A Participatory Educational Model for International Risk Management Programs in the 21st Century

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The purpose of this narrative is to propose an educational model for agricultural educators to use when planning, implementing, and evaluating risk management educational programs. The model is based upon the findings of a larger study dealing with the perceptions of Iowa farmers towards risk management education and the delivery of risk management education (Mickelsen, 2001).

Extension programs in the United States and abroad have taken on a new approach in educating producers. This new paradigm emphasizes the participatory learning process, which allows the producers to be a part of the educational process and help develop topics and instructional methods and tools for the learning process (Toness, 2001).

This model is predicated on continual and beneficial dialogue among researchers, specialists in the field, risk management educators, lenders, farm families, input suppliers, commodity producers, and producers so that effective programming and delivery can take place. The model is a structured and combined effort among the groups or persons responsible for preparing and delivering risk management programs.

Methodology

The first step in creating this model was to gather information using the descriptive, survey research design. Descriptive survey research is used to "describe and interpret what is." This type of research also attempts to "measure what exists without questioning why it exists" (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 1985, p. 337).

Based upon the data, a model was constructed using the most important sources of risk, perceptions toward risk management, risk management tools and strategies, and preferred learning styles as described by Kolb’s descriptors, delivery methods, and preferred media and instructional technologies.

The skeletal portion of the model is derived from Stufflebeam’s CIPP model (1983). The CIPP model was selected to incorporate all aspects (content, input, process, product, evaluation) when planning and delivering educational programs.

Educational Importance

This model along with the study from Iowa State University has been used to develop, plan, and integrate risk management educational programs across the State of Iowa and abroad. AgInsight, a sister company to the Iowa Soybean Association, Resource Consulting Services in Australia, and AgAdvantage, a consulting firm, have all requested information to develop successful programs. Successful Farmer, Ag Risk Homepage, and the Farm Centre Homepage in Canada (article submitted) have all published research articles from the research and model.

It is hoped that professionals will use this model in developing risk management educational programs and continue to shape it, add to it, and make it a useful and productive model. The model is designed to help in the planning, design, implementation, and evaluation of educational programs. It also offers the latest cutting-edge responses from Iowa farmers to what they deem necessary and important in risk management.