resulted from classroom observations, interviews with those participants, and official documents gathered throughout the fieldwork process. Based on a concurrent process similar to theoretical sampling (Corbin and Strauss, 2008), data were progressively collected and analysed in order to present findings around emerging themes. The purpose of the current chapter is to present the constructed understanding around a major theme, namely the curricular characteristics of the EFL programme. Insights presented under this theme answer partly the following research question:

> *What is the predominant approach (principles and values) within programmes that prepare teachers of English as a foreign language? What are the practices that are indicative of this approach?*

Considering the above, I present insights in this chapter to highlight 1) the diversity of students and their motivations for attending the programme, 2) the nature of courses offered by the programme, and 3) the orientations of the existing TEFL (teaching English as a foreign language) courses. Insights in this chapter also include the way teaching and assessment are delivered by teacher educators.

As a reminder, the EFL programme of Sahel University is the institution of the country where the majority of EFL teachers receive their initial education. At the time I collected data for this research, many review actions were being planned and/or implemented in that context (see chapter seven). This presupposes that the case of this study was in a state of change that might affect the currency of the findings.

Furthermore, a complete picture of findings for answering the above-mentioned research question might not be offered at this level without taking into account some aspects relevant to the ongoing reviews. Aspects relating to course planning and course evaluation, for example, are complementary for understanding the approach used by the programme to prepare EFL teachers. However, I chose to present these aspects in the next chapter due to the problematic situation they revealed in relation to the ongoing LMD reviews.

6.2. Diversity of Students, Goals and Motivations

Determining who the students of the EFL programme are has involved an analysis of the types of instrumental motivation (Aliakbari and Monfared, 2014) and career goal they hold in relation to their education within that programme. Based on the data, student motivations and goals for studying English were largely expressed in relation to the position the English language occupies within the context where the study took place. The position of the English language was first inferred from the attraction the programme has on first year students and many professionals. Based on classroom observations, it was ascertained that the programme has more students than it used to have one or two decades ago. Over the years, the student population has more than doubled, despite the recent creation of another programme, which was opened few years ago to welcome a good part of students. Based on my personal experience, fifteen years ago, it used to be less than a hundred students at the first year level. When I conducted this research, the number was more than four hundred.

> In the English Department, there used to be not more than hundred
> students. But last year, they come about 450 students. So, even the number
> surprised them (Joseph, 06/01/2015).

The increase from a hundred to hundreds of students is a surprising phenomenon. It arose my interest to understand the underlying rationale. While the increase is partly caused by the policy of the institution, the growing number of students within the EFL programme is mostly linked to the position the English language occupies in the minds of learners or the important role it plays in their lives (Mansoor, 2004). Some believe that the EFL programme attracts more students due to the advantage English provides to job seekers.

> It is a big plus for you when you are looking for a job, whether in Niger or
> out of Niger (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).

It was also widely acknowledged by participants that English is an international language. Without English, one cannot easily travel abroad. Other participants also held the belief that the most important sources of knowledge worldwide are written in English. To be able to benefit from those sources, one must first acquire some proficiencies in English. Building on these expressed views of the English language, a diversity of students with different career goals and motivations was found to exist within the EFL programme. While a striking majority of them wish to teach, many others indicated that they attended courses in order to gain linguistic proficiencies needed for their job or for further studies abroad. To exemplify these, the following subsections present insights into the personal experiences and motivations held by the participants.

6.2.1. "For the majority, it's really to become teachers"

The data reveal that most of the students at the Sahel University's EFL programme aim to become EFL teachers for secondary schools or beyond. Participants like Salim, Labo, Ika, Oro, Sheik, Roukaya, and Alice are teachers already. Others like Alou, John, Haoua, Zalika, and Zaharaou were not teachers at that moment, but they do plan to make their careers in EFL teaching. Out of the eighteen interviewed students, only five were not intending to become teachers. This is a strong indicator that the majority of the registered students within the programme are likely to embrace the teaching career.

> *For the majority, it's really to become teachers. For the older groups, they are already teachers. They just want to teach English at a higher level (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).*

The older groups Dr Kadidja is referring to are former graduates of the programme who obtained their Bachelor's Degrees years or decades ago, and after the implementation of the LMD system, they decided to come back for a Master's Degree. This category of students constitutes an important majority at the Master's level, and most of them are teachers.

> *Most of us are teaching. Even those who are working in offices, they teach some classes in private schools. For example, there are some advisers among us, but they also have English classes in some private schools. All of us are teaching (Labo, 27/01/2015).*

Thus, most of the returning students already have some teaching experiences. They generally claim to have returned for improving their skills. These skills, in most of the cases, have to do with linguistic skills.

> *I came back, first of all to improve, to improve my way of speaking (Labo, 27/01/2015).*

In other cases, targeted skills have to do with pedagogy and teaching skills:

> *What I want is to improve my teaching, to be more confident, to get something related to my teaching. (Alice, 28/01/2015).*

In these cases, the purpose pursued by the participants is tied to the acquisition of additional knowledge in order to become better teachers. They present a diversity of preference where some among them are looking for linguistic knowledge and others for pedagogical skills. The above statements may be regarded as an implicit expression of beliefs that subject matter knowledge or knowledge of applied science is the most important element for effective teaching (Wallace, 1991). Knowing that Alice and Labo are already teachers at senior secondary school level, I inferred that their returning to the EFL programme is linked to the purpose of professional development. In this situation, formal teacher education is seen as an important element of teacher development by allowing in-service teachers to acquire more content subject matter and pedagogical knowledge. This is a situation shaped by behaviouristic models.

Beyond the purpose above, there exists another reason for which people return to the programme. Many of them plan to obtain a Master's Degree in order to register abroad for a Doctoral Degree.

> *I would like to attain the higher level. This is my mission and my objective to get this title of PhD (Salim, 03/02/2015).*

This reason also applies to Ika, a second year Master student. Ika was at the *Maîtrise* level, back in 2003, when he left the university. Since then, he had been teaching English at the senior secondary school level. Over time, he had realised that he needs a degree higher than a Bachelor's Degree. The main reason to this is the growing opportunity for becoming an EFL teacher educator in one of the newly created universities.

There is a change into the academic policy. In the past we have only one university; that is the University of Niamey. From 2010 to 2011, they have tried to add more universities. […] So, these universities, you know, they need lecturers and my objective through this going back to university is maybe, if I can get a scholarship after my MA degree, to continue for a PhD degree and maybe one day I can become a lecturer at one of these universities (Ika, 15/01/2015).

As exemplified by Ika and Salim, the purpose is to obtain a higher degree in order to teach at a higher level. With the creation of new institutions, as mentioned by Ika, there is a high demand for EFL teacher educators in the country. The Nigerien government had recently created new universities as a response to the growing population in need of higher education and as a way to raise the level of access to higher education, which remains the lowest in the Sub-Saharan Africa. The demand in academic staff created by these actions explains better, in my view, the presence of many returning graduates. Most of the in-service EFL teachers go back to school for the purpose of preparing their path for doctoral studies rather than becoming better teachers as expressed by Labo and Alice.

There also exists within the EFL programme another category of older students generally found at the Bachelor's level. These are 'Special A' students, a category made of former primary school teachers who aim to become secondary school EFL teachers. To be admitted to the programme, they generally sit for a selection test.

Those are primary school teachers who have been given opportunity to take an exam and come to the university to continue their studies (Joseph, 06/01/2015).

This partly explains the increase of the student population within the EFL programme. Within this programme, 'Special A' students constitute the largest category.

I think, in my class, there is at least 170 'special A' cases. (Joseph, 06/01/2015).

The number provided by Joseph is very meaningful for examining the extent to which teaching remains the main goal pursued by students within the programme. A number of more than 170 in-service teachers in a class of about 400 students is likely to support the assertion made by Dr Kadidja that the majority of students aim to become teachers. This is reinforced by the presence of other students who had never taught but wish to

become teachers. This is the case of Alou, who is aware of the shortage of EFL teachers in Niger and wishes to become one in order to help the country.

> *In Niger we have our schools suffering with the lack of teachers who teach English. So, my desire is to go and help my brothers in different schools (Alou, 04/12/2014).*

The same goal was expressed by Haoua, Zalika, and Zaharaou, who intend to become EFL teachers in order to help fill the gap. It therefore derives from these insights that many, if not the majority of students within the EFL programme, aim to become EFL teachers or teacher educators. This situation might have originated from factors that can be linked to globalisation. Even though, there is need to consider demographic and access factors, the increase in the number of people willing to become EFL teachers may be regarded as a response to the demand of EFL proficiencies in the Nigerien labour market and the shortage of EFL teachers as engendered by the increased access at secondary school level.

6.2.2. English for Something Else

There also exists within the EFL programme a category of students who do not wish to make their career in teaching. There are many among them who are jobholders in different professions, and their aim is rather to acquire some English language proficiencies as required by their employers. Others are regular students aiming to learn English for undertaking studies abroad or making career in multilingual contexts where English is used as a lingua franca.

Grace, for example, is a student who wishes to make her career in the field of translation. She is also one of the rare second year students who dare to speak English outside classroom without major constraints. Her motivation to study English comes from her multiple encounters with the English language before joining the EFL programme. For some years, she had worked with some Americans who used her service as a babysitter.

> *I really don't know how I get to speak English this way. It's the grace of God; because I have not done some specific schools or some specific studies somewhere else. I have been living in here since I was born. But I have worked with some Americans; I have babysat their children (Grace, 08/01/2015).*

From a sociocultural perspective, Grace's communicative competence might have originated from her interactions with native speakers of English, mainly the young children she used to babysit. This was reinforced by her involvement with some English-speaking missionaries with whom she used to visit some villages to teach the Gospel. In such enterprise, her role was that of an interpreter.

> *I have also been translating sometimes. I don't know if you know I am a Christian. So, we share the Gospel in some villages. I got to do the interpretation for those people when they come here (Grace, 08/01/2015).*

Grace's interest to study Sahel University's EFL programme might have been motivated by those experiences and early contact she had established with that language through native speakers. It was from those experiences that she had developed some beliefs that, outside Niger, one cannot find his/her way without English. For her, this might be the reason why people are rushing to register to the EFL programme.

> *They are becoming conscious that English is the language that people speak outside. When they go abroad, to America, for example, French, Hausa or Zarma cannot help them. But only when you speak English, you can find a way (Grace, 08/01/2015).*

This reflects a belief with which individuals tend to value English more than the languages they use on a daily basis (Botez, 2015; Hilliard, 2015). Hausa and Zarma are the two dominant languages in the Nigerien context, but with which Grace believes she cannot find her way if she travels abroad. Given the limited scope of English usage in the Nigerien context, her wish to become a translator could be seen as an attempt to help bridge the information gap.

Aisha is another second year student whose first contact and interest with the English language were established through her attendance of an elementary school. She had the chance to attend one of those rare private elementary schools where English is taught to children. Similar to Grace, Aisha believes that proficiencies in English are very necessary when travelling abroad. More importantly, she positioned English as the most important language to be learned for the purpose of managing international relations.

> *I noticed that if you travel outside Niger, everybody speaks English. And to work in international relations, you must also speak English very well (Aisha, 08/01/2015).*

This is indicative of Aisha's awareness of the fact that English is the first lingua franca used around the planet. It is also one of Aisha's wishes to be employed in the field of international relations, which ideally connects people of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

> *I decided to learn English because I would like to work in the international relations sector or to work with foreigners in other countries (Aisha, 08/01/2015).*

As such, her registration to the EFL programme was mainly to acquire the necessary linguistic and intercultural skills in order to study in an English speaking country and to communicate efficiently with foreigners through her target job of international relations. Aisha also believes that learning English will enable her to effectively explore the sources of knowledge, which generally use English as a medium.

> *Most of the important books are written in English. Even on the internet, most of important information is in English. So, it's important for us to come to school to learn this language (Aisha, 08/01/2015).*

As such, English is seen by this participant as a key for opening the door of knowledge. This type of belief seems to be prevalent within the context of the current study. There is a tendency from many intellectuals to believe that most of the published books and other information sources around the world are written in English. This might have originated from the fact that English is the language most used for research dissemination (Anderson, 2013; Botez, 2015; Kerklaan et al., 2008; McKay and Bokhorst-Heng, 2008). This situation generally goes side by side with the commercial and technological monopoly Western English-speaking countries have on the rest of the world (Canagarajah, 2002; Gray, 2002).

Jacks, a second year Master student, has different motivations compared to Grace and Aisha. He does business in town where he owns a store and sells electronic devices.

> *I am doing business in Petit Marché. I have a shop of computer parts, games and other electronic devices. It gives me freedom to do whatever I want concerning my education here and there (Jacks, 15/01/2015).*

Jacks is also one of the students who have double registrations: one at the EFL programme and another at a professional institute in town. Initially, he did not register to the EFL programme for long-term studies. His purpose had been the acquisition of

English proficiencies in order to evolve in something else. That was the reason he left in 2011 upon obtaining his Bachelor's Degree.

> *I got my Bachelor's Degree in 2011. By then I wanted to stop because I thought the BA was enough. At that time people didn't stop telling me "English in this country, it's just for teaching. So, when you get the BA, it's enough. You can go and do something else." So, that is what I did (Jacks, 15/01/2015).*

It can be inferred from the above that the decision made by Jacks to stop after the Bachelor's Degree had its origin from a social belief that, in Niger, teaching is the only job option one can have after undertaking English studies. To escape from this frame, the alternative is to acquire some proficiencies and continue one's studies in different subject matters or become a businessperson. Jacks' returning to the programme, at the time I conducted this research, was still not for becoming an EFL teacher. His objective was rather to improve his communicative competence. This might be linked to the purpose of enhancing his business of electronic devices, as it might require him to occasionally travel abroad and interact with foreigners and business partners.

Other students within the EFL programme, as revealed by interview data, have affiliation to religious institutions. ***Emanuel*** is one of them; he is a pastor and a third year student. He has a Bachelor's Degree in *theology* based on which he offers some service to a local church. Emanuel's interest to study English emerged from his interactions with foreigners in Niger and his attendance to some international events. One of these events he remembers the most is the Youth for Christ International gathering that took place in Brazil some years ago.

> *In 2003, I attended an international youth conference with Youth for Christ International in Brazil. So when I attended that conference I was really shocked by my level in terms of speaking, because whenever I wanted to share with those people, I had to speak English. And I was very limited at that time (Emanuel, 05/12/2014).*

Emanuel's interest to learn English, therefore, stemmed from the need to communicate with people from different backgrounds. By the time he accepted to participate to this study, his speaking skill had already reached an acceptable level. As he told me, this was aided by his involvement with the Youth for Christ Association, which provided him with the opportunity to practise his English. In other words, his initial efforts to

speak English was reinforced by his exchanges with other members of the association who are generally British and American citizens.

> *What helped a lot was that I worked in a Youth for Christ association and had some colleagues from U.S.A. and U.K. who came to Niger for a short term mission. So, when they came, we interchanged with them…I helped, I forced myself to be a kind of interpreter. So I attached myself to them in order to improve (Emanuel, 05/12/2014).*

Therefore, Emanuel did not register on the EFL programme in order to become an EFL teacher. His primary objective, as a pastor, was to acquire a language that would help him communicate and become knowledgeable. Like Aisha, he believes that the English language gives more access to sources of knowledge.

> *As a pastor, English is important for me because I noticed when I was studying theology that most of the best tools in terms of knowledge, experience, books…are written in English (Emanuel, 05/12/2014).*

Moreover, Emanuel wishes to become a writer, and he thinks English is the best language to convey his message to the youth.

> *One of my objectives is to become a writer, to write for my generation, for young people. I have a heart for the youth. So, I really see English as an opportunity for me to be better in what I am doing and have a large audience (Emanuel, 05/12/2014).*

As such, Emanuel's intention to become a writer is not exclusively for the Nigerien context where French is the dominant language. He wants an audience that comes from diverse backgrounds, citizenships, and ethnicities. This justifies his choice of English, which is generally regarded as an international language.

Joseph, an Air-Traffic Controller, is also another student who did not register to the EFL programme for becoming an EFL teacher. His main objective is to master the English language for communication purposes. It is a requirement from his employer to be fluent in English.

> *I am working in the aviation, so it is a requirement for us to have a certain level of English. I have been doing night calls for more than 10 years (Joseph, 06/01/2015).*

Communicating with pilots and other personnel from diverse backgrounds seems to be the main reason why Joseph's employer requires English proficiency to be one of the

key competences possessed by employees. There exist many places in town – the American Cultural Centre for example – where Joseph could go to learn English and achieve the goal of communicative competence, but he preferred to register to the Sahel University's EFL programme where he can earn a degree.

> *I thought if I can really have a paper to attest my level of English, it's better to get that paper here. And maybe in future days, it can help me to do something else (Joseph, 06/01/2015).*

The reason behind this decision resides therefore in the hope to use such degree for advancement purposes or any recruitment opportunity (Al-Mahrooqi and Tuzlukova, 2014; Egan, 2004). If his degree is lower than a Bachelor's Degree, he might use the latter within his organisation to claim for a pay readjustment or change of position. He might also decide to change his career or use the degree from the EFL programme for further studies.

The above analysis of students' diversity, career goals and motivation towards studying within the EFL programme provides a strong signal that the programme is not entirely dedicated to preparing EFL teachers. It welcomes both people with the drive for teaching and those aiming 1) to become translators, 2) to study in English speaking countries or 3) to become competent speakers as required by their jobs. This diversity of students, goals and motivations is indicative of the existence of varied needs in terms of knowledge – knowledge for teaching and knowledge for becoming competent speakers of English – and raises questions about the extent to which the programme meets those needs and the way it is structured to cope with students' aspirations. Some responses to these questions are provided in the next section, which presents findings about the nature of courses the programme offers to the diversity of students it welcomes.

6.3. The Nature of Courses Offered by the EFL Programme

Despite the diversity of their goals and instrumental motivations as presented above, students at the EFL programme follow the same curricula. The programme has a two-cycle system offering a Bachelor and a Master's Degree. The Bachelor's Degree is a three-year cycle run over six semesters. During the first semester, registered students attend foundation courses that involve all the first year students of the faculty (humanities). This curricular practice is called *tronc commun*.

...tronc commun is all first year students, for the first semester, being taught all the different courses that are planned for the semester (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).

As such, during the first semester, first year students of the EFL programme attend courses shared with other students from other programmes, such as Modern Languages, History, and Sociology. As per the policy of the faculty, students are required to attend five courses every semester. For the *tronc commun* semester, three of them are mandatory and two others selected by students from a pool of courses destined to that purpose.

It's what they call five UE: French (Technique de Communication), Basic English, Computer Skills, and the other two are elective. You have to choose them between Arabic and Spanish, and the others are Introduction to African Oral Literature, History, Geography, Sociology and Philosophy. So yeah, three compulsory courses and you have to look for two elective courses so that you can have your five courses (Joseph, 06/01/2015).

As such, students not only attend courses provided through the EFL programme but also courses which form part of other programme. This practice aims at strengthening the general instructions students have received from secondary schools. It can be equated to a foundation level where students are expected to become familiar with higher education practices.

Throughout the five remaining semesters at the Bachelor's level (see Appendix D), students are offered courses in areas of linguistics and literature. As presented in *table 3*, there are nineteen courses taught during these semesters within the programme. According to the policy, students are required to add six electives chosen from other programmes – two during the 2nd semester and one during every other semester. As reflected in *table 3*, the nineteen courses offered at this level are equally distributed for linguistics and literature. Only one course is offered for pedagogy.

Table 3: Course structure at Bachelor's level

#	Course Title	Linguistics	Literature
1	Introduction to English Phonetics	✓	
2	English Grammar 1	✓	
3	Introduction to African Literature		✓
4	American Literature		✓
5	TEFL		
6	Introduction to Amer. & Brit. Civilisations		✓
7	African Drama		✓
8	Practical Phonetics	✓	
9	English Grammar 2	✓	
10	African novel		✓
11	Comp. & French-English Translation	✓	
12	English-French Translation	✓	
13	British literature		✓
14	Precolonial African civilisations		✓
15	African oral literatures		✓
16	English phonetics and phonology	✓	
17	English Grammar 3	✓	
18	African female writers		✓
19	Advanced comp. and literary stylistics	✓	
Total		9	9

At the Master's level, the cycle takes two years (see Appendix E). During the first year, students are required to attend eight mandatory courses (see *table 4*) within the programme and two electives from other programmes. For the second year, they are left to choose a specialisation track, either for linguistics and related areas or for literature. For each track, three courses are prescribed plus a dissertation (see *table 5* and *6*).

Table 4: Course structure at 1ˢᵗ year of Master's level

#	Course Title	Linguistics	Literature
1	English Phonetics and Phonology	✓	
2	Masterpieces of Amer. & Brit. Lit.		✓
3	Research in literary methodology		
4	Literary theory and criticism		✓
5	Comparative literature		✓
6	Theory & practice in teaching meth.		
7	Masterpiece of African Drama		✓
8	Canon formation and the masterpieces of African novels		✓
Total		1	5

Table 5: Course structure at 2ⁿᵈ year of Master's level – Applied Linguistics

#	Course Title
1	Issues of teaching English in Francophone environment
2	Business writing
3	Technical and professional English

Table 6: Course structure at 2nd year of Master's level – Literature

#	Course Title
1	The interface between African oral and written literatures
2	The interface between African and African American literatures
3	The interface between African and world literatures

Contrary to the Bachelor's level, at Master's level there is more focus on literature than linguistics. In the first year, only one course is planned for linguistics and one for pedagogy, while five of them are dedicated to literature.

Considering the above distributions – at both Bachelor and Master's level – the focus of the programme is placed more on content subject matter knowledge than the knowledge of pedagogy (Coskun and Daloglu, 2010). Only two courses (highlighted in green) are offered (one at Bachelor and another at Master's level) to provide students with pedagogical knowledge. All the remaining courses are more related to linguistic and cultural knowledge. This reflects practices of traditional approaches in which content subject matter knowledge is considered as the most important element for teaching. In order to draw a thorough conclusion on this, there is need to examine the nature of the two TEFL courses offered by the programme.

6.4. "In the TEFL class, it's actually theory and practice in teaching"

As mentioned above, the EFL programme offers two TEFL courses: one at Bachelor and another at Master's level. While these courses could be judged insufficient for providing prospective teachers with content and practical pedagogical knowledge, their existence within the EFL programme provides a sense of pride to certain stakeholders.

> *You know, here in our programme, it is a chance we have. Because, at the English programme, students take a course called TEFL (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).*

> *At this faculty, it's only the English department that has a course that helps students to have the basics of teaching. The other departments don't have this (Dr Sam, 04/02/2015).*

In these statements, the participants are clearly highlighting the fact that many programmes within the faculty of humanities do not provide courses that help students to know how to teach the subject matter they are learning. The expressed sense of pride around the existence of TEFL courses within the EFL programme may be regarded either as a signal to some institutional problems or as a reiteration of the institutional

belief that subject matter knowledge is the most important component in preparing teachers to teach. With these assumptions in mind, I intend in this section to provide insights about the nature of those TEFL courses.

Based on the interview data collected from administrators, teacher educators and students, content knowledge about methods and their application in EFL classrooms were revealed as the most emphasised components of the TEFL course. At the Bachelor's level, the course is more theoretical. Students attend classes mainly to receive theoretical knowledge about how to teach English.

> *I attended TEFL classes, but it was not really helpful. It was only on the field that I understood some strategies. For example, even to prepare a lesson plan, it's in the field I learnt that. There was no practice at all when I took those classes (Labo, 27/01/2015).*
>
> *P: Among our subjects, there is one that is called TEFL. It shows us the ways to teach well.*
>
> *R: Okay. So, you practise teaching?*
>
> *P: No, not at all! It's just theoretical (Alou, 04/12/2014).*

The focus of the course is therefore on theoretical understanding (Elliott, 1993) of how teaching should be conducted. Depending on how this course is delivered, students may develop different understanding of the theories transmitted to them and therefore apply them in different ways.

> *P: Nowadays, the method is the communicative approach.*
>
> *R: Tell me about that.*
>
> *P: Students are at the centre of the process.*
>
> *R: Can you then describe one case for me? What happens in class?*
>
> *P: Before the planned lesson, we revised what we did in the previous session. Then the professor asked questions to introduce the lesson of that day. The students provide answers. They are at the centre (Alou, 04/12/2014).*

This is an example of understanding constructed by a participant around CLT. As he rightly underlined, CLT is a learner-centred approach (Kumaravadivelu, 2006), but the process he described may be attributed to a didactic classroom in which the teacher educator starts the class by assessing how much students have learned from the previous

lesson or how much they know about the new one. While the description does not realistically define CLT, the participant's understanding of it might have been constructed based on his previous experiences or what Illeris (2009) called assimilation, a constructivist process of learning in which inputs are generally associated to a "scheme or pattern that is already established" (p. 13). As such, the above understanding might have originated from the participant's assimilation of the received CLT knowledge with previous knowledge or beliefs developed from other classes. This interpretation is also relevant to Vygotsky's (1978) notion of mediation.

At Master's level, the TEFL course is implemented in a different way. As clarified by the TEFL teacher educator and some of his students, the course is generally divided into two parts. Students are first introduced to teaching methods and then sent to some secondary schools for a short period practicum.

> *Half of the sessions are focused on theory, and the other half is focused on practice that we do in schools (Dr Sam, 04/02/2015).*

The theory-focused sessions, as highlighted by Dr Sam, offer content knowledge about teaching methods.

> *For the theoretical content, we study the different approaches of teaching English. This includes for examples the communicative language teaching, the task-based, the 3 Ps, the competence-based teaching, etc. (Dr Sam, 04/02/2015).*

This part of the course, therefore, emphasises the procedures that students are expected to follow when they teach. Notwithstanding, the way this methodological knowledge is delivered involves discussions through which students are asked to share their perspectives and experiences of teaching.

> *Students also bring their own perspectives in this course. Some of them are already teachers. So, they did have some concepts in teaching; they come with their ideas, and we discuss in a form of seminar. We discuss and bring our contribution from different sources (Dr Sam, 04/02/2015).*

In line with this statement, the inclusion of discussion in that class is to provide in-service teachers with the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and possibly to expose their beliefs about teaching. The course therefore offers the teacher educator an opportunity to challenge prior beliefs held by student teachers. However, this seems to be made in the scope of CLT, which is the mandated teaching method in that context.

> *Language is to communicate. So, Communicative Language Teaching is definitely what we encourage students to use (Dr Sam, 04/02/2015).*

The exposed teachers' beliefs, in such circumstance, are restricted to the application of CLT, which in that context is viewed as the best method (Kumaravadivelu, 2001; 2003b). There is no opportunity for the student teachers to shuttle across various methods to develop skills for eclecticism (Ur, 2013).

For the practical part of the TEFL course mentioned by Dr Sam, it consists of two phases but implemented together. The teacher educator generally puts students into groups of four to five and sends them to some local secondary schools for observation and teaching.

> *They first observe a teacher in his/her classroom teaching. They observe him/her for a couple of weeks, and then I tell them that I will come to observe the class, watching one of them teaching (Dr Sam, 04/02/2015).*

Thus, not every students is given the chance to teach during the practicum. Due to some logistical constraints, the teacher educator asks each group to let the less experienced member to do the teaching.

> *He told us to choose the less experienced student [...] We are going to prepare the lesson plan together and give it to the less experienced student, and this one will present the lesson (Labo, 27/01/2015).*

It is, therefore, a collaborative process. Based on a sociocultural perspective, this is a learning opportunity through which scaffolding might take place and enable the less-experienced student to attain what Vygotsky (1978) referred to as ZPD. The less-experienced students may seize such opportunity to challenge and reconstruct their experiences by tapping into others'. Even though there is no clarity on the cyclical structure of observations and meetings held by experienced and less-experienced student teachers, the process seems to incorporate aspects of lesson studies (Elliott, 2012), which stand as another version of action research.

From the insights presented above, the TEFL courses at the EFL programme give more importance to theory than practice. They offer practicum at Master's level but over a short period – two weeks generally. This could be a signal to some social and institutional problems. Even though these have not been fully expressed by the participants, I assume one of the main reasons behind the short period is the large

number of students at both Bachelor and Master's level. Another possible reason could be the lack of partnership with local secondary schools. Finding schools seems to be the responsibility of the TEFL professor. However, there seem to exist windows of opportunity at Master's level for enhancing the effectiveness of initial teacher preparation. Aspects of reflection and lesson study embedded to the TEFL course are useful components that require emphasis and further examination.

6.5. "Every teacher has his/her way of teaching"

Understanding how teaching is conducted within the studied case is an important aspect of this research. It provides complementary insights to the nature of courses offered by the EFL programme. Due to the diversity of interviews and classrooms observed, the collected data have offered the possibility to identify two types of teaching mode used by teacher educators: lectures and group modes. These modes, however, were not entirely exclusive during lessons observed. While in some classes one mode was more predominant, in others the situation offered a combination of both lectures and group-work strategies. For example, in Dr Kader's class, a lecturing strategy was used throughout the sessions I observed whereas in Dr Kadidja and Dr Paul's classes, it was a combination of lectures and group modes.

6.5.1. Lecturing

Lecturing is a strategy through which teacher educators communicate information or talk to students for a certain period. In one of Dr Kader's classes, I observed a gapped lecture session (Wallace, 1991: 45) interspersed with small exercises performed by students. It had taken the form of an inductive grammar teaching where the teacher educator asks students to translate sentences and then moves on to underline some grammatical structures from them. He afterwards recites the appropriate rules for translating similar sentences. Sometimes he would write these on the blackboard to help students take better notes of them. This was the case during one of the sessions when Dr Kader taught the English structures *much*, *many*, *a lot of*, *little/a little*, and *few/a few*.

> *Throughout the whole activity, students were busy writing from the professor's dictation and elements he was writing on the blackboard. Only occasionally could few peers be observed talking silently, generally double-checking words from dictations. To finish with the focused grammatical structures, the professor provided a list of other structures that can be interchangeably used with **much**, **many** and **a lot of**. After that, he requested*

the class representative to clean the blackboard in order to start a new lesson (Field notes, 10/11/2014).

In this process, the teacher educator did more talking than students who were most of the time busy writing the information in their notebooks. He regularly took time to explain the grammatical rules and make sure students understood how to apply them.

To expand on the example above, dictation is an important aspect of lecturing as practised within the EFL programme. Even in classes where I could not conduct observations, it was reported as prevalent. In those classes, teacher educators prefer to read out-loud for students, who are expected to take notes.

> *The one who is full time teacher, she is dictating. Sometimes she gives handout (Alice, 28/01/2015).*
>
> *The first thing he does when he comes is to review the last lesson, to make sure we get the meaning. After that, he makes dictation of the lesson. We take notes and he also takes time to explain it (Joseph, 06/01/2015).*

 As such, the role of the teacher educator is to identify the appropriate source or material that he will read to students in class. Based on a personal experience, this type of lecturing used to be the only mode of teaching within the EFL programme. Twelve to fifteen years ago, when I was a student of that programme, teacher educators used to read and explain the contents of their lessons while students take notes and occasionally ask the lecturer to repeat some lines where they missed some words. This seems to be changing due to the requirements of the LMD system for educators to use interactive strategies (Eta, 2015). According to Alou, dictation is used more at lower levels.

> *In second year, yes! But they also provide explanations. Some teachers, instead of giving you documents to photocopy, they do dictations. If you have no means to photocopy, you have your hands to take notes (Alou, 04/12/2014).*

This situates dictation not as an instructional strategy but as a means to help students cope with expenses. Students can therefore opt not to take notes in class if they can afford the means to photocopy the handout. In my view, dictation is used by teacher educators in order to provide students with information they expect them to memorise and give back during examinations. It may also be inferred that the predominance of dictation in lower level classes is due to the low level of students' language proficiency

for taking notes from oral presentations or for reading and critically assessing scholarly articles in English.

In relation to Alou's statement above, even at lower levels, dictation is less used than before. In Dr Kadidja's class, for example, the teacher educator makes students read some literary texts and facilitates the whole session through a sort of seminar based on a series of questions. As I learned from Aisha, Dr Kadidja's use of lecturing or dictation occurs only when she has to define some key literary concepts.

> *Sometimes, she also takes time to explain concepts like Transcendentalism, Puritanism… She gives us more details about them (Aisha, 08/01/2015).*

This is a similar situation in one of the classes attended by Alice at Master's level but different from a session in which I observed Dr Paul lecturing. In Dr Paul's session, students were provided with handouts on APA and MLA styles, and the role of the teacher educator consisted in reading and explaining the content. Occasionally, students would interrupt him in order to ask questions.

The use of dictation or lecturing is still the predominant mode of teaching within the context of this study. Even though there seem to exist some changes attributable to the recent LMD reform, which values practice and tutorials more than lecturing, the predominance of this mode of teaching is likely to perpetuate passive or surface learning rather than offer student teachers processes and opportunities for becoming critical thinkers.

6.5.2. Group Modes

Group mode encompasses various strategies. One of these that I observed in certain classes is what Wallace (1991) called seminars, a set of activities usually carried out through class discussions. These have first been observed in Dr Paul's class:

> *Around 4:33, there were about 42 students in class. Discussions were going on in a way that allowed students to answer the questions from the teacher educator or raise disagreement with comments made by other students or the teacher educator. The climax of those discussions was observable when questions and interpretations about the symbolic meaning of "mirror" were progressively formulated by students. The teacher educator facilitated the discussions and occasionally intervened to make critical comments or to extract examples of interpretation from the materials under analysis. The process continued that way, regardless of late comers, till 5:14 (Field notes, 02/12/2014).*

To make his seminars successful, Dr Paul provides students with some guiding questions (see Appendix G) for the required readings. Based on these questions, students have the opportunity to develop ideas from the texts before coming to class. In fact, it is around these questions that he generally conducts the class discussions. Being a literature class, discussion is made easier by the fact that students can make appeal to their opinions and experiences as social beings.

