

Developing an International Agricultural Leadership Program to Meet the Needs of a Global Community

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Abstract

This paper advances the notion that global leadership is a necessary component of undergraduate agricultural leadership. Within an existing leadership curriculum, the development of at least three new courses with innovative approaches to such a globalized curriculum is justified and outlined. These three classes include a course designed to increase awareness of global leadership issues, a cultural assimilation course designed to prepare students for an international experience, and a capstone seminar course. The program will require students to take the three classes being developed in addition to at least three other classes with an

international or cultural emphasis as well as participate in an international experience during their undergraduate career. Upon completing the global agricultural leadership curriculum, students will be awarded an academic certificate.

Introduction

There is a shortage of global leaders in the corporate world; therefore, leaders need to develop global competencies and perspectives (Suutari, 2002). The National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) (2004) noted that “for students to contribute and succeed today, they must not only have a broad knowledge of the world, its people, politics and cultures, but more importantly, have developed the skills to comprehend, analyze, and evaluate the knowledge” (p. 8). Unfortunately, undergraduate leadership students still lack knowledge of global issues and are essentially globally illiterate.

Despite a media deluge of daily global events, the results of a recent study showed that students do not concern themselves with learning more about international agricultural policies, products, peoples, and cultures (Wingenbach, et al., 2003). The results support earlier research (Roper ASW, 2002) where it was found that most United States 18 to 24 year olds lacked understanding of global events. This lack of understanding may stem from a disconnection between real world events and the topics discussed in agricultural and leadership curricula. More effort needs to take place in teaching students how global events may impact agricultural practices worldwide (Wingenbach, et al., 2003). This paper describes one attempt to infuse global literacy into an agricultural leadership education program.

Literature Review

NASULGC (2004) identified five characteristics of globally competent graduates including: (a) have a diverse and knowledgeable worldview, (b) comprehend the international dimensions of the major field of study, (c) communicate effectively in another language and cross-culturally, (d) exhibit cross-cultural sensitivity and adaptability, and (e) continue global learning throughout life. A review of current literature revealed that despite a call to globalize curriculum over the last 10 years in order to produce globally competent graduates (Acker & Scanes, 1998, 2000; Duffy, Tones, & Christiansen, 1998), little has been accomplished.

This is especially true for the leadership curriculum. Only a small portion of students complete study abroad programs (The Chronicle, 2000). Multiple factors point to the need for all students to have not only a global worldview, but also international experience. As students graduate and move into the workforce,

international experience will be necessary if they are to help the United States remain competitive in a global market. Manning (cited in Alon & Higgins, 2005) noted some surprising findings related to global leadership. The findings included:

- Eighty-five percent of Fortune 500 firms surveyed did not have an adequate number of leaders.
- Sixty-five percent felt their leaders needed additional skills.
- One-third of international managers underperformed in their international assignments based on their superiors' evaluations.
- Organizations have erroneously promoted leaders to international assignments based on technical and organizational skills. (p. 502)

One in six jobs today is directly tied to international trade (Bruening & Shao, 2005). Acker and Scanes (2000) note that multi-national companies seek graduates who have language skills and cross-cultural experiences in addition to agricultural knowledge. The need for cultural understanding and global contextual understanding is crucial. Bruening and Frick (2004) noted surprise that students do not participate in study abroad programs despite the need for these skills. In a recent study, Wingenbach et al. (2003) discovered that only five percent of agriculture students earned a passing score when quizzed about international agricultural issues. These students showed a preference for learning about international issues via television or by taking a vacation in a foreign country. The students did not believe that interacting with international students was necessary or an effective method for learning about international issues. An implication exists that the lack of international experiences results in lower levels of international knowledge and contributes to a value system that does not embrace internationalization.

Several studies found that land-grant universities struggle to globalize their curricula (Moore & Woods, 2003; Bruening & Shao, 2005). Researchers and the land-grant university system have called for globalization of the curriculum since the middle to late 90s (Duffy, Tones, & Christiansen, 1998; NASULGC, 1997). A 1997 NASULGC report established the goal for all undergraduate students to graduate with international experience. Efforts to date have fallen far short of this goal.

Javidan and House (2001) noted "Managers who work in the international arena are steeped in their own culture. They have lived many years of their lives in their own country, have been educated there, and have spent years working there. It is not easy for them to understand and accept practices and values that vary from their own personal experiences" (p. 292).

