

Annual Symposium of the European Teacher Education Network (ETEN)

22 – 24 April 2026, in Vlore, Albania

***Theme: Education of active citizenship for global society***

***TIG sessions overview - Reflective practice and Teaching for Thinking***



**Thursday 23/04/2026**

**Stepping Stones: The impacts of adopting a fading programme model to promote teachers' metacognitive practice** - Dr Kirstin Mulholland, Dr Chris Counihan and Dr David Nichol (Northumbria University)

- The team from Northumbria introduced us to their 'Stepping Stones' programme for mathematics education, consisting of a comprehensive set of sessions around teachers modelling metacognition through the programme materials, combined with regular reflective practice.
- Exercises for example entail the comparison between different approaches to tackling a math problem, rather than simultaneously solve the problems themselves, to reduce cognitive load. The reflective practice gets into students' self-perceived difficulty dealing with the challenges presented in the sessions.
- Results:
  - All teachers would recommend and reported improved confidence and a large majority reported increased understanding.
  - The teachers involved in the project report transferring metacognitive strategies to other subjects as well.

**REFLECTION:** some of the questions gathered or discussed:

- How can we support the transition of these practices to other practices?
- How can we help students understand they are 'stuck'?
- A challenge with introducing metacognitive practices in education is showing that the extra time these practices involve is warranted in the long run; how is this with your project and its findings?



**Teacher Education Students in Stressful Whitewater Kayaking Situations: Experiences, Reflections, and Coping Strategies** - Thomas Eberle and Simon Taschka (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg)

- Thomas and Simon introduced us to the notion of ‘limit experiences’. These experiences come up in their approach to their brand of experiential outdoor education, revolving around kayaking with groups of students.
- Simon and Thomas are doing research into how these kinds of experiences can be leveraged to impact teacher-trainees’ ability to deal with stressful situations, such as the ones they experience in teaching. They ask how these extreme experiences connect to coping processes and what sort of transfer can happen there.

**REFLECTION:** some of the questions gathered or discussed:

- Is there an experience of belonging that appears in these sessions, and if so, what kind?
- How were the student teachers’ experiences connected again to teacher training afterwards?
- How can we help transfer this to teaching?



**Constructing Reality: How should we design simulation-based learning in Initial Teacher Education?** - Dr David Nichol, Dr Chris Counihan and Dr Kirstin Mulholland (Northumbria University)

- The team from Northumbria shared their approach to the use of simulation-based learning to address typical challenges initial teachers deal with, often leading to them leaving the profession entirely within the first 5 years of teaching.
- They chose a low-technology approach, to keep it simple and affordable, and to preempt contextual challenges that medium to high-technology solutions bring with them.
- Their research and teacher experiences within the project result in an emerging model for effective simulation design and delivery in initial teacher education.
- The team are keen to collaborate with international partners, and invite you to join their network: SimulatED Network (currently 52 members, predominantly teacher educators, from about 20HEIs)

**REFLECTION:** some of the questions gathered or discussed:

- How is the transfer?
- What is the long-term impact on their teaching; do they remain in the profession?

