Using Personal Life Experiences and Global Competencies to Build an Orphanage for Abandoned Children

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This case study tells the personal story of how an American orphan's life experiences and passion to give back led to the building of an orphanage in Mexico for abandoned children. As we expand international collaboration as part of humanitarian efforts, global competencies can provide a framework for deeper understanding of the issues we are addressing, an awareness and sensitivity to different cultures, and mutual respect for different opinions. The work done in Mexico demonstrates that, working together, we can make a difference in the lives of children who come from deplorable living conditions.

GLOBAL COMPETENCIES

The experiences of University of Toledo principal preparation graduate students in China helped them develop multiple global competencies, most particularly the following:

Core Concepts:
- ◦ One's own culture and history is key to understanding one's relationship to others

Values and Attitudes:
- ◦ Desire to engage with others
- ◦ Valuing multiple perspectives
- ◦ Self-awareness about identity and culture, and sensitivity and respect for differences

Skills:
- ◦ Recognizes, articulates, and applies an understanding of different perspectives (including his/her own)

Behaviors:
- ◦ Seeks out and applies an understanding of different perspectives to problem solving and decision-making

CASE BACKGROUND

The path I have taken in life has led me in many unique directions. The experiences and challenges I faced seemed at times like insurmountable obstacles. But as I grew older and recognized the value of my experiences, I realized that these obstacles were really stepping-stones to an amazing future. I did not know that the challenges of my life would create a foundation for serving children like myself.

My life began in Lorain, Ohio, a small town on the outskirts of Cleveland. My dad was a steel worker and my mother was a bill collector. Neither of them had gone to college. I had seven half-brothers and sisters. All of them were much older than me, and they chose to work instead of pursuing higher education. We were a blue collar working family that survived on minimum income in a rented house. Lorain was very diverse at the time, with Cuban, African American, and Caucasian populations. When I was 8 years old, my dad died and my mother placed me in Parmadale Orphanage, in Parma, Ohio. I admit it was difficult to handle, but she wanted a better life for me and knew she could not provide it. This was the first major obstacle that significantly disrupted my life; I felt abandoned and resentful.

At Parmadale, I became an integral member of a diverse community of children. As a result of my experiences there, I developed a deep sense of understanding and sensitivity toward the needs of those who are different and less fortunate. I understood what it was like to not have material things because we shared our clothes at the orphanage. The only thing I really owned was a toothbrush. I also understood first-hand feelings of rejection, neglect, and difference (See Figure 1).

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