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STUDENT VOICE AND QUALITY GOVERNANCE: POTENTIALS AND LIMITS OF THE ITALIAN UNIVERSITY MODEL

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TOPICS

STUDENT PARTICIPATION

ITALIAN FRAMEWORK

EQAVET PEER REVIEW MODEL

LESSONS FOR HE

CONCLUSIONS



- Student participation is now recognised in European Higher Education quality systems
- Students may be involved as survey respondents, users, stakeholders, representatives, or partners
- These roles are not equivalent and produce different levels of influence
- When participation is linked only to accountability, students risk becoming information providers
- The key question is how student contribution enters institutional learning and visible change



- AVA 3 (Autovalutazione, Valutazione e Accreditamento – Self-evaluation, Evaluation and Accreditation) defines the Italian Quality Assurance architecture
- ANVUR (Agenzia Nazionale di Valutazione del Sistema Universitario e della Ricerca – Italian National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes) assigns students an active role
- CPDS (Commissioni Paritetiche Docenti-Studenti – Joint Student-Teacher Committees):
 - are central bodies in this model
 - monitor the educational offer, teaching quality, and student services
 - formulate observations and proposals for the relevant academic bodies



POTENTIALS AND LIMITS OF THE ITALIAN MODEL



- The Italian model gives students a stable place in quality governance
- CPDS (Commissioni Paritetiche Docenti-Studenti – Joint Student-Teacher Committees) can connect student experience, monitoring, and proposals for improvement
- The model is weaker when access to meaningful data is limited
- Student representatives often need more training, continuity, and institutional support
- Participation loses value when outcomes and follow-up are not visible



THE EQAVET PEER REVIEW MODEL



- EQAVET (European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training) peer review is a voluntary mutual learning process
- It supports improvement and transparency without becoming an accreditation procedure
- The process has four phases: preparation, peer review meeting, feedback, and follow-up
- The host defines guiding questions and prepares a self-assessment based on evidence
- Peers act as critical friends and help identify feasible improvement actions



1. First lesson: external review should be used as formative institutional learning, not only as accountability or compliance.
2. Second lesson: evidence becomes useful when it is interpreted through structured dialogue, not only reported in documents.
3. Third lesson: students and stakeholders should be co-interpreters of practices, not only respondents or representatives.
4. Fourth lesson: participation needs guiding questions, access to data, preparation, competence, and continuity.
5. Fifth lesson: follow-up must be visible through action plans, feedback loops, and clear responsibilities for improvement.



CONCLUSIONS



- Higher Education does not need to replace its existing Quality Assurance systems
- It can strengthen them by making improvement processes more dialogical, developmental, and participatory
- Formal architecture remains necessary: standards, indicators, responsibilities, procedures, and documentation
- Structured peer dialogue can transform evaluation into institutional learning
- Students and stakeholders can become co-interpreters of evidence and co-responsible participants in improvement



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