Situations similar to the above also happen in Dr Kadidja's classes where students are frequently required to read short stories in order to formulate answers to some guiding questions given by the teacher educator. As per the data, class discussions are central to her philosophy of teaching literature.

> *I always tell my students that it [literature] is not a question of "I am the teacher; I come to give you what you need." You know, it's an arena of discussion. Students have their own ways of looking at what they read, and they have their own reactions. And it's during discussions that you really feel that the student is getting something from what he/she is learning in class (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).*

As such, organising seminar discussions enables, not only the students to express their understanding of a literary text, but also the teacher educator to have a hint about who is learning from the class and who is not. It offers students freedom to interpret literary texts with their personal, social and psychological backgrounds. In this kind of situation, students may find opportunities to build cultural awareness, which is necessary for building intercultural competence. The use of discussion also constitutes a medium through which students are expected to develop speaking skills or demonstrate confidence in using the English language and making sense of the materials they read.

In fact, discussions does not happen in literature classes only. They are also used in other courses, such as *Issues of Teaching English in Francophone Environment*, where teacher educators raise issues and ask students to express their views.

> *He creates some debates to involve everybody to speak. And he does it in the scope of teaching. He takes something, for example, that is happening in schools, and from that he creates a debate in order to make everyone give his point of view (Labo, 27/01/2015).*

> *When he comes, he sometimes brings different handouts and gives to different groups. You can be alone or two. So, when it is this kind of activity, we discuss directly (Alice, 28/01/2015).*

The seminar discussion is therefore based on either a formulated topic or a reading material. As added by Alice, it may be carried out in pairs and then extended to the whole class. This gives students the opportunity to explore and create meanings from their personal experiences.

Another group mode technique I observed consists in arranging students into small groups to work together (group-work henceforth). This strategy was revealed by the data in three different forms. It is used 1) to deal with some practical activities in class, 2) to discuss elements from a lecture or 3) to have students work on a topic outside class. In Wallace's (1991) terminologies, the former two are called workshops and cross-groups while the latter is a combination of student projects and feedback sessions. In the EFL programme, workshops are generally rare. I was able to notice only few instances of their usage. These were in Dr Paul's class where students were requested to work on APA and MLA referencing. In those sessions, students received handouts from the teacher educators and sat in groups of five to seven to manipulate bibliographical information in order to produce reference lists in APA and MLA formats. When they finished, members from each group were designated to report the output to the whole class. As Dr Paul indicated, that was the first time for him to use group-works in class. His initiative originated from the belief that this strategy has the potential to reinforce his students' motivation.

> *I thought, by putting them in groups, that would give them more interest, more stimulus in learning, individually first but also in learning from each other. And also, I felt that would be a way, at least, to make them participate more actively in the class activities (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).*

Therefore, the purpose behind the initiative was to enhance students' participation and establish a collaborative learning process through which scaffolding takes place among students. Even though the origin of Dr Paul's beliefs may be linked to the policy requirement established by the LMD system, his initiative could have been motivated by a state of affairs, such as the lack of interaction observed in some sessions, he wanted to improve. However, due to the lack of deliberate actions to collect information about the efficacy of the used strategy in order to engage into more reflections, his endeavours might not be equated to action research. It is a simple intervention, which bears the power to evolve into an action research. Due to the lack of systematic actions

to gather insights from the session, the intervention may not help Dr Paul to draw strong conclusions.

In one of Dr Kadidja's classes, group-works were also used through a sort of cross-group activity (Wallace, 1991) to discuss ideas from the home assignments generally given to students during previous sessions.

> *Around 12:06 p.m., Dr Kadidja arrived and took two minutes to get ready. She then started the class by asking students about the homework she gave them during the previous session. The homework was a sort of plot analysis through which students were expected to underline key themes within a text they were provided with in the beginning of the year. Assuming that students had done the homework as requested, the teacher educator asked them to work in pairs, a sort of group-work to compare and discuss their individual outputs (Field notes, 25/11/2014).*

In some occasions, she uses cross-group activities as a preliminary step to seminars. In others, she uses that strategy in the form of buzz groups, a sort of activity in which groups of students undertake small discussions over a short period to generate ideas or answer particular questions (Wallace, 1991: 44). In most of the observed instances, she used buzz groups to break from lecturing.

The most common use of group-work within the EFL programme, as recorded, is the one dedicated to small projects carried out by students outside classroom. In almost every course, projects and presentations are part of the required components.

> *It's almost at all levels: from first year to Master 2. There are always group-works. It's something that teachers use to help the interaction of students, to share what they know and maybe to put them in the real research situation (Jacks, 15/01/2015).*

This statement from Jacks highlights the importance of group-work that matches the purpose attached to it by Stenhouse (1975) – in terms of sharing – and Vygotsky (1978) – in terms of interaction. However, the main purpose at the EFL programme is to engage students in some library search in relation with a topic. Group members are then expected to read some relevant articles and write a paper that will be presented to the class.

> *A topic is given to students or sometimes chosen by students themselves. They go on research; they try to work together and bring a final draft of the work. And then, they come to present the work. They present it in front of the class (Ika, 15/01/2015).*

In this case, students are given more time outside of their class to read and make sense of their readings together before presenting their output to the class where their ideas might be challenged by their classmates. This process is, in fact, what was underlined by Jacks as a 'real research situation' in which interaction and sharing constitute the main learning strategies. It may be regarded as a process through which students are expected to develop cooperative skills and academic maturity. Even though in this context *research* may be defined in various ways (see Ousseini, 2013), the purpose of this kind of group-work is also to initiate students to activities that require critical reading and writing and academic presentations skills.

The underlined widespread use of student projects within the EFL programme, however, have revealed some undermining issues related to group management and formation. As Dr Kadidja indicated, there exists a policy for limiting the number of student presentations to twenty hours per course, but this does not specify how big a group should be or who should be responsible for the group formation. This leaves room to teacher educators to make their own decisions. In some classes like Dr Paul's, group formation is initiated by the teacher educator taking into account the attendance list made on the first day of class. In others like Dr Kadidja's, the responsibility to form groups is left to students.

> *The lecturer doesn't write the names of students and say "you, go to this group or that one." It is for us to do it (Roukaya, 16/01/2015).*
>
> *Right now we have some teacher that told us to make some groups and choose a topic or a short story or something and work on it (Grace, 08/01/2015).*
>
> *The teacher told students to organise themselves. So those who are familiar to one another, they get into groups (Oro, 16/01/2015).*

This shows the extent to which students have freedom in certain classes to choose who to work with. Seemingly, this is the most frequent scenario in classes where projects are assigned. The freedom given to students in certain cases is a catalyst to some expressed issues. Students, when forming their groups, do not generally associate with people unfamiliar to them. They tend to join with only friends or people they know well. According to some participants, this is what makes the functioning of groups problematic. The majority of group members tend to leave one or two persons to do the work (McKay, 2003).

> *Usually, the groups are not formed by lecturers, but students give their names. In that sense, I can submit the name of a friend or two and end up doing the work alone for the group (Minas, 14/01/2015).*

This implies that giving freedom to students to make their own groups does not result in a cooperative work but rather a situation where just one person or two do the work for others. Those who do the work, generally, avoid reporting to the teacher educator about those who did not contribute, because they are all friends.

> *You know how students are…some people don't do the work; they don't come at meetings. And because of this social relation between people, you just can't cross the name of a person because he/she didn't attend the meetings. So, you just put his/her name (Jacks, 15/01/2015).*

In this situation, social relation stands as an obstacle to learning. It gives place to a sense of solidarity with which social members take responsibility of learning for others.

Apart from the case of friends, there is also the case of students satirically described by Sheik as parasites. The latter constitute a category of students who join particular groups where there are intelligent persons on whom they can count for doing the work and having a good grade. Most often, they do not join a group until the last minute, the time they can identify groups with intelligent members.

> *There are some parasite students, waiting just for the last moment to come and say "I have seen the lecturer; he/she has accepted I come and see a group where I can write my name." They write their names, but come only for presentation and gaining the same grade as those who have done the work (Sheik, 14/01/2015).*

This might be regarded as an unethical situation in which some students take advantage of the efforts of others. This could be due to the lack of guidelines based on which each member should contribute to group-work. It could also be a consequence of the presence of jobholders among students. These might be constantly busy with their jobs and lack time to work with other group members. This situation is likely to be worsened by the formation of big groups, generally made of more than six members, as observed in certain classes.

6.6. Process of Assessment

Assessment is one of the practices examined by this study. The main aspects focused in this section include the types of assessment strategies used by teacher educators at the

EFL programme and the reasons why they use them. Data have shown assessment within that programme to be more summative than formative. It is generally conducted in four different ways: through quizzes, in-class exercises, final exams and presentations. While the first three can be regarded as testing, I have chosen to present them separately due to various reasons behind their use. Teacher educators in the researched institution use them in different scenarios. Some, like Dr Paul, simply administer quizzes to students every time the class meets. The quiz was a set of questions the teacher educator formulates to assess students' understanding of planned reading materials. As I observed, the quiz consisted of a certain number of multiple-choice questions (see Appendix H) for which students were expected to respond within a certain amount of time.

In other classes, such as those taught by Dr Kader, the use of written exercises is one of the strategies for assessing students' achievement. Even though the frequency of these exercises is not revealed by the data, checking how well students have mastered the usage of the grammatical structures taught during the previous sessions is the main purpose attached to them. This kind of exercise, as Dr Kader clarified, can also be administered in anticipation to the teaching of a new structure, to assess how much students know about it. This is a sort of testing for formative purposes. In addition to this type of assessment, Dr Kader usually organises a final exam in which students are asked to answer questions dealing with the information given to them throughout the whole semester.

In Dr Kadidja's classes, it is rather a combination of quizzes and class presentations. In her syllabus, it was clearly stated that there is no final exam but quizzes and short presentations by students. While the latter were indicated to be optional, the former are central to the class and administered to students at least three times throughout the semester.

> *She gives stories and evaluates us. After three stories, sometimes four, we have a quiz (Aisha, 08/01/2015).*

The above is confirmed by the syllabus (see Appendix F) in which quizzes were planned to take place after every teaching of a short story. I was not able to obtain a sample of quizzes in that class, but these are likely to be tied to the content of the short

stories. They are made either of multiple-choice or of thematic questions for students to discuss in order to demonstrate knowledge about the taught short stories.

Considering the insights above, there is a repetitive and frequent use of assessment within the EFL programme. However, this is a recent phenomenon. Five to ten years ago, teacher educators used to wait until the end of the year to administer a final exam to students. According to Dr Kadidja, this frequency has a positive impact on students' results.

> *What people are trying to do is to have many evaluations before the end of the course. Because we used to have cases where the teacher just gives one final exam and that's it. And we have noticed that with this new system we have less and less students that are failing and the grades are improving (Dr Kadidja, 19/12/2014).*

Therefore, the frequent use of assessment enables teacher educators to have many students who pass their courses. The repetitive use of quizzes, for example, is more beneficial to many students in classes where teacher educators take the initiative to drop some lowest grades and consider the highest ones only.

> *Some people do as many as six quizzes and sometimes they drop the two lowest and students get to keep just the four quiz grades. (Dr Kadidja, 19/12/2014).*

As revealed by the data, the positive impact of quizzes is not the only reason to their frequent use within the EFL programme. Many of the teacher educators use them for coping with certain issues. In Dr Paul's class, for example, they are used as a means of pressure on students to read. Students' reluctance to read is one of the contextual factors revealed by this research (see 8.4., p. 158), and Dr Paul's strategy to cope with that consisted in testing students' understanding of the assigned reading materials.

> *One of the reasons – and I wrote it on the syllabus for them to know that – was to force them to read first (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).*

Upon checking Dr Paul's syllabus for that class, I found this reason stated through an objective "to force students into reading the texts…" It was therefore a way of changing students' behaviour. The way the quizzes were designed might push students to read and acquire some content knowledge but not be able to develop critical reading skills. This situation may be related to issues of learning culture in which students' resistance to new modes of teaching and learning create constraints to pedagogy.

The second reason to Dr Paul's use of quizzes is to ensure students' regular attendance to classes. This reason is shared by Dr Kadidja who believes that the frequent use of quizzes is the only remedy against student absence (see 8.6., p. 166).

> *The only thing that works for making them come to class, it's those quizzes that we do. They know if they don't attend class regularly, they might fail. Without doing those quizzes, the final grade will be a failing one (Dr Kadidja, 19/12/2014).*

As such, any student who fails to attend a class is likely to be given a zero grade for missing the quiz. In certain classes, the same applies to latecomers.

> *When she [the teacher educator] comes, she asks us some questions about the last course. She calls it quiz; it is two questions before the class starts. She said it's in order to make us come to class earlier, to be on time (Grace, 08/01/2015).*

It is therefore used to regulate tardiness. In this case, the main purpose of the quiz is, not only to test students' mastery of the previous lesson, but also to ensure that they come to class on time. Those who do not comply may miss the quiz and consequently have a zero grade.

There exists another type of assessment different from quizzes and other forms of testing but similar to student presentations. This was found in relation to the teaching practice undertaken by Master students as part of their TEFL course. In this circumstance, student teachers conduct teaching, under the supervision of the TEFL teacher educator, to show their skills as classroom practitioners. These skills, as assessed by Dr Sam, consist of the student teacher's ability to formulate lesson objectives and achieve them; his/her ability to manage a classroom; and his/her command of the English language. These are some of the key criteria he uses, through an observation schedule, to grade the teaching practice.

> *I grade students using a lesson observation sheet in which I have the following questions or criteria: a) What are the lesson's objectives? b) Are they achieved? c) Teacher talk vs student talk, d) Classroom management, e) Teacher's command of English, f) Evaluation of the lesson, and h) Different stages of lesson (Dr Sam, 04/02/2015).*

In this case, the purpose of the teaching practice is to enable the teacher educator to assess student teachers' ability to put theory into practice. The assessment is based on a set of standards formulated based on both subject matter and theoretical pedagogical

knowledge. This reflects the traditional practice of ELTE in which student teachers are generally assessed against some criteria of 'good teaching' (Wallace, 1991).

Following from the above practices, the purpose of assessment is purely to grade students' mastery of certain required skills and content knowledge. There was a rare use of formative assessment to monitor students' progress towards the achievement of their objectives (Harlen, 2010). There were few instances from the data that could be linked to that form of assessment. These were identified in relation to Dr Kader's use of summative assessment formatively and the teaching practice mentioned above. Regardless of the fact that Dr Sam observes students' teaching in order to grade the extent to which they apply theory into practice, there are occasions he gives them verbal feedback for improvement.

> *P: The teacher observed the teaching, and when we came back to school he gave the feedback to us.*
>
> *R: Was it written, the feedback?*
>
> *P: No, it was verbal feedback. (Salim, 03/02/2015)*

Because Dr Sam uses groups for teaching practice and asks the less experienced student to do the teaching, group members also find in this process the opportunity to hold a peer-feedback session. This might be more beneficial to the less experienced students whose teaching actions remain the centre of the feedback.

> *After, we do some kind of feedback and tell him/her[the less experienced member] where he/she must improve. Last year, just after, we told the person where he/she failed – maybe the warm-up or presentation and so on. We told him/her that next time he/she must correct (Salim, 03/02/2015).*

According to this statement, the peer-feedback is tightly linked to the general spirit of the TEFL class. It is confined to the knowledge of theories and procedures acquired from that course.

6.7. Conclusion

In summary, I have provide insights about the characteristics of the ELTE curriculum at Sahel University. First, I have reflected the diversity of the programme, which comprises regular students, in-service teachers and other jobholders, all of them aiming either to become EFL teachers, to develop professionally and in their career or to acquire the English language proficiency as required for their jobs or for further studies

abroad. Second, I have offered an analysis about the emphasis made by the different courses on content subject matter knowledge. In doing this I also put a particular emphasis on the TEFL course to present the nature of the pedagogical knowledge offered to student teachers. The latter is more theoretical and involve only a short-period practicum. Beyond these, I have presented findings about the modes of course delivery used by educators and the way student teachers' learning is assessed. While the former has tended to be based on lecturing more than on other interactive strategies, the latter was revealed almost entirely to be summative. The next chapter expands on these aspects by providing insights about the characteristics of the curriculum as shaped by the LMD reform.

The EFL Programme at the Crossroads of the LMD System

7.1. Introduction

This chapter extends the insights about the characteristics of the Sahel University ELTE curricula. The previous chapter has indicated the extent to which the programme prepares EFL teachers in ways attributable to the traditional approach of ELTE. The programme welcomes students with differing career goals and motivations. It also offers courses that are more focused on knowledge about the language than on knowledge of pedagogy. The TEFL courses provided by the programme are very few and limited to a focus on teaching methods. The teaching practice organised for prospective teachers lasts for a short period of time and takes place at Master's level only. Furthermore, the programme uses more summative strategies in assessing students' learning.

In this chapter, other insights relating to the programme are presented but in the scope of the LMD reviews. Ideas and issues related to the latter are presented through a structure that encompasses the policy and process surrounding course planning and design, the dilemma encountered by stakeholders in the process of making reviews, the situation about course and programme evaluation, and the opportunities established by the system in terms of research. These foci are intended to provide insights armed at answering the following research questions:

- *What are the procedures for reviewing and assessing EFL programmes? How frequent are reviews undertaken? How are they conducted? How are the resulting changes evaluated?*
- *What are the opportunities for teacher educators' development? What provisions does the institution make to facilitate teacher educators' professional growth?*

The purpose of these questions has been to underline practices within the EFL programme that are aimed at reinforcing the effectiveness of the curricula. These

questions have been formulated regardless of the ongoing LMD reviews, which, on the contrary, was an important factor for understanding diverse phenomena from the data.

7.2. Course Planning and Design

Following from the implementation of the LMD system in 2008, the EFL programme has adopted a semester framework. The academic year has been divided into two semesters: one from September to January and the other from February to June. Courses, during each semester, require fourteen to sixteen weeks. In accordance with the school regulation, every course is allocated four hours per week. As such, weekly classes can be conducted in single 4-hour sessions or double 2-hour sessions.

> *Normally, each course has four hours a week. Now, you can have two sessions on different days or four hours in a row (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).*

In most of the cases the schedule of single sessions is made by the institution out of constraints. As shown by data, these constraints are generally related to the insufficiency of rooms.

> *Recently because of the problem we have in terms of infrastructure, the lecture theatres and rooms that are insufficient, and the growing number of students, the university president's office has decided to even schedule some sessions for four hours in a row (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).*

As such, this schedule is made for teacher educators due to the limited number of facilities to accommodate all the courses in 2-hour sessions. This leaves the institution with no choice but schedule certain courses in 2-hour and others in 4-hour sessions. I have seen cases where teacher educators attempted to reschedule their timetable to evening classes due to the difficulty 4-hour sessions cause to them. The weather in Niger is generally hot, and the majority of facilities are not equipped with airconditioning systems. Due to this situation, 4-hour sessions are umbearable when they are scheduled between 10 am to 4 pm. For such reasons, some teacher educators tend to make arrangments with students to have 2-hour sessions at a time the institution does not officially schedule classes.

In certain situations, however, teacher educators opt for four hours because of the smallness of the rooms allocated to them. Dr Kader, for example, has been having his classes on Mondays and Tuesdays from 8:00 to 10:00 am in Room B. As I observed, the latter is not big enough to contain all the students. To cope with this situation, the

teacher educator suggested to combine the two sessions and move the class to Saturdays afternoon.

> *… the teacher educator took few minutes to announce the possibility of changing the schedule of that class. He suggested transferring the class to Saturdays from 2:00 to 6:00 pm. […] The teacher educator re-explained the need to do so by arguing that the current room is not enough to contain everyone. As he added, there is need to find a lecture theatre which cannot be available but on Saturdays (Field notes, 10/11/2015).*

This means the teacher educator and his students are likely to sacrifice their weekend days for the sake of a more spacious facility. This practice raises questions about the extent to which learning and teaching effectively take place in such condition. I have not observed a 4-hour session in order to reflect on how it feels, but it can be argued that this type of session is very tiring for both teacher educators and students, while using small facilities is also likely to be an exclusion factor for certain students.

The above situation is not favourable for a certain category of students who have to work full time at their job before going to school. It is the case of many in-service teachers like Oro, Salim, and Ika.

> *You see, for example, last year I used to have classes from 8:00 am to 1:30 pm – that is my teaching at my school. And then at 2:00 pm I had to go for a class at university. I just pray and then try on my way to university to find something to eat and then try to be on time to start a course from 2:00 to 6:00 pm (Ika, 15/01/2015)*

Taking this into account, job holders are likely to lack rest if they have to attend 4-hour classes. With a packed day like the one described by Ika, one may not have enough time for reading and other school or job-related tasks. In the case of this participant, there is no choice but keep working throughout the night and on weekend days.

> *To tell you the truth, it's not easy task to be a teacher full time and also to be a student full time. […] In fact, as I told you, it's a question of commitment. At 6:00 pm, most of the time, I come home very tired. My readings…sometimes I can't. I postpone it to the weekend. Generally I take it to the weekend; that is on Sundays. And if I have some quiz or any other exam, I read at night. So, I take my tea around 10:00 pm and then study till 1:00 am. That is the way I do things. So, there is the weekend and then at night; I always try to read from 10:00 pm to 1:00 am, sometimes even beyond 1:00 am (Ika, 15/01/2015)*

This could be made easier for jobholders if the programme offers part-time tracks. But, this is not part of the LMD Scheme. The latter distinguishes four types of students –

fulltime, independent, visiting or auditing – and none of them matches the characteristics of being a part-time student, at least as practised in Western countries where the LMD system originated. The closest may be the independent student, but this scheme denies to candidates the right of registration to the programmes of their choice. They can attend a limited number of courses but not allowed to register to the programme and earn a degree.

A second aspect of course planning concerns the fact that the EFL programme offers two types of degree: Bachelor and Master's Degree. At Bachelor's level, courses span over six semesters. During the first semester, students attend a *tronc commun,* which is run through an intensive format. For each course, teacher educators are required to teach fifty hours over three weeks.

> *Each teaching is given three weeks to be implemented. Let's say twelve to fourteen days, from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm. That is 4 hours. 4 hours times 12, that is 48 hours; plus 2 hours for exam, that is the 50 hours. So, this is how things are organised for the tronc commun (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).*

So, with the *tronc commun* scheme, classes take place every day, through 4-hour sessions, till the required number of hours is attained.

At Master's level, there is a total of four semesters to be spent. At the end of the first two semesters, students are presented with the choice to specialise either in areas of linguistics or in literature. For the purpose of specialisation, one semester is devoted to coursework and another to dissertation projects. This situation follows the LMD requirements which suggest three types of specialisation scheme: **Y**, **V**, and **T**. The **Y** format reflects the present situation where specialisation takes place during the last year at Master's level. In the **V** format, specialisation is suggested to begin immediately after the Bachelor's level, i.e. the first year at Master's level. For the **T** scheme, specialisation is achieved through dissertation projects, which students are required to conduct after the joint Master's courswork.

Regardless of the above, the LMD system requires students, in almost all the levels, to attend five courses every semester. One of these courses is expected to be chosen from another programme.

> *A student has four courses in his/her department and for the fifth one, he/she has to go and take it in another department. So this is the goal or objective of the new programme (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).*

This, therefore, gives students the possibility to attend courses of other programmes based on their interests. This practice places courses from the EFL programme as major and the outside courses as minor. Nonetheless, this is not positively appreciated by the majority of students. At the time this research was conducted, the requirement for an elective course from other programmes was subject to disagreements among stakeholders.

Another situation about course planning and design, which is also attributable to the implementation of the LMD system within the EFL programme, is the requirement to deliver courses in three types of mode: *travaux pratiques* (TP – practical works and seminars), *travaux dirigés* (TD – tutorials and workshops) and *cours magistraux* (CM – lectures). While the policy emphasises the first two of these modes, the requirements are somehow problematic. Some teacher educators find it challenging to redesign their courses in order to accomodate practical works and workshops.

> *We cannot say that we can have all the time classes of practice, unless it's a TEFL class where you can have teaching practice or observations. But for other classes, even if you say you are going to have some hours of practice, you may only have exercises. But there are other classes in which even exercises, you cannot have (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).*

This position confirms the previously presented findings that lecturing is predominant in that programme. As such, there is a limited application of the LMD requirement. While reasons to such non-compliance may be explained in terms of resistance due to contextual beliefs and learning culture or in terms of socio-economic factors, the above statement raises questions on who designed the courses and how. As revealed by the study, courses have been chosen locally, but some of their aspects have originated from other West African institutions.

> *It's locally that they have been chosen through our different meetings. You know, we have programme board meetings. So, it's through those meetings that we decided that those are the courses we would like to put in our programme. Of course we looked at the different courses in other English programmes in some Anglophone countries like Ghana, Nigeria, even in Senegal (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).*

As such, decisions about courses have been made by the programme council, partly based on models from other countries. This can be regarded as a situation of borrowing in which the programme is trying to ensure courses they offer match those from other regional institutions. This may also be indicative of the fact that the LMD system does

not prescribe every single aspect of the curricula within that programme. It gives the opportunity to decision makers for customisation on certain features. There is also the freedom given to teacher educators to decide on the content they want to include in their syllabi.

> *The syllabus…it is the lecturer who prepares his/her syllabus. From your different researches – from your different materials – you prepare your syllabus at the beginning of the course (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).*

Even though titles of certain courses were borrowed, decision on the materials are left to teacher educators, regardless of the fact that they have to show their syllabi to the head of programme who ensures the contents selected comply with the title of the course.

> *Professors have the freedom to make their syllabi, but they give a copy to the department to have a look at it. That is only the head of department. Because we don't even get them checked by the council (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).*

It is therefore a conformity check process focussed on some aspects of the syllabus and does not involve more than the head of the programme. In other words, course decisions within the EFL programme are more individual than formal or collective. This is reinforced by the lack of governmental mandate or formal policy and guidelines (Vodopija-Krstanoviæ and Brala-Vukanoviæ, 2012) for assigning goals and procedures for the curriculum implementation.

Dr Kadidja's statement is, however, indicative of a decision making process within the programme. Decisions are made through the council in which matters concerning the programme are generally discussed in a meeting that involves all the teacher educators. Council meetings can be summoned by educators or the head of programme.

> *Not only the head of programme, but also professors have the power to raise issues. They can also call for the meeting. It might also be the dean's office that is asking the programme to discuss about some issues and take some decisions. It might be the vice-Chancellor's office who will ask also the faculties to call for programme meetings to discuss an issue concerning the university (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015)*

This reveals not only the non-existence of power relation among teacher educators and administrators, but the extent to which the process of decision making about the life of the programme involves teacher educators. Based on a personal experience, the administrative roles in that programme (head and deputy head of programme) are generally ensured on a rotational basis – after every two years. As such, all the teacher

educators, at some time or another, have been in the role of head of programme or deputy head of programme. Each of them is therefore predisposed to serve as a resource person in making decisions and managing issues relevant to the programme. However, the existence of such council and the non-existence of goals and agreed procedures for collaborative development and review of curricula implementations constitute a real dichotomy, which, as indicated later, is enhanced by the non-participation of students in the decision process.

7.3. Issues and Conduct of LMD Reviews

The implementation of the LMD system at Sahel University is a current and an ongoing process. At the EFL programme, reviews take place almost every year. Most often these reviews lead to the introduction of new criteria. Examples of these, over the years, include the introduction of new admission criteria for students applying to Master's level and also the implementation of new specialisation schemes.

> *Almost every year! At the beginning, some criteria did not exist. Now, we should have 12/20 to pass from BA to MA. At the beginning it was not so. Besides this, there is also…especially at the English programme…from third year, you have to specialise. When I was in 2nd year, I could already see some students saying "I am in 3rd year language" or "I am in 3rd year literature." When we reached the 3rd year, the programme has changed, and we are still taking the same courses. There is no specialisation whether you want to be literature or language students. So, it continues till last year with Master 1. It's only this year that we are going to specialise for language or literature, and after that the MA dissertation (Sheik, 14/01/2015)*

This highlights the frequency of reviews within the EFL programme. The above statement provides insights about the attempts made by the department to accommodate some LMD requirements, such as the ones related to specialisation. It underlines the programme's previous attempt to customise the **Y** scheme at the last year of Bachelor's level, instead of Master's level as recommended by the LMD system. It also reveals the shift from the **Y** scheme at Bachelor's level to a **T** scheme at the Master's level and then to a **Y** scheme. The frequency of these changes has established a new situation in which almost everything has appeared new to me. This has been a learning opportunity which pushed me to raise more questions for understanding the new system.

During the conduct of my fieldwork, the implementation of the **Y** scheme at the Master's level was not the only major change that had occurred over the year within the EFL programme. There were other changes related to the courses offered by the

programme: some courses were cancelled and new others created. In addition, some requirements were made for students to attend a fifth course every semester from a programme of their choice. While the changes related to specialisation schemes did not seem to pose any issue to the programme, the other changes have been, on the contrary, creating some socio-academic tensions. Most of these were caused by the requirements for elective courses. During the past two years or so, elective courses used to be chosen internally from a pool of courses offered by the programme.

> *All the courses used to be within the EFL programme. If you do English,*
> *you have three compulsory courses on which you have nothing to say. You*
> *have to take them. But there are two others you can choose (Emanuel,*
> *15/12/2014)*

As such, students used to have the chance to choose the elective courses within the programme instead of from outside. But, starting from October 2014 – when I started collecting data – this was changed. Every student has, since then, been required to select one course every semester from a different programme. This has been posing some constraints to many stakeholders – students in the first place. Some of the students find it contradictory to require learners of English to attend courses in History, Psychology or Geography and be assessed on the same basis with students who are majoring in those fields.

> *Because, we cannot understand…you as an English student to go to the*
> *French department and choose a course and you will be evaluated in the*
> *same way as students from that department. How? And for me I don't*
> *understand the way in which some people who since their first, second and*
> *third year have been studying French….and now you as student of third*
> *year English, you will be combined in order to be evaluated in the same*
> *way. You see the problem? (Alou, 04/12/2014)*

> *The problem or say the complaint some give is that it's difficult because you*
> *have to join your level of a different field. Sometimes you lack the basics of*
> *the course. So it is difficult to understand, especially when you have no*
> *interest (Minas, 14/01/2015).*

So, the constraint concerns the difference of academic backgrounds. In the case of Alou, for example, he does not feel comfortable attending courses about which he does not have enough previous knowledge. He is mainly raising an issue of assessment in situations where learners have different academic histories and different level of background knowledge. This reaction might be due to a heavy focus on testing and other summative assessments methods through which learners are expected to

demonstrate the mastery of knowledge. Even though there exist some contextual variations, the requirement for students to attend courses from different programmes is a practice commonly found in some Western universities where students pursue a major and a minor. It is generally a choice made by students based on personal interests. This practice is facing resistance within the EFL programme seemingly due the lack of articulated rationale.

The practice of electives was also found to cause constraints in terms of programme delay. Programmes at Sahel University do not finish their courses at the same time. Even though there exists an official calendar for each semester, there are programmes where courses and assessment are never finished within the prescribed timeline. Having elective courses from other programmes may, in certain circumstances, cause graduation delay to some students.

> *Personally, I noticed that in the English department we generally end our semester on time. But, if I go to another department and there they take one year and half to finish a one-year programme…So, I will be late. Because of that course, I cannot finish on time. Not only that! I can say the entire department can be late because of other departments. If they don't receive the grades from other department, students cannot graduate. So this will have an impact on students' study time (Emanuel, 05/12/2014)*

> *I think it wastes time, puts students late and at the end we didn't learn much (Grace, 08/01/2015).*

Having electives from other programmes is therefore likely to extend the normal study period. One of the statements above is voiced by a job holder who seems eager to graduate as early as possible in order to fully resume with his job. As he underlined, the constraint might be more serious when the whole programme has to wait for other programmes. As I have noticed and experienced before, there is no graduation ceremony in that context. Every programme tends to gather students grades, make the necessary calculation and publicly display them. Upon this, every student will be able to see the names and grades of those who have passed and those who have to resit some exams or repeat some courses.

Morever, the requirement of an elective course from other programmes creates constraints to students in terms of class schedules. Since every programme has its own course schedules, some students are confronted with clashes of timetable. A student

may be interested in a course from a programme and be unable to register to it, because its schedule clashes with that of a core course.

> *Sometimes, you have chosen a course in another department that has some clash of timetable with the other courses in your department (Sheik, 14/01/2015).*

> *I did not like that…the problem was that I did not have time to attend the course as I should, because the hours were not convenient to me. I finally went and take the exam and I failed it (Grace, 8/01/2015).*

Following from these, students are likely to choose only courses that fit their timetable but which are not of their first choices. There are also chances they register to courses they will partly attend or be constantly absent as was the case of Grace.

According to some participants, elective courses constitute one of the reasons most of the classes in the EFL programme are large. There are many students from other programmes attending courses of that programme.

> *We have among us history students, psychology, sociology… It's a mixture of students from various departments. That is why the class is so large (Alou, 04/12/2014).*

This, therefore, causes the allocated facilities to be inadequate or not enough to contain all the students. To be able to follow a course, one may have to go to school very early in order to book a place, preferably one at the front.

