

**TSTT 2023 International Conference**  
**Rethinking How We Train**

# **Teachers of Tomorrow**

**15–17 September 2023**

**BOOK OF ABSTRACTS**



  
**Charles  
University**



**FACULTY  
OF EDUCATION**  
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# **TSTT 2023: International Conference Rethinking How We Train Teachers of Tomorrow**

Teacher training programs worldwide face long-standing challenges, including the theory-practice gap and the integration of digital technologies and innovative approaches. This conference provided a platform to address these challenges and explore effective approaches for bridging the theory-practice gap in teacher education.

Key themes discussed included digital literacy, gamification in teaching, inclusive education with technology, and innovative pedagogical approaches for second language teaching. Additionally, sessions focused on assessment and evaluation strategies enhanced by digital technologies and technology-enhanced Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).

The conference fostered meaningful collaboration among educators from diverse backgrounds, providing networking opportunities to scholars worldwide and facilitating insightful discussions to shape the future of teacher training for teachers of tomorrow. We invite you to explore the conference book of abstracts for more insights.



# Foreword

*Kenan Dikilitas*

The interface between theory and practice in teacher education has often been a topic of debate in the field, mainly because research conducted with, on, and for teachers has been informed by theories and aims to inform teachers. However, while this is the ultimate aim, there is still a need for facilitating that connection more explicitly. Whose responsibility is that? Teachers', teacher educators', or researchers'? My answer is multifaceted and is based on a continuing collaboration among all.

First of all, teachers need to engage in and with research by reading, using, and conducting research to access recent research-driven knowledge generated across the field. In theory, this is often found in teacher education strategies in many European countries, while in practice, there is still a lack of a culture of research-rich classrooms and course designs that prioritize research as content, practice, process, and product. Teachers need mentoring on how to approach research as learning materials. Since empirical and conceptual research they can read includes theory, they should be familiar with the common theoretical perspectives in their field, as this is systematically integrated into their course content. Such activities require them to assume diverse roles as they learn to become teachers. For example, they could be positioned as researchers of their practicum or as learners and active contributors to the research conducted by their educators. In such research, they can be active participants and engage in the research process as collaborators. These dual positions can prepare them to learn to conduct research and perceive their identity as researchers as well. However, in many research practices, they are seen as sources of information or data where they are exploited for their views, judgments, beliefs, and practices. This hardly supports their development of a researcher identity; moreover, they might find this off-putting since the influence of such research participation may discourage them from becoming researchers. It is therefore important that teachers are given opportunities to find meaningful knowledge throughout their participation in research in multiple roles such as researchers, co-researchers, co-inquirers, co-designers, reflective learners, reflective writers, inquirers, critical thinkers, critical friends, problem solvers, and research collaborators (See Jensen & Dikilitas, 2023).

Similarly, teacher educators need to develop their courses or curriculum around diverse research orientations and make their teaching research-based. According to Jenkins and Healey (2005), such a curriculum needs to prioritize inquiry-based activities over the mere acquisition of content, integrate research practices as learning activities, connect teacher-student roles, and facilitate two-way interactions between research and teaching. To achieve this purpose, Healey et al. (2014) suggest four orientations which teacher educators should consider. First, they could adopt a research-led approach where they develop course content led by the current and ongoing research in their discipline. Second, they could

adopt a research-oriented approach to develop students' knowledge and ability to learn and apply appropriate research methods. In these orientations, students learn and develop their research skills and enhance their understanding of relevant research. Third, they can organize their course design towards research-tutored orientations where students are engaged in research discussions. For example, such courses might initiate critical discussion of relevant research in a series of seminar-based sessions. Finally, they might adopt a research-based orientation for facilitating the process of students performing research and inquiry. For example, they engage students in conducting research and becoming producers of practical knowledge, not just consumers of it. The systematic integration of these research orientations in the learning process and in the curriculum could lead to greater learning outcomes and greater potential for teachers to assume roles such as researchers, inquirers, and research collaborators.

Researchers conducting research into teacher education and subject-specific disciplines could also undertake the responsibility to make their research outputs accessible to teachers. This might include providing practical implications of their findings which teachers can understand and use. They can create summaries where they discuss their findings in simple terms and involve teachers in these discussions. Many teachers do not read research since academic research is often difficult to understand due to commonly used academic jargon and conceptually sophisticated terminology. Therefore, there is still a need for simplifying research outputs into reader-friendly formats and making them openly accessible to teachers.

To bridge the divide between theory and practice, teachers, teacher educators, and researchers need to build channels through which they can communicate their needs, intentions, and expectations. Research activities serve as catalysts for mediating that interface and could contribute to the understanding of theoretical perspectives created by academic research. Teachers and teacher educators as practitioners need to closely collaborate with researchers, and vice versa. Such cooperation might make research more meaningful and purposeful, directly contributing to the practices performed in educational contexts. Teachers and teacher educators need to be recognized as key stakeholders in research activities, where their voices and choices are listened to and embedded in research designs and outputs more inclusively.

This conference has marked a milestone in the Czech Republic, where teachers, teacher educators, and researchers gather not only to discuss potential ways of bridging the theory-practice connections but also to explore possibilities for further collaboration. Such events in public spaces, where researchers are encouraged to meet teachers and teacher educators, need to be organized systematically to offer opportunities for practitioners to raise their voices. Such conferences will then become a venue for challenging the gap between researchers and practitioners, who are the key actors in bridging the divide between theory and practice. We can only address the theory-practice gap by bringing people together, rather than conducting research without involving the voices of practitioners and accommodating their pedagogical needs.

It is my hope that teachers are invited to take part in such conferences and are given space to share their pedagogical challenges and discuss them with researchers who publish research about their practical world.

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## **PART I**

# **Education Unveiled: Analyzing Theories, Practicing Strategies, and Gamification in Teacher Training**



# University Practice Partnerships: Sustainin Collaboration Across Learning Environments

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Many European countries are facing a shortage of suitably qualified teachers caused by an ageing teacher population and a high drop-out rate from new entrants to the profession (Ovenden-Hope & Passy, 2020). Traditionally, models of initial teacher education (ITE) are based upon partnerships which are led by universities as the ‘custodians’ of theoretical knowledge complemented by practical teaching experiences provided by their partner schools. Organisations with accreditation for providing initial professional studies must therefore continually balance the time available for theory, methodology and an expanding school curriculum with sufficient time for students to develop pedagogical skills in a classroom environment. In recent years, technological innovation in teaching methods combined with growing demands from 21st century policymakers and employers, has led to pressure for greater emphasis on school based ITE programmes. Consequently, established hierarchical partnership models based on the roles of schools as ‘suppliers’ of practical experience in response to the academic ‘demands’ of universities are now being challenged. At the same time, placing greater emphasis on the role of practical experience is in danger of diluting the importance of critical analysis and reflection upon theory within initial professional study programmes. Based upon a methodology of Appreciative Enquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987), teachers and lecturers from schools and universities in five European countries, used a four-phase model of Discover, Design, Deliver and Disseminate to refine a set of principles for effective collaborative work. The efficacy of these principles was tested by a series of small projects aimed at finding creative solutions to career difficulties faced by newly qualified as well as experienced teachers. The results of the research project revealed great potential for professional, personal and organisational development when partnerships explicitly recognise values such as ‘equality’ and ‘mutuality’. The research also analysed the basis for traditional partnership models and considered the benefits of ‘more democratic work in teacher education’ (Zeichner et al., 2014) when preparing teachers for a sustainable and rewarding career.

**Keywords:** Initial teacher education (ITE); schools; universities; partnerships; principles; relationships.

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# **The First Experiences of Future Teachers with The Environment Of Lower Secondary Schools And Upper Secondary Schools – Students’ Reflections As An Inspiration Of What To Focus On In Methodology Lessons**

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The submitted paper presents a case study of how students of the programme English Language Focused on Education of the Department of English Language and Literature of the Faculty of Education of the University of Hradec Králové perceived their first experience of attending schools as future teachers. Before attending schools, the students were given observation forms and a list of questions to be answered as a part of reflection of the introductory teaching practice. This paper has two aims. The first one is the qualitative analysis of how students kept lesson observation forms. The second aim is the qualitative analysis of the answers to the questions about the reflection of the days students spent at lower or upper secondary schools.

The results of this research should help the academicians who teach at the Department of English Language and Literature to discover what students consider to be the most important to focus in methodology classes.

The task of the students was to observe the course of the lessons (Wajnryb, 1992, p. 1). Students were given observation forms to be completed and the following question to be answered: Based on what you have observed and what you think a teacher’s knowledge and skills should be, what would you like to focus on in your methodology classes? The notes about lesson observations and the answers of the students to the first question were analyzed using the method of critical discourse analysis with the aim to find interpretative repertoires.

From the analysis of the lesson observation forms, the following repertoires were found:

- forms as a detailed description of everything that has happened during the lesson,
- forms as a source of inspiration for future teachers,
- forms as a source of inspiration for university teachers of methodology classes,
- forms as a form of critical point of view on how teacher mentors manage lessons

After the analysis of the students' answers, these repertoires about methodology classes were recognized:

- shift of focus of classes on working with particular activities and software,
- focus of classes on teaching students with different learning abilities,
- focus of classes on making working with textbooks more interactive and student-centered
- focus of classes on using digital technologies for particular activities

**Keywords:** future teachers, first experiences at schools, lesson observations, microteaching, methodology lessons

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# Using Measures Of Quality To Problematised The Purpose Of Initial Teacher Education: Lessons From A National Survey In Scotland

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Measuring Quality in Initial Teacher Education (MQuITE) was a six-year project, funded by the Scottish Government, with collaboration across all Scotland's ITE providers and the General Teaching Council. The project aimed to offer a 'health check' of ITE provision, establishing a methodology for measuring quality that would be relevant to the national context, and then conducting such measurements by tracking two cohorts of new teachers through their early careers. The toolkit, final report, and a range of research presentations are available at the project website [www.mquite.scot](http://www.mquite.scot). With the project concluded, this paper offers a reflection on how successful we were in the aim of creating context-relevant measures, a process we referred to as 'Scotifying' measures of quality (Kennedy, Adams, et al., 2021). 'Scotifying' began by taking an existing six-part framework for measuring the quality of ITE programmes (Feuer et al., 2013), separating measures into looking at the entry profile and retention of student teachers, how programmes are designed, how practicum is integrated into the programme, graduate employment, medium-term teacher retention, and the status of ITE within the host institution. All of these were deemed relevant, and we added a focus on university/school partnership and the profiles of teacher educators (Kennedy, Beck, et al., 2021), reflecting the aspirations for teacher education expressed in the Donaldson Report (Beck & Adams, 2020; Donaldson, 2011). A longitudinal survey tool was designed based on items from the OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey (Ainley & Carstens, 2018). In the spirit of measurement without ranking or competition and a desire to see the system as a whole, it was agreed by all stakeholders that data collected at the programme or institutional level would only be shared within those institutions and that only the project's research associate would have access to all of the dataset. As survey items were expanded from TALIS following stakeholder input, over 40 teacher efficacies were measured throughout the project, many across four years of comparisons. The headline finding was that there were no consistent areas of weakness and that persistent national narratives around a 'crisis' in literacy and numeracy (Humes, 2015; Scottish Government, 2017) were not shared by new teachers; indeed, these were the areas in which new teachers felt most prepared. Discussion soon turned to what values were reflected by what we deemed to be a 'good' score on any particular measure. For instance, new teachers feeling less prepared for teaching at the advanced stages of upper secondary was not seen as problematic by those who viewed ITE as the first stage of a teacher's professional learning. For those who expected teachers to be 'classroom ready', such a low rating might be seen as a deficiency.

Likewise, efficacy ratings for foreign language instruction or meeting the needs of English language learners were much lower than for other efficacies. This might be a concern given the parallel reduction in recruitment of overseas student teachers post-Brexit, but did not seem to ignite much debate when shared (Carver, 2020). Ranking efficacy ratings was helpful in moving beyond a positive/negative rating narrative. For instance, expressing that 10% of new teachers felt unprepared for teaching numeracy might be seen as a crisis of sorts. When coupled with this efficacy being the top-rated, the narrative shifts: if the figures in MQuITE show a numeracy crisis, then there must be an 'everything crisis'. Rankings also helped to structure a conversation around national priorities. Ratings for efficacy in adopting inclusive pedagogies were substantially higher across the Scottish sample than in OECD comparisons, at a typical score of 3.6/4.0. From this, it can be argued that measures of quality need to consider national and local 'signatures', so that programmes can decide for themselves their vision for the areas in which their teachers should excel and where the reputation of the programme or institution will be based. Analysis also expanded the range of measures of teacher retention to move away from measures such as attrition or wastage rate that are more commonly associated with brief teacher training programmes than the degree-length teacher education used in Scotland (Carver, 2021). From this broader perspective, that only 72% of new graduates expected to still be teaching in five years might be a concern for the teaching profession, but it is not necessarily a reflection of the quality of ITE – for this, measures such as course satisfaction more common in HE courses are more appropriate, and show a remarkable 90% satisfaction rate among the same teachers. Putting the two measures helps to move the retention conversation into a more interesting space – if so many teachers are happy with their choice of career, feel prepared and able in their job, and still feel that their degree studies were a good decision, why do so few expect to stay in the classroom for more than a few years? As the project has concluded, two aims remain. First was to offer some useful survey items and a guide to interpreting ratings that could be useful for formative evaluation at programme level (see [www.mquite.scot](http://www.mquite.scot)). Second, and the aim of this presentation, was to offer advice for research teams seeking to conduct similar large-scale evaluations of ITE. This advice can be summarised in three key recommendations. First is to establish stakeholder buy-in about what teacher efficacy measures are a priority, using OECD data to benchmark the areas commonly regarded as important and what a 'normal' score might look like. That TALIS offers its data freely is especially valuable for such benchmarking and helps to manage the temptation to ask too many questions and to constantly be refuting crisis narratives. The second recommendation is to engage more at programme-level to establish the priorities of individual programmes so that teacher educators can reflect on the aims of their programmes and how that might manifest in quantitative measures. Third is to broaden comparisons wherever possible, especially with demographic data, as the diversity of the teaching profession is of increasing relevance and deserves greater attention.

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# The Imperative For Transformative Revisions In Teacher Training Programs: Rationale And Methodological Considerations

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This study explores the compelling need for transformative revisions in teacher training programs, grounded in three primary rationales: 1) Shifting the educational landscape, 2) Enhancing student outcomes, and 3) Addressing inclusivity and diversity. In response to these imperatives, we delve into three methodological considerations for transformation: 1) Collaborative partnerships, 2) Pedagogical innovation, and 3) Continuous professional development. To enact these principles, we created an innovative approach within our Teacher Training program, specifically integrating a course on Curious Learning. The course implementation incorporates project-based learning, design thinking methodologies, and STEM learning environments. The study employs a dual-pronged analysis, combining qualitative insights from students' portfolios and lesson record microanalysis with quantitative data from a questionnaire. The questionnaire focuses on gauging participants' attitudes toward collaboration and cultivating a growth mindset within the learning process. This research contributes valuable insights into the efficacy of transformative pedagogical strategies, shedding light on their impact on educational paradigms, student performance, and promoting inclusivity and diversity in teacher training programs. Our research critically examines student motivation within primary level Teacher Training Programs (TTP) in Slovakia's educational landscape. The preliminary findings underscore a prevalent trend: students in Slovak schools predominantly exhibit external motivation (Kuruc, 2017), with their academic pursuits often driven by the desire to evade punishment or secure rewards. This pattern extends to mathematics education (Kuruc, 2021), where students in TTP for primary levels demonstrate a similar inclination towards externally motivated learning. Compounding this, a noteworthy discovery emerges from the Research report of the analyzed results from PIAAC online about Slovak teachers' perspectives (NUCEM, 2021). Most educators in Slovakia do not prioritize cultivating curiosity as an essential element for effective learning. This insight prompts a deeper inquiry into the dynamics shaping the motivational landscape within Slovak schools, particularly within TTP, and invites reflection on the potential ramifications for the educational journey of young minds in the region. Our methodology employs an inquiry-based research design (Fraenkel, 2011), anchoring our exploration of transformative revisions in teacher training programs. Guided by three key rationales—Shifting the educational landscape, Enhancing student outcomes, and Addressing inclusivity and diversity—we integrate Collaborative Partnerships, Pedagogical Innovation

(project-based learning, design thinking and STEM), and Continuous Professional Development. Embedded within our Teacher Training program, notably in the Curious Learning course, our inquiry-based approach complements qualitative analyses of students' portfolios and microanalyses of lesson records. Simultaneously, we utilize a tailored questionnaire to quantitatively assess participants' attitudes toward collaboration and embracing a growth mindset. This inclusive methodological design enriches our understanding of the transformative impact on teacher training, emphasizing the importance of inquiry-based approaches in shaping adaptive and effective educational practices. Implementing the Curious Learning course within the Teacher Training Program (TTP) yielded significant outcomes aligned with the program's overarching objectives. Our findings reveal a transformative impact on students' self-perception and attitudes towards collaboration and learning mindset. Through engagement with the Curious Learning course, students exhibited a notable shift in their self-image, gaining a more realistic assessment of their ability to collaborate effectively. The course provided a dynamic platform for students to experience firsthand the challenges and rewards of collaborative endeavors, fostering a more grounded understanding of their interpersonal skills. Moreover, the intervention positively influenced students' adoption of a growth mindset toward learning. The immersive nature of the Curious Learning experience prompted students to recognize the inherent challenges in autonomously controlling their learning journey. Despite the acknowledged difficulty, students reported a strong motivation derived from this autonomous control. Notably, the experience was described as positively shaping and, in some instances, physically demanding—a testament to the profound impact of the course on students' perception of self-directed learning. These results underscore the efficacy of the Curious Learning course in not only reshaping students' self-image but also instilling a motivated and growth-oriented mindset, aligning seamlessly with the goals of the Teacher Training Program. In conclusion, our comprehensive exploration of student motivation, pedagogical strategies, and transformative interventions within the Slovak Teacher Training Program (TTP) illuminates critical insights with profound implications for the educational landscape. The prevailing trend of external motivation observed among students in Slovak schools, coupled with a parallel inclination within the TTP mathematics education, underscores the urgency for intentional interventions. Acknowledging the widespread external motivators, the results emphasize the need for educational reforms that address the symptoms and the root causes of motivational challenges among students. The introduction of the Curious Learning course emerges as a pivotal stride in this direction. The course catalyzes students' realistic self-perception. It is a transformative force in shaping attitudes towards collaboration (Kaasila & Lauriala, 2010) and fostering a growth mindset (Dweck, 2017). Recognizing the challenges inherent in autonomous learning and the students' acknowledgment of its motivational potency signifies a paradigm shift in educational approaches. However, the noteworthy finding that many Slovak teachers need to prioritize promoting curiosity poses a critical reflection point. While the Curious Learning course demonstrates its efficacy in student outcomes, aligning educators' perspectives with the transformative potential of cultivating curiosity becomes imperative. Our research

underscores the intricate interplay between student motivation, pedagogical strategies, and the impact of transformative interventions. The results implore not only a reconsideration of existing educational paradigms but a concerted effort to align educators' visions with the evolving needs of students, ensuring a dynamic and responsive approach to education within the Slovak Teacher Training Program.

