

## Draft

### EDITORIAL

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Dear Reader,

Although we are busy with organizing the joint conference of the Association of Agricultural and Extension Education (AIAEE) and the European Conference of Extension and Education (ESEE), which will take place on April 28 until May 1 this year in Wageningen, the Netherlands, chances are that if you are reading this, the conference has already happened. Nevertheless, it may be good to say something about the preparation of the conference and to write about how it was in my next editorial of the JAEE.

We received a large response on the call for proposals. The AIAEE and ESEE taken together had just under 400 proposals. You may have seen earlier figures which were a bit lower, but that was because there was a bug in the submission system, which caused us a lot of trouble. Submissions had to be done by attaching Word files to the registration. The bug was that when registrations were complete, the attachment was missing, the authors still got a message that their submissions was received. At the bottom of that automatically generated message was printed 'file', but the space behind that was blank. I can imagine that authors of these submissions were thinking that their submissions were entered, but in reality they were not. At least, the organizational committee of the conference did not get their proposals for review. There were many more submissions than were expected, so the organizational committee did not expect there were proposals missing. But there were. Of course authors started to make inquiries after the peer review was completed and other authors received notifications of acceptance or rejection of their submissions. The first inquiry was not such a big problem to handle, because the organisational committee thought one proposal somehow slipped through, but when the second and third inquiry came in, the organizational committee started to think what went wrong, and after the fourth and fifth inquiry we knew that something was wrong, and we needed to rectify this error.. It took several nerve-breaking days to find out what the problem was, which was what I said above: submissions were confirmed while the proposals were not included in the registration process, and as an effect of that, were not send through to the organizational committee for review. Once this was clear, all registration forms were checked and those forms which did not have a file name of the submission printed on it were grouped together. It appeared that there were around 40 of these cases. That was a shock. Authors were directly notified about this bug, and were invited to re-submit their proposal

with a direct email to the organizing committee, who handled and reviewed the proposals manually. After that, the authors were notified about acceptance or rejection. That process took around a month extra. I hope to never experience any kind of ghost submission system anymore as it is quite annoying to get inquiries of authors about their submissions while these cannot be traced back in the system. That's terrible. But that 40 additional proposals, some of which were symposium proposals which count for 3 or 4 proposals each, came on top of the around 200 proposals that were registered with submissions.

I am sure that all conference organizers have to deal with dark horses like this, especially when a conference is organized as a single event, which is the case for many ESEE conferences. A university nominates itself, or is invited, for organizing the next ESEE conference. It is like this for the year 2017 as well. There is already a university which would want to host the next conference. I will not yet disclose the venue, but from a climate, natural and cultural perspective it is quite attractive. I think you assume it is in the Southern part of Europe, and you are right. But this is as far as I go here. The venue needs to be decided upon during the ESEE 2015 conference, and then it will be formalized.

However, organizing ESEE conferences would be much easier if there would be an association behind it, with a board and committees. In general I am not very much in favour of bureaucracy and I appreciate voluntary work, but having no institutional back-up in organizing an academic conference for say 150 delegates from ESEE and maybe a similar amount of AIAEE is not without risk. With institutional back-up I mean back-up by an entity which represents the scholarly education and extension community in Europe, and not so much the university, as within the university I am privileged to act entrepreneurial with the support of scientific and administrative staff. Without that, organizing an event at this scale would be impossible in the first place. I mean, it would be so much easier if ESEE would be an association of its own, and not just a volatile network. On the other hand, the way in which the ESEE operates has sustained over 40 years, which is quite an achievement. But in these days with lean and mean university budgets, it may become more and more difficult to organize larger ESEE conferences. This has already been observed during the 2013 ESEE conference in Antalya, Turkey. At that conference the scientific steering committee, which is nothing like a formal committee, was talking about transcending ESEE and a Seminar into ESEE as a Society. That would mean the acronym ESEE would be re-baptized into European Society of Extension and Education. That would indeed be very instrumental in consolidating the network of scholars in this field in Europe, especially because during the last decade various founders of the ESEE have been retiring.

