

Globalizing Agricultural Education: Poetry for Nurturing Educators' Cultural Awareness

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Introduction/need for innovation or idea

The value of integrating global perspectives into agricultural education has been well-researched (Roberts et al., 2024; Foster et al., 2024; Wright et al., 2019; Heinert & Roberts, 2016; Acker & Scanes, 2000). In a research synthesis of the literature dating back to 1975, Wright et al. (2019) found that the globalization of the American agriculture curriculum has been a major theme in international agriculture research. Given the crucial role of agricultural education in preparing the next generation of agrifood system leaders, there is a need to deepen students' understanding of international agriculture for enhanced student learning outcomes (Foster et al., 2024; Conner & Butcher, 2016). According to Foster et al. (2024), global learning in agriculture embodies the principles of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), consequently aligning agricultural education with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals while preparing students to contribute to the competitive global economy (Wu, 2022). For agriculture education to produce globally competent graduates, Roberts et al. (2024) emphasize the need for teachers to actively seek out opportunities to build their repertoire of globally responsive pedagogical tools.

In existing literature, not only is there a substantial body of evidence supporting the value of global learning in agriculture, but various strategies have been proposed to achieve it. Some of these strategies include study abroad experiences, international partnerships and collaborative research, values-based pedagogy, curriculum reforms, and continuous professional development opportunities for agriculture (Sharp & Roberts, 2013; Schroeder-Moreno et al., 2012; Foster et al., 2024). Despite these strategies and teachers' favorable disposition to integrating global perspectives into their classrooms, educators have reported a lack of preparedness to facilitate global learning in agriculture due to how little of the concepts are covered in teacher preparation materials (Zong, 2009). They specifically bemoan a lack of knowledge of different cultures, people, and issues (Pigg et al., 2021; O'Malley et al. 2019). Also, the cost (time and funds) and visa process for immersive professional development experiences call for more cost-effective alternatives. This poster proposes the use of culturally-flavored poetry about Nigerian agriculture as a cultural awareness nurturing medium.

How it works/methodology/program phases/steps

The cultural awareness workshop was designed with the idea of facilitating global competence among educators by learning about the world, one country at a time. This workshop provides a bite-size piece of the elephant- global learning in agriculture- by sharing poems about Nigerian agriculture with opportunities for participants to reflect on possible ways to incorporate the new perspectives into their classrooms. The is a 40-minute workshop designed around *Growing the Future: Youth Voices in Agriculture*, a poetry chapbook written as a product of research exploring Nigerian agricultural science students' perception of agriculture and their career intentions within ag. This workshop was first piloted at People And Nature (PAN) a graduate students' community of practice at a northwestern university. A total of five participants were at the workshop, four North American graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) and one Chilean GTA. It was facilitated in the following steps: (1) GTAs were prompted to write about their current knowledge of Nigerian agriculture. Participants were reminded that it was okay to write anything or nothing. (2) Then they read a packet of 3-4 poems (*When I grow up, Money in the Bush, Textbook Agriculture, Yawn Fest*) from the chapbook. (3) They wrote down the new cultural

insights and knowledge about Nigeria and her agri-food system gleaned from those poems. (4) Individually, they compared these new insights with what they knew before reading the poems. (5) Reflect and co-develop ways (in groups of 3) through which they might utilize these new perspectives in their classrooms.

Results to date/implications

Participants reported existing knowledge about Nigerian agriculture. One participant shared that they knew Nigerian agriculture is “small to mid-scale, mostly rainfed or river irrigated and has low machinery impact.” Others, prefacing their notes with “probably not a lot” or “not much,” shared that “Nigeria grows her own food, might face wildlife and drought problems” and one participant simply shared that they had no prior knowledge about Nigerian agriculture at the start of the workshop. After reading the selected poems from *Growing the Future*, they shared their new knowledge which included awareness of poultry system of free-roaming birds and crops cultivated in the region such as yams, cassava, cocoa, and groundnuts. Participants also inferred a linkage between subsistence farming to household-level food security, quoting some lines from the poems and describing participation in agriculture as a “guarantee for access to food.” The idea that agriculture is not a popular career path was brought to bear and participants pointed out that limited resources for production might be a deterrent to prospective agriculturists- citing access to agricultural technology as “a dream not a reality.” During the group reflection which featured sharing questions/things they were curious about and then co-ideating ways to incorporate the new knowledge in their classrooms, participants shared that they appreciated the props such as cultural attires and proverbs in the poems and especially footnotes providing additional contexts for those props. Discussions about gender roles in agricultural settings were also discussed as one poem highlighted the gendered lens of some rituals such as the appearance of certain masquerades which women and children are forbidden from seeing. Participants shared that the poems were cultural artefacts they would love to bring into their classrooms when they could and that they would use roleplay and storytelling to share new insights with their students.

Future plans/advice to others

In post-workshop reflection, participants provided feedback on their experience. One participant enjoyed reading and reflecting on the poems individually and then convening with a small group to collaboratively develop ideas for use in classrooms. Another suggested that more time be allocated to reading and reflecting on the poems individually, so increasing workshop duration to around 50- 60 minutes may be ideal. The transferability of the ideas of the workshop was also shared by a graduate assistant (currently teaches the Multicultural Perspectives in Natural Resources course) thus: “...your work within poetry seems like an amazing tool to engage students with diversity and cultural perspectives.” The group discussions were particularly useful as participants frequently turned to the facilitator as a cultural stakeholder (a Nigerian with rich agricultural heritage) to answer questions. This workshop whether delivered as developed or adapted for a different country or culture, access to cultural stakeholders is encouraged for the duration of the workshop. Overall, participants shared that they learned a lot and that this workshop presented opportunities to critically reexamine stereotypes about developing countries.

Costs/resources needed

Besides the printing costs of workshop (2-page) handouts, this workshop cost nothing. The chapbook, *Growing the Future*, and workshop handout are available for use and adaptation by interested individuals. A QR code access will be provided during the poster session.

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