

Call for papers

The Conference of the Swiss Society for Research in Education (SSRE) 2024 will be held **June 26-28 in Locarno**. It is directed and organized by the Department of Education and Learning / University of Teacher Education (DFA/ASP) of The University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland (SUPSI), the Swiss Federal University for Vocational Education and Training (SFUVET) and the Swiss Society for Teacher Education (SGL). The Conference focuses on the theme **“Transversal competencies in education and training: from discourses to practices”**.

The Conference invites questioning about transversal competencies, understanding the concrete role they play in the world of schooling and training, thematizing good practices and ways to develop them, and identifying and grasping the real benefits they can bring in education and training as well as the critical and/or tension-generating aspects.

Contributions based on both research and practical teaching and learning activities are welcome from researchers, trainers, teachers, and all the practitioners in pedagogy as well as students.

An additional and innovative way of participation is proposed through the organization of a World Café entitled “Synergies for Transversal Skills Development”. Participation in the World Café is open to anyone who wants to contribute to innovative and collaborative thinking on the following question “School, family, work and civil society: what synergies are needed for the development of soft skills?” Registration for the special World Café session can be made at the time of registration for the Congress. Full details can be found on the Congress website.

Contribution proposals must be uploaded via the ConfTool platform
by **November 15, 2023**: <https://www.conftool.com/ssre2024>



Conference Topic

Transversal competencies in education and training: from discourses to practices

In contemporary Western societies, which are often described as characterized by the widespread diffusion of digital technologies and an increasingly competitive and demanding labor market in terms of knowledge, attitudes and operational skills, transversal competencies (or *soft skills*) are often seen as essential resources that should allow for greater flexibility and ability to adapt to society's rapid changes.

In the face of the challenges of inclusion and active participation of people in the various spheres of life, transversal skills assume particular relevance today. The increasing interconnectedness of different cultural contexts, which are also subject to rapid spatial and temporal change, requires adequate comprehension and action skills. Contemporary society places subjects in a field of tension – until a few decades ago unknown and completely new – between the need for reactivity and the need for proactivity, but also for reflexivity and personal development. Not least, the challenge of sustainability, which with injunctive character demands of each of us to reflect on our behavior at the ecological, economic and social levels, also appears central in this sense. The mobilization of such a variety of cognitive, attitudinal, and ethical resources brings out the need for their emphasis as specific competencies to be developed.

Even in the world of schooling, the topic of soft skills is recurring if not fashionable. Such skills would make it possible to prepare people for the adult world and particularly the working world. This is what the term “employability” reflects by placing emphasis not only on the ability to find employment but also on those skills of adaptation and development in the various contexts in which one is called upon to work by appealing, for example, to effective modes of communication, critical thinking, the ability to work in a team or even adopt a problem-solving approach.

Tied to an educational orientation focused on competencies – also a strong theme in contemporary schools – transversal competencies are the target of increasing categorization and formalization and find their way into various programs and curricula as objectifiable, identifiable, and consequently learnable skills such as, for example, the ability to collaborate and communicate, or the ability to activate a critical thinking. In particular, the scientific (and non-scientific) literature overflows with definitions and lists with respect to such transversal skills: what they should be, what their nature would be, how they should be promoted and/or developed. Despite this centrality, transversal competencies remain a polysemic universe, a theoretical and discursive construct that is not easy to understand. They are often brandished as a miraculous solution to address complex problems and tend to represent an educational and training injunction full of promise and potential. However, when applied, they often result in approaches still tied to more traditional disciplinary goals and content.

If indeed competencies such as, for example, knowing how to communicate in a context-appropriate way, knowing how to collaborate and interact with different actors and in different contexts, and also knowing how to decentralize and analyze concrete situations in a critical and contextualized way represent useful skills to be developed and applied both in school and in daily life, it is also important to go beyond rhetorical definitions and applications of immediate use. That is, it is necessary to give oneself the

time and means to analyze and understand those obstacles, critical aspects and more generally those areas of tension that the many discourses on soft skills tend to hide.

In this sense, the Conference of the Swiss Society for Research in Education 2024 intends to provide a privileged opportunity to discuss transversal competencies in depth and critically, to understand the real and concrete role they play in the world of schooling and training, to thematize their good practices and ways of development, and to identify and grasp the real benefits they could bring in education and training.