> *It's not easy to follow the course. The first time I was new here, I had to come earlier. If you don't come early, you can't have even a seat. You'll have to follow the course from the back (Aisha, 08/01/2015).*

In this situation, seats in the classroom are likely to be subjects to competition and other behaviours where first comers book good places for their friends who generally arrive later (see 8.6., p. 166).

The presence of students from other programmes also creates constraints to teacher educators in the EFL programme. It influences the way classes are taught. Due to the lower English proficiency of those students, teacher educators sometimes have to shift from English to French in order to better explain their lessons.

> *In that class we don't have only students from the English department. We have students from other departments. Those students, they don't have the same level like students in the English department. So, to help them from time to time, we use the other language – French (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014)*

This situation has therefore some effects on pedagogy. It creates to teacher educators the difficult task of accommodating students with different levels and background knowledge.

Apart from issues regarding elective courses, the EFL programme, at the time of this research, was also experiencing difficulties with courses cancelled through the review process. On this matter, the constraints revealed by the study are of two types. First, there are courses that were cancelled, and students who were due to retake them – as a consequence of failing the resit exam – found themselves constrained to attend different courses.

> *You can see some students who didn't pass a course of last year. It means they have to take the same course this year. But when they came to take the course, they realised it doesn't exist in the curriculum for this year. So, this is really a big problem. So, maybe if I didn't validate…just an example…if I didn't validate American Civilisation, this year, I have to take the course again. But, instead of that, this course was replaced by African Drama (Emanuel, 05/12/2014).*

In this case, it means for concerned students to attend courses different from the expected. Even though this can lead to additional learning, some students seem to view it as an extra burden to the normal workload.

Second, at certain levels, new courses created happened to be the same with those cancelled at a lower level. As such, they pose the constraint of being retaken by students who had already passed them.

> *Maybe last year I validated Phonetics and this year I came and found the same course (Emanuel, 05/12/2014)*

Therefore, this takes the opposite of the previous situation and places contraints on students to attend courses they have already passed. This situation might be due to the fact that the programme is frequently looking at programmes from neighbouring countries in order to align itself to regional practices. It might also be a consequence of the LMD requirements for programmes to align their offers to four types of courses. According to the LMD guidelines, every programme should have basic courses, methodology courses, specialisation courses, and courses that offer general knowledge to students. A key indication from the LMD guidebook states that:

> *Les UE de connaissances fondamentales ont une importance décroissante, les UE de spécialité, une importance croissante, les UE de méthodologie,*

une importance relativement constante, et les UE de culture générale ont une importance variable (REESAO guidebook, p. 18)

Basic courses have a decreasing value; an increasing value for specialisation courses; a relatively constant value for methodology courses; and a varying value for general knowledge (my translation)

It is based on this directive that programmes within Sahel University are reviewing their offers almost on a yearly basis. Considering the above, basic courses within each programme are expected to be offered during the first years of Bachelor's level, specialisation courses at Master's level, Methodology courses throughout the two levels, and general knowledge as the need arises.

Notwithstanding, tensions created by reviews constitute a real obstacle to the process. On several occasions, the student union was observed holding general meetings within the premises of the faculty in order to denounce some aspects of the reviews and, at the same time, sensitise students about the drawbacks of the changes. There were also occasions when students gave ultimatums to the central administration and went on strike afterwards. With these tensions one is likely to wonder how these reviews are communicated to students, and to which extent all the stakeholders are involved in deciding, planning and implementing the changes.

As revealed by the study, the overarching problem originates from the fact that programmes at Sahel University are not on the same level of LMD implementation. Moreover, programmes generally use different procedures to execute the related plans.

We've realised that sometimes people have different approaches to how to implement it, from department to department and from school to school…even though we have those texts. (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).

Despite the shared rules and guidelines for implementing the LMD system, programmes at Sahel University are therefore not conducting changes with the same pace. While some among them have devised small and slow steps to do so, others have made big strides at one time in order to focus on emerging difficulties afterwards. As indicated by certain participants, most of the issues arise when students start to make comparison between what is happening from one programme to another.

You know, students they listen very carefully… They listen to what is happening in other places. So, when they noticed there is something…an approach that is in their favour that is being used elsewhere, and in their department it is not being used, they always come and say "see, we are in

the same school. How come!" But sometimes, it's the approach that people use that shows the difference. For example, in certain schools...the reform...they said "Ok, we are going to go progressively start with the first year." In our case, we have decided to find ways of handling the different problems individual students are facing. But we want everyone to embrace the new programme. So, it's a difference with those who decided to apply it to just the first year. So, this is a problem we are handling now. They are saying "how come in X school, they apply it to just the first year and here you are making us go in the same boat and we are having problems?" (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).

This may be indicative of the fact that the system allows some flexibility to individual programmes to implement changes in a progressive way, following their own pace. This is also indicative of the likelihood for students to prefer a uniform system in which all the programmes implement the same changes at the same time. This might be linked to the fact that before the advent of the LMD system, programmes within the institution were having a uniform system. The difficulties of the EFL programme come from the fact that they have decided to fully implement the system from the beginning – as opposed to other programmes – and manage problems as they emerge.

As we go, we see certain problems that need to be fixed. And we can't say, because we don't want students to go on strike, we are going to leave them like that, because with time they will catch us. Finding solutions to all the problems that are emerging...that is what is creating the problem (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).

This means the difficulties are coming from suggested solutions, which do not seem to win students' confidence due to their limited participation in the process. Based on my personal experience, students in the Nigerien context have a long history of unionism, since the event of February 1990. Lack of their active participation in the decision making process for reviews is, therefore, a probable impediment to the implementation process. Additional details on this aspect is provided in the next section, which presents insights about the way the programme and teacher educators are evaluated.

7.4. Teacher and Programme Evaluation

In the previous chapter, insights have been presented in relation to the forms of strategies that educators at the EFL programme use to assess learning. This section provides additional insights by displaying issues around programme and teacher evaluation under the LMD system. Teacher evaluation, here, is used interchangeably with course evaluation. This has various characteristics. One of these was exemplified

below by Minas, who has experienced related situations from a Ghanaean higher education institution.

> *With the system in Ghana, every semester, at the end of the course, the institution brings out a questionnaire to assess the lecturer and then the course. So, it's all the students in class, but it's anonymous; you don't write your name on it. You just write the course code. There are questions on it: how was the course? Was it good? Then you mark when it is good. So, at the end it's the university that judges if the lecture was good or not (Minas, 14/01/2015).*

In other words, a set of criteria for good practice are identified and applied to the process. These criteria are generally put against a scale on which students are expected to grade the course implementation. In this case, the process may require the use of statistical procedures to determine a score. I have experienced a similar situation in a US institution where evaluation forms are filled by students and then processed by computers. The latter are used to ensure an anonymous participation in the decision making process. This type of course evaluation is, however, not practised by the EFL programme but remains part of the LMD framework.

> *At university we don't have this. Each lecturer is free to teach as he/she wants. We have this practice only in junior and senior high schools. (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).*

> *Here we don't have anything like that. But right now there is a committee that is being established. It's something that has been done in all the universities that are members of REESAO (Kadidja, 29/12/2014).*

A course evaluation system is therefore on the way to be put in place. It might be monitored by a centralised unit within the university. The committee referred to by Dr Kadidja is expected to function like a quality assurance team, which might have the responsibilities of designing and regulating the evaluation process and procedures.

Nonetheless, during the conduct of this study, a form of formative teacher evaluation was observed in Dr Paul's class when he requested not only the students but also myself to provide him with some critical inputs about the way he had taught the MLA and APA styles.

> *On November 11th, he administered a small assessment to students, and based on the outcome, which he judged non-satisfactory, he decided to request my critical inputs towards the way he conducted his activities during those APA and MLA sessions. The most important aspect of this was when he openly shared those criticisms with his students in class and*

requested them to provide him with additional criticism or feedback (Field notes, 25/11/2014).

In this situation, Dr Paul's request of feedback was trigerred by the unsatisfactory results of the summative assesment he had administered to students. His intention had been to understand the weaknesses of the teaching process in order to improve it. As highlighted in chapter six about Dr Paul's use of group work strategies in class (see 6.5.2., p. 122), his initiative constitutes a real opportunity for embedding a collaborative action research in his teaching. Even though there was no feedback offered by students that day – probably due to power relation and other factors – his openness to criticism reveals a positive predisposition for challenging his own beliefs. This might help him create a process in which learning takes place for both students and himself. However, this type of practice does not happen in every class within the programme. Dr Paul might be the only one asking students such feedback from time to time.

> *As far as I know, he is the only one who always asks students to critique his teaching. Sometimes, there are some sheets of papers you are given to answer some questions. Yes, some kind of criticism of the classes. He is asking students to fill, to answer those questions to know how he can change those classes, how he can improve the class for the coming year (Sheik, 14/01/2014).*

Considering Sheik's testimony, the feedback Dr Paul asks from students is not only verbal; he sometimes requests written feedback. He gives blank papers to students and asks them to reflect on what did not work and how to make it better. This is similar to the formative strategy described earlier. Even though this may not be regarded as action research – due to the absence of systematic planning and actions – the endeavour might yield useful insights from which Dr Paul can reflect, change his ways of teaching and learn from his practice. The absence of many teacher educators requesting feedback, in my view, can be a signal to some contextual problems. To be effective, such practice might require the system to break the observed barriers imposed by power relation between teacher educators and students. For a formative evaluation process to be complete, teacher educators may need to empower their students.

Building on the above insights, procedures for course evaluation at the EFL programme are missing or remain at an informal stage. Based on observations and interview data collected over a whole semester, no formal practice of teacher evaluation was identified. Teacher educators are therefore not bound to meet standards based on which they may

undergo assessment. In such circumstance, it rarely happens to a teacher educator to be observed by a peer or an evaluator for the purpose of receiving feedback on how to improve the teaching process.

This, however, does not mean teacher educators cannot include an evaluation component in their courses. They can do it, provided they can find an evaluator who has a higher academic rank.

> *You can do it if you want to, but most of people don't do it. It's possible for you to do it, but it's not an obligation. Also, you don't have somebody higher than you that would come and observe you and say, you know, things are okay or they are not okay. We don't have that kind of evaluation. This is something that sometimes people talk about. They say at university, we don't have people who would come… (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2015).*

Therefore, the lack of inspectors and advisers at university level is one of the key reasons why teacher educators' practices are not regularly evaluated. The only time this kind of evaluation takes place is when a teacher educator wishes to advance from one academic position to another. In this case, the teacher educator is responsible for searching someone with a higher title to do the evaluation – based on classroom observation – and write a report that should be sent to CAMES – an international body that regulates higher education and research within French-speaking countries in Africa.

> *The only case when they do it is when they have to submit a 'dossier' to CAMES. That is the institution that gives the different titles…for advancement purposes. For that kind of thing, you need somebody who has a higher rank to come and see you and then write about it. [..] For example, if I ask somebody who is what we call Professeur Titulaire from Lettres Modernes to come and observe me because I want to become Maitre de Conference, it has 'nothing' to do with me as a teacher of the English department. Because, it's not going to be submitted to the head of my department. He/she will write it and then send it to CAMES (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).*

From this perspective, it may be implied that teacher evaluation takes place occasionally but not mandated by the EFL programme. This happens on a personal basis as part of a process required by CAMES for the promotion of teacher educators. Arguably, this type of teacher evaluation is formal but monitored at a higher level. Even though it is not the only criterion for academic advancement, the way it is conducted matches the summative purpose of evaluation described by Delvaux et al. (2013). It has also appeared that the programme could build on the formative evaluation of teaching, which is operating informally with educators like Dr Paul. There seems to be space in the

system for developing systematic and formative evaluations of teaching based on feedback from peers and students.

Contrary to the situation around teacher or course evaluation, the institution that hosts the EFL programme has some procedures for programme evaluation. These are monitored by some internal committees appointed to assess the worthiness of certain academic practices and implement reviews.

> *There are people progressively doing the evaluation. Because within every faculty, people have been appointed as LMD Committees. So those people are doing the evaluation. And this is the reasons we are continuously bringing some changes… (Dr Kadidja, 12/02/2015)*

Since the time the LMD system has been implemented, changes are continuously undertaken within different programmes. Those changes are decided and initiated by the internal committees, which bear the responsibility of collecting information from programmes about issues that require immediate or long term solutions. Those issues are generally gathered and discussed during workshops organised yearly by the committees.

> *Every year, there are workshops that are organised based on the experience of the year or of two years, and we try to fix things. It's been going on for years now (Kadidja, 12/02/2015)*

The purpose of the workshop is to record problems being faced by different programmes. It also suggests solutions and ensures these are duly implemented to fix the problems. The internal committees, therefore, play a crucial role in the review process. The latter has some characteristics of participatory research where community members are fully involved in understanding their issues in order not only to devise and implement solutions but also to monitor aspects that work and those that do not. Nonetheless, its efficacy seems to be hampered by the lack of empirical actions and involvement of some key stakeholders, such as students and educators. This is worsened by the lack of formative evaluation systems as underlined earlier.

7.5. The Place of Research

The role and place of research within the EFL programme constitute an important aspect of the LMD system. Research is the one element through which the system aims to achieve excellence. Upon implementation of the LMD system at Sahel University,

some changes have been made in relation to research. The first thing fulfilled by the higher education administration was the improvement of teacher educators' working conditions.

> *Something has been done, maybe not enough. But I think, giving the situation of the country, the government has done something to stimulate people, to put them in better conditions, even though we're still struggling with tough situations. But I think our living conditions have been improved somehow (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).*

The next thing fulfilled was the creation of a research grant board through which teacher educators could apply and defend their projects for the purpose of funding.

> *There is a kind of research fund which teachers can use. But of course you have to come up with a research project that you will defend in front of a scientific committee. If the committee accepts your project, then you will receive the fund that you have asked for (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).*

With the Scientific Committee in place, teacher educators are given the opportunity to design their research in accordance with some interest areas (see Appendix I) and submit requests for financial support. There also exists another form of support provided for the purpose of publication. In case a teacher educator wishes to publish his/her work, as a result of a funded research or not, he/she can submit a claim to the Vice-chancellor's Office and be immediately refunded.

> *There is also that aspect to encourage teachers to publish. When you publish an article, you will receive XOF100,000. You'll just send your article to the Vice-chancellor's Office and upon reception, the same day they will refund you XOF100,000. That is one of the measures aiming to encourage teachers to publish. They know that publishing is difficult (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).*

This used to be different before. In the past, research did not receive much interest from teacher educators due to the lack of governance and financial support.

> *I should add that for a long time, research has been neglected, because people do not have any financial support. […] Especially when we left CAMES in the 80s, people were not very much into trying to do it, to progress through research. It's only recently when we went back to CAMES that teachers realise that for promotion they really have to do some research and publish (Dr Kadidja, 12/02/2015)*

As indicated earlier, CAMES is the organisation that regulates research in many Sub-Saharan African countries, and before the implementation of the LMD system, Sahel University was not one of its affiliates. Joining CAMES has therefore constituted a

crucial step for this institution. It seems to be a strong signal for the university's commitment to research and search for quality.

Nonetheless, CAMES requires research for advancement purposes only. With financial support or not, teacher educators are not obliged to do research unless they wish to advance in their career.

> *It's not a requirement, but if you don't do it you are not going to get a promotion (Dr Kadidja, 12/02/2015).*

Research therefore remains a personal endeavour for achieving career growth. There is no requirement, as opposed to the practice in certain Western universities, to do research in order to secure one's job. At the EFL programme, tenure is generally achieved after a certain number of years of teaching and does not require any research achievement. This may explain the reason why some teacher educators do not see the need to engage in research activities for the purpose of achieving more academic titles. They feel secure as soon as they achieve tenure.

> *It seems also if you become Maitre-Assistant, then it's like tenure. So, once you get tenure, you feel secure. So, some people if they get tenure, they feel they just have to do their teaching (Dr Kadidja, 12/02/2015).*

After becoming Maître-Assistant (Senior Lecturer), there is no need to worry in terms of job security. But to advance to other titles, such as *Maître de Conférence* and *Professeur Titulaire*, teacher educators are required to do research and publish. In fact, reseach is just one requirement among others for career advancement. Teaching experience also counts. This is where the need of teacher evaluation arises, as mentioned earlier, for those applying for advancement.

Taking the above insights into account, it could be assumed that research within the EFL programme is well-regulated by the LMD system, and minimum financial support is provided to teacher educators. This is a basic requirement for teacher educators to engage in research and ensure the competitiveness of the institution. However, the established changes are insufficient for ensuring continuity. There exist some constraints which prevent teacher educators from engaging in research. At the EFL programme, these constraints are linked to teacher educators' lack of time.

> *But, as you can see, it's not easy. […] Let's say you are a new PhD holder recruited in the department…you are burdened with course loads. You don't*

have enough time to do research in order to be able to change your status.
So, that is one of the problems (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).

So, the lack of time comes from the fact that teacher educators are overloaded. As highlighted in the next chapter (see 8.2., p. 150), this problem originates from the shortage of teacher educators, mainly those specialised in areas of linguistics and TEFL.

7.6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the LMD system seems to be the main factor which shapes the changes and issues occurring within the EFL programme. Based on this system, reviews occur almost every year as a consequence of evaluations conducted by internal committees through workshops. As presented, the workshops offer certain stakeholders the opportunity to raise issues occurring within their programmes. Solutions to those issues are afterwards formulated for implementation and follow-up. However, data in this study have shown how certain review actions create constraints to students and teacher educators. The cancellation of some courses and the requirement for students to attend elective courses every semester outside their programmes are the most recent changes but which have been creating tensions within the EFL programme. Moreover, it has been noted that the LMD reviews are not uniformly implemented across the institution, and this causes more problems to the programme. Another factor that affects the change process is the limited participation of students in the decision making process.

In the current chapter, aspects of teacher evaluation and research in the scope of the LMD system have also been presented. Evidence has revealed teacher evaluation and research as important instruments of teacher career progression. They are generally conducted by teacher educators on a personal basis for advancement. It has also been evidenced that the system provides teacher educators with opportunities in terms of research grant and publication support, despite the fact that many of them lack the necessary time for research. The next chapter provides more insights about other related constraints to research and pedagogy.

Chapter 8

The Context and its Realities

8.1. Introduction

The current chapter focuses on some contextual issues that affect practices within the EFL programme. It seeks to provide answers in relation to one of the research questions formulated for this study:

> *What are the contextual factors that affect teaching and learning within EFL programmes?*

With this purpose, the current analysis presents factors that include teacher shortage, large class size and lack of academic resources. Data concerning observed learner attitudes are also presented. Interpretations of these attitudes are offered in line with three phenomena: absence, students' reluctance to reading and their attitudes in terms of using the English language for communication purposes. Throughout the chapter, the identified factors are connected to certain practices presented in previous chapters.

8.2. "We don't have enough teachers"

Teacher shortage within the EFL programme is a phenomenon that emerged from the data when I was examining aspects related to large class size. Based on classroom observations and interviews I conducted during the fieldwork, I noticed that most of the classes within the programme are large, except in the section of linguistics at the second year of Master's level (see 8.5., p. 161). This situation has triggered my interest to understand the reasons why in literature section the student population (about 70 students) is almost six times the number of students of linguistics and related areas (about 12 students). The main reason, as expressed by certain participants, is linked to the shortage of teacher educators specialised in linguistics and applied linguistics. The programme has eight full-time teacher educators, but only two of them have such specialisation. In this case, students who choose to specialise in linguistics may have more difficulties to find supervisors for their dissertation projects than students who are specialising in literature.

The number of lecturers is not sufficient. If you take the students who are specialising in language, there are only two lecturers. I think this is not sufficient. And the problem is that when you finish, there is the issue of supervision. So, you see, you'll not have lecturers to supervise you (Labo, 27/01/2015).

This shows how students' choices are influenced by the limited number of teacher educators who can supervise them. The above statement highlights the difficulty students and teacher educators may encounter due to the lack of supervisors. While the available supervisors are likely to be overloaded, students may be in the risk of spending more time than expected before they can graduate. However, this problem is not exclusive to linguistics students alone, as most of the participants tended to believe. Mathematically, the opposite situation is more convincing. There are more supervisors for students in linguistics and related areas than those specialising in literature. As per the student population ratio, every teacher educator specialised in literature is likely to have more than ten supervisees while six only may be assigned to each linguistics teacher educator.

The real issue may be in terms of teaching workload. Taking into account the course structure presented in chapter six (see 6.3., pp. 112-13), the programme has fifteen courses for linguistics and related areas and seventeen courses for literature. According to the regulation of Sahel University, each teacher educator is required to teach only three courses per year. With the configuration in the EFL programme, each literature teacher educator is likely to have less than three courses per year while each language teacher educator may have to deal with eight courses.

However, at the time this study was conducted, each linguistics or literature teacher educator was having more than three courses per year.

Teachers are really overloaded. Apart from what the regulation says – that there is a certain amount of courses to handle – you have to do more than that. You can't say "Ok, regulation says every year I should have three courses and I am going to do just those three courses." We don't have enough teachers. This is the reason why people are overloaded. So, you are going to have the amount that is required, and then you will have to do what we call 'cours complémentaires', simply because there are no teachers. For example, among all the full-time teachers, it is only Dr X who from last year has stopped taking extra courses for health reasons. So, we have to see who can take his extra courses. There are some courses we cannot give to part-timers (Dr Kadidja, 12/02/2015).

Thus, the programme has found a way to ensure balance among all the teacher educators even though the overload remains. Teacher educators are generally rewarded for extra courses, but they do lack time for activities necessary for their development. Part-time teacher educators are used but not to a point of solving the problem of overload. At the time of this research, three part-time teachers were being used by the programme, but only few courses were open to them. It is a regulation from Sahel University that only PhD holders can be hired on a fulltime basis. As it has appeared, most of the part-timers are experienced people with a Master's degree.

Following from the above situation, some teacher educators do teach courses they did not specialise in. Due to the shortage of teacher educators for linguistics and related areas, many literature teacher educators see themselves assigned the teaching of courses that are not part of their specialisation. Dr Kader, for example, has a specialisation in literature, but the class in which I observed his teaching is more related to linguistics than literature. He also teaches *Stylistics* and *Varieties and Functions of English*. This has been the same for other teacher educators, such as Dr Paul and Dr Kadidja.

> *When I started, it was African literature courses…and then, with time, I started teaching translation classes…French to English and vice-versa…and American Literature (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).*

> *We do have some who are teaching courses that are not really related directly to their areas of specialisation. That was my case, initially. Yes, we have some teachers who are doing that (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).*

The above statements exemplify the complexity of some situations inherent in the EFL programme. While this may pose pedagogical issues, much of it underlines many of the difficulties presented in previous chapters. This can be expressed as one of the main reasons some teacher educators do not engage in research. Knowing that each course has four hours a week, teacher educators are likely to devote most of their time to teaching alone. Those who are teaching courses different from their area of specialisation are likely to spend extra time for learning about what they teach.

Following from the above, one is likely to wonder why the EFL programme is not hiring more teacher educators. Two main reasons have been identified for this situation. First, the reason is financial. The programme has made plans to hire more teacher educators but in line with the budget allocated to the university.

> *We do have plans, but really… You know, the plans to be effective, it's politically-dependent. It depends on the government; it's a financial issue. Right now, we are going to have one more teacher. This is going to be a specialist in education (Kadidja, 12/02/2015).*

This reveals the dependency of the institution on governmental funding. Taking into account the economic situation of the country, this funding seems to be very limited. The meagre annual budget approved by the government determines the number of headcount the university can plan. It is based on this that the EFL programme has recently been permitted to hire one teacher educator starting from the academic year 2014-2015.

Nonetheless, the problem is more than a financial limitation of the institution. As mentioned earlier, to become a university teacher educator, one must hold a PhD. As it has appeared, the country does not afford many people with such capability. With the recent creation of new universities, the demand in PhD holders has soared over the years. Some among the eight full-time teacher educators at the EFL programme, for example, are already on the verge of retirement, but there is no clear indication of how these are going to be replaced. As shown by the data, the mother institution does not have strategic human resources plans to cater with such situation.

> *The university, up to now, has not prepared some kind of recruitment plan that will allow her to know in advance. Let's say those graduate students… Already some students are planning to study for PhDs in different universities so that when they come back already, the department or the university can hire them. What if they were sent to be trained in particular areas by the university? So, when they come back, they will be recruited according to the profile. What is happening is that sometimes or usually…in many cases, at least…people try to get their own scholarships and they go to study for Master's degrees or PhDs and they come back with some degrees that they decided to get from other universities, and when they come back they need jobs. The university also needs some teachers. So, they hire them even if the profile does not correspond to the one the department is looking for. So, in my personal opinion, I think it's a question of management; because the university has not been able to plan those kinds of recruitment (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).*

The above statement highlights not only the origin of the imbalance at the EFL programme, in terms of specialisation, but also an example of strategy the university could use to ensure replacement and provision of required profiles. According to Dr Paul, the problem may be alleviated if the university puts in place a selection mechanism through which it offers study contracts to its graduates. A study contract would be an agreement through which graduates receive a conditional study funding for

an area of mutual interest so that upon completion they come back to take a position within the institution. This could be a good approach for recruiting and training appropriate candidates as the need arises but which may not be applicable due to the financial dependency of the institution. To be able to offer study contracts to its graduates, the institution would have to establish a solid funding scheme.

8.3. Lack of Academic Resources

Lack of academic resources is one of the factors observed in the context of this study and expressed by many among the participants. Even though access to materials has been identified as one of the reasons why students vacate courses for small jobs – to earn money and buy books or any other required reading packet – there are many aspects of this phenomenon that need to be presented here instead of under the theme on absence. Access to materials within the EFL programme has mainly been related to an outdated library and a limited access to online resources and appropriate bookstores in the country. Within the institution that hosts the programme, a library is available, but it lacks sufficient and up-to-date resources. Most of the books one can find are generally more than 20 years old.

> *As you know, it's the same library that we have since when we were students, and our students, you know, continue to go to the same library…and we've brought in new courses, but the resources did not follow (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).*

This denotes the extent to which library resources lack renewal and replacement. Most of the available materials seem incompatible with new courses created upon implementation of the LMD system. The facility that hosts the library is built on about 300sq. meters out of which about 40sq. meters give way to the room where all the books and librarians are located. As such, the facility is small and cannot accommodate many resources. With that situation, books are likely to be insufficient, considering the growing number of students who need to use them.

> *The ones that are available, sometimes they can have five copies or ten copies, and it's for everybody. So, it's difficult. (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).*

This is a situation where participants expect the library to make copies of books available in bigger quantities. In university libraries of developed countries, as per my personal experience, copies of books are generally around the number mentioned above by Dr Kadidja, but users rarely complain about their insufficiency. This is probably due

to people's ability and ease of access for purchasing their own copies. In the context of this study, students expect the institution or the teacher educators to provide them with the required materials.

> *I would say most of the time, students expect you, the teacher, to give them the texts that you need them to read for your classes (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).*

> *We also need books. They don't have to ask us to go and buy books. Why not provide us with those books? (Aisha, 08/01/2015).*

This expectation might have originated from students' experiences with practices at primary and secondary school levels. At these levels, there is a tendency from the Nigerien educational administration to provide students with textbooks, notebooks and other materials in the beginning of every school year. This is generally due to the financial inability of most parents to cope with those needs for their children. This reason applies well to students at the EFL programme. The majority of them are from non-privileged backgrounds and therefore lack financial resources to support their study requirements.

> *Sometimes, teachers ask us to buy some books, and you know, there are many students who do not have access even to the bursaries. So, they do not have the means for buying those books (Aisha, 08/01/2015).*

> *We have many students who really do not have the means to undertake higher education. Because, it's expensive. And sometimes even the money to make their own course packet … (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).*

As such, the reliance on the school library resources comes from the fact that the majority of students cannot afford to buy the required books. With the limited number of those books, the rules for usage are likely to be unfavourable to students.

Another reason to students' expectation is linked to the linguistic nature of the context. Niger is a French speaking country, and access to academic books written in English is difficult. In case a book is not available at the university library, it is likely to be unavailable at other libraries and bookstores in town. Students who can afford to buy one may have to order it from abroad – English speaking countries, such as Ghana and Nigeria.

> *Here, at the library, we can't get them [books]. So, we need somebody from some Anglophone countries to get them for us (Alice, 28/01/2015).*

This situation may become worse due to students' limited access to online resources. Within the context of Sahel University in particular, and Niger in general, access to internet by students remains a major issue.

> *You know, all these things…internet… we don't have access here. Even if you want, it's difficult sometimes. It's not really available as we need (Alice, 28/01/2015).*

It is inferable from this statement that students do not have access to academic and professional online databases. During my fieldwork, I have frequently used the library space but did not notice any related facilities. Students who have frequent access to internet may only retrieve available resources through Google searches. Another related problem in that context is students' lack of computer skills and permanent access to computers for their academic activities.

> *You know, one needs to get a computer or go to an internet café. So, not all of us are computer literate. Because in this country, computers are expensive; being trained is also expensive (Oro, 16/01/2015).*

Computer skills is increasingly becoming a study pre-requisite at Sahel University, but opportunities for acquiring them are lacking. The issue raised by Oro is a prevalent situation within the context of the current study. There is no specific facility within the institution where students can freely have access to computers for their academic activities. Even at the library, book searching is conducted manually from print catalogues.

Considering the above situations, teacher educators who include reading materials in their syllabi are bound to make them available to students in order to reinforce their engagement. I have observed this in Dr Kadidja and Dr Paul's classes in the beginning of the school year. Reading packets, as they call them, have been prepared and given to students for making photocopies. This is a similar situation in a Master's level class attended by Alice.

> *She gives documents; because we don't have some documents. Only the teacher has the real documents (Alice, 28/01/2015).*

This creates an extra burden for the teacher educator who takes the responsibility to make the material available and ensure every student has a copy. On the contrary, asking students to find the required materials by themselves would restrict them from

fully participating to the teaching and learning process. Knowing that students are reluctant to reading (see section 8.4), not providing them with the required reading packet will only reinforce that attitude.

Another relevant situation revealed by the data is the fact that the library is not always accessible to students. It opens from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm on working days. It closes during vacations and public holidays, and there exist seasons during which book loans are not permitted. In addition, because students have to register and renew their ID cards every year, book loans are not permitted with old ID cards.

> *For example this year, we are already in January, but if I take my case I don't even have a new ID card. So, they cannot let me borrow books there. They will say I am not a student yet; because I don't have the card of this year. So, I will have to wait maybe until February or March to get the ID card then to get access to the books (Oro, 16/01/2015).*

It can be inferred from this statement that the production of ID cards generally takes time. The non-access to the library resources due to lack of ID cards presupposes the lack, within the institution, of an automated or computerised system, which could have allowed access to the student information without requiring his/her ID card. This situation creates an additional constraint, which may push students to expect the required materials from teacher educators or simply loose interest in reading. There is a belief among some participants, however, that the limited access to academic materials is not the main problem but rather the reluctance of students to read. Insights on this issue are presented in the following section.

8.4. "In general, we don't like to read"

Within the context of this study, students' reluctance to reading is one of the major factors that influence teaching and learning. I observed this phenomenon in a class taught by Dr Paul. In that session, students were given instructions to read some materials from home and be prepared for some class activities, but the majority of them went to the class without having read the required texts. This obliged the teacher educator to change his initial plans. As revealed by data, it is due to this type of attitude that some teacher educators use quizzes to force students to read.

> *They don't like to read; they don't want to make that effort to read. And that is the reason why I initiated these reading quizzes as I call them (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).*

This is therefore a way to make pressure on students to read. Because of quizzes, students may feel obliged to read in order not to fail a grade. Without this pressure, they are likely to come to class just to sit and listen to the teacher educator. This highlights not only the predominance of summative assessment in that context but also its influence on students' preference. For, students' reluctance to reading might be regarded as a resistance to other forms of teaching and learning. Since students in that class are already provided with the required readings, lack of access to materials can no longer be evoked. Explanation to this attitude might be found in the predominant learning culture partly created by testing. Students' reluctance to read in order to critically make meaning of the texts they are assigned might be caused by a preference to memorise information and show mastery during final exams or other required tests.

> *Some are not reading the articles, but they rely on quiz answers of past years; because the articles are the same. They go and find those quizzes done by others, and then have the corrections and come just to memorise the corrections instead of reading the articles to understand what is inside (Sheik, 14/01/2015).*

This can be related to some insights highlighted in the previous chapters. It might be a consequence of the LMD system, which has brought new teaching and learning requirements. Before the LMD system, dictation used to be the most predominant mode of teaching, and this was generally characterised by expectations for students to memorise the information they receive and show mastery during examinations. Students' attitude towards reading can therefore be regarded as a form of resistance to a process they are not used to. Even when they read to satisfy the quiz requirements, memorisation is their last recourse instead of critical reading.

Apart from the use of quizzes to force students to read, the EFL programme has put a requirement in place for every teacher educator to communicate his/her office hours to students so that they could visit in case they need assistance with their readings. Yet, students rarely visit a teacher educator for such matter.

> *The unfortunate thing is that few students only come just to ask questions maybe about some issues that were not clear during the lecture. When you see students knocking at your door, you can be in advance sure that they have some claims, maybe some grade claims or they would like to have recommendation letters as you have just seen this morning (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).*

As such, only few students do occasionally go to teacher educators' offices to seek for help. The types of help they request do not generally comply with the motives behind office hour requirements. However, this attitude cannot solely be attributed to students' reluctance to reading. It may be a symptom of power relation between students and teacher educators. In that context, teacher educators are generally perceived by students as figures of authority.

Other reasons to students' reluctance to read are linked to the socio-economic situation they live in. First, some students are believed to be reluctant to reading because of their lack of interest to achieve excellence.

