Identifying Best Practices for Engaging Faculty in International Agricultural Education Experiences

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Universities are being called upon to internationalize curriculum as the need for a globally competent workforce increases. Without globally-competent faculty, international integration within higher education cannot occur. Literature indicates that participation in short-term international agricultural education experiences is important to increasing agricultural faculty members' cultural awareness. However, the best way to design and implement such experiences for faculty is uncharted. The purpose of the study was to identify best practices for facilitating a short-term international agricultural education experience for faculty in the agricultural and life sciences that encouraged learning, discussion, and reflection leading faculty to further integrate international perspectives in their agricultural courses in the U.S. Through a qualitative research design, reflective observations and statements from a planning team conducting a short-term international agricultural education experience in Ecuador were used to provide a thick, rich description of the successes/challenges faced while designing and implementing the experience. The results provided a list of best practices future planning team members can use to emphasize learning before, during, and after a short-term international agricultural education experience for faculty.

Keywords: globalization, educational programs, international experience, faculty

Agriculture is a core human activity dependent upon the sound management of global resources. This has created a need for colleges of agriculture and life sciences to prepare students for responsible citizenship and professional employment in a global agricultural workforce (Zhai & Scheer, 2004). Yet, according to Hudzik (2004), the U.S. is not reaching its potential. In a review of land-grant university internationalization efforts, Hudzik (2004) found U.S. education has generally been unable to meet the challenges and opportunities of globalization, and the American public is not prepared to be employed in a global economy. The U.S. has been found to "fall short on virtually all indicators of international knowledge, awareness, and competence" (Hudzik, 2004, p. 3).
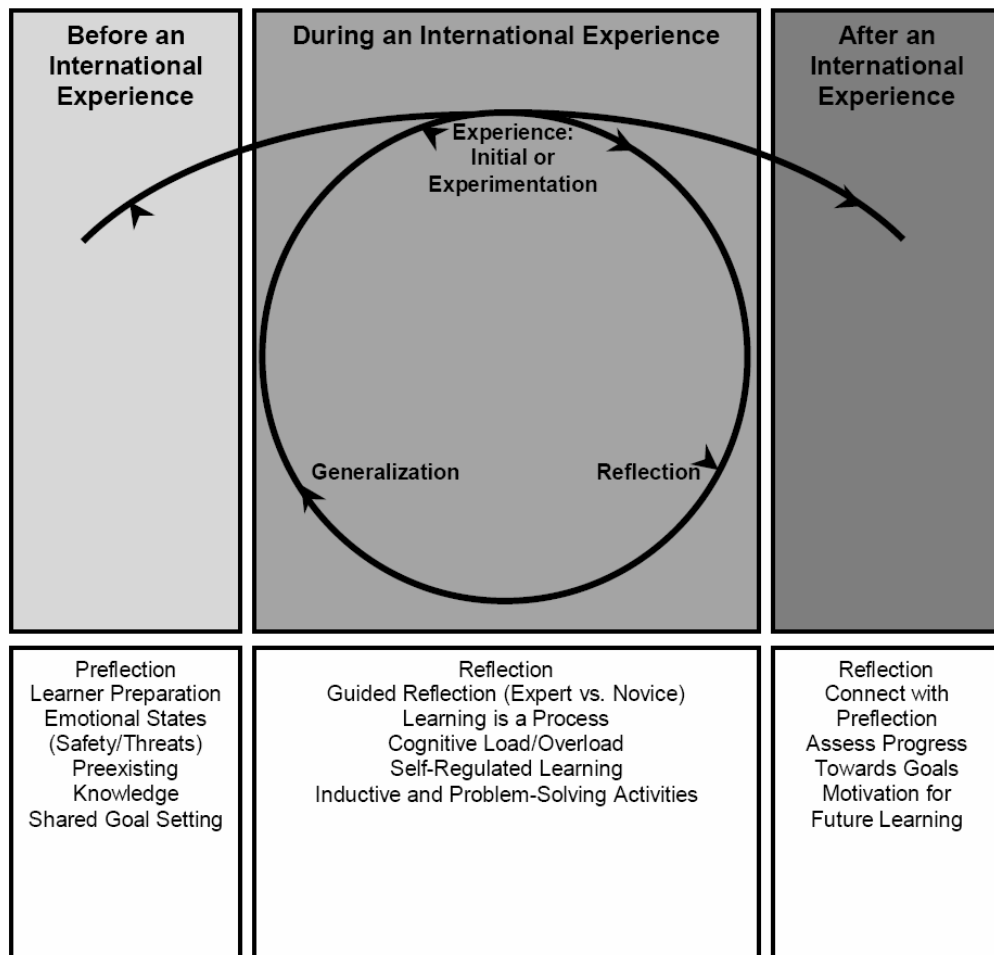
Higher education institutions can instill this global perspective by demonstrating a clear commitment to a global vision, including a curriculum with a strong international content. These are essential parts of integrating international aspects into on-campus courses (National Research Council, 2009). Kuenzi and Riddle (2005) stated, integrating international perspectives into higher education includes "studying languages, cultures and world regions that are critical to U.S. interests" (p. 1). Curriculum integration begins with faculty, and to integrate international perspectives into higher education, both faculty and students need culturally rich experiences.

