
Virtual Mobility: Using social media to connect with global industry - Biological Science

Area of Focus

Students take on different roles – as an Ethiopian Politician, an Egyptian Politician, a farmer, and other roles. Students then vote whether to proceed with building the dam or not. The result of the debate/vote is then posted on twitter.

The purpose of this activity is to debate whether the Dam should be built or not – highlighting the different environmental concerns that are raised by this sort of project.

By asking students to take on different roles, students were able to develop an understanding of different cultural perspectives towards the environment and recognise diverse cultures and practices. The role play enabled students to show consideration for cultural diversity.

Freshwater Ecology is often seen as being narrow in focus in terms of not being very internationalised so this is a good way of bringing an international dimension to this module 'in fact it is far more fun to consider some [topical] examples, what's going on in the world'.

Staff Comment

“So one of the main things that this showed was perhaps highlight how narrow our view is again. The students really enjoyed it and I – but I remember posting on Twitter the result of the debate. They voted at the end and two-thirds of them were against building this dam, even though it was – I guess primarily because of [environmental concerns] that us westerners have the luxury of having and yes somebody, all I know is his name(...)I don't know if he was British or Ethiopian but he was outraged by this result. That in itself was quite discussion generating in terms of our own perceptions of these and how they would...” .

The debate split the student body into those for and against the building of the Dam and highlighted the existence of significant cultural differences within the cohort.