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**Keywords:** curious learning, teacher training program, project-based learning, design thinking

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# On the Way to a Competent Teacher – A Tool for Self-Reflection of Students of Pre-Primary Education

*Eva Koželuhová, Milas Podpera, Ondřej Koželuh  
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In recent years, in consideration of the concept of preparation for the teaching profession, the model of the teacher as a reflective practitioner has come to the fore (Korthagen et al., 2011; Spilková, 2005; Syslová, 2017; Višňovský, Kaščák & Pupala, 2006; Vítečková, 2018). The students are considered key actors in their own professional development (Vermunt & Verloop, 1999). The aim of the paper is to present a tool for students' reflection and self-reflection. The tool for students' reflection and self-reflection was created due to the need to individualise the training of future teachers and provide each student, at any stage of professional development, with adequate support. It builds on the gradual gradation of the difficulty of pedagogical practices, strengthening the importance of the accompanying teacher and structured self-reflection. The tool was implemented within all pedagogical practices of students in pre-primary education and verified through students' reflective reports (N = 91) at West Bohemia University in Pilsen. Data from reflective reports was analysed using open and thematic coding (Švaříček & Šedová, 2014). The results showed that the tool helps students think about their professional development, plan sub-steps, and set specific goals they want to achieve in the development of their professional competences. At the same time, it turned out that the students chose different goals for their development, which they focused on during the given pedagogical practice, which corresponded to their different initial knowledge and experience.

**Keywords:** Initial professional studies; preschool teachers; self-reflection; competencies.

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# Innovative Practice in Initial Professional Studies of Pre-primary Education

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The transformation of the Czech education system since 1989 introduced many improvements in the conception, structure and content of Bachelor's degree programmes (Spilková, 2004; Syslová, 2017; Loudová et al., 2022; Loudová & Koželuhová, 2022). The aim of the paper is to present innovative teaching approaches to theoretical, methodological and practical modules implemented and resulted in positive feedback from students (N=185) and mentors (N=10) at the Charles University. Data were collected from student reflective reports and mentor questionnaires and analysed using open and thematic coding (Švaříček & Šedová 2014). The innovation created an interdisciplinary course integrating content from 6 sub-courses focusing on communication, language development and literacy. The course was linked to a course on teaching practice and ran progressively over 2 semesters in cooperation of 3 teacher of different disciplines. The students rate the opportunity to learn in the context of real-life practice in pre- schools as the biggest advantage of this innovative approach. Student evaluations show that the changes made have been positively received. The diversity in the lecturers' perspectives on the subject provides students with a comprehensive overview. Mentors appreciated that students were able to respond to children's interests and use group and cooperative activities to encourage self-reflection.

**Keywords:** Initial professional studies; pre-school teachers; innovative practice; university didactics; interdisciplinary approaches.

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## **PART II**

# **Exploring Innovative Frontiers in Education: From Neuroimaging to Intercultural Collaboration**



# A Crucial Area to Train the Teachers about: Engagement in Research

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Research engagement by teachers has been gaining momentum in recent years since teachers are deeply influenced by the process of researching in multiple ways. In this study, we sought to discover the research engagement levels of EFL teachers in Turkey. It is a quantitative study, and the data was collected from 274 EFL teachers working at K-12 schools and universities in Turkey. To collect the data, we developed and validated the Teacher Research Engagement Scale (TRES), and used it as the data collection tool. The data was collected online in order to reach out as many participants as possible in various parts of Turkey. The research engagement of EFL teachers was examined under various domains such as engagement in critical reflection, conducting, disseminating, and following research findings. The findings were analyzed using SPSS through descriptive and inferential statistics. The overall scores from the survey indicated that the engagement of the participants in research was low, with the mean score of 36.08 while the total score that can be taken is 96. Furthermore, it was found out that the scores of the participants from the subdomains of the survey were also low. The findings were also examined to see the impact of the demographic variables on the research engagement scores of the participants, and it was found out that while where they work at, their educational status played a significant role on the research engagement scores of the participants, whether they graduated from an ELT department and if they took a research method course at BA level were found to have no significant effect on their scores from TRES. The findings from the survey displays that there is a significant need to train the teachers of tomorrow in a way to develop a researcher mindset.

**Keywords:** research engagement, teacher research, reflection through research.

# **Connected Learning – Implementing International And Intercultural Online Student Collaboration, Focused On 21st Century Skills**

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Connected Learning, as exemplified in the project “Connected Learning - implementing international and intercultural online student collaboration, focused on 21st-century skills,” presents an educational framework capitalizing on digital technology and networked environments to craft dynamic learning experiences. Rooted in scientific and theoretical foundations drawn from education, sociology, psychology, and technology, this methodology embraces several key principles. Social Learning Theory underscores the importance of social interaction and collaboration, allowing students from diverse backgrounds to engage online, fostering a democratic culture in classrooms (Baker, Kassimer, 2021). As a result, the implementation of Connected Learning transcends traditional classroom boundaries, promoting inclusivity and diversity while preparing students for a globally interconnected future. Constructionist Learning theories align with hands-on, experiential activities, enable students to actively construct knowledge through cross-border collaborative projects and enhance critical thinking skills. In a digitally connected world, Digital Literacy takes precedence within Connected Learning, emphasizing information literacy, media literacy, and digital communication skills. Expert teachers from Iceland and Poland have been collaborating to design Connected Learning Units, guiding students in navigating digital content, communicating effectively online, and cultivating essential digital literacy skills. Aligned with Participatory Culture, Connected Learning encourages active contribution, creation, and engagement within a global learning community. Moreover, the framework emphasizes the importance of student agency in shaping their learning journeys, promoting self-directed inquiry, and instilling a sense of responsibility for their educational pathways. Through engaging assignments, students produce content, collaborate globally, and share their work, fostering a sense of agency and ownership over their learning. Cultural-Historical Activity Theory emphasizes the role of cultural and social contexts, addressing gaps between in-school and out-of-school learning and promoting intercultural competence following CEFR and EU guidelines (2016). Furthermore, this theory serves as a foundation for developing assessments that authentically measure students’ intercultural competencies, ensuring a comprehensive evaluation of their skills and knowledge in a culturally diverse learning environment. This holistic approach integrates various concepts, including Technology-Mediated Learning and Interest-Driven Learning, creating a comprehensive education model that capitalizes on technology while fostering meaningful, socially embedded, and interest-driven learning experiences. In addition, the incorporation of Technology-Medi-

ated Learning ensures that students are not just consumers of digital content but active participants in the creation and application of technology, promoting a well-rounded skill set for the 21st century. High school English teachers are encouraged to connect globally via the Facebook group to collaboratively develop thematic units, providing an innovative and effective approach to

English language education. In addition to the Facebook group that can be joined at any time, two workshops will be organized in April 2024 to facilitate the exchange of best practices, ensuring continuous professional development for teachers, and enriching collaborative learning within the global high school English teaching community.

**Keywords:** Connected Learning, 21st-century Skills, Digital Literacy, Collaboration, Intercultural Competence

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# Linking Lab-Based Neuroimaging to Science of Teaching

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Testing the potential educational value of lab-based neuroimaging research by additional field studies is as yet uncommon, and described as ‘a nearly unexploited research frontier’ (Sigman et al., 2014; van Atteveldt et al. 2018). Bruer’s observation (1997) despite the advancement of scientific studies has lost none of its relevance even today: interest in how neuroscience could improve education has gone from marginal to central (Sander, 2021). Neurosciences and education, biology and cognitive sciences, while maintaining a rigorous epistemological link within their own scientific boundaries, may be interacting in understanding the role of the mind and brain in learning and teaching processes, offering new, perhaps even challenging contributions for the future and declining possible directions of study, including neuroeducation. The seductive fascination of neuroscience adheres to the idea that direct observation of the brain should be able to overcome conflicting opinions, since the findings come from the very source of the phenomenon being studied, brain data are considered, in fact, less ambiguous than behavioral data (Sander, Molinari, Gentaz, 2021). The focus on bridging different disciplines and the transferability of results is central to the re-centred debate on neuroeducation, and is, perhaps, one of the reasons that facilitates divergent positions (Matta, 2021; Feiler J.B., Stabio M.E. 2018). The basis of this study are the neuro-pedagogical theories in line with brain-based learning and the brain model of teaching: neurobiology of education; brain plasticity; brain-based studies in education; teaching and learning with the brain. Neuroscience and education, biology and cognitive sciences, while maintaining a rigorous epistemological link within their own boundaries, may be interacting in understanding the role of the mind and brain in learning and teaching processes, offering new, perhaps even challenging contributions for the future (Gola, 2021;2022). The aim of Link-Neuro project is to research and reflect on brain function and regions are activated during specific tasks, those instruction, procedures, applications that are most compatible with neural aspects, to encourage exercises and activities in teaching that help brain efficiency and activity, to space/span neuron activations, to encourage selective dimension to knowledge of Science of Teaching. The first three questions (a, b, c) responding to the first objective will be investigated through the activation likelihood estimation (ALE), integrating the neuroimaging literature in which coherent regions of activation are identified in the studies: What regions are typically engaged for a given function? What tasks elicit activation for a given brain regions? What other regions are coactivated for a given brain regions? The three meta- analyses were performed using the Activation Likelihood Estimation (ALE) approach as implemented in the software GingerALE. The



obtained maps where thresholded with a Bayesian method based on the minimum Bayes' Factor (Costa et al. 2023). This approach allows to correctly compute meta-analyses even when few experiments are available. A few studies have assessed univariate brain activity during closed-ended hypothesis generation (convergent thinking). Comparing data one can see how the phenomena of generating and understanding involve the activity of distinct regions of the brain, which represents, in some sense, a generic hypothetical reasoning process, actually collects some activation blobs from both sub-conditions, but leaves out more specific elements. Analyzing data at multiple levels of details can therefore capture more subtle details of cognitive phenomena. Hypothesis-understanding in this study refers to the thinking process of receiving new causal knowledge from a set of specific samples through inference based on an expository explanation. Hypothesis generation involves several cognitive subordinate processes, such as creative thinking: recognizing the cause and effect of a given questioning situation, searching for similar experiences, and finally determining an explanation for the situation. These processes are only possible when strong connections are made among regions in the human brain. According to recent neuroimaging studies, the brain structure of students can change during learning (Lee, Know 2011; Beaty et al., 2023) and teaching experience (Gola, 2023).

**Keywords:** Science of Teaching; Educational Neuroscience; NeuroEducation; Neuroimaging

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## **PART III**

# **Impact of Technology & Digital Literacies in Linking Theory with Practice**



# Risks of Inadequate Research on Young Children in Response to Technological and Innovative Research Trend

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There is an increasing momentum in hard sciences, particularly in technology fields, that is replacing universities as the source for research and development with giant companies. These companies have abundant sources of human capital, talent acquisition, and research conditions. Thus, they recruit, invest, improve, apply, and profit. They do and will actualize these developments by integrating and somehow asserting their existence in the lives of young children. We experience it through digital platforms, software, commercialized toys, and the increasing time they captivate from the lives of young children. However, social sciences, and particularly educational sciences dealing with young children, are nonresponsive and stall by spinning around the same traditional research topics, lack human and monetary capital, and fear going beyond traditional theories and theoreticians. Most of the research is not even innovative and stuck with the easiness of so-called qualitative methods. Thus, it has been in passive mode for the last twenty years and this results in risks for young children. This presentation is about the risks for young children of this hegemonizing and dominating technological exposure and the inadequacy and conservatism of current research in childhood education. Further implications will be shared and discussed.

**Keywords:** Innovative research in ECE, Reflections of High-Tech developments on ECE, Digital topics in ECE, Conservatism in ECE research.

# Digital Tools in Early Education: Preschool Teachers' Perspectives on Language Development of Young Children

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This study focuses on the utilization of digital technologies within the context of preschool education, as viewed through the lens of educators. Specifically, it concentrates on the integration of educational applications on digital devices that leverage gamification elements to develop language competencies among children in their native language. The objective was to find out teachers' perspectives on the digital technologies, of educational application features for children and their challenges and opportunities. Responses were collected from 78 preschool teachers from the Czech Republic using an on-line questionnaire, data was analyzed and discussed quantitatively in descriptive analysis. The study revealed that preschool establishments demonstrate a relatively commendable level of digital technology provisioning. Teachers mostly have a positive attitude towards their utilization, under conditions of limiting their use in time and type of content. Teachers mainly preferred features of applications that give children the possibility to determine their own progress and the simplicity of user control. Language is a crucial tool for an individual's development in every aspect of his life. As a young child, our understanding of the world, processing and communication depends on developing language skills. Children of preschool age experience rapid growth in lexicon, vocabulary and social skills (de Villiers, 2014). Systematically and purposefully used digital technologies may already be beneficial for children of preschool age (Goto Batler, 2022, etc.). The attractiveness of digital technology for young children creates many opportunities for teachers to include them in their work. A study by Angeline Lillard and her students Sierra Eisen (2018) found that preschoolers who used educational tablet apps had better self-directed learning, motivation, and achievement compared to those who used traditional toys. The key success factors of educational programs are interactivity, attractiveness and form that corresponds to the cognitive abilities of the specific age group for which they are intended (Chiong & Shuler 2010). Teachers' practices and beliefs play the key role in the implementation of digital tools to classroom activities (Webb & Cox, 2004). This study employed a quantitative research design with the use of the survey method to collect data from preschool teachers. Responses were collected from 78 respondents from Czech republic using an on-line survey questionnaire sent to pre-primary schools and teachers and shared through social media. The individual responses revealed that teachers mostly have a positive attitude towards their utilization, under the condition of limiting their use in time and type of content. Digital technologies should not replace children's play in the

classroom, direct communication and educational methods should be varied and not focus only on digital tools as a trend of modern times, but serve only as an occasional diversion, a supplement. Konca and Erden's study (2021) pointed out that preschool teachers mainly use technologies for preparation of materials or activities and gather other content for their activities. According to our findings the inclusion of digital technologies in classroom activities is often a regular part of educational activities. It is however important to identify what activities they are used for in preschools. Teachers tend to use interactive screen devices mostly for educational purposes, utilizing different educational programs and applications. The questionnaire showed that teachers mainly value the possibility to proceed at an individual's own pace while identifying the most important application features. According to Chiong & Shuler (2010), a personalized and individual learning experience is one of the great opportunities to support the development of autonomy and independence. Responders mainly focused on the properties of the applications related to the needs and abilities of preschool children, according to which the applications should be easy to use, but at the same time interactive with a variety of tasks and games. Other game features that relate to the child's active choice in the area of game content and the possibility to determine their own games were relatively low on the list. Respondents' reserved attitude towards children choosing their own games might stem from the challenging aspect of what content children should have access to. Otterborn, A., Schönborn, K. & Hultén, M. (2019) recent study suggests that teachers find children's activity and influence as both a positive as well as a difficult aspect in using digital tools. On one hand, there are concerns for the child's well-being and safety, on the other is the child's agency.