Paus and Robinson (2008) believed taking faculty abroad on short-term visits focused on research and intellectual growth, as it relates to understanding cultural perspectives, would assist faculty in integrating international perspectives into their conversations with students. Short-term international experiences are "intellectually exciting to faculty members and can have serendipitous outcomes for faculty's perspectives on learning abroad" (Paus & Robinson, 2008, p. 45). While taking faculty to Japan during a short-term international experience, Festervand and Tillery (2001) found the participating faculty experienced academic validation, intellectual growth, acculturation, and cognitive repositioning as a result of their time abroad.

The goal is to create an international experience which encourages discussion, reflection, and integration of key cultural aspects into U.S.-based classrooms. Roberts and Jones (2009) provided a conceptual model for facilitating an international experience that can be used as the foundation for research in this area. Their model is segmented into three stages: before, during, and after an international experience (see Figure 1). Each of the three stages is meant to target facilitation of learning through set expectations during the particular time frame associated with an international experience (Roberts & Jones, 2009).

Previous research suggests the reported outcomes received from an international experience are highly related to the amount of preparation in which the participant engages prior to traveling (Tritz & Martin, 1997). International experiences are known to elicit both positive and negative emotional responses in learners (Lamm & Harder, 2010; Wingenbach, Chmielewski, Smith, Piña, & Hamilton, 2006). Since emotional responses may impact learning, either positively or negatively, they should be addressed prior to traveling abroad. Roberts and Jones (2009) suggested addressing participants' emotional reactions by preflecting prior to the international experience on participants' safety concerns, pre-existing beliefs regarding the culture of the country(ies) visited, and engaging in shared goal setting. In addition to alleviating emotional stress, group preflection allows the participants an opportunity to engage with one another in conversations around their expectations resulting from previous experiences. Every learner brings prior experience to a learning environment (Roberts, 2006), and "each experience is influenced by the unique past of the learner" (Beard & Wilson, 2006, p. 21). Wingenbach et al. (2006) found that "allowing students to use their background experiences to interact provided a positive learning environment" (p. 80) when participating in international experiences.

Figure 1. Model for Facilitating an International Experience (Roberts & Jones, 2009)

Before an International Experience	During an International Experience	After an International Experience

Experience: Initial or Experimentation

Generalization   Reflection

Before an International Experience	During an International Experience	After an International Experience
Preflection Learner Preparation Emotional States (Safety/Threats) Preexisting Knowledge Shared Goal Setting	Reflection Guided Reflection (Expert vs. Novice) Learning is a Process Cognitive Load/Overload Self-Regulated Learning Inductive and Problem-Solving Activities	Reflection Connect with Preflection Assess Progress Towards Goals Motivation for Future Learning

Given the intense nature of international experiences, sensory overload, including "an overabundance of culturally and complex situations" (Roberts & Jones, 2009, p. 407), can occur. Cognitive load theory suggests each individual has a limited working memory. Therefore, an individual's senses can become overloaded to a point where their learning will be negatively influenced (Sweller, 1998). In order to avoid overloading participants during an international experience, Roberts and Jones (2009) suggested engaging participants in guided reflection, allowing for self-regulated learning, and using inductive and problem-solving activities. Guided reflection can be used to "help learners focus on key aspects of the experience that are most relevant to achieving learning objectives" (Roberts & Jones, 2009, p. 407). Self-regulated learning may encourage participants to be more self-motivated, while giving participants responsibility for their own learning and allowing them to construct their own knowledge (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1994).