> *Students are infested by a virus: this virus of just to have a grade of 10/20 in all the subjects. That means, students have no more the idea of excellence (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).*

> *It looks like what they are aiming at is to pass a course, get a pass grade and then go (Minas, 14/01/2015).*

10/20 is the lowest passing grade at the EFL programme, and most of the students are content with that. Their objective is to obtain passing grades needed for obtaining a degree that will allow them to take a job.

> *They are in hurry to go and get a job, but they don't know even for doing a job you must be excellent (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).*

Based on the social status of the majority of students, being in hurry to get a job can be regarded as a normal attitude. In the Nigerien community, having a job provides respect to every individual who may find him/herself entrusted with the responsibility to cope with the needs of multiple families. In such conditions, excellence, which Dr Kader is emphasising, may not be on students' agenda. As evidenced in previous chapters, the majority of students at the EFL programme are most likely to become teachers. Based on a personal experience with the Nigerien education system, grades do not count for becoming a teacher. All that is needed is a degree, be it with honours or not. Pursuance of excellence may be observed only in the cases of students who are planning to study abroad, apply for foreign scholarships or work in private sectors.

Students' reluctance to reading is also a signal to some constraints, such as students' lack of time. Taking into account the fact that many students within the EFL programme are jobholders, there are chances that some of them do not find enough time to devote to

their readings due to professional commitment. Considering these insights, students' reluctance to read is a factor caused by social, psychological and academic factors. It constitutes an avenue on which more in-depth understanding needs to be constructed in order to help improve learning and students' experiences with new strategies introduced by the LMD system.

8.5. "Did you see my class? It's more than 200 students."

As observed and also expressed by certain participants in this study, classes within the EFL programme are generally large. This applies to classes at Bachelor's level more than those at Master's level.

> *In our department, the two first years are where you have larger classes. Mine is already a Master's level. That is why the number is not too big compared to the other levels. But even for my other class, which is a third year class, I have around more than hundred students. (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).*

> *Our first year which is becoming second year now is around 500. More than 500! And even the 3rd year that you have seen, they may reach 300 or more (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).*

These big numbers of students are not uniquely composed of students registered to the EFL programme. As clarified in the previous chapters, they also include students from other programmes. Due to some requirements of the LMD system, students at Sahel University are required to attend elective courses from other programmes.

> *We have students from other departments that come to take this course (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).*

Those students from other programmes are numerous, but they do not attend courses at Master's level. Moreover, they do not constitute a majority within most of the courses they attend. Without them, Bachelor's level classes are still very large.

At Master's level, classes are also large but small compared to those at Bachelor's level. The number varies from 55 to 75 students in the first year.

> *Last year, it was around 75 students. This year, I think, we have around 55. (Dr Sam, 04/02/2015).*

The 75 students of last year are now in 2nd year, but more than 60 of them are specialising in literature. Only 12 among them have chosen to go for linguistics and

related areas. This is the only section of the EFL programme where classes are small. This study, however, has revealed some reasons behind the limitation of the student number in this section. As presented earlier, students' choice of this area is linked to the lack of teacher educators who specialised in linguistics and related areas. The number of teacher educators who specialised in literature is higher – more than double – compared to those with an applied linguistics background. Students who choose linguistics are likely to lack supervisors as soon as they finish their Master's Degree coursework. That is the reason the majority of them prefer to go to the literature section where there may be less difficulty to have a supervisor.

Looking at the large class practices within the EFL programme, one may wonder if such phenomenon constitutes a problem in the eyes of the stakeholders. For some of these, the concern is minimal.

> *There is no problem! We are all students with the same aim, the acquisition of knowledge. For me it's not a problem. The class is big or not, it's the same (Alou, 04/12/2014).*

So, all that is needed is the knowledge source (the teacher) and the host containers (students), regardless of the size of the class. This clearly reflects ideas presented earlier in terms of learning culture. Due to the predominance of testing practices, learning is generally regarded as a memorisation-recall process. This view is supported, within the programme, by the lack of a specific policy to limit the number of students per class.

> *As far as I know, there is no limit to the number of students that can be in a class (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).*

It can be inferred from the above that the administration is not much concerned about the size of a class. There is the likelihood that the administration itself views teacher educators as absolute knowers and students as simple receivers of knowledge (Freire, 2000). In such case, the number of students in a class matters less as long as they can hear what the teacher educator is transmitting to them.

While the above practices may be in contradiction with certain literature, which places large class size as a negative phenomenon (Blatchford, 2003), some of the problems attached to them further confirm the issue of learning culture highlighted above. Problems of large classes expressed by participants are more logistical and likely to imply the need for more space and other equipment to better accommodate everyone

registered to the courses. From the perspectives of some teacher educators, one of the logistical problems concerns the difficulty of controlling attendance – even though this is not a policy requirement (see section 8.6). During the time of this research, the only instance a teacher educator was noticed checking attendance was the day I observed Dr Kader's class for the first time. Despite the fact that it might have occurred because of my presence, the control of attendance conducted that day may be interpreted as a way for the teacher educator to frighten frequent absentees. In classes where this regularly happens, there exist chances for teacher educators to spend considerable amounts of time on that before the class properly starts. To avoid that, teacher educators like Dr Paul simply ask students to write their names on a blank sheet circulated throughout the session.

> *If you have around 90 students and you want to check attendance, you may lose 20 to 30 minutes just doing that. So, what I do is simply give the attendance sheet. They circulate the sheet, write their names and after the class, I collect the list (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).*

Dr Paul's strategy is to avoid wasting twenty to thirty minutes, which is a lot out of a 2-hour session. The purpose of this control is to ensure students are attending classes. Attendance is regarded as a sign of student engagement; it is generally used by certain teacher educators to make decisions on students' eligibility to sit for final examinations. As such, attending class regularly is a sign of the student's commitment and discipline to acquire knowledge. However, the way Dr Paul does it might not yield a reliable attendance list. Data have shown that, in some classes, students tend to write the names of their friends, and teacher educators do not have the possibility to control that.

> *Some make attendance sheet, but even the attendance you cannot know who is registered. Because I can take it and write the name of my mate who is absent. They don't have the tool to know who is really present or not (Emanuel, 05/12/2014).*

Therefore, checking attendance the way Dr Paul does may result in a list that includes present and absent students. This is caused by teacher educators' inability to know every student registered to the course. This is made more difficult, in most of cases, by the institution's inability to provide teacher educators with the exact list or number of students registered to each course.

> *Not only for the department, but the whole faculty, and I would say the whole university. If you go now to the registrar's office, no one would give*

you the exact number of students we have here for this year (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).

As mentioned earlier, the institution does not have an automated computer system for students' registration. This process is manually conducted on papers. With this situation, administrators and teacher educators are likely to remain powerless in their commitments to control attendance and participation. Without knowing who and how many students are supposed to attend a course or be part of a programme, adequate planning of learning and teaching activities and assessment is likely to be hampered.

One of the most emphasised logistical problems of large classes, as revealed by this study, concerns the students' inability, in certain facilities, to hear clearly the teacher educator. This is due to the lack of wide range microphones in most of the classrooms.

> *You know, when the class is big, for me, it's really not all the students that can feel comfortable; because there are no sound equipment that can allow all the students to hear (Emanuel, 05/12/2014).*

> *Last year, for this same level of tronc commun, we had a microphone. Unfortunately, this year only one lecture theatre has a microphone. So the two other lecture theatres don't have. So, with this, we cannot work as we want, because the voice cannot go far (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).*

I have experienced this situation in one of the classes I observed by sitting at a far back position of the facility in order to be less noticed by students but also have a better view of the class. Unfortunately, I was disappointed by the difficulty of hearing well the voice of the teacher educator. This experience has helped me to understand the reason why students have to go early to book a front place or stay in a strategic position waiting for an ongoing class to finish. It is generally a real spectacle when a class is ending and another one is about to start in the same facility. Conditions like these are likely to negatively affect the motivation of certain students to attend classes.

Additional to the above, the current study has also captured some views of large classes linked to classroom management. First, large class size prevents teacher educators from arranging students as they wish. This gives more autonomy to students to sit with people of their preference. This is the case of female students as observed in certain classes. In those classes, female students tend to segregate themselves in one area of the lecture facility. As per my personal experience, this was a less frequent phenomenon

few decades ago. Even though it may relate to local cultural practices, the phenomenon was observable more in large classes than small ones.

> *10 years ago, there was no problem of seeing this mixture between males and females. But these days, the tendency is observable (Emanuel, 05/12/2014).*

> *Most of the females, because they are married, they prefer to sit with other females (John, 03/12/2014).*

As such, the larger the class is, the more uncomfortable female students are to mix with male students. Large classes, therefore, enable social relations and other cultural factors to emerge and possibly affect students' engagement. It may give birth to a diversity of representations, which might be challenging to teacher educators' actions and responsibilities. Those representations may give way to chatting groups, which, in turn, can cause disturbances to the class.

> *If you have observed me teaching the first year's tronc commun, there, you would have seen how things are done. There, maybe it's because they are first year students, they still have the behaviour of pupils from senior high schools. The class is a little bit noisy. You have to tell them every time "please, quiet." (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).*

> *Even if you want to concentrate, you can see others discussing, joking or playing with their handsets. But, if it's a small number, even the teacher can control the class easily (John, 03/12/2014).*

According to the above account, this occurs more at the undergraduate levels where teacher educators like Dr Kader deal with more than 500 students. In such condition, asking students to keep quiet is probably the only measure the teacher educator can take since he/she may not be able to identify all those causing the trouble. There is also the case of some students, as I witnessed in certain classes, who give themselves the freedom to play with their cell phones, sleep, or leave the class before time. While these may be interpreted as signs of disengagement caused by the observed mode of teaching, their occurrence would have been easily noticed and appropriately coped with by the teacher educator if the size of the classes was smaller.

As the data in this research show, large classes also impose obstacles to certain pedagogical innovations, such as the use of group work. With more than a hundred of students, teacher educators have difficulties to adequately plan or implement classroom activities that use groups in class to enhance students' communicative competence.

It's not that they don't like to use that technique. It is not easy for them to do that in this environment. Take for example the class of Master 2, there are almost seventy students. There are a lot of students. And this is one of the big problems they have (Jacks, 15/01/2015).

You know that now teaching is student-centred. Now, in our classrooms, in our school systems, we have huge classrooms. As you know, it's over 60 students, average. It's difficult to have students who work in groups or in pairs. Sometimes even the sitting arrangements will not allow that. So, with all this, it's not easy to put into practice our ideas (Dr Sam, 04/02/2015).

These assertions confirm the difficulties I observed in Dr Kadidja's class when she attempted to use pair-groups. Due to the size of the class, the teacher educator was powerless to check how well the pairs were carrying out their tasks. I once noticed her going round the class, but that did not last due to the fixed seating arrangement of the facility. Seats in the lecture theatre do not allow easy movement from one spot to another. Students were seated in a way that does not allow the teacher educator to identify who was working with who. Looking at that instance, one would hardly believe that group work activities were taking place. In fact, seating arrangement in most of the facilities at Sahel University is the same. Tables and chairs are fixed facing the blackboard in a way that does not allow the use of interaction among students. This is additional evidence in support of the dominant learning culture and approach mentioned earlier.

From the insights presented in this section, large class size is a non-negligible phenomenon. Even though it does not constitute a major concern to most of the stakeholders, there is need to consider the logistical and classroom management issues evoked by certain participants. Devising pedagogically relevant initiatives is needed to cope with these issues of disengagement in a context where students occasionally vacate classes due to policy gap and unfavourable conditions of studies.

8.6. "In a course we need two types of person: a lecturer and a student"

This section presents insights about the observed phenomenon of absence, which is recurrent in the context of the current study. Through my observations of some classroom sessions, I was able to notice the extent to which students physically attend classes. This discovery was reinforced and confirmed by interviews I conducted with some teacher educators and students. In large classes like those of Dr Kader and Dr

Kadidja, insights about absence were obtained from interviewed participants. This was different in Dr Paul's class where the estimated number of students was seventy. It was in this class that I first noticed students being absent. Due to the possibility to count the number of students attending the class, I was able to make comparisons from one specific time to another or from one session to another.

Examining the phenomenon of absence, the current study has found this to be a symptom of some institutional and social issues students and teacher educators experience on a daily basis. It has been understood that some students go to class late or simply do not go because of some policy gap. Others do so because the conditions in which they study are not favourable. The conditions of study here include the lack of logistical and financial means to go to school and handle the day-to-day study expenses.

8.6.1. Absence due to Policy

As stated in the previous chapter, the EFL programme is part of an institution, which has recently implemented the LMD system. According to the policy adopted under this system, attendance is mandatory only to workshops, tutorials and practical works. For lectures, students are free to attend or not.

> *For courses we call lectures, students might miss class. It's not a problem. But other courses like English Phonetics, those are mandatory. The words we use are TD, TP – travaux dirigés, travaux pratiques. If you miss classes more than three times, you cannot even pass. But for other courses like mine, which is not a TD, it's not a TP, students are not penalised. They [teachers] cannot tell them [students], "Because you haven't been coming, you cannot take the exam." (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).*

This shows clearly that absence in certain classes is tolerated by policy and not in others. As long as it is a lecture, teacher educators may not be permitted to take disciplinary measures against students who do not attend their classes. This situation provides some students with the opportunity to take jobs and for jobholders to register to courses they may not physically attend. As exemplified in previous chapters, many of the students are what people in that context call 'professionals', a category made of in-service teachers or holders of other types of job. Based on collected insights, many of the professionals go to school only when they have free time or permissions from their employers. Joseph, for example, is an Air Traffic Controller, and his timetable does not always match with his course schedule. His chance to attend classes depends much on a night shift schedule or the good relation he maintains with his colleagues.

I don't have a regular time of work. I work as a shift. I have to be there in the morning, then the next day in the afternoon or in the night. So what I do, if I work in the night, the next morning, despite of my tiredness, I try to be here on time and take the course. And also, sometimes I have to ask my colleagues. They used to help me. If I really have an important course and that I should attend, I just explain to one of them. I say, "Please take my place this time, because I have this course to do. And next time, I take your shift." This is how I manage (Joseph, 06/01/2015).

Therefore, in case Joseph works during the day and cannot have a colleague with whom to swap his schedule, he may not have the possibility to attend his class. However, Joseph may not have to worry in case the missed class is a lecture. This situation also applies to many in-service teachers who have to commute from the town where they teach to the city where they attend classes.

Many are not teaching in Niamey. They go to some villages around. Maybe for coming and going, the time is not suitable (Roukaya, 16/01/2015).

Because it takes time to travel from one city to the other and for the fact that their teaching and learning schedules do not sometimes match, many of the in-service teachers opt to miss their classes. This is made easier for them by the policy since the majority of classes at the EFL programme are delivered through lectures.

While absence in the above cases is justified by professional commitment, there exist cases of regular students who take advantage of the policy gap in order to have double registrations or do some lucrative business in town. Jacks is in this category of students. He does business and takes Management and Computer courses in a local professional school.

This year, because I don't want to mix the two Masters…Master 2 here and there also…I want to do something in Master 1 again. I didn't start yet, but I want to do Business Management. The first one, Computer Science, it was a course of 'Licence' (Jacks, 15/01/2015).

Many of the students are registered in other institutes taking professional courses to either become computer specialists or administrators and bank managers (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).

While this practice overtly places the acquisition of linguistic proficiency as the main reason to some students' registration to the programme, their attendance to classes is likely to be undermined by their external courses. Since attendance to certain courses is

not mandatory, students who do not plan to become teachers may also be tempted to register to other programmes of their interest.

However, the above insights are in contradiction with other findings suggesting that students are not aware of the policy on absence. As revealed by the data, some students have different understandings or attitudes in relation to the programme policy. In the eyes of some participants, there exists no formal policy.

> *Every teacher has his/her own policy, but there is a basis among them. There are some principles which are common to everyone. We know that "do not come late or be absent" is policy; "do not let your phone ring" is also policy. "If you are absent, you have to justify." This is also policy. We know that "three absences without justifications mean not attending final exam." .... This is something we hear, but it's not all the teacher educators that are so strict on that. I cannot certify there is a written and commonly accepted policy, but what we hear from our teachers is what we consider to be policy (Emanuel, 05/12/2014).*

From this statement, one can infer that students are not familiar with the formal policy highlighted earlier by Dr Kadidja. Emanuel's lack of knowledge about the policy established by the LMD system is the reason why he believes every teacher educator has his/her own policy. It is also the same reason that pushes this participant to generalise the rules that are applicable to workshops or practical works only. In other cases, the lack of knowledge about the absence policy leads students to believe that the school administration lacks the will to apply the rules.

> *John: There is a policy but they don't apply it.*
>
> *Researcher: Have you ever seen it?*
>
> *John: No, I haven't!*

It can be understood from this that the institutional policy on absence is unknown to some members of the programme. This gives room to various speculations.

On the contrary, some teacher educators know about the policy, and many among them are not happy with some of its aspects.

> *In a course we need two types of person: a lecturer and a student. If the student is not obliged to come, the lecturer alone, can he/she come and make his/her course? No! (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).*

This reveals Dr Kader's attitude towards that policy, which poses problems of absence to his classes. This kind of reaction may translate the attitude of other teacher educators who generally choose to formulate their own policies, verbally communicated in class or clearly written in the syllabus shared with students. The personal policy mostly used by teacher educators is characterised by a frequent use of summative assessments. This, as Dr Kadidja indicated, is generally formulated in the teacher educator's syllabus. In her own syllabus (see Appendix F), she has clearly stipulated that each story discussed in class will be followed by a quiz. As such students may have the obligation to attend classes in order not to get a "zero" grade. The impact of such personal policy was observed in Dr Paul's class the first day data were recorded from his session. That day, my attention was drawn by the sudden increase of the student number – it almost doubled, from 30 or 32 to more than 50 students. Even though attendance reinforcement was not Dr Paul's primary objective, the reading quiz he started implementing that day was the major factor to explain the considerable presence of almost all the students registered to that class.

The most radical personal policy revealed by this study is probably the one used by a teacher educator who makes attendance to her class mandatory. Even though I did not get the opportunity to observe one of her classes, there seems to be a maximum compliance to her requirements.

> *In our classes, it's compulsory. You are obliged to follow the course for the two subjects. We have one teacher, for her you are obliged to come. She cannot accept this kind of absences (Salim, 03/02/2015).*

It has been further recorded from the above participant that the classes he attends are made of twelve students, and the teacher educator takes time to check who is present and who is not. So, the application of the requirement is made easier by the small size of the class. In that particular instance, the teacher educator does not use quizzes or any form of summative assessment. She simply gives a zero to any absentee.

> *You will be punished! I mean, she can give you zero if you are absent (Salim, 03/02/2015).*

Following from the insights in this subsection, absence creates imbalance among courses of the EFL programme due to policy problems. While this phenomenon is

partly caused by the lack of a consistent and well-communicated policy, its occurrence constitutes a threat to the quality of teaching and learning.

8.6.2. Absence due to Difficult Conditions of Study

Apart from the policy reasons highlighted in the previous subsection, there exist other factors that lead students to be late or absent. In certain circumstances, the latter is caused by unfavourable conditions of study. Those conditions are logistical and financial. The most apparent of them are the logistical conditions. These have been largely signalled by Dr Kader's class, which generally takes place early morning every Monday and Tuesday. In that class, the session generally starts with a 30-minutes delay. The teacher educator has made it almost a habit to wait for students who may keep coming even after the class has already started. During the first observed session, for example, students were noticed coming late over more than one hour. As Dr Kader explained, this is more frequent to early morning classes due to the transportation system, which is deficient.

> *Many of the students live in town. So, the different cars, the different buses that transport students are not sufficient. The buses are overfull when they come (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).*

> *The buses are not coming on time, mainly in the morning. Even if the teacher comes, he/she is obliged to wait for students coming. The main reason is the buses (Alou, 04/12/2014).*

The university is far from the most populated area of the city. Only a small number of students are housed on the main campus, and the large majority of those living off-campus rely on university buses, which on the contrary are insufficient. In order to transport all the students to school every morning, buses have to travel twice. In most of cases, missing the early buses is equivalent to going to school late or being absent.

The above-mentioned insufficiency of buses had been temporarily worsened by an external situation. At the time of this research, there were changes made to the traffic system around the campus area; access to the main route that leads to the university was restricted due to some construction work. This had made traffic jams frequent around that area, and opting for the alternative route seemed to increase the driving time. Seemingly, this is what the university buses were doing.

Apart from the transportation problem, the current study has also revealed other logistical conditions, which are likely to dishearten students from attending classes. Based on the classroom observations I conducted, most of the facilities allocated to the EFL programme were found inadequate.

> *It was 8:00 am on November 17th; I arrived to the room where the class regularly takes place. This was the second time I recorded data from that class. The room was already full of students, and there was no free chair or table available. That time I was not lucky! I had to go out – to other places within the faculty – to look for a chair. I went to the room next door, but still no chair. I then went to a spot where students usually meet to do some out-of-class group works. There, I found one, which wasn't yet taken by other students looking for seats. My problem was solved but only partly: there was still no table on which I could lean to write comfortably. Throughout the whole session, my observation notes were recorded using my thighs in place of a table (Field notes, 17/11/2014).*

The above record is an illustration of the logistical problems students deal with in certain classes. Due to the large number of students, rooms happen to be very small. Room B, where Dr Kader teaches, for example, is a large room but which cannot accommodate all the students registered to the course. Tables and chairs are always insufficient. To have a table and a chair, one has to be there very early, and this is something that may not happen if one has to rely on the university transportation.

The insufficiency of large facilities – added to the problem of buses – is the reason behind the attempt made by Dr Kader to reschedule his class to Saturdays afternoon. His class is more than 200 students, and only half of them attend the session due to the lack of space. He was hoping to find a lecture theatre that might be available only on Saturdays. In fact, the mother institution has three lecture theatres, but each of them does not provide more than 500 seats. Furthermore, those theatres are all in high demand because of *tronc commun* classes.

Tronc commun, as explained in previous chapters (see 6.3., p. 111), is a first year scheme, which involves more than a thousand students to attend the same courses. In such enterprise, the problem of facilities is more serious.

> *We have a problem of rooms, a problem of chairs. I noticed the number of students increases every year. We have more than 3000 students this year in the first level. We don't have any room that can contain 3000 students. Even for 1000, we don't have. The largest room we have can contain only 500 students (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).*

With this situation, students are likely to be fighting for seats. Considering these insights, the difficulty is caused by the tendency of the institution to welcome large numbers of students while the majority of facilities destined to host them are very small.

> *Most of the classrooms were built to hold between 50 to 60 students maximum. And when you have between 80 to 90 students in a classroom designed to contain 50 to 60 students…you see the problem? And this is the case in all my classes, except the one you have been observing (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).*

This situation might have originated from the facts that most of the rooms were built at the time the university was created, and that no major investment was made to enlarge those facilities or build many others to meet the new demands. In this situation, when spaces are not available for students to attend a class, the alternative is to be absent and catch up later with friends. Catching up here means copying the class notes made by other students.

There are also reasons linked to the socio-economic conditions of students. The majority of students in that context originate from poor families; they do not afford the means to cope with expenses required for higher education. In order to manage their academic expenses, some students opt for absence in order to make money in the city.

> *You have to go somewhere to search for something. You know, after the courses here, generally teachers give us documents to photocopy. If you have no money, you are obliged to go and see other ways to make money (Alou, 04/12/2014).*

> *When one has not eaten or is in need, one is obliged to go and seek the money that is necessary to eat instead of coming to school. That is the case of most of our comrades (Oro, 16/01/2015).*

In the case highlighted above by Oro, the reasons for being absent also encompass the urge for survival. For him, it is a "clash between the need and the class." Oro's statement is, not only justifying the case of jobholders presented earlier; he is also raising the situation of the Special A students. Students in this category, as mentioned earlier, are former primary school teachers. Most of them have been suspended by the educational administration of the country upon admission to the Special A test. They no longer receive salaries, and this puts them in a situation of high need. This kind of situation is likely to negatively influence their learning.

8.7. "We are good with writing but no practical oral"

Based on findings presented in previous chapters, which support the claim that the EFL programme is run through a transmission model, this research has extended the insights by examining the extent to which students put the acquired knowledge of the language into practice. This was mainly motivated by my interest to understand how students' use of English reflects compliance with the methodological mandate. The context of this research being an EFL programme which advocates CLT as the most appropriate method for EFL teaching, I have developed expectations to see students practising their English inside and outside classrooms. However, data have shown that students rarely use English outside classrooms for communication purposes.

> *It's difficult to see students from English Department speaking English all the time. They most of time prefer to speak French or Hausa or Zarma (Emanuel, 05/12/2014).*

This could mean either most of the students are less proficient in English, or they are lacking the will or support to do so. While this research was not intended to unearth the level of students' language proficiency, much from the data that prevent students' use of English relate to some socio-psychological factors. In most of the cases, students feel uncomfortable to speak English and tend to resort to French or any other local language. The discomfort is caused by their fear to commit errors.

> *Any time you try to speak English with a student, they have this attitude of shying away or not speaking because he/she feels he/she is going to make mistakes or something like that (Minas, 14/01/2015).*

This occurs generally when the conversation takes place between a lower and higher level student. Minas is not only a Master student; she is also a graduate from an Anglophone country. As such, her fluency in English may be of challenge to other students, mainly those at Bachelor's level. This situation was confirmed by Aisha whose attitude consists in avoiding the English Club – a student organisation – for fear of having to speak English with Master's level students.

> *I am afraid to go and… Sometimes, when we go there, we just find the students who are in the Master's level and we… we are just in the first or second year. You see, it's not very easy for us to speak very well like them. Personally that is my reason (Aisha, 08/01/2015).*

Therefore, students at lower level are likely to believe their proficiency to speak English is lower than that of students who are in a higher level. Based on a socio-cultural perspective, this belief can be interpreted as a barrier to scaffolding between higher and lower level students. This may be exacerbated by negative reactions from other students. According to the data, the reluctance of certain students to communicate in English is sometimes caused by the mockery of their friends. There is also the tendency from certain students within the context of this study to see efforts of speaking English as an act of showing off.

> *Many of them don't use the language. The few students who use the language they find themselves among students who are laughing at them because they are making mistakes or because they are struggling to find words (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).*

> *Even if you try to do that, some of our friends will see you as someone who is showing off (John, 03/12/2014).*

These are indicative of social factors that are likely to dishearten students in their attempt to practise the foreign language they are learning to teach. Beyond the scope of these barriers, other reasons may be linked to the lack of opportunity and the type of pedagogical practices that shape students' prior experiences. Lack of opportunity concerns the nature of the context in which English is a foreign language. In the past, the programme used to send students to some Southern Nigerian and British universities to spend a year or so, but this was ended in the very beginning of the 21st century.

> *Before, our government used to send people to English speaking countries, but nowadays it's not the case. We stay only here in Niger (Alou, 04/12/2014).*

As such, students used to have an opportunity for developing their communicative proficiencies from an English-speaking environment. To fill the gap created by this situation – lack of language immersion – attempts are made by the English Club to offer extracurricular activities (Al-Mahrooqi and Tuzlukova, 2014) to students for improving their proficiency.

> *In the programme, we have debates; we also have discussions. We have local and international excursions. For the local excursion, it's just to have a sit-in in Niamey or around Niamey, just to have some debates and discussions. We have also been organising debates and discussions, but the problem is that people are not attending (Sheik, 14/01/2015).*

This suggests the existence of initiatives and opportunities for interacting and communicating in English. The issue comes from students who do not show interest to attend. Many prefer to attend classes and leave immediately. In one of Dr Kader's classes, I witnessed an instance where a student entered the classroom and invited students to an event for speaking practice. Unfortunately, the student did not receive much attention from the class. This constitutes supporting evidence that attempts to create a speaking environment are made, but students lack the will to benefit from them. According to Joseph, this is a consequence of the diversity of students and goals within the programme (see 6.2., p. 102).

> *We don't have a kind of common goal; some are professionals, and others only come to school to attend class and go home. So, it's difficult to get them around one objective, which is the English proficiency (Joseph, 06/01/2015).*

Therefore, the difficulty is bound to the fact that many of the students are jobholders. Most of them cannot afford to spend time for extracurricular activities. In order to change this situation, Emanuel suggested the integration of such activities to mandatory courses.

> *We are learning English literature, African drama and everything like that….Shakespeare… So, these are plays we are learning, but for me it will be better if the programme has the means to take these kinds of course and to see how to make them practical in order to perform them. It can be a part of a course. Maybe it's free now for everyone to decide to be in a club, but if it's something compulsory for students… (Emanuel, 05/12/2014).*

This provides an alternative way through which some courses could be changed to comply with the criteria for workshops, practical works and tutorials. This is a legitimate suggestion, but which is likely to be unrealistic. Knowing that classes in that context are generally large, Emanuel's suggestion may not work without increasing the overload of teacher educators. Besides, data in this research have revealed that students' reluctance to speak English for fear to commit mistakes also occurs in class.

> *Most of them prefer not to talk. They prefer just to come and sit in class and then when it's the time for the quiz, to write their quiz and give it to you (Kadidja, 29/12/2014).*

Thus, students' verbal participation in class is also rare. They go to class only to make use of their passive skills – listening, taking notes and answering test questions. While this may support earlier claims that most of students go to school just to obtain a degree

– regardless of achieving excellence or gaining required communicative competence for teaching – much of this attitude is a signal of the dominant learning culture in which most of the students expect to receive rather than produce.

Nonetheless, it is arguable that students' reluctance to speak English inside or outside classrooms originates from the kind of pedagogical practices they have experienced at secondary school levels. In other words, students' reluctance to communicate in English may be related to the types of teaching method their EFL teachers were using. CLT is the most preferred method in Niger, but until teachers teach what is preached by embedding communicative practices in their classrooms, learners may not be willing to use the language for communicative purposes. Dr Sam agrees with this assumption.

> *English as a Foreign Language, the only place where students can practise or have the opportunity to use the language is in class. So, give them this maximum opportunity to practise (Dr Sam, 04/02/2015).*

The problem is therefore likely to come from the fact that students, in their educational journey, did not get the opportunities to practise their English in class. All the above problems about practising the language student teachers are expected to teach highlight one of the aspects of socialisation in which learner engagement is lacking. Most of them agree with previous findings that learning, at the EFL programme, is perceived as a process of knowledge accumulation. In such conditions, some language skills, such as speaking and listening comprehension, may not be of major interest.

8.8. Conclusion

This chapter has presented findings about some contextual factors which are recurrent within the EFL programme and which somehow constitute impediments to teaching and learning. First, it has been indicated that the programme lacks enough teacher educators, mainly for courses in areas of linguistics. This has been interpreted as one of the main reasons behind teacher educators' overload and the observed student population imbalance between literature and linguistics sections. Reasons behind the lack of teacher educators have also been expressed but in relation to the financial limitations of the institution and the lack of a strategic human resources planning.

Second, academic resources are also lacking within the context of this study. This chapter has revealed some constraints students have in getting the required and relevant reading materials. Those constraints include the inadequacy of the library, students'

financial limitations and the lack of access to academic and professional resources online or from local bookstores. These constraints reinforce students' expectations to always receive materials from the teacher educator.

Third, issues of large class size have also been presented in this chapter as a reflection of the dominant contextual learning lecture. While fewer concerns emerged from participants' perspectives, most of the constraints expressed are logistical. Additional to these, the chapter has provided insights on student absence and reluctance to reading and speaking English for communication purposes. While most of the reasons to these behaviours point to the dominant learning culture and other socio-economic problems mentioned above, there are gaps that are rather created by the institutional policy. This has been expressed mainly in relation to the regulations, which do not make requirements for students to attend courses known as CMs (lectures). Overall, the identified factors are interrelated. This interrelation and the link between these factors and practices presented in previous chapters need to be further discussed in order to clarify the research findings and assess their pedagogical implications. This is the main purpose of the next chapter.