Javidan and House (2001) went on to endorse living and working abroad as a method of increasing cultural awareness and understanding. Banks (2001) argued that for students to gain a multicultural citizenship, they must participate in international exchanges, study abroad, or courses that provide direct contact with foreign nationals. Bruening and Frick (2004) noted that international experiences not only helped students understand other cultures, but also helped them recognize the narrowness of their previous perceptions and understandings of other cultures and countries, thus expanding their worldview. The authors propose the development of a global leadership certificate in part to build the cultural awareness and understanding of program participants.

Description of Globalized Leadership Curriculum

The proposed certificate program is designed for undergraduate students in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (COALS) and can be used as a model for globalizing current leadership curriculum in colleges across the nation. The proposed program includes the development of three new courses within the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications. The program will require participants to take the three classes being developed in addition to three other classes with an international or cultural emphasis and that are offered outside the COALS as well as completing an international experience. Suutari (2002) suggested several methods for developing global leaders including action learning groups, projects, task forces, international meetings and forums, and international travel. However, global literacy and competence cannot be gained from a single course but must be gained from multiple opportunities and perspectives infused within the curriculum across courses and the campus (NASULCG, 2004). The proposed global leadership certificate will immerse students in international issues and culture using not only international students and faculty from within the university and study abroad experiences, but will also utilize online simulations that immerse students in agricultural issues from different regions of the world and a capstone learning group project. Boyd, Felton, and Dooley (2004) found virtual international experiences, such as the proposed online simulations, had profound impacts on agricultural students and can be effectively used to simulate international experiences. These simulations will require students to think critically about solutions to agricultural issues and consider how their proposed solutions will be affected by the culture of the region.

Multidisciplinary and Problem-based Focus

According to Petrick, Scherer, Brodzinski, Quinn, and Ainina (1999), “Excellent global leaders, therefore, are able to understand complex issues from different strategic perspectives, and act out a cognitively complex strategy by playing

multiple roles in a highly integrated and complementary way” (p. 60). The answers to most international agricultural leadership issues require holistic solutions. For example, water issues involve both agronomic as well as rangeland management strategies. Improving crop production involves the intersection of agronomy, entomology, and soil sciences. Preparing students to solve global issues involves the application of leadership theories, critical thinking, cultural competence, and multiple agricultural disciplines. Students completing the proposed certificate program will develop a holistic view to solving world issues using a multidisciplinary approach to problem solving.

Proposed Approach

This program will be developed using the Analysis-Develop-Design-Implement-Evaluate (ADDIE) Model which is the basis for most other instructional design (Dick & Carey, 2006).

The analysis phase began with a review of literature. The literature, including a recent study from our department (Wingenbach, et al., 2003), repeatedly documents not only the necessity of globalizing the undergraduate curriculum, but also the fact that we have not yet reached such a goal. The analysis phase will also include a descriptive study of the international experiences and activities of seniors graduating from our program this year.

The development phase will include a systematic process to identify learning objectives. Bruening and Shao (2005) conducted a Delphi study to identify knowledge and content that should be included in undergraduate courses with a global perspective. Their study revealed the following topics should be included: role of leadership in economic development, globalization and the implications for commerce, differentiating between developed and developing countries, the importance of a worldview, and knowledge of agricultural and extension systems in other countries. These components will provide the framework in developing the courses and in identifying existing courses to complete the certificate program.

The design phase will be implemented through the development of three new undergraduate courses offered within the department. Students will also complete three other courses from outside the college and an international experience. The first course, Global Agricultural Leadership, will expose students to global agricultural leadership issues and is intended for second year students.

International graduate students and faculty will assist with instruction in this course bringing aspects of their culture to the forefront of instruction. The second course, Cultural Orientation and Adaptation, is intended to be completed by junior and senior students prior to their international experience, such as a study abroad

program. The third course, Senior Seminar, is intended to be the capstone course of the program completed by seniors after they have completed all other components of the program.

The implementation of the program will consist of teaching the three new courses. Finally, the evaluation of the program should be implemented. Both formative evaluations, used throughout each stage of the ADDIE process, and summative evaluation, tests designed for criterion-related referenced items, will be used.

