

AIAEE HISTORY: IS THE PAST A PRELUDE TO THE FUTURE?

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Abstract

This paper provides a brief history of the beginning of the Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education. It also looks at minutes from board meetings, copies of the reports from annual meetings, copies of both the newsletters and journals which were available to the authors. The review of materials has been selective in terms of some changes in the constitution regarding elected members of the board as well as the purposes and objectives of the Association. Some attention has been given to the ways members have been involved in presenting papers at the annual meetings, for the development of a manual on how to organize, and a visioning process to look at the future for the organization.

A brief look was given at two major changes that have occurred during the years that the Association has been in operation. Finally, a brief statement has been made as to the educational value of this paper.

AIAEE History: Is the Past a Prelude to the Future?
A Review of the Leadership, Conference Themes, and Programs
as Clues to the Future of the Association for
International Agricultural and Extension Education

Introduction

This paper serves as Historian Report Number 4. It provides a brief review of the origin of AIAEE with emphasis on trends within the organization. These trends were identified through evidence gained from a careful review of official documents for the Association and other materials available regarding the beginning and development of the organization. This brief history of the organization provides both new and older members with a better understanding of how the Association provides the members and participants with opportunities for professional leadership and development. Some changes over time were identified and a few questions posed for consideration by the membership as they look to the future.

Purpose

The review provides substantive information about the organization which is new for more recent members, and a review for long-time members. The review of the substance and process of the operation of the Association provides a systematic look at the manner in which the purposes of the Association have been pursued. All of this is to help the present membership, both new and older members, enhance their own basis for participation either as elected leaders, chairpersons of committees, or as active members in other roles.

Methodology

The materials available for review included four 3-ring notebooks of Official AIAEE Records; AIAEE Journals and AIAEE Newsletters; copies of various versions of the Constitution and Bylaws; copies of most of the Annual Conference programs; bound copies of research papers presented at annual meetings, and other miscellaneous materials from personal files. However, time limits and space limits for this report precluded an all-inclusive review and presentation of the details from the findings.

Some key questions asked by the researchers were:

1. What are the aims and purposes of the Association? Have they changed?
2. Who has been identified in leadership roles in the Association? What has been their organizational and professional affiliations?
3. What have been the key 'moments' in the evolving patterns of the organization in its striving to achieve its stated purposes?
4. What have been some of the changes in the context for the operation of the Association: agriculture and natural resources, political and social climate, institutional climate, and other.

The reader is cautioned to recognize some limitations for this paper. Neither time nor space permitted the review and presentation of all the changes and trends noted by the authors. In addition,

there are some gaps in the sources of information. Some files are incomplete and little attention appears to have been given in the early years of the Association to keeping permanent records. Primary attention was given to the inclusion of members in the proceedings and actions by the association. Finally, the importance of various events are often seen differently by different viewers and not all of the significant events have been highlighted in this brief paper.

Findings

Origin of AIAEE

The organizational meeting held in Washington, D.C. in April 1984 was preceded by several years of informal meetings held at the annual meetings of the American Association of Teachers Educators of Agriculture (AATEA now AAAE) which were held in conjunction with the annual meetings of the American Vocational Association (AVA now ACTE–American Career and Technical Education). A national conference held at Sam Houston State University in the spring of 1983 and a special planning meeting in February 1984 at a location near the Kansas City airport preceded the Washington, D.C. organizational meeting. David Riley, a recent doctoral graduate from Oklahoma State University, was instrumental in the arrangements for the conference at Sam Houston State University and the meeting near the Kansas City airport.

William Thuemmel, University of Massachusetts, was instrumental in the arrangements for the organizational meeting in Washington, D.C. This was in part an outcome from his 1983 summer sabbatical in the AID Office, Department of State. During that summer, Thuemmel helped prepare plans for a seminar on African Agricultural Education¹ that was sponsored by the Education and Human Resources Development Division and the Agriculture and Rural Development Division, Office of Technical Resources, Agency for International Development. Some of the future leaders of AIAEE were presenters and discussants at that seminar. That seminar provided one of the bases for the conference on Agricultural Education in Africa the following year, at which time the first meeting of the Board for AIAEE was held in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

Mission/Purposes

The stated purposes in the original constitution for the Association for International Agricultural Education (AIAE) were as follows:

- a. Provide a medium for exchange of ideas and information relating to international education programs in agriculture and rural development.
- b. Provide a liaison on international agricultural education between colleges and universities, government agencies, private industries, foundations, international agencies, and international agricultural educators on a global scale.²

Concern and discussion regarding the mission of AIAEE continued and was brought to a focus in February 1988 when Clifford L. Nelson, president 1987-88, brought to a Board meeting for discussion a paper, “Positioning AIAEE for the 21st Century: The Next Steps.” The paper was then presented as the keynote address the first afternoon of the 1988 annual meeting. Nelson proposed six priority items:

Priority 1. Mission

Provide a professional association and network for international agricultural educators and extension personnel who share the common goal of improving and

strengthening agricultural and extension education programs and institutions, especially for developing countries.