**Keywords:** digital tools; preschool teachers, language development

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# Primary Education Teacher Programs: Analyzing Paradoxes With The Support Of Geogebra As A Way To Develop Mathematical And Digital Competencies

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In this work, we briefly present the design of a didactic proposal aimed at student teachers through the analysis of mathematical paradoxes with the help of the free mathematical software Geogebra, based on the guidelines of the didactic analysis. As conceived by Gómez (2002), the didactic analysis is a cyclical procedure that enables a teacher to design, implement and evaluate teaching and learning activities. It is articulated through four interrelated analyses. The conceptual and content analysis focuses on the selection and reflection on the concepts and meanings to be worked, their phenomenology and the representations systems. The cognitive analysis aims to establish the learning expectations, recognise the students' learning difficulties and decide the cognitive demands. The instructional analysis is about the design of the tasks, the choice of the materials and resources for the implementation, and the classroom management. The evaluation analysis seeks to identify the evaluation criteria and design the evaluation instruments to measure students' learning. We chose the use of paradoxes and GeoGebra as key instructional resources to promote critical thinking and develop mathematical and digital competences (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2018), taking advantage of the attractive and shocking nature of paradoxical facts. In everyday speech, a fact is considered paradoxical when it is contrary to reasonable expectations, breaking some real or presumed regularity (Peña & Ausín, 2011). The term paradox etymologically comes from the Latin word paradox (*παράδοξα*) and means "the opposite to common opinion". Watzlawick et al. (1981) define paradox as "a contradiction that results from a correct deduction from congruent premises" (p. 173). According to their nature, Gardner (1982) classifies paradoxes in four types: "(1) statements that appear false, although they are actually true; (2) statements that appear true but are actually false; (3) apparently impeccable chains of reasoning, which nevertheless lead to logical contradictions (fallacies); (4) statements whose truth or falsity is undecidable." (p. 7). In the presented didactic proposal we use examples of the first three types of paradoxes, including Hooper paradox ([ggbm.at/ckaj9tjd](http://ggbm.at/ckaj9tjd)), Bertrand paradox ([ggbm.at/Xb4UbW4h](http://ggbm.at/Xb4UbW4h)), Monty Hall paradox ([ggbm.at/eMtZrjGn](http://ggbm.at/eMtZrjGn)), the paradoxes of the spherical band ([ggbm.at/rzuxdzdf](http://ggbm.at/rzuxdzdf)) and the spinning coin ([ggbm.at/yczaspdn](http://ggbm.at/yczaspdn)), etc. To enhance students' mathematical exploration, the work on these paradoxes is proposed through the use of GeoGebra. GeoGebra is a dynamic mathematics software for all levels of education that brings together geometry, algebra, spreadsheets, graphing, statistics and calculus in one engine. It is intended for learning and

teaching mathematics and offers an online platform with free classroom resources created by the community. It is available on multiple platforms, with apps for desktops tablets and web. The use of Geogebra allows students to strengthen their digital competence at the same time that contributes to their mathematics learning. In the context of our proposal it facilitates, for instance, a frequentist approach to probability in the paradox of Monty Hall, or visual exploration of metric and geometric facts using dynamic geometric constructions with the help of sliders in Hooper paradoxes. Figure 1 shows an illustrative and summarized example regarding the paradoxical fact of the spherical band.

To conclude, it is worth mentioning the multiple benefits that the use of paradoxes in teaching mathematics provides. Paradoxes generate surprise and shock, and awaken curiosity and interest. This fosters students' participation in class group discussions and invites them to do mathematics. Moreover, the cognitive conflicts caused by paradoxes lead to critical review of concepts and conceptions and adoption of solutions, integration and creation of mental mathematical structures. Paradoxes let us understand the importance of premises, rigor and disambiguation. In another order of things, understanding the reasons that make a situation paradoxical generally produces a gratifying feeling in learners. Finally, we highlight the use of the didactic analysis as a valuable and operational tool for the elaboration of the didactic proposal. We emphasize, in particular, the importance of cognitive analysis in the work with paradoxes. This allowed us to identify common mistakes and misconceptions, to anticipate possible ways of thinking in relation to paradoxes, and design tasks that expose students to them, taking errors as a learning opportunity.

**Keywords:** Primary education teacher programs, mathematical competence, digital competence, paradoxes, GeoGebra

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# Remedies for Reading Motivation: Flipgrid, Teacher Training, Student Centered-Learning Methods

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Currently, there is an absence of what qualifies as adequate training to prepare teachers to effectively use technology (Chaparro et al., 2012; Davis & Neitzel, 2010; Nichols et al., 2007) and mitigate the decrease in middle school students' reading motivation (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Fulmer & Frijters, 2011; Barry 2013; Bright & Loman, 2020). The purpose of the present qualitative study was to analyze the impact of Flipgrid-based discussion activities, teacher training, and middle school reading motivation. A total of four teachers (n=4) and 133 students (n=133) were included in the study. Interviews and survey responses were analyzed through axial and analytical coding for common themes using MAXQDA. Main findings indicated high teacher confidence due to the training they received and positive perceptions of Flipgrid due to its student-centered learning. Using a basic qualitative design, the research study determined students' and teachers' perceptions of Flipgrid, teacher training, student choice, and reading motivation. The findings from this study are relevant for middle school educators because the data came from teacher perspectives and student reflections. Open-ended interviews with participating teachers allowed the researcher to understand the perspectives of teachers and their use of Flipgrid after the training. The researcher conducted a one-day training to prepare teachers to use Flipgrid with sixth-grade students. A convenience sample of four teachers (n=4) in sixth-grade classrooms participated in the professional development training on Flipgrid. Data sources came from the student reflection responses after using Flipgrid and teacher responses, which were obtained during open-ended interviews following the Flipgrid lessons. The findings in this study illustrate positive conclusions from student perceptions on using Flipgrid, student choice, and reading motivation and teacher perceptions on the training they received, their overall Flipgrid experience, and their students' reading motivation in conjunction with the Flipgrid-based discussion activities. Student-centered learning using Flipgrid can positively affect middle school reading motivation. The following themes emerged after the coding process: adequate training is needed for Flipgrid implementation and student-driven learning is motivating for students. Teacher interviews illustrated positive perceptions of the training, using Flipgrid, student choice, and the overall unit. Teacher comments demonstrate the reasons why the Flipgrid training was effective and how it helped them prepare to use Flipgrid with their students. Additionally, teachers expressed plans to use Flipgrid again, with various recommendations and changes for future use. Teachers provided detailed, thorough reflections on using Flipgrid and why they plan to implement Flipgrid with their students in upcoming units, subjects, and school years. Within their responses, teachers observed students' desire

to use Flipgrid, talk about their articles, and excitement to debate their opinions through video responses to their peers. Teachers also stated their own joy in watching students' videos about their articles and the overall quality of the article summaries. The implications of this study demonstrate that students care about what they read, how they read it, and why they are reading it (Pennington, 2017; Gabriel et al., 2012). Technology-based discussions can help mitigate this, but only when teachers are prepared, trained, and confident in using it (Green et al., 2021; Higgs, 2020). With this adequate training, teachers may be able to utilize student-centered learning to positively impact students' motivation to read. Given the results of the present study, educators may be able to redesign reading activities and structure them to be student-centered using choice and technology such as Flipgrid. As education continues to search for ways to increase reading motivation and subsequent reading performance, the use of technology combined with student-centered learning may be significantly effective.

**Keywords:** teacher training, technology, Flipgrid, motivation, student-centered learning

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# **STEM/STEAM Gap Between Theory and Practice. An International Case Study: from the Metaverse to Artificial Intelligence in the Classical High School**

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Since 2001 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) courses have been created to deepen the subjects considered particularly useful for the progress of countries. Many studies demonstrated that these courses develop students' digital literacy and their 4 Cs, considered essential for active citizenship: Critical thinking, Communication, Collaboration, Creativity. Also, there are STEAM courses, which add Art to emphasize the importance of creativity in solving problems and the connection between scientific and humanistic subjects. However, STEAM courses had some gaps between theory and practice regarding: 1. Development of digital competences 2. Sharing of innovative teaching 3. Assessment on competences and not only on disciplinary contents. Faced with these challenges, the urgency to share good practices at an international level also emerged for schools. This study presents the results of the STEAM courses of the classical high school Scaduto in Bagheria (Italy). In the classical high school curriculum, the main subjects are Latin and Greek. In addition, the STEAM course offers one hour a week of Art in English (CLIL) and an extra hour of Math and Natural Sciences. In 2020, a collaboration started between the classical high school Scaduto and the Saint Germain International High School en Laye (Paris, France) to form a learning community on virtual reality and metaverse. In 2022, in the light of the results obtained, the Maths' teacher proposed to the teachers of the three STEAM courses of the Scaduto classical high school to work on the metaverse. So, professors of Latin, Greek, Art, Physical education, Earth sciences and English also participated in the research. Therefore, the aim of the present study is to describe how the STEAM teachers used the metaverse in their subjects. This study used a constructivist approach that emphasizes the social nature of learning. We use a case study which is, according to Yin (1989), a qualitative research method that serves to deeply understand the social and educational reality. As participants in the research a sample of convenience was chosen: 10 teachers and 53 students from 14 to 16 years old. Among the students there was a special needs girl. Collaboration between teachers to implement good practices happened in 3 phases: 1. Study of the literature on the use of the metaverse in the classroom 2. Application of innovative teaching among teachers 3. Monitoring of results. To collect data, interviews were conducted with teachers and students. Being qualitative research, a discourse analysis was conducted. From the results, the following categories emerged: 1. 4Cs development. 2. Internationalization.

3. Perception of Metaverse usefulness to acquire disciplinary knowledge and competences. In relation to the 4Cs development, the students and teachers stated that they grew up

very much in Collaboration, Communication, Critical thinking, Creativity. In relation to the international experience, students and teachers underlined their enthusiasm for having worked in an international group. In relation to the perception of the Metaverse usefulness to acquire disciplinary knowledge and competences, it emerged that, in this way, the learning was more dynamic and motivating. Therefore, on the one hand, the results showed that the collaboration with the French school became generative. Thanks to this, the teachers of the STEAM courses at the Scaduto classical high school used the metaverse. On the other hand, Italian students grew up in the 4Cs using the metaverse. Their assessment was focused on the competences. Faced with the challenges of education in the digital age, this study offers a way forward: fostering the habit of thinking together, teachers and students, to find innovative solutions to the gap between theory and practice. Finally, we highlight some limitations of the research. First, as a qualitative study, the results cannot be generalized. Finally, it should be kept in mind that not all schools have the broadband connections that make the use of the metaverse possible. As future lines of research, 1) conscious use of Artificial Intelligence 2) collaboration between the University of Palermo (robotics engineering and AI) and the Scaduto classical high school to program the Pepper robot, AI platforms and new platforms for the metaverse with Oculus viewers.

**Keywords:** STEAM; Metaverse; Artificial Intelligence; Mathematics; Classics.

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# Digital-Based Thematic Material Design Process in Social Studies Teacher Training

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## **Abstract**

This research, which aims to design thematic materials in the digital environment for pre-service teachers during the social studies teacher education process, to help pre-service teachers acquire 21st-century skills and use these skills in the design of instructional content, was carried out within the scope of a case study pattern using qualitative research methods. The research was conducted with 31 preservice social studies teachers continuing the social studies teacher education program of the Faculty of Education of a State University in Turkey in the 2022-2203 academic spring semester. After the sad earthquakes in February 2023, the courses were continued remotely for a semester after the online education decision was made by the Higher Education Institution. In this research, the researcher guided the process of preparing digitally-based thematic materials by providing the necessary information and directions from Google Classroom. The information, application, and data collection processes of the research were completed online. Pre-service social studies teachers were asked to complete a digital-based thematic material preparation form. Pre-service social studies teachers in the application process; They designed digital materials for the themes of puzzles, concept maps, presentation creation, graphics (posters, posters, infographics), online books, gamification measurement and evaluation activity design, online exam creation, video editing/creation, animation creation, and website design. At the end of the implementation process, semi-structured online interviews were conducted with 20 volunteer pre-service social studies teachers. Data were analyzed using the MaxQDA qualitative data analysis program. Based on the findings obtained, important suggestions were made for designing materials in the digital environment of social studies teacher education.

**Keywords:** Sosyal studies teacher training, digital-based material design, and thematic material design.



**PART IV**  
**Inclusive Education and the Use  
of Technology to Foster Inclusive Practices**



# **The Potential of Classroom Video Recordings in Detecting the TA-to-Pupil, Teacher-to-TA and Peer Interactions: An Overview**

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Technology in the classroom comes in many shapes to differentiate instruction, enhance meaningful learning experiences, actively engage the learners or simply inform about classroom exchanges. Video recordings are no exception. They facilitate the investigation of classroom interactions and the collection of audio-visual data that provide further insights into the teaching practice and the classroom dynamics. Previous education research has almost turned a blind eye to uncovering the intricacies of elementary classroom behaviour and interactions through the medium of modern technologies. Only scattered attempts have brought to bear the issue (Longobardi et al., 2020; Sadak, 2023). To this end, this paper presents a theoretical overview on the salient role of digital technologies mainly video materials in clarifying the different interactions that take place within the confines of the classroom including teacher -to- teaching assistant (TA) relationships, teacher aide-to-pupil interactions and peer-to-peer interaction. If used properly, the recordings from classrooms might be a fountainhead for detailed, reflective analysis, enhanced communication among all participants and better teaching-learning practice. The first part of the paper reviews some related definitions based on a number of previous theoretical grounds. Then, it highlights the peculiar classroom interactions aided by various analytic angles. Deeply rooted in education research, these dynamics are indebted to the presence of audio and visual records. Most importantly, the paper is built around the research endeavour by researchers at the University of HK, mainly the Faculty of Education that aims at getting down to brass tacks of TAs interactions by means of technological intervention in data collection (video recordings) and measurement (Flanders Interaction Analysis System – FIAS). Fundamentally, it sets the scene for a future empirical endeavour that will measure the above-mentioned interactions in elementary schools around Hradec Králové (HK) region in Czech Republic.

The current overview is an attempt that aims at unveiling the subtleties of video-recorded data and their potential in detecting the main interactions within the boundaries of classrooms in a number of elementary schools. Despite the ethical concerns voiced in the past (Schmidt, 2019), data from video recordings have continued to inform research on pre-primary and primary schools, to be resources for teacher learning and part of formal or informal professional development opportunities. Through the lens of a video camera, multitudinous insights into not only how the curriculum is enacted but also into various

human classroom interactions have availed state-of-the-art classroom research. It is worth mentioning that the complex nature of the learning environments makes moment-by-moment judgments challenging and devoting equal amounts of attention to everything happening even harder. Reproducing the dynamics of the classroom, via the help of technological tools, at a later time can be a focal factor in directing and placing the attention where it needs to be (Jacobs et al, 2010). Grounded in Ethnomethodology, a sociological approach developed by Harold Garfinkel in the 1960s, this paper aims to fathom out the intricacies behind classroom interactions that ultimately shape the teaching-learning environment. The framework also argues that social meanings and orders are continually scaffolded and negotiated in interactions rather than preset and predetermined, a tenet that challenges traditional sociological assumptions and concepts.

The success of the classroom interactions is bound by the context, the surroundings and the roles of the participants. Lack of any of these components is a leading factor to detrimental effects on delivery of the lessons according to a plan and potential pitfalls of the interactions between class teachers and TAs who are initially brought together to develop an inclusive school ethos; hence the fiasco in supporting the learning of primary school pupils. In this way, neither the passive presence of the TA within the room nor the over-indulgence of the pupils can create a comfortable climate for learning. Instead, a combination of increased independence on the side of the learners and willingness to support when the need arises, at any time during the lessons, is a recipe for a successful interactive classroom and effective lesson delivery. Inasmuch joint planning and evaluation are taken into consideration, a respect and trust relationships are built between the different players in the classroom. This means building a bridge towards a smooth running of the lessons and further learning. Technology, since it found its way in the educational system, has come in handy to keep track of what is going on in the classroom. Video recordings in the classroom have altered the approach to professional development and made the interactions that shape the teaching-learning process, mainly TA-pupil and TA-teacher relationships a subject of reflection and change, which continues to open avenues for empirical research.

**Keywords:** Video recordings TA-to-Pupil interaction Teacher-to-TA interaction Elementary schools FIAS

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# Organisation of Distance Education for Schoolchildren with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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In December 2019, the COVID-19 virus emerged in China and spread rapidly around the world, in 2020 an epidemic broke out in Lithuania as well. Due to the COVID-19 situation in the World and in Lithuania, education process in all educational institutions was organized in distance way, and one of the most important objectives was to ensure social distance (Allen et al., 2020). According to UNESCO on Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, more than 1.5 billion children and adolescents worldwide were unable to learn in their normal way. Nevertheless, the COVID19 situation showed that educational institutions and their communities were not prepared for such a sudden change that education had been digitally transformed (Bozkurt et al., 2020; Frumos, 2020). There are many studies abroad that analysis experience of organizing distance education, but just few studies have been conducted on the experience of Lithuanian teachers, and there is a lack of research on the organization of distance education for students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). There were raised main problematic questions in the research: How distance learning is organized for schoolchildren with autism spectrum disorders? How do teachers perceive distance learning for schoolchildren with autism spectrum disorder?

The aim of the research – to reveal the experience of teachers in organising distance education for schoolchildren with autism spectrum disorder. Research methods: analysis of scientific literature and documents, semi structured interviews, content analysis of interviews. Research participants: 30 primary schools teachers in Lithuania.

