



Editorial

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EDITORIAL

Dear reader,

As a follow-up on Issue 4 of this Volume, I can inform you that we have made significant progress in organizing the next European Seminar of Extension and Education, which will take place from 28 April to 1 May 2015. As I have mentioned in the previous Editorial, this conference will be organized in conjunction with the conference of the Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education (AIAEE), which will be held on the same dates at the same place, the new campus of Wageningen University. We have collected a strong group of active colleagues who collectively act as the Scientific Steering Committee. The website for the conference is active (www.esee2015.nl) and proposals can be submitted in the time window of 1 September to 1 October 2014. Registration will be open from 1 September as well, and will stay open until a short time before the conference.

As various readers know, I have been to several ESEE conferences, including the last one, in Antalya, which was a very good conference, especially because of its location and also because of the strong regional agricultural sector. But I had never been to the AIAEE conference. To prepare myself for the AIAEE conference in Wageningen I went to the last AIAEE conference, which was held in Miami, Florida, from 28 April to 1 May 2014; exactly the same dates on which the ESEE-AIAEE conferences in Wageningen will take place in 2015. We thought of starting the conference a day earlier, but during the early days of the planning of the joint conference, King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands, who was crowned on 30 April 2013, decided to move the birthday celebration of former Queen Beatrix (which was known as Queens's Day) from 30 April 27 April. So 27 April is now the official King's Day, and will be an holiday, with lots of celebrations across the country. The university will be closed that day (at least there will be no services), so we had to move the starting date to 28 April. As I have been elaborating on the theme of the conference, '*Competence and Excellence in Extension and Education*' in the previous issue, I will not go into this here anymore. I was pleasantly surprised that the board of the AIAEE proposed its membership to have the same theme for their conference in 2015, which was accepted and decided.

Since many readers of the JAEE may not know the AIAEE and its conference very well, let me share my first impressions of the conference. There were around 160 participants registered for the conference. The theme of the conference in Miami was 'Integrated Agricultural Systems for Environmental Sustainability and Production'. The conference was opened by Dr. Grady Roberts, President of AIAEE. The keynote speech was given by Dr. Nick Place, Dean and director of the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences at the University of Florida. Dr. Pete Vergot III was acting conference chair (and is the conference planning committee chair for 2015). Kristin Davis (of the Global Forum of Rural Advisory Services) was elected as new president of the AIAEE, and Renee Pardello (University of Minnesota) is president-elect. The 2016

AIAEE conference will be organized in Portland, Oregon, and in 2017 in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The keynote speech was about agricultural extension, which celebrates its 100th birthday this year. Senator Hoke Smith from Georgia and Rep. Francis Lever from South-Carolina sponsored the bill for Extension work in 1914, which became known as the Smith-Lever Act. This Act was the beginning of cooperative extension provided by the land-grant universities, which were created in the course of the second half of the 19th century. Many colleagues may have understood that the extension system was aimed at the development of agriculture by teaching farmers new production methods, but that was only part of the extension assignment to universities. Originally, land-grant universities were supposed to provide services in a much wider sense, such as home economics, public policy/government, leadership, youth development (known as 4-H, or head, heart, hands and health), economic development, and coastal issues. Nowadays, extension is much broader than agricultural extension, and is aimed at developing citizenship, healthy life styles, science and engineering, and technology for a diverse audience, including Native Americans, for whom Land-grant colleges were founded in the recent past. Such colleges were also founded for African-American youth, although this already started at the end of the 19th century. Although all universities across the globe have a societal function, and many deliver all kinds of services to society, for instance via service learning programs, not many have a substantial fund for extension (or outreach) programs. In many countries there is rather a disconnect between development programs as included in the US extension systems and institutes for higher education.

