Exploring Student’s Perceptions of Globalization and International Involvement

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Introduction

Globalization of the student’s learning experience is a key pathway to preparing a global workforce for agribusinesses (Acker, 1999). However, Moore, Ingram and Dhital found that college of agriculture students were reasonably knowledgeable of international agriculture related to the USA, but less knowledgeable of world agricultural issues (1996). “The rising level of global interdependency” has made it essential that colleges produce graduates with qualities that enable them to be successful working in an international society (Tucker, Hart and Muehsam, 1993).

International programs are critical to the mission and responsibilities of a college of agriculture (Acker & Scanes, 1998). As agribusinesses become more involved in the international marketplace, there becomes a need for an experienced workforce educated on the subject of globalization and international involvement. Colleges of agricultural sciences have responded by requiring foreign language classes, encouraging study abroad programs, and internationalizing curriculum (Moore, Ingram & Dhital, 1996). However, Redmann, Schupp, and Richardson found that college students at a land grant university needed to be more knowledgeable of international agriculture, and that college faculty must develop curricula to meet this need (1998). Although much research has been done concerning students’ knowledge of international agriculture, little research exists relating to student’s perception of globalization and international involvement. It becomes crucial that we assess the students’ perceptions of these concepts before we continue to develop curriculum to meet the needs of agricultural students.

One way to describe the student’s decision to study in another country is a diffusion of an innovation. Rogers explains the innovation-decision process as an individual going through a process of initial knowledge of an innovation, to forming an attitude and making a decision (2003). Roger’s model of the innovation-decision process involves starting with the knowledge stage as an individual learns of the existence and gains understanding of the innovation. The individual then moves to the persuasion stage as the person forms a favorable or unfavorable perception toward change. Later, the individual will move to the decision stage which leads to a choice of adopting or rejecting the innovation (p. 169). If students have an adequate amount of knowledge of globalization and international involvement, it becomes necessary to assess agricultural students’ perception to continue the innovation-decision process of students subscribing to international experiences and study abroad programs. The terms globalization and international involvement are commonly used in discussions concerning the worldwide marketplace, but how do students perceive these two terms?

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to explore students’ perceptions of globalization and international involvement. The specific objectives of the study are to 1) Describe students’ perceptions of the terms globalization and international involvement related to demographics such as country of origin, languages spoken, and college major; and 2) Explore students’ perceptions of globalization and international involvement.
Methods/Results

The researchers prepared and directly administered one instrument for data collection. A sample consisting of students in an agricultural writing class (N=89) were to openly define the terms “globalization” and “international involvement.” A qualitative research design using textual analysis was utilized to conduct the study. Interpretation of the qualitative data using the constant comparative method (Ary, Jacobs, & Asghar, 2002) involved looking for common themes to define descriptive patterns, and associations and linkages among descriptive levels. Major and minor themes emerged providing distinct similarities and differences found between students’ perceptions of globalization and international involvement. Analysis of this data is still underway.

Educational Importance, Implications, and Application

University faculty must help students learn the complex, interconnected, diverse, and ever-changing global society (Moore, Ingram & Dhital, 1996). University faculty must know students’ perceptions of concepts such as globalization and international involvement to complete the decision-making process and influence the participation in an international learning experience. The findings of this study will determine the positive and negative attitudes of agricultural college students which will aid colleges in the development of curricula and the recruitment of students into international learning experience programs. Students’ misconceptions discovered in this study concerning globalization and international involvement can lead to educating faculty to become better prepared as change agents in the student’s decision-making process. In turn, this will increase the likelihood for diffusion, with more students becoming aware of global issues and developing competencies necessary for success in the international agribusiness world.

As a stakeholder, international agribusinesses will be able to use these findings to help in the curriculum design for agricultural college students. Internships, experiences, and study tours can be more directly promoted to students to increase the recruitment of students to start a career in the global marketplace.

“Simply stated, global skills, global perspectives, and global citizenship are now a fundamental prerequisite for success in agribusiness careers” (Acker, 1999). If global perspectives can be identified, college faculty can work more efficiently with international agribusinesses to develop global skills. Additionally, we can produce global-ready graduates and aid in the success of students’ chosen careers.

References


