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Fondazione di Sardegna



## E.07. Practices and perspectives of self-reform in university teaching

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### Quality of Teaching: Developing Teachers' Skills to Improve Students Learning and Participation

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quality of teaching, faculty development, student voice, teaching and learning center

The Teaching and Learning Centre (T&LC) is an institution established with the aim of promoting, recognising and enhancing the skills acquired by academic staff. The need to improve the quality of university teaching through the activation of qualified training paths and specific monitoring and evaluation strategies of faculty development actions, represent a priority for the Italian higher education system. The significant paradigm shift introduced by Faculty Development (Lotti & Lampugnani, 2020) concerns the shift from teacher-centred learning to student-centred learning (Sursock & Smidt, 2010; Warming & Frydensberg, 2017; Gover & Loukkola, 2018). Longitudinal studies on the pedagogical movement called Student Voice, investigated the importance of student involvement in improving the quality of teaching within universities, have proved “how student perspectives can support improved teaching/learning practices”(Rudduck & Flutter, 2004, p.132). Studies confirm that:”Giving young people more opportunities to express what they think about school and develop their sense of responsibility as members of a learning community means moving towards a different understanding of the role of students. Rather than being seen as dependent and incapable, they are to be seen as individuals with the right to be heard and respected, as well as the responsibility to act in ways that align with the best interests of their school community” (Rudduck & Flutter, 2004, p. 134). Hence, the need to develop and support teaching practices that support students in their education, and make them active and responsible members of the community in which they live.

This contribution presents two lines of research carried out by the T&LC of the University of Florence that intersect and complement each other. The first one concerns a survey aimed at investigating the opinion of academic staff (full professors, associate professors, researchers) with respect to the areas of improvement perceived by them and related to the design of teaching courses, teaching methodologies and the assessment of learning outcomes. Initial results show that teachers are especially interested in participating in: moments of interdisciplinary discussion on the use of effective teaching methods (61.4%); in-depth training seminars on issues related to teaching practice (50.5%). There were statistically significant differences (Chi-Square test) ( $p < .05$ ) between the subgroups of survey participants and specifically with regard to the variable “disciplinary area”. This data points to the need to construct targeted training actions with respect to the different profiles of the teaching staff. The second line of research is at a preliminary stage and aims to investigate the role of students as change agents, investing in their active, responsible and conscious participation in academic processes. Student representatives are directly involved in research in line with “undergraduate research approach” (Del Gobbo, Frison, 2022). Acting through teacher training on the areas investigated can have a bivalent impact on: quality within teaching and on student learning, as well as enhancing the activation of students as change agents. Students and teachers thus develop a sense of equal responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning in the wider university and training environment.