Addressing the Right Issues and Raising the Right Questions in AIAEE

James E. Christiansen
Professor Emeritus
TAMU 2116
Texas A&M University
College Station, TX 77843

Abstract

This paper presents the partial development of a theoretical base and related discussion about issues and questions that members of the Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education should address if the Association is to impact agricultural education and agricultural development in its broadest sense, both worldwide and within the nations of its respective members. Eleven postulates are presented that relate to the seven specific objectives currently stated for the Association. The postulates constitute a summary for the incomplete theoretical base that was developed. General problems or issues perceived to exist currently in 2005 are described. Questions to be considered for discussion by members and officers of the Association are identified. Five recommendations for action to provide focus and direction for the Association are presented as well as three concluding questions directed to the reader.

Keywords: Issues, Objectives, Problems, Professional Association, Theoretical Base, Vision

1 Acknowledgment: This paper was developed and refereed through special invitation from the JIAEE Editorial Board to initiate its inaugural “Seminal Article Series.” This paper is supported in part through State of Texas funds, and funding from the Department of Agricultural Education, Texas A&M University; it was produced, in part, through the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, College Station, Texas.
What factor, force, item, presence, quantity, or quality exists in programs of international agricultural development and education that is consistent over time irrespective of the organizational structure or institutional setting in which people work? What affects the success or failure of those programs? It is the human element.

But do we anticipate the consequences of our actions when engaged in such programs? Have we been realistic in our endeavors? Do we exercise reasoned, thoughtful judgment resulting from knowledge and careful analysis as we undertake professional activities? We are members of a professional association, the Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education (AIAEE). Have the actions of the Association and its members been realistic, reasoned, thoughtful, and considerate as we undertake activities of the Association on behalf of its members? Have we successfully avoided this all too common organizational pitfall? Or, do we need to make some adjustments in what we do individually and collectively as a professional association? Possibly more importantly, are there issues emerging in international agricultural development that the Association should address through the collective wisdom of its members irrespective of the organizational structure or institutional setting in which the members work? If so, what can agricultural and extension educators do now? Can we remember that if we point our index finger at others and three fingers point back at us that we might involve ourselves more realistically in our profession and Association? Let us gain some insights into these questions.

First, a bit of history is in order. “The Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education (AIAEE) was established in 1984 to provide a professional association to network agricultural and Extension educators who share the common goal of strengthening agricultural and Extension education programs and institutions worldwide” (Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education, n.d., ¶ 1). Its establishment was the result of perceptions of people who had been active on the International Education Committee of the American Association for Teacher Educators in Agriculture (AATEA), now the American Association for Agricultural Education (AAAE), and the International Education Committee of the American Vocational Association (AVA) that neither organization was addressing questions across the whole spectrum of agricultural education nor taking into account the worldwide personnel, status, needs, programs, possible interactions, and opportunities in agricultural education. In short, the time was ripe for establishing an international professional organization that focused on the different knowledge bases and contextual applications constituting agricultural education.

The current specific objectives of AIAEE that evolved over time, have been subscribed to by the membership, and reflect, hopefully, the mission of the Association, are to:

1. Articulate the role of agricultural and Extension education in international agricultural development.
2. Develop state-of-the-art papers on agricultural and Extension education worldwide.
3. Establish a continuing dialogue within the profession in international agricultural and Extension education on a global scale.
4. Establish and maintain a continuing dialogue between AIAEE and donor agencies for international agricultural development.
5. Establish a roster of professionals in agricultural and Extension education who can provide the expertise needed to assist funding agencies in planning and implementing agricultural and Extension education programs and institutions in other nations.
6. Encourage research within the profession that will favorably impact on agricultural and Extension programs in countries around the world.

7. Improve the skills and knowledge of professionals who want to work in international agricultural and Extension education. (Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education, n.d., ¶ 1)

Now that 21 years have passed since the founding of the Association, should we not perform a reality check as to the degree to which these objectives are being met? Should we determine if some of these objectives are still relevant for the foreseeable future? Are there other objectives that need to be established to further the mission of the Association more effectively and more appropriately? What can agricultural and extension educators do now to enhance achieving these and possibly other objectives?

