

**Extension Strategies for a Changing World
Begin with the End in Mind**

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Abstract

Increasingly, extension and university professionals are being asked to organize international experiences and travel for groups of clientele, students or colleagues to increase their understanding of global issues, markets or interdependencies. These may be short travel experiences, a student study abroad class or a lengthy stay to work on a university or sponsored project. To create a successful international experience, the person responsible for the organizing must be something of a prophet, promoter, provider, politician and police officer. The five P's that support and ensure a successful international experience for all involved are explored. Introduced will be a web based International Extension Curriculum developed by a multi-state task force from Purdue, Florida A&M, Iowa State University and Ohio State University.

Introduction

Increasingly, extension and university professionals are being asked to organize international experiences and travel for groups of clientele, students or colleagues to increase their understanding of global issues, markets or interdependencies. These may be short travel experiences, a student study abroad class or a lengthy stay to work on a university or sponsored project.

Too often, colleagues or clientele non-participants hearing about these international travels view them as a junket or holiday rather than as a learning opportunity where the laboratory is another part of the world. Planners have a responsibility to begin with the end in mind. They must carefully consider how colleague participants can upon their return incorporate into on-going programs an international component to offer local clientele or students increased understanding of global interdependencies. Planners of international experiences also need to consider carefully how they coach all participants to talk about and “frame” their experiences.

A recent publication by the Aspen Institute (2004) starts with the question: How does the U.S. public currently see the world and America’s role in it? Their conclusion following a research process called deliberate polling is that there is no simple answer. Public opinion develops slowly and over a long period, at least 10 years (Yankelovich & Aspen, 2004) for a complex issue. Extension and universities have a role to play in increasing public understanding in these areas. A brief review of literature revealed that although there are many experts in organizing and conducting out of country experiences, few have shared their knowledge in the literature. This paper begins to outline some basics.

Purpose

To create a successful international experience, the person responsible for the organizing an international experience must be something of a prophet, promoter, provider, politician and police officer. The five P’s support and ensure a successful international experience for all involved.

This paper offers a simple and practical approach based on the work of numerous researchers. The presentation will encourage participants to share personal strategies which will be incorporated into future recommendations.

A Simple Strategy for Planners

A simple strategy to improve international experiences for participants and improve communication with administration, colleagues and stakeholders is to challenge planners to consider their own talents and comfort zones related to the five P’s.

The **prophet** develops the concept for the international experience. There must be clearly articulated ideas about what the experience will accomplish and how the travel relates to the values and mission of the organization. The prophet is a visionary and a dreamer, but cannot be naïve about the current organizational culture and how much he/she is advocating a new way of thinking. The prophet reminds doubters that global interdependence is a reality; we are connected economically, politically, socially and environmentally. The prophet facilitates an educational program whose goals and objectives are clearly established and delineated. The prophet during the tour identifies when participants need time for reflection, or shopping and sightseeing. “Togetherness” can be overwhelming.

The **promoter** recognizes the need for public relations work on campus, within extension and the community to market the opportunity as well as frame the discussion about what happens. Framing relates to the use of language, visuals and stories that help correct stereotypes and false perceptions. Aspen Institute in their materials reminds us of the benefits of international cooperative and development to the United States (Radomski, 2002). Specifically they list:

1. Increased trade
2. Promotion of private sector investment opportunities
3. Preservation of the world’s natural resources
4. Preservation of global genetic resources
5. Exchange of scientific ideas
6. Improvement of food safety and quality
7. A better educated and globally aware citizenry
8. Collaboration on international health problems, including HIV/AIDS research
9. Cross cultural awareness leading to increased tolerance and cooperation between nations
10. More stable economics that promote a more peaceful world for everyone.

The promoter understands the importance of developing a plan before going overseas to communicate and act upon when participants return. The promoter honestly represents in advertising and other promotional materials the nature and expectations of the program. The promoter will seek out people from the host country living in the U.S. and ask for tips about culture and language. The promoter starts involving colleagues and local supporters in the planning process; sharing ideas and concerns and asking for input. Writing a column for the local paper or professional newsletter and including digital photos is all a part of framing the message.