Program Components

Below are the overall learning outcomes established for the program. Students will meet the specific objectives by completing the three newly created classes, three existing classes from outside the college, and an international experience.

Overall Learning Outcomes

To achieve our goal, we have set five measurable objectives. Students will demonstrate each by knowing the following:

- Increasing the program knowledge of global issues, by attending courses developed by the Global Leadership Program, three additional international courses and international experience.
- Determining the impact that leadership may have on resolving global issues, by using multidisciplinary approaches and theories to problem solve international issues.
- Examining the application of leadership theory in an international setting, by immersing students in the international community to develop cultural understanding through a travel abroad experience.
- Analyzing and reflecting upon one's roles in global leadership through enhancing critical thinking skills, by completing self reflection assignments.
- Developing a broader worldview through globalization of the curriculum, engaging students in courses that focus on international or cultural emphasis and traveling abroad.

The authors see their greatest contributions as leadership educators occurring in the three proposed classes to be offered through our department. Each is discussed below.

Global Agricultural Leadership

Students will be challenged to define and reflect on their personal worldview. By providing baseline information on various regions of the world, or cultural

clusters, through guest lectures and the local international communities, students will be exposed to the globalized world in their own backyard. Javidan and House (2002) have noted that the usefulness of exploring culture through the use of cultural clusters. By processing first impressions and challenging perspectives, the class will help students begin to open their mind to the world around them.

Objectives

1. Develop an operational definition of globalization
2. Critically examine agricultural and leadership issues in different regions of the world
3. Differentiate between developed and developing countries,
4. Examine cultural implications to leadership,
5. Interact with the international community at Texas A&M University

Cultural Orientation & Adaptation

In order to truly be global citizens and culturally competent, students need to have a sound understanding of the elements of culture, the ways it affects your ability to function within another culture, and strategies for more easily adapting to the host culture. Greater understanding of the role of cultures in society, and skill which enable you to learn and adapt to a new culture will improve your acceptance into that culture, shorten the period of cultural adjustment, and lessen the chances of offending the people with whom you are trying to work and live.

Objectives

1. The elements of culture and how to use this knowledge to assess the cultural norms of a society or group to more quickly adapt to that new culture.
2. Know and recognize the stages of cultural adjustment, the signs of culture shock, and strategies for making cultural adjustments.
3. Be more self-confident when meeting persons from other cultures.
4. Demonstrate how to exercise “soft” diplomacy.

Senior Seminar

Students will be able to bring their new global experiences together with and the knowledge gained in their coursework and begin to connect these to both agriculture and leadership issues. The class will divide into groups and each group will be presented with a global agricultural issue in a certain region of the world. Through application and synthesis students will connect the necessary leadership skills and global perspective to find a solution and realize their own role in the globalized agricultural world. Presentations will provide a broad dissemination of

information and the critical thinking utilized to develop solutions will be used in the creation of a case study book to be shared with other agricultural programs.

Objectives

1. Create a case study of a global agricultural leadership issue.
2. Develop skills in problem solving and working with diverse perspectives.

Conclusion

Almost two decades ago it was noted that the shortage in global leaders is not due to unreliable or inadequate sources of capital, but is actually a limitation in human resources (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1992). This fact coupled with the documented need for more global leaders only further substantiates the need to globalize undergraduate leadership curriculum. This certificate in global leadership at the undergraduate level is unique and necessary. This certificate program will be multidisciplinary, drawing from the fields of leadership, anthropology, geography, economics, and multiple agricultural disciplines. The program will be problem based to enhance students' problem-solving and critical thinking skills. Immersing students in the international community will help them develop cultural understanding and a worldview. Graduates of the certificate program will be better equipped to solve global agricultural issues using leadership.

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Biographies

Lori L. Moore is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications at Texas A&M University. She teaches classes in the areas of adult education and leadership theory. Dr. Moore is also the co-coordinator for the university-wide Leadership Living Learning Community (L3C), a program that integrates classroom instruction in leadership with residence life programming. Her primary research interests are in the area of collegiate leadership programming.

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Manda H. Rosser received a doctorate in Human Resource Development at Texas A&M University. She currently works at Texas A&M University as an assistant professor in the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications where she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in leadership theory. Her current research interest includes mentoring and the use of popular media as a tool in leadership education.

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