Having a Society would also be beneficial for the JAEE. It could better link the journal to the European network of scholars in this field. Obviously there are already many links between the journal and various associate editors, and the members of the editorial committee and the editorial advisory board, but the network between the journal and researchers and professionals who are interested in research in the field of extension and education could be enlarged and strengthened I think.'

So far for the AIAEE-ESEE 2015 conference, which, I think, will be an interesting platform for intensive dialogue between representatives of both the American-global and European-global network of extension and education experts. It will be a truly global event, as for the ESEE conference alone already there are representatives of all contents of the planet. During

the opening session of the conference the delegates will be addressed by the Rector Magnificus of Wageningen University, Prof. dr. Martin Kropff, the deputy-director of the Netherlands University Foundation for International Cooperation (NUFFIC), Mr. Theo Hooghiemstra, and by Dr. Marianne Cerf, who is Assistant Director of the Research Department at INRA, France, and who will be one of the key-note speakers. The title of her contribution is 'Envisioning the contribution of extension work to the transition towards sustainability in agriculture and within rural areas'. The second key-note speaker is Henrik Dethlefsen, who is head of the International project department at the Green Academy in Aarhus, Denmark, and secretary general of EUROPEA, the European association of green vocational schools. The title of his address will be 'Towards Excellence in Agricultural Education? Some Reflections of a Practitioner'. So we will have two key-notes, one from the extension and one from the education perspective. Both speakers will give their contribution from a European perspective.

While preparing this important international conference, I am working on the preparation of the research assessment of the chair group of Education and Competence Studies (ECS) which I am leading (and which I consider as a privilege). The research assessment of ECS is part of the assessment of the Wageningen Graduate School for the Social Sciences (WASS). The research assessment in our case is called Peer Review and is a major event in the development of work units of the university. In Wageningen University these work units are called Chair Groups, which are comparable to Departments. The Chair Groups together make up the Department of Social Sciences. Chair Groups are varying in size between 5 or 10 co-workers to between 50 or 70 co-workers. There are just over 20 chair groups within the Social Sciences Department. ECS is the largest of them; it has a group of about 70 co-workers, PhD candidates included, of which some are employed, some are studying on grants, and some are private. The PhD candidates do not call themselves PhD students because many of the Dutch candidates are having an employee status based on a 4-year full time contract, in which they have to do courses and related educational activities of 30 credits (=half a year full-time) and 3,5 years research.

The review period is 6 years, and during the middle of that period there is a mid-term review held by the international advisory board of the graduate school.

I am writing about this research review in this Editorial, because I think that many of you who are working in university groups may face this kind of reviews in the near future. The research assessment is quite demanding, and one can better be prepared. The research assessment within Dutch universities is a conducted via a collectively agreed procedure. Organizations involved in the definition of the assessment protocol are the Association of Cooperating Netherlands Universities (VSNU), the Royal Academy of Sciences (KNAW) and the National Science Organization (NWO). The protocol requires chair groups to conduct their self-assessment which is evaluated based on three criteria: research quality, relevance to societal and viability. Self-assessments typically are documents of 30-50 pages, including mini-CVs of core staff and references lists. They contain sections about Objectives and the Research Area, Resources and Facilities, Research Quality, Relevance to Society, Viability (which means whether the group is resilient, has prospects, and has a critical mass), Benchmarking, a SWOT-analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats), a

Reflection and future strategy, a reference to previous assessments, and future strategy. The report is finalized with a section on Research Integrity.

For the criteria research quality, relevance to societal and viability groups can get points, varying from 4 (unsatisfactory) to 3 (Good), and 2 (Very good) to 1 (World leading/excellent). Until last year there were four criteria and 5 grades, 1 meaning unsatisfactory and 5 excellent. Groups which had scores below very good on average had to report to the board of the Department and University and develop improvement plans to get better. 'Very good' was seen as a kind of minimum standard, which probably reflects the ambition of the university to remain the best university worldwide in its niche of agricultural and environmental sciences.