In particular, the SSRE 2024 Conference aims to explore the theme of transversal competencies through the following thematic orientations understood as areas of tension:

A. Transversal competencies today: theories, definitions and conceptual articulations

- How to think about transversal competencies? With what theoretical approaches?
- What articulations with other related categories such as knowing, knowledge, knowhow, etc.?
- What are transversal competencies in education and training for? What purposes?
- To what extent are soft skills relevant today? To what extent do they contribute to facing the challenges of today and tomorrow (digitization, sustainability, migration flows)?
- To what extent do soft skills allow individuals to shoulder responsibilities that would be primarily collective?

B. Social relations and inequalities in front of transversal skills

- What conditions (social, cultural, economic, institutional, relational, cognitive...) enable the development and promotion of transversal competencies? What factors, on the other hand, inhibit them?
- To what extent do transversal competencies conceal or reproduce forms of inequality?
- To what extent can schools and educational and training institutions contribute to greater equity with regard to transversal competencies?

C. Actors and educational and training practices around transversal competencies

- Who are the actors who concretely promote transversal competencies? How?
- What is the role of institutions (schools, educational authorities, working world)? Which promotion is possible?
- What perspectives do different actors bring in reference to transversal competencies?
- What is the role of families (including with respect to schools) in the development of soft skills?
- What other civil society actors intervene in the area of soft skills?
- What practices (or methods) of promoting and/or developing soft skills are used in education and training? In what ways? With what results?

D. Observing, studying and evaluating transversal competencies

- What scientific research on transversal competencies in education and training? What is the state of the art? Which developments can be foreseen?
- Is it possible to assess/measure/observe transversal competencies in school and educational settings? How? For what purpose? For whom?
- What are and what might be the implications for teacher practice and training?

E. Areas of application, experiences, and projects for the development of soft skills

- Is it possible to teach soft skills? How?
- What are the privileged areas of application of transversal competencies in schools at various levels and in various educational contexts? Why? How?
- What projects/experiences promote and/or develop transversal skills in education and training?

F. Transversal competencies and disciplinary competencies

- What relationship do transversal competencies have with disciplinary competencies and vice versa?
- How do actors in education and training consider these different types of competencies? To what extent do they contribute to their differentiation or, conversely, to their integration?
- To what extent is transversality possible and/or necessary?
- How are transversal competencies considered in relation to the goals of general education and their translation into the various curricula? What role do they play? What utility and purpose?

These areas of tension and their respective questions represent general directions that leave room for other questions and issues related to transversal competencies in education and training. Moreover, they can be treated from various disciplinary perspectives, from educational sciences to psychology, from sociology to applied linguistics, from didactics to cognitive sciences.

Orientation of contribution

It will be possible to submit contributions based on research or practice. Please indicate your intended choice:

Research-oriented contribution

Research-oriented contributions illustrate completed or ongoing research projects with a focus on theory and literature review or analysis of empirical data. Practical activities for research-oriented articles may include a demonstration of a data collection tool, or collaborative analysis of a reduced set of data, etc.

Practice-oriented contribution

Practice-oriented contributions report on formal or informal teaching and/or learning experiences carried out on the field, with a focus on their implementation and impact. While focused on practice, they should include an appropriate theoretical framework and some empirical evidence to support the claims and insights. Practical activities for practice-oriented contributions may include a demonstration of a learning tool, or an implementation of a short classroom activity, etc.

Submission formats

Single contribution

The single contribution, for which one or more authors may be responsible, consists of a 15-minute presentation followed by 5 minutes for questions and discussion. It may be research- or practice-oriented, and the presentation may include a practical activity. As much as possible, individual contributions will be grouped into sessions of 3 or 4 papers on similar topics. The contribution should be submitted in an anonymous format: authors should not mention their name and affiliation organization.

The single contribution proposal must include:

- title of the communication;
- disciplinary anchor;
- thematic orientation in which the communication fits chosen from those proposed in the Conference topic;
- practical or theoretical orientation;
- an abstract (max. 450 words) stating:
 - introduction: purpose of the article, theoretical issue, problem and research hypothesis if applicable;
 - methodology;
 - results (obtained or expected, but assumed in the final communication);
 - some discussion elements (scientific relevance, practical implications).
- 5 keywords;
- list of minimum 3, maximum 5 bibliographic references (APA 7th standard) (including maximum 1 reference from author's own work).

Research poster

The research poster can be designed by one or more authors and present a completed or ongoing research project. Posters are particularly suitable for presenting early or intermediate results and can be research- or practice-oriented. Authors are responsible for printing the poster in A0 vertical format. Posters will be presented during a dedicated collective session.

The poster proposal should be prepared following the directions for single contribution proposals.

