

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

Teachers of Tomorrow

15–17 September 2023

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS




**Charles
University**



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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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Table of content

PART I – Education Unveiled: Analyzing Theories, Practicing Strategies, and Gamification in Teacher Training

University Practice Partnerships: Sustainin Collaboration Across Learning Environments	19
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.....	21
Using Measures Of Quality To Problematisé The Purpose Of Initial Teacher Education: Lessons From A National Survey In Scotland	23
The Imperative For Transformative Revisions In Teacher Training Programs: Rationale And Methodological Considerations.....	26
On the Way to a Competent Teacher – A Tool for Self-Reflection of Students of Pre-Primary Education	29
Innovative Practice in Initial Professional Studies of Pre-primary Education.....	31

PART II – Exploring Innovative Frontiers in Education: From Neuroimaging to Intercultural Collaboration

A Crucial Area to Train the Teachers about: Engagement in Research.....	35
Connected Learning – Implementing International And Intercultural Online Student Collaboration, Focused On 21st Century Skills.....	36
Linking Lab-Based Neuroimaging to Science of Teaching.....	38

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	43
---	----

Digital Tools in Early Education: Preschool Teachers' Perspectives on Language Development of Young Children.....	44
Primary Education Teacher Programs: Analyzing Paradoxes With The Support Of Geogebra As A Way To Develop Mathematical And Digital Competencies	47
Remedies for Reading Motivation: Flipgrid, Teacher Training, Student Centered-Learning Methods	49
STEM/STEAM Gap Between Theory and Practice. An International Case Study: from the Metaverse to Artificial Intelligence in the Classical High School	52
Digital-Based Thematic Material Design Process in Social Studies Teacher Training	54

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.....	57
Organisation of Distance Education for Schoolchildren with Autism Spectrum Disorder	60
Expansion of the FIAS Tool for Monitoring Communication and Interaction Between a Teacher and a Teaching Assistant in Czech Classrooms.....	63
Digital Technology for Inclusive Education and Transformative Pedagogy: Reaching for the Stars	64
Promoting Inclusive Education through the lens of UDL. A Teacher Professional Development Action-Research	66
The Living Lab Promotes the Professional Development of Inclusive Teachers Inclusive, Between Innovation And Participation.....	69

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.....	75
--	----

Students' Deepened Engagement in Learning English as a Foreign Language: Teacher Survey Report.....	77
Body Education in Primary School: Analysis and Determinations.....	80
Developing EFL Learners' Writing Skills Through a Combination of Evidence Technology and Business Based Instruction.....	83
Facilitating Pre-service ESOL Teacher Candidates' Critical Language Awareness Through Dialectical Variation Study.....	86
Mitigating Challenges of Cross-Cultural Adaptation between Chinese EFL Students and their Non-Chinese Teachers in a University Environment.....	89

PART VI – Approaches to Linking Theory with Practice

Combining Theory & Practice in Theory	95
Combining Theory & Practice in Action.....	98
Promoting the Writing of Portfolios in Teacher Education: How to Better Engage Students?.....	100
A Ministerial Level of Touch on Teachers' Professional Development: Case of a Hands-on and Collaborative Model	102
Individualized Group Teaching and Learning: Integrating Elements of Tutoring in Teaching Italian Language and Culture.....	105
At School With Instagram, Social Networks as Educational Platforms.....	198
Enhancing Creative Learning through Theoretical Education: A Focus Group Research.....	110
Building Teachers' Digital Competence Through Collaborative Design Of Materials.....	112
Learning Tasks in Textbooks, Their Language and Its Problems.....	113
Directions for Reform of Teacher Observation A Hermeneutic-Phenomenological Model	115

Exploring Teachers' Emotion Labour in the Context of EMI: Implication for Teachers of Tomorrow	118
EFL Instructors' Values Systems, Reflections and Emotions on Paired Peer Observation Process: Case Study*	121
Hard Skills, Physical Activities and Spaced Learning	123
The Possibilities of Integrating the Holocaust Theme into the Teaching of Literature at the Primary Schools.....	126
English Syntactic Structures Starting with "WHEN"	128
The Dilemmas and the Challenges in Providing Supervisor Support in Teachers Training	131

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

*Gabriella Ferrara, Maria Moscato and Francesca Pedone
University of Palermo*

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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