Educating children with ASD through distance learning requires a complex approach, abilities, digital competences, and cooperation of the participants in the educational process. Adaptation to distance education for all participants – teachers, children with ASD, their parents and education support specialists in the education process has been challenging (Kojovic et al., 2019; Buchnat, Wojciechowska, 2020; Stenhoff et al., 2020; Roitch et al., 2021; Misirli & Ergulec, 2021; Cikili & Gulsoz, 2022) because of the specific reasons: specificity of education abilities of children with ASD; teachers' digital competences; adaptation of the curriculum to the individualised programme for schoolchildren with ASD; creation of stronger collaboration networks; importance of feedback from children with ASD; social skills development of children with ASD. Teachers conducted synchronous general and individual lessons, prepared papers and digital tasks for asynchronous learning, prepared new agendas, schedules, and information for parents. The research results showed the main obstacles encountered by the research participants when organizing distance learning for schoolchildren with ASD: lack of digital competences of teachers; increased time spent on preparation

for distance learning; inability to monitor schoolchildren progress; episodic participation of schoolchildren in distance lessons together with the class; insufficient schoolchildren capacity to participate in individual counseling session; loss of social skills for schoolchildren. Also research results showed positive issues of distance education: Improved digital skills for schoolchildren and teachers; student-friendly environment; increased parental involvement in children learning.

**Keywords:** distance education, schoolchildren with autism spectrum disorder.

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# **Expansion of the FIAS Tool for Monitoring Communication and Interaction Between a Teacher and a Teaching Assistant in Czech Classrooms**

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Effective communication and interaction between teachers and teaching assistants are pivotal elements in optimizing student learning outcomes. Teaching assistants play a multifaceted role in supporting educators, including customizing instructional approaches, tending to students with special educational requirements, and facilitating administrative and organizational tasks. Seamless collaboration between teachers and teaching assistants is imperative for classroom efficiency and fostering an inclusive learning environment where all students can reach their full potential. This research project endeavors to illuminate the extent to which educators and teaching assistants cooperate within Czech classrooms.

This ongoing project explores the development and validation of evaluation categories within the internationally recognized FIAS (Flanders System of Interaction Analysis), a tool designed for the analysis and assessment of classroom interactions. Originally created in the 1970s by researchers at the University of Leuven in Belgium, FIAS required adaptation to account for the presence of additional adults in the classroom, such as teaching assistants. The development of new categories took into account relevant legislation, the roles and responsibilities of both stakeholders, and the prevailing conditions within school classrooms. Ultimately, a set of 16 meticulously crafted categories has been established and verified to facilitate the monitoring of communication and interaction between teachers and teaching assistants in Czech classrooms. This comprehensive framework holds promise for advancing classroom dynamics and enhancing the educational experience for all students.

**Keywords:** FIAS, communication, interaction, inclusive education.

# Digital Technology for Inclusive Education and Transformative Pedagogy: Reaching for the Stars

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Digital technologies are nowadays broadly used not only by teachers but also students. Now comes the right time to integrate it in classrooms as it may play a significant role in supporting deep learning practices. The comprehensive psychological and neurological understanding of the executive function of attention is also critical for teachers to move students from a surface learning stage to deeper engagement. This paper provided insight into using digital technologies in inclusive education by introducing three essential reference frameworks, namely 4C (Creativity, Critical Thinking, Communication, and Collaboration), connected to the playful challenges students are exposed to. In this case, the word “challenge” means to support students and activate their full attention span. For teachers to engage in digitalization is essential to adapt the so called TPACK (Technological, Pedagogical and Content Knowledge), and SAMR model (substitution, augmentation, modification, and redefinition) created by dr. Ruben R. Puentedura (2007), not only to be implemented in everyday teaching practices, but also to enhance digitalization as a pathway for inclusion. Present digital technologies, such as padlet, quizzlet, bigbox, wordmint, answergarden, and more, can assist in fostering an active approach to develop deep learning practices while supporting active student engagement to encourage and cultivate inclusive education.

According to the neural network model created by Posner (2007), the brain’s attentional system consists of three distinct neural networks (alerting, orienting, and the executive control network). As Posner defines, “Alerting is defined as achieving and maintaining a state of high sensitivity to incoming stimuli; orienting is the selection of information from sensory input; and executive attention involves mechanisms for monitoring and resolving conflict among thoughts, feelings, and responses.” (p.7). To prove these networks, an experiment with 85 University students of bachelor’s program was conducted in which they were given a collaborative task to challenge their thinking while presenting their work later on through the padlet app, aiming to be intrinsically motivating. During the process of creating, their ability to selectively focus on the relevant information while filtering out distractions to complete tasks was tested by playing an oriental song in the background. Random distracting questions that were not related to their specific topic of expertise were asked accordingly. Research showed that autistic students (5%) found it harder to focus, whereas those with ADHD (42%) noticed a pleasant change as their brain was stimulated by different notions at once. On the other hand, students with autism expressed their positive diagnosis with mental illnesses (17%) expressed their enthusiasm towards fulfilling their

task. Remaining 27% of students energetically engaged in activities and only 9% in total expressed their conflicted attention.

An ultimate state of intrinsic motivation is activated when students are challenged to accomplish something difficult but achievable, leading to a feeling of enjoyment. The state of full attention and deep engagement is called the flow, coined by a Hungarian psychologist Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi (2008). By practicing inclusive teaching and transformative pedagogy, we can reduce the achievement gap between underrepresented or minoritized students by focusing on inclusive teaching with the assistance of digital tools.

By actively using the neural and psychological knowledge about the activation of the attention of the student, it is possible for a teacher to activate deep learning processes instead of just the surface learning by providing students with a positive, playful, yet challenging environment. Let us bridge the differences and biases to be the change we want to see to create confident leaders of our future.

**Keywords:** transformative pedagogy, deep learning, digital tools, inclusivity

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# Promoting Inclusive Education through the lens of UDL. A Teacher Professional Development Action-Research

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The theoretical framework of the research moves within a perspective of inclusive education as a transformative know-how oriented to the enhancement of diversity as an intrinsic quality of every educational context. Schools are called to assume universality and flexibility as goals and values since the design steps, to ensure everyone has equal access to the learning process (Booth & Aiscow, 2014; Florian & Beaton, 2018). In this sense, diverse studies highlight the framework of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (CAST, 2018) can support the implementation of curricula able to facilitate everyone's academic success while promoting equity and active participation for all. The UDL framework emphasizes the importance of building expert learners in any context; pupils who are: confident to translate new information into meaningful and useful knowledge; strategic and goal-oriented; determined, motivated, able to withstand effort and regulate emotional reactions (Mayer, Rose, Gordon, 2014). This means fostering the development of learner agency, as pupils are active protagonists of the entire learning process as they are involved in the choices regarding what to learn, why to learn it, and how to share what they have learned (Manyukhina & Wyse).

Given this, teaching quality is identified both by the scientific literature and by European policies as a strategic lever for every educational improvement, highlighting the need to rethink the pre-service and in-service teachers' training to promote - in addition to disciplinary, methodological, organizational, and social skills - the development of professional habitus based on recursive reflexivity, self-assessment, research, and agentic skills (Pedone, 2021).

The researchers have identified the Teacher Professional Development Action-Research as a suitable methodological framework. It is a specific declination of the Action-research paradigm (Nigris, Cardarello, Losito, Vannini, 2020) as a combination of research and in-service teacher training, aiming to investigate in the school context with teachers to promote professional development, and transformative changes in actors' habits and contexts, putting at the heart of the method the social identity of learning processes (Asquini, 2018). The research began in the academic year 2022-2023 and involves 21 voluntary teachers at a lower secondary school, their school principal, and 3 researchers. From the theoretical analysis and the research group dialectics, four research questions emerged: on the one hand, we wondered if the implementation of UDL can improve the inclusive teaching approach as well as have a significant impact on the pupils' learner agency; on the other hand, we asked if the involvement in the Teacher Professional Development Action-Research can change teachers' perception of their professional agency and if the professional development of agentic skills can improve the impact on inclusive practices at school. It consists

of five steps: 1) Group setup and research objectives definition; 2) Training and co-design of lessons and research tools; 3) Class implementation; 4) Evaluation, self-assessment, and results sharing; 5) Impact assessment.

To investigate different aspects of the phenomena, the research design is based on a mixed methods approach with the collection, analysis, and interpretation of quantitative and qualitative data (Trincherò & Robasto, 2019). Scientific literature highlights that giving voice to the real school protagonists allows the development of an open environment, aimed at leveraging intrinsic motivation and thus promoting the development of agentic skills (Aquario et al., 2017; O'Brien, 2016). Thus, to focus on the specificity of the context and participants' needs, teachers were previously asked to state the frequency with which they adopt a set of teaching behaviors that meet the UDL guidelines (27 items, Section 1), and what they think are the potential school barriers to the implementation of the framework (10 items, Section 2), using a quantitative survey, built from existing tools (Alsalem, 2018; CAST, 2018). Within the limits of a self-report tool, the outcomes show that the involved teachers implicitly tend to adhere to UDL principles. That suggests they may be open to the reception and adoption of the framework, as they also didn't highlight contextual barriers to the framework implementation.

In light of the above, we expect that the end of the Teacher Professional Development Action- Research will lead teachers to increase the adoption of inclusive practices focused on the UDL framework as well as a sensible change about their agentic skills, with a positive impact on pupils' learner agency.

**Keywords:** Inclusive Education – Participatory Research – Teacher professional development – UDL

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# **The Living Lab Promotes the Professional Development of Inclusive Teachers Inclusive, Between Innovation And Participation**

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The paper shows the first steps of research aimed at designing and implementing an innovative system for the training of education professionals through a Living Lab, which is an Action- Research approach operating between community and innovation. The goal of the study is to develop a digital platform focused on teacher training, also creating a repository for inclusive good practices, which arises from the interweaving of educational research, the professional expertise of practitioners, and the experiential input of learners and families. In this first phase, it was chosen to carry on with exploratory research through focus groups which were addressed to disciplinary and support teachers of different school orders on teachers' training and skills themes, with the aim of understanding and defining the needs for the future enhancement of the tested solutions.

The study is framed within a transformative and systemic perspective that moves the Inclusive education paradigm (Booth & Ainscow, 2014; Florian & Beaton, 2018; UNESCO, 2017, 2020) from the level of assimilation to a level of active participation, aimed at enabling dynamic environments to promote human flourishing and development (Nussbaum, 2011). In the school context, that requires a set of disciplinary, didactic, methodological, organizational, social, and relational skills to implement differentiated teaching methods that allow everyone to reach their maximum potential, welcoming all differences as a resource rather than an obstacle. In this scenario, the inclusive professional development of teachers is the key to remedying the phenomena of exclusion or labeling and guaranteeing equal opportunities for all (Dyson 2010; Forlin, 2012; Panti & Florian, 2015; Pedone, 2021). In compliance with the Twenty-thirty Agenda, the PNR Twenty-one/Twenty-seven and the REACT EU documents, orient the promotion of educational and didactic research aimed at proposing new architectures of education and training systems, placing inclusion and equity as a cornerstone.

Against this background, the research aims at the study, design, and prototyping of an innovative system for teacher training through a Living Lab, which is an open environment of innovation in real-life settings where user-driven innovation is fully integrated within the co- creation (Di Pace, 2016; Westerlund, et al., 2018) aimed at connecting the educational research, the professional expertise of practitioners, and the experiential input of learners and families to develop a digital platform focused on teacher training and to create a repository for inclusive good practices.

Before the Living Lab implementation, four exploratory focus groups (Trincherro, 2015)

were conducted to understand the perceptions, opinions, and needs of a group of teachers about teacher professional development, teaching competencies, and teaching actions to promote effective inclusive education. 57 teachers from four school orders joined the study. They were aged between twenty-seven and fifty-three, with teaching experience from one to fifteen years.

Although the sample is not representative of the population, the percentages you can see in the pictures show belong rather equally to the four school orders.

Data were processed through a Qualitative Thematic Analysis (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). For mere space matters, the posed questions and main results will be summarized in the table below (Tab. 1):

Question	Results
What do you think teacher professional training is helpful for?	To extend competencies (N. 20) To meet better and better students' needs (N. 14) To reach personal and professional gratification (N. 12) To be more competitive when entering the labor market (N. 11)
In your opinion, what competencies are essential for an inclusive teacher?	Relation (N. 42) Methodology (N. 28) Networking (N. 24) Problem solving, and creativity (N. 20)
What are the constituent elements of good inclusive practices a teacher should be trained on?	Observation and understanding, of students' characteristics (N. 25) Promotion of critical, creative, and problem-solving thinking (N. 24) Effective communication with colleagues (N. 24) Educational use of ICT (N. 22)
What kind of professional training you may need as an inclusive teacher?	Inclusive educational methodologies (N. 40) Link between theory and practice (N. 20) Assessment (N. 19) Community of practice (N. 19)

*Table 1 - Focus groups' questions and most recurring answers*

In light of the above, the pilot study showed encouraging results regarding the involved teachers' needs and perceptions of their inclusive professional development. The research will be enriched by a focus group on digital training themes. It will then proceed with the involvement of the community of teachers, students, and families in the LL activation, within which participatory action design (Sanders & Stappers, 2008), platform development, and iterative evaluation of products and results will come to life.

**Keywords:** Technological innovation - Teacher training - Focus Group - Living Lab - Active Participation



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**PART V**  
**Innovative Pedagogical Approaches**



# What is the Teacher's Perception towards Using Blended Learning During Covid-19? Comparative Study: Israel, Jordan, India and Czech Republic Teachers

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The objective of the research was to identify the perceptions of Israeli, Jordanian, Indian and Czech Republic teachers about using blended learning during COVID-19. A quantitative method was adopted in which a questionnaire was used to collect the data from (1500), from Israel (320), Jordan (340), Indian (480) and Czech (360) teachers, The questionnaire contains 30 items divided into three dimensions: educational dimension , learning dimension and educational environment dimension), The results of this study showed a high degree of use of blended learning among Israeli teachers, a moderate one among Jordanians, and a low among Indian and Czech-republic teachers It also showed statistically significant differences attributed to gender and the type of school among Israeli teachers. Contrary to the Jordanians, Indian and Czechs, all the countries realize the potential of blended learning to improve educational outcomes. We recommend that to maximize the benefits of blended learning in these conditions, challenges such as infrastructural restrictions, teacher training, and equal access to technology must be addressed, the authors concluded that the implementation of Bl as a learning strategy depends on two factors: the readiness of the teachers to implement it and the willingness of the system to meet the needs.

**Keywords:** Blended learning, Israeli Teachers, Jordanian Teachers, Czech Republic Teachers, Indian Teachers, Covid-19.

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# Students' Deepened Engagement in Learning English as a Foreign Language: Teacher Survey Report

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According to Dietrich Benner (2023) and Micheal Uljens (2023a), education theories can be divided into two types - affirmative and non-affirmative. In spite of contemporary developments with regard to the understanding of pedagogical practice, the affirmative model, which is based on an affirmative theory of education, still plays a predominant role. In this model the teacher is in control of the learning process, conveys his knowledge and beliefs, and students' role is to consent and learn presented contents by heart. In the non-affirmative model of pedagogical practice, the roles of teacher and student shift quite differently. According to Benner (2023) and Uljens (2017, 2023a) the teacher does not require students to mindlessly accept and memorise presented contents. Non-affirmative way of teaching engages students as active and decisive participants in the learning process by challenging their existing beliefs and current knowledge. What causes a change in the approach to the distribution of roles and the allocation of tasks performed by the teacher and the student is the *Bildung* (Benner, 2023; Uljens, 2023a). The German term *Bildung* can be understood as the student's activity of reflective learning and developing oneself in the subject's contents (in my survey this refers to knowledge and skills of English as a second language). The process of *Bildung* (Uljens, 2023b) consists of two phases: (1) reciprocal engagement in teaching and learning which manifests in mutual cooperation of teacher and learner in delving the learning subject and (2) deepened engagement in learning in the form of independent student's actions, such as steering one's own learning, managing the time allocated to learning and assessing one's own progress. These two phases are closely linked, and the latter without the former does not exist (at least in a school setting). The acquisition of English language knowledge and skills happens in the first phase of a student's active participation in tasks planned and carried out by the teacher. This phase indicates increasing student engagement alongside teacher's non-affirmative teaching. In school/lesson reality non-affirmative teacher enables student engagement in three key areas of English learning: contents, lesson activities and assessment. At the same time the teacher supports the student in undertaking his/her *Bildung* by involvement in activities proposed by the teacher. As indicated above, the second phase refers to the deepened engagement in learning in which the learner more or less independently achieves mastery of the English language. It involves not only increasing proficiency in the five linguistic skills, but also reflective experiences of contents, lesson work and assessment. At this point a non-affirmative teacher encourages the student to set his own goals for learning English, co-determine how he/she works in English lessons, and observe and evaluate his/her own development in learning English. Engagement in those

three areas help students to become gradually independent. At this phase of learning, the learner's linguistic competence is no longer limited to the teaching contents presented at lessons, but increasingly covers the English language in its natural environment. In addition, the teacher's workload decreases while the share of own activities increases on the student's side. Both of the characterised stages of the non-affirmative model of teaching and learning are subordinated to inducing in the student *Bildung*. Most often school teachers are mainly concerned with the efficient/effective delivery of contents. *Bildung* does not usually occur as the goal of the pedagogical practice performed by the teacher. If it does, it is an unintentional by-product. Nevertheless, it is the most important task of school education. The non-affirmative teacher has to strive for students to learn not for him/her, but for themselves in the process of *Bildung*. The researcher has re-examined the material collected during the study for her PhD due to a new research problem, which is contained in the question: Do learners participate in their own *Bildung* during English lessons, and if so, in which areas? The researcher used case study as a research strategy and at the same time as a method of data collection. The choice of this type of strategy required the researcher to choose the main unit of analysis, mainly- self-reflective engagement activities focused on *Bildung* that learners undertake at EFL lessons. There were identified three areas of the students' participation while English lessons which correspond exactly to the following three immersion units of the case study: (1) students set their own goals with regard to EFL, (2) students co-determining how they work in EFL, and (3) students observe and evaluate their own performance in EFL. The context of the research was the Polish secondary education system. The data collected in the course of the study was analysed using the method of portfolio (Fink 2003) and projective method (Maison 2022). The first immersion unit of the case study concerned learners setting their own educational goals. In the learner's statements it can be seen that in general they have some expectations of their own. It is usually thought that only the teacher has the right to formulate his expectations of the learners, who quietly accept and implement them. In my study, the second case study immersion unit involved students co-determination of the way they worked in English lessons. Contrary to the common belief that giving learners the opportunity to influence the course of the lesson only leads to a waste of time on unnecessary consultation, I used to agree with students on the pace of work and the scope of the material. The third immersion unit in the case study involved students observing their own performance in learning English and assessing it. First of all, learners have a keen interest in their *Bildung*, although their proactive attitude is stifled by everyday school life, in which the role of learner is reduced to that of passive recipient of teacher's actions. What is more, learners are able to formulate their own expectations of education, provided, of course, that they have the conditions to do so. It should be noted that the articulation of their own expectations strengthens their motivation to take on the burden of learning and *Bildung*. Moreover, learners are able to manage their time responsibly in lessons, i.e., taking their own work into account. Through deepened engagement, learners perceive learning not as an activity imposed by the teacher, but as a component of their *Bildung*. Last, but



not least, through self- evaluation, learners not only implement themselves to work more intensively, but also to acquire the skills to manage their own learning.