Key Factors and their Effects on EFL Teacher Learning

9.1. Introduction

In the previous chapters, findings have been presented in response to the following research questions:

1. *What is the predominant approach (principles and values) within programmes that prepare teachers of English as a foreign language? What are the practices that are indicative of this approach?*

2. *What are the procedures for reviewing and assessing EFL programmes? How frequent are reviews undertaken? How are they conducted? How are the resulting changes evaluated?*

3. *What are the opportunities for teacher educators' development? What provisions does the institution make to facilitate teacher educators' professional growth?*

4. *What are the contextual factors that affect teaching and learning within EFL programmes?*

The current chapter draw on those findings to provide answers to the overarching research question, which aims to identify ***the factors that affect the effectiveness of EFL initial teacher preparation in Niger***. To achieve this aim, insights are offered around three major themes. First, the influence of globalisation has been situated through some factors affecting decisions made by educational stakeholders at the EFL programme. Second, low student engagement is presented through multiple factors which are believed to negatively affect student teachers' learning and professional socialisation. Third, the provision of CPD and career growth opportunities to teacher educators is reported as a non-negligible factor shaping the effectiveness of initial teacher preparation. These factors are not exclusive but interrelated in many ways. As illustrated in *figure 6*, these factors interact with each other in many ways. While global factors, such as borrowing, labour market demands and top-down practices, influence

decisions made by stakeholders in terms of governance, choice of programme and course offer, other social and institutional factors also seem to shape each other and consequently affect teacher learning. For example, passive course delivery strategies used by educators are linked to students' ways of learning and also their reluctance to read or speak English. These elements could have been catered for adequately and innovatively if the institutional policy emphasised teacher development more than career progression. These policies are in turn linked to aspects of borrowing and top-down procedures in reform initiatives, which pertain to global factors. More interrelations explaining the figure below are discussed further in this chapter.
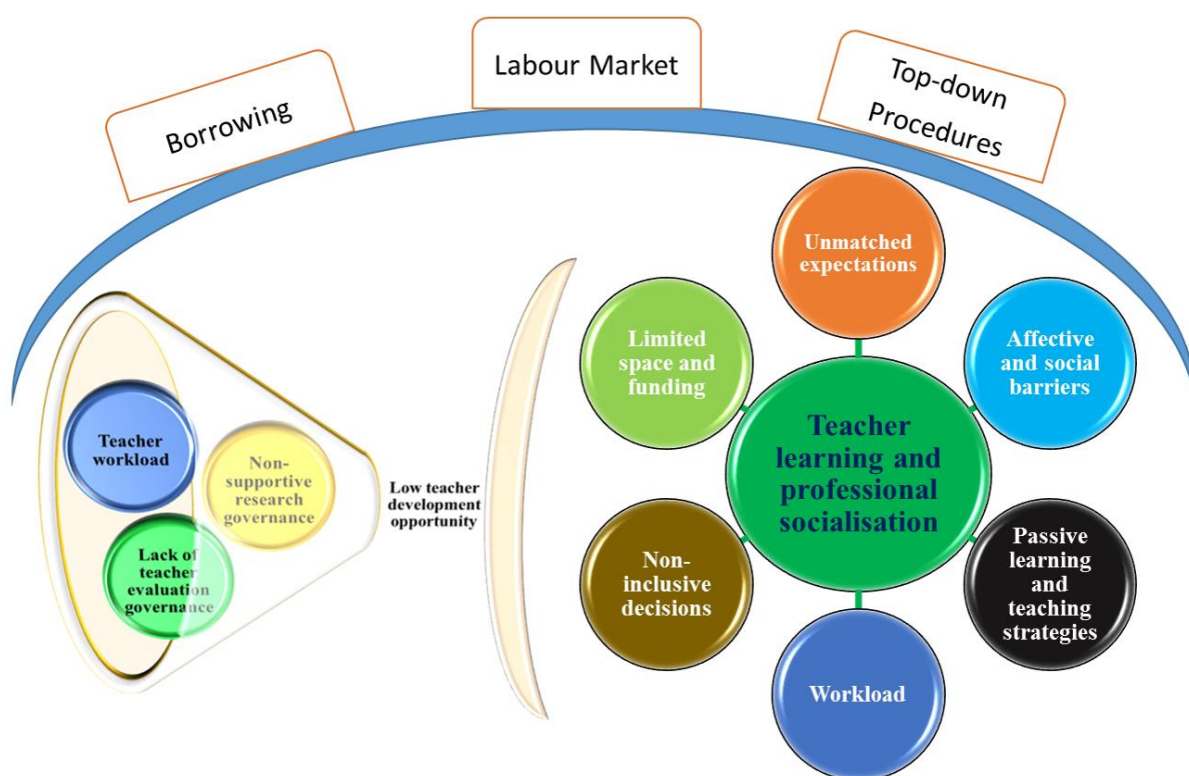
Figure 6: Factors affecting teacher learning and professional socialisation

9.2. Global Factors

Based on findings in this research, global factors are shown to exert influence on how the initial EFL Teacher education programme operates. The LMD system was five to six years old when the current research was conducted, but data have revealed the related changes to be recurrent. While the LMD system itself is a global phenomenon (Woldegiorgis et al., 2015), some of its review actions involve the practice of borrowing. Beyond this scope, some findings have revealed factors attributable to the English language due to its status as an international language (McKay, 2002). These

global factors, though different in some regards, exert some pressure on the EFL teacher education system in Niger and consequently affect negatively the effectiveness of initial EFL teacher preparation.

9.2.1. Educational Borrowing

Educational borrowing or transfer in the context of Sahel University's EFL programme has been identified through the LMD system and the use of courses designed in other countries. The implementation of the LMD system in that context follows a framework supported by the French Technical Cooperation through guidelines developed by the *Réseau pour l'Excellence de l'Enseignement Supérieur en Afrique de l'Ouest* (REESAO – network for excellence in higher education in West Africa). Based on this, new practices have been established in order to allow mobility from one country to another. That is, students registered at the Sahel University EFL programme can transfer to a university in Mali, Senegal or Togo. One of the established practices consists in regularly reviewing courses to ensure they reflect the regional offer. This is the reason why the EFL programme tends to rely on the types of courses universities in other West African countries offer. As such, the used curriculum within that context does not reflect the aspirations of the stakeholders but remains a customisation, which, over time, might prove problematic.

Considering the REESAO guidelines, the objective of the borrowed LMD practices is to prepare students in accordance with the nature of jobs offered by the West African market. This presupposes the presence of predefined job requirements and standards according to which EFL teachers should be prepared. However, findings from the current study do not confirm such situation for the case of Sahel University's EFL programme where students with differing career goals attend the same courses. There does not exist in that programme a clear commitment to certain professional standards or mandated guidelines for preparing EFL teachers(Vodopija-Krstanoviæ and Brala-Vukanoviæ, 2012). This might be explained by the fact that the LMD system is still new and more development are underway. For example, during the fieldwork, I did not come across any teacher evaluation standards but have learned that decisions on such matters are being taken by the REESAO.

Despite the lack of standards, the above situations are indicative of the fact that the LMD system in the EFL programme follows a top-down process. Guidelines are

generally produced by REESAO, and the programme is expected to implement them with a very limited scope of customisation. The programme is therefore constrained to embrace changes without assessing their value and appropriateness to the context. Based on findings from this research, most of the recommended LMD practices appeal to interactive modes of teaching but which are very unfamiliar to that context. Those practices constitute an act of borrowing, which requires the replacement of old practices by new modes of course delivery, such as workshops, seminars and tutorials (Eta, 2015). They are therefore based on beliefs that the perspectives and practices in that context are outdated and need to be replaced (Thanh, 2011).

Taking into account the above nature of educational borrowing, the main purpose of LMD reforms has been to replace the transmission model, which seems to have framed initial teacher education in that context for a long time. Even though the modes of delivery suggested by the LMD system seem to be relevant to the theoretical perspectives underpinning this research, it should be admitted that their application in the context of the studied EFL programme is problematic. Some signs of resistance to these changes (Liu and Fisher, 2010; Yu, 2001) have been captured as part of the data and discussed later in this chapter in relation with students' engagement. These signs include, but not limited to, students' reluctance to reading and speaking English and the continuous use of lecturing and testing as modes of delivery and assessment. In fact, the expressed resistance to the LMD system may be regarded as an important aspect of this research, which provides insights on reactions that might have occurred with the implementation of action research, which was a key component of the initial plan to this research. Most of the factors highlighted in the current discussions are sufficiently rooted to hinder the use of action research within the EFL programme. The next section provides ideas on some of those factors engendered by the status of English as an international language.

9.2.2. Labour Market Pressure

Findings in this research have also revealed the extent to which the English language is shaping decisions within the EFL programme. Because of this language, the programme attracts students whose number grows every year. Behind this phenomenon lies a diversity of goals shaped by requirements of the labour market. In Niger, there exists a high demand of EFL teachers caused by actions targeting the achievement of EFA

goals. The consequences of those actions remain the progressive creation of secondary schools and the growing need to recruit more secondary school teachers every year.

As far as EFL teachers are concerned, the high demand in the Nigerien context is reinforced by the practice that places English on top of any other foreign language. Spanish and Arabic are also foreign languages taught in that context, but they are not emphasised on the same ground with the English language. In fact, English classes are mandatory – and taught in both junior and senior secondary schools – while the other foreign languages are optional and taught in senior secondary classes only. This situation is creating job opportunities for participants, such as Alou and Haoua, who hold dear the goal to become EFL teachers.

The existence of job opportunities has been evidenced by this research through the multiple categories of students attending the EFL programme. Beyond the traditional category of student teachers, the programme also welcomes in-service teachers who are either *Special A* or secondary school teachers. Of these categories, the case of *Special A* is more appealing. They are primary school teachers who decided to quit teaching from that level in order to become EFL teachers. English is seen by many as a necessary factor for living a better life and combating unemployment. This confirms the arguments developed around the internationality of English (Kubota, 2002; McKay and Bokhorst-Heng, 2008; Warschauer, 2000) and the needs it creates in many contexts (Gray, 2002) or the opportunities it offers to NS and NNS teachers of English around the world (Canagarajah, 2002; Deyrich and Stunnel, 2014; Kumaravadivelu, 2003b; Richards, 2008).

Other aspects revealed by the study about the internationality of the English language include the growing phenomenon by which English remains one of the skills required by employers. Due to global phenomena, foreign institutions are opening offices within the country, and many of them tend to use English as their organisational medium of communication (Swift and Wallace, 2011). There are also other regionally shared organisations where English is required for communication with English speaking partners. Beyond these remains the latent need of the country to prepare bilingual speakers of French and English so that they could take the available jobs of translation and interpretation within some diplomatic institutions, such as those under the ministry of foreign affairs. These needs justify the presence of students, within the programme,

who do not wish to become EFL teachers. Many of these are jobholders from private and public institutions while others are regular students planning to become translators or diplomats.

Following from the above needs, the EFL programme lacks options save to accommodate large numbers of students with diverging goals and expectations. Those students, as findings have suggested, are not differentiated based on their career goals or previous teaching experiences. They all undergo the same curricula. This is likely to result in poor professional socialisation for student teachers or negatively restrict their engagement with learning.

9.3. Factors of Student Engagement and Professional Socialisation

Findings in the current research have situated students' engagement and professional socialisation as the most important aspects of initial teacher preparation negatively affected by several factors. During the conduct of this research, I was able to observe and learn from participants about certain behaviours, which are consequences of many psychological, pedagogical, institutional and socio-economic factors uncovered by the study. These behaviours have included students' non-attendance at classes and their reluctance to read teaching materials or practise the language they are planning to teach. Undoubtedly, these factors hinder students' learning while the institution is in the midst of applying new ways of teaching and assessment.

9.3.1. Psychological Factors

The psychological factors revealed by this research are of two types. First, some students' behaviours constitute a resistance emanating from their learning culture. The LMD system has established new practices within the EFL programme, and these require students' interaction and active classroom participation. The new system requires teachers to use more workshops, seminars and tutorials instead of lecturing. In classes where these teaching strategies are in use, teacher educators tend to provide students with reading packets. In this, there is an expectation for students to read these materials and critically assess them before they go to class. Seemingly, this is where the challenge resides for students, probably due to their unfamiliarity with the process. There is no evidence from this research whether students have been initiated to critical reading strategies or not, but insights from the field have shown the likelihood of memorisation to be the primary strategy used by students to approach their texts.

Students' reluctance to reading, as revealed by this study, might be a consequence of their inability to apply critical reading strategies, which generally involve reflection and taking position towards certain issues from the text. Even though in certain observed seminars some students make good sense of their readings, the session was more of a question-answer process. Furthermore, in that class, students always expect a quiz after the question-answer activity. Upon looking at the questions used for the activity, I realised they are almost the same as those used for the quizzes. In such conditions, students read for answering quiz questions instead of building a critical understanding. The question-answer activity itself can be regarded as a process of helping students to recollect and appropriately situate the correct answer for the multiple-choice test. In this situation resides an irony: quizzes are used to make students read but, unfortunately, bears more chance to turn them into passive learners, which is contrary to the expectations.

In classes where quizzes are not used, students hardly read but expect teacher educators to explain the articles so that they could take notes. This demonstrates the extent to which students' learning culture and unfamiliarity with critical reading processes stand as a barrier to their engagement with reading. Based on a personal experience, I would argue that memorisation as a learning strategy is deeply rooted in the Nigerien educational practices. From primary to tertiary levels, memorisation is heavily emphasised through testing and other forms of summative assessment. It is also grounded in many cultural and religious practices. Before the advent of the colonial school, there existed – and continue to exist – Koranic schools where the process is but a continuous memorisation of verses in Arabic language until the disciple has reached the ability to mentally recite the complete Koranic script. Critical reading or thinking is never part of such process. Upon memorising the Koran, the disciple is expected to graduate and begin another stage that consists in memorising the translation of the Arabic text he/she has already memorised. With these cultural practices entrenched in the Nigerien context, applying new strategies based on socio-constructivist perspectives are very likely to be met with latent resistance from students. There is therefore the necessity to pre-establish a mechanism that will help students learn about the strategies before applying them into practice.

The second psychological factor that affects student teachers' engagement is rather affective. This has been underlined in relation with students' reluctance to practise their

English. The latter happens both inside and outside the classroom. While this can be linked to students' learning culture as discussed earlier, its occurrence is more frequent with undergraduate students. These tend to avoid speaking the language for fear to commit mistakes. This illustrates the extent to which grammatical rules remain the key criteria for assessing students' linguistic competence. In that context, as might be the case of many other EFL contexts, knowledge of linguistic rules plays an important role in defining standards of quality learning. This undervalues the role of the language as a means of communication and the importance of certain social strategies and skills that allow the occurrence of meaningful interaction. It is likely to reinforce the view of language learning as a process of memorising grammatical rules.

Following from the above, students' fear to speak English in class or outside is conditioned by their belief that their mastery of the English grammar is insufficient (Wallace, 2016). The case of Aisha, who explicitly admitted her fear to speak with Master students, illustrates well this situation. She believes she lacks mastery of the language due to her level as an undergraduate student. Yet, when this research was undertaken, she was on the verge of starting her third year after which she can immediately start teaching in a secondary school if she wishes to. It is undeniable this fear constitutes a real obstacle to student teachers' learning due to the fact it prevents them from practising the language they aim to teach. With the very limited use of English within the EFL programme, one can question the extent to which CLT can be effectively used in secondary schools. Due to their lack of communicative competence, which is central to CLT, preservice EFL teachers are likely to ground their teaching in grammar-based approaches. This situation should be regarded as a crucial element in explaining the fundamental reasons why CLT is failing in certain contexts. As discussed further in the following subsection, students' fear to speak is also due to the dominant course delivery practices, which encourage memorisation rather than the acquisition of social and communication strategies.

9.3.2. Pedagogical Factors

The pedagogical factors that negatively affect student teachers' engagement and professional socialisation, as revealed by this research, include the nature of courses offered by the programme and the way these courses are delivered. Even though efforts of the LMD system are considerably geared towards changing the ways teaching takes place within the context of Sahel University, much remains unchanged. Without

positioning LMD as an entirely positive system, discussions in this subsection of the chapter emphasise the need to look into the drawbacks of the unchanged practices in terms of content and delivery and how these limit the professional socialisation of preservice EFL teachers.

9.3.2.1. Courses and Content Matter

As revealed by the current study, the EFL programme offers a range of courses for obtaining Bachelor and Master's Degrees. It has been evidenced that more than half of the courses are focused on literature while the rest of them offer knowledge on areas of linguistics. These characteristics are attributable to the traditional approach of ELTE where linguistic and cultural knowledge is considered the most important element for teaching English (Grave, 2009). These also confirm the analysis made by Tedick (2005) indicating that most of the second language teacher education programmes tend to orientate teachers' education towards learning the language they wish to teach. As such, programmes are likely to offer many language courses as major and very few – two or three – on methodology of teaching. While Tedick's view applies to some American contexts where student teachers are expected to fulfil 27 or more credits of language courses and only one third of that on pedagogical courses, this is worse in the EFL programme of Sahel University. The number of TEFL courses in that programme is far below one third. There are only two courses out of forty-three at both Bachelor and Master's levels. As such, there is less emphasis in the curriculum on courses that provide students with the knowledge about language learning and language teaching, which are key constituents of professional knowledge identified by Richards (1998) and Kumaravadivelu (2012).

Based on the above, it is arguable that the number of courses dedicated to pedagogy is not enough for an adequate preparation of teachers for today's EFL classrooms, which are characterised by multiple challenges produced at national, intra-national and international levels. The highlighted curricular practice is likely to maintain a status quo where the notion of method will continue to prevail. In this situation again, the programme is likely to meet the needs of students, such as Emanuel, Aisha, and Joseph, seeking for linguistic competence, and not for returning students or in-service teachers like Alice, who have expressed the need to learn about innovative strategies in order to become better teachers. The programme is, therefore, likely to dishearten the category of students who aim to learn more about teaching and learning. Even though it is very

justifiable that student teachers – mainly those who were previously primary school teachers – must develop adequate linguistic competence, there is an equal need to ensure they understand the different approaches to learning and teaching and what it takes to grow in the profession. By emphasising linguistic and cultural knowledge more than professional pedagogical knowledge, student teachers are likely to behave as pure consumers. They are also likely to develop beliefs framed by traditional models of teacher education and consequently shape their future practices accordingly.

However, it is worth acknowledging the importance of certain aspects of the courses offered by the EFL programme. The latter offers a variety of courses in literature and civilisation. Literature being recognised as a special form of culture (Dyvadatham, 2014), the existence of such courses is a necessary element towards building learner cultural awareness. This might provide learners with backgrounds of contexts where English is used as either a native or a second language. In addition, due to the need for prospective EFL teachers to be able to explain some culturally driven materials to their future students, literature courses may provide a wide range of skills and backgrounds based on which intercultural competence can be developed. Beyond these aspects, the study of literature is likely to provide learners with models of ways in which language can be used to achieve certain social or personal goals. In other words, literature and civilisation courses may serve to present learners with ideological perspectives necessary for their intellectual and social growth.

However, there is no evidence from this research that those literature and civilisation courses help students, in the context of the EFL programme, to develop intercultural awareness. Some classes where question-answer processes were used have shown a certain level of interaction, but, taking into account the dominant modes of course delivery in that context, literature courses may only serve as informational packages. With the *American Civilisation* course, for example, students may be able to "explain the historical premises for the Civil War in the US and how it changed the nation" (Dyvadatham, 2014) but not be able to make comparisons between cultural facts and events from the American context to another, or make connection with their own cultural heritage and history. To ensure student teachers are developing cultural competence and awareness based on literature and civilisation courses, the use of engaging delivery strategies is necessary.

Based on a closer look at the literature and civilisation courses offered by the EFL programme, the study has revealed a relatively equal emphasis on three different contexts: African, American, and British contexts. The programme does not explicitly favour one or certain varieties of English, but the existence of courses on British and American literature and civilisation are likely to infer a strong preference on British and American English (Vodopija-Krstanoviæ and Brala-Vukanoviæ, 2012). In fact, even students seem to be attracted by these varieties, which they tend to label as 'good English'. On various occasions during my fieldwork, I have come across several students who approached me just to say that my English is very good. Some were even tempted to ask if my English is British or American. This attitude, somehow, reveals the kind of interest students hold towards the inner circle English. This interest, which might originate from their life experiences or the phonology courses where they learn how to pronounce either American or British English, is a good opportunity teacher educators of British and American literature and civilisation courses can use to boost students' engagement.

Looking also at the emphasis in the EFL programme on knowledge about language, one can identify some linguistic imbalance in terms of course provision. Considering language as a system, discourse and ideology (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; 2012), there are many aspects that are not provided by the programme. Even though course titles (see 6.3., p. 112-13) might suggest different things from what is actually taught, the curriculum does not include much about semantics and discourse analysis. Out of the nine Bachelor courses on language, three are dedicated to phonology and three others to Syntax. While two out of the three remaining courses deal with translation, this may not entirely serve the purpose of semantics, which "deals with the meaning of words, how every morpheme – a collection of phonemes arranged in a particular way – expresses a canonical meaning" (Kumaravadivelu, 2012: 24). Evidence in this research has shown the closeness of the translation course to syntax rather than meaning. In that course, emphasis is put on language structures, and class activities target the mastery of those structures by students. Furthermore, linguistic-related courses offered by the programme provide opportunities for building listening, writing and reading skill, but less is made available for speaking. This situation may undermine the actions of the programme in their attempt to promote CLT. Without courses aimed at enhancing students' communicative competence and conversation skills, the use of the language inside and

outside classroom for functional, notional and social purposes may not be possible. This can be considered as one of the key reasons for explaining the expressed students' disengagement discussed earlier in terms of affective factors.

9.3.2.2. Lack of Adequate Socialisation through Practicum

Findings in this study have suggested that the EFL programme of Sahel University is the only programme within the faculty of humanities and social sciences where TEFL courses are offered to prospective teachers. However, these courses are not enough for professionalising the programme as required by the LMD system. Not only these courses, as mentioned before, are very few, but their scope is more theoretical than practical. They engage students less in meaningful and pedagogical activities that are likely to help them conceptualise teaching and learning in an effective way. At Master's level, the unique TEFL course offered to students has a practical and a theoretical component, but these emphasise the application of the best method (Kumaravadivelu, 2003b). Besides, the theoretical component of this course ignores much about the realities of the contexts where prospective teachers are expected to teach (Graves, 2009). For example, it fails to consider the nature of classrooms in secondary schools in order to prepare teachers accordingly.

Based on a testimony I recorded from the Master's TEFL teacher educator, one of the difficulties EFL teachers have is the application of CLT in large classes, which seems to be a common situation in secondary schools in Niger. Unfortunately, this awareness does not affect the design of the TEFL course, which could raise such issues and possibly have student teachers devise strategies to be tested throughout the practical component of the course. Evidence has shown that the theoretical component involves discussions through which teachers express their experiences with teaching, but these experiences are generally approached in terms of how well they match with the CLT practices. Moreover, the programme provides a course devoted to understanding issues of teaching English in Francophone settings, but this is concerned with matters related to phonology and how the French language interferes in the process of learning English. While these constitute real opportunities for reflections on practice, more is needed to extend the process beyond discussions on best methods and issues of linguistics.

Regarding the second component of the TEFL course mentioned above, it is very short and generally consists of two elements: observation and teaching practice. These take

place over a period of two weeks. Student teachers are generally assigned into groups of four to five to observe a class from a local secondary school and then select the less experienced member to practise teaching under the supervision of the teacher educator. It can be argued from this practice that the dedicated time is not enough for student teachers to capture well the complexities of classrooms, even though some of them are experienced teachers. In certain programmes around the world (at least those I attended), classroom observation is a separate course from that of teaching methodology, and so does teaching practice. In those contexts, classroom observation offers student teachers the opportunity, over a whole semester, to acquire practical knowledge by designing protocols, collecting classroom insights, and progressively reflecting on their learning. With these in mind, the TEFL course at Sahel University EFL programme does not initiate students on how to capture real life insights from classrooms. The process does neither engage learners in collecting data and making sense of it nor initiate or require them to reflect on their lived experiences. They are rather brought to recognise and assimilate how the best method (CLT) they have learned about is put into practice. It is, therefore, a passive process in which they are exposed to 'good teaching' and expected to replicate, in their own classes, the techniques they have observed. That is the reason why classroom observations are combined with teaching practice, which is generally graded by the teacher educator.

In certain contexts, observation of teaching and teaching practice are regular components of practicum, which traditionally plays the role of providing school-based experiences to teacher learners in order to facilitate their transition from academic programmes to real life in schools (Gebhard, 2009). Practicum, therefore, is meant to be a socialisation stage for novice teachers (Farrell, 2008). It includes developing an understanding of how teaching takes place and what it requires. In line with these, the practical component included in the TEFL course at the EFL programme is not enough for the socialisation of unexperienced teachers into the realities of teaching. The practical component, as highlighted earlier, is very short. It is carried out during the first year of Master's level and does not serve the purpose of transition. Even though it may prove useful for inexperienced student teachers, it should not be limited to few observations and one teaching session. It should be planned on an extended period in order to allow more experiential learning and provide teacher-learners with the opportunities to reflect on their teaching, analyse it and learn from it. More importantly,

practicum should be connected to the fact that "Teaching is an activity situated in complex cultural, social, and political contexts" (Grave, 2009: 118). It therefore requires teacher-learners to understand and learn how to negotiate and shuttle through those contexts that are generally embedded in the school setting. With all the characteristics above about the TEFL course, one can conclude that the programme values theory more than practice.

9.3.2.3. Delivery and Assessment

Methods of course delivery within the EFL programme are part of the factors, as revealed by the study, which may cause drawbacks on student teachers' engagement and professional socialisation. Findings have shown that lecturing is still pervasive despite the emphasis made by the LMD system for the use of workshops, seminars and other interaction-based strategies. The use of lecturing within that programme, either for preparing teachers or developing proficient speakers of English, can be viewed as a pure transmission approach. With lecture modes, student teachers might behave as simple knowledge consumers and not be able to demonstrate their creativity or critical thinking. In pedagogy related classes, they may not be able to "understand, examine, and challenge their previously unexamined conceptions and beliefs about teaching" (Graves, 2009: 120). They may not also be able to expose their cognition and critically reflect on provided experiences. Even though lectures have undeniable advantages, such as providing contact with the audience through the theatrical atmosphere they create and providing a "tutor with a chance to influence her audience in ways that might not be possible even in a discussion group" (Wallace, 1991: 34-5), this mode of teaching generally fails to develop critical interactions among peers. Lectures are unlikely to sustain listeners' attention for long times. If conducted over an extended period, the audience is likely to lose attention after a certain amount of time. Lectures are also difficult to evaluate. The lack of feedback (Wallace, 1991) attached to them, due to various expectations, different previous knowledge, and different levels of ability from the audience, makes it difficult for teacher educators to measure the effect of their lectures on students. As such, lecture modes are less engaging and likely to perpetuate the notion of learning as consumption and teaching as pure transmission. Preservice EFL teachers prepared through this mode of teaching are likely to approach teaching in the same way. They are also likely to develop different understanding from that expected by the lecturer.

Arguably, the above situation is reinforced by the dominant assessment practice, which may reveal only favourable to the programme administration rather than students. As findings have revealed, the programme has increased the frequency of assessments, but these remain summative in their nature and process. The EFL programme administration has shown signs of satisfaction from that because a higher number of students are successfully passing from one level to another. While this cannot be equated to consistent and successful achievement of leaning, the programme may use such outcomes as evidence of quality. Accountability is therefore more likely to constitute the key purpose of such practice. Furthermore, evidence has shown that the use of assessment for learning within the EFL programme is very scarce. Opportunities for students to "understand the aim of the learning and how they can achieve the aim" (Pachler et al., 2014: 368) are considerably lacking. Instances of feedback exist in certain courses, but these are more informal and, in most cases, used to justify grading. As such, learners are rarely engaged in a process of discovering the weaknesses of their learning and making adjustments for reaching their learning goals.

Notwithstanding, findings in this research have revealed the use of interactive modes of teaching within the EFL programme but with a very limited scope. Group mode strategies have been noticed in certain instances, regardless of the difficulties they pose. The use of these through seminars, workshops, and cross-groups is still embryonic but constitutes a promise for advancement and improvement. These strategies may offer more opportunities than lectures in preparing EFL teachers. An extended use of these strategies by teacher educators is likely to help learners develop better repertoire of knowledge needed for teaching. The development of intercultural awareness in student teachers, for example, is likely not to happen until teacher educators move away from lecturing and adopt interactive modes of teaching that enable learners to interact and construct or reconstruct cultural inputs. As Graves (2009) has put it, ELTE programmes need to teach in ways that help teacher-learners "develop skills in becoming not only knowledge consumers and evaluators, but also knowledge generators" (p. 121).

One of the most used group mode strategies within the EFL programme is probably the one consisting of small-scale projects. This has actually been in use in that context before the advent of the LMD system. Even though their use seem to target the development of academic and heuristic skills, their management is problematic. As

findings have revealed, the level of student disengagement is very high in student-project works. There is tendency from students to join groups but never participate in doing the work. While this disengagement may be explained through institutional and socio-economic factors (see sections 9.3.3. and 9.3.4.), many of the reasons can be pedagogical. There are chances that teacher educators are not having time to assign roles to group members, initiate them to group-work strategies, and follow them up to check the extent to which they fulfil their tasks and make contribution to the assigned project.

9.3.3. Institutional Factors

Based on the findings, several institutional factors were found to be part of the causes of poor student engagement and professional socialisation. These include planning, institutional regulations, logistics and shortage of academic staff and resources. In terms of planning, findings have revealed a large number of mandatory courses scheduled for Bachelor and Master students. Including the *tronc commun* courses, EFL student teachers are required to attend thirty courses for the Bachelor's Degree and thirteen courses plus dissertation for the Master's Degree. In my view, the number of these courses is likely to overload students. Five modules every semester may leave students with little time for extracurricular and other relevant activities. This is further worsened by the requirement, for each course, to meet at least sixty hours per semester. This means, each course takes four hours every week. With five modules every semester, student teachers have to attend twenty hours of classes every week. In this situation, students are likely to lack engagement inside and outside classes due to the pressure and intensity of the modules. This may be worse for in-service teachers who have to teach and attend courses. This category of students has only two options: either to teach, attend classes and consequently get exhausted and unproductive or be occasionally absent to either their jobs or their classes. The case of Ika, which I presented as part of the findings, is very illustrative. He teaches in a secondary school and attends Master courses, which hardly give him time to prepare his lessons and work on his assignments. Being a graduate student, reading is a crucial aspect of Ika's studies, but with his job and twenty hours of classes at the EFL programme per week, his engagement is likely to be negatively affected. This situation may therefore push students to remain passive or rely on the only notes made in class – by themselves or by peers.

The current study has also revealed issues relating to the institutional governance, which in one way or another affects students' engagement. Findings have shown the existence of a regulation that gives students the free option to attend classes delivered through lectures. This has justified to a certain extent the observed absence of students in some classes. This regulation can be regarded as counter-productive, even though the purpose behind it is to reinforce the use of interactive strategies, such as workshops and seminars. Even though students ignore the existence of that regulation, the major side effect is the appeal by teacher educators to their personal regulations, which consist in using quizzes or punishing students through final exams. The effect of quizzes on students' engagement has already been discussed in the previous section. Quizzes bear the likelihood of transforming students into consumers rather than critical readers or thinkers. Another negative aspect of personal regulations is the possibility of creating fear and tensions between students and teacher educators. They may affect students' motivation when they realise those regulations are not uniformly applied from one class to another. As such, the use of personal regulations may have non-desirable effects on students' engagement and leaning.

Another aspect of governance that affects students' engagement is probably their non-involvement in the processes of making decisions. Findings have highlighted the fact that students' participation to the review process is very limited. Insights from the field have indicated that students in that context usually go on strike when unfavourable decisions on academic matters are made by the institution. I have experienced occasions during which students have stopped attending courses due to some decisions made by the institution during the review process. While most of the decisions are justified by the LMD requirements, I understood the issue to have stemmed from the fact that students' voices were not part of the review process. This demonstrates the need to regard students as change agents by placing them at the centre of the process – by collecting information from them and by involving their representatives in the review activities. This should increase their acceptance of decisions made and make them aware of the major expectations. With such dispositions, they may be able to participate fully in defining the values of the teaching they receive and possibly express ways that may help them achieve their learning goals. After all, it is their learning that matters.

Beyond the scope of governance, findings in this research have also revealed multiple forms of shortage within the EFL programme. It has been demonstrated that the

programme lacks teacher educators, mainly in the areas of linguistics and applied linguistics. This is likely to negatively affect students' professional socialisation and learning in many ways. First, the lack of teacher educators influences students' decisions for specialisation and contributes to widening the shortage. Second, this is the main reason why some teacher educators tend to teach courses they did not specialise in. While there is no intention in this research to assess teacher educators' capacity and knowledge for teaching certain courses, there is the likelihood of such practice to affect learning negatively. The non-specialisation of certain teacher educators in certain courses may lead them to avoid using suggested interactive teaching strategies, such as seminars and other practical works, and prefer the use of lecturing. This can also add to their overload by requiring them to learn more about the courses in which they did not specialise.

Another form of shortage revealed by this research is the limited access to academic resources within the context of the EFL programme. It has been underlined as a major factor that may negatively affect students' engagement and the effectiveness of their learning. This phenomenon has been expressed in terms of the institutional inability to provide students with relevant resources. The library within that institution is very small, and its resources mostly outdated. Besides, there does not exist online databases and facilities through which students can access these. As such, most of the reading materials required in certain classes are likely to be inaccessible to students. Due to the expressed expectations of students to receive these materials from the institution, this situation is likely to engender students' withdrawal behaviour and loss of interest in reading. Even when the required readings are prepared in the form of packets and provided to students for photocopy, many of them may not be able to get a copy due to their socio-economic status (see section 9.3.4.). As mentioned earlier, reading is a crucial component of higher education and initial teacher education alike. Without being able to read, students may not be able to fully engage and learn in certain classes where the reading materials are fundamental to class activities and interaction among peers.

Findings from the current research have also situated the use of large classes within the EFL programme as a common phenomenon that may reduce students' engagement and the effectiveness of their professional socialisation (Al-Jarf, 2006; Foley and Masingila, 2014; Shah and Salim, 2013). It has been evidenced that almost all the classes within the programme are large. This practice may be linked to the contextual learning culture

through which teaching is regarded as transmission and learning as reception and memorisation. Large class size is, in fact, one of the contextual realities that create obstacles to certain practices required by the LMD system (Al-Jarf, 2006; Sawyerr, 2004). Seminars and other group mode strategies require the creation of interactions among peers in order to facilitate learning, but with more than fifty students in a class, such engaging activities may not be easy to implement. The observed limitation of their use may be a sort of resistance due to the lack of a realistic customisation. Large classes are partly caused by the institutional inability to limit the number of students per class. They are also due to the attraction the English language exerts on many citizens. In order to ensure learning is effectively taking place in those classes, there is need to creatively adapt the new strategies to this constraint.