Theoretical Base and Discussion
Eleven postulates related to AIAEE objectives have been developed to summarize a partial theoretical base. A theoretical base can set the stage for conducting different forms of scholarship, for considering policy, for establishing direction, and for establishing points of reference. The theoretical base presented here undergirds the premise that issues exist that members of AIAEE must address if the Association, collectively, is to have an impact on agricultural development and agricultural education, both worldwide and within the nations of its respective members. The postulates are:

Postulate 1. Because, in other settings, it has been shown that a multiplier, compounding effect results when individuals or organizations collaborate with other individuals or organizations to pursue a common goal, it can be theorized that AIAEE would benefit from actively seeking and establishing collaborative relationships with other international agricultural development-related organizations and associations to develop such activities as joint conferences, joint programmatic initiatives, joint legislative recommendations, jointly sponsored publications, etc.

Postulate 2. Because the members of an effective international association focus on actions that reflect emerging trends and issues relevant to that association’s mission and thus articulate their roles in doing so, it can be theorized that AIAEE members, especially as social scientists, can undertake, promote, support, or otherwise engage in activities that relate to at least 12 of the 40 sections of Agenda 21, the United Nations plan of action for sustainable agriculture, rural development, and the environment.

Postulate 3. Because social scientists have undertaken such activities in other fields and because those activities have borne fruit in advancing those fields, it can be theorized that as social scientists in international agricultural and extension education we can and should undertake such efforts and that the fruit borne will advance our field also.

Postulate 4. It is theorized that while the nature and structure of the Association’s annual conference and articles in the Journal permit a continuing dialogue to occur on a global scale to a limited extent within the profession in international agricultural and Extension education, such efforts can be expanded successfully, as has been the case in other disciplines, e.g. the medical professions.

Postulate 5. Information and perceptions that people receive about the Association will be much more focused, specific, and less ambiguous if information concerning the areas of expertise that members can bring to the process of agricultural development were divided into knowledge bases and contextual applications when presented in AIAEE publications, Web sites, brochures, and other materials.
Postulate 6. It can be theorized that outsiders and prospective members may have the impression, especially after perusing several issues of the *Journal* and *The Informer*, that there is not a coherent, consistent, continuing focus in the activities of the Association.

Postulate 7. Because differences exist in perceptions and values concerning scholarship, it can be theorized that serious dialogue through live discussions, *Journal* articles, and conference presentations would bring clarification and better understanding about what the scholarship should be for which the Association strives as it works to assist its members and to increase its influence and effectiveness.

Postulate 8. While related to Postulate 7, it can be theorized that AIAEE Objective 6 can be broadened to encompass multi-dimensional scholarship and not imply a focus based solely on research.

Postulate 9. Because of the lessons learned in the successful collaborative Texas-Mexico agricultural development initiative, and because of lessons learned or not learned in other settings, it may be theorized that such lessons learned may be applied by AIAEE members in other development settings.

Postulate 10. Because many members of AIAEE have not had experience with problems and procedures faced in managing programs or projects and the underlying principles of management and development, but are likely to engage in such efforts in the future, it may be theorized that such topics could be featured in AIAEE conferences, publications, research, and in collaborative efforts with other organizations and associations, as has been demonstrated in other disciplines, e.g., the management field, and thus help to achieve Objective 7.

Postulate 11. Because limited alignment exists between published topics in journals relating to international agricultural education and extension and international agricultural development sponsored by professional associations and the course content at universities that have been examined, at least in the United States (Acker & Grieshop, 2004), it can be theorized that a serious “disconnect” exists that could dilute the effectiveness of graduates of programs in higher education or the membership of professional associations interested in working in international agricultural and extension development education.

Be forewarned. The author of this paper is not reporting specific research. Instead, questions are raised and food for thought is presented relative to the stated objectives of the Association. The theoretical base presented and the comments related to the objectives are the heart of this paper.