To show research quality, relevance to societal and viability, various indicators are being used in reporting.

The first and maybe the most important indicator is the RI, the Relative Index, but apart from that there are a series of indicators. The website of the Library of Wageningen University lists these indicators. This website is not an open website for the general public I am afraid, but I am sure that libraries in your institutions have access to this information and can calculate the values of the indicators for your groups as well. This clearly is the domain of the bibliometricians at institutional libraries. The indicators included in the Wageningen University library website are: the Total Number of publications, Total number of Citations to these N publications, the World average number of citations to these publications, Number of Citations Per Publication, the Percentage of publications within the top 10% most cited (T10) publications, the Percentage of publications within the top 1% most cited (T1) publications, and the Percentage of non-cited publications. Journals are ranked by impact factor. If they are in the top 25% of a subject category in Journal Citation Reports they are in Quartile (Q) 1, in the 25%-50% range they are Q2, in the 50%-75% range Q3, and others are in Q4. Now that I am explaining this, it may be good to mention that the JAEE has reached the Q2 status in Scopus for three subject categories, including education, development and planning.

The indicator of Relative Impact (RI) may need some further clarification. RI stands for the item oriented field normalized citation score. It reflects the number of citations to publications compared to the world average of citations to similar publications (of the same age and in the same research field). The term 'item oriented' means that the normalization of the citation values is done on an individual article level first, the average over all articles yields the RI. Normalized scores follow the Gauss curve, so a RI of 1 means that the publications of the group belong to the best around 35% of articles in the domain, for instance social sciences. An RI of 2 means that the articles of the group belong to around the best 5% of publications in the field of study. The other criteria such as %T10 and %T1 are of course also very important. During the last couple of years I have found out that many colleagues in universities in the field of agricultural education and extension are not aware of the research indicators mentioned above. Many work within systems that do not yet use these indicators in their personnel assessment systems. But that may change, just as it has changed the university assessment culture in various Western countries. To explain a little bit about where the indicators come from, it is important to mention the Web of Science. Within that website, which is only accessible if your institution has a subscription to that, one can make Journal Citation Reports, for instance for journals which are listed within the Social Science Citation

Index (SSCI) by Subject Category. Education and Educational Research is such a Subject Category, and the journals in that category can be listed by Impact Factor. The Impact Factor is the number of times the items in a journal are cited on average over a certain period of time. An impact factor of 1 means that the items in the journal are cited once on average during that period of time. The subject category of Education and Educational Research counts 219 journals. For each journal a report can be made which shows to what Quartile that journal belongs. So the higher the impact factor of a journal, the more likely it is that the articles in it are being cited. The number of citations to these articles are included in the RI.

Another way of benchmarking of scholarly output is by benchmarking a group via SciVal, which is a product of Elsevier (whereas the Web of Science is a product of Thomson Reuters). SciVal is based on publications in Scopus, which is a comparable system to the Web of Science, but which is more inclusive. Scopus also includes peer reviewed journals which do not have an SSCI impact factor. Since many of the colleagues in the field of agricultural education and extension publish in niche peer reviewed journal without the impact factor mentioned, Scopus-based indicators, like the Scopus H-index, which is indicator of the number of times publications of scholars have been cited, are more just to assess their scholarly output. The good thing about SciVal is that it enables researchers to compose groups of institutions who are publishing in the same field: the real peers. Based on the manuscripts in Scopus journals and the citations to those interesting graphs can be produced by which the research performance of groups can be compared. I did it for the peer review, and I found it fascinating. Of course it is fun if your group is doing well, but even if there is a lot of room for improvement, it is good to look at how these systems and indicators work, as understanding them and including them in your research and publication policy and strategy may significantly contribute to your own or your department's scientific impact. With doing so I wish you lots of success.

Hoping to see many of you in Wageningen at the end of April.

Martin Mulder  
Editor-in-chief JAEE