The above issue of large classes is generally made worse by the ever-recurring problems of infrastructure and transportation within the context of the EFL programme. Classes are generally large, but the rooms to accommodate them are relatively small. This puts students in a position of competition for front seats. Such situation constitutes a disengagement factor, mainly for students who do not live on campus and rely on the university buses to go to school. Findings suggest that the university buses are not enough; they also reach the campus late, most of the times. Because of this situation, some students are likely to be occasionally absent from classes. Even when they choose to attend the class, in certain circumstances, they may do it by sitting outside the room. I have witnessed situations where the room was crowded and certain students were obliged to sit outside (Sawyerr, 2004). Unfortunately, most of the facilities are not equipped with microphones. In such conditions, it may be difficult to follow the class since the teacher's voice might not be audible. This may lead students to loose motivation and, in certain cases, feel excluded from the teaching-learning process. This is generally aggravated by some socio-economic factors.

9.3.4. Social and Economic Factors

The socio-economic factors that affect the effectiveness of initial teacher preparation, as revealed by findings, are of two types. First, the context is not conducive for student teachers to practise the language outside the classroom. Attempts to communicate in English are generally undermined by the fear of provoking negative reactions. Students are afraid of being negatively perceived by peers and other community members. This is largely due to the status of English as a foreign language in that context. Even French,

which is the second and official language in Niger, is not spared by this phenomenon: not everyone uses it outside class or office for communication purposes. Based on a personal experience, speaking French in some social spaces is synonymous to being acculturated. This is what seems to apply to English language learners but in academic environments. The English programme being hosted by a faculty where French is the dominant language, attempts from EFL student teachers to speak English are seen as an act of showing off. This, therefore, limits the opportunity for students to practise and reinforce their proficiencies.

Additional to the above, the position of English as a foreign language in the Nigerien context does not favour access to academic sources. As expressed by Alice, access to required but non-available materials is generally difficult. This reduces students' opportunity to engage with relevant literature for their learning. Local bookstores do rarely sell materials in English, and external libraries offer a very limited range of relevant resources. Taking these into account, the only option students have is to get their reading materials from abroad – from neighbouring English speaking countries, such as Nigeria and Ghana. This adds up to the factors discussed earlier in terms of students' disengagement with reading.

Low social status goes along with the above situation. Not every student within the context of Sahel University can afford buying the required course materials, either in Niger or from abroad. To cope with academic requirements, some students opt for small jobs in town in order to earn money. This pushes them, sometimes, to vacate classes. In some cases, this situation is not due to the need for purchasing academic materials; it is rather due to the need for survival. Only a minority of students at Sahel University have grants from the government. For many students, such as Special A, finding a source of revenue is necessary. They generally have families to take care of, and their financial need occasionally undermines their attendance to classes. This also has an impact on students' psychological predisposition for quality learning. As findings have suggested, students are generally eager to finish in order to start a job. The majority of them rarely aim to achieve excellence. As such, their socio-economic condition constitutes a factor that possibly affects their engagement with learning in a negative way.

9.4. Research and Development Factors

The discussion on research and development factors is based on the beliefs that teacher educators themselves need to continuously develop in their profession in order to provide effective preparation to preservice EFL teachers. In relation to this, the current study has revealed opportunities as well as constraints encountered by teacher educators. Research opportunities, for example, have constituted one of the areas examined by the current study. Findings have revealed that research funding is made available to teacher educators, but their projects have to be aligned to the interest areas of the university (see Appendix I). In addition, there exist other forms of support provided for the purpose of publication. The availability of these opportunities has been interpreted as a positive advancement, compared to many years ago. These funding schemes stand as real opportunities for teacher educators to contribute to their fields of specialisation by researching issues related to their practices.

Nonetheless, research in the context of Sahel University is not embraced by teacher educators for the same purpose. The institutional governance does not require teacher educators to do research, and many of them do not engage in such enterprise. Findings have shown research in that context to be a personal endeavour. While some teacher educators prefer to stick to their teaching, research engagement is linked to promotion rather than the improvement of teaching and learning. It is not the intention of this study to unearth the contribution of EFL teacher educators' research to their career progression, but there exists little evidence about their engagement in research. Apart from personal decisions, teacher educators' engagement in research is also hampered by their workload. Not only courses within the programme are many, but also the number of teacher educators is very limited. Each course takes four hours every week. This may prevent teacher educators from securing time to undertake research projects.

Another aspect of teacher educators' development and career progression revealed by this study is linked to the practice of teacher evaluation. Findings have shown the extent to which teacher educators exert autonomy in designing and implementing their syllabus, and there exists no procedure in place for making judgement about their teaching process. A rare case – in which a teacher educator requested feedback from students for the purpose of improvement – has been reported, but this is a less frequent phenomenon. Similar to research engagement, teacher evaluation happens only for the

purpose of promotion. In this case, the teacher educator is observed by a peer who will write a report and submit it to the institution (CAMES) which decides on promotions. As such, the evaluation is not tied to teacher learning and improvement but for the purpose of career advancement.

So, either from research or teacher evaluation, teacher educators' development is not positively affected. Teacher educators have less time for research, and their teaching is not subjected to a systematic process of formative evaluation. In such conditions, teacher educators may remain ignorant of their students' needs and expectations. They are also likely to miss the opportunity of tapping into student teachers' prior knowledge and beliefs in order to help them construct informed perspectives.

9.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, answers to the overarching research question have been provided through the data collected. Several factors have been identified and discussed in terms of how they affect the effectiveness of initial EFL teacher preparation in the Nigerien context. The most salient of these factors have been grouped under global factors, student engagement factors and research and development factors. As discussed in this chapter, global factors are those contributing to the increase of the student population in need of preparation. They affect curricular decisions, which in turn affect the way teacher educators deliver, what they deliver and how much they deliver. Around the issues of student engagement and teacher educators' development, this chapter has discussed factors that hamper students' learning and teacher educators' learning about students.

First, students' behaviours and attitudes have been presented as consequences to many factors, such as the affective and social barriers, unmatched goals and expectations, time and space barriers, learning and teaching culture, curricular imbalance, and the non-consideration of students as change agents. These factors have been situated as either psychological, pedagogical, socio-economic or institutional. Relating to factors surrounding teacher educators' development, discussion has been focussed on the lack of formative teacher evaluation initiatives and the inability of teacher educators to conduct research due to workload and personal motivations. In order to help reduce the negative effect of the identified factors, the next chapter discusses some useful

approaches for improving the effectiveness of initial teacher education in the context of the current study.

Chapter 10

Conclusion and Recommendations

10.1. Introduction

In chapters six, seven, eight and nine, I have presented findings about the four central research questions focused around the ELTE curricula in Niger. In the current chapter, I draw some conclusions about those findings by connecting them to the theoretical perspectives that underpin the current study and the relevant literature reviewed in chapters three and four. I also explain the limitations within this study. The chapter ends with some final reflections about the conduct of the study and a set of suggested recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of ELTE curricula in the context of this study. These recommendations foster the idea of 1) revisiting the course structure and course delivery and 2) introducing rigorous and research-oriented framework for assessing learning and teaching and evaluating the programme.

10.2. Connecting Findings to Theories and Existing Literature

The current study has provided a range of insights relevant to the theoretical perspectives used to plan and conduct the research. In order to answer the key research questions, the case study has revealed the predominance of traditional approaches of ELTE within the EFL programme. Insights gained about the curricular practices within this programme have shown characteristics similar to those of a language and literature department depicted by Crandall (2000), where linguistic and cultural knowledge is regarded as the key element for becoming an EFL teacher. Taking into account the insights about students' career goals and motivations and the nature of courses offered, there is little evidence about the commitment of the EFL programme to provide a pedagogy-oriented preparation to prospective EFL teachers. The majority of students are in-service teachers and those aiming to become teachers, but the programme does not provide courses focussed on pedagogical reasoning skills and knowledge about the context of practice (Richard, 1998). Courses likely to provide these skills and knowledge are very limited, and they appeared to focus more on theoretical knowledge. A two-week practicum is involved but which does not initiate students to reflection-in-action (Schön, 1987). Students are simply requested, in a short time, to recognise and

apply CLT, which is regarded as the best method for teaching English in that context. This situation extends, beyond the 20th century, Schön's (1991) concern about the predominance of the Platonic/technical rationality model:

> *How comes it that in the second half of the twentieth century we find in our universities, embedded not only in men's mind but in the institutions themselves, a dominant view of professional knowledge as the application of scientific theory and technique to the instrumental problems of practice? (Schön, 1991, p. 30)*

This is further emphasized by my findings which suggest the prevalence of practices opposite to the process model and reflective practice respectively proposed by Stenhouse (1975) and Freire (2000). It has been revealed by the study that lecturing is the dominant mode of course delivery in the EFL programme. Transmission remains the main process through which student teachers are introduced to content subject matter knowledge. Formulated objectives in course syllabi emphasise surface leaning which is assessed summatively. This is contrary to Stenhouse's perspective of the process model in which learners have the opportunity to share knowledge and construct understanding and in which teachers are not makers but critics who engage students in worthwhile activities that involve criteria for improvement of learning. Thus, the use of models grounded in behavioural perspectives by the EFL programme is likely to provide student teachers with little opportunity to continuously adjust and improve their learning as they progress.

The predominant use of lectures within the EFL programme and other practices, such as large classes, is in disagreement with sociocultural perspectives of ZPD and interaction proposed by Vygotsky (1978). The frequent modes of course delivery do not emphasize constructive interaction among teacher learners and between the latter and educators. The case of this study being an EFL programme, the lack of interaction involved in lecturing (Wallace, 1991) constitutes a barrier to language learning. This is supported by findings that revealed students' reluctance to speak English in class and outside due to the emphasis on transmission of linguistic rules rather than inducting students into the communicative use of the language. This is also contrary to the emphasis on CLT while there is little opportunity for student teachers to acquire communicative competence. However, findings have revealed the emergence of practices, within that programme, that bear the capacity to enhance worthwhile activities and scaffolding among peers. The use of some group mode strategies, such as seminars and workshops – introduced

by the LMD reform – constitutes a positive sign towards change and integration of sociocultural approaches to teaching. The presence of in-service teachers within the programme is also an opportunity for integrating contextual knowledge into TEFL courses and making student teachers' beliefs and experiences central to the teaching process. These could be made central to the LMD reviews, which, according to one of its purposes, aims to professionalise programmes within Sahel University.

The above discussions of findings suggest a low level of effectiveness in initial EFL teacher preparation, which, according to other findings, is partly due to the influence exerted on the programme by institutional and contextual factors(Vodopija-Krstanoviæ and Brala-Vukanoviæ, 2012). Most of these factors are recognised in the existing literature to constitute barriers to teaching and learning. The research confirms the existence of various problems known to most of higher education institutions in SSA. These include 1) the issue of massification characterised by a flow of large numbers of students (Lebeau, 2008; Oketch, 2003; Yizengaw, 2008), 2) the issue of facilities and adequate infrastructures (Afemikhe, 2001; Feudjio, 2009; Goudiaby, 2009; Ikando, 2009; Sall and Ndjaye, 2007) to accommodate these numbers, 3) the shortage of academic staff due to financial limitations (Sawyerr, 2004; Teferra and Altbach, 2004; Visser, 2008), 4) the lack of academic resources (Alemu, 2014; Bulfin, 2009; Charlier and Croché, 2009; Teferra and Greijn, 2010), and the resistance engendered by reforms (Aina, 2010; Gazibo, 1998).

However, some aspects of the above factors, as revealed by the current study, seem to be absent from the existing literature on higher education in SSA and therefore remain as a contribution of this research to the literature. While findings in this research provide extensive insights about LMD implementation in a particular context, they also reveal a diversity of inherent resistance, which were not previously documented. The study has interpreted students' reluctance to reading and other attitudes in that context as a resistance to the new learning culture conveyed by the implementation of models borrowed from other contexts (Liu and Fisher, 2010). The study has also revealed the fact that students' protests in SSA contexts are not tied to bursary and political issues (Teferra and Altbach, 2004) alone. Most of the protest actions that occurred during my fieldwork concern curricular issues caused by the LMD system due to the lack of participatory frameworks as supported by Freire's (2000) theoretical perspectives in order to annihilate the power relation among stakeholders.

Other missing insights from the literature revealed by the current study is the nature of the shortage of academic staff within the EFL programme. Even though the study did not examine the reasons of shortage beyond financial limitations, it has shown the specialism in which EFL teacher educators are lacking. Findings have revealed the difficulty for finding educators who specialised in applied linguistics and related areas. This has been interpreted as a factor that adds to the workload of educators and prevents them from engaging in research (Ikando, 2009). Furthermore, findings in this study suggests that the massification within the EFL programme is not only a consequence of increased access at primary and secondary education levels (Lebeau, 2008) but mainly the attraction the English language exerts on learners (Hasanova and Shadieva, 2008; Pan and Block, 2011; Sasaki et al., 2006; Vodopija-Krstanoviæ and Brala-Vukanoviæ, 2012) and opportunity it offers for career development (Egan, 2004; Swift and Wallace, 2011). A last but not the least important finding is the disconnect between research policy and teacher educators' learning. While the literature on higher education in SSA has shown research to be low and underfunded, the current study has revealed the existence of funding at Sahel University and also a research governance but which supports career advancement rather than educators' CPD.

All the above findings suggest that the effectiveness of initial EFL teacher preparation within the studied programme is impeded by several factors, which are both pedagogical and institutional. Teachers prepared in such conditions are likely to teach English ineffectively at secondary school level and therefore contribute to the lack of quality. The study findings, therefore, legitimise the assumptions made through the quality debates (see 1.4., p. 19) within the Nigerien educational arena.

10.3. Theoretical and Methodological Contributions

Considering the above conclusions, the current study contributes to research theoretically and methodologically. First, it confirms assumptions about the influence exerted by English as an international language on outer and expanding circle countries (McKay. 2002). Second, it confirms the impact of globalisation on developing countries, such as Niger, where local knowledge is lacking due to the scarcity of research endeavours (Teferra and Greijn, 2010) and where practices rely much on models and perspectives borrowed from Western countries. Third, the study reiterates the power of contexts in shifting practice and creating resistance to models and products borrowed from culturally different contexts (Canagarajah, 2002; Kumaravadivelu,

2003b). Methodologically, the study is points to the need for customisation of research by taking into account the cultural and social factors that characterise certain contexts of practice. Difficulties encountered during fieldwork (see 5.4.3., 5.5. and 10.6) – mainly those related to the implementation of action research suggest the existence of beliefs, norms and values attached to research.

10.4. Limitations of the Study

Having connected findings to the underpinning theories and literature, there is also the need to identify some limitations that characterise the conduct of this study. First, it is necessary to recall that *phase two* of this study did not take place as planned. This forced me to refocus the study based on data collected in *phase one*. In doing so, some relevant aspects were found absent due constraints of time and funding. Considering that initial teacher education does not involve only students, educators and programme administrators, findings in this research lack the voice of higher education decision makers and parents of students. This aspect should be taken into account for future actions to extend insights. Second, the study reflects some limitations due to my sole focus on Sahel University EFL programme instead of gathering insights from the two other EFL programmes of the country. The focus on only one EFL programme was due to reasons of access and limited time and funding devoted to the research. Even though all the three programmes seem to have similar curricula, there is need to secure funding and access in order to examine and compare the way they prepare EFL teachers. This may help to construct a thorough image of initial EFL teacher education in Niger.

There are also other limitations linked to the context where data were gathered. Due to the lack of full-time educators for TEFL courses, the programme could not announce my research on time to those serving as part-timers. The latter are not frequently in touch with the administration; they go to school only when they teach, without having to notify their presence. This situation prevented me from observing TEFL classes and the embedded practicum. Insights presented in this report were gathered through interviews with one of the part-time educators and some preservice teachers attending those classes. As such, my construction of those classroom realities – based on observation – are missing. Furthermore, in the conduct of my interview with students, English was used as the medium of conversation. This might have prevented some of them from providing more insights than if French or any other local language was used.

While code switching was used to cope with difficulties, the use of English as medium of interview allowed me to realise the extent to which student teachers possess the necessary communicative competence for teaching English through CLT.

10.5. Recommendations

Considering the key findings and the major impeding factors revealed by the study, suggested recommendations are mainly targeting the curricular practices within the case of the study. This research, however, acknowledges the complexity of the problem caused by some institutional factors, such as the shortage of academic staff and adequate facilities, which go beyond the power of the EFL programme and appeal for the provision of solid funding schemes. This problem has been frequently discussed in the literature on SSA higher education for decades, but no concrete solutions seem to have emerged. Even though institutions in SSA could simply adopt measures – tuition fees for example – employed by richer Western countries to enhance their financial abilities, doing so would drastically reduce access to higher education and therefore create obstacles to EFA and MDG initiatives since the majority of the citizens are poor (see UIS (2014) and UNDP (2016)) and cannot afford to pay for their education. Such measures would also trigger protests, which may lead to political unrests. Furthermore, reliance on international donors does not seem to make a big difference. In view of this complexity, it would be advisable for SSA African institutions to move towards a regional or shared management of academic resources. Meanwhile, efforts of the EFL programme should be focused on redesigning the ELTE curriculum and establishing procedures for future reviews and educators' development based on empirical and participatory approaches.

10.5.1. Redesigning the ELTE Curriculum

In order to restructure the ELTE curriculum, recommendations are made around three components. In line with Graves' (2009) ideas of ELTE curricular planning, I suggest the course structure be revisited taking into account the diversity of students within the EFL programme. I also recommend a shift away from lecturing in order to offer students opportunities of interaction and sharing. Finally, I recommend the use of assessment and evaluation procedures that enhance student teachers' learning and teacher educators' professional development.

10.5.1.1. On Course Structure

The diversity of students within the EFL programme and their instrumental motivations, as revealed by the current study, constitute a factor that hinders effectiveness. There is need for the programme to offer courses that match motivations held by students. Taking into account issues of students' reluctance to read or speak English inside and outside classroom, there is also need to offer courses that cater for these issues. For these purposes, I recommend a structure that offers foundation and specialisation tracks during the first cycle (Bachelor's level) as captured in *figure 7*.
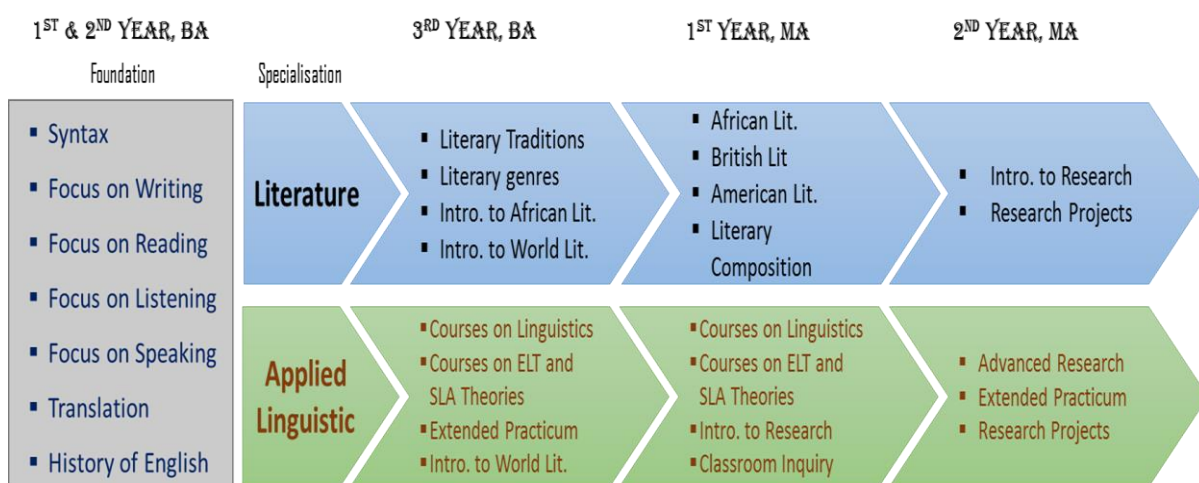

Figure 7: A New Structure of ELTE Curriculum

Considering the recommended curricular structure above, the EFL programme is expected to achieve the goals below:

- Provide student teachers, over two years, with foundational linguistic knowledge and build their proficiencies in the target language (Pachler et al., 2014) before they make decision on a specialisation track. At this foundation level, learners should be inducted to strategies that include critical reading, academic writing, group work etc. this would be a first step towards a smooth change of learning culture and the integration of interactive strategies which foster students' communicative skills (Al-Mahrooqi and Tuzlukova, 2014; Xue, 2013). They should also be provided with microenvironments for language immersion through listening and conversations. Furthermore, criteria should be established for assessing students' conversation skills. This could help alleviate their reluctance to speak.

- Provide students with specialisation tracks, either for literature or for applied linguistics. The latter is recommended for those aiming to become EFL teachers. The main recommendations around this track consist in providing student teachers with professional pedagogical knowledge and knowledge about the English language in a well-balanced way.

- Provide student teachers with professional pedagogical socialisation based on a combination of both practical and theoretical knowledge. Courses providing the latter should encompass not only the ELT methodological procedures but also theories of language teaching and learning that underpin those procedures. For the practical knowledge, it should be provided through an extended practicum scheme in which student teachers spend a whole semester observing classes and another semester teaching. Ideally, observations and practicum should be carried out prior or jointly with theoretical courses. Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden (2007) indicated, with such arrangement, student teachers would be "better able to connect theoretical learning to practice, more comfortable and confident in learning to teach, and more able to enact what they are learning in ways that are effective for students" (p. 118). This would also allow student teachers to write reflective portfolios based on which teacher educators should create meaningful activities to challenge and change their detrimental beliefs about teaching and learning.

- Provide student teachers with classroom inquiry and academic research skills. This should involve theoretical knowledge about the foundations of research and other empirical endeavours needed for CPD. Dedicated courses should also provide student teachers with hands-on experiences through small-scale research. Ideally, the practicum and research project components at master's level should be combined to engage students in small-scale action research or lesson study interventions in local secondary schools. For example, student teachers could be put into groups to jointly produce designs based on the same topics, teach them in different classes, observe each other and regularly hold meetings to reflect on their observation (Elliott, 2012). This would enable teacher educators to equip student teachers with strategies for challenging their own beliefs (Farrell, 2007b) and exploring beliefs held by young learners about language learning (Fisher, 2013).

- Provide student teachers with opportunities to develop intercultural awareness. This could be achieved by introducing them to courses of literature (see Dyvadatham, 2014; Maley, 2012) and courses about the history of English. These may provide student teachers with cultural content (Olaya and Gómez Rodríguez, 2013) which is expected to be replaced, at advanced level, by a focus on World Englishes (Ali, 2014; Floris, 2014).

To achieve the above goals, the EFL programme should establish partnerships with local secondary schools. These partnerships should provide a reciprocally beneficial situation through which mentors receive development opportunities and provide support for student teachers' professional socialisation. As such, mentors should be regularly provided with workshops to raise their scaffolding skills. Beyond these arrangements, the EFL programme should foster the use of interactive modes of course delivery as recommended next.

10.5.1.2. On Course Delivery

In order to support the curricular structure recommended for initial EFL teacher preparation, modes of course delivery should be aligned to a constructivist paradigm. The spirit of the LMD system should be reemphasised in order to replace lecturing by seminars and workshops. This is one of the goals attached to the new structure – through the induction of students to critical reading, academic writing and group work strategies – but which may not be achieved until certain problems revealed by the current study are solved. First, the EFL programme should reduce the number of hours for each module in order to break classes into multiple groups. Ideally thirty instead of sixty hours should allow educators at Master's level to teach two groups of thirty students for each course in order to comfortably and interactively implement their activities. At Bachelor's level, however, this might not be possible due to larger classes until the programme decide to increase the number of part-time educators (who hold Master's Degree) to teach at foundation level. In the context of this study, part-time educators with Master's Degree are more available and less costly than PhD holders.

Second, the practice of minors should be made optional and regulated in a way that would prevent classes from being large. Knowing that students from other programmes affect the way courses are delivered, there is need for the EFL programme to set criteria and a threshold for accepting external students. Such measure may be a source of

tension between the programme administration and student union, but this should be avoided by involving students in the process and providing arguments that support the need for quality of teaching and learning. Furthermore, the EFL programme should widely communicate the regulations for classroom attendance to students and establish guidelines for managing group works – in-class or outside class.

10.5.1.3. On Assessment and Evaluation

Modes of assessment and evaluation are other aspects that the EFL prograramme could redesign in order to enhance the effectiveness of education it provides to prospective EFL teachers. As revealed by the study, summative assessment is predominant within that context. In order to improve learning, there is need to back summative assessment with formative practices (see Black, 2003; Black et al., 2003; Black and Wiliam, 1998; Harlen and James, 1997). Building on the recommendations for making classes smaller, formative assessment can be used to continuously provide students with constructive feedback on their learning. I recommend a frequent use of self- and peer-assessment in that context in order to develop independence and autonmy in learners. However, educators would have to regularly provide criteria to students (see Chetcuti and Cutajar, 2014; Topping, 2009). Knowing that students might have already acquired group work strategies during the foundation years, the use of peer-assessment bear the advantage of giving time to the educators to undertake inquiry actions or focus on something else.

In terms of teacher evaluation, the study has revealed the lack of mandated procedures within the EFL programme. Informal cases have been noted during fieldwork but very infrequent. Based on the importance of teacher evaluation for teacher educators' CPD and career growth, the programme should design and implement policies that formalise its procedures. As a consequence, teacher evaluation within this programme should be conducted in two different ways. First, it should be undertaken at the end of every semester or a given period to achieve a summative purpose (Delvaux et al., 2013). That is to measure the teacher educator's performance in line with the goals set for the course. In this case, teacher evaluation should be tied to the teacher educator's effectiveness and quality assurance (Danielson, 2001) and therefore likely to be used for making decisions about his/her career.

Second, teacher evaluation should be conduted for the purpose of improving teaching (Delvaux et al., 2013; DeMatthews, 2015) and setting a path for teacher educators'

development and learning (Danielson, 2001; Shagrir, 2012). In this type of evaluation, strategies are generally qualitative. Feedback, for example, can be provided to a teacher educator by a peer or by students. In the case of evaluation by students, one of the procedures may consist in giving blank papers to students – as informally conducted by Dr. Paul – and asking them to reflect on the teaching process. This may give students the opportunity to identify the pros and cons of a particular teacher educator's way of teaching. They can critically approach the way a class has been taught by highlighting 1) what worked, 2) what did not work, and 3) what could have been done to make it better. Such practice may open opportunities to teacher educators to learn from their practices.

Nonetheless, implementing teacher evaluation procedures within the EFL programme would require the reduction of power relation between teacher educators and student teachers. Both sides need to be sensitised to understand the need for such process. There is also the need to prepare students on how to provide constructive criticism. Achieving these could offer opportunities for establishing and promoting a research culture within the programme.

10.5.2. Towards an Inquiry-Based Teaching and Curricular Reforms

While I strongly believe in the need to redesign the EFL programme in accordance with the recommendations formulated above, the implementation of the latter may not be effective until the programme embraces inquiry for conducting educational changes. Either for syllabus revisions or curricular reforms, research should be central to the process. Even though this can be achieved in diverse ways, the most important requirement is the democraticality they should offer in process. There is therefore the need to use models of inquiry, such as action research and lesson study, for making participatory or collaborative decisions. The end result is the establishment of a framework as reflected in *figure 8*.
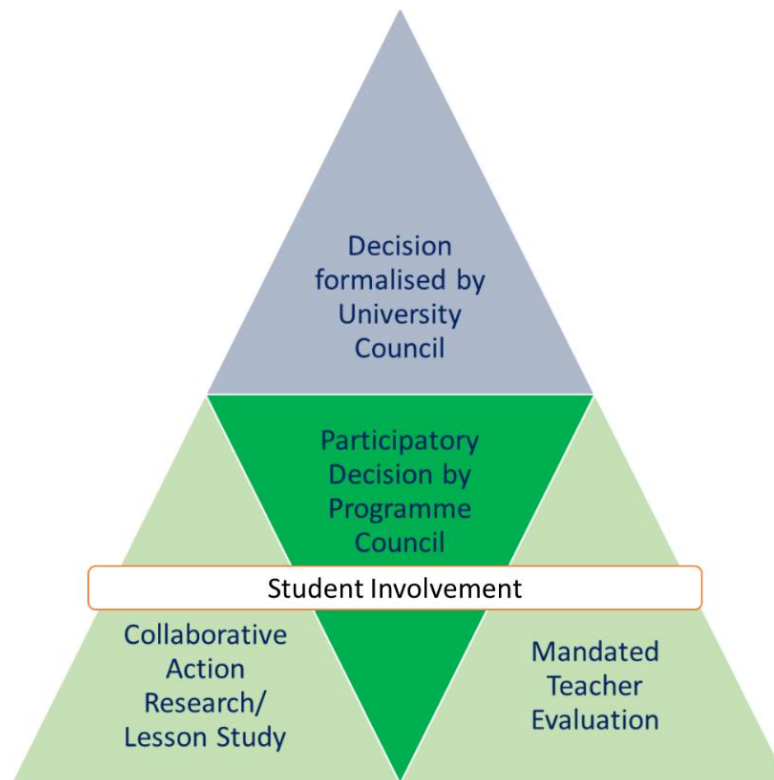
Figure 8: Participatory Decision Model

The above framework is meant to formalise teacher evaluation as recommended earlier and suggest action research (see Hussein, 2007) and lesson study to teacher educators as a means of self-assessment and proffesional development. Student autobiographies could also be combined with action research as a means for exploring student teachers beliefs about language learning (Durán Narváez et al., 2013; Stuart et al., 2009). Insights generated by educators from these endeavours are expected to feed into decisions for restructuring courses and making changes to the way teaching is undertaken. Beyond this purpose, insights from collarborative action research or lesson studies and mandated teacher evaluation should be used by the programme council for understanding curricular issues and implementing changes. However, for this to be regarded as participatory, student representatives should be allowed to hold seats within the programme council. This will enable reform processes wthin the programme to take the form of a bottom-up process where decision is taken by stakeholders and formalised by the top management of the institution.

10.5.3. Planning for Change

Implementing changes as recommended by this research could be a daunting task that requires a consistent and coherent planning. Communicating with stakeholders is one of

the most important step for changing their mindset. Unless stakeholders – mainly those with the power to decide – are convinced, suggested recommendations may not be put into practice. Being an outsider to the programme, my main responsibility would consist in an efficient disemination of findings to the stakeholders and suggesting an action plan for implementing the changes. This will be carried out over the academic year 2016-17 through presentations to target groups: educators, students, student union, teacher educators' union and administrators.

In terms of action plan for applying recommendations, I suggest steps that would not overload the programme. While the adoption of a participatory framework could be immediate, the implementation of the recommended curricular structure should be undertaken in five phases as illustrated in *figure 9*.
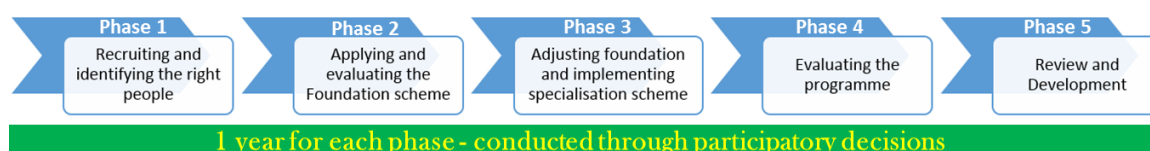

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5
Recruiting and identifying the right people	Applying and evaluating the Foundation scheme	Adjusting foundation and implementing specialisation scheme	Evaluating the programme	Review and Development

1 year for each phase - conducted through participatory decisions

Figure 9: Action Plan for Change

The first phase should consist in identifying and recruiting people with the appropriate specialism. This process could take a year or so. Over the next year, the programme could implement the structure recommended in terms of foundation. Based on the participatory framework recommended earlier (see *figure 8*), evaluation and inquiry strategies should be used along in order to make adjustments over the following academic year. The adjustments for the foundation level should be coupled with the implementation of the specialisation scheme during the third year. A comprehensive evaluation of the programme should intervene during the fourth year in order to make decisions for changes. This will enable a review and development process to take place over the fith year. The five phases should establish the foundation for continuous evaluation and review of the programme in order to ensure effectiveness in teaching and learning.

10.6. Final Reflections and Way Forward

The conduct of the current study is a worthwhile endeavour through which I have gained tremendous amount of knowledge on ELTE. Despite my background in ELT, my teaching experience, when this research commenced, was very limited. Sitting in

classrooms as an observer and interviewing student teachers and educators have enabled me to understand some issues and consequently revisit my philosophical positioning in relation to teaching. While my teaching philosophy has always been shaped by sociocultural perspectives, this research has reinforced my understanding of the ways contextual factors influence learning and teaching. It has made me acknowledge the need to develop an acute understanding of the contextual learning culture in order to continuously plan and design effective actions towards change and lifelong learning.

The current study has also extended my interest beyond the scope of ELT and ELTE. It has allowed me to discover multiple issues attributable to higher education, which was not core to my field of specialisation. As revealed by findings, the effectiveness of initial EFL teacher preparation in the context of this study is not affected only by issues reviewed in chapter three but by an interplay of factors known to both EIL and higher education. Furthermore, this study offers some avenue for future research endeavours. Beyond areas, such *student teachers' cognition, world Englishes, assessment, teacher evaluation, large size classroom, educational innovation* and *higher education governance*, which are well-covered by existing literature, other issues including *students' reluctance to reading and speaking English* must be examined further to uncover more about the complexity they hide.

