

INTERNATIONALIZATION OF EXTENSION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Barbara G. Ludwig, Associate Professor
R. Kirby Barrick, Professor
The Ohio State University

Abstract

Extension systems across the country have been challenged to integrate international perspectives into programs and assist staff and clientele in developing global competency. For the past decade, national Extension leaders have encouraged state Extension systems to internationalize. Few studies have been conducted related to internationalization of the Extension component of the land grant university system. The purpose of the study was to identify the characteristics that will describe an internationalized state Extension system. The study used a three-round, modified Delphi technique to explore and describe the characteristics of an internationalized state Extension system. By consensus, the Delphi Panel identified 38 characteristics of an internationalized state Extension system. Five critical elements were identified: (1) Clientele develop a fundamental understanding of global and national interdependence; (2) Extension educational programs within the U.S. stress the impact of international economic forces on agricultural markets; (3) Extension educators incorporate international perspectives into on-going activities; (4) Extension faculty/agents recognize the relationship between basic international issues and the Extension mission; and (5) Personnel evaluation systems recognize international efforts. The absence of any one of these critical element would mean that the Extension system could not be considered to be internationalized.

The concept of internationalization means different things to different people. It could be compared to an image in a foggy mirror, where people gaze through the mist seeing an image somewhat shaped by their own beliefs. Henson, Noel, Gillrad-Byers and Ingle (1990) in their study of university internationalization stated that internationalization was frequently viewed in general, rather amorphous terms that were difficult for some to understand and comprehend. Arum and Van de Water (1992) in their book Bridges to the Future: Strategies for Internationalizing Higher Education supported this view.

Few studies have been conducted related to internationalization of the Extension component of the land grant university system. None define internationalizing in terms of objectively verifiable indicators of success. A need to examine and improve the understanding of internationalization of a state university Extension system became apparent

through a review of literature. The review of literature revealed broad, but often ambiguous, goal statements related to internationalization of Extension (ES-USDA, 1989; Ingle, 1990; King & Martin, 1991). Some ideas had been formulated for internationalizing (Somersan, 1992; Henson, Noel, Gillard-Byers, & Ingle, 1990; ES-USDA, 1989; Patton, 1984), but there had been little emphasis on implementation by Extension systems across the country (Poston & O'Rourke, 1991; Andrews & Lambur, 1986).

To assist in the process of internationalizing Extension, a clearer understanding was needed of what it meant to internationalize. If characteristics of an internationalized Extension system could be identified, then an organization might focus available resources to create needed changes. The Organization Elements Model (OEM) developed by Kaufman (1982) provided a framework for the study. Kaufman's model was used to examine and

improve the understanding of internationalization of a state university Extension system.

Purpose

The purpose of the study was to identify the characteristics that describe an internationalized state Extension system. The objectives of the study were:

1. To identify the organizational efforts evident in a state university Extension system that is internationalized.
2. To identify the organizational results evident in a state Extension system that is internationalized.

Methodology

A modified Delphi study using a panel of 15 experts was undertaken to identify the characteristics. The Delphi Panel members were purposefully selected following a nomination process and were treated as a population. Panel members identified were individuals who were well known and respected for their contributions to Extension or land grant colleges or universities in the area of internationalization. Delphi, a group process, utilized individual written responses to three researcher-developed instruments. The process was further characterized by multiple iterations or feedback designed to accomplish convergence of opinion. For Rounds II and III, a statistical summarizing for each item in the form of a frequency table and a listing of all comments made by panel members encouraged reassessment of initial judgements. Anonymity of the respondents and their specific comments was maintained during the study.

Instrumentation

The instrument developed for Round I of this Modified Delphi study contained 39 position statements derived from the literature and structured interviews with international experts. Face and content validity of the initial instrument were assured through the use of a content validity panel. Given the nature of the Delphi technique, additional types of validity and reliability estimates were not appropriate for the instrument. (Dalkey, Rourke, Lewis, & Snyder, 1972.)

A seven-point Likert-type scale was used with 0 indicating "no importance" and 6 indicating "critical importance". The Delphi Panel was asked to identify the degree to which they believed each item contributed to the internationalization of an Extension system. Comments were solicited and panel members were encouraged to add new statements.

