



Lincoln Bishop
University

TEACHER EDUCATION POLICY IN EUROPE (TEPE) 2026

**A New Magna Carta for Change:
Empowering the Teaching Profession**

Conference Programme

**6 - 8 May 2026 | Lincoln Bishop University,
Lincoln, United Kingdom**

Welcome to TEPE 2026



We are delighted to welcome colleagues from across Europe and beyond to Lincoln for three days of rich dialogue, shared inquiry, and collaboration within the TEPE community. It is a particular pleasure to host two distinguished keynote speakers whose scholarship and leadership will help frame and challenge our collective thinking.

Lincoln Bishop University is proud to host this year's TEPE conference. With a long-standing commitment to teacher education stretching back to 1862, the University has deep roots in Lincolnshire and an enduring reputation for shaping teachers and teacher educators locally, nationally, and internationally.

We hope the coming days offer space not only for critical engagement with policy, research, and practice, but also for meaningful exchange – conversations that inspire, connect, and transform how we think about teacher education across Europe.

We wish you a stimulating and enjoyable TEPE 2026.



Conference theme

A new Magna Carta for change: Empowering the teaching profession

This year's theme draws inspiration from Lincoln's historic connection to the Magna Carta, a defining moment in history that challenged concentrated authority and initiated a redistribution of power. In that spirit, the conference invites educators, researchers, and policymakers to reimagine teacher empowerment not as a symbolic gesture, but as a transformative force capable of reshaping educational systems across Europe.

The teaching profession faces complex and evolving challenges: technological disruption, environmental uncertainty, policy reform, and recruitment pressures. Teachers need to be supported not only to respond to these changes, but to lead them.

The role of teacher education, which encompasses teachers' ongoing professional development, is significant in rethinking how the profession is structured, sustained, and valued. This raises a critical question: **How can we best leverage teacher education as the new Magna Carta for empowering the profession?**

The four levers

Cultivating resilience: What conditions are needed to empower teachers to build resilience in the face of ongoing educational, social, and environmental uncertainty?

Embracing digital innovation: How can the integration of AI and digital technologies support teacher empowerment?

Leading through learning: How can professional learning be reimaged as a lever for teacher empowerment and leadership across schools and systems?

Policy and governance: How can teacher empowerment be embedded within education policy and governance structures across Europe?

The TEPE Network

The Teacher Education Policy in Europe (TEPE) Network is an informal academic network that brings together teacher educators, researchers and policymakers with a shared interest in the quality and development of teacher education in Europe.

TEPE is founded on the view that teacher education policy is shaped through dialogue across practice, research and policy at regional, national and European levels. The network provides a platform for this dialogue through its annual conference, alongside related activities such as webinars and publications. TEPE has no formal membership structure. Participation is open to all those engaged in teacher education and policy through active involvement in the network's events and initiatives.



Use QR code to follow TEPE on LinkedIn

Format: Dialogue, exchange and connection

The TEPE 2026 conference is designed to support meaningful dialogue and active exchange among participants. Across keynotes, parallel sessions, a panel discussion, and informal networking opportunities, the programme creates space for sharing perspectives, testing ideas and building connections.

Parallel sessions are structured to encourage discussion alongside presentation, supporting reflection, challenge and collaborative thinking. Dedicated opportunities for exchange, including the Idea Exchange: The New Magna Carta, the panel discussion, and scheduled networking time, invite participants to engage across national, institutional and disciplinary contexts. Throughout the conference, delegates are encouraged to contribute openly, draw connections between research, policy and practice, and take part in a shared exploration of how teacher education can support professional empowerment across Europe.

How to find us



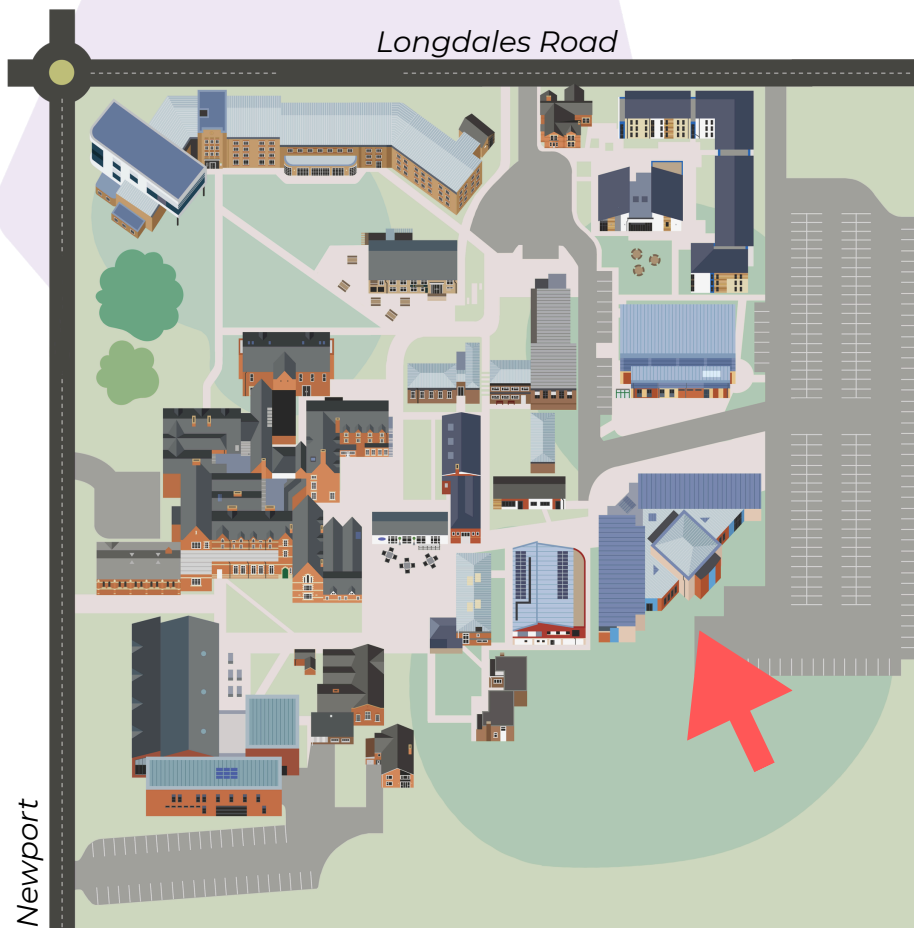
By train

Lincoln Central is the railway station serving the city. From station to campus: 10-15 minutes by bus (Number 7 or Number 8), 5 minutes by taxi.

By car

Use **LN1 3DY** for Sat Nav directions. On-site parking is available on Longdales Road.

Venue information



Conference location: Robert Hardy Building

Directions: From Newport entrance, walk past the Cornerstone Building, the Skinner Building, Curiositea and the Business School. The building is on your right before you reach the main car park. If arriving by car, please use the main car park.