As a novice researcher, however, a few challenges have characterised some of my actions in the field. To explain some of these challenges, I should begin by reiterating that the programme where I conducted fieldwork is the same programme where I obtained my Bachelor's Degree thirteen years ago. Two among the professors who participated to the study were my professors. In addition, many among the students – at Master's level – were former classmates. This suggests the existence of familiarity with many among the participants. While this familiarity constituted an advantage in terms of access to participants, there were also some risks in the observed tendency of many among them talking to other students about their relation with me and their participation to the study. Without adequate measures, such behaviour could have undermined the confidentiality involved in the procedure, mainly if the most enthusiast of them took the freedom to share their data with others. To cope with this situation, I had to talk individually with the participants about the issue before providing them with the data handout for checking its accuracy. In addition, I requested most of them – students only

– to sit with me in order to peruse the handout and make corrections if necessary. This prevented them from keeping the document longer and from sharing it with others.

Another challenge I experienced concerns the power relation between my former professors and myself. In the context of the current study, the relation between students and professors is generally hierarchical. The notion of power is obvious. Having been a student in that programme, I was aware of the difficulty I might have when interviewing my former professors. In fact, there were times during interviews when I had difficulties to ask certain questions due to their straightforwardness. Those questions were fairly appropriate, but in that context asking direct questions to professors requires having an equal or higher social or academic status. Questions like "why did you use this or that strategy in class?" had taken much courage from me to be asked. I had the fear that certain professors might believe that I (their own former student) was trying to question their ability and expertise as educators. At times, I had to indicate the reasons why I was asking this or that question. Undoubtedly, this situation had somehow affected the amount of data I collected from professors.

In addition to the above, it should be noted that in the context where I conducted this study people are not used to the arrays of research procedures I used during the fieldwork. People are generally used to surveys and questionnaires, but not filling consent forms and sitting with a researcher to answer 'unexpected' questions. At many occasions, participants would ask if they could have the interview questions in advance, in order to prepare for adequate responses. This attitude had in one way or another affected the conduct of interviews with students. Many were aware of their friends' participation in the study, and communications among those who already sat for the interviews and those waiting could have taken place in order to share about the nature of questions being asked. The only measure against that situation was the fact that interview questions were not the same asked to participants due to the use of theoretical sampling strategy (see 5.4.4., p. 94). Questions were generally not static; they were progressively formulated as data collection and initial analysis was taking place.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Case Record

This is a compilation of selected and additional excerpts from the raw data to provide readers with further evidence. These excerpts are presented under themes similar to those in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

Diversity of Students, Goals and Motivations

In the English Department, there used to be not more than hundred students. But last year, they come about 450 students. So, even the number surprised them (Joseph, 06/01/2015).

The reason is because we have professional people who come here to continue their studies and most of them are people who have been teaching for years at lower levels, who come back, maybe from primary schools or secondary schools. They come back to have a degree higher than what they are working with (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).

It is a big plus for you when you are looking for a job, whether in Niger or out of Niger (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).

For the majority, it's really to become teachers. For the older groups, they are already teachers. They just want to teach English at a higher level (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).

Most of us are teaching. Even those who are working in offices, they teach some classes in private schools. For example, there are some advisers among us, but they also have English classes in some private schools. All of us are teaching (Labo, 27/01/2015).

I came back, first of all to improve, to improve my way of speaking (Labo, 27/01/2015).

What I want is to improve my teaching, to be more confident, to get something related to my teaching (Alice, 28/01/2015).

I would like to attain the higher level. This is my mission and my objective to get this title of PhD (Salim, 03/02/2015).

There is a change into the academic policy. In the past we have only one university; that is the University of Niamey. From 2010 to 2011, they have tried to add more universities. [...] So, these universities, you know, they need lecturers and my objective through this going back to university is maybe, if I can get a scholarship after my MA degree, to continue for a PhD degree and maybe one day I can become a lecturer at one of these universities (Ika, 15/01/2015).

Those are primary school teachers who have been given opportunity to take an exam and come to the university to continue their studies (Joseph, 06/01/2015).

I think, in my class, there is at least 170 'special A' cases. (Joseph, 06/01/2015).

In Niger we have our schools suffering with the lack of teachers who teach English. So, my desire is to go and help my brothers in different schools (Alou, 04/12/2014).

I really don't know how I get to speak English this way. It's the grace of God; because I have not done some specific schools or some specific studies somewhere else. I have been living in here since I was born. But I have worked with some Americans; I have babysat their children (Grace, 08/01/2015).

I have also been translating sometimes. I don't know if you know I am a Christian. So, we share the Gospel in some villages. I got to do the interpretation for those people when they come here (Grace, 08/01/2015).

They are becoming conscious that English is the language that people speak outside. When they go abroad, to America, for example, French, Hausa or Zarma cannot help them. But only when you speak English, you can find a way (Grace, 08/01/2015).

I noticed that if you travel outside Niger, everybody speaks English. And to work in international relations, you must also speak English very well (Aisha, 08/01/2015).

I decided to learn English because I would like to work in the international relations sector or to work with foreigners in other countries (Aisha, 08/01/2015).

Most of the important books are written in English. Even on the internet, most of important information is in English. So, it's important for us to come to school to learn this language (Aisha, 08/01/2015).

I am doing business in Petit Marché. I have a shop of computer parts, games and other electronic devices. It gives me freedom to do whatever I want concerning my education here and there (Jacks, 15/01/2015).

I got my Bachelor's Degree in 2011. By then I wanted to stop because I thought the BA was enough. At that time people didn't stop telling me "English in this country, it's just for teaching. So, when you get the BA, it's enough. You can go and do something else." So, that is what I did (Jacks, 15/01/2015).

In 2003, I attended an international youth conference with Youth for Christ International in Brazil. So when I attended that conference I was really shocked by my level in terms of speaking, because whenever I wanted to share with those people, I had to speak English. And I was very limited at that time (Emanuel, 05/12/2014).

What helped a lot was that I worked in a Youth for Christ association and had some colleagues from U.S.A. and U.K. who came to Niger for a short term mission. So, when they came, we interchanged with them…I helped, I forced myself to be a kind of interpreter. So I attached myself to them in order to improve (Emanuel, 05/12/2014).

As a pastor, English is important for me because I noticed when I was studying theology that most of the best tools in terms of knowledge, experience, books…are written in English (Emanuel, 05/12/2014).

One of my objectives is to become a writer, to write for my generation, for young people. I have a heart for the youth. So, I really see English as an opportunity for me to be better in what I am doing and have a large audience (Emanuel, 05/12/2014).

I am working in the aviation, so it is a requirement for us to have a certain level of English. I have been doing night calls for more than 10 years (Joseph, 06/01/2015).

I thought if I can really have a paper to attest my level of English, it's better to get that paper here. And maybe in future days, it can help me to do something else (Joseph, 06/01/2015).

The Nature of Courses Offered by the EFL Programme

...tronc commun is all first year students, for the first semester, being taught all the different courses that are planned for the semester (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).

It's what they call five UE: French (Technique de Communication), Basic English, Computer Skills, and the other two are elective. You have to choose them between Arabic and Spanish, and the others are Introduction to African Oral Literature, History, Geography, Sociology and Philosophy. So yeah, three compulsory courses and you have to look for two elective courses so that you can have your five courses (Joseph, 06/01/2015).

You know, here in our programme, it is a chance we have. Because, at the English programme, students take a course called TEFL (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).

At this faculty, it's only the English department that has a course that helps students to have the basics of teaching. The other departments don't have this (Dr Sam, 04/02/2015).

Everything is theoretical. And after that theory, people go directly teaching. I maybe have the chance to have attended all the English happenings at the American Cultural Centre. I think it helped me a lot. I have done even some online classes with some US schools in the field of teaching. These are the sorts of things I was looking at when I came back for the Masters classes (Alice, 28/01/2015).

I attended TEFL classes, but it was not really helpful. It was only on the field that I understood some strategies. For example, even to prepare a lesson plan, it's in the field I learnt that. There was no practice at all when I took those classes (Labo, 27/01/2015).

P: Among our subjects, there is one that is called TEFL. It shows us the ways to teach well.
R: Okay. So, you practise teaching?
P: No, not at all! It's just theoretical (Alou, 04/12/2014).

A student who doesn't master those theories, those teaching methodologies, cannot succeed once on the field of teaching (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).

P: Nowadays, the method is the communicative approach.
R: Tell me about that.
P: Students are at the centre of the process.
R: Can you then describe one case for me? What happens in class?
P: Before the planned lesson, we revised what we did in the previous session. Then the professor asked questions to introduce the lesson of that day. The students provide answers. They are at the centre (Alou, 04/12/2014).

Half of the sessions are focused on theory, and the other half is focused on practice that we do in schools (Dr Sam, 04/02/2015).

For the theoretical content, we study the different approaches of teaching English. This includes for examples the communicative language teaching, the task-based, the 3 Ps, the competence-based teaching, etc. (Dr Sam, 04/02/2015).

Students also bring their own perspectives in this course. Some of them are already teachers. So, they did have some concepts in teaching; they come with their ideas, and we discuss in a form of seminar. We discuss and bring our contribution from different sources (Dr Sam, 04/02/2015).

Language is to communicate. So, Communicative Language Teaching is definitely what we encourage students to use (Dr Sam, 04/02/2015).

They first observe a teacher in his/her classroom teaching. They observe him/her for a couple of weeks, and then I tell them that I will come to observe the class, watching one of them teaching (Dr Sam, 04/02/2015).

He told us to choose the less experienced student […] We are going to prepare the lesson plan together and give it to the less experienced student, and this one will present the lesson (Labo, 27/01/2015).

Course Delivery

*Throughout the whole activity, students were busy writing from the professor's dictation and elements he was writing on the blackboard. Only occasionally could few peers be observed talking silently, generally double-checking words from dictations. To finish with the focused grammatical structures, the professor provided a list of other structures that can be interchangeably used with **much**, **many** and **a lot of**. After that, he requested the class representative to clean the blackboard in order to start a new lesson (Field notes, 10/11/2014).*

When we finish one lesson, I am going to check the grammatical structures that are good for the students; then I make a kind of reminder. So, those documents were just for the students to have the materials that they are going to use and work in class (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014)

The one who is full time teacher, she is dictating. Sometimes she gives handout (Alice, 28/01/2015).

The first thing he does when he comes is to review the last lesson, to make sure we get the meaning. After that, he makes dictation of the lesson. We take notes and he also takes time to explain it (Joseph, 06/01/2015).

In second year, yes! But they also provide explanations. Some teachers, instead of giving you documents to photocopy, they do dictations. If you have no means to photocopy, you have your hands to take notes (Alou, 04/12/2014).

Sometimes, she also takes time to explain concepts like Transcendentalism, Puritanism… She gives us more details about them (Aisha, 08/01/2015).

Around 4:33, there were about 42 students in class. Discussions were going on in a way that allowed students to answer the questions from the teacher educator or raise disagreement with comments made by other students or the teacher educator. The climax of those discussions was observable when questions and interpretations about the symbolic meaning of "mirror" were progressively formulated by students. The teacher educator facilitated the discussions and occasionally intervened to make critical comments or to extract examples of interpretation from the materials under analysis. The process continued that way, regardless of late comers, till 5:14 (Field notes, 02/12/2014).

I always tell my students that it [literature] is not a question of "I am the teacher; I come to give you what you need." You know, it's an arena of discussion. Students have their own ways of looking at what they read, and they have their own reactions. And it's during discussions that you really feel that the student is getting something from what he/she is learning in class (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).

He creates some debates to involve everybody to speak. And he does it in the scope of teaching. He takes something, for example, that is happening in schools, and from that he creates a debate in order to make everyone give his point of view (Labo, 27/01/2015).

When he comes, he sometimes brings different handouts and gives to different groups. You can be alone or two. So, when it is this kind of activity, we discuss directly (Alice, 28/01/2015).

I thought, by putting them in groups, that would give them more interest, more stimulus in learning, individually first but also in learning from each other. And also, I felt that would be a way, at least, to make them participate more actively in the class activities (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).

Around 12:06 p.m., Dr Kadidja arrived and took two minutes to get ready. She then started the class by asking students about the homework she gave them during the previous session. The homework was a sort of plot analysis through which students were expected to underline key themes within a text they were provided with in the beginning of the year. Assuming that students had done the homework as requested, the teacher educator asked them to work in pairs, a sort of group-work to compare and discuss their individual outputs (Field notes, 25/11/2014).

The professor first tried to check if students have read the text before coming to class. Seemingly, less than half of them have done so. The professor then asked those who have read the text to work in pairs, and those who have not, to read the text first and then underline the key ideas individually. 10 minutes were devoted to this assignment during which the professor took some steps across the lecture theatre to check on students (Field notes, 23/12/2014).

It's almost at all levels: from first year to Master 2. There are always group-works. It's something that teachers use to help the interaction of students, to share what they know and maybe to put them in the real research situation (Jacks, 15/01/2015).

According to me, a particular way to teach is to make discussions central to the process, to let students present their points of view and understand each other. Because,

as far as literature classes are concerned, it's better for teachers to let students express their points of view (John, 03/12/2014).

A topic is given to students or sometimes chosen by students themselves. They go on research; they try to work together and bring a final draft of the work. And then, they come to present the work. They present it in front of the class (Ika, 15/01/2015).

The lecturer doesn't write the names of students and say "you, go to this group or that one." It is for us to do it (Roukaya, 16/01/2015).

Right now we have some teacher that told us to make some groups and choose a topic or a short story or something and work on it (Grace, 08/01/2015).

The teacher told students to organise themselves. So those who are familiar to one another, they get into groups (Oro, 16/01/2015).

Usually, the groups are not formed by lecturers, but students give their names. In that sense, I can submit the name of a friend or two and end up doing the work alone for the group (Minas, 14/01/2015).

You know how students are…some people don't do the work; they don't come at meetings. And because of this social relation between people, you just can't cross the name of a person because he/she didn't attend the meetings. So, you just put his/her name (Jacks, 15/01/2015).

There are some parasite students, waiting just for the last moment to come and say "I have seen the lecturer; he/she has accepted I come and see a group where I can write my name." They write their names, but come only for presentation and gaining the same grade as those who have done the work (Sheik, 14/01/2015).

Assessment

She gives stories and evaluates us. After three stories, sometimes four, we have a quiz (Aisha, 08/01/2015).

What people are trying to do is to have many evaluations before the end of the course. Because we used to have cases where the teacher just gives one final exam and that's it. And we have noticed that with this new system we have less and less students that are failing and the grades are improving (Dr Kadidja, 19/12/2014).

Some people do as many as six quizzes and sometimes they drop the two lowest and students get to keep just the four quiz grades. (Dr Kadidja, 19/12/2014).

One of the reasons – and I wrote it on the syllabus for them to know that – was to force them to read first (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).

The only thing that works for making them come to class, it's those quizzes that we do. They know if they don't attend class regularly, they might fail. Without doing those quizzes, the final grade will be a failing one (Dr Kadidja, 19/12/2014).

When she [the teacher educator] comes, she asks us some questions about the last course. She calls it quiz; it is two questions before the class starts. She said it's in order to make us come to class earlier, to be on time (Grace, 08/01/2015).

I grade students using a lesson observation sheet in which I have the following questions or criteria: a) What are the lesson's objectives? b) Are they achieved? c) Teacher talk vs student talk, d) Classroom management, e) Teacher's command of English, f) Evaluation of the lesson, and h) Different stages of lesson (Dr Sam, 04/02/2015).

P: The teacher observed the teaching, and when we came back to school he gave the feedback to us.
R: Was it written, the feedback?
P: No, it was verbal feedback. (Salim, 03/02/2015)

After, we do some kind of feedback and tell him/her[the less experienced member] where he/she must improve. Last year, just after, we told the person where he/she failed – maybe the warm-up or presentation and so on. We told him/her that next time he/she must correct (Salim, 03/02/2015).

Course Planning and Design

Normally, each course has four hours a week. Now, you can have two sessions on different days or four hours in a row (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).

Recently because of the problem we have in terms of infrastructure, the lecture theatres and rooms that are insufficient, and the growing number of students, the university president's office has decided to even schedule some sessions for four hours in a row (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).

… the teacher educator took few minutes to announce the possibility of changing the schedule of that class. He suggested transferring the class to Saturdays from 2:00 to 6:00 pm. […] The teacher educator re-explained the need to do so by arguing that the current room is not enough to contain everyone. As he added, there is need to find a lecture theatre which cannot be available but on Saturdays (Field notes, 10/11/2015).

You see, for example, last year I used to have classes from 8:00 am to 1:30 pm – that is my teaching at my school. And then at 2:00 pm I had to go for a class at university. I just pray and then try on my way to university to find something to eat and then try to be on time to start a course from 2:00 to 6:00 pm (Ika, 15/01/2015)

To tell you the truth, it's not easy task to be a teacher full time and also to be a student full time. […] In fact, as I told you, it's a question of commitment. At 6:00 pm, most of the time, I come home very tired. My readings…sometimes I can't. I postpone it to the weekend. Generally I take it to the weekend; that is on Sundays. And if I have some quiz or any other exam, I read at night. So, I take my tea around 10:00 pm and then study till 1:00 am. That is the way I do things. So, there is the weekend and then at night; I always try to read from 10:00 pm to 1:00 am, sometimes even beyond 1:00 am (Ika, 15/01/2015)

During our time – when we were young students – we used to have ten subjects. We do them every week until the end of the year; we are evaluated two times. But now, the

difference is that we have five subjects per semester, and it's too heavy. Each subject, it is four hours, and it's tiring, not to say boring (Oro, 16/01/2015).

Each teaching is given three weeks to be implemented. Let's say twelve to fourteen days, from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm. That is 4 hours. 4 hours times 12, that is 48 hours; plus 2 hours for exam, that is the 50 hours. So, this is how things are organised for the tronc commun (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).

A student has four courses in his/her department and for the fifth one, he/she has to go and take it in another department. So this is the goal or objective of the new programme (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).

We cannot say that we can have all the time classes of practice, unless it's a TEFL class where you can have teaching practice or observations. But for other classes, even if you say you are going to have some hours of practice, you may only have exercises. But there are other classes in which even exercises, you cannot have (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).

It's locally that they have been chosen through our different meetings. You know, we have programme board meetings. So, it's through those meetings that we decided that those are the courses we would like to put in our programme. Of course we looked at the different courses in other English programmes in some Anglophone countries like Ghana, Nigeria, even in Senegal (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).

I think they went to another country, saw how things work there and come back to apply the same without taking into account the fact that we don't have the same reality. This is the big problem (John, 03/12/2014).

The syllabus…it is the lecturer who prepares his/her syllabus. From your different researches – from your different materials – you prepare your syllabus at the beginning of the course (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).

Professors have the freedom to make their syllabi, but they give a copy to the department to have a look at it. That is only the head of department. Because we don't even get them checked by the council (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).

Not only the head of programme, but also professors have the power to raise issues. They can also call for the meeting. It might also be the dean's office that is asking the programme to discuss about some issues and take some decisions. It might be the vice-Chancellor's office who will ask also the faculties to call for programme meetings to discuss an issue concerning the university (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015)

Issues and Conduct of LMD Reviews

Almost every year! At the beginning, some criteria did not exist. Now, we should have 12/20 to pass from BA to MA. At the beginning it was not so. Besides this, there is also…especially at the English programme…from third year, you have to specialise. When I was in 2nd year, I could already see some students saying "I am in 3rd year language" or "I am in 3rd year literature." When we reached the 3rd year, the programme has changed, and we are still taking the same courses. There is no specialisation whether you want to be literature or language students. So, it continues

till last year with Master 1. It's only this year that we are going to specialise for language or literature, and after that the MA dissertation (Sheik, 14/01/2015)

No, it's general. General, because it's a system that all the eight countries of UEMOA have decided to implement. And we have documents that explain clearly how we should go about tackling that reform (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).

All the courses used to be within the EFL programme. If you do English, you have three compulsory courses on which you have nothing to say. You have to take them. But there are two others you can choose (Emanuel, 15/12/2014*)*

Because, we cannot understand…you as an English student to go to the French department and choose a course and you will be evaluated in the same way as students from that department. How? And for me I don't understand the way in which some people who since their first, second and third year have been studying French….and now you as student of third year English, you will be combined in order to be evaluated in the same way. You see the problem? (Alou, 04/12/2014)

The problem or say the complaint some give is that it's difficult because you have to join your level of a different field. Sometimes you lack the basics of the course. So it is difficult to understand, especially when you have no interest (Minas, 14/01/2015).

Personally, I noticed that in the English department we generally end our semester on time. But, if I go to another department and there they take one year and half to finish a one-year programme…So, I will be late. Because of that course, I cannot finish on time. Not only that! I can say the entire department can be late because of other departments. If they don't receive the grades from other department, students cannot graduate. So this will have an impact on students' study time (Emanuel, 05/12/2014)

I think it wastes time, puts students late and at the end we didn't learn much (Grace, 08/01/2015).

Sometimes, you have chosen a course in another department that has some clash of timetable with the other courses in your department (Sheik, 14/01/2015).

Yes, we have a reform process that is going on. From this reform, many courses have been cancelled (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).

There was a time students were in strike; many among them were even arrested. Teachers took the advantage of that situation to implement the reform without consulting students (John, 03/12/2014).

I did not like that…the problem was that I did not have time to attend the course as I should, because the hours were not convenient to me. I finally went and take the exam and I failed it (Grace, 8/01/2015).

We have among us history students, psychology, sociology… It's a mixture of students from various departments. That is why the class is so large (Alou, 04/12/2014).

It's not easy to follow the course. The first time I was new here, I had to come earlier. If you don't come early, you can't have even a seat. You'll have to follow the course from the back (Aisha, 08/01/2015).

In that class we don't have only students from the English department. We have students from other departments. Those students, they don't have the same level like students in the English department. So, to help them from time to time, we use the other language – French (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014)

You can see some students who didn't pass a course of last year. It means they have to take the same course this year. But when they came to take the course, they realised it doesn't exist in the curriculum for this year. So, this is really a big problem. So, maybe if I didn't validate…just an example…if I didn't validate American Civilisation, this year, I have to take the course again. But, instead of that, this course was replaced by African Drama (Emanuel, 05/12/2014).

Maybe last year I validated Phonetics and this year I came and found the same course (Emanuel, 05/12/2014).

We've realised that sometimes people have different approaches to how to implement it, from department to department and from school to school…even though we have those texts. (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).

the strike was due to the problem of moving from your department to another. Sometimes, you have chosen a course in another department that has some clash of timetable with the other courses in your department. This is one of the points of debates with the head of the English Department. For that reason, some students repeating some classes are allowed to go, for this year only… just some kind of bonus…this year only, to go to choose classes they want, even if these are taught by lecturers of the English Department in other departments. Apart from this year, everybody will be obliged to take one course outside not given by lecturers of English Department. So, for the strike, I think, it's also about this issue of 12/20 and moving from one department to another since students are disturbed by this change (Sheik, 14/01/2015).

You know, students they listen very carefully… They listen to what is happening in other places. So, when they noticed there is something…an approach that is in their favour that is being used elsewhere, and in their department it is not being used, they always come and say "see, we are in the same school. How come!" But sometimes, it's the approach that people use that shows the difference. For example, in certain schools…the reform…they said "Ok, we are going to go progressively start with the first year." In our case, we have decided to find ways of handling the different problems individual students are facing. But we want everyone to embrace the new programme. So, it's a difference with those who decided to apply it to just the first year. So, this is a problem we are handling now. They are saying "how come in X school, they apply it to just the first year and here you are making us go in the same boat and we are having problems?" (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).

As we go, we see certain problems that need to be fixed. And we can't say, because we don't want students to go on strike, we are going to leave them like that, because with time they will catch us. Finding solutions to all the problems that are emerging…that is what is creating the problem (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).

The council is called when there are some issues concerning the department to be discussed. Those issues, they might only concern the teachers. They might concern the students. They might concern the faculty or the university. So everything that is

academic or administrative. Yeah, the council is really, if you like, the management (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).

for me, when a reform is taking place, it is better to work with students, to do preliminary work in order to facilitate, to make easy the process…in order to do the consultation together, to share what the administration want…students can talk about their worries and desires in order to come to a line on which both are satisfied (Emanuel, 05/12/2014).

Teacher and Programme Evaluation

With the system in Ghana, every semester, at the end of the course, the institution brings out a questionnaire to assess the lecturer and then the course. So, it's all the students in class, but it's anonymous; you don't write your name on it. You just write the course code. There are questions on it: how was the course? Was it good? Then you mark when it is good. So, at the end it's the university that judges if the lecture was good or not (Minas, 14/01/2015).

At university we don't have this. Each lecturer is free to teach as he/she wants. We have this practice only in junior and senior high schools. (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).

Here we don't have anything like that. But right now there is a committee that is being established. It's something that has been done in all the universities that are members of REESAO (Kadidja, 29/12/2014).

On November 11th, he administered a small assessment to students, and based on the outcome, which he judged non-satisfactory, he decided to request my critical inputs towards the way he conducted his activities during those APA and MLA sessions. The most important aspect of this was when he openly shared those criticisms with his students in class and requested them to provide him with additional criticism or feedback (Field notes, 25/11/2014).

As far as I know, he is the only one who always asks students to critique his teaching. Sometimes, there are some sheets of papers you are given to answer some questions. Yes, some kind of criticism of the classes. He is asking students to fill, to answer those questions to know how he can change those classes, how he can improve the class for the coming year (Sheik, 14/01/2014).

You can do it if you want to, but most of people don't do it. It's possible for you to do it, but it's not an obligation. Also, you don't have somebody higher than you that would come and observe you and say, you know, things are okay or they are not okay. We don't have that kind of evaluation. This is something that sometimes people talk about. They say at university, we don't have people who would come… (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2015).

The only case when they do it is when they have to submit a 'dossier' to CAMES. That is the institution that gives the different titles…for advancement purposes. For that kind of thing, you need somebody who has a higher rank to come and see you and then write about it. [..] For example, if I ask somebody who is what we call Professeur Titulaire from Lettres Modernes to come and observe me because I want to become Maitre de Conference, it has 'nothing' to do with me as a teacher of the English department.

Because, it's not going to be submitted to the head of my department. He/she will write it and then send it to CAMES (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).

There are people progressively doing the evaluation. Because within every faculty, people have been appointed as LMD Committees. So those people are doing the evaluation. And this is the reasons we are continuously bringing some changes… (Dr Kadidja, 12/02/2015)

Every year, there are workshops that are organised based on the experience of the year or of two years, and we try to fix things. It's been going on for years now (Kadidja, 12/02/2015)

The Place of Research

Something has been done, maybe not enough. But I think, giving the situation of the country, the government has done something to stimulate people, to put them in better conditions, even though we're still struggling with tough situations. But I think our living conditions have been improved somehow (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).

There is a kind of research fund which teachers can use. But of course you have to come up with a research project that you will defend in front of a scientific committee. If the committee accepts your project, then you will receive the fund that you have asked for (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).

There is also that aspect to encourage teachers to publish. When you publish an article, you will receive XOF100,000. You'll just send your article to the Vice-chancellor's Office and upon reception, the same day they will refund you XOF100,000. That is one of the measures aiming to encourage teachers to publish. They know that publishing is difficult (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).

I should add that for a long time, research has been neglected, because people do not have any financial support. […] Especially when we left CAMES in the 80s, people were not very much into trying to do it, to progress through research. It's only recently when we went back to CAMES that teachers realise that for promotion they really have to do some research and publish (Dr Kadidja, 12/02/2015)

It's not a requirement, but if you don't do it you are not going to get a promotion (Dr Kadidja, 12/02/2015).

It seems also if you become Maitre-Assistant, then it's like tenure. So, once you get tenure, you feel secure. So, some people if they get tenure, they feel they just have to do their teaching (Dr Kadidja, 12/02/2015).

But, as you can see, it's not easy. […] Let's say you are a new PhD holder recruited in the department…you are burdened with course loads. You don't have enough time to do research in order to be able to change your status. So, that is one of the problems (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).

Teacher Shortage

We have more teachers who specialised in literature than in language. That could be a reason; because if students choose to be in Language, chances are that they are going

to have only two possibilities; because there are only two teachers. The other teachers have specialised in literature. And, since we have a limited number of teachers that can advise the students, anybody who chooses to be in language, it is possible for the student to have difficulties finding an adviser than if the student decides to be in Literature (Dr Kadidja, 12/02/2015).

We don't have enough teachers. It's really difficult to work. It's a kind of suicide; because you will work, and it will be very difficult… There is no supervisor, if you want to do your thesis. This is why students are really afraid. Myself, I came because I know I have nothing… I am ready. Even if it's going to be more than this year, I am ready for that. But if you want to do something in a short time, it's really difficult (Alice, 28/01/2015).

The number of lecturers is not sufficient. If you take the students who are specialising in language, there are only two lecturers. I think this is not sufficient. And the problem is that when you finish, there is the issue of supervision. So, you see, you'll not have lecturers to supervise you (Labo, 27/01/2015).

Teachers are really overloaded. Apart from what the regulation says – that there is a certain amount of courses to handle – you have to do more than that. You can't say "Ok, regulation says every year I should have three courses and I am going to do just those three courses." We don't have enough teachers. This is the reason why people are overloaded. So, you are going to have the amount that is required, and then you will have to do what we call 'cours complémentaires', simply because there are no teachers. For example, among all the full-time teachers, it is only Dr X who from last year has stopped taking extra courses for health reasons. So, we have to see who can take his extra courses. There are some courses we cannot give to part-timers (Dr Kadidja, 12/02/2015).

Apart from the translation class, I have another class of stylistics. Before the new programme, I had the class of Varieties and Functions of English for the L3 level. In first year I had Introduction to African Literature and British Civilisation. In second year, it's British Civilisation that we continue. Then in Master 1, before the new programme, I had the History of the English Language. Then in Master 2, I had The Interface between African and African-American Literature (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).

When I started, it was African literature courses…and then, with time, I started teaching translation classes…French to English and vice-versa…and American Literature (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).

We do have some who are teaching courses that are not really related directly to their areas of specialisation. That was my case, initially. Yes, we have some teachers who are doing that (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).

We do have plans, but really… You know, the plans to be effective, it's politically-dependent. It depends on the government; it's a financial issue. Right now, we are going to have one more teacher. This is going to be a specialist in education (Kadidja, 12/02/2015).

The university, up to now, has not prepared some kind of recruitment plan that will allow her to know in advance. Let's say those graduate students… Already some

students are planning to study for PhDs in different universities so that when they come back already, the department or the university can hire them. What if they were sent to be trained in particular areas by the university? So, when they come back, they will be recruited according to the profile. What is happening is that sometimes or usually…in many cases, at least…people try to get their own scholarships and they go to study for Master's degrees or PhDs and they come back with some degrees that they decided to get from other universities, and when they come back they need jobs. The university also needs some teachers. So, they hire them even if the profile does not correspond to the one the department is looking for. So, in my personal opinion, I think it's a question of management; because the university has not been able to plan those kinds of recruitment (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).

Lack of Academic Resources

As you know, it's the same library that we have since when we were students, and our students, you know, continue to go to the same library…and we've brought in new courses, but the resources did not follow (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).

it's really because of the insufficiency in terms of the materials that are available to us in English. When I do my research and I discover some materials written in French that are very relevant to the issue that I discuss with my students, I simply use them for discussion in class (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).

The ones that are available, sometimes they can have five copies or ten copies, and it's for everybody. So, it's difficult. (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).

I would say most of the time, students expect you, the teacher, to give them the texts that you need them to read for your classes (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).

We also need books. They don't have to ask us to go and buy books. Why not provide us with those books? (Aisha, 08/01/2015).

Sometimes, teachers ask us to buy some books, and you know, there are many students who do not have access even to the bursaries. So, they do not have the means for buying those books (Aisha, 08/01/2015).

We have many students who really do not have the means to undertake higher education. Because, it's expensive. And sometimes even the money to make their own course packet … (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).

Here, at the library, we can't get them [books]. So, we need somebody from some Anglophone countries to get them for us (Alice, 28/01/2015).

You know, all these things…internet… we don't have access here. Even if you want, it's difficult sometimes. It's not really available as we need (Alice, 28/01/2015).

You know, one needs to get a computer or go to an internet café. So, not all of us are computer literate. Because in this country, computers are expensive; being trained is also expensive (Oro, 16/01/2015).

She gives documents; because we don't have some documents. Only the teacher has the real documents (Alice, 28/01/2015).

For example this year, we are already in January, but if I take my case I don't even have a new ID card. So, they cannot let me borrow books there. They will say I am not a student yet; because I don't have the card of this year. So, I will have to wait maybe until February or March to get the ID card then to get access to the books (Oro, 16/01/2015).

Students' Reluctance to Reading

They don't like to read; they don't want to make that effort to read. And that is the reason why I initiated these reading quizzes as I call them (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).

Some are not reading the articles, but they rely on quiz answers of past years; because the articles are the same. They go and find those quizzes done by others, and then have the corrections and come just to memorise the corrections instead of reading the articles to understand what is inside (Sheik, 14/01/2015).

The unfortunate thing is that few students only come just to ask questions maybe about some issues that were not clear during the lecture. When you see students knocking at your door, you can be in advance sure that they have some claims, maybe some grade claims or they would like to have recommendation letters as you have just seen this morning (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).

Students are infested by a virus: this virus of just to have a grade of 10/20 in all the subjects. That means, students have no more the idea of excellence (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).

It looks like what they are aiming at is to pass a course, get a pass grade and then go (Minas, 14/01/2015).

They are in hurry to go and get a job, but they don't know even for doing a job you must be excellent (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).