Roberts and Jones (2009) contended that the goals established during the preflection period should be readdressed at the conclusion of the international experience. Participants should be given additional opportunities for reflection in order for learning to continue after an international experience (Kolb, 1984). Given that reflection is found to be an experience in and of itself (Zull, 2002), reflection after an international experience will prolong the learning that has taken place by "focusing the learner's attention on the experience for a greater amount of time" (Roberts & Jones, 2009, p. 407) and motivating the participant to further his/her own learning.

Roberts and Jones' (2009) framework emphasizes the importance of stressing certain activities before, during and after an international experience to ensure faculty get the most out of their experience, arguing that the more faculty learn, the more likely they will integrate international perspectives into their curriculum. Stohl (2007) argued that faculty engagement in international experiences is the key to the internationalization of higher education in the 21st century. In addition, Peterson (2000) stated that a *world faculty* is critical to the internationalization of college students' education. Without globally-competent faculty members committed to integrating international perspectives into their curriculum, international integration within agricultural higher education may not occur (Navarro & Edwards, 2008). Stohl (2007) contended that for international integration to occur, faculty members needed to be exposed to and participate in international agricultural experiences.

While it has been acknowledged that participation in short-term international agricultural education experiences are important to increasing faculty members' cultural awareness, the best way to create short-term international experiences for faculty members focused on agriculture and life sciences is uncharted. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to identify best practices for facilitating a short-term international agricultural education experience for faculty in the agricultural and life sciences. The research question driving the study was: What common themes emerge from planning team members' reflective statements related to the successes and challenges noted while creating and implementing a short-term international agricultural education experience for faculty?

Methods

In order to collect necessary data needed to answer the research question posed, the researchers designed a qualitative study using participant-observer ethnography. A researcher may use ethnography in order to, "get inside the way each group of people see the world" (Crotty, 1998, p. 76). The ethnography allows the researcher to enter into the world of the research subjects. In this study, the research subjects were the planning team members. Using a qualitative research design allowed the researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the social context through the identification of emerging themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) found in the planning team

members' reflective statements (Neuendorf, 2002). To confirm and substantiate the observations made, the researchers conducted a content analysis on written reflections provided by the planning team. The analysis allowed for the identification of themes, which were then cross-compared with the observations.

Five planning team members developing and implementing an international faculty experience in a college of agriculture at a U.S. university made up the population of interest. The planning team consisted of an assistant professor, two associate professors, a lecturer, and one doctoral student. There were four females (two Caucasian and two Hispanic) and one male (Caucasian). The male professor was considered the "lead" instructor for the experience, and the Hispanic lecturer was the only one of the five fluent in Spanish. Members of the planning team had an individual responsibility assigned to them while engaged in the course implementation. One person took the lead role for each of the following responsibilities: (a) overall project, (b) evaluation, (c) facilitating reflection, (d) trip planning, and (e) general observation/trip support.

The international experience consisted of a 13-day trip to Ecuador during the summer of 2010. In addition to the five planning team members, eight agricultural and life sciences faculty members participated in the international experience. The goal of the international experience was to allow the eight faculty participants to explore scientific and cultural aspects of their disciplines in Ecuador.

The international experience consisted of a four-day stay in Guayaquil, a major metropolitan area, where faculty participants visited the Escuela Superior Politecnica del Litoral (ESPOL), one of the largest agricultural universities, to engage with ESPOL faculty in conversations surrounding current research and future collaborations. During the stay in Guayaquil, the U.S. faculty participants visited the main ESPOL campus and several research facilities along the western coast of Ecuador, as well as met with instructors and students at a vocational farmer training site. The faculty participants then traveled to Salinas de Guaranda for three days, a small town in the Andes Mountains, where they learned about the agricultural cooperatives in a particular rural community of Ecuador. The trip concluded with a three-day stay in the Galapagos Islands where the faculty participants took educational tours focused on learning about the ecosystems of various islands. During the international experience, the faculty participants were expected to take photographs, record videos, and collect information they could use to create educational experiences for their students.