TEPE 2026 Programme

Wednesday 6th May 2026

15:00 – 15:30	Registration with tea and coffee
15:30 – 15:50	Welcome and introduction to the conference
15:50 – 16:50	Keynote 1: Dr Jenny Wynn (University of Oxford)
16:50 – 17:20	The idea exchange: The new Magna Carta
17:20 – 18:00	Informal networking

Thursday 7th May 2026

9:00 – 9:15	Day 2 introduction
9:15 – 11:15	Parallel sessions 1
11:15 – 11:45	Refreshment break
11:45 – 12:30	Panel discussion
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 15:00	Parallel sessions 2
15:00 – 15:30	Refreshment break
15:30 – 17:00	Parallel sessions 3
17:00 – 17:15	Day 2 reflections

Friday 8th May 2026

9:00 – 9:15	Day 3 introduction
9:15 – 10:45	Parallel sessions 4
10:45 – 11:00	Refreshment break
11:00 – 12:00	Keynote 2: Professor Romiță Iucu (University of Bucharest)
12:00 – 12:10	Closing remarks
12:10 – 13:00	Farewell lunch

Keynote speakers



**Dr Jenny Wynn
(University of Oxford)**

*Threshold Concepts in Initial
Teacher Education: Navigating
Complexity, Identity, and Practice*

An internationally respected teacher educator and researcher, Dr Wynn brings deep expertise in Initial Teacher Education, science education, and professional learning. With extensive leadership experience across the UK sector, including national roles with UCET, her current work at Oxford explores threshold concepts, epistemic development, and the future of teacher education, alongside a strong commitment to sustainability and climate education.



**Professor Romiță Iucu
(University of Bucharest)**

*A Magna Carta for Teacher
Education: A Charter for a New
Governance of Learning in
Transnational Teacher Education*

A leading European voice in teacher education policy and higher education governance, Professor Iucu is President of the Board of Trustees at the University of Bucharest, a Corresponding Member of the Romanian Academy, and a key contributor to Bologna Process reform, European University Alliances, and teacher education policy networks across Europe. His work sits at the heart of how education systems respond to contemporary societal and policy challenges.

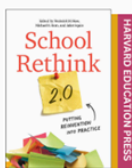
Conference partner

The TEPE 2026 conference is supported by Mare Nostrum Group, an academic books distributor working with leading international publishers in education and the social sciences.

Mare Nostrum Group is contributing book prizes for conference delegates and offering a 25% discount on selected publications using the code provided.

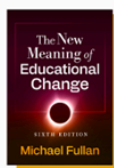


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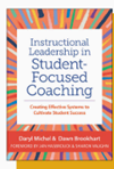
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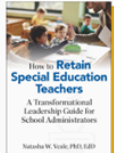
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Parallel sessions

Thursday 7th May 2026

Parallel session 1 (9:15 - 11:15)

Room: Hardy Seminar 2	Room: Hardy Seminar 3	Room: Hardy Seminar 4
<p>Lawrence & Rimmer Broken? The Challenge of Educating Teachers to Meet the Needs of Autistic Pupils</p>	<p>Ryan Using Lesson Study as a Lever to Support Teacher Educators' Professional Learning and Practice in Initial Teacher Education</p>	<p>Snoek & Koffeman Empowering Innovative Capacity Within Teacher Education</p>
<p>McQuade Understandings of Emotional Labour in Teaching in England</p>	<p>Hall Reimagining Professional Learning as Relational Practice: Inclusive Co-Research, Teacher Empowerment, and Beliminal Theory</p>	<p>Sneyd Harm Reduction or Systemic Change: Empowering Educators Through Structural Transformation</p>
	<p>Buleshkaj & Mehmeti School-Based Professional Development as an Opportunity for Teacher Empowerment and Leadership for Learning</p>	<p>Wilson A Primary School's Role in Enacting Social Mobility</p>

Parallel session 2 (13:30 - 15:00)

Room: Hardy Seminar 2	Room: Hardy Seminar 3	Room: Hardy Seminar 4
<p>Fawkes Cultivating Resilience: Policy Lessons from Schools in Ukraine for Empowering Teachers Amid Prolonged Uncertainty</p>	<p>Fitzpatrick SPARK Project (STEM Partnerships for Action, Relevance, and Knowledge): Empowering Teachers to Respond to Emerging Challenges and Lead Change</p>	<p>Edwards What are the Challenges and the Opportunities in Implementing the ITTECF for Subject-Specific Pedagogy in Secondary Initial Teacher Education?</p>
<p>Halder Rethinking Accountability in UK Higher Education: Beyond OfS and TEF Metrics</p>	<p>Meijer Understanding and Dealing with Teachers' Resistance to Change from the Perspective of Teacher Identity</p>	<p>Al Busafi Reimagining Physical Education Teacher Education through Policy Alignment: An Interdisciplinary Perspective</p>

Parallel sessions

Thursday 7th May 2026

Parallel session 3 (15:30 - 17:00)

Room: Hardy Seminar 2	Room: Hardy Seminar 3	Room: Hardy Seminar 4
<p>Impedovo Exploring Belonging Through Dialogue: A Qualitative Study from the Ebelong Project Within the CIVIS European University Alliance</p>	<p>Myllyviita Self-Study of Teacher’s Digital Innovations</p>	<p>Koffeman Cultivating Resilience Through Participatory Action Research: Policy Lessons from the Amsterdam Education Research Workshop</p>
<p>Murphy Developing Competences for Democratic Culture: Insights from Teaching Professionals</p>	<p>Muir 'AI - What is it Good For?' A 'Long Table' Discussion</p>	<p>Luby Tilting at Windmills? Leerkracht – A Dutch Magna Carta for the Teaching Profession</p>

Friday 8th May 2026

Parallel session 4 (9:15 - 10:45)

Room: Hardy Seminar 2	Room: Hardy Seminar 3	Room: Hardy Seminar 4
<p>Bushell-Thornalley & Tierney What Does ‘Confidence’ Look Like for School Based Teacher Educators (SBTEs) When Enabling Trainee Teachers to Develop Research Literacy?</p>	<p>Body-Douglas Designing for What We Value: Project-Based Curriculum for Learning, Inclusion and AI</p>	<p>Leverton & Carlin Strengthening Teacher Education for Carer-Inclusive Schools: Policy Pathways for Recognising and Supporting Unpaid Carers Across Europe</p>
<p>Lindström From Teacher to Teacher-Educator: Contributing Factors of School-Based Teacher Educator Identity Development</p>	<p>Mayrell From One-Size-Fits-All to One-Student-at-a-Time: How AI-Powered Flipped Classrooms Are Reshaping Learning at Scale</p>	<p>Wythe Small Adjustments, Significant Impact: Inclusive Pedagogy as a Lever for Teacher Empowerment</p>

Abstracts

Click on name to go directly to abstract:

- [Al Busafi](#)
- [Body-Douglas](#)
- [Buleshkaj & Mehmeti](#)
- [Bushell-Thornalley & Tierney](#)
- [Edwards](#)
- [Fawkes](#)
- [Fitzpatrick](#)
- [Halder](#)
- [Hall](#)
- [Impedovo](#)
- [Koffeman](#)
- [Lawrence & Rimmer](#)
- [Leverton & Carlin](#)
- [Lindström](#)
- [Luby](#)
- [Mayrell](#)
- [McQuade](#)
- [Meijer](#)
- [Muir](#)
- [Myllyviita](#)
- [Murphy](#)
- [Ryan](#)
- [Sneyd](#)
- [Snoek & Koffeman](#)
- [Wilson](#)
- [Wythe](#)

Abstracts

Al Busafi, Majid

Reimagining Physical Education Teacher Education through Policy Alignment: An Interdisciplinary Perspective

Empowering the teaching profession requires education policies that are responsive to evolving labour market structures and the expanding professional roles of Physical Education (PE) teachers beyond traditional school instruction. This study examines how higher education policy can function as a governance mechanism for aligning Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) curricula with workforce demands in sports training, sports health, and community-based physical activity promotion.