Symposium

The symposium brings together contributors from at least two separate institutions on a clearly identifiable common topic, coordinated by one (or more) lead proponent. The symposium lasts 90 minutes and usually includes three presentations (in exceptional cases four), followed by a discussion. Each presentation lasts 15 minutes and covers a different but complementary project or topic within the common topic. Multilingual symposia are possible and welcome. A person designated by the symposium proponent(s), other than the authors, assumes the role of discussant and initiates the discussion with a critical contribution and moderates the ensuing discussion. At least 45 minutes should be allocated for the discussion. Papers submitted as part of the symposia will also be evaluated individually and may be research- or

practice- oriented. The contribution should be submitted in an anonymous format: authors should not mention their name and affiliating organization.

A symposium proposal must include:

- title of the symposium;
- disciplinary anchor;
- 5 keywords;
- a presentation of the symposium theme, its general issue and its declination related to the various contributions, as well as its organization and the name of the person in charge of the discussion (max. 450 words);
- a presentation of each contribution strictly following the directions for single contribution proposals.

Collective session

The collective session provides an open space for discussion and sharing of ideas in a less formal but structured setting. Authors prepare a brief stimulus for interaction and/or invite one or more speakers and personally take on the moderation of the session. The collective session lasts 90 minutes and can take the form of a panel discussion, workshop, pro and con debate, etc. At least 45 minutes should be provided for discussion or interaction. Collective sessions can be research or practice oriented.

A proposal for a collective session includes:

- title of the collective session;
- presentation of the topic and main issues (max. 250 words);
- name and professional contact details of the moderating person and the participant(s) in the collective session (if already known);
- thematic orientation in which the collective session fits.

Publication

The journal “Quaderni per l’innovazione nella formazione professionale” [<https://www.suffp.swiss/service/pubblicazioni/quaderni-innovazione-nella-formazione-professionale>], released by the Swiss Federal University for Vocational Education and Training (SFUVET), will publish a selection by invitation or on request of contributions submitted to the Conference.

Contributions that can be published may be either conceptual/theoretical (views and concepts on soft skills) or empirical (practices and data on soft skills).

More information will follow.

Practical information

Languages

Contributions can be submitted in 4 languages: Italian, German, French and English. During the Conference, contributions should be presented in the language announced in the program.

Procedure for evaluation of submitted proposals

Single, poster and symposium contribution proposals will be evaluated by two members of the extended scientific committee (double-blind peer review), while collective session proposals will be evaluated by members of the Conference organizing committee.

The evaluation criteria are as follows:

- scope and relevance of the topic and the questions in relation to the Conference theme;
- quality of the content (theoretical and methodological aspects, presentation of results and/or discussion); for practice-oriented contributions, the presence of a theoretical framework and empirical evidence to support the highlighted claims will be evaluated;
- quality and clarity of presentation.

Experts provide feedback to the authors and a summary opinion to the scientific committee. They may request that the article be classified in another format (from poster to contribution or vice versa). The organizing committee decides on whether to change the format of the communication.

Submission of contribution proposals

Contribution proposals must be uploaded via the ConfTool platform **by November 15, 2023**:

<https://www.conftool.com/ssre2024>

Conference registration

All persons wishing to attend the Conference, including authors of contributions that have been accepted must register for the Conference and pay the appropriate registration fee. Detailed information on fees and opening of registration can be found on the conference website (www.ssre2024.ch).

Organization and contacts

The Conference of the Swiss Society for Research in Education (SSRE) 2024 is directed and organized by the Department of Education and Learning/University of Teacher Education (DFA/ASP) of The University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland (SUPSI), the Swiss Federal University for Vocational Education and Training (SFUVET) and the Swiss Society for Teacher Education (SGL).

Organizing Committee

Masiar Babazadeh SUPSI-DFA/ASP
Elena Boldrini SUFFP
Luca Botturi SUPSI-DFA/ASP
Alberto Cattaneo SUFFP
Alberto Crescentini SUPSI-DFA/ASP
Francesco Galetta SUFFP
Stefano Losa SUPSI-DFA/ASP and SSRE, Conference Chair
Fabio Merlini SUFFP
Viviana Sappa SUFFP
Katja Vanini De Carlo SUPSI-DFA/ASP
Monika Wicki SGL

Contacts

Sabrina Migani
Organizational secretariat

Dipartimento formazione e apprendimento / Alta scuola pedagogica della SUPSI
Piazza San Francesco 19
CH-6600 Locarno

e-mail: ssre2024@supsi.ch
sito web: www.ssre2024.ch