

Summary of Trip Reports: Wageningen University, ESEE/AIAEE conference, 2015

Dates: April 25th – May 1st

Travellers: Dr. Tom Hammett, Dr. Emily Van Houweling, Dr. Kurt Richter, Dr. Pavli Mykerezi, Dr. Kristal Jones, Nargiza Ludgate

Institution(s): OIRE, Virginia Tech, Penn State, University of Florida

Purpose: The purpose of the trip was to network with AET practitioners and present at the joint AIAEE/ESEE conference at Wageningen University.

Sites Visited: Amsterdam, Wageningen University.

Description of Activities:

See trip log and follow link below to program.

ESEE & AIAEE Combined Program

Suggestions and Recommendations:

Dr. Van Houweling received some good feedback from her presentation. The suggestions included:

- Look at examples of what has worked well for improving gender equity in other universities or as part of a national education plan
 - The locations suggested were Malaysia, the Philippines, Rwanda, and Makerere
 - Kathy Colverson said she did a long term analysis at gender issues in Sokoine University that was never released
 - Add an in-depth historical analysis of what these model programs did to improve the position of women
- Be careful not to assume that all the issues are in developing countries; women are highly underrepresented in many agricultural programs in Europe and the US.
- Separate the recommendations gained from empirical research from what was learned from other reports.
- Look at Sandy Ruxton's books to think more about how to engage men as allies.
- Look at Janice Monk's work on gender issues in geography programs, which could also be relevant to agriculture.

Dr. Van Houweling will review the literature suggested, but does not think that the budget allows for more empirical fieldwork looking at gender policies and practices at model institutions. These are some of the other interesting and relevant things learned:

Shamba Shake Up is an “edutainment” television program in Kenya used to teach people about basic farming techniques. This approach could also be a way of attracting young people to agriculture and promoting messages about gender equity-both of which are relevant to the InnovATE gender video in progress.

There were several panels on gender. One thing that struck Dr. Van Houweling was how many of the issues that keep women from engaging in extension and education are related to cultural gender roles. These include time and mobility constraints, lack of access to productive resources, and lack of control over household finances. All the presentations she attended drew similar conclusions. To overcome these issues related to women’s cultural gender roles and position in society it is necessary to engage men, and none of the presenters talked about this. Working with women alone will not address gender relations and the division of labor in the household. It would be interesting to look more at what other NGOs have done to address these underlying gender inequalities that are responsible for so many of the gender issues across development sectors.

Dr. Myrzeki noted that this was a good conference with participants from all continents in a topic they all are involved and engaged with to share experiences and create connections as one of his primary goals. He states, “I think, I reached the goal”.

Dr. Jones suggests that next time there is an especially relevant conference, it makes sense to send only enough people to present in one organized session, rather than the scattered presentations by innovATE at this conference.

Ms. Ludgate stated that the conference was interesting and provided excellent networking and professional development opportunities. Offering AIAEE conference in an African country or Asian country would provide a venue to attract local AET professionals.

Dr. Richter noted that it was a good conference and the InnovATE team did a good job. He felt that the team spent too much time in Netherlands for a two day conference and questions the decision of sending them early to save on airline tickets.

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Trip Log:

The following are notes about participation in the 22nd European Seminar on Extension and Education (ESEE) 2015 held in Wageningen University, The Netherlands between April 28 – May 1, 2015. Before the conference, Dr. Hammett served as a member of the Scientific Steering Committee.

Tuesday, April 28th, 2015

- Conference registration
- AIAEE mentoring session for students
- Presentation at the poster session

The conference took place in the Forum Building of the Wageningen University campus. It hosted more than 200 researchers from leading universities and research and extension centers from USA, Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America and Australia. The AIAEE conference was combined with the European Seminar on Extension and Education (ESEE).