The instruments used in the second and third rounds contained items on which a predetermined level of consensus was not achieved during the previous round. Consensus on an item was considered to have been reached when 80% of the ratings fell within two categories on a seven-point scale. For Round II, based on suggestions from the Delphi Panel, 12 new items were added and nine items were reworded.

Descriptive statistics were calculated for each round. The computer program SPSS was used for data analysis. Following Round III, statistics of central tendency and variability were calculated for all items on which consensus had been reached. The mean was used to describe the level of importance of the item to an internationalized state Extension system as determined by consensus of the Delphi Panel.

Results and Conclusions

The results of the study represent the collective opinion of the experts participating in the Delphi Panel at a single point in time and cannot be construed to be representative of any other population or situation. Fifty-one items were considered during the three rounds of the Delphi. Consensus was achieved on 38 items which were identified as having moderately high importance to critical importance for the internationalization of a state university Extension system. (See Tables 1 & 2) Consensus was not reached on the level of importance of 13 items.

Organizational Efforts

Organizational Efforts are comprised of inputs and processes. Inputs, the existing starting conditions affecting organizational activities identified by the Delphi Panel, could be broadly classified into two areas: organizational mission and resource base. Processes, the means, methods and procedures necessary for managing inputs identified by the Delphi Panel, could be broadly classified into three areas: institutional commitment; staff development; and, organizational development.

An input of critical importance to the internationalization of an Extension system was recognition by faculty and agents of the relationship between international issues and the Extension mission. A commitment to international education as a part of the Extension mission, an organizational culture that expects international activity, and administrators who communicate support for internationalization were viewed as highly important.

Inputs related to the resource base that were identified as having high importance included: financial support being available for internationalization activities, human and physical resources being allocated to integrate international

activities into the overall institutional effort, and the identification of a person to provide leadership to internationalizing efforts and proposals for international work being developed and funded.

Institutional commitment was evident through three processes: The development of a personnel evaluation system which recognized international efforts had critical importance; policies and procedures which facilitated international program efforts; and a reward structure which recognized and rewarded internationalization were viewed as highly important.

Staff development processes identified as having high importance to the internationalization of an Extension system included: interaction with scholars from other countries to increase faculty expertise, opportunity for international experiences for county agents; and administrators and professional improvement activities designed to increase knowledge of global issues.

Organizational Development Processes identified as having high importance included: encouragement of regular visitation by scholars from other countries; the establishment of a committee to guide internationalization efforts; institutionalization of exchange programs with Extension organizations in other countries resulting in regular and on-going exchanges; and Extension involvement with international development activities.

Organizational Results

The Delphi Panel identified organizational results comprised of products and outputs. Products, the internal results accomplished through the application of inputs and processes, could be grouped into two broad areas: educational programs developed and audiences targeted. Outputs, the products the organization delivered to external clients identified, were educational programming efforts.

Table 1. Level of Importance of Organizational Efforts

Item	Mean	SD
Extension faculty/agents recognize the relationships between basic international issues.	5.54	.66
Personnel evaluation systems recognize international efforts.	5.50	.76
Reward structure recognizes internationalization in its system of rewards.	5.31	.63
Financial support for internationalizing activities is available.	5.21	.43
A person(s) is identified to provide leadership.	5.14	.53
Administrators clearly communicate support.	5.14	.66
International experiences are provided for county agents.	5.08	.64
Faculty increase their expertise by interacting with faculty and scholars from other cultures.	5.07	.47
Human and physical resources are allocated.	5.07	.47
Policy and operating procedures facilitate efforts.	5.07	.62
The organization's culture expects international activity.	5.07	.62
Opportunities for international experiences are provided for administrators.	5.00	.55
The central mission of the Extension system includes a commitment to international education.	5.00	.55
Professional improvement activities increase knowledge of global issues.	4.93	.47
Extension is involved with international development activities.	4.93	.92
The organization's best junior faculty/agents are identified to participate in overseas assignments.	4.86	.36
Administrators engage in experiences which will internationalize their own professional lives.	4.86	.53
Regular encouragement/accommodation of visitation by scholars.	4.86	.66
Proposals for international work are developed and funded.	4.77	.44
The organization's best senior faculty/agents are identified to participate in overseas assignments.	4.64	.63
Exchange programs with Extension organizations in other countries are institutionalized.	4.64	.74
A committee(s) is established to guide internationalization efforts.	4.57	.65
Exchange programs with Extension organizations in other countries are planned and conducted on an on-going basis.	4.50	.65

Scale: 0 = No Importance; 1 = Slight Importance; 2 = Limited Importance; 3 = Moderate Importance; 4 = Moderately High Importance; 5 = High Importance; 6 = Critical Importance

Note: Round 1: N = 14; Round 2: N = 13; Round 3: N = 14

Products identified as having critical importance to the internationalization of an Extension system included: educational programs offered in the United States that stress the impact of international economic forces on agricultural markets and Extension educators incorporating international perspectives into on-going educational activities.