Grounded in an interdisciplinary framework that integrates teacher education policy, workforce planning, public health strategy, and sports sciences, the study adopts a descriptive mixed-method approach combining a structured questionnaire and systematic content analysis. Data were collected from 211 professionals working in sports federations, fitness and rehabilitation centers, schools, and health institutions that directly employ or supervise graduates of Physical Education and Sports Science programs. In parallel, a detailed review of existing PETE curricula was conducted to examine course structures, credit distributions, practicum models, and competency frameworks.

The findings identify several precise curriculum–workforce mismatches. First, current programs remain predominantly generalist, with over 70% of coursework focused on theoretical pedagogy and traditional sports instruction, while less than 15% addresses applied sports training, injury prevention, exercise prescription, or health-based programming. Second, limited exposure to industry-based practicum placements restricts graduates' readiness for employment in fitness, rehabilitation, and community sport sectors. Third, competency frameworks embedded in national teacher education policies emphasize classroom delivery but insufficiently incorporate emerging labour market expectations such as data-driven performance analysis, health monitoring technologies, and interdisciplinary collaboration with health professionals. Survey respondents (93.8%) strongly supported the introduction of structured specialization pathways in sports training and sports health, alongside revised practicum requirements and competency-based assessment models.

[Return to overview](#)

Abstracts

Al Busafi, Majid

Continued

The analysis further reveals a gap between policy intentions advocating diversification and innovation in teacher roles, and their translation into concrete curriculum design within university programs. While policy documents promote alignment with national health and sport strategies, institutional implementation remains limited and fragmented.

From a governance perspective, the study argues that curriculum reform should be treated not merely as academic restructuring but as a policy translation process requiring coordinated engagement between universities, ministries of education and sport, accreditation bodies, and employers. Strengthening specialization tracks, embedding industry partnerships, and revising competency standards are proposed as mechanisms to bridge curriculum–workforce gaps and enhance teacher professional autonomy.

By providing empirical evidence of specific structural mismatches and analysing how education policy is enacted at the program level, this study contributes to international debates on teacher empowerment, labour market alignment, and the redesign of teacher education systems capable of responding to contemporary public health and sport sector transformations.

[Return to overview](#)

Abstracts

Body-Douglas, Lewis

Designing for What We Value: Project-Based Curriculum for Learning, Inclusion and AI

As education systems face increasing pressure from technological change (Mace et al, 2025; Richmond, 2025), inclusion agendas, and shifting labour markets (Milberg, 2025), teachers are frequently positioned as implementers of reform that is already out of date. This workshop argues that teacher empowerment requires a fundamental rethinking of curriculum design, moving away from subject bounded structures towards interdisciplinary, project-based models that position teachers as facilitators and designers of learning ecosystems. Drawing on practical curriculum development in multiple settings, the session will look to discuss how project-based approaches enable teachers to mobilise expertise collaboratively, while designing inclusive learning environments responsive to AI and digital innovation. Participants will explore how approaches support diverse learners by valuing multiple forms of contribution through creative, technical, and reflective input, thereby redistributing success beyond narrow attainment measures. The workshop frames AI not as a tool integration challenge, but as a curriculum design problem. Traditional content heavy models struggle to accommodate ethical, collaborative, and contextual uses of AI. Whereas PBL structures allow educators to facilitate complex spaces that reflect real world uncertainty and requests for future learners. This repositioning enhances professional judgement and autonomy, strengthening teacher and learner identity, whilst also aiding in engagement (THE, 2025). However, the workshop will look to identify a significant tension between reframed thought leadership and existing policy and governance structures (Naz, 2025; Sallai et al, 2024). Partially through historical tendencies to prioritise individualised “checkbox” style outcomes and standardised assessment. The session will argue that teacher empowerment cannot be achieved solely through professional development/training initiatives, but requires policy realignment to recognise interdisciplinary design, collaboration, and external engagement as legitimate measures of educational quality (Galavan, 2026). The session will conclude with a synthesis of principles that propose AI-responsive PBL curriculum for teacher empowerment, leadership, and systemic change across teacher education and policy.

[Return to overview](#)

Abstracts

Buleshkaj, Osman & Mehmeti, Selim

School-Based Professional Development as an Opportunity for Teacher Empowerment and Leadership for Learning

Teacher professional development (TPD) is widely recognized as a critical driver of educational quality, student outcomes, and system improvement. Contemporary education systems face increasing demands related to curriculum reform, digitalization, inclusive education, and expanded professional responsibilities for teachers. In response, education policies are increasingly shifting from centralized, top-down approaches toward models that emphasize teacher empowerment, professional autonomy, and collaborative governance. School-based professional development (SBPD), supported through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), represents a key mechanism for fostering teacher leadership and learning-centered school improvement.

This paper aims to examine the emerging national policy framework for school-based teacher professional development in Kosovo and to explore early experiences of teachers and school leaders in its implementation, with a focus on teacher empowerment and leadership through learning.

The study draws on qualitative insights from teachers, quality coordinators, school leaders and education officers in municipalities involved in the initial implementation of SBPD. Data were collected through nine individual interviews with education officers, six focus groups with 36 school leaders and quality coordinators, and a questionnaire completed by 59 teachers. A total of 106 participants took part in this study. It provides an analysis of national policy documents, curriculum reform guidelines, and the Ministry of Education's school-based professional development framework. Attention was given to governance structures, implementation strategies, and perceived impacts on professional practice.

Findings indicate that the SBPD policy in Kosovo provides clear guidance, simplified procedures, and supportive governance structures that enhance teacher engagement and ownership. Five interrelated elements emerge as central: teacher involvement in policy design, strengthened professional autonomy, collaborative learning cultures through PLCs, redefined teacher roles as learning leaders, and the use of practical European frameworks for systemic change. Participants report increased collaboration, alignment between curriculum reform and professional learning, and greater responsibility at the school level.

[Return to overview](#)

Abstracts

Buleshkaj, Osman & Mehmeti, Selim

Continued

The paper concludes that school-based professional development offers a viable pathway for empowering teachers as leaders of learning and agents of educational change. Embedding these principles in education policy can support more resilient, inclusive, and learning-centered education systems in Kosovo and comparable contexts.

Keywords: school-based teacher professional development, teacher professionalism, distributed leadership, professional learning communities, education governance and decentralization.

[Return to overview](#)

Abstracts

Bushell-Thornalley, Helen & Tierney, Eleanor

What Does ‘Confidence’ Look Like for School Based Teacher Educators (SBTEs) When Enabling Trainee Teachers to Develop Research Literacy?

Consistently low levels of confidence are reported to the question asked of SBTEs: ‘how confident do you feel in enabling trainees to access, utilise and interpret robust educational research to inform their teaching’. As a result of audit findings by an Initial Teacher Training (ITT) provider, this research seeks to explore, describe and understand why reported confidence levels are lowest in this category. From SBTE’s own lived experiences, views and opinions, this research seeks to reveal possible enabling factors that may support a transition from a place of liminal uncertainty to greater confidence in the interplay between theory and practice and in addition, engagement in research literacy (Boyd, 2012; White, 2020). Design, methodology, approach Employing a qualitative, interpretivist paradigm through an instrumental and descriptive Case Study and multi methods data gathering approach, this study uses current and archived quantitative data from the PGCE Secondary SBTE’s audit returns. It also undertakes complementary qualitative Thematic Analysis (TA) (Braun and Clarke, 2022) of semi-structured interviews. Findings Emerging findings include SBTEs highly valuing their autonomy and additionally, expressing a desire for greater collaborative learning spaces and building communities of practice. SBTEs also see themselves as expert guides of their trainees’ progress and often those who need most support bringing greatest feelings of reward. Practical implications ITT providers will develop and innovate learning opportunities via communities of practice and individual experiences for their SBTEs and it is hoped that this study can contribute to the discussion (White, 2022). Originality / value In a new era of mentor training expectations, going from 20 hours mandatory training to its removal as a national expectation, this is timely research. Government policy in England compels SBTEs to support trainees more directly with praxis development and contributes to the perceived paucity of research of the interplay between theory and practice.