Nargiza Ludgate participated in an AIAEE student meeting with advisors (mentoring session for students) to get engaged with AIAEE professional opportunities for graduate students. During the poster session she established contacts with researchers from the USA, European countries, and African countries. Dr. Grady Roberts (University of Florida) presented a poster (Lessons learned from conducting scoping assessments in international development), which was well attended by various conference participants.

Dr. Tom Hammett answered questions and distributed innovATE handouts and Community of Practice cards. Several attendees were very interested in innovATE– two graduate students from UF wanted to know how they could work with innovATE. Another visitor to the poster offered to take any leftover handouts to another conference she was attending in a few weeks. Participants from several universities asked how their institutions could join the consortium. Another representing Purdue (one of our competitors on the MAETS bid) was very interested in our progress. It was very gratifying to hear several people give comments that they were impressed by the level of quality of the graphic design used in the poster.

Wednesday, April 29th, 2015

- Presentation during the morning session
- Conference sessions in the morning and afternoon
- AIAEE committee meeting on professional development
- Networking during breaks and lunch

As member of the Scientific Organizing Committee Dr. Tom Hammett was asked to Chair three sessions. He was unable to chair one due to a conflict with his role in the FAO Side Event, so declined being the chair for the session “Relevance, quality, and effectiveness of Higher Education”. One of the speakers Shah Pour Abdulrahimzai works in TVET in Afghanistan, Dr. Hammett met him during a later session, and set up a meeting of the innovATE team with him and his colleagues.

Dr. Hammett chaired the session entitled “Design, implementation, and assessment of green education”. A lot of interest was shown in this session with nearly a full room of 25-30 attendees. The four talks were focused on a broad spectrum of topics including learning pathways, MOOC applications, and methods using games to teach extension education. Dr. Hammett made valuable contacts with several of the

speakers and participants. One by Harm Biemans was focused on students' performance in Dutch agricultural education.

The second session Dr. Hammett chaired "ICT solutions for education" reflected several methods that were locally appropriate and may be applicable in our work in innovATE. He was most interested in two talks presented by faculty members from a university in Iran. They were very interested in networking with innovATE, and forming collaborations. These and other speakers in the session may be valuable contacts for us. Dr. Hammett also handed out innovATE flyers to all participants and speakers who would take them.

The last session Dr. Hammett conducted was a side event under the theme of Service Provisions and Family Farming. Early in the year, he had been asked to be part of a side event organized by FAO to rollout and examine their new flagship publication "The State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA) 2014". The focus topic of this volume is "Innovation in Family Farming" and is the most recent volume in a FAO regular series. The objectives of the side event were (1) to present the key findings of the SOFA 2014, (2) to raise awareness of the importance of innovation for family farms, (3) to facilitate discussion on key messages, and (4) to make available SOFA materials.

At the beginning of the side event, introduction of the SOFA volume was made by the FAO team Ms. Magdalena Blum, Ms. Delgermaa Chuluunbaatar, and Mr. Jakob Skoet. They explained how the research for this volume was conducted, and the history of the SOFA series. Dr. Hammett was asked to be part of a panel that gave a broad perspective reflection on this SOFA (NGO, university, international organizations, etc.) and to link SOFA 2014 to applications in AET. Others on the panel were Dr. Helen Hambly Odame (University of Guelph), Ms. Chesha Wettasinha (Prolinnova/ETC), and Ms. Maria Fernandez (ISG).

The basis for Dr. Hammett's comments was his experience at Virginia Tech and the innovATE Program that included conducting training and needs assessments in the agriculture and natural sectors of many countries for several years. In addition he has been involved in developing curriculum, institutional capacity, and other methods to meet and respond to food security needs. Dr. Hammett stressed that it is critical to match the capacity of training institutions and programs with strategies to provide those needed skills – in this case to family farmers. The AET Community of Practice should be a good venue linking our colleagues to this resource, and for continuing this discussion. Some of the key points mentioned included:

