
***Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education Scholarship:
Passport to the World***

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Abstract

The Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education (JIAEE) has been a constant product of the Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education since 1994. Research topics and the journal's importance to researchers have changed over time, but its seminal obligation as a contributor to the body of scholarly knowledge has not; its purpose is to enhance the research and knowledge base of agricultural and extension education from an international perspective.

The JIAEE serves as the AIAEE's passport to the world, when considering the many unknown audiences who first learn about the AIAEE through digital library searches for international agricultural and extension education periodicals. From that basic premise, the goal for the JIAEE should be to publish only high quality, relevant, focused research for international agricultural and extension education. However, much of the scholarship reported in the JIAEE is fragmented, thereby having minimal impact or significance to the body of scholarly knowledge. The AIAEE needs to adapt, adopt, or create its own international research agenda. Persistent, rigorous investigations of our research agenda's priority areas will produce a body of scholarly knowledge that distinguishes international agricultural and extension education as a discipline.

Keywords: Body of Knowledge, Research Agenda, Scholarship, JIAEE Topics

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Introduction

The “Seminal Articles Series” of the *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education (JIAEE)* began in fall 2005. From its inception, the purpose of this series has been to present an “annual scholarly event designed to encourage debate within the Association” and it “may provide guidance in developing a future theme-focused *JIAEE* issue” (Wingenbach, 2005, p. 4). The first three contributors to the *JIAEE* seminal article series are well-known, highly-respected individuals with many years of service and scholarly contributions to the Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education (AIAEE). This author is not an intellectual equal compared to Christiansen (2005), Swanson (2006), or Ludwig (2007); however this invited article may spark debate within AIAEE that leads to actionable efforts for enhancing the scholarship reported in the *JIAEE*. Eventually, these efforts will lead to a body of scholarly knowledge that distinguishes international agricultural and extension education as a discipline.

The *JIAEE* is not the only outwardly product of the AIAEE, but for many audiences unknown to the AIAEE, it may be the most easily accessed and visible product. AIAEE membership ($N \approx 140/\text{year}$) has remained steady over the past 10 years. During that time, *JIAEE* subscriptions have mirrored AIAEE memberships, however at least one dozen libraries became subscribers to the *JIAEE* during the same decade. Library subscriptions increase the likelihood that audiences outside the AIAEE membership will find the *JIAEE*. Also, continuous development of AIAEE’s Web site (<http://www.aiaee.org/index.html>) and the *JIAEE*’s primary Web page (<http://www.aiaee.org/journal.html>) adds potential for attracting new audiences through Internet searches.

When the *JIAEE* began in 1994, computer technologies and the Internet were

not as readily available as they are today. Researchers likely searched card catalogs and library shelves for international agricultural and extension education periodicals. Today, researchers are more inclined to use Internet technologies, specifically Google™ and Google Scholar™ (Brophy & Bawden, 2005; Tenopir, 2005), to facilitate their literature searches. A recent search for sources using Google Scholar, dated 1998 to present, using the keywords “international agricultural and extension education” anywhere in the article, returned 302 hits. Granted, some of these hits were duplicates, but if only 50% were originals, how long would it take you to sort through 151 library cards or shelves to locate those original sources? Incidentally, a similar search using the keywords “*Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*” returned 202 hits.

The pervasiveness and power of information technologies warrants attention from the AIAEE membership to better use the Internet for promoting international agricultural and extension education research. If the *JIAEE* is an easily identifiable product of the AIAEE, then its contributions the body of scholarly knowledge for international agricultural and extension education research should be of the utmost significance. The *JIAEE* is, for many purposes, the AIAEE’s passport to the world. It is the first impression many audiences unfamiliar with the AIAEE acquire; the *JIAEE* should make a positive lasting impression. It is time to reconsider the importance and significance of the body of scholarly knowledge reported in the *JIAEE*.

Purpose

The purpose of this article was to examine the body of scholarly knowledge reported in the *JIAEE*. The examination was focused on research subject-matter topics, as previously reported in the *JIAEE*, and their

congruency with *JIAEE*'s list of acceptable topics for review. It was hoped that practical solutions could be offered to focus the collective research efforts of the AIAEE.