First, it is recommended very strongly that the reader, besides reading this paper, read the excellent, appropriate, and timely keynote address, “Leadership through Service: All the Easy Jobs Have Been Taken,” presented by David G. Acker (2005) at the 21st annual meeting of AIAEE on May 25, 2005 and reprinted in the Spring 2005 issue of the *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*.

Why? Dr. Acker outlined four things very well: 1) the kind of world in which we currently live and work, 2) our grand challenge as an Association, especially as it relates to the eight goals of the 2000 Millennium Summit, 3) the kinds of leaders needed to meet this grand challenge, and 4) ten especially important things that agricultural and extension educators can do right now. As there was no need to reiterate the excellent points made by Dr. Acker, this writer could address points arising from the mission and previously stated specific objectives of AIAEE.

Several international organizations and/or publications exist with similar or related missions pertaining to international agricultural education and development, e.g., Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education,
European Seminar on Extension Education, The [formerly European] Journal of Agricultural Education and Extension, Southern and Eastern African Association of Farming Systems Research-Extension (SEAAFSRE), Journal of Extension Systems, and Association for International Agricultural and Rural Development. These and other resources with compatible goals and activities exist. In other settings, it has been shown that a multiplier, compounding effect results when individuals or organizations collaborate with other individuals or organizations to pursue a common goal. Therefore, a rationale for Postulate 1 can be developed and supported.

AIAEE Objective 1. Articulate the role of agricultural and Extension education in international agricultural development [and] review a vision for the future, 11 years old.

AIAEE has progressed and matured over the years. But has it achieved its potential? Consider the following: Roger Steele, president-elect of AIAEE in 1994, stated that “The wave of the future is participatory development whereby aid-givers and –receivers work together as partners” (Steele, Summer 1994, p. 1) when he announced the theme for the 1995 AIAEE conference in The Informer. He stated further that as professionals involved in social change that there were “many ways [in which] we can form partnerships with others engaged in the same endeavor” (p. 1). He listed four actions:

Increased collaboration between non governmental, governmental, universities, research centers, and private organizations, forming coalitions with professionals from various agricultural and social science disciplines, ensuring greater diversity in the profession, that is, providing opportunities for women, and people from diverse ethnic and geographic areas to become involved in AIAEE, and a better linkage between various components of the international, national, and local agricultural systems.” (p. 1)

About the same time, S. Michael Campbell (1994) completed an analysis of the philosophy of international agricultural and extension education and then compared this philosophy in a qualitative study of the opinions of 17 experienced members of AIAEE. Among his conclusions about the four problems faced by the Association at that time were the following: The problems 1) “...mirror the problems in our society at large, particularly as they relate to the idea of diversity. The diversity of the AIAEE was seen as both its strength and its weakness....This problem appeared most often in terms of members feeling a sense of separateness or otherness. This otherness was often sensed as a kind of discrimination” (p. 2). 2) A general problem in communication was perceived to exist and “developing inclusive methods of communication appears to be a task that AIAEE should take on....Developing non-hierarchical communications was the other important issue for the group” (pp. 2-3). 3) A duality of focus existed. “AIAEE appears to focus on the improvement of the lives of its clientele. There is confusion, however, as to who that clientele is ...[with] confusion over whether the organization should work exclusively with its members and other organizations, as pointed to in the by-laws, or work directly to improve the lives of people” (p. 3). 4) Related to the question of duality of focus was a conclusion about the role of AIAEE “...in developing an international agricultural and extension education curriculum. While it seems that most members felt it important to ground such a curriculum in the traditional AgEd areas of experiential and relevant educations, many also expressed the need for such an education to be much more broadly based. Such an education should include such humanistic subjects as philosophy, psychology, anthropology, mythology, and spirituality, in addition to the traditional areas in AgEd, e.g., program
development, evaluation, etc....It was suggested that we might even need to develop a new discipline, which would be called something like international agricultural development education” (p. 3).