Regarding the program of the conference, under the general conference theme were 16 concurrent sessions with the following titles 'food security issues', 'extension program delivery', 'secondary education, adoption of agricultural production practices', 'extension education and outreach programs', 'post-secondary student experiences', 'issues in extension education', 'information and communication technologies', 'extension stakeholder perceptions', 'vocational agricultural programs', 'international agricultural issues', 'international experience in the classroom', 'higher education programs', 'extension reform and strategies', 'agricultural production practices', and 'women's perspectives of agriculture and extension education'. As you see, this represents a wide range of session themes, with various topics, some of which were more, and others less related to the overarching conference theme (as is the case in most academic conferences I have attended). All sessions consisted of four to five paper presentations, which means there were around 60 presentations. Some presenters were not there, however, which is not uncommon at international scientific conferences. If these themes are grouped, this could be represented as follows:

Agricultural development

- International agricultural
- Agricultural production practices
- Food security

Extension

- Extension reform and strategies
- Extension stakeholder perceptions

- Extension program delivery
- Information and communication technologies

Education

- Secondary education
- Vocational agricultural education
- Postsecondary and higher education
- International education
- Gender issues in agriculture and extension education
- Extension education and outreach
- Post-secondary student experiences

That means next to agricultural education and extension there was a theme on agricultural development, which is not illogical, as developments in agriculture and broader developments in the agrifood complex and its wider context, including societal change and international relations, will have various consequences for extension and education. As I have mentioned quite often, transformations in the agrifood complex necessitates new competencies for students and graduates, not only to cope with the various innovations and changes but also to create and realize them, from newly emerging value systems. This is what the Germans call '*Gestaltungskompetenz*'.

The extension and education themes look like being quite descriptive. The majority of the papers seem to be of that nature. Whilst there is nothing wrong with descriptive research in fields which are to be explored because the phenomena in those fields are quite unknown, agricultural extension and education as applied research fields exist long enough to move towards more advance research questions, designs, methods and analysis techniques. As examples I would like to refer to sophisticated methods for interpretative analysis, testing models, and multi-level analysis. My observation of the manuscripts for the JAEE is the same. A considerable amount of manuscripts that are submitted are of descriptive or explorative nature, and have a case-study oriented research design. Correlational studies suffer quite often from lacking theoretical underpinnings, and ask the question if certain extension or education practices make a difference for certain target groups. For measuring characteristics of target groups various basic variables are used as age, gender and education level. Needless to say that work in that category does not have the chance anymore to get published in the JAEE, as it does not add to the accumulation of knowledge in this field. Of course, good case studies, and good descriptive research has a place in scientific development, and in the JAEE, provided it is innovative and ground breaking.

One of my observations is that the work presented often tends to be tucked away in its own niche and sometimes there is little boundary crossing with the mainstream development, education and learning sciences, which may be a lost opportunity. There is a lot of interesting work done in the fields of development studies (relevant for agricultural development), human resource development (even if colleagues may have an antipathy against the notion that human beings are degraded to being 'resources' for others, being 'users' or 'managers' of these resources), workplace learning (including the work on communities of practice and apprenticeships), adult learning (like entrepreneurial, career, and employment-related learning), and obviously educational research, with its

many specializations like vocational education, professional education, higher education, teacher education, management, curriculum, learning, on-line learning and testing (to name a few, as the list of journal in the subject category 'Education and Educational Research' in the Social Science Citation Index now counts 217 different journals). I will not give specific examples of papers here, which could benefit from linkages with mainstream educational research, as I do not want to be offensive. My point is meant as a general observation and should be taken that way. I believe the field of extension and education can benefit a lot from building bridges between the education, development and communication sciences.

Interesting to see was the large poster session. There were over 40 posters, which were seriously graded for awards. Although this grading was subject of a bit of online-debate after the conference, the general feeling within the AIAEE seemed to be that it added to the interactive sharing of project themes, approaches and results. I had the same feeling, as I have never been at a poster session so long as during this conference. One of the good points was also that the posters were displayed in one of the meeting rooms (with a breath-taking view of the Atlantic Ocean) and stayed there quite long, so there was ample time to review them. We definitively have to think about opportunities to sort of replicate this format, or warrant the intensive interaction around posters during the Wageningen AIAEE conference in another way. The level of attention for this representation of scholarly work in agricultural and extension education deserves this.