[Return to overview](#)

Abstracts

Edwards, Kimberley

What are the Challenges and the Opportunities in Implementing the ITTECF for Subject-Specific Pedagogy in Secondary Initial Teacher Education?

This workshop will explore the challenges and opportunities involved in implementing the Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Framework (ITTECF), a statutory framework for England that sets out the mandatory content and expectations for all Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes. It will examine how teacher educators interpret and navigate the framework's requirements alongside their own subject-specific pedagogical expertise, and how these processes shape their perceptions of professional autonomy. The workshop will also consider the ITTECF as a mechanism of state control, analysing the authority it exerts over programme design and delivery within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

Drawing on findings from an interpretivist study involving questionnaires and a focus group, the session will illuminate teacher educators' lived experiences of enacting policy at the micro level. The workshop will offer insights into working within one of the most tightly regulated ITE systems globally and will create opportunities to discuss implications for collaboration across HEIs, quality assurance, and professional development, while ensuring alignment with statutory requirements.

[Return to overview](#)

Abstracts

Fawkes, Andy

Cultivating Resilience: Policy Lessons from Schools in Ukraine for Empowering Teachers Amid Prolonged Uncertainty

The ongoing war in Ukraine has brought continuous educational, social, and environmental challenges, putting unique pressure on teachers and schools. Educators are expected to keep classes going while dealing with trauma, displacement, damaged infrastructure, and greater emotional strain. Drawing from real-world experiences of Ukrainian schools during the conflict, this paper argues that teacher resilience is not simply an individual trait—it should be seen as a systemic outcome shaped by policies, professional standards, and available resources. Adopting a wellbeing-focused and systems-based approach, the paper explores how some Ukrainian schools have changed their organisational practices to support teachers through extended periods of stress. These changes include prioritising psychological safety over strict accountability measures, using trauma-informed teaching methods, allowing more flexibility in curriculum and assessment, and sharing leadership roles to lighten individual responsibilities. Such adaptations reveal the shortcomings of mainstream discussions about teacher resilience, which often focus on personal coping skills without addressing broader structural issues. Special attention is given to the importance of material conditions in fostering resilience. Evidence from Ukraine shows that sustained investment is needed for smaller class sizes, more staff, specialist wellbeing and pastoral support, protected planning time, and safer physical and digital learning environments. Without these fundamental supports, expecting teachers to remain resilient becomes unrealistic and ethically questionable. The paper presents a policy framework for teacher resilience based on four key elements: recognising wellbeing as a professional right in teacher education and standards; enabling flexible workloads and accountability; ensuring sufficient funding and staffing to manage uncertainty; and promoting collective understanding through collaborative and relational leadership. Lessons from Ukraine offer essential insights for European education policymakers looking to redefine the teaching profession for a future marked by ongoing uncertainty.

[Return to overview](#)

Abstracts

Fitzpatrick, Michelle

SPARK Project (STEM Partnerships for Action, Relevance, and Knowledge): Empowering Teachers to Respond to Emerging Challenges and Lead Change

STEM educators, at all levels, have a transformative role in shaping informed, ethical, and action-oriented responses to 21st century challenges. In Ireland, the recent publication of a formal STEM curriculum at primary level (NCCA, 2025) necessitates an urgent focus on teacher support for integrated approaches. Traditional teacher education has focused on individual disciplines, creating a need for teachers to develop a stronger understanding of disciplinary connections and what integrated STEM looks like in practice. Furthermore, existing critiques highlight the siloed nature of much work in higher education, emphasizing the need for teacher educators to collaborate to support professional learning (Patton & Parker, 2017). The SPARK project responds to this need through a school-university partnership, aiming to support collaboration between primary teachers (n=6), preservice teachers (PSTs, n=25), and STEM teacher educators (mathematics and science) as they co-create, implement, and revise rich STEM learning experiences for children which are rooted in sustainability challenges. Japanese Lesson Study acts as the organizing framework for this professional learning, selected for its robust, research-based, and iterative process of collaborative planning, classroom implementation, guided observation, and reflection, which focuses specifically on enhancing student learning (Lewis & Takahashi, 2013). The project's interdisciplinary approach aims to promote systems thinking and bridge knowledge and actions to promote critical climate and STEM literacies. As a multi-tiered research study, SPARK also aims to develop research-informed classroom pedagogies aligned with the new primary curriculum landscape, while generating practice-informed research to guide the professional development required for effective STEM teaching and learning in Irish primary classrooms. This paper presents tentative findings from the first cycle of SPARK (Spring 2026), reporting on the research lessons designed as part of the STEM inquiry unit, highlighting the challenges and affordances of interdisciplinary teaching and learning. Implications for initial teacher education as well as professional development are discussed.

[Return to overview](#)

Abstracts

Halder, Buddhadeb

Rethinking Accountability in UK Higher Education: Beyond OfS and TEF Metrics

In recent years, frameworks led by the Office for Students (OfS) and the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) have sought to strengthen accountability through metrics, benchmarks, and performance indicators. While these mechanisms have clear policy intentions, they have also encouraged forms of compliance that are often reactive, procedural, and disconnected from the everyday realities of governance and teaching practice. Against this backdrop, the paper proposes Accountability by Design as an alternative way of thinking about accountability in higher education. Rather than treating accountability as something imposed externally or addressed after problems arise, the framework argues that it should be built into institutional structures from the outset. The discussion focuses on three areas where this can be made visible in practice: institutional governance and decision-making, curriculum design and delivery, and the broader alignment between educational values and public responsibility. The paper is particularly critical of the tendency within OfS and TEF processes to privilege measurable outcomes over context, professional judgement, and institutional culture. It suggests that transparency in governance and coherence in curriculum design are not peripheral concerns but central to how accountability is experienced by students, staff, and external stakeholders. When these dimensions are overlooked, accountability risks becoming a narrow exercise in performance management rather than a meaningful commitment to educational integrity. This paper reflects on the growing emphasis on accountability in UK higher education and questions how far current regulatory approaches genuinely support educational quality and public trust. Methodologically, the paper draws on conceptual reflection and policy analysis, informed by regulatory documents, governance literature, and practitioner experience within UK higher education. In line with the TEPE Conference 2026 theme, it calls for a rebalancing of accountability that supports autonomy, ethical governance, and long-term public value, rather than short-term regulatory compliance.