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# Body Education in Primary School: Analysis and Determinations

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Social inclusion is widely recognized as a priority to be achieved at the international level; many institutions attribute a fundamental role in this direction to sport. Sporting activity, conceived and organised in its educational value, is generally considered an opportunity for pupils to develop their physical body (Landry & Driscoll, 2012), psychological and socio-relational, as well as increasing functional independence and the inclusion process (Valentini & Marinelli, 2021). The recent legislative innovation, introduced by Law n.234 of 2021, which provides for the use of specialist teachers to teach motor education in primary school, has awakened the debate that had already started on the occasion of the bill n.992 of 2018 which already provided for the introduction of the specialist teacher of motor education in primary school to guarantee “a real and qualified teaching to children through suitable and targeted interventions from the point of view of motor development, but not only, also to produce effects on learning, prevention and socialisation”. Consequently, it is necessary to recall the assumption of a procedural habitus able to identify the most suitable didactic and methodological strategies to promote inclusion processes with the adoption of a physical and sporting practice that is “for everyone” and “of everyone” to facilitate access and physical practice in formal education for all students. Embracing the importance and the necessity of this qualitative approach to motor education, a research was conducted during the academic year 2022-2023 to answer the following question: is it possible to promote a process of sports literacy in children aged between 9 and 11 years? Through what actions is it possible to promote sports skills in students attending the fifth grade of primary school? The intent is to pay attention also to the quantitative approach in response to the deficiencies that the current generations are highlighting at the psycho-physical level and, after presenting a screening on a sample, to define some possible integrated strategies, both qualitative and quantitative, to respond to the emerging problems of well-being concerning the developmental age. The design work responds to the backward design model (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005; 2007), which allows an analysis of the task aimed at clarifying what goals to pursue and how to give evidence of their achievement; makes it possible to clarify which teaching and learning objectives to pursue; it enables greater consistency between desired outcomes, key performance, and learning and teaching experiences. It has been decided to promote learning that derives from experience, with an orientation of relevance, since it develops in the person the awareness about his prerogatives, the personal project, and the path taken. The sample was composed of 449 Italian children, aged 9 to 11 years (Male=225; Female=224). The percentage distribution of students compared to the Motorfit Lombardia

reference tables, showed the following results: 66% and 57% of participants were insufficient- poor respectively in the aerobic endurance test (Cooper 12m) and anaerobic endurance test (10x5 shuttle), only 27% in the first test, and 34% in the second test, were good or excellent, the rest of the sample is sufficient. Even in the explosive force of the lower limbs, 61% of the participants are insufficient-poor and 28% good-excellent, the rest of the sample is sufficient. Better results, however, in tests of upper limb strength (60% good-excellent) and abdominal strength (57% good-excellent). The trend remains similar even when comparing sex, males versus females, where there are poor values both in aerobic resistance (64% vs 52%) and in anaerobic resistance (68% vs 63%) and in standing long jump (51% vs 59%). An experimental plan that offers some advantages over the single-group plan is the two-group plan where two samples of pupils are randomly chosen, for example, two classes, one of which is offered the teaching of a subject by an ordinary method and the other the teaching of the same subject by an experimental method. Random choice gives a certain degree of confidence that the two groups are homogeneous. The two changes in the knowledge and skills acquired are monitored through two tests for each group: the initial test, which detects the starting level of the learners and the final test, which detects the level of knowledge and skills reached overall by the learners. The participants came from Comprehensive Institutes of the province of Turin and the province of Palermo equally distributed. The sample was composed by 323 children aged from 9 to 11 years, of which 125 males and 198 females. The tools we used in the research are: Test Eurofit (Council of Europe, 1988); Test anamnestic; Test Motorfit Lombardia (2006); Physical Activity Questionnaire for Children - PAQ-C (Gobbi et al, 2012). The first modality, which can respond to the integration between quality and quantity, in educational proposals, can be traced back to the strategy defined as enriched education (Pesce et al. 2016, p.3), whether motor, physical, or sporting. Under this umbrella, there is an activity that integrates more or less complex motor tasks within the deliberate game (Pesce et al., 2015). In this combination of demanding aerobic physical exercise and playful activity, motivational solicitation, physical commitment and cognitive enrichment are realised. A second more interdisciplinary modality could be represented by the "physically active lesson" (Cereda, 2017) characterised by the transfer of bodily and motor action in the teaching of other school disciplines (Norris et al, 2015) with the great advantage of guaranteeing, among other things, the minimal daily physical activity indicated by international organisations in 30 - 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity (WHO 2010). A third modality to which we must commit ourselves is the creation of an educational network between families, school, and the sports world so that, in each environment, moderate to vigorous motor activity is promoted on every possible occasion: lessons at school, training in sport, family activities on the weekend when the child was the protagonist and brought home the exercises to do.

From a statistical analysis, conducted with the software SPSS.23 (univariate ANOVA), it was possible to compare some differences between the experimental group and the control group in all the tests carried out. Participants in the experimental group were significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) more performing, significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) more active than the PAQ-C. It follows that

physical education cannot only protect the qualitative aspect but, through fun, engaging, motivating strategies, it must also guarantee the quantitative aspect, referring to the request for an adequate psycho-physical commitment, with an intensity that is not excessive but not insufficient either. Practising motor-physical-sports activity in the playful and educational dimension must also include the stimulation of aerobic activity, physical effort and movement in the school environment, to encourage children to move to combat sedentariness and improve the quality of life.

**Keywords:** physical education, didactic strategies, inclusion, primary school.

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# **Developing EFL Learners' Writing Skills Through a Combination of Evidence Technology and Business Based Instruction**

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The study examined ten Kosovo high school students' experiences and perceptions about a combination of evidence-technology-and-business-based learning in EFL writing classes. In this longitudinal study, under Action Research as the study's main methodological design, the students had to produce several texts through the traditional writing instruction at the beginning of school year, and then followed up an eight-month period of learning writing via evidence-technology-and-business-based instruction, focusing on the genres of formal letters and business ads. The findings from the semi-structured individual interviews suggest that the L2 writing instruction based on the process-genre approach to teaching writing, along with the writing curriculum instruction powered by technology incorporation and business-related contents, reportedly enabled students to boost interest, change their attitudes to, and improve writing by presenting it as a process, staged, digitally and business oriented activity, as opposed to its traditional-based counterpart. The results also indicate a rise of the student's awareness of the social contexts, communicative purposes, and functions of writing, which have a great impact on certain linguistic features of particular text types. The overall findings suggest that the students were enabled to strengthen their composing skills by viewing and practicing writing as a cognitive, mental activity, and socially-linked communicative medium, with their increased interest in writing, as they explicitly stated in their interviews. The newly-established student relation with the outer technological and business world, as findings suggest, might have been accomplished by the application of the in-class integration of the real-world trends of business and technology which, synthesized with evidence-based writing strategies, have resulted in students' enhanced interest and practical involvement and advance in written communication - a prerequisite to university and career paths. The participants of this study were 10 students of the 12th grade of a public high school in Pristina. They were 5 female and 5 male students, aged 17-18. All participants were native Albanians, whose mothers tongue is Albanian. The data collection process was conducted throughout a nine-month period (one full school year). At the beginning of the school year the teacher researcher developed a Process-Genre Approach (PGA) curriculum, as an annex to the main English language curriculum. As writing-based activities on the English language main curriculum are usually taught on average once in 4 to 5 classes, the PGA classes were planned to be taught in every 3 to 4 general English classes on average. The PGA classes have also been linked to other reading, listening, and speaking skills and activities, and as such have served the main goals and outcomes of the

general English language course curriculum. The PGA curriculum was taught for two school terms, a full academic school year. The PGA curriculum topical content had been carefully designed and developed in order to satisfy to-date preferences and interests of learners, which mainly include the fields of information and communication technology (ICT), business and entrepreneurship, youth activism and volunteerism, etc., focusing on two main genres: formal letters and business ads. The inclusion of formal letters and business ads in the PGA curriculum was justified for they were in line with at least four out of six objectives and competencies set forth in the Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Education in Kosovo: effective communicator, creative thinker, productive contributor, and responsible citizen. They are also consistent with the learning outcomes of the component of Languages and Communication within the Core Curriculum (see MASHTI, 2016). Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted twice with each of the ten student participants, first at the end of the winter term and second, at the end of the spring term of the academic school year. The first round conducted at the end of the first school term contained questions related to the writing process, and the second round was conducted at the end of the school year and contained questions about the process-genre approach pertaining to the writing genres of the formal letter and business ad. As this interview type provided a non-official conversation environment by nature, a list of question prompts was prepared beforehand, while the rest of the questions emerged during the interview talks. The majority of participants had positive opinions about in-class discussions about the social factors related to writing and as a result changed their views towards writing. According to the students' opinions, one of the key factors contributing to this change was - the ways writing as a social activity was presented in the classroom. The findings also suggest that the majority of them became aware to a good extent about the social situations or contexts in which their writing pieces occurred and were able to identify their learned concepts related to writing and particular factors connected to it. Most of the students seemed to have gained sufficient genre awareness of the notion of communicative purpose. The findings from the data analysis suggest that most participants acquired a good amount of business ads' genre awareness in terms of their social connections. The participants seemed to have taken considerable advantage and therefore gained sufficient awareness about the social component within which business ads occur. Writing processes seemed to have gained considerable attention of the participants, serving them as a good basis for engagement with writing. The findings from the data analysis suggest that most of the participants had positive experiences dealing with the stages of the process-genre writing approach. These findings revealed that they learned to address issues from bottom up, covering relatively light themes around their surroundings such as school and learning related topics, and beyond school including community, business and global matters like technology, economy, education, fundraising, environmental issues, etc. These findings also suggest that inclusion of up-to-date writing genres in teaching writing such as technology and business themes, may contribute to enhancing students' interest in writing as an important factor in writing classes, and therefore it might serve as a positive element for improving learners' writing skills.

**Keywords:** EFL Writing Development, Process-Genre Strategy, Technology and Business Learning Contents, Students' Experiences and Perceptions

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# Facilitating Pre-service ESOL Teacher Candidates' Critical Language Awareness Through Dialectical Variation Study

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Curzan & Adams (2012) define language as "...a conventional system of signs that allows for the creative communication of meaning" (p. 8). The linguistic attributes of a given language often remain hidden, and speakers are often unaware of its properties. Fairclough (1992) indicates that critical language awareness "highlights how language conventions and language practices are invested with power relations and ideological processes which people are often unaware of" (p. 7). Consequently, not only is it important for people to become aware of the educational and political consequences of using language, but it is essential for teachers to advance this knowledge amongst students as they are ultimately responsible for the preparation of the future citizens of society. The ramifications for using a specific language in a given context abound, but these effects also hold at the level of dialects, which are variations of a given language dependent on a variety of social factors, including (but not limited to) gender, geography, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, etc. Educators should thus be familiar with the inherent societal tensions associated with the usage of particular varieties in certain situations. The goal of this exploratory study was to document and examine students' perceptions of the relevancy of a course unit on dialectical variation to their emerging understanding and appreciation of the social and political nature of dialect usage in the United States and beyond. Participants in the study included thirty-three elementary-education pre-service teachers attending a small college located in the American Southeast who were enrolled in two sections (Class #1 and Class #2) of a culture and education ESOL course designed to acquaint them with the nature of the phenomenon of culture along with the pivotal role culture plays in the enterprises of language learning and teaching. The multi-day unit on dialectical variation that took place in the summer semester of 2023 was embedded within the course and consisted of the following modules. The first module consisted of introducing students to the prescriptive and descriptive views of language (Hinkel, 2018) and applying these overarching views of language to dialects. During the second module, students watched a variety of documentaries to familiarize them with the nature of dialectical variation in the United States along with cultural stereotypes commonly associated with speakers of these dialects. The third module included an opportunity for students to explore the linguistic properties of various dialects of American English by watching video clips of speakers of these dialects and recording and analyzing the linguistic qualities of these dialects. In the fourth module, students read a variety of articles which explored the nature of dialectical variation and



equipped them with a variety of class activities regarding dialects they could conceivably use with their own students. During the fifth and final module, students completed a course assignment in which they documented their learning gains and considered how they might incorporate this knowledge in their current/future classrooms. After completion of the course unit, participants completed a mixed-methods post-course questionnaire consisting of ten Likert-scale items (1-5) and five open-ended questions designed to investigate students' perceptions concerning the strengths and weaknesses of the course unit. Data for the study were analyzed using descriptive statistics and content analysis. Due to space limitations, this paper will only report the results of the analysis of the quantitative data. The average rating for the ten Likert-scale statements was 4.68 in Class #1 (n=16) and 4.74 in Class #2 (n=17). These relatively high ratings suggest that the pre-service teachers in both classes believed that the course unit modules advanced their awareness of the nature of the dialectical variation and promoted their understanding of different views concerning dialects. Statement #2 ("I understand the importance of understanding and valuing students' home dialects/languages.") was rated highly (4.88) by participants in both classes. This statement was possibly rated highly because the articles, documentaries, and class activities may have contributed to their awareness of the importance of teaching students the standard variety of English while simultaneously appreciating their primary/secondary languages/dialects. Interestingly, Statement #6 ("The dialect activity helped me understand how to teach students about dialectical/linguistic variation.") was rated highest (4.88) by participants in Class #1 but lowest (4.53) by participants in Class #2. This result was perhaps obtained because, although the class activity completed in the third module may have familiarized them with essential characteristics of various dialects of American English, the activity itself may have been too technical for them since they were asked to identify specific phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic features of these dialects. Statement #1 ("I understand what dialectical variation is.") was rated lowest (4.44) by participants in Class #1. This finding may have occurred because, despite the wealth of information explored across the five modules of the course unit, teacher candidates may have found the information overwhelming, and they may not have had sufficient time to digest and process this information within the limited time of the course unit. Moving forward, the author intends to analyze the quantitative data at a deeper level while also examining the qualitative data to determine the extent to which both data sets (do not) correlate. The author plans to utilize more data points in future studies to gain a better understanding of teacher candidates' perspectives regarding the course unit. Additionally, the author aims to incorporate the findings outlined above in future iterations of the course.