- Agriculture training and education (AET) should be responsive to current needs (i.e., meet today's challenges such as food security, climate change, realize agriculture is linked to health, economic development, and water issues) especially at the household or family farm level
- To be successful in developing capacity we need to think of AET as a "pipeline" - starting with school age students through secondary and higher education, and then work force development
- Meeting the needs of family farms through extension and other training venues should be a key strategy; we are dependent on extension workers to gather and meet local (household) level needs
- Make technologies accessible to local level needs; capacity building includes sharing best practices and life-long learning; farmers have and can share a wealth of best practices
- We are sometimes too technology driven (it will solve all our problems). To be effective technologies should be adapted to production, processing, and marketing needs
- A better trained workforce needs to be part of an integrated system involving many AET stakeholders government, training schools, higher education, and research entities

- Need proactive partners who understand that to improve food security requires long-term investments in building training
- Gaps include lack of will to invest for the long-term, lack of awareness of the linkages to resource conservation, current issues (coping with climate change), health, etc.

Nargiza Ludgate with a colleague from the Jordanian National Center for Agricultural Research and Extension, Dr. Samia Akroush presented the findings of the field research in Jordan. The presentation was titled: *Empowering Women's Groups To Access Agricultural Extension And Training Through Peer-To-Peer Training And Social Capital Building In Jordan*. The presentation was presented as part of the Empowering through agricultural extension outreach session.

Dr. Emily Van Houweling was impressed by their presentation and the work they accomplished. Ms. Ludgate and Dr. Akroush implemented a very thorough program to provide women in Jordan with opportunities to participate in extension services. Working with three cooperatives they offered trainings on group management, finances, technology and innovation, natural resource management and business and marketing. Some of the keys to their success included working with women in safe spaces, offering training topics that interested women, providing transportation and child care, and offering peer to peer mentoring and support networks. They also measured the results of the program using social network analysis and found that they facilitated the creation of new connections within and outside of the existing network and increased women's self-confidence.

Dr. Pavli Myerkezi and Nargiza Ludgate both valued the keynote address dedicated to *Envisioning The Contribution Of Extension Work To The Transition Towards Sustainability In Agriculture And Within Rural Areas* by Dr. Marianne Cerf (Assistant Director Research Department, INRA, France).

Ms. Ludgate participated in an AIAEE committee meeting to discuss the future of professional development opportunities for AIAEE members during the annual conference. She joined afternoon sessions on gender, diversity and mentoring training to improve extension effectiveness, and education and assessment in extension sessions. During the breaks and lunch, Ms. Ludgate established connections with representatives of GFRAS (Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services), and FAO's (Food and Agriculture Organization) research and extension branch focused on providing technical assistance to rural advisory services.

Thursday, April 30th, 2015

- Presenting during conference sessions in the morning and afternoon
- Professional development session in the afternoon
- Networking during breaks and lunch
- Attending closing reception

Nargiza Ludgate attended the morning sessions on education, chaired by Dr. Kurt Richter and facilitated by VT representatives Dr. Pavli Mykerezzi, and Dr. Tom Hammett, dedicated to *Examining The Role Of TVET In The AET Systems Of Lesser Developed Countries*. The topics of presentations and discussions for this panel were:

1. The role of TVET in supporting Lesser Developed Country AET systems, a Value Chain Approach (Kurt Richter)
2. Addressing Global Gender issues in Higher Education Agricultural Programs (Emily van Houweling)
3. American Model of Technical Agricultural Programs at Land –Grant Institutions (Pavli Mykerezi)
4. Making workforce development sustainable in Nepal: can we adapt international responses to local needs? (Tom Hammett)

The team led a lively and helpful discussion on the key attributes of TVET programs and what lessons can be learned from others. The AET Community of Practice could be a good venue for continuing this discussion.

Dr. Mykerezi also attend two sessions on International Agricultural Vocational Education, and the key note speaker session on Green Academy presented from Henrik Dethlefsen, Head of International Project Department, Denmark. He also participated in the panel discussion “Lessons Learned on Competence and Excellence in Extension and Education: Achieving Synergy between European and American Traditions”.