Over 100 members worked in small groups during the 12th annual conference of AIAEE in Arlington, Virginia, USA in March 1996, using the concerns and conclusions identified by Campbell as described above as their point of departure, to project to 2005 a vision of what AIAEE would be or should be in order to provide guidance to the newly elected AIAEE leadership team for 1996-1997. Steele (1996) summarized the 26 key points of the members’ preferred future for AIAEE. While paraphrased and not listed here in their entirety because of space limitations, they related to AIAEE being highly participatory with 50-100 affiliates, being composed of professionals engaged in reflective analysis of critical agricultural issues, being characterized by greater participation of AIAEE members, decentralization and growth of communication between members, having established linkages with other organizations, having a diversity of people and ideas, having members enhancing their role as change agents, having linkages with other organizations, and establishing partnerships to build bridges “...between research and practice in social, biological, and physical sciences” (p. 1). Also, “…At the end of the next decade, members will have felt that AIAEE is inclusive, rather than hierarchical. Information will have been readily exchanged among members because of positive, supportive environment within the AIAEE” (p. 1). Graduate students will have scholarships and mentorship arrangements available. “In 2005, women will be even more visible in leadership roles in AIAEE....Even though AIAEE will have proactively addressed current issues, the focus on agricultural and extension education will have been maintained” (p. 1). A matured Journal meeting the needs of a broader audience with a diversity of content will exist. “The name will have changed from JIAEE to IJAEE to represent an enlarged world view, transitioning from a predominant U.S./Western focus to looking at the world to a more global perspective” (p. 2). AIAEE will be facilitating global linkages and “national associations/societies of agricultural and extension education professionals will have emerged. By 2005, AIAEE will have promoted and enhanced the benefits to be derived from linkages between similar organizations in various countries” (p. 2).

As a person in 2005 reading this vision for 2005, and seeing where we are today, which parts of this vision do you believe have been achieved? Which parts have fallen completely through the cracks? Which parts that have not been achieved are as critical to our responsibilities as social scientists working with different clienteles in varied national and international settings that they should become immediate items for action? Is it time to revisit our vision for AIAEE and prepare a realistic revised vision?

The members of an effective international association focus on actions that reflect emerging trends and issues relevant to that association’s mission and thus need to articulate their roles in doing so. In the case of AIAEE, a “people” organization, it is apparent that AIAEE can undertake, promote, support, or otherwise engage in activities that relate to at least 12 of the 40 sections of Agenda 21, the “comprehensive plan of action to be taken globally, nationally, and locally by organizations of the United Nations System, Governments, and Major Groups in every area in which [there are] human impacts on the environment....Commitments to Agenda 21 were strongly reaffirmed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg, South Africa from 26 August to 4 September 2002” (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Sustainable Development,
2004). Those 12 sections of Agenda 21 are 1) international cooperation to accelerate sustainable development in developing countries and related domestic policies, 2) promoting sustainable agriculture and rural development, 3) global action for women towards sustainable and equitable development, 4) children and youth in sustainable development, 5) recognizing and strengthening the role of indigenous people and their communities, 6) strengthening the role of non-governmental organizations, partners for sustainable development, 7) strengthening the role of farmers, 8) transfer of environmentally sound technology, cooperation, and capacity-building, 9) promoting education, public awareness and training, 10) national mechanisms and international cooperation for capacity-building in developing countries, 11) international institutional arrangements, and 12) information for decision-making. These needs and opportunities for Association members to become involved underlie Postulate 2.

AIAEE Objective 2. Develop state-of-the-art papers on agricultural and Extension education worldwide.

Objective 2 and Objective 6 discussed below are related in terms of potential impact. Radhakrishna, Connors, Elliot, and Verma (2001) reported a survey of members of the Association undertaken by Eaton, Radhakrishna, and Diamond in 1994, 10 years after the organization of the Association. At that time, its members perceived that the two publications of AIAEE, The Informer and the Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education, “…reflected relevant issues related to international agricultural development” (Radhakrishna, et al., 2001, p. 31).

