The tutorial role of university faculty and the provision of academic tutoring services to enhance the students' educational experience

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ABSTRACT

This contribution explores one specific aspect of faculty development, namely the tutorial role of university professors. In the Italian context, this role is highlighted in various legislative documents (Ministerial Decree 45/2013; Law No. 240/2010; Presidential Decree 382/1980) and is often complemented and supported by the work of tutors – PhD students or senior students – within specific tutoring services (Ticknor, 2014; Moretti et al., 2015; Burgalassi et al., 2019; Da Re et al., 2023). The main forms of tutoring in Italian universities include: orientation tutoring, which supports students during transitional phases; academic tutoring, aimed at providing study assistance and enhancing students' skills to successfully manage their university studies; specialized tutoring, designed for students with special educational needs (CRUI, 1995; CNUDD, 2014). The research was conducted within the framework of the 'S.Tu.Di.' academic tutoring service at the Department of Education of Roma Tre University. It involved coordinating faculty members, tutors, and students who took part in the tutoring activities during the academic years from 2022 to 2025. The results of assessments of students' basic and transversal skills – administered before and after the tutoring activities – were analyzed. The research methodology adopted a mixed-methods approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2006; Trinchero & Robasto, 2019), employing tools such as questionnaires and interviews. The main findings of the study highlight the strategic role of academic tutoring services in enhancing the quality of students' educational experience and in reducing both dropout rates and delays in academic progress.

Keywords: delay in academic progress, faculty development, higher education teaching, student drop out, tutorship