Prior to the international experience, one of the planning team members was asked to contribute as a participant observer. The assigned role of participant observer was kept private with the exception of the lead instructor. As the participant observer, the team member participated in all of the planned activities, taking careful observations of how planning team members and faculty participants interacted with one another. The participant observer engaged both planning team

members and faculty participants in conversations surrounding their experience while traveling abroad. The participant observer kept reflective notes throughout the day and a daily journal to record observations.

Acknowledging researcher bias, the participant observer had previous experience with all four of the planning team members through previous travel, research activities, or coursework. The participant observer also had limited previous interactions with one of the faculty participants. The participant observer was hired by the project funding the international experience. The participant observer had previous experience serving as a participant observer on a student-focused, short-term international experience, conducting research in an international environment, and evaluating several student-focused international experiences in Latin America.

At the conclusion of the short-term international experience, the other four planning team members were asked to reflect upon their experiences prior to and during the trip. The planning team members provided written reflective feedback to the project lead, which were then shared with the participant observer. The format of their responses was left open as long as they discussed their thoughts about the planning process and project implementation. Planning team members were aware, while completing their reflective statements, that the comments would be read and analyzed. As a result, the lack of anonymity may have limited planning team members' ability to be forthright with their statements. However, the participant observer was assured the reflective notes from conversations with the planning team members throughout the international experience and daily journal would be kept confidential. Therefore, the participant observer's reflective notes and journal entries were used to confirm and develop a deeper understanding of the planning team members' statements. All five planning team members' responses and reflective notes were coded with a preassigned number for confidentiality and will be noted as Planning Team Member 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 (PTM1, PTM2, PTM3, PTM4, PTM5). Pseudonyms were used when the planning team members' direct quotes referred to specific faculty participants and other planning team members in their reflective statements to ensure anonymity of the participants.

The data were analyzed using content analysis (Neuendorf, 2002) by the participant observer. Emergent themes from the participant observer's reflective notes and daily journal, as well as each of the other four planning team members' individual reflections were identified, categorized, and then combined to meet the objectives of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher first analyzed each planning members' reflections by identifying key phrases that characterized the nature of the reflective statement. The 48 key phrases were then categorized by similarity. The categorized key phrases were labeled based upon a common thread, which united the reflective statements into one theme. An audit trail (agendas and minutes from pre-trip and post-trip planning team member meetings, international experience itineraries, e-mails between planning team members, and e-mails between planning team members and participants),

triangulation with recorded statements made during the faculty participant daily reflective sessions while traveling, member checks conducted with the entire planning team at the conclusion of the data analysis, and acknowledgement of researcher bias were used to establish trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Results

Five themes emerged from the respondents' reflections. Because of the close nature of participant observation ethnography, the findings included the participant observer's findings as they aligned with the remaining planning team members' reflective quotes. There were five themes which emerged, aligning the participant observer observations with the planning team members' reflections: communication, group dynamics, expectations, itinerary, and contrast.

Communication

The respondents reflected widely on the first theme, *communication,* in regards to communication issues taking place before and during the international experience. They felt discussions with the faculty participants prior to the trip, including specifics regarding the daily itinerary (PTM2, PTM4, PTM5), possible illnesses they may acquire (including food-borne illness) (PTM1, PTM3, PTM4), cultural considerations (PTM3, PTM4), needed documentation (PTM1, PTM5), packing/other travel considerations (PTM1, PTM2, PTM3, PTM5), and availability of phones/internet (PTM2, PTM4), would have greatly enhanced the international experience. Planning Team Member 1 wrote the need for communication clearly when reflecting that the planning team should "be much clearer on packing, comfort, and extenuating physical experiences." Planning Team Member 4 reflected the planning team needed "more timely communication regarding the trip itinerary, and that the itinerary needed to be finalized and distributed in advance." Planning Team Member 5 felt that everyone had a "general idea, but was much less focused on a specific task that needed to be accomplished" due to a lack of itinerary communication. To deal with the lack of communication, Planning Team Member 2 suggested creating "a meticulously detailed itinerary including beginning and ending time for every activity such as meals, local trips, visits, etc."