The articles published in the Journal from 1994 through 2000 were also reviewed by Radhakrishna et al. (2001). Their review included subject matter topics, scope, focus, and program areas. They reported that “1) authors from a variety of public and private organizations representing all geographical regions of the world published articles in JIAEE, 2) articles published in JIAEE tend to be more research-oriented, and 3) subject matter topics such as extension education, agricultural education, sustainability, curriculum and global issues ...were the topics frequently published in JIAEE” (p. 31). A breakdown of their analysis of the subject matter of the 101 feature articles published from 1994-2000 is presented in column one in Table 1 below.

The subject matter categories of the 107 feature and 5 commentary articles that were published in the Journal from the spring issue of 2001 through the summer issue of 2005 were also examined by this writer. Shifts or changes in topics or types of articles appearing in the Journal since 2001 have occurred. Eleven more categories were added to the 19 categories reported earlier for the 1994 – 2000 period.

As can be seen in Table 1, while roughly the same numbers of articles were published in 11 of the 1994-2000 categories, 37 articles appeared in new categories from 2001 through 2005. As one examines the table, one should draw his/her own conclusions about the reasons behind the shifts that are displayed.
Table 1

Subject-matter Categories of Articles Published in JIAEE, 1994–2005 (N = 213)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Matter Categories</th>
<th>1994-2000&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>2001-2005&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural extension, both programs and personnel</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural vocational-technical education, primarily secondary level</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum development and content</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global issues</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s programs and issues</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International agricultural development</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation, programs and techniques</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology transfer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous knowledge</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth, including international knowledge</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small farmers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student performance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming systems</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job satisfaction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, dairy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internationalizing the curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizations, organizational support, university partnerships</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participatory education, programs</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied research and techniques</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical subjects, e.g., dairy, AIDs</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural education, rural development</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic preparation of faculty</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing to work in the international arena</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using available resources, e.g., library</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication for development</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjustment of international students</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>101</strong></td>
<td><strong>112</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<sup>1</sup> 18 issues of the JIAEE. Feature articles reported only.

<sup>2</sup> 14 issues of the JIAEE. Includes both feature and five commentary articles.
Please note some of the changes that stick out. In the past five years, only one article was published that pertained to global issues. Eight articles, however, related to internationalizing the curriculum, five pertained to organizations or organizational support and institutional partnerships, and four pertained to participatory education and programs. While Radhakrishna et al. (2001) noted that articles in the Journal tended to be research-oriented, note that since then four articles also dealt with specific research techniques rather than with research projects per se, e.g., “Handling of Nonresponse Error in the Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education” (Lindner, 2002). Also, note that 15 articles in the past five years (13.4% of the total) related in some way to people becoming knowledgeable about, being prepared to work in, communicating in, or adjusting to cross-cultural settings in the international arena.

The record described above pertains to papers or articles that have appeared in the Journal of the Association. However, to this writer’s knowledge, the Association has not sponsored or sought the preparation of inclusive “state-of-the-art papers on topics of agricultural and Extension education worldwide” (Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education, n.d., ¶ 1). Professional associations in other disciplines do seek out and do sponsor benchmark papers, manuals, and books applicable to their field, e.g., the Handbook or Research on Teacher Education, which was a 1990 project of the Association of Teacher Educators. Social scientists have undertaken such activities in other fields and those activities have helped to advance those fields, thus basis for Postulate 3.

AIAEE Objective 3. Establish a continuing dialogue within the profession in international agricultural and Extension education on a global scale.

The nature and structure of the Association’s annual conference and articles in the Journal permit such a dialogue to occur to a limited extent. Such efforts can be expanded as has been demonstrated in other fields, e.g., the medical profession. Consequently, the rationale for Postulate 4 can be supported.

AIAEE Objective 4. Establish and maintain a continuing dialogue between AIAEE and donor agencies for international agricultural development.

