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Nextfood - Educating the next generation of professionals in the agrifood system

Practice Abstract #13: Action learning to become a gastronome: experiential learning links theory and practice and develop students' competencies

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Experiential approach is implemented at UNISG since its foundation with study trips. However, Action-learning is developed in a structured way since NEXTFOOD with thematic study trip at Bachelor level and a case base course in agroecology at Master level. The study trip structure includes since last year 3 phases: introduction, thematic cases visits and reflection and restitution using Plenary, Group and Individual (PGI) sessions. This structure is used both for Bachelor and for Master students and the goal is competence development in both knowledge and skills. The Introduction and Reflection sessions stimulate active participation of students both through interpersonal interaction (dialogue) and use of electronic resources (online sources, electronic platform, tools of Google). In addition, this structure stimulate participation and direct dialogue between students and agricultural stakeholders. The students had opportunities to see food production and food processing, and to talk directly to food producers and to players of food supply chain. In turn, the producers could contact to the future professionals and to have their feedback and new ideas. Educators can use this structure in order to provide various learning outcomes such as knowledge acquisition, competence development, practical experience, understanding of existing realities of the agro-food system in a country. The value of this three-phase structure is fostering action learning practices, engagement students in the learning process, development of specific knowledge and enabling student-stakeholder dialogue.