Discussion

A focused research agenda that serves the AIAEE organization, evolves into a true body of scholarly knowledge, and distinguishes international agricultural and extension education as a discipline, has been presented several times in the *JIAEE*. Miller and Sandman (2000) shared their thoughts about scholarship, defined by university academicians, and contrasted them with AIAEE's presence of scholarship in the *JIAEE*. Miller and Sandman offered many practical suggestions (see Miller & Sandman, pp. 41-43), based on universities' (Wisconsin and Oregon State) definitions of scholarly activities that would help the AIAEE practitioner focus his/her scholarship. The authors concluded that AIAEE scholars ". . . will need to have both the inclination and well-honored skills in knowledge generation, application and transmission . . . Much of our research is fraught with methodological errors in sampling, design and/or analysis. Research, simply, must get better" (p. 40). Miller and Sandman (1998; as cited in Miller & Sandman, 2000) contended that

Our [AIAEE] scholarship has, too often, tended to be accounts, stories, if you will, of projects and activities. Account after account of study abroad programs and study tours, for example, do not advance the knowledge base of the discipline unless someone analyzes these experiences and makes meaning from them for the discipline. (p. 40)

Have we, as an organization of practitioner scholars, evolved since Miller and Sandman's (2000) edict to the AIAEE was issued? A scant 15 months after the Miller and Sandman article was published in the *JIAEE*, Radhakrishna, Connors, Elliot, and Verma (2001) reported on the *JIAEE*'s

published articles from its initial seven years. Radhakrishna et al. based their study, in part, on the vision of the *JIAEE* in the year 2005 as predicted by Steele (1996; as cited in Radhakrishna et al., 2001). Steele's vision of the *JIAEE* in the year 2005 was that it would have

a) become a dynamic, flexible, electronically driven publication; b) attracted a worldwide circulation; c) received significant volume of manuscripts from around the world; d) diversified the contents of the journal to include research-based, philosophical, applied and practical articles, book reviews, commentary, and feedback, etc.; and e) multilingual versions, particularly Spanish, French and Arabic.

(Radhakrishna et al., 2001, p. 32)

Radhakrishna et al. concluded that there was "a tendency [in published articles] to focus more on research than on developmental, philosophical, and curriculum aspects of the disciplines of agricultural education and extension education" (p. 37). Also noted was the fact that a variety of subject matter topics were published; both findings supported the argument posed by Miller and Sandman (2001).

Christiansen (2005) continued the examination of *JIAEE* scholarship through his comparison of Radhakrishna's et al. (2001) study of articles published from 1994–2000, and Christiansen's analysis of the *JIAEE*'s contents from 2001–2005. Christiansen's examination of *JIAEE*'s scholarship was based on the AIAEE's organizational objective, "Develop state-of-the-art papers on agricultural and Extension education worldwide" (p. 6). Christiansen included feature ($n = 107$) and commentary ($n = 5$) articles in his analysis of the *JIAEE* from spring 2001 to summer 2005. The final issue (fall) for 2005 was included in the following analysis, bringing the total number of articles to 220 (feature articles = 114; commentary articles = 6) for the years 2001–2005.

The case can be made that the *JIAEE* has specialized in publishing agricultural extension (25%) and agricultural education (~8%) research articles since 1994 (Table 1). However, observations of Radhakrishna's et al. (2001) and

Christiansen's (2005) analyses coupled with the analysis of the final issue for 2005, present a troublesome historical perspective of the *JIAEE*'s body of scholarly knowledge.

Table 1

Subject-matter Categories of Articles Published in JIAEE, 1994–2005 (N = 220)

Subject Matter Categories	1994–2000 ¹	2001–2005 ²
Agricultural extension (programs and personnel)	26	29
Agricultural education (primarily secondary level)	9	8
Sustainability	8	8
Curriculum development and content	8	5
Global issues	8	1
Women's programs and issues	7	5
International agricultural development	5	4
Evaluation (programs and techniques)	5	3
Technology transfer	4	6
Indigenous knowledge	3	6
Youth, including international knowledge	3	3
Small farmers	3	2
Collaboration	3	
Student performance	2	
Leadership	2	
Adult education	1	
Farming systems	1	
Job satisfaction	1	
Other, dairy	1	
Internationalizing the curriculum		9
Organizations (support, university partnerships, etc.)		6
Participatory education		4
Applied research and techniques		4
Technical subjects (e.g., dairy, AIDS)		4
Rural education, rural development		4
Academic preparation of faculty		3
Preparing to work in the international arena		2
Using available resources (e.g., library)		2
Communication for development		1
Adjustment of international students		1
Total	100	120

Note. ¹18 issues of the *JIAEE*; Feature articles only. Adapted from "Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education: From Early Beginnings to Sound Sustained Future," by R. B. Radhakrishna, J. J. Connors, J. Elliot, and S. Verma, 2001, *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, 8(3), p. 37. ²15 issues of the *JIAEE*; feature and commentary articles. Adapted from "Addressing the Right Issues and Raising the Right Questions in AIAEE," by J. Christiansen, 2005, *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, 12(3), p. 12.

