

Glocal Lessons for School-Based Agricultural Education

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Introduction/Need for Innovation or Idea

Developing an appreciation for multiculturalism and global competence is important in agricultural classrooms for many reasons, but primarily to shift how individuals learn about others to also learning about themselves and the history of their own culture. This change can help broaden the ideas of multiculturalism and increase acceptance of the discussions that occur within a class (Markus & Rios, 2018). This means education has a powerful position in promoting peaceful coexistence among cultures with differences (Stavenhagen, 2008). Inclusion of globally competent education will help to create a culture of compassionate and respectful communication between differing opinions, a skill critical to agriculture, an increasingly globalized industry that impacts and reaches everyone regardless of beliefs (Van Winkle, 2021).

In school-based agricultural education (SBAE), the agricultural pathways and classes offered are easily influenced by external factors. In many programs, the influence of the community and even systematic inequalities dictate what courses and pathways are offered in the program (Stewart et al., 2021). In most areas, student preference determines what courses are offered and the way content is taught in each class. In most cases, successful agriculture programs are dependent on student-teacher relationships. Agriculture teachers utilize the building of this connection with students throughout all three components of the three-circle model, although this connection lacks any critical depth (Wood et al., 2022). As Wood et al. (2022) said: “Perhaps while SBAE teachers care for their students and want to build rapport with them, terms like culturally responsive, culture, and diversity are not received well by some teachers because of how these terms have become politicized” (p. 3). Approaching diversity and inclusion work from the perspective of utilizing global competency can help agriculture teachers better navigate the development of critical connections with students through culturally responsive teaching, without the use of terms that have been highly politicized (Wood et al., 2022).

How It Works/ Methodology/Program Phases/Steps

For this project, we developed 11 student-centered glocal lessons that begin with thinking globally and learning about culture in general, to the end lessons of creating a final project that acts on a local community issue. Topics related to careers, economics, safety, and food security are all taught from a glocal perspective. Glocal is taking global perspectives and awareness to local focus and action (Niemczyk, 2019). Teachers can access these lessons through Canvas, Google Classroom, and the US agricultural educators email listserv. In our state’s Canvas and Google Classrooms, educators have sections to provide feedback and ideas, so lessons continue to adapt to what is needed. Each lesson follows the same template and describes how the teacher should facilitate it. Resources and descriptions for teachers are included to help build confidence in teaching global competence. Each lesson can be inserted into any introductory curriculum within an agriculture program where the teacher feels that it fits best into their scope and sequence.

The glocal lessons focus on differences and similarities between students and their peers, showing students that even with differences we can find ways to work together and get along while respecting what everyone brings to the table. One way the lessons accomplish this is by teaching students what culture is and asking them to think about their own cultures. Allowing students to learn more about cultural and global differences will help them build their own cultural and global competencies.

The introductory lesson should be one of the first lessons in the classroom to establish the culture of the classroom for the rest of the semester and encourage critical thinking from the start so that students have time to learn and grow. This change in classroom culture will eventually lead

to multiculturalism in the content, representation in the class, and even in the completed activities. However, this could also be a challenge, not only because this is challenging content, but because it involves change. Thandeka (1999) described this pushing back as a “battle by a self against itself in order to stop feeling what it is not supposed to feel: forbidden desires and prohibited feelings that render one different” (p.12). This hidden battle may require more community support to implement the program. Some programs may experience community pushback; therefore, incorporation of these lessons will need to carefully consider the unique needs of community members, students, and administration.

Results To Date/Implications

Initially, these lessons were developed as part of a graduate-level course assignment on incorporating multiculturalism into education. From there, these lessons and the importance of their integration into SBAE have been shared through a workshop at a state-level meeting of agricultural educators. At this workshop, many educators signed up for future contact about our plans with the global lessons later. Implications and impact will be seen in the future of this work. These lessons will involve changing the entire culture and norms of an educator’s classroom. Acknowledging the history of agriculture playing a role in continuing systemic issues allows for a space for challenging norms and a more comfortable environment for marginalized communities.

Future Plans/Advice to Others

To implement this plan, we have the following advice: The educator will need professional development on how to approach politicized or charged content objectively, which is different from approaching the content neutrally. The educator will also need to be aware of community needs and values, to make the content culturally relevant and applicable to students while being sensitive and respectful to any information discussed. The needs and values should come from businesses in the area and the family and community norms that built the program. The global lessons developed here have been aligned with national agriculture standards to make the lessons applicable to each community with minimal changes. Content will need to be scaffolded and information needs to be approached as more than simply facts to pass on, but information to interact with and influence. To obtain the most influence from these lessons, the classroom's culture may need to be addressed, too. This content “relies upon a safe and accepting learning environment that engages students in social interactions and excitement and encourages students’ success that the teacher integrates into each tirelessly planned learning activity...” (Marsh, 2022, p. 12). As with any other lesson in a classroom, the effectiveness of the material depends on the delivery (Blumberg, 2019).

Costs/Resources Needed

Developing these lessons took time and energy from staff and graduate students, although no other outside costs were necessary for development. Lessons are free of charge for educators to access, and many of the lessons themselves will have low or no cost for the educator to facilitate in their classroom. There are resources necessary that may result in the educator or school needing to purchase materials, but all activities are optional and able to be edited to best fit the situation.

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