

## Academia-driven social action transforming language studies and initial teacher education: mapping the field

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### Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

### Abstract

In a challenging socio-environmental landscape, characterised by growing social inequalities, armed conflicts and the climate emergency, academic activism and social action emerge as vivid manifestations of civic engagement in social matters. Hence, universities' social mission should expand beyond traditional boundaries of teaching and learning to embrace action-oriented methodologies and prepare future teachers capable of addressing these challenges. This presentation contributes to the mapping of meanings of activism within teacher education; a phenomenon that is also taking shape in language education but remains still a rather underexplored topic. Through desk research, we focus on learning and social dimensions related to the integration of activism and social action practices in initial language teacher education, as highlighted by the Erasmus+ BOLD project. Thus, this contribution aims to expand reflections on academia-driven social action for intercultural citizenship and advocacy.

### Full paper

Faced with significant socio-political and environmental challenges, from the climate emergency to armed conflicts and rising social tensions due to economic crises, societies constantly need to re-invent and adapt their crisis response mechanisms to effectively go through this troubling landscape (Nolte & Lindenmeier, 2023). Within this collective quest for socio-environmental well-being, higher education institutions (HEIs) have a pivotal role to play, as knowledge institutions with a distinct social mission: forming active citizens capable of applying their acquired knowledge and skills for the benefit of society.

Thus, in academia, an increasing number of scholars, researchers, teaching staff and students are involved in social actions and activism movements advocating for social and environmental justice, as a concrete response to the ongoing challenges. In this context, Zourou, Potolia & Oikonomou (2024) have approached academic activism as a manifestation of civic engagement and self-transformation of scholars whose participation in action taking bears profound meanings that influence their personal and professional identities. Hence, academic activism is not exclusively manifested outside classrooms. On the contrary, it takes concrete shape in teaching and learning methodologies and practices used by academic activists within their regular teaching activities (Quan et al., 2019).

In this contribution, we look at a particular field of studies, namely languages and initial teacher education, for which the spectrum of forms of activism and the meanings it conveys remain still underexplored. Despite the growing presence of activism and activist-oriented identities in teacher and language education (Zaino et al. 2023; Römhild, 2023), there is a long way to uncover the impact and potential of these developments at the individual, academic and societal levels. During this presentation, we aim to expand and enrich current understanding of learning and social dimensions related to the integration of activism and social action practices in initial language teacher education. Through desk research that allows us to map this field, we foresee bringing to the fore

meanings of activism, the several forms under which it is expressed and is impacting the identities and teaching practices of educators and students.

This contribution is part of the EU-funded BOLD project (2022-2025, <https://boldproject.eu/>) that aims to bridge the gap between initial teacher education and engagement in society by supporting student teachers' civic engagement and active citizenship through academia-civil society collaboration.

## References

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