Erasmus+ Symposium at the University College of Teacher Education Tyrol, April 16, 2026

Beyond Skills? Rethinking Competence-Based Education through Service-Learning in Teacher Education: Perspectives from Uganda and Austria

Context: The symposium is part of a collaborative learning project between Gulu University for Community Transformation in Northern Uganda and the University College of Teacher Education Tyrol in Austria. Both institutions train future teachers for school systems that are based on competence-oriented approaches to teaching and learning, while viewing sustainable development as a guiding principle. Against this background, the collaboration focuses on a shared interest in developing transformative approaches to competence-based learning (CBL) in teacher education.

Topic: The UNESCO Futures of Education report calls for a new social contract in education aimed at repairing planetary injustices and transforming human and ecological futures. At the same time, teacher education and school curricula worldwide are increasingly shaped by competence-based models often aligned with human capital theory. This tension raises fundamental questions about the purpose, orientation, and implications of CBL.

Goal: The symposium aims to critically discuss CBL at the intersection of instrumental and emancipatory understandings of education. Ugandan and Austrian perspectives on service-learning offer a focal point for examining how CBL can be embedded within broader visions of transformative and humanizing education. Key questions of the symposium include:

1. How can competence-based approaches to education align with transformative understandings of education?

2. Can service-learning act as a catalyst for fostering skills within a broader vision of a humanizing and just education?

3. What concrete examples and success factors of service-learning in teacher education can be identified in Uganda and Austria?

Target group: The symposium is aimed at university lecturers, students, teachers, education professionals, social workers, and anyone interested in international education issues.

Participation is free of charge; please register via email to mario.voetsch@ph-tirol.ac.at

Venue: University College of Teacher Education (PH Tirol), Pastorstraße 7, 6010 Innsbruck

University College of Teacher Education Tyrol

Co-funded by the European Union

Programme

09:30–10:40 | Opening Session

09:30–09:50: Welcome – Vice-Chancellors (PHT & Gulu University) — 20 min

09:50–10:10: Introduction I
Context and rationale of the collaboration between Gulu University and PH Tirol
(Matthias Forcher-Mayr / David Monk) — 20 min

10:10–10:30: Introduction II
Teacher education as community engagement – the Gulu example
(Francis Atube) — 20 min

10:30–10:40: Open floor (Q&A) — 10 min

10:40–11:00 | Coffee Break

11:00–12:15 | Student Perspectives

11:00–11:10: Introduction
Service-learning concepts from a vocational student perspective. Results from a seminar course (Matthias Forcher-Mayr & student representative) – 10 min

Student presentations

11:10–11:20: Gulu students (via Zoom) — 10 min

11:20–11:40: Student Group 1 — 15 min presentation + 5 min discussion

11:40–12:00: Student Group 2 — 15 min presentation + 5 min discussion

12:00–12:15: Poster walk — 15 min

12:15–13:45 | Lunch with Students

13:45–15:15 | Workshops

Parallel workshops (with short input + discussion):

Workshop 1: What kinds of assessment work with service-learning? (micro input)

Workshop 2: How can service-learning be enabled in schools and teacher education? (micro input)

Workshop 3: Service-learning between needs, boundaries, and sustainability (micro input)

15:15–15:35 | Coffee Break

15:35–16:15 | Results & Conclusions

15:35–16:05: Plenary
Presentation of key findings – lessons learned
Facilitator interview format — 30 min

16:05–16:15: Closing – 10 min