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Research in Graubünden

Learning and teaching in tandem

New paths in teacher education



From 2021 to 2024, the Universities of Teacher Education of the Grisons and St. Gallen collaborated on the research project “Quattro”. The aim was to bring theory and practice in teacher education closer together. Specifically, the project focused on promoting a “dual competence profile” among participating lecturers and teachers.

“Ideally, a teacher not only knows what they are doing, but also why,” emphasizes Vincenzo Todisco, Professor of Italian and Italian Didactics at the University of Teacher Education of the Grisons (PH

At the PH Graubünden, the “Quattro” project connects theory, practice, and research. Image: © Kevin Wildhaber

Graubünden) and overall project leader. Teachers need to be trained accordingly. For lecturers to be able to cover both practice and academic theory equally, a long educational path is required: from bachelor’s to master’s degree, plus professional experience and a doctorate. Only a few bring all these qualifications with them.

This is where the subproject “Tandem” of PH Graubünden came in. It formed teams in which different competencies complemented one another. University lecturers in Italian didactics worked closely with primary school teachers, who were actively involved in university teaching for around ten hours per month. Together, they planned two subject-didactics modules for Italian as a foreign language. The guiding question: How can Italian be successfully taught as a foreign language in the German-speaking part of Graubünden? Students of the modules were involved from the very beginning and provided feedback. Accompanying research demonstrated the benefits such cooperation between lecturers and teachers brought to the quality of training.

“The beginning was a learning process for both sides,” says Todisco. Lecturers were used to planning modules on their own, while teachers had hardly ever played an active role in higher education teaching. Out of this initial role-finding process grew a fruitful exchange that strengthened both sides: teachers refreshed their theoretical knowledge and gained a better understanding of why they convey content in a certain way. Lecturers, on the other hand, gained direct access to school practice, which made them feel more “legitimized” to speak about their subject.

The second subproject of PH Graubünden, “forLP” (researching teachers), brought research directly into the classroom. Under scientific supervision, teachers developed practical teaching models, for example on how multilingual didactics can be meaningfully integrated into Italian lessons. The idea is to make use of learners’ existing language knowledge so that new languages can be acquired more easily and language awareness can be further enhanced.

The Quattro project officially ended in 2024, but the insights remain. Results were documented, presented at conferences, and will be published in an edited volume in autumn 2025. And those involved continue to apply the experiences in their work.

For Todisco, one thing is clear: “Our task as a University of Teacher Education is to improve teaching. When schools and teacher education are not seen as separate worlds, everyone benefits, above all, the pupils.”

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The PH Graubünden offers degree and continuing education programs for prospective and practicing teachers in German, Italian, and Romansh. It also conducts research on current issues in school education. It is the only trilingual university competing in Switzerland’s national higher education landscape. www.phgr.ch

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Vincenzo Todisco

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