[Return to overview](#)

Abstracts

Hall, Lorena

Reimagining Professional Learning as Relational Practice: Inclusive Co-Research, Teacher Empowerment, and Beliminal Theory

Teacher empowerment in education policy is frequently framed through competence, resilience, and measurable outcomes. Less attention is paid to how professional learning occurs relationally, or to whose knowledge is recognised within these processes. This paper explores professional learning as a relational, ethical, and epistemically shared practice, drawing on inclusive, arts-based co-research with adults with learning disabilities. The paper is grounded in a participatory research project in which people with learning disabilities acted as co-researchers, using creative methods to explore friendship, belonging, and everyday social life within community services. These co-research encounters became sites of professional learning for educators, researchers, and practitioners, disrupting deficit-based assumptions about expertise, communication, and agency. Learning emerged not primarily through outcomes or artefacts, but through dialogic, sensory, and relational processes enacted during shared creative activity. The analysis draws on Beliminal Theory, an emergent conceptual framework developed by the author to theorise relational, suspended, and non-linear forms of learning and personhood within institutional and educational contexts. Used here as a developing analytical lens rather than a closed theoretical system, Beliminal Theory illuminates how professional learning can occur in spaces characterised by uncertainty, interdependence, and ethical presence. From this perspective, teacher empowerment is understood not as mastery or compliance, but as the capacity to remain with complexity and to learn with marginalised knowers. The paper contributes to debates in teacher education policy by re-imagining professional learning as a co-produced and relational process. It concludes by considering the implications of inclusive research practices for teacher education, professional resilience, and policy frameworks concerned with empowering the teaching profession.

[Return to overview](#)

Abstracts

Impedovo, Maria

Exploring Belonging Through Dialogue: A Qualitative Study from the Ebelong Project Within the CIVIS European University Alliance

A sense of belonging is a crucial determinant of university students' academic, personal, and social success. This study aimed to explore how students within the CIVIS European University Alliance—specifically at the University of Bucharest (Romania), the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (Greece), and Aix-Marseille University (France)—experience and construct belonging and inclusion within higher education settings. The research sought to identify institutional, social, and pedagogical factors that either promote or hinder a sense of belonging among diverse student populations. The study employed a mixed-methods design approved by the respective university ethics committees. Quantitative data were first collected via online surveys (N=752 across the three universities) focusing on inclusion, accessibility, well-being, and participation. In a second phase, qualitative inquiry was conducted through focus groups and semi-structured interviews with 22 students (Master's and PhD levels) and six faculty members. Discussions were guided by a thematic interview protocol addressing personal experiences of inclusion, perceived barriers, and recommendations for enhancing student integration. Data were coded and analyzed inductively using NVivo software to ensure rigor and traceability. Analysis revealed four major themes: recognition, participation, support networks, and institutional responsiveness. Belonging emerged as a dialogical process—cultivated through opportunities for active engagement, fair communication, and mutual respect between students and staff. Students highlighted the importance of mentoring, inclusive teaching practices, and visible support services as key facilitators. In contrast, bureaucratic opacity, lack of information, and limited institutional flexibility were identified as barriers to inclusion. Overall, the findings suggest that belonging is not a static state but an evolving relationship between individuals and their academic environment. Fostering belonging through inclusive communication, collaborative governance, and sustained faculty engagement enhances both student well-being and institutional cohesion across the CIVIS Alliance.

[Return to overview](#)

Abstracts

Koffeman, André

Cultivating Resilience Through Participatory Action Research: Policy Lessons from the Amsterdam Education Research Workshop

This paper examines how teacher resilience can be systematically cultivated through participatory action research (PAR) and draws key policy implications from eight years of the Amsterdam Education Research Workshop (WOA). The WOA, a collaboration between Dutch secondary, vocational schools, and universities, shifted in 2022 from individual teacher research to PAR, engaging colleagues from the outset in shared inquiry cycles structured as “before, through, and beyond the gate.” This approach fostered collective ownership, reduced professional isolation, and embedded research outcomes into daily practice, thereby strengthening both individual and organizational resilience. Policy implications are threefold: 1. Governance for collaboration: Policies should incentivize and structurally fund long-term school-university partnerships, moving beyond short-term projects to sustained co-inquiry models that build professional resilience. 2. Support for safe learning environments: Education policy must protect time, space, and resources for teachers to engage in reflective, practice-based research, creating “safe havens” where uncertainty is leveraged for learning rather than managed as risk. 3. Systemic integration of teacher-led inquiry: Teacher empowerment should be embedded in national and regional teacher career frameworks, positioning PAR as a recognized pathway for professional development, leadership, and school improvement. Through evidence from the WOA, we argue that resilience is not an individual attribute but a collective outcome of supportive structures, participatory processes, and policy-enabled professional autonomy. These insights offer a actionable framework for European education policymakers seeking to foster resilient, empowered, and sustainable teaching professions.

[Return to overview](#)

Abstracts

Lawrence, Clare & Rimmer, John

Broken? The Challenge of Educating Teachers to Meet the Needs of Autistic Pupils

Research suggests a need to cultivate teachers' resilience through overcoming their professional isolation regarding meeting the needs of autistic pupils. Understanding ways to effectively serve a cohort with a diagnosed social communication difference remains a challenge. Feedback from the autistic community suggests a disparity between what is provided in teacher education and what is needed by autistic pupils. This workshop is informed by ongoing work with autistic people – teachers, students, student teachers, artists and creative writers - to articulate autistic lived experience in the classroom and beyond. It includes the short film 'Broken', created by an autistic student working with visual artist Dr John Rimmer and used extensively in ITE. This is further supported by feedback from recent research exploring metaphor as a vehicle for understanding autism, findings from Shared Reading research, and an ongoing study with autistic professional authors on writing as communication. Published research underpinning the workshop includes: Lawrence, C. (2026). Why write? Creative writing in the classroom explored from a professional writing perspective. *English in Education*. ISSN 1754-8845 (under review). Lawrence, C., Reynolds, O. and Rimmer, J. (2025) "Watching the loo door swing slowly open": using visual metaphors to explore autistic experience through the medium of PGCE school placement. *Journal of Inclusive Practice in Further and Higher Education*, 17 (1). pp. 87-102. ISSN 2398-5976 Lawrence, C. (2022) Dancing with the daffodils: using a Shared Reading approach to explore autistic identity. *Good Autism Practice*, 23 (1). pp. 5-13. ISSN 1466-2973 Fauxparl, [pseudonym], Mahon, L., Rimmer, J. and Lawrence, C. (2020) 'I can't understand a word he says': a personal exploration of autistic dysfluency in film. *Disability and Society*. ISSN 0968-7599

[Return to overview](#)

Abstracts

Leverton, Leanne & Carlin, Alexandra

Strengthening Teacher Education for Carer-Inclusive Schools: Policy Pathways for Recognising and Supporting Unpaid Carers Across Europe

Strengthening Teacher Education for Carer-inclusive Schools: Policy Pathways for Recognising and Supporting Unpaid Carers Across Europe
Unpaid student carers constitute a vital yet overlooked social group across Europe, with many experiencing limited recognition within education systems, despite the profound impact caring responsibilities have on learning and wellbeing. Education providers are uniquely positioned to identify and support young and adult carers, but teachers frequently lack the awareness, structural policies and guidance needed to respond effectively. Aligning to the conference theme: Policy and Governance, this session aims to examine how strengthening teacher education through use of widening participation policies, may aid teachers to recognise unpaid carers and provide strategies to support their learning. Initially, existing findings from local research at Lincoln Bishop University on student carers will be shared to justify and stimulate discussion. To further explore the existing strategies on widening participation with student carers, the audience for this conference presentation will participate in an Open Space Technology (OST) participatory platform. An OST provides a self organising , agenda setting environment that enables participants to steer the agenda around unpaid carers in education. We hope to identify systemic barriers, enablers and in turn collaboratively stimulate policy innovations.