Miller and Sandman's (2001) warning that AIAEE's scholarship was fragmented was confirmed by Radhakrishna et al. (2001) and Christiansen (2005). While some of the article categories may be collapsed, 30 identifiable topics of research are too many to build a significant body of scholarly knowledge that distinguishes international agricultural and extension education as a discipline. Some may argue that defining the AIAEE as a "discipline" is not a worthy goal. However, it behooves us to reaffirm AIAEE's sixth objective, "Encourage research within the profession that will favorably impact on agricultural and Extension programs in countries around the world" (AIAEE Objectives, n.d., ¶ 6). How will this objective be achieved if our goal is not to establish the AIAEE's work as a bona-fide discipline, which is exemplified through research that impacts agricultural and extension education worldwide?

The *JIAEE* began contracting with Express Academic Services[®] to provide online manuscript submission and review systems in mid-2006. Since that time, 189 manuscripts were submitted (7.1/month, 86.2/year); 301 reviews were conducted; and each manuscript averaged only 17 days in the review process (K. Dooley, e-mail communication, September 30, 2008). Paramount to the successful matching of manuscript topics with peer reviewers' expertise, Express Academic Services[®] required the *JIAEE* to submit a list of topics that authors would use to identify the focal points of their manuscripts. *JIAEE* editors match the authors' defined topical areas with peer reviewers' expressed areas of expertise. The list of topics (Table 2) was developed through a consensus-building process with all *JIAEE* editorial board members in spring 2006.

Only 12 categories were defined as suitable focal points of research for possible publication in the *JIAEE*. Arguably, two of those categories (Perspectives and U.N. Regions) are not necessarily research focal points, but rather over-arching factors that

may be associated with research conducted in one of the remaining 10 categories. When comparing the topics in Table 1 with those in Table 2, we surmise that the *JIAEE* did not have 30 identifiable research topics/areas from 1994–2005 because several of the "education" subject-matter areas in Table 1 could be grouped within an overall education category. Nevertheless, the AIAEE should redouble their efforts to clearly define their collective body of scholarly knowledge. One method for accomplishing this goal can be learned from the National Research Agenda: Agricultural Education and Communication, Research Priority Areas, 2007–2010 (Osborne, n.d.).

The National Research Agenda (Osborne, n.d.) was the culmination of a joint project of the American Association for Agricultural Education, Association for Communication Excellence, Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education, Association of Leadership Educators, NCAC-24 Experiment Station Committee on Organization and Policy, and The National Council for Agricultural Education. Twenty-seven members from the associations, committee, and council mentioned previously, created the National Research Agenda to communicate "research priorities to numerous state and national interests, including Agricultural Experiment Station directors, USDA program administrators, and funding agencies" (Osborne, n.d., para. 1).

One of the five broad disciplinary dimensions developed by the team was focused on "extension education and outreach," which could be associated with the scholarship published in the *JIAEE*. Research Priority Areas were developed, including the area for "agricultural education in domestic and international settings: extension and outreach." Key Research Questions or critical research problems were developed for each research priority area and specific dimensions of each key research question, designated as Priority Initiatives, were identified. The National

Research Agenda team listed Key Research Questions or critical research problems for “international settings” as

- Ascertain the public’s knowledge, views and openness regarding the agri-food and natural resource system.
- Identify the needs and competencies of stakeholders and professional practitioners in nonformal agricultural extension education.
- Identify appropriate learning systems to be used in nonformal education settings.
- Examine appropriate nonformal educational delivery systems.
- Identify and use evaluation systems to assess program impact. (Osborne, n.d., p. 5)