Because, now what is happening is that people are just reading for grades and not really to understand or do whatever it is. Just get the minimum; just to pass the quiz, but not to understand or get further information about what you read from the text. I don't really know why people can't just get the time; all they just want is to pass. I think this is something linked to the system. The educational system is like that. So, people are not interesting in getting knowledge for themselves or … All what people want is getting the grade and having the diploma to get a job. They don't think there is need of going further…maybe this is linked to the economy of the country (Jacks, 15/01/2015).

Large Class Size

In our department, the two first years are where you have larger classes. Mine is already a Master's level. That is why the number is not too big compared to the other levels. But even for my other class, which is a third year class, I have around more than hundred students. (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).

Our first year which is becoming second year now is around 500. More than 500! And even the 3rd year that you have seen, they may reach 300 or more (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).

We have students from other departments that come to take this course (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).

Last year, it was around 75 students. This year, I think, we have around 55. (Dr Sam, 04/02/2015).

There is no problem! We are all students with the same aim, the acquisition of knowledge. For me it's not a problem. The class is big or not, it's the same (Alou, 04/12/2014).

As far as I know, there is no limit to the number of students that can be in a class (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).

If you have around 90 students and you want to check attendance, you may lose 20 to 30 minutes just doing that. So, what I do is simply give the attendance sheet. They circulate the sheet, write their names and after the class, I collect the list (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).

Some make attendance sheet, but even the attendance you cannot know who is registered. Because I can take it and write the name of my mate who is absent. They don't have the tool to know who is really present or not (Emanuel, 05/12/2014).

Not only for the department, but the whole faculty, and I would say the whole university. If you go now to the registrar's office, no one would give you the exact number of students we have here for this year (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).

You know, when the class is big, for me, it's really not all the students that can feel comfortable; because there are no sound equipment that can allow all the students to hear (Emanuel, 05/12/2014).

Last year, for this same level of tronc commun, we had a microphone. Unfortunately, this year only one lecture theatre has a microphone. So the two other lecture theatres don't have. So, with this, we cannot work as we want, because the voice cannot go far (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).

10 years ago, there was no problem of seeing this mixture between males and females. But these days, the tendency is observable (Emanuel, 05/12/2014).

Most of the females, because they are married, they prefer to sit with other females (John, 03/12/2014).

It could be noticed from the structure of the class that female students were sitting together in one area of the room. According to their physical appearance, it was inferable that they are in majority married women. Only few female students – most of them revealing a different physical appearance – could be located sitting among or next to male students (Fieldnotes, 17/11/2014)

While the majority of students were actively working with each others, there were few of them – mainly those sitting at the back – who were either sitting empty-handed or manipulating their mobile phones. Around 1:04 p.m., I even noticed a gentleman talking on his phone while walking out of the theatre facility. It took him about 24 minutes before coming back to his seat. During that session, I also noticed that female students were in general sitting together (Fieldnotes, 25/11/2014)

If you have observed me teaching the first year's tronc commun, there, you would have seen how things are done. There, maybe it's because they are first year students, they still have the behaviour of pupils from senior high schools. The class is a little bit noisy. You have to tell them every time "please, quiet." (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).

Even if you want to concentrate, you can see others discussing, joking or playing with their handsets. But, if it's a small number, even the teacher can control the class easily (John, 03/12/2014).

I know that as soon as the class is large, some students are just sitting for sitting. Only those who are really interested will emerge or participate, especially when the teacher is just dictating the lesson (Alice, 28/01/2015).

It's not that they don't like to use that technique. It is not easy for them to do that in this environment. Take for example the class of Master 2, there are almost seventy students. There are a lot of students. And this is one of the big problems they have (Jacks, 15/01/2015).

You know that now teaching is student-centred. Now, in our classrooms, in our school systems, we have huge classrooms. As you know, it's over 60 students, average. It's difficult to have students who work in groups or in pairs. Sometimes even the sitting arrangements will not allow that. So, with all this, it's not easy to put into practice our ideas (Dr Sam, 04/02/2015).

Class Attendance

For courses we call lectures, students might miss class. It's not a problem. But other courses like English Phonetics, those are mandatory. The words we use are TD, TP – travaux dirigés, travaux pratiques. If you miss classes more than three times, you cannot even pass. But for other courses like mine, which is not a TD, it's not a TP, students are not penalised. They [teachers] cannot tell them [students], "Because you haven't been coming, you cannot take the exam." (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).

I don't have a regular time of work. I work as a shift. I have to be there in the morning, then the next day in the afternoon or in the night. So what I do, if I work in the night, the next morning, despite of my tiredness, I try to be here on time and take the course. And also, sometimes I have to ask my colleagues. They used to help me. If I really have an important course and that I should attend, I just explain to one of them. I say, "Please take my place this time, because I have this course to do. And next time, I take your shift." This is how I manage (Joseph, 06/01/2015).

Many are not teaching in Niamey. They go to some villages around. Maybe for coming and going, the time is not suitable (Roukaya, 16/01/2015).

This year, because I don't want to mix the two Masters…Master 2 here and there also…I want to do something in Master 1 again. I didn't start yet, but I want to do Business Management. The first one, Computer Science, it was a course of 'Licence' (Jacks, 15/01/2015).

Many of the students are registered in other institutes taking professional courses to either become computer specialists or administrators and bank managers (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).

Every teacher has his/her own policy, but there is a basis among them. There are some principles which are common to everyone. We know that "do not come late or be absent" is policy; "do not let your phone ring" is also policy. "If you are absent, you have to justify." This is also policy. We know that "three absences without justifications mean not attending final exam." …. This is something we hear, but it's not all the teacher educators that are so strict on that. I cannot certify there is a written and commonly accepted policy, but what we hear from our teachers is what we consider to be policy (Emanuel, 05/12/2014).

A class is a class! So if the texts are done and if the texts are clear that students must attend the class, I think they are going to attend the classes. So, this is one. Two, we must, still with the texts, show that a student who does not attend classes normally must not pass his exam. And if you miss the first session, you must not be allowed to take the second session (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).

John: *There is a policy but they don't apply it.*
Researcher: *Have you ever seen it?*
John: *No, I haven't!*

In a course we need two types of person: a lecturer and a student. If the student is not obliged to come, the lecturer alone, can he/she come and make his/her course? No! (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).

In our classes, it's compulsory. You are obliged to follow the course for the two subjects. We have one teacher, for her you are obliged to come. She cannot accept this kind of absences (Salim, 03/02/2015).

You will be punished! I mean, she can give you zero if you are absent (Salim, 03/02/2015).

Many of the students live in town. So, the different cars, the different buses that transport students are not sufficient. The buses are overfull when they come (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).

The buses are not coming on time, mainly in the morning. Even if the teacher comes, he/she is obliged to wait for students coming. The principal cause is the buses (Alou, 04/12/2014).

It was 8:00 am on November 17th; I arrived to the room where the class regularly takes place. This was the second time I recorded data from that class. The room was already full of students, and there was no free chair or table available. That time I was not lucky! I had to go out – to other places within the faculty – to look for a chair. I went to the room next door, but still no chair. I then went to a spot where students usually meet to do some out-of-class group works. There, I found one, which wasn't yet taken by other students looking for seats. My problem was solved but only partly: there was still no table on which I could lean to write comfortably. Throughout the whole session, my observation notes were recorded using my thighs in place of a table (Field notes, 17/11/2014).

We have a problem of rooms, a problem of chairs. I noticed the number of students increases every year. We have more than 3000 students this year in the first level. We

don't have any room that can contain 3000 students. Even for 1000, we don't have. The largest room we have can contain only 500 students (Dr Kader, 29/11/2014).

I arrived to the room around 7:55 am. The room is large, about 10x15 meters of size. It is a dusty room and many of the tables and chairs in it are rusty. There were five fans out of eight working in order to refresh the air. The light in the room was provided by few bulbs and the sunlight which penetrates through the opened windows. By that time, some students were already inside while others were standing outside, waiting for the professor. I managed to secure a table at the back of the room, but there was no chair to seat on. Unexpectedly, there was a kind-hearted student who, upon seeing me coming, went to another room to get a chair for me. It was very noticeable in that room that there weren't many chairs for everyone. The rule of "first come, first get the chairs and front places" was ubiquitous there. Those who arrived early took the opportunity to book places for themselves and also for their friends coming later. All it takes was to place a token (a notebook generally) on the chair. Because of this situation, there was a constant movement of students going to other rooms or places within the faculty to look for chairs. At a certain time, I realize the room would hardly contain everyone (Fieldnote, 10/11/2014)

Most of the classrooms were built to hold between 50 to 60 students maximum. And when you have between 80 to 90 students in a classroom designed to contain 50 to 60 students…you see the problem? And this is the case in all my classes, except the one you have been observing (Dr Paul, 08/01/2015).

You have to go somewhere to search for something. You know, after the courses here, generally teachers give us documents to photocopy. If you have no money, you are obliged to go and see other ways to make money (Alou, 04/12/2014).

When one has not eaten or is in need, one is obliged to go and seek the money that is necessary to eat instead of coming to school. That is the case of most of our comrades (Oro, 16/01/2015).

Students' Reluctance to Speaking

It's difficult to see students from English Department speaking English all the time. They most of time prefer to speak French or Hausa or Zarma (Emanuel, 05/12/2014).

Any time you try to speak English with a student, they have this attitude of shying away or not speaking because he/she feels he/she is going to make mistakes or something like that (Minas, 14/01/2015*).*

I am afraid to go and… Sometimes, when we go there, we just find the students who are in the Master's level and we… we are just in the first or second year. You see, it's not very easy for us to speak very well like them. Personally that is my reason (Aisha, 08/01/2015).

Many of them don't use the language. The few students who use the language they find themselves among students who are laughing at them because they are making mistakes or because they are struggling to find words (Dr Kadidja, 29/12/2014).

Even if you try to do that, some of our friends will see you as someone who is showing off (John, 03/12/2014).

Before, our government used to send people to English speaking countries, but nowadays it's not the case. We stay only here in Niger (Alou, 04/12/2014).

In the programme, we have debates; we also have discussions. We have local and international excursions. For the local excursion, it's just to have a sit-in in Niamey or around Niamey, just to have some debates and discussions. We have also been organising debates and discussions, but the problem is that people are not attending (Sheik, 14/01/2015).

They sometimes come to the lecture theatre and ask students to be regular in the club; it may help us. But sometimes students don't like to go there. I don't know why (Aisha, 08/01/2015).

We have the English Club that is here, but none of us…we really have the card, but we do not usually go to the club. That is the problem (Grace, 08/01/2015).

Around 9:40, there was a student, apparently not a member to that class, who came in, talked to the representative, and started announcing an initiative for improving English speaking skills. Nonetheless, his announcement was not welcome. People were busy finishing their assignment, which was due in about 15 minutes (Fieldnotes, 17/11/2014)

We don't have a kind of common goal; some are professionals, and others only come to school to attend class and go home. So, it's difficult to get them around one objective, which is the English proficiency (Joseph, 06/01/2015).

We are learning English literature, African drama and everything like that….Shakespeare… So, these are plays we are learning, but for me it will be better if the programme has the means to take these kinds of course and to see how to make them practical in order to perform them. It can be a part of a course. Maybe it's free now for everyone to decide to be in a club, but if it's something compulsory for students… (Emanuel, 05/12/2014).

Most of them prefer not to talk. They prefer just to come and sit in class and then when it's the time for the quiz, to write their quiz and give it to you (Kadidja, 29/12/2014).

But I think the university should provide some activities like conferences, even interclass competitions and from time to time discussions about English….interchange between teachers and students around interesting topics which can give students the desire…. (Emanuel, 05/12/2014).

English as a Foreign Language, the only place where students can practise or have the opportunity to use the language is in class. So, give them this maximum opportunity to practise (Dr Sam, 04/02/2015).

Even last time one of our teachers was expressing his disappointment about that. He said people go to the ACC to take courses and have an English-speaking environment. There are some people doing Licence here. They go there to the same level with people coming like random. They don't even have this level. When doing the course and during the interaction, you feel like the level is the same. So he was pointing at the responsibility of students. Why did they fail to talk, to show that they come from an English department? So, that is really a problem, but for the verbal interactions, the students are the ones to blame (Jacks, 15/01/2015).

what I have noticed is that our students, in our system, they start English from 6e all the way to Terminal, but when they can read very well, they can write very well, they can listen maybe not vey well, but when it comes to speaking, they are stuck. It's because they don't have this opportunity to communicate (Dr Sam, 04/02/2015).

because when you sit and just follow the course, people will never speak English. They will just sit down and look, but if it's in a group everyone is going to participate and give his own views. And if it's an English class, everyone is going to improve his language (Roukaya, 16/01/2015).

Appendix B: Sample Interview Transcript

Researcher: Thank you Dr Kadidja. There are few elements on which I want to extend my data. I have interviewed some Master 2 Language students; I learned their class is very small compared to Master 2 Literature. In Language, they are 12, and in Literature, they are more than 50. I wonder if there is a limitation to the number in each section.

Participant: There is no limitation. Students are free to choose literature or language. At the beginning, when we started the two sections, we had more students in Language than in Literature. And I tried to inquire about it, and most students told me there is less reading in Language than in Literature. I don't know the reasons why things have changed. I don't know if it has to do with grades or… I didn't inquire about that, but now I realised there is a change. There are more students in Literature than in language. I can only think of one reason, the fact that we have more teachers who specialised in literature than in language. That could be a reason; because if students choose to be in Language, chances are that they are going to have only two possibilities; because there are only two teachers. The other teachers have specialised in literature. And, since we have a limited number of teachers that can advise the students, anybody who chooses to be in language, it is possible for the student to have difficulties finding an adviser than if the student decides to be in Literature. That could be one reason. For the moment it's the only reason I can think of.

Researcher: So, is it a regulation here to have more literature teachers than language?

Participant: No, it's not regulation. It's just something that happened like that. When we finished our studies and came here, it happened that most of us were specialists in literature at that time. It's not something that has been planned intentionally.

Researcher: Ok! Since there is an issue in terms of supervision, is there any plan to recruit teachers specialised in language education?

Participant: We do have plans, but really… You know, the plans to be effective, it's politically-dependent. It depends on the government; it's a financial issue. Right now, we are going to have one more teacher. This is going to be a specialist in education. So, he might handle students who want to write their theses in language issues.

Researcher: Ok, I see. You already gave me some information about LMD. This has been implemented since 2008. I am wondering if there exists an evaluation mechanism in place.

Participant: There are people progressively doing the evaluation; because within every faculty, people have been appointed as LMD Committees. So, those people are doing the evaluation. And this is the reasons we are continuously bringing some changes, changes that sometimes create more problems than what we intend to solve. What we have known this year is an example – the fact that students were complaining about some courses that have been cancelled.

Researcher: So how do the committees work? Is it like they ask questions to people within the departments?

Participant: Every year, there are workshops that are organised based on the experience of the year or of two years, and we try to fix things. It's been going on for years now.

Researcher: Ok. How about course evaluation, to ensure quality?

Participant: You mean by students?

Researcher: Yes, kind of..

Participant: Here we don't have anything like that. But right now there is a committee that is being established. It's something that is been done in all the universities that are members of RESAO. It's called Cellule Assurance Qualité. So, it's now that we are trying to establish this committee; it is the committee that will be in charge, later on, of any evaluation of programmes in different faculties and schools. But it is being done right now. They have asked us certain Data and there is some research that is going on. Some people have been designated from each faculty or school, and they are working on it. But it is something that is demanded by CAMES.

Researcher: Ok! Last time, you gave me the list of courses offered by the English Department. Were those courses designed and approved locally or by RESAO?

Participant: It's locally that they have been chosen through our different meetings. You know, we have department board meetings. So, it's through those meetings that we decided that those are the courses we would like to put in our programme. Of course we looked at the different courses in other English departments in some Anglophone countries like Ghana, Nigeria, even in Senegal.

Researcher: Ok! I have one question related to your class, the one I observed. I noticed the presence of non-Niger citizens.

Participant: Yeah, we have people from Nigeria… Have you seen the Turkish students?

Researcher: Yeah, absolutely! That is why I am asking. Is there like an approximate number of those Non-Niger citizens?

Participant: I don't know how many, but I think most of them are in our department. I don't know if they could be more than twenty. No, below! It's really a recent phenomenon. This has been for four or five years. I think it is linked with their country's policy of trying to reach out to African countries.

Student diversity/ EIL

Researcher: I definitely understand! My last question is about research. Are there research opportunities?

Participant: It's really something personal. I should add that for a long time, research has been neglected; because people do not have any financial support. So, this is why it's something personal. Especially, when we left CAMES in the 80s! So, people were not very much into trying to do it, to progress through research. It's only recently when we went back to CAMES that teachers realise that for promotion they really have to make some research and publish. And recently, there is also a policy trying to find some money for teachers who are willing to undertake some research. From time to time, if you submit something to the administration, you might get some assistance; because they are putting that in the budget. But, it's a recent phenomenon. This is the reason why research is not really very important…for a long time it was not important, but right now, people are trying to publish. It's really on a personal basis. There is no one who is going to tell you that you have to do X amount of research and Y amount of teaching. But you have to do your teaching; because that is how you are going to justify your pay.

Research / Personal basis

Research / Lack of

Research / Career Adv.

Research / funding

Research / Personal basis

Researcher: So, research is not a requirement, like every year you have to publish?

Participant: It's not a requirement, but if you don't do it you are not going to get a promotion. It seems also if you become Maitre-Assistant, then it's like tenure. So, once you get tenure, you feel secure. So, some people if they get tenure, they feel they just have to do their teaching. That depends on the person. Beyond getting tenure, which you get as soon as you become Maitre-Assistant, there are also levels…you have to be Maitre de Conf. then Professeur Titulaire, and there is also a change in the salary too.

Research / Career Adv.

Research / Personal basis

Research / Career Adv.

Researcher: Do teaching activities enable teachers to do research?

Participant: I wouldn't say it really allows teachers to do much research. But since it's linked to your own advancement, you have to find the time. But teachers are really overloaded; because apart from what the legislation says – that there is a certain amount of courses to handle – you have to do more than that. You can't say "Ok, regulation

Research / Workload

says every year I should have three courses and I am going to do just those three courses"; because we don't have enough teachers. This is the reason why people are overloaded. So, you are going to have the amount that is required, and then you will have to do what we call 'cours complementaires,' simply because there are no teachers. For example, among all the full-time teachers, it is only Dr X who from last year has stopped taking extra courses for health reasons. So, we have to see who can take his extra courses. There are some courses we cannot give to part-timers.

Researcher: You just mentioned 8 full-time teachers. Is it still the same number?

Participant: Yes!

Researcher: How many part-timers?

Participant: I think there are three part-time teachers.

Teacher shortage

Researcher: Ok, these are all the questions I have for the moment. Thank you so much, Dr Kadidja! Thank you for your time and support!

Participant: You are welcome! Good luck for the rest.

Appendix C: Access Letter

UEA
University of East Anglia

School of Education and Lifelong Learning

University of East Anglia
Norwich NR4 7TJ
United Kingdom

Head of English Department
Université Abdou Moumouni de Niamey
BP 418
Niamey, Niger

10 August 2014

Dear Madam

I am writing to request permission on behalf of **Mr Hamissou Ousseini**, one of our scholarship PhD candidates, to conduct his fieldwork within your institution (English Department).
Mr Ousseini is specialising in English language education and is currently exploring the possibility of using action research in Niger EFL programs. In conducting the fieldwork, **Mr Ousseini**'s primary goal is to learn about and understand the educational practices within your programme. The insights garnered from the fieldwork will constitute a fundamental part of his PhD thesis.

There are four main components to **Mr Ousseini**'s fieldwork. These include activities such as classroom observations, interviews, workshops, and action research experiments. His research proposals and data collection methods have been reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of East Anglia. As such, the fieldwork activities are planned in ways that respect the rights and privacy of the programme and participants. For your information, please find attached a short description of the research project and also the personalised information sheets for participants. As you will see from the description of the research project, this is *not* an evaluation of the programme or its personnel, but rather it aims to understand and learn how teaching is conducted and to explore the scope and possibilities of action research.

I do hope that you will provide **Mr Ousseini** with the support to learn from your programme and thank you in advance for facilitating his research. I remain at your disposal should you require any further information relating to this research project.

Yours faithfully

Dr Nalini Boodhoo
Head of School of Education and Lifelong Learning
N.Boodhoo@uea.ac.uk
+44 (0)1603 592630
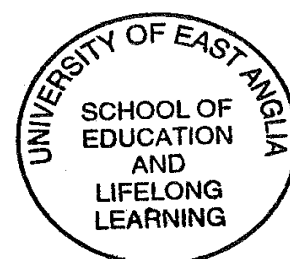
CONSENT FORM

Becoming an EFL Teacher in a Developing Country: A Qualitative Case Study from the Republic of Niger

I have read and understood the information about this study.

Please tick the relevant box.

I am willing to take part in the study.

I am not willing to take part in the study.

I am willing to be video-recorded as part in the study.

I am willing to be audio-recorded as part in the study.

Your Name: ……………………………………

Your Signature: …………………………………………………………….

Date: ……………………………………………..

Appendix E: Institutional Verification Letter

UNIVERSITE ABDOU MOUMOUNI DE NIAMEY

Niamey, le 26 Août 2016

FACULTE DES LETTRES ET SCIENCES HUMAINES

DEPARTEMENT D'ANGLAIS
Téléphone : (+227) 96-18-38-64
Fax : 20-31-58-62
E-Mail : flshuam@intnet.ne
Télex : UNIM 5258 NI
NIF : 5713
Mail Box: 418 – NIAMEY
NIGER

Le Chef du Département, pi

Dear Hamissou Ousseini,

In my capacity as acting chair of the Department of English at the Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines at the Université Abdou Moumouni of Niamey I certify that the content of your PhD research does not put either our Department or our University at any risk whatsoever. We were very happy to welcome you back for your research and are looking forward to having you back as soon as possible. On behalf of the English Department, I wish you a very good luck for your upcoming defense.

Dr Chaibou Elhadji Oumarou

Associate Professor of African Literature
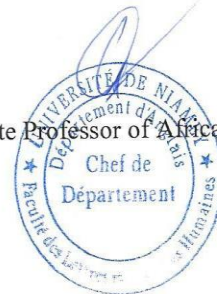
Appendix F: Bachelor's Level Structure

Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines

DEPARTEMENT D'ANGLAIS

: Langues, Littératures, Arts et Communication (LLAC)

: Langue Anglaise, Littératures et Civilisations (LALC)

B.A. Program 2014-2015

Semester 2:

Core[1] Courses:

ANG 101   Introduction to English Phonetics

ANG 102   English Grammar I

ANG 103   Introduction to African Literature

2 Electives from other Departments

Semester 3:

Core Courses:

ANG 205   American Literature

ANG 206   Teaching English as a Foreign Language (T.E.F.L.)

ANG 207   Introduction to American and British Civilizations (ECU)

ANG 208   African Drama

1 Elective from other Departments

Semester 4:

Core Courses:

ANG 201   Practical Phonetics

ANG 202   English Grammar II

ANG 203   African Novel

ANG 204   Composition and English-French Translation (ECU)

1 Elective from other Departments

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[1] A Core Course is a compulsory or obligatory course for ALL the students at the English Department.

Semester 5:

Core Courses:

ANG 305   English-French Translation

ANG 306   British Literature (ECU: Theatre and Novel)

ANG 307   Pre-Colonial African Civilizations

ANG 308   African Oral Literatures

1 Elective from other Departments

Semester 6:

Core Courses:

ANG 301   English Phonetics and Phonology

ANG 302   English Grammar III

ANG 303   African Female Writers

ANG304   Advanced Composition and Literary Stylistics (ECU)

1 Elective from other Departments

Appendix G: Master's Level Structure

Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines
DEPARTEMENT D'ANGLAIS

Domaine : Langues, Littératures, Arts et Communication (LLAC)

Mention : Langue Anglaise, Littératures et Civilisations (LALC)

Master of Arts in English

Master 1

Semester 1:

Core Courses

ANG 401	English Phonetics and Phonology for Language Learning and Teaching.
ANG 402	Masterpieces of American and British Literature (ECU)
ANG 403	Research in Literary Methodology
ANG 404	Literary Theory and Criticism

1 Elective from other Departments

Semester 2

Core Courses:

ANG 405	Comparative Literature
ANG 406	Theory and Practice in Teaching Methodology
ANG 407	Masterpieces of African Drama
ANG 408	Canon Formation and the Masterpieces of African Novels

1 Elective from other Departments

Master 2:

Language or Literature and Civilization Options:

Language Option:

Semester 3 (30 cr.):

ANG 501	Issues in Teaching English in a Francophone Environment
ANG 502	Technical and Professional English
ANG 503	Business Writing
ANG 504	Guided Thesis Writing I [Topic Proposal and a Tentative Annotated Bibliography)
ANG 505	Guided Thesis Writing II[Research and Literature Review on the Accepted Topic]

Semester 4: (30cr)

ANG 506	Thesis Guidance
ANG 507	Thesis Guidance
ANG 508	Thesis Guidance
ANG 509	Thesis Guidance
ANG510	Thesis Guidance

Literature and Civilization Option:

Semester 3: (30cr)

ANG 511	The Interface between African Oral and Written Literatures
ANG 512	The Interface between African and African American Literatures (ECU)
ANG 513	The Interface between Africa and World Civilizations
ANG 514	Guided Thesis Writing I [Topic Proposal and a Tentative Annotated Bibliography]
ANG 515	Guided Thesis Writing II [Research and Literature Review on the Accepted topic]

Semester 4: (30cr)

ANG 516	Thesis Guidance
ANG 517	Thesis Guidance
ANG 518	Thesis Guidance
ANG 519	Thesis Guidance
ANG 520	Thesis Guidance

Appendix H: Sample Syllabus

<u>Syllabus</u>
<u>Course</u>: ANG 205-An Introduction to 19th Century American Literature
Class Hours:

Instructor:
Office Hours:
E-mail:

Course description and objectives

ANG 205 is an introductory course to 19th Century American Literature. The main objective of the course is to expose students to prominent American authors of this century through the short story. In the discussion of the selected authors we are going to examine the recurrent and major themes reflected in the literature of that period.
At the end of the course, students should be able to:
- identify and be familiar with the recurrent and major themes in the selected works;
- produce short critical analyses on the issues raised in the works;
- analyze a theme in the studied short stories or a short story of their choice.

Requirements from the students

- For each session, students will be given a homework assignment. They **must** come to class prepared to go over the assignment with the teacher.
- The teachers will spot-check or check the assignments and give extra credit to students who do their homework.

Grading

There will be a quiz on each story and short presentations by students. Though the presentations are optional, they will be evaluated. Students will get extra credit for their work.
There will not be a final exam. Students who do not pass the quizzes will have to take the re-sit exam (2eme session).

Required document
Course packet of selected works
NB. The packet is available with the teacher. You should borrow it to make your own.

Recommended Document
Highlights of American Literature. Available in the main library and at the English Club

Schedule

Week 1: Introduction-What is American Literature? "National Beginnings"
Highlights P 5-9

Appendix I: Sample Discussion Questions

Discussion Questions:

"Preface":

1. Pourquoi les écrivains Charles Nokan, A. Kourouma et Y. Ouologuem sont-ils considérés comme les pionniers de la rupture?
2. Pensez-vous, comme N'DA dans la préface, que la grande préoccupation des écrivains africains de nos jours doit être purement et simplement d'ordre esthétique ? justifier votre réponse.
3. Comment l'auteur de la préface aborde t-il la question de l'interface entre l'oral et l'ecrit ?
4. A partir du commentaire de N'DA a la page 11, comment pourriez-vous définir le postmodernisme ?
5. Quel est l'aspect de l'interface qui n'a pas été suffisamment discute dans les deux textes ?

« Oral Literature and Modern African Literature »

6. According to Okpewho, what shows the vitality of oral literature and illustrates the interface between the oral and written literature?

7. According to the article, why have modern African writers tended to identify with the literary traditions of their peoples in general, and with the oral traditions in particular?

8. What are the ways in which modern African writers have made their contributions to the indication of traditional African culture?

9. What were the consequences of the approach of the mid-19th-mid-20th centuries' European attitude on the oral literatures they collected and translated?

10. In the words of Okpewho, what distinguishes the way Mofolo presents emperor Chaka and the way Niane presents emperor Sundiata? What do you think may be the reason for the difference in the treatment of the two emperors?

11. Based on the comments made by Okpewho about the different translations or versions of Sundiata and the areas of interests of the translators, what conclusions can you draw on the cause-effect relationship between translators and the artistic or literary qualities of translated works?

12. According to the article, what does Liyong share with J.P. Clark?

13. What is adaptation, according to the text?

14. How does Okpewho demonstrate the existence of an interface between the oral and written literatures in his comment on the poem by p'Bitek where Ocol kisses Clemantina (p.303)? What is the technique used by Okpewho to describe the process of that interface?

15. Give two examples of interface from page 305.

16. What kind of interface is illustrated by the work of Tutuola discussed on page 311?

Appendix J: Sample Reading Quiz

Student's Name and ID number: ---

Circle the best answers:

1. D'après F. Lambert (p.55), ce qui caractérise la nouvelle esthétique romanesque africaine est
   a) Le décloisonnement générique b) le mélange des genres c) l'hybridité générique.
2. Selon Todorov (p.56), un genre littéraire n'est rien d'autre
   a) Que la codification des auteurs   c) que la codification des propriétés discurtives
   b) Que la codification des œuvres
3. Comme toute institution, nous dit Todorov (p.56), le genre littéraire est
   a) L'expression d'un style c) l'expression de l'idiologie ambiante
   b) L'expression d'une période artistique
4. Beaucoup de romanciers africains ont érigé le conte en modèle d'écriture parce que
   a) Il est le plus facile à imiter c) il est le plus représentatif de l'idiologie ambiante
   b) Il est le plus représentatif de la culture ambiante
5. L'oralité littéraire (p.56) est synonyme
   a) D'un genre oral c) d'un savant dosage des genres oraux
   b) D'un style oral
6. L'intégration des contes dans un récit romanesque apporte à ce dernier
   a) Une dimension ethnographique   c) une esthétique moderne
   b) Une vision du passé
7. Le conte est différent du mythe parce que ce dernier est le récit
   a) D'une histoire sacrée   b) d'une histoire lointaine   c) d'une histoire profane
8. Dans le roman La carte d'identité (p.62), le mirroir symbolise
   a) Le narcissisme b) la peur   c) l'identité
9. Selon l'auteur (p69), la légende présente
   a) Des faits historiques grossis c) des faits fictifs grossis
   b) des faits dramatiques grossis
10. D'après l'auteur de cet essai, la particularité des romans étudiés réside
    a) Dans leur cloisonnement générique
    b) Dans leur hybridité générique   c. Dans leur appartenance a un même continent
11. Selon Todorov (p.56), les textes individuels (par exemple les romans)
    a) Sont lus et analyses par rapport a la norme que constitue la récurrence institutionnalisée de certaines propriétés discursives
    b) Sont produits uniquement par rapport à la récurrence institutionnalisée de certaines propriétés discursives
    c) Sont produits et perçus par rapport à la norme que constitue la récurrence institutionnalisée de certaines propriétés discursives
12. Selon l'auteur de cet essai, la structure du conte oral africain est caractérisée par
    a) Un désordre bien pense

Appendix K: Sahel University's Funded Research Agenda

Programmes de recherche

Qualité des eaux
Epuration des eaux usées
Pollution des aquifères superficiels et profonds
Defluoruration des eaux souterraines
Corrosion des eaux sur les infrastructures hydrauliques

Environnement
Modèle de transport de poussière au sahel
Photodégradation des pesticides dans la vallée du fleuve NIGER
Pression anthropique et changement global sur les flux sédimentaires en zone sahélienne

Développement
Microfinance
Secteur informel et politique économique
Impact des systèmes de production sur les terrasses du fleuve et de Gorouol
Activités pastorales en zone agricole
Evaluation du potentiel minier de MAKALONDI
Promotion du phosphate naturel de Tahoua
Valorisation du minerai d'étain de l'Aïr
Valorisation des ressources minérales du bassin de Tim Mersoï
Réalisation d'un herbier national

Sécurité alimentaire
Régénération naturelle et valorisation alimentaire du pommier de Cayor
Embauche ovine et amélioration des productions laitières et bouchères par croisement de races bovines locales et exotiques
Diagnostic phytosanitaire de la patate douce
Sécurité alimentaire et aliments alternatifs
Développement, évaluation et dissémination de nouvelles variétés de mil à haut rendement
Problèmes parasitaires et promotion de la culture de la pomme de terre au NIGER

Santé humaine
Activité antimalariale de certaines plantes du NIGER et lutte contre le paludisme
Etude pharmacologique et physiologique de plante antivenimeuse de la pharmacopée traditionnelle
Etude des plantes antidiabétiques utilisées au NIGER

Sciences de l'Education
Déterminants de la volonté d'enseigner au cycle de base 1 au NIGER
Evaluation et rendements scolaires au NIGER
La didactique du français aujourd'hui

Culture
La pensée islamique face à la modernité
Manuscrits ajami en Haoussa
Traitement automatique du langage naturel
Le cousinage à plaisanterie : mécanisme traditionnel de prévention des conflits intercommunautaires
Genre et immigration africaine
Interculturalité et identité à travers les littératures francophones

Démocratie et droits de l'homme
La problématique du recours à la justice au NIGER
Recueil des lois de la République
La problématique de la consolidation de la démocratie et de la paix en Afrique : cas du NIGER
Droit de grève et liberté syndicale au NIGER
Droit de l'homme en milieu rural nigérien