High importance was placed on the targeting of specific groups for education.

The output identified as having critical importance to an internationalized state Extension system was clientele developing a fundamental

Table 2. Level of Importance of Organizational Results

Item	Mean	SD
Clientele develop a fundamental understanding of global and national interdependence.	5.85	.38
Extension educational programs stress the impact of international economic forces on agricultural markets.	5.69	.86
Extension educators incorporate international perspectives into on-going educational activities.	5.54	.66
Sensitivity to diversity issues by Extension clientele is enhanced.	5.36	.63
Key leaders participate in interdisciplinary international experiences.	5.36	.74
Extension educators assist communities in building a sense of responsibility for wise use of natural resources.	5.07	.62
Local business persons are trained for participation in international markets.	4.93	.62
Specific groups are targeted for public policy education on global decision-making.	4.86	.66
Rural clientele are targeted for programming on the international marketplace.	4.64	.74
Educational programs planned by Extension help clientele secure a better understanding of complex worldwide issues.	4.57	.76
Extension educational programs offered to 4-H members help develop international awareness.	4.57	.76
Educational programs increase participant's understanding of other cultures.	4.57	.76
Training programs are provided for foreign immigrant living in the United States.	4.50	.52
Urban clientele are targeted for programming on the international marketplace.	4.50	.65
Extension clientele interact with visiting scholars and students.	4.31	.75

Scale: 0 = No Importance; 1 = Slight Importance; 2 = Limited Importance; 3 = Moderate Importance; 4 = Moderately High Importance; 5 = High Importance; 6 = Critical Importance

Note: Round 1: N = 14; Round 2: N = 13; Round 3: N = 14

understanding of global and national interdependence. Educational programming efforts having high importance to internationalization included: programs that help clientele understand complex worldwide issues, programs that train local business persons for participation in international markets, and interdisciplinary international experiences for key leaders.

Conclusions

Based on the results of the study, a state university Extension system that has achieved internationalization would exhibit five critical elements: (1) clientele develop a fundamental understanding of global and national interdependence; (2) Extension faculty/agents recognize the relationship between basic international issues and the Extension mission; (3) Extension educational programs within the U.S. stress the impact of international economic forces on agricultural markets; (4) Extension educators incorporate international perspectives into on-going activities; and (5) personnel evaluation systems recognize international efforts. The absence of any one of these critical elements would mean that the Extension system could not be considered to be internationalized.

An internationalized state university Extension system would also exhibit other important characteristics. The characteristics are those discussed in the preceding sections. Not all of the important characteristics identified by the Delphi Panel need be present for an Extension system to be considered to be internationalized, but many are likely to be evident.

Implications

The current study has identified characteristics of an internationalized Extension system and through interaction of the Delphi Panel has been able to establish the relative importance of these

characteristics. The results will provide other researchers, as well as leaders of land-grant universities and Extension, a clearer understanding of Extension internationalization and a starting point for further research, debate and discussion.

Poston and O'Rourke (1991) reported 80% of Extension directors indicated their state had achieved either a low level or had not achieved any level of globalization. For these Extension systems, internationalization will represent a significant organizational change. Identification of characteristics essential to an internationalized Extension system can assist Extension leaders and university administrators to identify and focus available resources where the greatest impact or change can be realized. A clear sense of direction, strong leadership in internationalizing and enthusiasm from leaders of the organization will help to ensure concerted and sustained action. Policy and resource decisions such as the incorporation of fiscal support into the ongoing Extension budget and placing a person "in charge" of internationalization to support and coordinate Extension program and activities, are necessary implementation strategies. Assessment must focus on the outcomes achieved. Organizational change is a slow and often discontinuous process in a complex organization. Ongoing assessment of the progress being made will be necessary.

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