**Keywords:** Dialect, Educator Preparation, ESL, Language Awareness, Language Variation

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# Mitigating Challenges of Cross-Cultural Adaptation between Chinese EFL Students and their Non-Chinese Teachers in a University Environment

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Enrollment of Chinese students in Czech universities has risen rapidly in the past decade. These students are often, if not always, studying in the English language. Therefore, possessing a strong command of English is essential for success. Many Chinese students attend EFL preparatory classes upon arrival in the Czech Republic in order to obtain the B2 language skill required for university study. One such course at VSCHT School of Business has sought to find out why the majority of its Chinese students persistently struggle to pass the B2 exam. Hu (2002) and Nisbett (2003) highlight a plethora of cultural differences between Asian and Western societies regarding classroom etiquette and academic approach that are often cited as reasons for the struggles of Chinese students to adapt to the communication-based methodology of European EFL classrooms. While these findings are often student-focused, our experience has shown that non-Chinese EFL teachers of such classes often struggle as well with their approach to these students while also struggling with their classroom approach and achieving the stated goals of the course. This article attempts to examine the experiences of both Chinese students studying English in a Czech EFL classroom and their classroom teachers while providing strategies and techniques to mitigate the potential challenges both may face. While the struggles of Chinese students in a Western EFL environment are well-researched, the unique struggles faced by the local teachers of these courses is often left unexamined. One of the main issues faced is the unfamiliarity with respect to how English is taught in China or to the content of the myriad state English exams in Chinese schools. Therefore, our department set out to interview both students and teachers of a Preparatory B2 English course in order to fill in the knowledge gaps regarding EFL teaching in China and to better understand the experience of both teachers and students of the course. Such data would then be used for the implementation of a new course design and improved methodology. Qualitative methodology included a questionnaire designed by the author and administered to Chinese students studying for a B2 language exam in the Preparatory English course at VSCHT School of Business, compiled over a 5-year period. An additional questionnaire was also created by the author and administered to the relevant course teachers, compiled over a 2-year period. The student questionnaire sought to find out students' level of familiarity with western teaching methods and past EFL experiences in China. Additionally, the questionnaire sought to introduce students to western-style self-assessment techniques and gauge their satisfaction level with the course. The teacher questionnaire sought to find out teachers' level of familiarity with teaching Chinese students and their level of satisfaction

with both the course and their teaching. Additionally, the questionnaire sought to find out which adaptations teachers made (if any) to their teaching throughout the semester and whether or not they considered their teaching to be “successful” in terms of achieving the course objectives. The findings showed a gap between students’ professed sense of acclimation to western teaching methods and their overall understanding of the language with regard to their actual overall results in the course and on the B2 exam. Such findings also showed a significant gap in students’ ability to accurately self-assess their work and progress, as many of the students who did poorly on the exam expressed confidence in their language abilities and overall satisfaction with their language progress. Among the teachers, nearly all professed a strong dissatisfaction with the course, feeling as if they had not been successful in achieving the course aims. Furthermore, all teachers admitted to changing their approach to teaching the course during the semester, while most interesting was the varied ways in which these approaches were made and implemented, as no two were the same. The results of these two surveys show that it is necessary to provide teachers with unique strategies and techniques to mitigate the challenges faced when teaching Chinese students in a western EFL environment in order to ensure a learning environment more conducive to achieving course goals and objectives. Furthermore, it is necessary to make these teachers aware of the potential challenges to be faced when teaching Chinese EFL students. At the same time, such EFL courses need to be re-designed so as to better meet student needs and provide more realistic preparation for future studies in western countries.

**Keywords:** Chinese, Cross-cultural teaching, EFL, Methodology, Teacher-Student Dynamics

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## **PART VI**

# **Approaches to Linking Theory with Practice**





# Combining Theory & Practice in Theory

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The gap between theory and practice has been an issue for teachers' training since the existence of the teaching profession. Scholars, policymakers, teachers, and researchers have been working to examine and analyze this gap at different levels worldwide, however, there has not been much change in the educational contexts for the teachers of the future. Establishing links between theory and practice is one of the key issues in teacher education (Lunenberg, Korthagen, & Swennen, 2007) and we all do agree that the integration of both is essential for effective teaching (Squires, 1998).

Regarding the previous research that had been conducted in the Pre-primary and Primary Education department of the Faculty of Education of Charles University, results showed that student teachers have perceived theory as a distinct concept and questioned its utility, and considered it a set of definitions with no clear application or connection to the teaching practice and they have a hard time understanding how these two contexts are related (Lopes & Korbek, 2022). Students' preference for the practical component of their education over the theoretical subjects taught in university colleges comes as no surprise as this has been noted by a large number of other researchers in the field (Downey & Kelly, 1975; Larsson, 2009; Standal, Moen, & Moe, 2014). In other words, in the eyes of the pre-service teachers, the pedagogical theory is useless and has nothing to do with actual teaching (Lopes & Korbek, 2022; Standal, Moen, & Moe, 2014). Taking this into consideration this study analyzed pre-service teachers' perceptions of pedagogical theory and teaching practice in the Czech Republic. It uses a mixed method for data collection and analysis through a survey that consists of multiple-choice, open-ended, and Likert scale questions. The participants of the study were consisted of 77 pre-service teachers and 8 course instructors and they filled out the survey on a voluntary basis.

According to the findings, students do not understand how theory and practice are intertwined so they call for more hands-on learning to help them understand. They expect more example situations from real-life for a better understanding of the theories. Moreover, they believe that brainstorming, analysis, discussion and group work can help them to be active participants of the course and prepare them better for their future profession. Last but not the least, the fact that they are being evaluated on the accuracy of the literal definitions instead of their comprehension of the theoretical concepts is considered to be another barrier to their understanding of these concepts. In other words, the importance of theory in education is often overlooked by pre-service teachers, especially when it comes to

specific courses. However, a strong theoretical foundation is crucial for pre-service teachers to effectively understand and engage with their learners in their practical implementation. Helping pre-service teachers create a strong theoretical foundation is possible through demonstrating better connections between knowledge and action. To make this happen they need more room to be a part of their learning process, to experience, to discuss, to ask questions, and to reflect on their own experiences since learning does not occur without the active engagement of the students. In the light of this information, the course instructors should work more on creating their own theories in collaboration with pre-service teachers instead of simply lecturing the existing pedagogical knowledge.

One final point to make, our results show that even though pre-service teachers have difficulties in understanding they do not ask questions. It is yet to be discovered whether they lose interest in the knowledge or motivation, or they do not trust the knowledge of their course instructors (Lejonberg et al., 2018). In this paper we highlighted the responsibilities the pre-service teachers have as well as the course instructors apart from the discussion of importance of theory and the need to build a bridge.

This study underscores the critical importance of fostering stronger connections between pedagogical theories and their practical application, urging course instructors and pre-service teachers to fulfil their responsibilities to bridge the gap. While challenges persist in integrating these elements seamlessly, our findings highlight the need for a critical analysis of teacher training programs in terms of the innovative and interactive instructional approaches that merge knowledge and action based on the pre-service teachers' and course instructors' perceptions.

**Keywords:** teacher training, theory & practice, interconnected process, higher education, Czech Republic

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# Combining Theory & Practice in Action

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The integration of theory and practice remains a pivotal challenge in teacher education, often leading to a perceived disconnect by students who prioritize practical experience over theoretical learning. (Lunenberg, Korthagen, & Swennen, 2007; Resch, & Schritteser, 2021). Previous studies at Charles University's Faculty of Education indicated that student teachers view theory as abstract and question its practical utility, preferring practical training over theoretical coursework (Lopes & Korbek, 2022; Vondrová et al., 2020).

This action research examines the impact of modifying lecture structures and incorporating digital tools on pre-service teachers' perceptions of the relevance of pedagogical theory. Employing a mixed-method design for comprehensive analysis (Creswell, & Plano Clark, 2007), this study utilized convergent parallel design for data triangulation, treating quantitative and qualitative data independently (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017), and implemented an equal-status sequential design with a QUAN-QUAL matrix (Johnson & Christensen, 2013). The intervention, informed by pre-survey results, revealed that pre-service teachers desire practical examples, interactive discussions, critical reflection, and up-to-date content in theoretical courses. Based on this feedback, a learning cycle aka a five-step lecture structure - question, lecture, reflection, discussion, feedback - was designed and implemented in the Introduction to Pedagogy Course for a semester. This structure was adapted after the first lecture, beginning with feedback in subsequent sessions. An online platform, Mahara, was used for feedback and reflection as well as for the communication between the pre-service teachers and course instructors during the intervention. A post-survey and interviews indicated positive shifts in students' perceptions and enhanced course evaluations. This study underscores the need for dynamic, interactive approaches in teacher education, blending theory with practical elements to enhance pre-service teachers' engagement and understanding. The pre-service teachers' reported course evaluation significantly improved, and their positive feedback was evident in the results. It also demonstrates improved academic performance on the final exam and a greater comprehension of the theoretical material taught in the course by the pre-service teachers. This research highlights the effectiveness of blending theory with practical, interactive elements in teacher education. The positive outcomes suggest that such approaches could be beneficial across various educational settings, encouraging further exploration into their broader application. This study paves the way for future research focused on long-term impacts of such pedagogical strategies on

teaching efficacy and student learning outcomes, emphasizing the need for dynamic and adaptable teaching methodologies in higher education.

**Keywords:** pre-service teachers' perceptions; digital technologies; action research; Mahara; Czech Republic

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# Promoting the Writing of Portfolios in Teacher Education: How to Better Engage Students?

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The use of portfolios in Higher Education is a widespread pedagogical practice to help student teachers establish autonomous learning (i. e. Argondizzo, Marcella & Sasso, (2020), develop reflective thinking (i. e. Sultana, Ping & Liang, 2020) and achieve meaningful learning (i. e. Torre, 2019). Nevertheless, one barrier that many university teachers often face is that student- teachers need extrinsic motivation for periodic writing of the portfolio (Slade & Downer, 2019). Therefore, this research aimed to compare how different approaches to portfolio's framework and feedback led to different students' behaviours towards writing their portfolios. In this qualitative research, three courses were given by the same teacher to a total of 70 student- teachers. The first was a required course offered for freshmen with 37 students. The second was a required course for 15 students of different years. Finally, the third was an elective course for 15 students, also from different years. All courses required the production of a portfolio, but with different frameworks. In the first course, the portfolio was produced on Google docs and commented on every three weeks by teaching assistants. In the second one, students shared an e-portfolio with the course teacher, who commented monthly. In the third, the portfolio was written offline and delivered at the end of the term. In the first course, which was offered to freshmen students, many of them had to be stimulated to start writing the portfolio. It is important to note that this situation was because they were not used to university demands. Additionally, they were students who experienced High School during covid pandemic, which may have affected their autonomy and self-regulation skills. Students wrote more frequently in the second course, which may be linked to the fact that students chose to enroll themselves in and, therefore, were more engaged with the course and its content. Students from the third course, who delivered their portfolios at the end of the course, did not write on it periodically. This information was implicit in some parts and was also discussed on the last day of class. Nevertheless, although the students produced their portfolios close to the end of the course, it contained all the entries. The courses that used e-portfolios and allowed feedback during the course were more effective in stimulating and maintaining students' writing. The teacher's periodic feedback was better than the teacher assistants' feedback for engaging students in regular writing. Nevertheless, there are many specific aspects that need to be considered, such as students' previous experience at university and students' interest and motivation in the courses.

**Keywords:** Portfolio; Teacher Education; Feedback

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# **A Ministerial Level of Touch on Teachers' Professional Development: Case of a Hands-on and Collaborative Model**

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Professional learning communities (PLCs) represent a collaborative approach to professional development wherein colleagues engage in joint learning activities that align with their individual needs. Within the realm of education, PLCs encompass tailored initiatives aimed at enhancing educators' professional growth, with a specific emphasis on improving educational outcomes for teachers. The success of this approach hinges upon the integration of theoretical knowledge and its practical application. The Ministry of National Education recognizes the significance of reevaluating this approach to facilitate the transformation of schools in Turkiye into collaborative learning communities through the implementation of PLC strategies. To realize this vision, the ministry places great importance on establishing an enabling environment that encourages teacher interaction and offers diverse opportunities for their professional development.

The quality of teachers' professional development is crucial, with an emphasis on continuous lifelong learning (Maor, 2003). Responsiveness in teaching goes beyond knowledge acquisition, encompassing moral responsibilities (Sherman, 2001). The concept of flexibility, influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, adapts learning to various environments, while the concept of suitability tailors programs to individual needs, enhancing motivation and effectiveness (Qian et al., 2018; MacPhail et al., 2019). PLCs have their origins in the US and further development in England. While DuFour and Eaker (2009) focus on improving teachers by addressing students' diverse learning needs, researchers in the UK, such as Bolam et al. (2005), emphasize enhancing teachers to elevate overall student learning outcomes. These approaches both prioritize collaborative teacher development, which is facilitated through PLCs—structured groups aimed at improving educational practices, enriching participants' professional knowledge and skills, and ensuring ongoing professional growth through mutual learning and practical experience. PLCs involve educators and community members in activity-based studies to enhance classroom practices. In Turkiye's pilot program, the MoNE determines PLC themes and evaluates teacher applications based on quotas and criteria set by various educational authorities. Details regarding application and evaluation criteria, PLC duration, and program implementation are outlined in the in-service training program prepared by the MoNE. The program includes the integration of PLC participants and trainers, as well as the provision of online training activities and experience sharing.



- Stage 1: Pre-Training: Participant teacher receives theoretical training from the PDC mentor (academic) through the TIN platform. In Pre-Training, the teachers who are the groups of the community are informed about what practices they should do in their own classrooms, as well as theoretical training.
- Phase 2: Implementation I: In Implementation Phase I, which covers the process from the pre-training to the next online meeting, teachers apply what they learned in the pre-education in their own classrooms.
- Stage 3: Interim Evaluation: The community members come together with the mentor (academic) online through the TIN platform, and the in-class practices carried out by the teachers during the Implementation I process are evaluated and the next implementation phase process is discussed in line with the feedback.
- Stage 4: Implementation II: Teachers practice in their own classrooms.
- Stage 5: Final Evaluation: The community members come together with the mentor (academic) online through the TIN platform, and the classroom practices carried out by the teachers during the implementation II process are evaluated, and the community work is completed at this stage. Good practice examples are shared in the IPA.

The provided template is non-standard and is currently in the piloting stage. Various aspects, such as the duration of pre-training, application I, and application II, as well as the location and duration of interim and final evaluations, are tailored to the specific subject under consideration. Additionally, a table outlines the themes for PLCs planned for implementation by the MoNE as part of the pilot program, along with the quotas set by mentors for each PLC and the number of teacher applications for each community.

Professional development is essential for enhancing teachers' knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes, significantly impacting educational quality (Moeini, 2008). In Türkiye, the Directorate-General of Teacher Training and Development is responsible for enhancing teachers' competencies (Moeini, 2008). The MoNE recognizes the need for continuous, ongoing professional development and has implemented innovative approaches in response (Skyles, 1996; Gore et al., 2017), particularly due to the large number of teachers in Türkiye, which is over one million (Şensin & du Mérac, 2020). PLCs are pivotal in addressing educational needs at the school level, fostering improvements, and promoting effective practices. These communities encourage collaboration among teachers and the sharing of professional knowledge, resulting in elevated school standards and improved classroom experiences. PLCs empower teachers and administrators to focus on learning and teaching, collaborate to achieve common goals, and take charge of their own professional growth. This approach allows for the assessment of outcomes and the adoption of development activities that ultimately benefit student learning and school development.

**Keywords:** Professional learning communities; collaborative teaching; teacher empowerment; professional development.

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# **Individualized Group Teaching and Learning: Integrating Elements of Tutoring in Teaching Italian Language and Culture**

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Teaching and learning presents unique challenges, particularly in a group setting where learners may have diverse backgrounds and learning styles. This short article explores chosen tutoring methods that aim to individualize the approach not only during 1:1 meetings (consultations or seminars) but also as part of group teaching, which is much more common at the university level nowadays. The indicated examples of individualizing teaching have been implemented in classes when teaching the Italian language and culture at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland (KUL) in the academic year 2021/2022. As proven by the results of the evaluation surveys conducted at the end of each academic year, by leveraging individualized approaches, technology, and effective pedagogical strategies, academic teachers can create a more inclusive and efficient learning environment for their students. Teaching and learning in a group setting, both at the school and university level, often requires educators to address the diverse needs and learning preferences of students. Traditional classroom methods may only sometimes cater to individual requirements, leading to unequal learning outcomes and reduced engagement (Fortes & Tchantchane, 2010; Jenkins, 2014). To overcome these challenges, many academic teachers in Poland, especially after participating in the Masters of Didactics project (MoD) organized by the Polish Ministry of Education and Science and five foreign universities with many years of experience in implementing tutoring methods and co-financed by the Operational Program Knowledge Education Development (more on the project: Brdulak et al., 2019, 2022), are increasingly integrating modern tutoring techniques into their teaching practices. This article aims to discuss the examples of techniques of individualization implemented by the author in classes when teaching Italian language and culture at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland (KUL) in the academic year 2021/2022, together with their benefits proven by the results of the evaluation surveys conducted at the end of each academic year among students. Tutoring is a multifaceted concept with various interpretations. Some define it as a form of individualized teaching, while others debate whether it qualifies as a pedagogical method. Many researchers emphasize that tutoring is understood differently in various institutions being applied in a variety of ways that suit the individual (Fernandes & Flores, 2013; Karpińska-Musiał, 2016, 65-80). To understand tutoring comprehensively, it is best viewed as a personalized educational approach focused on the holistic development of individuals, considering their diverse aspects and aiming to enhance the quality of education. This approach allows for the implementation of various methods of individualization

in diverse forms, following different models. Importantly, these tutoring methods should be tailored to the needs of students, the capabilities of institutions, and the beliefs of tutors. This way of understanding tutoring suits the a definition of this phenomenon proposed by the Ministry of Education and Science in the MoD project (Brdulak et al., 2019, 6). There are various benefits of individualization of teaching. It is worth mentioning here just a few of them. Learning experiences capture students' interest and motivation by tailoring content to their individual preferences and skill levels. When students

receive instruction that aligns with their learning style and pace, they are more likely to achieve higher levels of proficiency in a learnt subject. Modern tutoring approaches can accommodate a wide range of learning abilities, making instructions more accessible to diverse student populations. Individualized group teaching allows educators to cater to the unique needs of their students while maintaining a structured curriculum. The author conducted an educational experiment during the academic year 2021/2022, focusing on students studying Italian language and culture. It aimed to introduce tutoring elements to individualize the learning and teaching process. The critical elements of the experiment included:

- 1) Individualization of Exercises: a) Students were given the option to choose exercises that aligned with their knowledge, competencies, and language skills. b) Additional exercises were prepared online using modern educational platforms such as LearningApps.com and Educaplay.com. These additional exercises catered to both competent students and those who were struggling with the coursework.
- 2) Customized Project Topics and Scope: The author tailored the topics and scope of individual projects to meet the specific needs of the students.
- 3) Clearly Defined Task Criteria: For all assigned tasks, clear criteria were provided to the students. These criteria were accessible through MSTeams, ensuring transparency and consistency in assessment.
- 4) Individual Feedback: Individual feedback was provided in response to the tasks and projects submitted by students. The author used a written project assessment card designed for this purpose and provided oral feedback in class1.