As usual in agricultural and extension education conferences, there were excursions to various locations. In this case the conference delegates were invited to go to the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Miami-Dade County Extension Office (where Teresa Olczyk welcomed the participants), a high-end orchid production and trade company, an equally high-end hatchery with various kinds of fish, like Koy carps, the Tropical Research and Education Center (TREC), a tour through the agricultural area of South-Florida and a visit to the Everglades National Park at Royal Palm to walk the Anhinga Trail (with fields with vegetables and tropical fruits and groves), and a visit to a winery which is known in the area for its resort-like tropical lounge, and production, serving and retail of wines of various tropical products. The owner stated that he was thinking that this venture could be successful, though all wine-makers were at odds with his ideas. He forcefully experimented with the wine-making processes based on various fruits, designed and re-designed equipment to produce wine, and against all expectations of the 'experts' the winery is a success. A typical example of entrepreneurship based on a strong will, a clear mission, experimenting and collaborative learning. The excursions were all packed into one long day.

Conference excursions are always part of the ESEE conferences as well, so we will also organize these in 2015. Next to general cultural excursions to the Rijksmuseum, which was recently opened after a long restoration period, the Van Gogh museum, and the Anne Frank house (all in Amsterdam), there will be excursions to field-related locations such as the flower auction in Aalsmeer, the flower exposition at the Keukenhof, the national natural park the Hoge Veluwe, the Rotterdam harbor, which is a world transito-harbor for agricultural commodities, the polder system and water management with wind mills, and locations for rural innovation and nature conservation. This promises to be exciting, although we cannot promise sunny beaches as at the Miami and Antalya conferences.

Let me also share the latest news regarding the developments of the JAEE. Angela Pachau and I, representing the JAEE editorial team, had our annual meeting with part of the publishing team of Taylor and Francis in Oxford in June. As always it was a good meeting, during which we reviewed the publishing report of the publisher and discussed various other issues. The most important news is that the Impact Factor increased again and is now 0,55, which makes it – again – nearly a Q2 journal in the subject category Education and Education Research (E&ER) of the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) mentioned above. I have been explaining what this means in earlier issues, but to summarize this: as said, there are 217 journals in the SSCI within the subject category E&ER. These journals are listed based on their impact factors. The impact factor is calculated by dividing the number of citations to items in the preceding two volumes of the journal by the number of items in those volumes. An impact factor of 1 means that there are on average the same number of citations to the items as there are items. If the citations would be equally distributed over the articles in the journal, all articles would be cited once in that period. The list of journals is partitioned in four quartiles, the highest being Q1, the lowest being Q4. So the JAEE is nearly a Q2 journal. The cut of point between Q3 and Q2 is 0,65, so our ambition is to see the impact factor augment this level. At the end of the day, this requires only a couple more citations – in journals which are currently listed in the SSCI. It does not have to be citations in the E&ER domain; citations in journals in other SSCI domains also count. The ranking place of the JAEE in the E&ER subject category list is 119. So if we move up 10 places the JAEE is a Q2 journal, and then we are going to apply again for official registration. I again call upon all authors and reviewers to help the JAEE in getting a slightly higher impact factor, by citing relevant work from the journal in SSCI-manuscripts and referring authors of whom you review manuscripts for, again, SSCI-journals. If you do not write manuscripts for SSCI-journals, this may be the time to start doing that. You would contribute to the scientific field of learning, communication, and rural innovation. Thank you for your efforts.

What is also interesting to note is that the worldwide distribution of the JAEE again increased, as did the total number of downloads of articles. The number of submissions is increasing further, and as a consequence, the acceptance rate is decreasing. The submissions, downloads, and distribution are truly global, with an emphasis on certain regions. Both the publisher and we as publishing team are quite satisfied with these developments. I can also share that I received quite positive feedback on the JAEE during the various international conferences I have been attending during the last years. I appreciate that and find it encouraging. On behalf of all colleagues who work with us as editorial team, I would like to thank all colleagues who have contributed to the journal in various roles, and readers who have used the journal in their studies and work.

MARTIN MULDER, Editor-in-chief