Other than involving people from such agencies as Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), as speakers at annual conferences, such a dialogue has not occurred. To what extent have we collectively, rather than individually, provided input into proposals being prepared for development programs and projects? What is our documented “track record” in this area?

AIAEE Objective 5. Establish a roster of professionals in agricultural and Extension education who can provide the expertise needed to assist funding agencies in planning and implementing agricultural and Extension education programs and institutions in other nations (and focused activities of AIAEE).

This writer has heard potential members of AIAEE express the opinion on occasion that “your Association seems to try to be all things to all people in agricultural development. If that is the case, how does it make a difference?” Or, as one person put it, “It appears that AIAEE must be for generalists and generalists don’t accomplish much.” Or, in an e-mail received was this query: “I gather from your Web site that AIAEE members have experience in many different areas. I am working in Tanzania. How can I find out who can help me figure out a way to get some farmers here to adopt improved millet varieties? They [farmers] don’t like new things.” An informal survey among several long-time members of the
Association who live in different countries and who in turn have worked in other countries revealed that they have encountered similar comments or questions. Why is this occurring?

No distinction or differentiation is made between the bases of knowledge possessed by the members of the Association or the contextual applications of the setting, area, or program on which members focus their efforts while applying the knowledge base(s) in which they have expertise. Might this be one of three contaminating factors at work as the areas are diverse in which members have expertise as described on the Association’s Web site? It states that:

The AIAEE seeks to serve as a worldwide catalyst in bringing the collective expertise of agricultural and Extension educators to bear on the problems of human resource and agricultural development. Areas of expertise that agricultural and Extension educators can bring to the agricultural development process include agricultural education in public schools, rural youth programs, agricultural Extension, teacher education in agriculture, human resource and development programs, research and evaluation studies, institution building for agricultural development, programs for agricultural curriculum development and teaching methods, in-service education, human resource management programs, youth development, needs analysis and program development. (Association, n.d., ¶ 2)

A knowledge base is “...knowledge...expressed in articulated understandings, skills, and judgments which are professional in character and which distinguish more productive [members] from less productive ones” (Reynolds, 1989, p. ix). “This body of knowledge is undergirded by theory, research, and a set of professional values and ethics” (Corrigan & Haberman, 1990, p. 195). A contextual application is the setting and related conditions, often thought of as a “field,” in which the educator, change agent, programmer, administrator, planner, student applies the knowledge bases with which he or she is engaged. For descriptions and examples of different knowledge bases and contextual applications, including those listed in Table 2, please view the Web site: http://www.aged.tamu.edu/workgroups/gc90.asp, which was developed by faculties in agricultural education at Texas A&M University and Texas Tech University, U.S.A.

Table 2

Examples of Selected Knowledge Bases and Contextual Applications that may be Appropriate for Members of AIAEE and that could also Provide Focus and Direction for the Association

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge Bases</th>
<th>Contextual Applications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>Agricultural communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery strategies</td>
<td>Distance education and technology-enhanced instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation and accountability</td>
<td>Extension education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>International agricultural development education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planned change</td>
<td>Leadership and community education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and needs assessment</td>
<td>Teacher education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The advantages of providing specificity and focus by identifying the knowledge bases and contextual applications in the areas in which members have expertise and work so as to describe them and to interpret their work and capabilities more accurately underlies Postulate 5.

A second contaminating factor also may exist that causes people to perceive that a lack of focus exists within the Association based on the wide variety of topics of articles appearing in the *Journal* as described earlier. For example, outsiders and prospective members may have the impression, after perusing several issues of the *Journal*, that there is not a coherent, consistent focus in the Association. It must be recognized, however, that this writer has not undertaken a survey of perceptions of members and non members to determine if this truly is the case. As this factor is known to be at work in other fields, Postulate 6 was developed to address this issue.

A third contaminating factor may also cause people to perceive that there is a lack of focus within the Association. What is it? There has not been generally available to the membership since 2001 an updated, published, annual program of work or program of activities. Such a program provides insights as to activities and direction currently being undertaken.