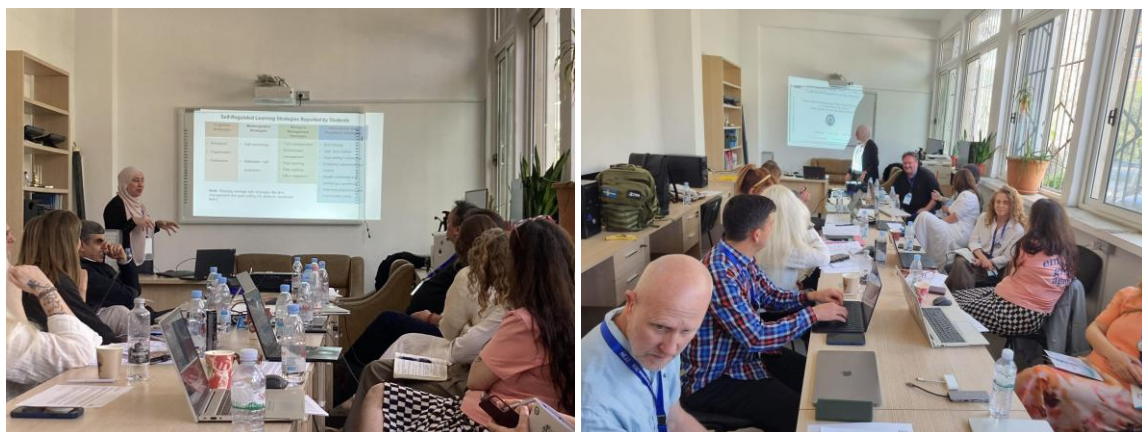


**How Successful Students Prepare for Tests: Exploring Self-Regulated Learning Strategies - Iman Keblawi, Faris Keblawi, Anat Cohen (Al-Qasemi Academy)**

- The team from Israel introduced us to their research in the use of SRL strategies employed by successful students to prepare for tests.
- Tests are very impactful on the lives of learners so this is. The research hopes to result in a focused picture of test-preparation practices, and areas where they are lacking or underused.
- Current findings are based on self-reported student responses as a qualitative leg to the research. Future research would expand on these.

**REFLECTION:** some of the questions gathered or discussed:

- You stated emotional control is an important part of test prep – what does this entail?
- How was the parameter ‘successful’ in ‘successful students’ established/measured?



**Preparing Pre-Service Teachers for Classroom Leadership through Simulation-Based Learning - Marie-Louise Höög, Caroline Appelgren, Camilla Sandström Prytz (Linköping University)**

- The Swedish team introduces us to their progress in VR-based simulation learning in teacher education. Students are enrolled in this three times in the five years of their training.
- A 3-hour session is reported to increase their self-efficacy as much as reached in weeks without this training.
- The simulation centers around the use of avatars (from TeachLive). We run through an assignment where a student-teacher has to set up a field trip to an art gallery. Jill Duncan from Northumbria University demonstrates how this approach can connect a virtual classroom with a teacher-trainee in Vlore, Albania, introducing the class to the Baltic Art Gallery.

**REFLECTION:** some of the questions gathered or discussed:

- Is the system adaptive: can the avatar change tack to react to the teacher in a way that results in the apt challenge for that teacher-trainee at that time?
- Can this be augmented, or cost-reduced, by replacing the teacher behind the screen with AI? And can AI be utilized to test the teacher-student's skill and progress in practice.

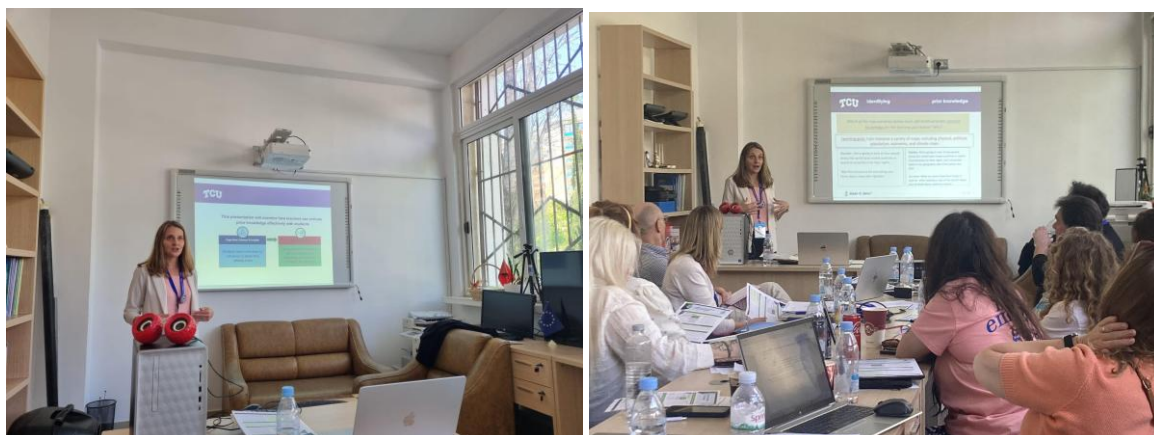


**Make It Stick: Using Learning Science Principles to Enhance Teaching and Learning** - Jennifer Smith (Texas Christian University)