Table 2

JIAEE Peer Review Subject-matter Categories and Topical Areas, mid-2006–present

Subject-matter Categories	Topical Areas
Education	Adult Learning, Curriculum Issues, Distance Learning, Experiential Learning, Faculty Teaching, Higher Education, Information Technology, Primary/Secondary Education, Student Issues
Environmental Issues	Agro-ecology, Energy, Ecotourism, Health Care, Natural Resources, Solid Waste Management, Wildlife Biology
Extension	Administration and Policy, Curriculum Development, Delivery, Methods, Programs, Systems and Models, Theory and Practice
Partnerships	Community-based Organizations, Cooperatives, Governmental Organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations, Public-Private Networks
Perspectives	Age, Ethnicity, Gender, Historical, Philosophical
Planning and Evaluation	Accountability, Competencies, Needs Assessment, Program Effectiveness, Program Evaluation
Management	Administration, Communications, Leadership, Marketing
Managing Change	Change Theory, Entrepreneurship, Planned Change, Public Good, Social Change, Technology Transfer
Research and Methods	Case Study Research, Experimental Research, Participatory Rural Appraisal, Qualitative Research, Rapid Rural Appraisal, Survey Research
Teaching and Learning	Instructional Design and Delivery, Learner Characteristics, Learning Outcomes, Learning Theory, Teacher Education, Teaching Methods
Training and Development	Capacity-Building, Community Development, Farmers, Human Resource Development, Participatory Training, Professional Development, Programmatic Issues, Sustainable Development, Youth Organizations
U.N. Regions	Africa, Americas, Asia, Europe, Oceania

The purpose of listing these critical research problems for those working in international agricultural and extension education research is not to reinvigorate the debate surrounding AIAEE's acceptance of the National Research Agenda team's perception of our research foci. The purpose is to promote open-mindedness in thinking about AIAEE's efforts to adopt, adapt, or create anew, its own set of research priority areas and critical research problems.

Conclusions

The *JIAEE* can be viewed as AIAEE's passport to the world, given the ubiquitous Internet connectivity of researchers worldwide. True, there are many stakeholders who are not connected to the Internet, but who may work with AIAEE members. This article is not intended to elicit practitioners' use of Internet connectivity in international agricultural and extension education projects. It is focused on the fragmentation of AIAEE's body of scholarly knowledge since 1994, and possible remedies to defragment that scholarship over the next 14 years.

A comparison of research topics published in the *JIAEE* from 1994 to 2005 revealed a fragmented, singular approach in many research topical areas. Extension education and agricultural education (primarily focused on secondary level schools) produced large numbers of articles, as expected, given the *JIAEE's* purpose. However, if our collective body of scholarly knowledge is to grow and evolve, then serious consideration must be given to the research subject-matter categories and topical areas used to receive manuscripts for the *JIAEE's* review process. Who among us cannot make the connection between environmental issues and international agricultural and extension education? Collaboration among AIAEE members and/or partnerships between universities worldwide may produce relevant research foci that accounts for environmental issues

in relation to international agricultural and extension education.

The upside of examining our body of scholarly knowledge revealed that Steele's (1996; as cited in Radhakrishna et al., 2001) vision of the *JIAEE* in the year 2005 has been realized. The *JIAEE* is a dynamic, flexible, electronically-driven publication, that attracts worldwide circulation, receives a significant volume of manuscripts submitted annually, has diversified content, and is produced in multilingual versions (Spanish and French abstracts). That vision, while pertinent in 2008, can be improved through increased focus on scholarship that is more "... developmental, philosophical, and [attends to the] curriculum aspects of the disciplines of agricultural education and extension education" (Radhakrishna et al., 2001, p. 37). In essence, we will not advance our body of scholarly knowledge through continued research of superficial research problems and/or the use of ill-conceived research methods. Mentor/protégé research relationships are needed in the AIAEE to produce high quality, relevant, focused research for international agricultural and extension education.

The National Research Agenda (Osborne, n.d.) was developed from a U.S.-centric perspective, and its "international" aspects are primarily focused on extension education. Regardless of the perspective or focus, the exercise showed us that a large group of like-minded people can assemble themselves around a common cause: improved communication of their research priorities to stakeholders. The AIAEE could adopt, but most likely needs to adapt or create anew their own Research Priority Areas, Key Research Questions or critical research problems, and Priority Initiatives. Such an undertaking could ignite the process AIAEE needs for establishing a body of scholarly knowledge that distinguishes international agricultural and extension education as a discipline. However, merely defining research priority areas, key questions, etc., will not in and of itself

establish a body of scholarly knowledge. *Persistent, rigorous investigations* of those research areas and questions for many years will produce that body of scholarly knowledge that distinguishes international agricultural and extension education as a discipline.

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