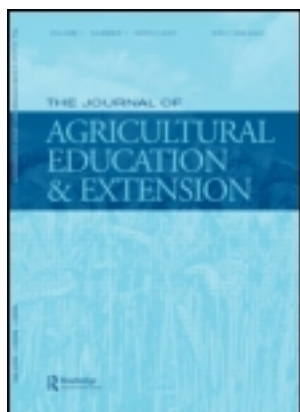


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Editorial

Martin Mulder Editor-in-chief

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EDITORIAL

Dear reader,

It is a pleasure to announce that in Spring 2015 Wageningen University will host two conferences on agricultural and extension education on the same dates. This idea of a twin conference was generated at the request of the Board of the Association of International Agricultural and Extension Education (AIAEE) to Education and Competence Studies (ECS) of Wageningen University to host the 2015 overseas AIAEE-Conference. As 2015 is also a year for the European Seminar of Extension and Education (ESEE), the idea arose to organize both conferences on the same dates: 28 April – 1 May 2015.

During the ESEE conference in Antalya in 2013 it was decided to accept this proposal and to move the conference from the original time frame of August and September to April and May. The AIAEE will organize its own conference and simultaneously the ESEE will be organized by the local organizing group in Wageningen, as ESEE is an informal seminar, for which the local organizer is responsible.

In 2013 ESEE meeting discussions were held to form the ESEE the European seminar for Extension and Education, which aims to introduce formal infrastructure to ensure that the seminar does not fade out in the future, although the evidence until now is that ESEE survived more than 40 years. A second issue discussed during the 2013 meeting was the creation of a Scientific Steering Committee (SSC) for the conference. We, as local organizers, stated that we would strongly favour the creation of such a committee. The committee has now been created: the procedure we followed was that we invited colleagues from and around the ESEE network and the JAEE community to think about proposing symposia for the conference. Colleagues who proposed symposia were included in the SSC. The idea to solicit symposium proposals was taken from earlier conferences we had organized, which showed that symposia always draw attention because of their thematic orientation. Symposia, as we organize them, have three or more thematically related and focused papers, which can be grouped together in conference sessions of 90 minutes with maximum coherence. If more than four papers are proposed and selected for the symposium, the papers can be divided over two or even more symposium sessions.

The overarching theme of the conference is '*Competence and Excellence in Extension and Education*'. In the past couple of years I have been writing quite a bit on competence, of which a small portion was also published in the JAEE. Competence, capability, capacity: it all boils down to the expertise individuals, teams and organizations have to adequately perform their duties. It includes entrepreneurial, organizational, leadership, innovation, problem solving, ICT and transformation competence, as well as intercultural, interdisciplinarity and sustainability competence. Many organizations are now heading for excellent performance, which has consequences for the individuals who are working or learning in those organizations. Many schools and universities have 'excellence'

programs, and various producers, exporters and marketing associations work on certificates of and awards for 'excellence'.

Some see excellence as a distinct category in the continuum of expertise, beyond competence; others see it as a position on the scale of competence. We see both as being necessary for performance improvement and personal, organizational and national and international socio-economic development. Competence is necessary for all professionals; excellence is an attribute for part of them. 'Competence for all' is essential to eradicate poverty, improve living and working conditions, and establish sustainable livelihoods and employment. It is a necessary prerequisite for effective performance, both of employees and business-owners. Excellence – or sometimes even 'brilliance' – is needed to solve complex and pressing problems, which can happen at the grassroots level as well as at the high-end of knowledge intensive innovation and transformation systems. But it is obvious that many practices are characterized by incompetence. Some even speak about the incompetence of societies, their inability to create conditions for all members of society to live an acceptable life, be it in rural or in urban areas.

We are suggesting a wide range of themes for the conference, for which symposia, paper and poster proposals can be submitted. These range from agricultural education, and competence management in health and society, to integrated rural planning and development. This means that the thematic field of this ESEE conference is somewhat wider than it used to be. Historically, ESEE was a conference on agricultural extension education, but that field has grown further into specializations in communication, media, innovation, facilitation, education, learning, competence development, lifelong learning and rural and human development.

In the region where I live there is still a lot of agriculture, but it hardly needs any agricultural extension and education. Commercial farmers who are maintaining their production farms in dairy, livestock or crops know their business very well. They get knowledge inputs from specialized research institutes, suppliers, clients, banks, insurance companies, organizations for quality control, the internet and literature. In their professional networks they also exchange experience and information. Young farmers get their primary knowledge about farming from intergenerational learning. In agricultural schools and colleges they learn about agricultural science, economics, business administration, technology and entrepreneurship. Students in entrepreneurship programs in agricultural colleges state that they get a wider perspective on farming through their education, and that they learn to think out of the box. In many cases older farmers are stuck in business models that they also learned from their parents and grandparents, but in the current farming economy, these business models may be outdated. New, multi-functional and sustainable business models may be needed to produce and process the food to feed the exploding world population. This calls for new competencies, which go beyond the traditional knowledge domains.

So the field is very fragmented and differentiated. Experts, organizations and institutions with different backgrounds, missions and mandates now work on development-related tasks in underdeveloped, developing and developed locations and regions. ESEE 2015 will provide a meet-and-exchange place to discuss the current practical and theoretical challenges in extension and education.

We suggest that submitted proposals should be based on theoretically founded, empirical research, conceptual papers and cases studies. For each category we have suggested different formats for proposals. Elsewhere in this issue of the JAEE you will

find the call for proposals. We encourage authors of papers or organizers of symposia to rework their papers to final manuscripts and to submit those for publication in the JAEE. All papers will enter the double-blind review process of the JAEE. Instructions for submission can be found on the home page of the JAEE.

We hope to see a lot of proposals!

MARTIN MULDER, Editor-in-chief