- Jennifer talks about insights from cognitive psychology that can provide principles for teaching. She focuses on the activation of prior knowledge.
- Students are trained in 'schema' and presenting the right prompt to create 'velcro' where students can easily fit answers too that will stick. They learn to use 'image cues', 'subskill warmups', and 'concept mapping' to ensure focused activation of prior knowledge.

**REFLECTION:** some of the questions gathered or discussed:

- How can you prevent situations where zooming in to limit possible answers can also exclude students from participating? Students from backgrounds that less readily connect to this subject might not find their way in?
- How do you prevent complicating your prompts/assignments too complex by adding these sorts of cues, considering metacognitive load. The goal is to involve all students in these activities.



**Cultural Encounters in Pedagogy (CEP)** - Dr. Jill Duncan (Northumbria University)

- Jill takes up where she left off with her presentation at last year's symposium, laying out the various steps in her programme for effective gallery practice. She wishes to work towards and embodied experience.
- TIG-members Tinne van Camp (Belgium) and Camilla Sandström (Sweden) share their findings after having tried out the programme in art galleries in their respective countries, after the previous ETEN symposium.

**REFLECTION:** some of the questions gathered or discussed:

- Can this approach be used just as easily for other subjects or is art (gallery) a condition for its success?



### **Generative AI Classroom Simulations for Strengthening Student Teachers' Skills on Controversial Issues – P.O. Hansson and Marcus Samuelsson (Linköping University)**

- The Swedish team explain why we should utilise simulated learning in teacher education, students having insufficient knowledge of certain issues and feel uncomfortable teaching about it and rarely get opportunity to practice teaching it.
- Their aim is to take away some of the restraints and/or costs of the avatar-based approach presented earlier by the Swedish team: to eliminate the need of the expert operator and even the teacher-educator from the equation. They created their own avatar-based classroom where the student responses are powered by genAI.

**REFLECTION:** some of the questions gathered or discussed:

- What are the advantages in the use of the avatars as opposed to text-based interaction with genAI?
- Is it possible to train the AI to create a more 'natural' classroom environment and student reactions?



## ***A few THREADS of THOUGHT REFLECTED throughout our reflections***

We are happy to be a living part of the education environment we experienced in this TIG and this ETEN symposium. We appreciate the passion that is very much alive in our colleagues, with everyone trying to make advances, understanding the significant challenges we face. New participants felt welcomed and included in the ongoing discussions.

This year's biggest theme was, unsurprisingly, technology in education, with a focus on VR-backed simulation-based learning and genAI. Some of the members feel simulation-based and (gen)AI-supported teaching and training could pose a threat to certain aspects in education, such as subjectification and the sort of friction/productive struggle that many consider essential to learning and a holistic education. Other reasons for wariness are the current nature of its output and the lack of an emotional dimension. We recognize that these concerns touch upon varying educational ideologies and are therefore part of a larger discussion that the technological advances bring to the fore again.

*As always, we critically consider our own practic*

*es as teachers in order to help our students' learning, and hope to model this stance for our students. We engage in professionalization and aim for perpetual growth, a value we equally try to instill in our students, future teachers or educational professionals. We are mindful of the eternal gap between theory and practice, and wonder and dream about possible bridges between the two, and how we can guide teacher-trainees in trying to bridge the two themselves throughout their training and careers.*



***Thank you to all the presenters and participants for once again making the sessions rich in thought and full of heart-felt ambition!***