Insights generated through this OST session will inform recommendations for continuing professional development to embed carer awareness into everyday practice. The session investigates how teacher education can strengthen carer identity through recognition practices, inclusive pedagogies, and supportive school cultures. Ultimately, this project positions teacher education as a strategic lever for advancing the social recognition of unpaid carers and promoting more equitable, responsive, and inclusive education systems across Europe. It contributes to ongoing European debates on social rights, wellbeing, and the role of education in addressing hidden inequalities.

[Return to overview](#)

Abstracts

Lindström, Lina

From Teacher to Teacher-Educator: Contributing Factors of School-Based Teacher Educator Identity Development

School-based supervising teachers have a central role in teacher education when supporting student teachers in their professional development, but to support students, they must be secure in their own professional identity (Hudson, 2013). The school-based supervisors' role is challenging due to the tensions related to their dual professional identity as teachers and teacher educators (Andreasen et al., 2019). Previous research indicate that school-based supervisors tend to prioritise their teacher role over teacher educator role (Sandvik et al., 2019). While this is understandable, it still challenges the role of supporting students' professional development and highlights the need to strengthen school-based supervisors teacher educator identities. The workshop begins with a brief presentation of central concepts concerning teacher educatorship, and a theory-inspired model about contextual (tensions) and individual (beliefs) factors that influence the teacher educator identity development, as well as individual (self-reflection activities) and contextual (partnership collaboration) factors that supports the professional identity development (Lindström et al., 2025). Additionally, Peavy's (1997) socio-dynamic approach to supervision is presented as a theoretical framework for exploring teacher educator identity development. The interactive part begins with discussions in small groups. The participants will explore whether they acknowledge the tensions encountered by school-based supervisors in their specific contexts and discuss how these tensions could be addressed. The theory-inspired model can be used as a guiding tool for the discussions. The workshop ends with a moderated reflection session, where every group shares their key insights on what shapes and supports the teacher educator identity development. The main question guiding the reflection is - what should change in teacher education for school-based supervising teachers to be identified as teacher educators, both from a collective and individual perspective? This workshop contributes to the conference by viewing teacher educator identity development as a form of professional learning enabling leadership and empowerment.

[Return to overview](#)

Abstracts

Luby, Antony

Tilting at Windmills? Leerkracht – A Dutch Magna Carta for the Teaching Profession

‘The first, and most important, lesson is that no education system can be better than the quality of its teachers’ (DfE, 2010: 3).

Drawing upon two previous McKinsey reports this statement by then Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of a UK Tory-led coalition government seems self-evident. Certainly, to a semi-retired chartered teacher it does. But it has been challenged. Coffield (2012) refers back to one of my most favourite quotes from the educational psychologist Ausubel (1968, vi) namely: ‘The most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows.’ Coffield then constructs an argument under the provocative heading “Why the McKinsey reports will not improve school systems.” But is he right? Well, here’s something to consider.

McKinsey provided the seed funding that has brought about leerkracht in the Netherlands. Leerkracht is “learning power” by which teachers are enabled to meet weekly in groups of 6-8 to collaboratively share and plan the week ahead. Collaboration builds resilience. Further, professional learning is reimaged at the chalkface as distributed leadership blooms in areas of socio-economic deprivation – and this re-imagination can take striking forms and extend beyond the school gates (Luby 2021, 2026).

With respect to policy and governance leerkracht is becoming embedded within the micro, meso, and macro levels e.g.,

- Micro: Case studies of Emmaus, Hildegardis, and Maria schools in the port city of Rotterdam.

- Meso: The RVKO association and its founding principle of subsidiarity.

- Macro: More than 1,600 schools in the Netherlands have participated with leerkracht, and research by Utrecht University in hundreds of schools indicates that teachers quickly and effectively create a learning culture in schools. <https://stichting-leerkracht.nl/>

Lincoln is home to 1 of only 4 copies of the Great Charter (Magna Carta) renowned for freeing the people from oppression. Perhaps importing leerkracht to the East Midlands will free teachers from the oppression of high stakes accountability (Müller and Cook, 2024); and help the Chartered College of Teaching as it convenes a new Teacher Agency Working Group to promote teacher professional development.

[Return to overview](#)

Abstracts

Mayrell, Doreen

From One-Size-Fits-All to One-Student-at-a-Time: How AI-Powered Flipped Classrooms Are Reshaping Learning at Scale

The flipped classroom is often promoted as a way to increase active learning by shifting content delivery outside the classroom and reserving in-person time for application and collaboration. In higher education, however, flipped approaches frequently struggle due to uneven student preparation, increased instructor workload, and limited visibility into student understanding before class. This presentation explores how generative AI can strengthen flipped classroom practices by enhancing key instructional components rather than requiring full course redesign. Drawing on applied teaching and pedagogical development experience, the session presents an AI-enhanced flipped classroom approach that supports personalized pre-class learning while maintaining academic rigor and instructor autonomy. The focus is on instructional design decisions that allow educators to create short, targeted pre-class activities that adapt to student readiness, surface misconceptions, and provide actionable insight prior to class meetings. Participants will examine concrete examples of AI-supported pre-class components such as readiness checks, misconception prompts, and formative feedback mechanisms, and how these elements inform in-class instructional choices. The session demonstrates how pre-class information can guide decisions about when to prioritize clarification, guided practice, collaborative learning, or higher-order application during face-to-face sessions. Emphasis is placed on sustainability and equity to ensure flipped classroom practices support diverse learners and avoid increasing instructional burden. Situated within the broader context of curricular design and assessment in the age of AI, the presentation highlights how AI can be integrated to support formative assessment, alignment of learning outcomes, and instructional transparency without replacing human judgment or relying on surveillance-driven models. Examples are adaptable across disciplines and teaching contexts, including blended, hybrid, and transnational learning environments. By the end of the session, participants will have analyzed high-impact flipped classroom components and designed a transferable, classroom-ready component aligned to their own teaching context. Attendees will leave with a practical framework for integrating AI into flipped learning to improve instructional decision-making and maximize the effective use of class time.

[Return to overview](#)

Abstracts

McQuade, Laura

Understandings of Emotional Labour in Teaching in England

Teacher recruitment and retention in England has been problematic since 2011, despite the recent pay increases. Emotional labour (EL) is a well-researched concept in the service sector and has been given some attention in academic research in education. EL is defined as ‘the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display’ (Hochschild, 1983). Teachers are implicitly expected to exhibit EL in the course of their work and this can have an impact on their wellbeing. Yet, teachers’ understanding of EL is under-researched.

This study uses an interpretivist paradigm, acknowledging that everyone will experience emotional labour in a unique way. Drawing on 3 focus groups and 1 interview with teachers across primary, secondary, and special education in England, the findings reconceptualise emotional labour as moral institutional negotiation work, a reflexive process through which professionals reconcile personal ethics of care with procedural logics of accountability. Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) has been used to identify common ideas and understandings while honouring the voices of the participants.

This study has discovered that teachers have little theoretical understanding of emotional labour and even less training in how to manage this aspect of their job. Since teachers consider emotional labour to be mainly centred around the care and emotional connection they have to their work and their students, they risk burn-out and compassion stress injury (compassion stress injury (CSI) as a unifying term when referring to the emotional detriment from the second-hand experience of suffering, coupled with a desire to alleviate it, rather than a direct personal involvement in a traumatising or upsetting event, Briggs, 2022) both of which can hinder wellbeing. Teachers’ accounts reveal that emotion management operates not as compliance with display rules but as moral reasoning enacted through practice. Emotional labour becomes a means of preserving ethical integrity, sustaining moral economies, and maintaining institutional legitimacy under constraint. The study extends emotional-labour theory by reinterpreting emotion as a site of moral agency, advances the moral-economy perspective by specifying negotiation as the mechanism of moral reproduction, and illuminates how relational economies of humour, empathy, and recognition sustain ethical life within bureaucratic systems.

