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

Practice Abstract #58: Action research as a didactic activity for improving the competence of reflection

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Action research was developed as a main and continuous didactic activity for the new Master in Agroecology and Food Sovereignty (University of Gastronomic Sciences, Pollenzo, Italy). Thus, all theoretical and experiential phases of the Master include action research. However, the practical application of action research under the Covid-19 restrictions has become a challenge in general.

Action research includes development of the core competences. In order to implement the core competences, we encouraged students to shift from classical written exam to reflection-based written assignment. This assignment includes a student's portfolio, which is a combination of academic work and other forms of educational evidence assembled for the purpose of (1) evaluating coursework quality, learning progress, and academic achievement; (2) determining whether students have met learning standards or other academic requirements for courses, grade-level promotion, and graduation; (3) helping students reflect on their academic goals and progress as learners; and (4) creating a lasting archive of academic work products, accomplishments, and other documentation.

Besides, every week students prepared an individual reflection journals in which they gave feedback on didactic activities (classes, physical and online farm visits, garden activities, group work) thereby connecting received theoretical and practical activities with their inner world. Action research encourages students to significantly improve their reflection competence.