In June 2022, the author conducted an evaluative survey among 21 students in the experimental teaching approach. The survey revealed the following key findings;

- All students (100%) found the opportunity to choose exercises during classes, both as homework and in- class activities, helpful and necessary, with various responses highlighting increased engagement, flexibility, and adaptability to individual learning preference.
- Most students (95.2%) appreciated teachers, including assessment criteria for each task via MSTeams, finding them helpful for understanding expectations and improving their work.
- Students expressed that clear criteria helped them focus on critical aspects of their work and provided a sense of fairness in assessment.

- All students (100%) received feedback during online classes or after submitting assignments, which enhanced knowledge retention, self-awareness of strengths and weaknesses, and motivation to improve.
- Most students perceived no weaknesses in receiving feedback in class or after completing assignments. However, a few mentioned concerns related to discomfort or excessive detail, which were not prevalent within the specific group.

Overall, the results of the educational experiment conducted by the author suggest that the introduced tutoring elements, including individualization of exercises, customized project topics, clear criteria, and individualized feedback, were well-received by the students and had a positive impact on their learning experience. Incorporating modern tutoring techniques into teaching and learning can revolutionize how educators approach group instruction. By individualizing learning experiences, teachers can improve engagement, enhance learning outcomes, promote inclusivity, and maintain flexibility. As the field of language and cultural education continues to evolve, integrating modern tutoring methods should be a priority for educators looking to provide high-quality instruction in diverse group settings.

**Keywords:** tutoring, individualization, university, MoD project, challenges of education

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<sup>1</sup> Detailed examples of exercises and projects, as well as a discussion of the techniques used to construct task criteria and provide feedback, will be discussed in an expanded version of this article.

# At School With Instagram, Social Networks as Educational Platforms

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According to a survey reported by DataReportal dated April 2023, Instagram ranks as the fourth most-used social media network among the world's population, with more than 1.5 billion registered users. This ranking, preceded only by Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp, shows how the Meta company's social network has influenced trends and convinced more and more people and professionals to take advantage of its internal features to communicate, entertain, and work. However, despite the wide membership of professors, science disseminators, and projects within Instagram, teaching and learning are still under-recognized as possible practices with social networking sites. Considering that most social networking platforms allow membership from the age of 13, the question arises as to how aware schools are of the teaching-learning techniques that can be applied in this context. To this end, the article proposes theories, methodologies and experiences for considering Instagram as a virtual learning environment in formal education, especially with the latest generation of students. In particular, after selecting studies that justify its choice, value and practice, this paper will illustrate the methodological model "Edu-social Algorithm," developed through an international action-research that led 130 students and 77 teachers to connect on Instagram to study and teach.

A mixed methods approach was considered for the research of this work. The choice is supported by studies that consider the digital space as an ideal environment for the selection of elements useful for the descriptive study of multimedia content. For the development of the virtual community, the methodology of Action-research (Lavanco & Novara, 2012), supported by netnography (Kozinets, 2010), was used for the descriptive analysis of the media pedagogical content that emerged.

**Keywords:** Instagram, Edu-social Algorithm, Generation Alpha, Community of Virtual Practices, Social Learning Network

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# Enhancing Creative Learning through Theoretical Education: A Focus Group Research

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Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE) encompasses the convergence of art practice, art criticism, art history, and aesthetics, with a focus on fostering a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Within this context, “discipline” refers to distinct fields of study characterized by established conceptual frameworks, communities of scholars, and accepted research methodologies (Clark, 1987). Eisner argues against imparting these disciplines to students in isolated patterns, advocating for an integrated approach, treating art production, art criticism, art history, and aesthetics as interconnected elements. The present study explores the potential of DBAE in enhancing students’ creativity and originality through theoretical education (Eisner, 1989). This research centers on assessing the role of basic design art education and art history courses in fostering students’ process knowledge, such as iteration, risk-taking, integrative thinking, and collaboration. Of particular interest is the examination of how collaboration between these two disciplines can significantly contribute to students’ capacity for generating unique artistic works. The focus group study was conducted among first-year students enrolled in the Painting Department of Trabzon University Faculty of Fine Arts and Design. The investigation sought to uncover the influence of theoretical education on practical artistic development. In this context, we focused on whether the basic design art education and art history course is a course with learning outcomes that expect students to demonstrate process knowledge such as iteration, risk-taking, integrative thinking and collaboration. The idea of how this collaboration contributes to students’ capacity for producing original works and enhancing their creativity has been questioned. In this research, the focus group study was conducted with students who are determined first-year students from the Painting Department of Trabzon University Faculty of Fine Arts and Design, to investigate the effects of basic design art education and art history courses in art education and theoretical education on practical education. A total of 15 artworks were selected, and all students were included as the sample for the study. Within the scope of the basic design art education and art history course, art movements such as Impressionism, Cubism, and Fauvism were introduced to students. Painting examples and compositions from that period were presented, and they were reinterpreted based on the elements learned in relation to the present day. In a 60-minute, 4-period lesson, students were encouraged to engage in free practice using collage, oil/acrylic, and mixed media techniques, focusing on the discussed art movements. Throughout this process, the aim was for learners to grasp their artistic background and reinterpret art history, ultima-



tely aiming for long- lasting learning outcomes. Students were also asked to express their application experience and understanding in words. As a result of the research, it was seen that this form of expression and written communication allowed students to make choices about how to represent their own thoughts while working. Furthermore, it was concluded that the collaboration between basic design art education and art history courses benefited students' original works.

In conclusion, by embracing the DBAE method, students can harness their creativity more effectively, resulting in the production of original and innovative artworks. The findings of this research shed light on the transformative power of an integrated approach, providing valuable insights for educators, students, and institutions seeking to enrich art education and nurture creative potential.

**Keywords:** Discipline-Based Art Education, Basic Design, Art History, Impressionism, Cubism

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# Building Teachers' Digital Competence Through Collaborative Design Of Materials

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This paper presents the results of a study carried out at the Instituto Cervantes in Prague in the field of teaching Spanish as a foreign language. The main objective was to explore the process followed by a Teacher Design Team (TDT) to create grammatical presentations from a cognitive perspective using technology. In this presentation we focus on the impact of teamwork on the development of the seven teachers' digital competence, as well as the behavioural changes they experienced in their classroom practices in relation to the use of technology at the end of the study (T1) and during the subsequent academic year (T2). At T1, teachers perceive they have strengthened their digital competence as they rethink how to make meaningful use of technology in the classroom, as well as the importance of material features such as flexibility, agility, interactivity and interaction, the role of the teacher and the role of the student. In T2, teachers report feeling more confident in integrating technology into their classroom practices and claim to extrapolate what they have learnt to other teaching situations.

In conclusion, teamwork has been fundamental for the development of teachers' digital competence and has led to significant changes in their classroom practices, allowing them to use technology more effectively as a pedagogical tool. Therefore, we can underline that TDT promotes a reflective approach that helps to link educational theory and practice.

**Keywords:** Teacher design team, teachers' digital competence, teachers' collaboration, educational technology

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# Learning Tasks in Textbooks, Their Language and Its Problems

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The contribution deals with learning tasks as part of the textbooks. It sees learning tasks as special epistemic figures which have a language of their own. By analysing tasks from textbook sources for the primary school, which are used in the pre-gradual training of primary teachers, the authors recognise and describe the language of the tasks through a quantitative methodology. In doing so, they pose several research questions: What morphological, lexical, syntactic specificities does the language of the tasks have? Do these characteristics vary between the textbooks or are they rather universal linguistic formulae that speak their own language regardless of the context?

Several steps were required to investigate the language of the tasks: to identify and categorise the existing discourses in the textbook text; to separate the texts of the tasks from the rest of the discourse (to consider them as separate epistemic figures) and to identify their building components; to characterise the language of the tasks through the extracted building components.

The authors used content analysis to describe the language of learning tasks. The language was characterised by the categories established by an explanatory analysis. The unit of analysis in the explanatory analysis was the words as well as the whole sentences of which the instructions (as stylistically coherent units) are composed. Two textbooks published by one publisher (Aitec, Ltd.) were analysed: Science for the 2nd classes (R. Adame & O. Kováčiková, 2016) and Science for the 3rd classes of primary school (R. Adame & O. Kováčiková, 2018). The analysis did not cover all tasks in textbooks, but only a limited selection, representing 20% of all tasks. The tasks were selected using proportional stratified sampling.

We found that the syntax of the tasks is not adapted to the age of the pupil; the tasks contain many words that are only in the peripheral segment of the pupil's vocabulary and also words that are distant from the life and culture of the child; faults in propositional logic and semantic nature, such as semantic disproportions in sentences, unclear statements, and inconsistencies between the additive part of the task and the action of the pupils in answers.

From a lexical perspective, a pupil needs to have a vocabulary of 400 words to understand the texts of the tasks in either textbooks. The pupil needs to know 254 words to understand the text of the tasks in the textbook for the 2nd classes and 218 words in the textbook for the 3rd classes. The vocabulary a pupil needs to understand the tasks is higher in the 2nd class. Understanding the task is also complicated by the occurrence of more verbs in the

sentence. For example, “Read what Jasminka says”. Such a sentence may be comprehensible to a pupil whose first language is Slovak, but not to pupils with a different mother tongue, dyslexia and other learning disabilities.

From a morphological point of view, it is well known that the presence of pronouns in a sentence complicates the understanding of the text. The more pronouns there are in a sentence, the more difficult it is to understand the text. Therefore, from a morphological point of view, the authors of the paper focused on pronouns and prepositions in a sentence. They found that almost every second task contains a pronoun in the textbook for the 2nd classes (44 out of the 84 tasks analysed contained a pronoun, i.e. 0.52 pronouns per task). Personal pronouns in particular are a main problem. Attempts to include motivational elements that are functionally unnecessary in the task, lead the author of the task to refer to these elements by pronouns, making the task more difficult to understand. The number of pronouns is much lower in the textbook for the 3rd classes (14 out of the 60 tasks analysed contain pronouns, giving a total of 0.10 pronouns per task).

In terms of syntax, the task consists of 2 or more sentences. The length of the task texts in the textbook for 2nd classes is longer than in the texts for the 3rd classes (1.73 and 1.33 sentences per task respectively). If the verb is at the end of the sentence, the presence of personal pronouns in the sentence is much higher. The number of words per sentence in the tasks seems to be the same in both textbooks (7.85 and 7.96). The text of the tasks are more comprehensible for pupils of the 2nd classes of primary school.

The research findings are the basis for improving the quality of the textbooks and also stimuli that leads students of teacher education programmes to comprehensively understand the problem of learning task design.

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**Keywords:** learning tasks, language, quantitative methodology, textbooks

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# Directions for Reform of Teacher Observation A Hermeneutic- Phenomenological Model

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In our presentation we have engaged in an analysis of the common mode of doing teacher observation in Romania and we have shown that it has four constitutive limitations preventing it from fulfilling its task. In the second part of the paper we have offered an alternative hermeneutic-phenomenological model of doing teacher observation.

In Romania, as in other countries around the globe, teacher observation is a central component of the initial teacher training programs. The basic goal of this endeavor is to afford student teachers the opportunity to learn from a senior teacher's experience by seeing precisely how pedagogical and psychological theory is put into practice. For this, in Romania, as elsewhere, students are required to attend a few classes armed with an observation protocol meant to draw their attention to certain important aspects of the didactic performance.

Despite the importance placed on it and its extensive use though, this model of approach to teacher observation has never been subjected to scrutiny to establish whether it can fulfil its allotted goal. Our presentation intended to supplant this lack. Drawing on psychological research on the functioning of attention, through reflective analysis we have shown that the current model of approach to teacher observation is marked by four limitations:

1. It invites students to simply get acquainted with the teaching performance, not to analyse and try to understand it.
2. It reduces the class to a sum of static scenes, missing its dynamic.
3. It focuses exclusively on the teacher and disregards the students. This is highly problematic because the teacher's actions are determined to a significant degree by the feedback coming from the students.

Insofar as it focuses student's attention on certain particular aspects of the teacher's performance it deprives them of the possibility to see what is happening overall, thereby robbing them of the chance to actually learn to teach. A long line of psychological research begun by Ulric Neisser in the 70s and carried on to this day (Neisser & Becklen, 1975; Mack & Rock, 1988; Simons & Chabris, 1999; Chabris & Simons, 2010; Drew et al., 2013; Neisser, 2014) shows that human attention is selective. Once an individual is required to focus on something it tends to miss even large, conspicuous elements in the scene.

Given that these four limitations are constitutive to the current model of teacher observation it becomes apparent that it cannot work and that it should be abandoned. So, in the second part of our presentation we tried to sketch the basic contours of an alternative model grounded in Graeme Nicholson's hermeneutic theory of perception (Nicholson, 1984)

and modeled after Husserlian phenomenological observation as conceptualized by Lester Embree (Embree, 2011).

Graeme Nicholson argues that visual perception is not only selective – as psychological research intimates – but also interpretive, being always guided by a practical interest in a broad sense. In teacher observation this means that rather than draw students' attention to a particular aspect or another of the teaching performance through the observation protocol, we should encourage them to look at what sparks their interest. But it also means that we should educate their interests by training them well in psychology, pedagogy, didactics and classroom management.

Against this backdrop teacher observation ought to follow three principles derived from Embree's description of phenomenological observation:

The student observer must adopt a “detached”, “neutral” stance toward the situation observed and refrain from any practical, ethical or aesthetic judgment regarding it or what happens therein.

The student observer must focus on the thing in the foreground, be that the teacher, a student, the entire class as a collective subject, the materials and documents presented and so on.

The student observer must approach the situation in categorial terms as made up of things and actions with various natural or cultural properties and relations.

The observational data collected in this manner will be subjected to an analysis guided by two lines of questioning. The first concerning the impact of what has been observed on how the class subsequently unfolded, the impact on the students and the teacher, on the general atmosphere of the class. And the second regarding whether the teacher and the students could have acted differently in a particular situation or another and what the effects of this way of doing things could have been.

**Keywords:** teacher observation; inattentional blindness; interpretive perception; phenomenological observation.

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# Exploring Teachers' Emotion Labour in the Context of EMI: Implication for Teachers of Tomorrow

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Teaching is an emotionally driven process especially when it is mediated through languages other than one's own native language. In English medium instruction (EMI) contexts, educators often go beyond solely teaching content, where use of second language adds layers of emotional depth to their teaching experience (Benesch, 2017). As Her & De Costa (2022) suggest, multilingual education settings offer a cognitive realm where several psycholinguistic, psychosocial and sociocultural challenges interact to produce "emotion labour" for both stakeholders. Particularly, in higher education where field-specific content delivery is of demanding, EMI poses several affective challenges for educators (Hopkyns and Gkonou, 2023; Sah, 2022). This qualitative study explores the potential emotional dimensions which 23 academics went through over a six-month-period as they adopted EMI in a state university in Turkey. The challenges and emotion labour EMI academics experience along with their potential influences on teaching processes are explored via three data collection tools including interviews, focus group meetings, and reflection notes elicited during an in-service training programme. Three research questions guided the current study: 1) What are the challenges EMI academics face during the transition process? 2) What emotion labour do these challenges generate? 3) How does the arising emotion labour influence teaching processes of EMI lecturers?

The results have revealed that EMI academics face institutional, learner-centric and intrapersonal challenges, which potentially generate emotion labour. The suggested emotion labour is intertwined in the discourses promoting EMI as an uplifting experience in actual classroom practices (Yuan, Li & Zhang, 2023), and an asset enhancing future career possibilities (Şahan & Sahan, 2023). In an EMI context, language related institutional rules and regulations to achieve internationalization, as well as norms and feeling rules for achieving quality in higher education are reported to generate feelings of dissatisfaction and inadequacy among academics. Large, multi-cultural EMI classroom settings pose a significant obstacle to effective teaching, particularly when lecturers lack pedagogical strategy repertoire to cope with high curricular demands for content mastery and skills development. On the other hand, the demand for solid pedagogical competency heightens when learner-centred constraints including lack of motivation, linguistic limitations seem to further complicate the EMI experience of academics filled with frustration and disappointment. EMI teachers' low self-efficacy pertaining to language competency seems to intensify the existing affective struggles. With respect to teaching practices, emotion labour seems to bring about use of avoidance strategies such as avoiding providing lengthy examples, or elaboration of com-



plex concepts in the classroom. The findings may inform EMI curricula, classroom practices, in-service teacher training practices as well as policy making regarding enhancement of linguistic and pedagogical repertoire of EMI educators.