[Return to overview](#)

Abstracts

McQuade, Laura

Continued

Once this is illuminated in education, strategies to encourage and support these relational economies could help reduce burn out and improve teacher retention. Importantly, not only will this improve retention but if the students of teachers see their working conditions being acknowledged and supported, more may consider teaching as a career for their own futures, having a knock-on impact for recruitment as well.

[Return to overview](#)

Abstracts

Meijer, Paulien

Understanding and Dealing with Teachers' Resistance to Change from the Perspective of Teacher Identity

Understanding and dealing with teachers' resistance to change from the perspective of teacher identity. Paulien C. Meijer, Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands. In this contribution, I will address how teachers navigate changes they are confronted with and sometimes resist, throughout their careers. I will specifically delve into teachers' resistance to change, from the perspective that 'resistance' might be an identity-defense mechanism. Viewing resistance as such, leads to a broader understanding why educational change so often is challenging. Research on human needs identified two needs that are involved in any process of development (see e.g., Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Allen et al., 2022): the need to belong, and the need for autonomy. When teachers are faced with educational changes, both autonomy and sense of belonging are put to the test. Teachers might feel that they have to do things that are not their own choice – so they lack autonomy, or they do not automatically see the value of – in other words: identify with. If such changes are only supported with professional development courses that focus on the development of skills, and ignoring the identification-part, teachers might leave the school, or even education as a whole. But if tensions between changes and teacher identity are taken seriously, this can lead to transformative learning or, as found by Lan (2024), "identity-based motivations". In this contribution, I will address the following implications for educational changers: (a) a realization that teachers need support to develop their teacher identity during educational change, which goes beyond the acquisition of knowledge and the development of skills; (b) teachers' resistance is understood and valued as a form of involvement and taken seriously; and (c) teachers need to be addressed as belonging to a community and valued for their place in society.

[Return to overview](#)

Abstracts

Muir, Lyndsay

'AI - What is it Good For?' A 'Long Table' Discussion

We know that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is developing at an ever-accelerating pace and that vast amounts of money are being invested in it. The Guardian reported that \$2.8 trillion will be spent on AI datacentres by the end of the decade, with \$2 billion being spent each week in the first six months of 2025 on the development of generative AI, and \$200 million per person being offered by Meta's Mark Zuckerberg to 'poach' AI experts (Booth, 2025). Not only is this a young industry but the median age of those being funded by start up incubators such as 'Y Combinator' in San Francisco is 24 and figures such as Isa Fulford, at 26, is already one of OpenAI research leads, working on ChatGPT's ability to take actions on humans' behalf – so called 'agentic AI'. In such a context, I propose a non-hierarchical and interactive discussion format, inspired by the social and dialogic practice-research methodology of my PhD, which explored how to support the creative and critical processes of becoming a professional teacher (Muir, 2023). This research drew on the social, dialogic, arts practices of Lois Weaver, particularly her 'long table' (Weaver, n.d.). The form is explained well via this link and the short 5 min video embedded there Long Table – SPLIT BRITCHES . I propose a similar format, to facilitate 'conversations in public' with up to 12 people seated around a long table, with larger numbers gathered around, who may listen and/or exchange places with someone at the table to speak. As a former Drama and English teacher, now experienced teacher educator, I propose myself to host and facilitate a 'long table'. The proposal enables direct engagement with two of the key conference levers, both content and form. The pace of change with AI demands exactly this kind of flexible, non-hierarchical, dialogic and developmental exchange.

[Return to overview](#)

Abstracts

Myllyviita, Ari

Self-Study of Teacher's Digital Innovations

A teacher educator has special duty to follow the didactic research and to execute different innovations and interventions to understand and compare them in practise. Crucial issue then is the reflection (self-reflection). Sharing created learning materials, documents and sharing experiences is increasingly needed instead of just measuring the results. The aim is to bridge the gap between research and practice. Several frameworks (like SAMR, TPACK) provide a structured approach to understanding how teachers can effectively use technology. But there is something missing. What are the issues why teachers don't want to learn how to use digital technology effectively and larger scale. Is it the problem teachers' attitude against new technology or the fear of change needed. Less attention has been paid to (and research on) the impact of interventions on teachers themselves and their teaching, self-reflections. And after that how to share experiences and good practices. This presentation is based on self-study action research. Self-study action research is an approach used to examine and improve my own practices. It is a reflective inquiry where I critically analyse my own practices, beliefs, values, and assumptions. There I reflect on my own practice to enhance personal understanding and professional effectiveness. Self-study and reflection-based research can significantly support the building of collective teacher efficacy (CTE), especially when it is linked to collaborative learning and development. The collective teacher efficacy is by far the most effective single factor in improving learning outcomes. CTE is about building and developing knowledge and practice together. When teachers investigate their own teaching and share their findings with the team, shared expertise and trust in their collective ability to influence learning are created. That's why teacher's training and personal development is not about two days courses but about process and using colleagues as a mirror.

[Return to overview](#)

Abstracts

Murphy, Timothy

Developing Competences for Democratic Culture: Insights from Teaching Professionals

This paper presents an original investigation into how teacher educators foster democratic engagement, introducing a novel analytic framework—Democratic Teacher for Pedagogical Wellbeing (DTPWB)—to examine the intersection of teacher well-being and democratic practice. Building on Greene’s vision of democracy as an ever-evolving community (Thayer-Bacon 2008), The research team included Dr. Timothy Murphy, Dr. Dan O’Sullivan and Dr. Patricia Kennedy. The research positions teachers as central agents in enacting democratic values within educational contexts. Greene (1978) contends that teachers’ self-awareness and their capacity to unite around freely chosen principles are foundational for cultivating democratic communities. This process, in turn, is linked to teacher pedagogical well-being (TPWB), as theorized by Soini, Pyhältö, and Pietarinen (2010) and expanded by Murphy et al. (2021), which is realized through meaningful peer and student interactions, the development of instructional tools, and reflective teaching practices. The originality of this research lies in its application of the DTPWB framework (Murphy 2025) to analyze semi-structured interviews with teacher educators—a methodological innovation that offers fresh insights into how professional comportment shapes the promotion of competences for democratic culture. By modeling respect, inclusivity, and democratic dialogue, teachers are shown to create classroom environments conducive to developing students’ democratic engagement. The study’s participants span the educational continuum, with a focus on teacher educators, and the research is guided by probing questions about the relationship between teacher educator roles, pedagogical well-being, and democratic teaching. This research not only advances theoretical understanding but also informs the practice of pre-service teachers, as reflected in its ongoing impact and its forthcoming contribution to the edited volume *Teacher Education for Democracy: Research, Policy and Practice* (Murphy & Blom, Eds., 2026). The presentation will highlight emergent findings and the distinctive contribution of the DTPWB framework to the field.