Promotional materials are developed by the promoter. They include a catchy title and visual, the place, date and sponsors of the tour. The purpose and an overview of the program including the proposed day by day itinerary are featured. Names of key tour leaders or resource persons, particulars about eligibility and how to enroll, costs and policies about refunds or cancellations need to be clearly outlined. (Andrews, 2005)

The **provider** looks after the safety, care and supervision of participants. The provider pays attention to the resources needed and ensures that there is a business plan. In today's environment, programs must often be capable of generating revenue to cover all expenses. Funds must be handled in accordance with regular accounting procedures of the university and the provider must maintain adequate financial records to document income and expenditures associated with the programs.

Organizers should clearly define for tour participants the extent of the participant's own responsibility for travel arrangements. As the participant's self-responsibility increases, liability for the university decreases. The provider competes for resources and becomes entrepreneurial in seeking new ways to fund international experiences.

Adequate health and accident insurance must be organized. This should protect participants for the duration of their international experience and provide for the return of participants in the event of serious illness, accident or death during the program. Provisions must be made for refunds in the event of cancellation. Adequate funds must also be available to cope with unexpected incidents, such as illness, accidents or other unusual circumstances. Examples of services that providers consider include: counseling services, medical care, language problems, changes in host families.

The provider manages risks and knows what do in an emergency. Planning and implementation of exchange programs and study tours expose the organization to a different set of risks than is usually encountered in Extension programs conducted within the responsible Extension professional's customary territory.

An orientation program and post activity evaluation are planned and executed by the provider. Although attendance at an orientation program on a weekend day or evening is ideal, increasingly groups are meeting via conference phone and not actually meeting each other until their departure at the airport. Regardless of which type of orientation is scheduled, advance print material should be developed and sent before hand to answer major questions about the travel experience and to lead the participants to potential resources about the sites and topics to be observed. A simple tour packet might include: the itinerary, a list of participants and addresses, information about group travel, expectations of tour participants when they return home, bios of key hosts/experts, maps, background about the country, health and safety precautions, suggestions for what to take, advice about being a considerate traveler and visitor, cultural briefings, reading lists or links to other resources or websites and a form for emergency contact information. (Andrews, 2005)

Mary Andrews, Director International Programs at Michigan State University, offers the following advice: Local agencies are excellent sources of assistance in identifying flights and schedules. They are not usually helpful, however, in developing in-country logistics. Two additional sources of help are usually needed for developing in-country logistics – a partner with expertise in the topical area and a local travel agency. The topic-oriented partner could be a university, agency, group or individual who is familiar with hosting international visitors, and is able to assist in creating the educational itinerary (speakers, key institutions/experts, visits, community access and suggestions for local interest). The second

local source of assistance would be a local travel agency in the country to be visited which would be engaged to provide local logistical services (hotel reservations, transfers, local transport, admissions, translators and other guide services). Identifying these trustworthy partners overseas is the first step in developing an itinerary. A wealth of contacts and information can be acquired with a few well-placed inquiries!

The **politician's** role comes into play as disputes are arbitrated and compromises sought before and during the trip. The politician also understands the organizational culture, articulates why international experiences are important and realistically looks at organizational barriers. The politician begins with words or visuals that highlight the global environment and gets people thinking about interconnected systems. Often appealing to moral values and the desire of everyone to make the world a better place creates a powerful frame of reference to open discussions. The politician knows to talk about global issues rather than "foreign" issues, again emphasizing connections rather than differences. The politician has also learned that when describing personal experiences overseas it is better to focus on the role of Americans as partners and mentors rather than "experts" or "heroes." (USDA, 2003)

Group meetings at a pre-arranged time set aside for participants to share and reflect on what they are learning is critical. The politician helps everyone see the importance and allows time to discuss any problematic situations as they arise. The politician's role also comes into play in negotiating and balancing educational and tourist activities. For many participants, the tour is also their vacation activity as well as an educational experience. So, an open afternoon or free evening becomes important. The wants and wishes of individual participants also need to be balanced against the group well-being and priorities.

Last, but not least, every organizer spends some time as a **police officer**. The police officer alerts potential participants what is and is not acceptable. Screening and selection of participants on the basis of appropriate criteria is another aspect of this role. Experience has taught us that participants must be carefully screened and selected on the basis of criteria appropriate to the program. Consider the focus of the tour, rigor of travel and overall educational goals of the trip. It is often suggested that screening procedures for home stay programs include personal interviews of participants and providers are interviewed personally in their homes. Once selected, at least a few participants will decide not to follow the ground rules, may try to create their own venue, not show up on time or generally make life miserable for those around them. The police officer provides clear and accurate feedback – in a sensitive way and looks after the common good of all.