**Key Words:** EMI, emotion labour, higher education, teacher education

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# **EFL Instructors' Values Systems, Reflections and Emotions on Paired Peer Observation Process: Case Study\***

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It is a fact that teachers all over the world are aiming at one thing and one thing only: students' success. To this end, teachers are expected to continue learning and developing their skills. In recent years, there has been an increase in the research focusing on Continuing Professional Development (Bleach, 2014; Day, 2012; Whitehouse, 2011) Richards and Farrell (2005) believe that it is necessary for teachers to engage in self-reflection and evaluation, increasing their pedagogical knowledge about theory, research and issues in teaching, as well as developing specialized skills about many facets of teaching, and playing new roles by taking new responsibilities, and building collaborative relationships with other teachers. Reflective practice is an essential predicament to attain professional development in the quality of teaching (Weshah, 2007). There are many forms of reflective practice activities, such as; keeping a journal, peer coaching, students' feedback, teacher working groups, action research and peer observation. As Richards and Farrell (2005, p.85) defined, peer observation of teaching means "a teacher or other observer closely watching and monitoring a language lesson or a part of a lesson in order to gain understanding of some aspect of teaching".

As the research of Vygotsky and his colleagues set the intellectual roots of sociocultural theory, he claims, "All higher mental functions are internalized social relationships" (cited in Cross 2010, p.164). Vygotsky coined the term Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The idea behind the concept is that learners attain knowledge best when they are working collaboratively with others. Drawing on Vygotsky, Warford (2011) suggested the concept of Zone of Proximal Teacher Development. If it is applied to in-service teacher development, the activities which increase the teachers' level of ZPD must include collaboration, interaction and reflection. One way of achieving this collegial support is to have peer observations, which enable teachers to focus on a 'problematic area' of their teaching with a colleague.

This study aims to investigate EFL instructors' values systems, emotions and reflections on paired peer observation in higher education. For this purpose, eight EFL instructors at a foundation university in Turkey were interviewed about their existing beliefs, attitudes and values regarding peer observation. Then the pairs observed each other and they were again interviewed to explore the changes in their values systems, and to study their emotions emerged in each step of the process. Finally, they were asked to write reflective essays to examine the impact of observing each other on their reflectivity and professional development. Findings indicate a change in instructors' existing beliefs on the ideal partner for peer observation, and an increase in their willingness to continue doing paired peer observations

in the future as a professional development tool. It is also seen that the negative emotions attributed to an observation due to power inequality in partners are quickly replaced by positive ones once the participants realized that they are in the same boat. An unexpected finding of this study is that while the observees were expressing normal to positive emotions, the observers expressed feeling nervous because they believed they caused stress on their partners. Another unexpected finding is that the participants found giving feedback to their partners is harder than receiving feedback. Instructors perceive paired peer observation as a chance to learn from each other and reflect collaboratively on all the aspects of teaching. Moreover, paired peer observation increases collegiality between the partners as well as it enhances participants' motivation and self-efficacy. Pedagogical implications and possible benefits of using paired peer observation as a professional development and future research are discussed.

**Keywords:** Paired Peer Observation, Teacher Emotion, Reflective Teaching, Professional Development

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# Hard Skills, Physical Activities and Spaced Learning

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International documents and regulations highlight the fundamental right of persons with disabilities to participate in quality, adapted, safe, and inclusive physical education and sports activities; to lead healthy lifestyles, and to develop authentic and participatory relationships. Scientific literature (Gomez Paloma et al., 2017; Palumbo, Valentini & Marinelli, 2021) underlines how sports practice builds the positive concept of corporeality, especially in people with disabilities, since through movement and its free expression, the student finds himself, stimulates creativity and overcomes psychophysical blocks. Research (Kudlacek, 2013; Magnanini, 2021) underlines how the importance of physical and sporting activity, carried out regularly and constantly, is a very important tool in maintaining a state of well-being and psychophysical health for all students (Poitrait et al., 2016), especially for children and adolescents with disabilities (Battaglia et al., 2019). Recent international surveys show that the proportion of students with low skills in reading comprehension, mathematics, and science is increasing in Italy (OECD /PISA, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development / Programme for International Student Assessment, 2018, 2022; IEA / TIMSS, International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement / Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, 2019, 2023). The studies also analyzed the measures taken by the educational authorities of European countries to strengthen the motivation of students and raise the level of their achievements, with a focus on support measures aimed at those with poor results, through the analysis of the organization of teaching, of the evaluation and the general context of education. The conclusions highlight the importance of allocating sufficient teaching time and innovative and/or alternative strategies, providing timely teaching support, ensuring the training of specialized teachers, and systematically monitoring students' achievements. The relevance of adequate development and mastery in students of linguistic, mathematical, and scientific skills, was affirmed in the Recommendation of the Council of the European Union (2006, 2018). The results showed that the problem of attributing meanings and meaning to the texts read becomes more relevant with the increase of their complexity, with the diversification of metacognitive strategies, and with the unfolding of motivational factors (engagement).

The AMIS project (Apprendimenti in Movimento per l'Inclusione a Scuola, therefore Learning in Motion for Inclusion at School, LMIS) aims to verify the implications of research results on Spaced Learning in the linguistic, mathematical, and scientific areas, implementing and optimizing the teaching methodology even with students in difficulty and/or with disabilities.

Spaced learning is a teaching methodology whose peculiarity is the articulation of lesson

time, which maximizes students' concentration and memorization. Kelley & Watson (2013) developed this technique to test whether it was possible to encode complex information in long-term memory (LTM) in students, using repeated stimuli in a very short time scale. Spaced learning conceives the lesson as an alternative situation that makes the student participate and aware. The teacher can use Spaced Learning to introduce a new topic, for reinforcement activities in anticipation of the tests, to lighten a lesson that is too long or difficult, and to facilitate the acquisition of content in students with difficulty. Throughout the lesson, stimuli (inputs) are highly concentrated periods of instruction while space is created through 10-minute distraction activities (intervals). Research results show that learning in an hour of instruction/lesson is significantly higher for interval learning groups. Motor activity favors spaced learning because it stimulates consolidating knowledge and information in students, through meaningful interactions between mind and body.

Against this background, the research intends to study the relationship between reading literacy, mathematical literacy, science literacy (hard skills), and the development of motor skills (physical literacy), with a focus on learning processes interspersed with motor exercises as provided by the Spaced Learning model. It was decided to use a two-year program of activities focused on Spaced Learning and a periodic verification tool; both will be intentionally prepared by the research team. The training program will be developed through an action-research, observing a continuous cycle of diagnosis, planning, action-execution, investigation, and evaluation (re-application, review, balance). The validation of the training course will be carried out with two experimental designs: a) with two groups (experimental and control); b) with a single recurring group with an interrupted time series (almost experimental plan). Games and motor exercises, and physical activity in general, serve to distract the student while learning by reducing his mnemonic and conceptual effort and his concentration, allowing him to learn in a serene, relaxed, and effective way. We predicted that at the end of the experimental action, the positive performance in the sample group would significantly increase in text comprehension, grammar, calculation, and numbering, units of measurement, geometry, concepts, and scientific experiments. Reading and comprehension activities of the text, grammar, solving mathematical problems, and scientific conceptualizations interspersed with motor exercises will be prepared. Physical settings of 10 minutes will be set up during which students will intersperse the lesson with motor activities and interactive games. The training program will be realized over two years and will be divided into seven steps: awareness of the problem and teacher training; definition of assessment criteria and construction of observation instruments; activity planning; baseline detection; experimentation on the sample of activities; final trend analysis; reflective sharing and dissemination of the results. The sample will be composed of 70 primary school classes, 1,400 pupils aged between 8 and 11 years.

The actions that will be implemented are a prerequisite for improving the quality and inclusiveness of education and training systems, improving education outcomes, achieving the goals and targets of the European Education Area, as well as driving sustainable growth, improving well-being and building a more inclusive society.

**Keywords:** spaced learning, physical-setting, hard skills, primary school.

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# The Possibilities of Integrating the Holocaust Theme into the Teaching of Literature at the Primary Schools

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Teachers who present the events of the Shoah to their pupils have at their disposal a considerable amount of material provided mainly by institutions dealing with the legacy of the Shoah phenomenon. In the Czech Republic, one of the most important is the Terezín Initiative, whose website offers a wealth of suggestions for implementing the Shoah into teaching at various levels of institutional education. The website can also be used for research-oriented teaching, thanks to the Victims Database, in which the victims of the Nazi extermination machine can be searched. The name (e.g., a victim of the Nazi regime from the town in which the school is located) can be used in teaching aimed at introducing this line of events of the 20th century. In our opinion, presenting the topic in this way is one of the most effective ways of abstracting the defined phenomenon. Several educational courses are also provided by the Jewish Museum in Prague, which in cooperation with other institutions (for example, the Institute for Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences or the Hebrew University of Jerusalem) offers seminars for pupils, students, their educators, and the public.

The activities of the given institution can be used as part of selected methods for presenting the topic of the Shoah to pupils and students. We mentioned, for example, the survivor testimony, which consists of passing on the life experience of survivors of the Nazi extermination machine to the next generation, either through interviews or through literary memoirs - in our opinion, this approach is more applicable to real teaching. This model can also be applied to the testimony of second- or third-generation descendants of Shoah survivors. The use of the model a priori assumes as a starting point the testimony of Jewish persons. We are convinced that it is very important to enrich this model also with testimonies from Germans, Poles, etc. In our opinion, teaching in which multiple perspectives on a given issue will be implemented has the potential to develop students' critical thinking, argumentation techniques, or the ability to view the problems of the (contemporary) world comprehensively. The historical approach is based on the thesis that pupils learn about history through literacy education. This approach, in terms of a certain amount of necessary information that primary school pupils should acquire, represents a shift from the transmissive transmission of knowledge to active pupil involvement in the search for connections between artistic narratives and real historical events. The multi-level approach is based on the thesis that the development of students' desirable axiological values, the acquisition of ethical norms or the perception of democracy as a value should begin at the youngest possible age. Of course, it should be a matter of course to adapt the teaching tool (in our case, artistic narratives) to the age



of the pupils. The interdisciplinary approach is based on the presentation of the events of the Shoah through the life story of a particular person. The diaries of Jewish children and adolescents seem particularly suitable for teaching in primary school. In connotation with their anchoring in the historical and social context, they can lead to looking at the issue in different ways (from different angles). The main contribution of this approach is to prevent the flattening of the view of the Shoah as merely an attempt to exterminate Jews.

**Keywords:** Holocaust, Shoah, literature, primary schools, integration

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# English Syntactic Structures Starting with “WHEN”

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The text focuses on the issue of creative thinking of undergraduate English teachers. It presents a case study carried out at the Faculty of Education of University of Hradec Kralove whose aim was to reveal students' ability to link their theoretical linguistic knowledge with their practical learning and teaching skills. The activity was conducted as part of an undergraduate course in applied linguistics for first- year students of the follow-up Master's degree study programme. The first task for the students was to refer to available materials focusing on English grammar learning and teaching, and to make comments on problematic issues related to the English word “when” and on linguistic rules related to syntactic structures starting with this word. Then, with reflections on the theory and the comments made and with reflections on their own learning experience, the students were asked to come up with recommendations for teaching practice. The text presents the findings resulting from the case study, and it can be helpful, motivational and inspirational for (not only) beginning English teachers. The topic of this paper is related to teaching grammar, which is definitely not an easy issue. As Swan (2012, p. 122) says: “The teaching of grammar can be something of a conceptual maze, full of confusing questions relating to problems of selection and methodology”. Trying to answer the question ‘Why do people worry so much about grammar teaching?’, Swan (2012, p. 122) claims: “The trouble with teaching grammar is that we are never quite sure whether it works or not: its effects are uncertain and hard to assess. If we teach rules, sometimes students manage to apply them and sometimes they don't. Practice may have some effect, but carry-over to spontaneous production is often disappointing.” The following text focuses on the issue of creative thinking of undergraduate English teachers studying at the Faculty of Education of the University of Hradec Králové (Czech Republic). In the first year of their follow-up Master's degree studies they are offered courses in Applied Linguistics. The courses focus on linguistic issues which are problematic from the learning / teaching point of view; and their goals are:

1. to develop pre-service teachers' abilities and skills to present and clarify English grammar issues more problematic for Czech learners of English
2. to develop creative thinking of undergraduate English teachers
3. to develop future teachers' ability to link their theoretical linguistic knowledge with their practical learning skills and teaching skills (not ignoring the issues of language interference and positive transfer)

These courses are not about memorizing rules and definitions. During the courses, the students are made to explore the principles of the language. Through such explorations, a

better understanding of not only the language rules and principles themselves, but also of the learning and teaching processes can be reached. As Batstone (1994, in Introduction) claims: “The more we can find out about how grammar is learned and used, the better we will teach it effectively.” Within the framework of the courses, we try to make our pre-service teachers be creative, we make efforts to encourage them to discover the target language and simultaneously their mother tongue creatively because as Harmer says (1994, p. 23): “... discovery activities are so valuable since by asking students to discover ways in which language is used we help to raise awareness about the creative use of grammar – amongst other things“. Possible ways of training pre-service teachers in their creative thinking can be better illustrated and clarified through the following tasks really assigned to participants in courses of Applied Linguistics:

- a) Refer to available materials focusing on English grammar learning and teaching, and make comments on problematic issues related to the English word “when” and on linguistic rules related to syntactic structures starting with this word.
- b) Reflecting the theory and your own learning experience, make recommendations useful for teaching practice.

In the follow-up discussions it was revealed that the students prefer referring to on-line materials rather than to printed ones. (The most frequently used sources were: Your Dictionary [online], available at <https://www.yourdictionary.com/when>; and Part of Speech [online], available at <http://partofspeech.org/what-part-of-speech-is-when/>).

Thinking about the word “when” used at the beginning of clauses, the students came up with its following functions:

1. conjunction introducing time clause
2. conjunction introducing relative clauses
3. wh- word introducing questions.

The order in which the functions were listed was discussed during the seminar. The students were asked to think about reasons why the interrogative function was the last one on the list.

Concerning the rules related to syntactic structures starting with “when”, the students came up merely with citing their sources:

1. “When“ as a time conjunction: It is used when we talk about future (= What happens when something else appears in the future). We do not use “will” after “when” in a meaning of “at that time”.

“When“ as a time conjunction: It is used when we talk about past events (= What happened when something else (had) appeared). We also use “when” to talk about one event that happens immediately after another and to talk about periods of time in the past. It is used usually in a clause with a single action and with a simple past or present tense.“

2. “When” as word introducing questions: the following word order: When + auxiliary verb + subject + main verb + ...?

Referring to the above mentioned rules, the students were asked about their clarity and other problematic issues related to these rules. Then the students were asked to adjust these clarifications to different levels of learners. None of the students mentioned the rules related to syntactic structures started with “when” in indirect speech. This issue was, however, not ignored by the teacher, who started quite a fruitful discussion about the word order and a potential back-shift in indirect speech. During the discussions, the pre-service teachers creatively adjusted their previously formulated recommendations, and they appreciated the fruitfulness of self-reflections. Ur (2013, pp. 4 -5) claims: “It is helpful to teach grammar systematically; it is helpful to have an explicit rule available for a grammar point being learnt.” On the basis of our experience, we can add some words: It is helpful to teach grammar systematically and creatively; it is helpful to reflect our learners’ needs and have an explicit rule available for a grammar point being learnt.

**Keywords:** applied linguistics, syntactic structures, learning and teaching skills

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# The Dilemmas and the Challenges in Providing Supervisor Support in Teachers Training

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The contribution deals with the problem of introducing and applying the supervision strategy to the reflection of continuous pedagogical practices. Supervision as a unique tool of reflection is successfully used in many so-called 'helping professions', where it helps to develop not only the quality of services provided but also supports the theoretical growth of the scientific area and also contributes to the well-being of participants. In the field of education in the Czech Republic, the potential of supervision is far from being fulfilled. And as we suppose that the quality of students' support during their teaching practices is an important factor affecting the overall quality of pedagogical training, it is logical to try to introduce supervision right there. The aim of this paper is to contribute to the discussion regarding the possibilities of implementing supervision in the in teacher training by asking (a) after the specifics associated with supervision applied in the area of continuous pedagogical practices, (b) after possible dilemmas that the supervisor/lector may encounter, and (c) after challenges which can be helpful to those who would like to use supervision in their practice. Methodologically, the contribution is anchored on the one hand in the reflection of experienced practice, and on the other hand in the theoretical reflection of the essential contexts of the given topic: reflection of pedagogical practice, supervision, humanities. The author shares his experience in searching for the possibilities of suitable support for civic education and social science students during their continuous practice at secondary school. He distinguishes between support in the form of mentoring, coaching, and supervision, and he presents the aforementioned specifics, dilemmas and challenges. In conclusion, the author expresses his opinion that supervision should play an important role not only in the reflective practice of skilled teacher, providing them effective professional development opportunities, but also it might play an important role in the reflective practice implemented during the teacher training, providing students with the opportunity to seek for a background for their professional and personal growth, and helping them to touch the meaningfulness of their future profession.

**Keywords:** supervision in pedagogy, complex support of student practice, didactics of social sciences and philosophy, holistic approach, ethical dimension of education

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