Going Global with Leadership:  
Important Components within Educational International Leadership Experiences

Kristina G. Ricketts, Ph.D.  
304 Garrigus Building  
Community & Leadership Development  
University of Kentucky  
Lexington, KY 40546  
k.ricketts@uky.edu  
Ph: 859.257.3767  
Fax: 859.257.1164

Chris Morgan, Ph.D.  
University of Georgia

Abstract

Today’s world is a global society. Ever-advancing communications and technology, the Internet, and other modern conveniences have permanently changed how society interacts; as a result, it is imperative that today’s students and future employees have useful global perspectives and competencies. Graduates should not only be able to work with diverse cultures and people, but should also have a good grasp on worldwide issues and events, in order to compete in an increasingly global society (Irani, Place, & Friedel, 2006; Navarro, 2004). Not surprisingly, the ability to develop competent, principle-based leadership is a major challenge facing businesses in today’s culturally diverse, global society (Marsh & Johnson, 2005).

The purpose of this study was to identify the most salient components to be included in an international leadership experience. A three round Delphi procedure was used to solicit expert opinions concerning the aspects needed to provide an effective international leadership experience. Results revealed a variety of important components that broke down into two categories: knowledge gained and concrete experiences. Specifically, the five highest rated knowledge components were: respect for other cultures; effective global interaction; critical thinking about leadership models students embrace; recognition of the interconnection between different contexts and an acquaintance with local indigenous people. The top five concrete experiences were: multicultural experiences focusing on local values; interaction with local students; frequent debriefing, personal logging and self-reflection through the process; incorporation of three learning stages – prework, experience, postwork – within the overall experience and a gamut of specific encounters with what is working in the local society and what’s not. Educators may consider these expert suggestions when developing curriculum or coursework for international experiences focused in leadership, whether for traditional students, non-traditional students or extension agents. Ideally, incorporation of these factors into leadership programs will encourage the development of more globally minded leaders.

Keywords: Leadership, International experiences, Delphi, Learning components