Framing Topics and Teaching Methods for International Agricultural Curriculum for US Undergraduate Students

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Introduction
The rapid globalization of economies and societies has opened the door for higher education to increase the opportunities for more students to study international agriculture. Most U.S. colleges and universities have acknowledged the need to equip students with skills and knowledge that will allow them to function effectively across cultures and nations. However, there is little evidence that this is being done in a systematic way, rather it appears that the international curriculum is being developed piecemeal (Hayward, 2000).

To respond to the need of internationalization of curriculum in higher education and provide better international experiences for undergraduate students, a three-round Delphi study was conducted with the purpose of identifying the topics and approaches to deliver contemporary international agricultural curriculum and activities. It is believed that the findings can help professionals to develop better programs and activities and improve the students’ international agricultural experiences.

This Delphi study consisted of three rounds. Sixty professionals with extensive experience in international agriculture from the membership list of Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education (AIAEE, 2003) were identified to participate in this study. In the first round, a survey questionnaire with open-ended questions that solicited topics, teaching methods, and experiences in international agricultural curriculum was sent to a panel of 60 members. Twenty-eight individuals responded to the first round. The second round questionnaire was developed based on the responses obtained from the first round, in which the respondents were asked to rate the topics, teaching methods, and experiences for a 15-week international agriculture course. Twenty-three members responded to the second round questionnaire. The third and final round asked respondents to confirm their ratings from the responses in the second round with a comparison to group means for each item.

Purpose of poster
The purpose of this poster is to display the most important topics and teaching methods needed to be included in teaching international agriculture for U.S. undergraduate students.

Results
The five highest rated topics by the panel experts included role of agriculture in economic development, globalization and the implications on agriculture, role of culture in agricultural international development, agricultural extension and education systems in different countries, and a world-view for today’s agricultural producers and leaders.

The top five teaching methods named by the respondents were experiential learning, field studies/trips to view various agricultural practices, presentations and dialogue with those who have worked long-term in relevant countries, internships, and case study exercises where students must assume a different way of thinking.

Educational importance
With the increased importance of international experiences for U.S. college students, there is an obvious need to develop an effective curriculum to maximize students learning in international agriculture. This study provides the blueprints for professionals who want to develop curriculum contents in international agriculture. The shared expertise of professionals in this study can help to form a cohesive direction for the development of a comprehensive international agricultural course for U.S. undergraduate students.