

## Promoting culturally and linguistically responsive teaching in initial teacher education programmes at the University of Aveiro

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### Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

### Abstract

Acknowledging the importance of integrating service learning (SL) and culturally and linguistically responsive teaching in initial teacher education, this contribution explores the perspectives of HE teachers and student teachers as to the integration in the syllabi of Teaching Master's Programmes courses of specific-themed modules on SL towards linguistic and cultural diversity. The study was undertaken at the University of Aveiro, in 2023-2024, and both teachers and student teachers' perspectives (regarding rationales, activities staged, potential and challenges of the integration of modules and learning outcomes achieved) were collected by means of an observation grid and treated using thematic analysis. Findings attest to the relevance of integrating themes such as social action, linguistic (in)equality, language activism and linguistic/cultural management in border regions in initial teacher education programmes as they sparked student teachers' interest in developing SL projects aimed at promoting linguistic and cultural diversity.

### Full paper

Service learning (SL) is considered a relevant educational approach in (initial) teacher education. This approach integrates community service with academic learning outcomes, engaging future teachers in activities that meet community needs while encouraging them to reflect critically on these experiences. The integration of SL in teacher education offers numerous benefits, including developing student competencies such as real-world knowledge application, interpersonal skills, social responsibility, empathy, cultural awareness, critical thinking, global citizenship, and teacher efficacy, as well as empowering communities (Furco & Norvell, 2019).

SL is acknowledged as an exceptional platform for addressing and integrating issues of linguistic and cultural diversity into teacher education. Specifically, SL offers student teachers the opportunity to engage directly with communities with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds and address their needs. Pre-service teachers become more aware of the challenges and opportunities in educating diverse student populations and develop teaching strategies responsive to multilingual and multicultural classrooms (Lucas & Villegas, 2013). This fosters a deeper appreciation and a stronger sense of ethical responsibility toward education for linguistic and cultural diversity (Fenzel & Dean, 2019; Porto, 2023; Rauschert & Byram, 2018).

The development of such skills, attitudes and knowledge is a concern of several Master's Programmes for Teaching at the University of Aveiro (Portugal), particularly the Master's in Language Teaching which comprise course units dedicated to educating future teachers to value linguistic and cultural diversity and preparing them to help their pupils build bridges between languages, cultures, individuals and communities (Andrade & Martins, 2017; Andrade et al., 2022; Lourenço, 2021; Lourenço & Simões, 2021). These programmes are informed by a socio-cultural perspective on learning, which regards the education of student teachers as a process embedded within a social context. According to this perspective, learning occurs through mediated interaction with others (Peercy, 2014). This training approach aligns well with national and international guidelines, which emphasise the social significance of teacher education and its local and systemic orientation (Conselho Nacional de Educação, 2023; UNESCO, 2022).

Considering this framework, in the academic year 2023-2024 several course units of Master's Programmes for Teaching have incorporated into their syllabi specific-themed open-access modules centred on SL to enhance linguistic and cultural diversity. These modules were developed by the six-partner consortium of the Erasmus+ Project BOLD (*Building on Linguistic and Cultural Diversity for social action within and beyond European Universities*; <https://www.eu-bold.com/>). The modules address different concepts and topics: interculturality, multilingualism and social action; linguistic (in)equality and social and educational justice; language activism for minority and minoritised languages; and linguistic and cultural management in border regions.

In this presentation, we will analyse the integration of BOLD's modules into those course units considering the data collected through an observation grid filled in by the teachers responsible for each course unit. The observation grid includes entries covering the rationale for integrating modules in the course unit; the activities staged during the implementation of the modules; feedback from teachers regarding the potential and challenges of the integration of modules and feedback from students regarding the activities and learning outcomes. Data were treated using thematic analysis (Proudfoot, 2023).

The results indicate that the integration of modules served two main purposes: firstly, enhancing student teachers' understanding of and reflection on concepts such as linguistic equality, social and educational justice, intercultural citizenship education, service learning and social action, and language activism; and secondly, facilitating the examination and analysis of classroom situations and language education practices within a social action perspective. A wide range of activities were developed to achieve these aims, namely role-playing, simulations, presentations, brainstorming, debates, analysis of

case studies, concept mapping, and exhibitions. Both the teachers responsible for the course units and the students agreed that the multimodal resources in the modules fostered a more critical approach to linguistic and cultural diversity. They also acknowledged that the resources enhanced the development of pedagogical competencies necessary to effectively address linguistic and cultural diversity in their teaching practices. Moreover, integrating the modules in the curricula sparked students' interest in developing SL projects aimed at promoting linguistic and cultural diversity in the future.

Findings attest to the relevance of integrating these themes in initial teacher education programmes as they prepare future teachers to cater for their students' diversities addressing real-world challenges that affect schools and communities worldwide.

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