What should be done to improve the perception that the Association has focus and direction? The writer offers five recommendations. *First*, develop a listing of knowledge bases held and contextual applications engaged in by members. Such a listing will help differentiate the areas in which expertise is held by members. *Second*, when developing a listing of Association membership, solicit from members their primary and secondary knowledge bases and their primary and secondary contextual applications to be listed along with other personal or professional information in the membership directory. *Third*, prepare a consolidated listing of members by primary and secondary areas of knowledge base and contextual area and make this information available as an Association information bulletin and/or post it on the Association’s Web site. *Fourth*, establish themes well in advance for each issue of the *Journal* such as is done now when establishing themes for each annual conference of the Association. *Fifth*, place the program of activities developed annually by the Leadership Team on the Association’s Web site, in the Association newsletter, *The Informer*, and possibly in the *Journal*.

AIAEE Objective 6. Encourage research within the profession that will favorably impact on agricultural and Extension programs in countries around the world.

Many members of the Association are engaged in research and other forms of scholarship because of their academic endeavors and positions in institutions of higher education. Many such efforts have been noteworthy. Have we, however, emphasized research *per se* and have not emphasized enough scholarship in all of its forms? Have we engaged in scholarly activities that truly have made a difference in our profession? Have members of our Association undertaken truly new scholarship or have we simply ridden on the coattails of what others have done in other fields? What new ideas in teaching and learning have we developed, tested, and applied? What new “learnings” have we accomplished? What have been our unique contributions to at least 12 common learning theories, to adult education, to planning models, to extension education, to applications of technology, to organizational change, to change theory, etc.?

Let us use change theory as an example. Many, many people in our profession work with change. We try to influence change, to get people to adopt changes, to keep them from going off the deep end by adopting inappropriate changes, to make organizational changes, to develop strategies of change that are appropriate within the culture with which we work, to
anticipate the consequences of change, etc. Many of us are familiar with and have used and applied different models, theories, and writings about change, e.g., Everett Rogers’ innovation-decision model, Kurt Lewin’s three-stage model, Lippit, Watson, and Westley’s seven-stage model, Jerry Porras’s stream analysis for organizational change, Brock and Salermo’s six-stage change model, Geoffrey Moore’s crossing-the-chasm technology- adoption model, and Bennis, Benne, and Chin’s writings on theory of change. However, what and how many unique contributions have we made in agricultural and extension education to advance change theory and its application? It may be that some of Düvel’s work in South Africa (Düvel & Abate, 2005), in which his findings illustrated the importance of intervening variables on influencing decision making and adoption behavior, are examples of a few exceptions to this condition.

Miller and Sandman (2000) in their excellent, thought-provoking article, “A Coming of Age: Revisiting AIAEE Scholarship,” presented and defined scholarship with its multidimensional facets and presented six categories of questions pertaining to scholarship for members of AIAEE to consider, whether they be academicians or practitioners. They pointed out that “Discovery, integration, application, and teaching of knowledge are central to the mission of higher education….A dialogue concerning the dimensions of scholarship and the implications for the profession is needed” (p. 39). They concluded that “the challenge to AIAEE is to further [sic] develop and support academicians and practitioners as reflective or scholarly practitioners….The current multidimensional definition of scholarship can energize and discipline AIAEE. Our 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). They further concluded that “if we are to become a ‘discipline,’ then we, as a profession, need more than common interests evolving from practice” (p. 37). Differences in perceptions and values exist with respect to scholarship, but scholarship is multi-dimensional. As differences can be resolved and consensus in understanding can be developed, it thus is possible to formulate Postulates 7 and 8.

AIAEE Objective 7. Improve the skills and knowledge of professionals who want to work in international agricultural and extension education.