During the trip, the planning team members felt *communication* could have been enhanced by distributing a daily detailed schedule (PTM1, PTM3, PTM4), ensuring the availability of local translators (PTM1, PTM3, PTM4, PTM5), assessing each faculty participant's ability to complete physical activities (PTM1, PTM3, PTM4), conducting daily debriefings (both with the entire group and the planning team) (PTM1, PTM2, PTM4, PTM5), and keeping a faculty participant log of where everyone was during the day (PTM2, PTM3). The planning team members believed attention to these areas would have assisted with arising issues and making faculty participants feel more comfortable. Planning Team Member 2 felt "time allocated for

[planning] team members to review trip activities" each day would have alleviated some of the issues with the daily schedule. Planning Team Member 4 felt a "participant 'log' to keep track of where people [were] during free time (suggested [by other state team members] as a safety measure) would be especially important." Planning Team Member 5 reflected that when it came to scheduling and translation, there was "some tension in the planning team."

Using local translators also arose in the reflective statements. Planning Team Member 1 felt "depending on one or two people to translate was tough as we thought, but it was unfair for [Adrienne] to have to continually serve in that capacity." Planning Team Member 2 felt, "pre–training on communication patterns favored by locals would help."

Group Dynamics

The second theme, *group dynamics*, emerged from comments regarding both the larger group and the planning team. Initial team building activities were suggested, along with plans for group development, to discourage small groups from forming. Planning Team Member 1 stated, "although our meetings were informative, they were strictly business. I think some initial get to know you activities (other than brief introductions) would have been nice and resulted in some other projects or planning." Planning Team Member 3 agreed when noting the need for additional "activities to discourage 'clicks'[*sic*]."

During the international experience, three distinct smaller groups formed within the first week. One of the groups formed out of relationships that existed prior to the international experience. Another group appeared to be based on cultural similarities and the ability to speak in Spanish. The third group constituted the rest of the participants and planning team members not included in the other two smaller groups. Additional groups also appeared to form based on where individuals sat on the bus. Given the length of travel between sites, those with motion sickness that sat near the front of the bus formed a group, and those sitting towards the rear of the bus formed a group, as they were more likely to engage in conversations given their physical location while traveling.

The roles and responsibilities of each planning team member should have been clearly established and trust built around those expectations prior to the trip. Planning Team Member 2 felt the planning team needed to "encourage the development of trust on the fieldtrip planner/coordinator within the grant team." Planning Team Member 3 felt "periodic debriefing sessions" could have helped set "clear expectations/goals" for each planning team member. Planning Team Member 4 felt "the [planning] team should meet periodically throughout the trip to review how things are going and to make sure everyone is informed about the upcoming events." Planning Team Member 5 noted that the planning team members seemed adversarial at times. While it was reflected that "they were able to keep their personal feelings to themselves

most of the time," Planning Team Member 5 also noted "no matter how quiet we keep things, [faculty] participants are likely to pick up on tension."

Expectations

The reflective statements reiterated that *expectations* should be clearly identified prior to traveling and emerged as the third theme. The expectations theme included planning team members' responsibilities (PTM1, PTM3, PTM4, PTM5), language needs (PTM1, PTM2, PTM3), and the physical demands of the activities occurring throughout the trip (PTM2, PTM3, PTM4, PTM5). Planning Team Member 3 believed "roles for the [planning] team" should be clearly defined. Planning Team Member 5 stated "while a great experience, had each of the planning team members known their exact role and what was expected of them throughout the project, things would have come together more easily."

The reflective statements reiterated the importance of clarifying language expectations with all faculty participants prior to traveling. While the faculty participants knew they were traveling to a Spanish speaking country, Planning Team Member 5 believed "most of us thought translation wouldn't be an issue and something that was planned for." Two translators were hired to assist the faculty participants' communication while traveling in Guayaquil and Salinas de Guaranda. Planning Team Member 3 mentioned, "only one of the planning team members, and one of the [faculty] participants spoke fluent Spanish" and felt it was unfair for them to work as translators rather than participating in the experience as they originally intended. Planning Team Member 2 recommended "a fieldtrip to an English–speaking country…for [faculty] participants without or [with] limited international experience" could alleviate the translation issue.