Priority 2. Internal Communication (eight specific steps were enumerated.)

Priority 3. Membership Development

Priority 4. Internationalize Programs

Priority 5. Involve International Professionals

Priority 6. Develop Strong Linkages with Outside Groups³

Since that time, there has been some change in the stated purpose and objectives of the Association. In the most recent brochure, the purpose of AIAEE is stated as: "...an international professional association linking agricultural educators and extension practitioners aimed at strengthening agricultural and extension education programs and institutions worldwide." This is a refinement of the earlier statements, but perhaps not much different. The same brochure identifies six objectives, which may be stated in brief as:

Serves as a catalyst, bringing the expertise of educators globally to meet needs in agricultural development

Promotes research on agricultural and extension education programs around the world

Provides a forum for discussing research...issues with a global perspective

Establishes and expands global networks for dialogue and partnerships.

Collaborates with international development agencies in designing strategies.

Welcomes diversity in its membership and actively seeks the participation of people from diverse ethnic origins and geographic areas.

Organization

The organizational format has changed much over the years. In the beginning, the elected officers included: President, Vice President, Secretary/Treasurer, and four at-large Board Members. The Vice President was given the duty of planning the annual meeting. There were no standing committees. Within a few years, the offices of Secretary and Treasurer were divided, and one of the Board member positions was officially designated for graduate students. Currently, the Board (now called the Leadership Team) consists of: President, President Elect, Past President, Secretary, Treasurer, Editor of Newsletter, Editor of Journal, and Committee chairpersons, Graduate Student Representative, and one Board Member at Large.

Involving Participants at Annual Meeting

Two major efforts were undertaken by AIAEE to involve the annual conference participants in development of concepts. The first, in the 1995 conference held in Little Rock, Arkansas, was an effort to prepare a handbook on how to develop an organization. Edgar Persons was the key organizer. The work of eight work-groups, each asked to respond to seven different questions, was synthesized by Persons and brought back to the 1996 conference in the form of a publication: Lets Organize! A Handbook for Helping Groups Organize for the Promotion of Agricultural Education and Extension.⁴

The second was a 'visioning process' led by Roger Steele for "Linking Our Past to Our Future: The Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education in the Year 2005". That was accomplished at the March 1996 meeting in Arlington, Virginia. Some of the changes already

accomplished in the first decade (1984-1995) were identified as:

“(1) from no graduate student involvement (on the Board) to a large percentage of the participants, papers, and committee work done by graduate students at the annual meeting; (2) from the president and vice president doing much of the work to decentralization and action through committees; and (3) from primarily a secondary education emphasis to include an extension education focus.”⁵

Publications

A newsletter was published in the first year of the association. Later, it was named The Informer, and usually was published three times each year. Its purpose was to provide information to the membership about Board meetings and the annual meetings, offer an opportunity for sharing news about activities and planned events, as well as promoting the association. The first editor was Hough F. Rouk, followed by a series of editors who held the office for two or three years.

A journal was started in 1994 with Jack Elliot as the first editor. Two issues were published each year until 1997 when a summer issue was added to provide an opportunity to publish outstanding papers from the annual meeting. Other editors have been Satish Verma and James Connors. The Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education is recognized for the high quality of its articles. The fall 2000 issue (Volume 7, Number 3) included three types of articles: feature articles, commentary articles, and tools of the profession articles. It provides the profession with an excellent means for sharing on a global basis articles that deal with results of research and other topics related to current or emerging issues in the areas of international agricultural and extension education.

Papers at Annual Meetings

A review was made of the titles of papers presented at three of the annual meetings: 1989, 1994, and 1999. At the 1989 conference, there were 27 refereed papers presented through nine presentations. There were four sets of concurrent sessions for presentation of 48 papers in 1994 and 64 papers in 1999. An analysis of the paper titles provided some indication of the geographical areas of the world which were the basis of the content of the papers. The following table provides a quick overview of that analysis.