AIAEE is a “people” organization. As such, many of its members have been, are currently, or will be involved in programmatic development efforts in different countries, many of them collaborative efforts. Because we are in the “people” business, are we truly cultivating the professional inspired and inspiring leader-managers that Bruce Lansdale (2000) described, leader-managers who are successful? It has been documented that “underlying all successful development programs is the thread of seeking out, paying attention to, involving, working with, collaborating with, and obtaining feedback from the intended beneficiaries of development programs, projects, and activities” (Christiansen, 2000, p. 227). But, before this “product” or “outcome” principle of development is applied, can be achieved, or can be evaluated (Stufflebeam, 1973), other “process” or “ways and means” principles that have emerged from lessons learned in development must be followed by people engaged in collaborative development efforts.

Piña (2001) stated six of those lessons well in reporting on 22 successful collaborative Texas-Mexico agricultural development projects that took place from 1993 through 2001. Those projects involved 63 faculty members from the College of
Agriculture and Life Sciences of Texas A&M University and 43 counterparts from the Technical Consortium from Northeast Mexico. The lessons were that (1) dialogue must take place between the personnel from each country in identifying the issues to be addressed; (2) representation is needed from all groups benefiting ultimately from joint efforts at all stages of the process; (3) cost sharing is essential for every activity undertaken, (4) all projects need a marketing component, whenever possible; (5) students must be involved at every opportunity; and (6) joint evaluation of outcomes to determine impact on policy is essential.

Although lessons for success were demonstrated in the successful collaborative Texas-Mexico agricultural development initiative, appropriate lessons have not been learned in other settings (e.g., Paddock & Paddock, 1973; Paul, 1982; Rondinelli, 1977). Many members of AIAEE have not been in a position to observe such lessons and the application of relevant underlying principles of development, but are likely engage in such efforts in the future. Other disciplines, e.g., the management field, have demonstrated success in preparing people to manage programs and projects. By examining Postulates 9 and 10, one result would be to help achieve Objective 7.

A limited alignment exists between published topics in journals relating to international agricultural and extension education and international agricultural development sponsored by professional associations and the course content at universities, at least in the United States (Acker & Grieshop, 2004). Consequently, a serious “disconnect” could exist that dilutes the effectiveness of graduates of programs in higher education or members of professional associations wanting to work in international agriculture. Reducing this disconnection as addressed in Postulate 11 would also help to accomplish Objective 7.

**Other Issues and Questions**

Space limitations preclude discussion of other issues related to the specific objectives discussed above that need to be raised and considered by the profession and the Association. Each of them can fit into an expanded theoretical base. Among them are the following:

1. Are we developing effective international partnerships between and among universities engaged in development activities in agricultural education? (Etling, 2005)

2. Time and time again, we find people who advise in, prepare for, or manage agricultural development activities who do not handle well the 24 factors common in managing development programs (Christiansen, 2000). Could we highlight successful program and management practices as a theme in Journal articles and conference topics to help people prepare better to manage development efforts successfully? Doing so would assist in achieving Objectives 1, 2, 3, and 7.

3. Have we explored, selected, and used effective methods to encourage and then to prepare young professionals to work in the international arena in agricultural development knowing that people who entered the work force in the year 2000 can expect to work on two continents during their careers?

4. An integrated and holistic approach (Squire, 2003) to sustainable agricultural development is effective. However, this approach has not been used in many development efforts. Is this an example of an emphasis upon which the Association and its members could focus when working with development organizations, undertaking scholarship, establishing themes for conferences and the Journal, and when preparing people to work in the international arena?

5. Why are a considerable number of people who once were active in the Association not active currently, even
though they still work in international agricultural development?

**Conclusion**

As the reader of this article, and as you mentally point your finger at the writer, can you answer the questions implied in the three fingers pointed back at yourself? First, what are you next going to do, in and for, this profession? Second, what will you emphasize in developing both a focus and a long-term commitment in your own professional career in international agricultural development? Third, knowing that there are many ways in which you can make a contribution, what is realistic for you to do for yourself, your colleagues, the clientele with whom you work, and the Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education, and will you let people know what you can and are willing to do?

**References**


Squire, P. J. (2003). Strategies for enhancing women’s full participation in sustainable agricultural development and environmental conservation in sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education, 10*(1), 5-10.