The physical demands of the activities were also not clearly explained prior to the trip, and expectations regarding participation in these activities were stressed throughout the reflections. While traveling, several faculty participants experienced motion sickness, which was incompatible with long bus rides on winding roads and long boat rides on rough seas. In addition, a safety incident during one of the more physically demanding activities led to participant discomfort and possible embarrassment. Planning Team Member 4 felt the planning team "needed to evaluate people's ability to complete physical activities and go over safety procedures before the activity begins." Planning Team Member 2 felt the planning team should have "required information on existing health conditions or potential illnesses (motion sickness, allergies, and migraines) from each fieldtrip participant." Planning Team Member 5 thought "pushing people out of their comfort zones isn't a bad thing, but we need to be prepared to deal with the consequences." Planning Team Member 3 agreed, feeling it was important to "stretch people in a safe environment."

Itinerary

The fourth theme emerged out of statements referring to the *itinerary*. While all felt a shorter time frame (maximum of two weeks) was the best for an international experience, faculty participants need to be given the opportunity to explore on their own. Suggested time included unplanned meals (PTM2, PTM4, PTM5), general down time (PTM1, PTM3, PTM4), and time for work and individual meetings in which faculty participants may want to engage while visiting another country (PTM1, PTM2, PTM4, PTM5). Planning Team Member 4 felt faculty participants needed "more meals out 'on your own,'" but recognized that it was important to compare the costs of eating individually versus eating at a hotel as a group. Planning Team Member 2 felt "group dinners should be limited to no more than 1/3 of total meals." Planning Team Member 1 stated the schedule needed to "include individual time, in our particular case, we sometimes got overscheduled even though the original schedule did not indicate it." Planning Team Member 5 reflected on the faculty participants' need to make work connections recognizing that "[Bill] and [Mark] were eager to make additional connections with faculty in Ecuador, but scheduling meetings was difficult due to the lack of open time in our trip schedule." Planning Team Member 2 stated that in the future, a team conducting a similar type of trip "must build free time throughout the entire trip."

Contrast

The last theme of *contrast* came out of the planning team members' positive comments regarding their opportunities to visit diverse parts of the country, including the ability to stay in nontraditional touristic accommodations. The planning team felt visiting diverse areas and staying in nontraditional touristic accommodations contributed to the cultural awareness aspects of the experience. Planning Team Member 3 felt "visiting multiple locations" was imperative, but "using a travel agent" would assist in the planning process, and that the trip could have been improved by "more informal time with the local people." Planning Team Member 5 felt "watching the trip [faculty] participants engage in different aspects of what they specialize in, depending on where we were at the time, made a huge impact on their learning and exposure to culture." For example, Planning Team Member 5 mentioned "[Jenny] was interested in nutrition and food, so she really enjoyed seeing how different people ate and prepared their food based on the location we were visiting." Planning Team Member 4 believed that traveling to diverse areas was important, but felt the planning team "needs to acknowledge potential challenges in making long-distance arrangements in a location/country that may differ significantly from home-country in terms of local context, resources and how people prefer to function."

The planning team members also reflected on their appreciation for the diversity in the faculty engaged in their trip. Diversity included age, sex, nationality, and programmatic areas of expertise. Statements were found throughout the reflections strongly suggesting others continue

a similar pattern when planning international experiences in the future, as it assisted in gaining different perspectives on the experience in Ecuador. Planning Team Member 5 stated, "you always have people with different backgrounds and experiences participate when you plan a trip like this, but watching soft and hard scientists work together and gain an understanding of what each has to contribute to conversations is very encouraging."