[Return to overview](#)

Abstracts

Ryan, Mairead

Using Lesson Study as a Lever to Support Teacher Educators' Professional Learning and Practice in Initial Teacher Education

The role of a Teacher Educator (TE) is complex and multifaceted, with minimal preparation and opportunities for professional development. Most TEs' professional learning is predominantly self-initiated and self-guided, taking responsibility for their own learning and professional practice (McPhail et al., 2019). Lesson Study (LS) provides a collaborative and iterative approach to professional learning. Across various education systems, adaptations have been made to LS practices that strive to strike a balance between fidelity to LS practice and the need to fit within particular cultural contexts (Vermunt et al. 2019). However, to date little is known regarding the affordances of LS in promoting professional learning among TEs (Schipper et al., 2022). In response, this study explores the potential of LS as a professional learning model for four STEM TEs. The participants (2 mathematics TEs, 2 science TEs) represent varying experiences in terms of collaboration, LS practices, and years' experience in the sector. The LS, conducted in Autumn 2025, focused on developing a science education tutorial (relating to the concept of Forces) to support the content and pedagogical knowledge development of preservice primary teachers. The TEs completed a LS cycle consisting of an iterative cycle of study, plan, implement, and reflect. Throughout the process, data were generated through planning documentation, fieldnotes, individual TE reflections, group recorded reflective discussions and focus group interview. The findings suggest that the affordances of the LS model for TEs were multifaceted, including, the development of knowledge for teaching, the role of self-efficacy, and awakening potential opportunities for interdisciplinarity. This paper focuses on the TEs' perspectives on the viability of LS as a sustainable means of professional learning.

[Return to overview](#)

Abstracts

Sneyd, Mia

Harm Reduction or Systemic Change: Empowering Educators Through Structural Transformation

Human Scale Education believes the contemporary crisis in teacher recruitment and retention is not a personnel problem but a structural failure. When systems rely on harm reduction, offering superficial support to manage burnout, the teaching profession remains intrinsically unattractive. This paper, based on the forthcoming book *Harm Reduction or Systemic Change: Human Stories in Education*, written by Human Scale Education trustees, argues that making teaching rewarding requires a Magna Carta level of systemic change that grants teachers the authority, agency, and relational infrastructure to thrive. We suggest that a rewarding profession is achieved when teachers are empowered to be educators (fostering whole-person development) rather than just compliant implementers. The book's core solution, guided by the HSE Four Pillars, directly addresses teacher empowerment across the conference levers: Professional Agency (Leading through Learning): Re-Designing curriculum and authentic assessment shifts the teacher role from test-administrator to intellectual leader, restoring professional judgment and intrinsic reward. Relational Fulfillment (Cultivating Resilience): Re-Structuring schools into smaller learning communities and Re-Culturing the ethos focuses daily work on deep, lasting relationships, combating isolation and burnout. Valued Expertise (Policy and Governance): Re-Connecting teachers with parents and community elevates their professional status and ensures that their grassroots wisdom informs systemic policy, making their work meaningful beyond classroom walls. Ultimately, the attractiveness of the teaching profession is directly proportional to its level of systemic empowerment. We conclude that only a commitment to systemic change over repetitive and ineffective harm reduction will make teaching a sustainable and rewarding career for current and future educators.

[Return to overview](#)

Abstracts

Snoek, Marco & Koffeman, André

Empowering Innovative Capacity Within Teacher Education

Teacher educators that aim to empower their students to become agents of change will need to design and implement curricula that foster and support agency development of their student teachers. In this process of designing and implementing (re)new(ed) curricula within teacher education institutions, teacher educators will encounter several challenges e.g. tensions with existing programme requirements and competence frameworks, tensions regarding support and resistance of colleagues, tensions regarding sustainability of innovations, tensions that relate to alignment of curriculum elements and tension regarding optimistic expectations of student engagement. In a national 4 year research project we looked closely at 5 cases of innovative teacher education programmes to understand the underlying alignment between educational ideology, programme aims, curriculum design and daily practice, to identify key elements of innovative teacher education programmes that surfaced in these cases and to understand the underlying innovation dynamics within these cases. The study showed how the five cases were connected by their ambition to strengthen agency of teachers in different areas and by how the innovation processes in teacher education could be characterized as a struggle with paradoxes. The different cases used different strategies in dealing with those paradoxes. Making these strategies explicit can help teacher education institutions to strengthen innovation capacity, thus empowering teacher education to be agents for change and to prepare their students as agents of change.

[Return to overview](#)

Abstracts

Wilson, Christopher

A Primary School's Role in Enacting Social Mobility

A Primary School's Role in Enacting Social Mobility From Blair's 'education, education, education' to 'reading (w)riting and (a)rithmetic' and 'intent, implementation, impact,' we have seen a plethora of 'TLA' initiatives since James Callaghan's Ruskin Speech triggered The Great Debate. However, there was no need to reinvent the wheel. Plato's Meno, written around 385 BC, contains its own three-word alliterative device: Educare – to mold, Educere – to lead out, and Eudaimonia, to work well, and it was these three words that form the basis of my thesis. The thesis describes not only how a primary school took steps to ensure that, whilst it followed the demands of the post-positivist inspection system - that children are molded in certain ways, it also ensured that it created an ethos based on educere, to ensure that children were able to develop as critical thinking individuals. Through a critical pedagogical lens, and using a hermeneutic methodological approach, I was able to gather evidence, through twenty interviews with teachers, governors, parents and children, and through Braun and Clarke's 'Reflexive Thematic Analysis, establish the main causes of the difference in attainment and progress within different groups of children, and what systems the school could employ to counteract those causes. By welcoming parents with newly born children, we were able to develop relationships with both parents and children from a very young age. These relationships enabled the school to identify the needs of its community and, through initiatives focused on strengthening those relationships, develop strategies to address significant issues, such as poverty and Adverse Childhood Experiences, thereby equipping children with the skills to navigate the next stages of their lives with confidence. The thesis also describes how the school released teachers from the burdens of target-setting and appraisal, giving them the freedom and resilience to risk failure in pursuit of success; creating eudaimonia – working well and then hedonia – feeling good.

[Return to overview](#)

Abstracts

Wythe, Jessica

Small Adjustments, Significant Impact: Inclusive Pedagogy as a Lever for Teacher Empowerment

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) refers to learners who require additional or different provision to access education, encompassing a wide range of needs including cognition and learning, communication and interaction, social-emotional needs, sensory impairments, and physical or medical conditions. In England, recent government data indicates that approximately 18–20% of pupils (over 1.7 million children) are identified as having SEND, meaning that in an average class of 30 learners there are around five to six pupils with additional needs. With SEND representing almost one fifth of the school population, inclusive practice is not a marginal concern but a core feature of everyday teaching. Despite this prevalence, inclusive education is frequently framed within policy and professional discourse as complex and resource-intensive, often experienced by teachers as an additional burden rather than a source of empowerment. This practice-informed presentation challenges that narrative by demonstrating how small, intentional pedagogical adjustments can have a significant impact on learner access, engagement, and teacher wellbeing. Drawing on SENDI practice within the FE sector, the presentation explores minor adaptations to task design, communication, pacing, assessment flexibility, and classroom organisation. Informed by principles of Universal Design for Learning (CAST, 2018) and inclusive pedagogy (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011), these adjustments are shown to benefit whole cohorts while reducing behavioural escalation and the emotional labour often associated with managing unmet needs. Crucially, my presentation argues that inclusive practice should not be positioned as an additional demand placed on already stretched teachers, but as an embedded and sustainable approach to teaching that supports both learner access and teacher wellbeing. Such practices enhance teacher resilience and professional agency, aligning with research on teacher wellbeing and judgement (Day and Gu, 2014; Biesta, 2015). The presentation will consider implications for teacher education and policy, calling for greater recognition of FE and SENDI practitioners as leaders of inclusive innovation.

[Return to overview](#)