Geographical Areas of World Based on Titles of Papers

Area	1989	1994	1999	Total
Africa	5	14	12	31
Asia	2	6	4	12
Australia		1		1
Caribbean	2	4	9	15
Europe	2	3	3	8
Middle East	1	4	5	10
U.S.A.	3	12	10	25
Others	4		4	8
Non-specific	8	4	17	29

Total	27	48	64	139
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Changing Context

There have been many changes in the context within which AIAEE and its members have worked between 1984 and 2001. Some of the changes have been quite dramatic. One of the changes has already been mentioned briefly. The booming U.S. economy has impacted the format and nature of our annual meetings. Many of the services provided by members and their institutions evolved into purchased services. At the first several annual meetings, the presenters brought multiple copies (75-175) of their papers; papers were assembled into binders; projectors were brought from home institutions; and the conference fees were kept at a minimum, \$15 at the first annual meeting. The 2001 meeting has conference fees of more than \$200 to cover breaks, program booklets, bound set of papers, equipment rental, and other items. Participants have been supportive of the higher level of services to be provided. Partial scholarships have been available for graduate students.

Two changes in the area of technology have been selected for mention. The more universal use of electronic mail has enhanced communication between and among members, domestic as well as international, as well as with sister organizations and related agencies. It has shortened the time for correspondence with international colleagues from 10 days or two weeks via 'snail mail' to less than a day or overnight with E-mail.

However, another technological development deserves special attention—the genetic engineering in plants and animals. The products from the highly technical procedures have been moved from the scientific realm to the political. The nature of the genetically modified material, whether vegetation or flesh, has moved into the political realm, prohibiting or at least delaying its impact on the development world. 'Factual' information has become extremely difficult to identify for the everyday reader. It reminds the authors of an axiom that was used by the newly installed director of extension in Michigan in the mid-fifties. He was promoting a significant organizational change and made trips to each county to discuss the change with the extension staffs. The center piece of his discussion was: it isn't what the facts are that count, it is what the people think the facts are that will become the basis for their decisions. There is a significant challenge to educators, whether in public schools or in the public work of extension. How do you plan for, organize, and carry out an 'educational program' when the subject is an issue?

Results and Conclusions

The Association has existed as a formally organized group of professionals for 16 years. It has had annual meetings regularly and with an emerging pattern of formally organized committees and procedures. The membership has included new and emerging professionals with interests in the international dimensions of agricultural and extension education. The planning for, and implementation of annual meetings, has become more systematic with carefully selected themes. There is a continuing concern for the involvement of representatives from the private sector and international groups. The recent pattern for holding every third annual meeting at an international venue appears to be a significant development for achieving some of the purposes of the Association. The refereed journal has provided a means for additional distribution of the papers prepared by members of the Association, as well as

highlighting outstanding papers from the annual meetings.

Educational Importance

Only a few of the present members were at the organizational meetings in 1983 and 1984. If the present members can be made more aware of the history of the Association, they may be better prepared to exercise leadership through their participation at meetings, presentation of papers, and serving as chairpersons for committees. The review of purposes and priorities identified in the past may be helpful in setting new priorities for the future. Finally, the roles for the newsletter and journal have changed but now appear to have even more significant parts in the achieving of the goals of AIAEE.

The Association has a unique opportunity at the beginning of the 21st century to review its purposes, procedures and regular activities such as publication of a newsletter, publication of the journal, and annual meetings. The members and the elected leaders are challenged to help strengthen the programs of agricultural and extension education through research, and communication.

Selected Sources as Endnotes

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1. Agency for International Development 1983. Seminar on Agricultural Education in Africa Summary of Proceedings. Washington, D.C.: Bureau for Africa, Agency for International Development. Seminar was held August 23, 1983.
 2. Constitution and By-Laws for Association for International Agricultural Education (AIAE), revised version adopted April 6, 1984. P. 1
 3. Paper prepared by Clifford L. Nelson, "Positioning AIAEE for the 21st Century: The Next Steps", shared with Board members in a memorandum dated February 29, 1988, and concurred by program chairperson Edna McBreen for use at the opening of the annual conference.
 4. Persons, Edgar (1996) Lets Organize! A Handbook for Helping Groups Organize for the Promotion of Agricultural Education and Extension. A special project of the Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education. St. Paul, Minnesota: Centre for Education in Agriculture and Extension, University of Minnesota.
 5. Steele, Roger. "A Visionary Statement" sent to the leadership group after the September 8-9, 1996 AIAEE Leadership Team meeting.

Additional Sources

1. Four 3-ring notebooks with copies of Board minutes, correspondence and miscellaneous materials.
2. A file of all issues of The Journal of the Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education.
3. A file of nearly all the newsletters published by the Association.
4. Copies of the first and subsequently revised constitution for the Association.

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5. Miscellaneous materials from the personal files of the authors.