Discussion

Best practices for planning faculty-focused short-term international experiences were identified based on the emergent themes found in the data and grouped by the stages identified in Roberts and Jones' (2009) model for facilitating an international experience (see Figure 2). While the researchers have developed an initial list of best practices that can be used when planning short-term international faculty experiences, the hope is that other groups conducting similar international experiences will develop additional best practices that can be added to the original list.
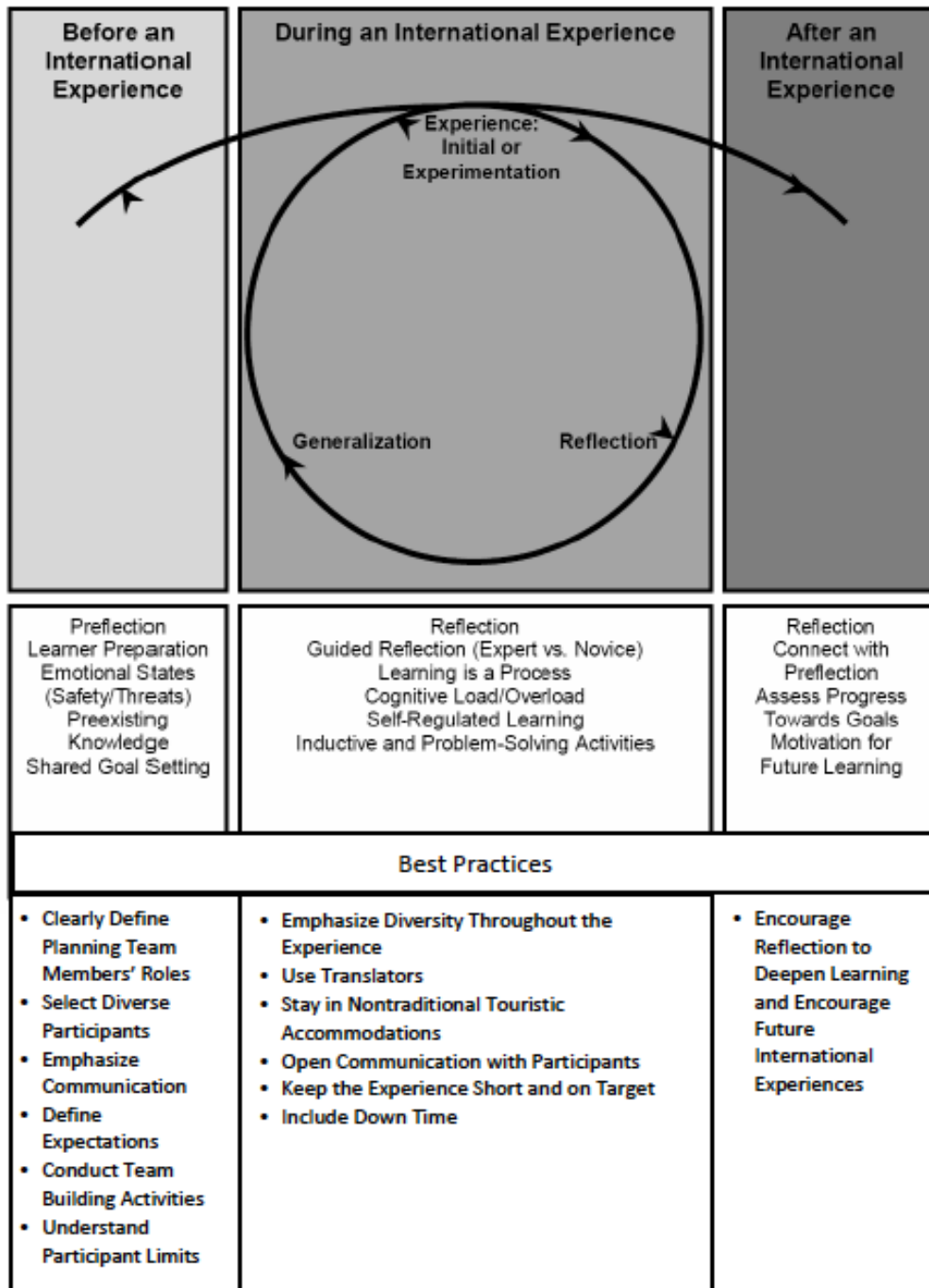
The generated list of best practices is meant to be a basis for further growth as the number of faculty-focused short-term agricultural education experiences increases. Given the list is an initial attempt to create best practices for facilitating faculty-focused short-term international experiences, there were several limitations to the study. First, the best practices were created from the planning team's perspective. The researchers' degree of international exposure and cultural competence, particularly in the analysis and interpretation of their own reflections, should be considered. Data should be collected from the faculty participants' perspective in the future to see if it supports the best practices emerging from the planning team to develop a well-rounded perspective. In addition, it is important to examine how the use of the following best practices influences international faculty experiences in the future. Last, the data were collected while participating in the international experience and upon its immediate conclusion, therefore, little data exist regarding the time frame after the experience.