Dr. Hammett also presented a paper the innovATE team had developed on lessons learned from higher education in Africa. The talk “Challenges to Higher Education Institutions in Africa” was well received with a full room of 30+ attendees.

Dr. Van Houweling presented the InnovATE gender research conducted in South Sudan, Mozambique, Cambodia and Bangladesh. This presentation discussed the challenges that girls and women face in agricultural programs in higher education and also overviewed some best practices and recommendations for addressing these issues. She also chaired a panel on “Gender specific themes” for ESEE. Between sessions Dr. Van Houweling networked and raised awareness about InnovATE.

Dr. Hammett, Dr. Richter and Dr. Van Houweling met with representatives from the National Agricultural Education College in Afghanistan. They are working in 15 agricultural high schools to improve the curriculum, train teachers, and improve the infrastructure and were interested in what InnovATE could offer.

Dr. Kristal Jones gave a presentation entitled *Building the capacity of the Cambodian agricultural education and training system*, co-authored by Drs. Tom Gill, Rick Bates and Melanie Miller-Foster (all from Penn State). The presentation was part of a session on case studies/examples of programming and capacity development in agricultural education and extension programs and departments.

Nargiza Ludgate joined in a session on *Assessment In Extension And Education* and attended the key note address by Dr. Henrik Dethlefsen dedicated to *Towards Excellence In Agricultural Education? Some Reflections Of A Practioners*. In the afternoon, she participated in a professional development session dedicated to *Managing Change To Build Community Capital Through Adaptation And Innovation* facilitated by Dr. Curtis Friedel (VT), Dr. Matt Spindler (VT), and Dr. Benjamin Ogwo (SUNY Oswego). She also remained for the closing reception, which included awarding prizes for best posters.

Friday, May 1, 2015

- Participating in day-long extension and rural development field trip with colleagues from Wageningen University;
- Visiting organic farms in region
- Evening meeting to discuss white paper on the observations made during the trip

On the last day of the conference, Dr. Tom Hammett attended the Extension Case Study field trip. He was teamed with 6 other AET practitioners (faculty, extension, etc.) and visited four farms in the region where they interviewed the owners and discussed education needs, and the owners' needs for or use of extension and advisory services. A separate agenda was distributed.

A few of the points raised included:

- All the farmers were asked about their use of extension services. The first farmer surprised the team and said he did not use extension and rarely went to the university with questions – even though from where we stood we could see the buildings on campus. He travels 100 KM to the south every Monday evening to meet and have supper with a group of farmers there. He gets his new ideas and answers to most of his questions during these meetings. Even though he returns home early in the morning he finds these meetings very helpful.
- This farmer's operation was highly mechanical with several expensive tractors. Not what you might think you might see on an organic farm. He developed some machinery that does not compact the soil – he says that lessening soil compaction is his secret to success.
- Another farmer organizes several hundred food baskets and sells them on a subscription basis (like our CSA). She rents land from a foundation, moving each year to a different plot. She and her business partners all got degrees at the university.
- The last two farmers had livestock. One was a "care farm" where they were paid to help rehabilitate mental patients. A novel idea for most of us.
- The team agreed to write a white paper on the experience and their reflections on AET and related areas. This might be appropriate to be included the innovATE publication series or posted on the Community of Practice to promote discussion?

Related activities:

During the conference, Dr. Hammett mentored Anna Yeritsyan, the Research Director from ICARE, an innovATE partner organization in Armenia. InnovATE had suggested that she attend so that she could meet key players in the AET field. The conference with 350 attendees looked to be a good opportunity for her and ICARE to gain contacts in the region. Each day Dr. Hammett spent some time with her talking about who to meet. He introduced her to several attendees who would be interested in ICARE's work and might offer collaboration. They also met in the evening for dinner to review the day's activities.