Educational Importance

The ideas and concepts presented offer AIAEE participants tools to use in teaching the inexperienced organizer to ensure that programs are designed to serve educational purposes with clearly established goals, objectives and appropriate learning experiences. The core concepts are drawn from the author's contribution to a web based curriculum developed as part of a multi-state project funded by the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service.

The International Extension Curriculum, Strengthening Extension's Capacity for International Engagement (www2.ces.purdue.edu/iec) is a needs based, national curriculum to build the international skills of Extension personnel by strengthening educator's ability to develop activities relevant to the global realities of their location (K. Selby, Coordinator, 2004). An overview of the eight modules is included in the table on the following pages.

Eight modules focusing on international and multicultural aspects of extension		
Module	Title	Overview
Module 1	Building Cultural Competencies	<p>This is an introduction and starting point for individuals and organizations to begin that visionary journey toward becoming “culturally” or as most in the field are now saying, “interculturally” competent.</p> <p>The module is primarily designed to impact the culture of the organization, by surfacing both organizational and individual “mental models” and developing new ones. Module 1 consists of three components – knowledge, awareness, and skills and abilities.</p>
Module 2	Assessing Strengths of Your Community	<p>Module 2 provides ideas and resources to Extension staff to better serve all residents of their county/state. It will help determine where and how to start educational programming efforts by providing ideas, strategies, resources, and examples in five units. The topics are difficult and often are barriers for education in responding to the demographic changes in communities. The effort to reach across cultures is no different than other Extension planning and programming in that it is based on designing, conducting, and evaluating educational programs that improve the lives of people in your community.</p>
Module 3	Facilitating Workforce Development	<p>This module provides a broad overview of the cultural issues that impact employment of new immigrants, and common issues that occur as they acculturate with a new environment. The module is constructed to address awareness of the participants own cultural perceptions and examine some major cultural issues and challenges that new immigrants may encounter in the work place. The understanding of culture, acceptance of cultural differences, and methods the extension professionals and educators can use to help in facilitating the new workers transition into a more diverse</p>

		population will enhance better understand and improve working relationships between employee and employers.
Module 4	Cultivating Community Leadership	Building leadership capacity is important, especially for immigrant populations but not at the expense of their cultural values. For example, gender and age are viewed differently with respect to community leadership in varying cultures. Teaching leadership is not simply something that we can just go into a community and do. There must be a desire on the part of the community members to increase capacity and not have the dominant groups impose their values. In addition, this module considers issues that existing local leadership must confront in efforts to satisfactorily absorb new immigrant populations into their communities.
Module 5	Understanding Legal Issues Relevant to New Populations	This module is designed for the extension educator working in communities with immigrant populations. A general overview of this module includes demographics of new immigrant groups in the United States, their socio/economic history, and factors that will have implications for health and legal issues.
Module 6	Exploring Cultural Perspectives of Families	Families build the foundation of communities. As the demographic profiles of families in communities change, communities change. In order to design and deliver extension programs and service to effectively meet the needs of the communities, it is important to understand the needs and wants of those who live there. This module can provide professional development to extension staff. However, activities in this module can also be used in extension programming to assist others in learning about the role of culture in families, how individuals can design and deliver programs and services.
Module 7	Discovering Global Trade	The globalization of trade around the world will result in major changes in agriculture. Forces outside of the USA, such as the World Trade Organization, have major impact on agriculture, the communities where we live,

		and the needs of Extension clientele. By completing this module you will gain a better understanding of the impacts of trade, who a few of the major players may be, and resources available to you to better prepare yourself and your clients for these changes.
Module 8	Planning Your International Experience	Module 8 is designed as a set of reference materials for Extension professionals to use to increase their own understanding of Internationalizing Extension. They are examples of materials developed and drawn from numerous sources and additional links that will be helpful to an Extension professional seeking additional background. This module relates to international experiences and how to apply those experiences in your personal and professional life. Unit 3 of this module is designed for the Extension professional without international experience. View this module as a supplement for Modules 1-7.

Conclusion

For many participating in AIAEE conferences, planning and communicating outcomes of international experiences are taken for granted. This is not likely to be the case for the majority of their university colleagues. The inexperienced do not understand the careful organization necessary to satisfy participants and hosts, provide experiential learning experiences and handle management challenges. Creating a comfortable, relaxed and flexible ambiance is important so individuals can enjoy themselves, be responsible and take advantage of unanticipated learning opportunities as they arise.

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