Before the Experience

Prior to traveling abroad, the data showed there were some best practices that could be implemented to better prepare faculty participants for an international experience. The best practices include clearly defining planning team members' roles and responsibilities, selecting faculty participants with diverse personal characteristics and professional specialties, emphasizing communication with faculty participants prior to traveling, defining expectations for faculty participants, conducting team building activities, gaining an understanding of the faculty participants' limits, and developing an itinerary with which all will be comfortable. These best practices are consistent with the work of Tritz and Martin (1997) and the model proposed by Roberts and Jones (2009). In the context of the study, faculty participants are the

learners, and established educational practices would support the importance of learner preparation, especially before an intense learning experience (Beard & Wilson, 2006; Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000; Kolb, 1984; Roberts, 2006).

Figure 2. Best Practices Conceptual Model for Facilitating a Faculty-Focused Short-Term International Experience

Before an International Experience	During an International Experience	After an International Experience
	Experience: Initial or Experimentation Generalization Reflection	
Preflection Learner Preparation Emotional States (Safety/Threats) Preexisting Knowledge Shared Goal Setting	Reflection Guided Reflection (Expert vs. Novice) Learning is a Process Cognitive Load/Overload Self-Regulated Learning Inductive and Problem-Solving Activities	Reflection Connect with Preflection Assess Progress Towards Goals Motivation for Future Learning
Best Practices		
• Clearly Define Planning Team Members' Roles • Select Diverse Participants • Emphasize Communication • Define Expectations • Conduct Team Building Activities • Understand Participant Limits	• Emphasize Diversity Throughout the Experience • Use Translators • Stay in Nontraditional Touristic Accommodations • Open Communication with Participants • Keep the Experience Short and on Target • Include Down Time	• Encourage Reflection to Deepen Learning and Encourage Future International Experiences

Note: Adapted from the conceptual model for facilitating an international experience (Roberts & Jones, 2009)

During the Experience

While traveling abroad, faculty participants may be exposed to a large amount of new stimuli throughout the experience. Best practices to follow during the experience have been created in order to assist faculty participants in learning as much as possible while traveling. They include emphasizing cultural diversity throughout the trip, using translators not already involved in the planning process when in non–English speaking countries, staying in nontraditional touristic accommodations, clearly communicating with faculty participants while traveling, keeping the experience short with only a few targeted objectives to emphasize, and ensuring down time is included in the schedule so faculty participants feel encouraged to explore on their own. Beard and Wilson (2006) proposed that learners should reflect *in* experience and *on* experience. Roberts and Jones (2009) also emphasized the importance of multiple ways of reflecting and processing the experience. Providing faculty participants with down time and flexibility in their schedules would allow faculty participants to regulate their own learning and reflect *in* the experience.

After the Experience

Considering the data analyzed were collected during and upon the immediate return of the international experience, very little data were available that could be used to extrapolate best practices for after the experience. However, despite the lack of data, the previous literature emphasized a best practice that could be implemented after an international experience to strengthen learning would be formal reflection (Rodriguez & Roberts, 2011). Reflection could be done through a group reflection session two to four weeks after returning from the experience, through prompted journal entries upon their return to the U.S., or an in-depth personal reflection on the photo journals kept by the faculty participants throughout the trip.

Previous literature shows that once an individual removes him or herself from an experience, he or she is better able to see how his or her life has changed as a result (Roberts & Jones, 2009; Zull, 2002). A reflection activity would allow faculty participants an opportunity to explore whether or not the experience altered their perceptions of the world, and if so, how, as well as deepen their understanding of how what they learned can be incorporated into their everyday lives (Kolb, 1984).

Summary

The best practices conceptual model for facilitating an agricultural faculty-focused short-term international experience can provide a guide for future planning teams to use while planning and implementing faculty-focused short-term international experiences. While the model does not capture every possible factor that could be applied in a variety of situations, it does provide a

place to start. The conclusions drawn from the study imply that planning teams should consider taking a holistic approach to international experiences by thinking about learning before, during, and after the experience and are similar to those found by Rodriguez and Roberts (2011). Emphasizing learning during all three phases of an international experience should allow for improved quality of the international experience and enhance faculty participant learning.

Faculty engagement in international experiences is said to be the key to the internationalization of higher education (Stohl, 2007). Therefore, not only does agricultural and life sciences faculty need to travel internationally, but they must also have high quality learning experiences to ensure they are able to reflect upon and understand international agricultural concepts. With a deep level of understanding, faculty will have the ability to integrate the learned international agricultural concepts into their courses once they return to their home institution (Peterson, 2000).

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