

12-1-2012

Perception Meets Reality: A Case Study of Faculty and Student Reflections of Participation in the 2011 World (AIAEE) Conference and Related Activities

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Recommended Citation

Rutherford, T. (2012). Perception Meets Reality: A Case Study of Faculty and Student Reflections of Participation in the 2011 World (AIAEE) Conference and Related Activities. *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, 19(3), 50-62. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5191/jiaee.2012.19305>

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Abstract

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doi: 10.5191/jiaee.2012.19305

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Abstract

Students benefit much from participating in international experiences. So too do faculty. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore faculty members' and students' pre- and post-reflections of participation in the 2011 World (AIAEE) Conference. Seven faculty members (four female and three male faculty members) and six students (three female and three male students; five graduates and one undergraduate) at Texas A&M University were purposefully selected to participate in the study. Respondents recorded their pre-conference reflections about Namibian life, its agricultural systems/practices, and barriers prohibiting participation in international agricultural research or development activities approximately one month before the conference; post-conference reflections were recorded about one month after the conference. Faculty and students alike held similar thoughts about Namibia and her peoples, agricultural systems, and practices during the reflection exercises. Respondents described Namibia as a poverty-stricken, desert-like country where classism existed and agriculture was defined as small-scale, subsistence production practices. Post-conference reflections were changed by the experience; respondents standardized their experiences using their own cultural lenses and U.S.-centric views. Both groups reported time away from family, financial concerns, and language skills as barriers prohibiting international involvement. Future AIAEE conferences in non-U.S. locations should include pre- and post-conference experiences for faculty and students, apart from the conference venue, to broaden participants' perspectives about life and agricultural systems/practices in the host country.

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Introduction

New communication technologies and networks continue to lessen the knowledge gaps between known and unknown facts about foreign lands from U.S. perspectives. Faculty, students, and scientists worldwide communicate more readily as networks become more reliable, and these communications are changing education, business, and lifestyles. While near equal evidence can be found to support students' and faculty members' participation in international experiences, understanding if these two groups view such experiences equally or differently may be the greatest long-term benefit. A graduate course at Texas A&M University took advantage of the location (Namibia) for the Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education (AIAEE) 2011 World Conference to explore students' and faculty members' pre- and post-experience reflections of Namibia and its agricultural systems.

The *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education (JIAEE)* has served its readers well in reporting the benefits, barriers, and issues of international study, research, and service opportunities. Most *JIAEE* studies of this nature have been devoted to students' knowledge of international issues, preparedness for international study, concerns, and/or barriers to participating in international educational experiences (Andreasen, 2003; Briers, Shinn, & Nguyen, 2010; Bruening & Frick, 2004a; Bruening & Frick, 2004b; Connors, 2004; Ingram, Smith-Hollins, & Radhakrishna, 2009; Irani, Place, & Friedel, 2006; McGowan, 2007; Tritz & Martin, 1997; Wingenbach, Chmielewski, Smith, Piña, & Hamilton, 2006; Wingenbach, et al. 2003). Although not as prevalent over the past decade, recent *JIAEE* articles have focused on globalization effects experienced by faculty in teaching and research abroad opportunities (Dooley

& Rouse, 2009; Dooley, Dooley, & Carranza, 2008; Harder, Wingenbach, & Rosser, 2007). Minimal research exists whereby students' and faculty members' beliefs and/or concerns of the same international experience were considered under the same setting. Do students' pre- and post-experience reflections mirror faculty members' reflections of the same experience?

Students' Perspectives

Most recently, Briers et al. (2010) found a "positive relationship between students' willingness to study abroad and their beliefs that participating in a study abroad program would improve their competitiveness in the global marketplace" (p. 15). Other influences on students' decisions to participate in international educational experiences included affordability, the country itself, and subject matter. Financial issues posed the greatest barrier to participation; another difficulty was the language barrier. Briers et al. learned that students preferred faculty-led programs or similar experiences. Briers found that students' fears can be mitigated sufficiently so that, when given the opportunity to study abroad with faculty guidance, they would do it. Perhaps a similar, yet unspoken, situation exists for faculty members. That is, do faculty members participating in their "initial" international experience mirror students' fears about such experiences?

Ample evidence exists from previous studies related to undergraduates' perceptions of international educational experiences. Among those include Wingenbach et al. (2003), who found that students' knowledge of international agricultural policies, products, peoples, and cultures could be advanced through increased experiential learning via study abroad. Wingenbach et al. (2006) followed

up the earlier study with a more focused effort in the form of a case study of undergraduates participating, in what for some was their “first ever” experience, in a series of Texas–Mexico field days. Prior to traveling to Mexico, students expressed negative attitudes toward the country and perceived its agricultural practices to be traditional and not technologically advanced. The students expressed concerns related to personal safety, language, finances, and family as barriers to participating in an international experience. Post-experience reflection revealed attitudinal changes; students expressed positive beliefs about the people and practices in Mexico. However, the identified barriers to international experiences of personal safety, language, finances, and family remained unchanged. Others (Bruening & Frick, 2004b; Connors, 2004) found undergraduate students to be positive about their international experiential learning situations. Can the same be said about graduate students’ international experiential learning situations?

Faculty Members’ Perspectives

Dooley and Rouse (2009) reported on the longitudinal effects of the Faculty Abroad Seminar (FAS) at Texas A&M University. One aspect of the FAS was “to contribute to the internationalization of faculty by directly exposing them to the culture, history, government, business, and language of Mexico” (p. 40). Texas A&M’s FAS program provided culturally-enriched experiences (10-day seminars in Mexico), for which more than 135 members had participated in up to the time of the Dooley and Rouse (2009) study. The authors conducted a census study of all participants from 1994–2007. Respondents reported that their FAS participation had changed them personally and professionally, most notably through improved teaching techniques such as incorporating case studies and more

international topics into their curriculum. It was also reported that their research had been impacted by making new contacts in Mexico and by expanding research opportunities for their graduate students. “Faculty research impacts are an integral part of higher education faculty development” (p. 55).

Dooley and Rouse (2009) was actually an extension of the Dooley et al. (2008) research concerning faculty members’ beliefs, barriers, and benefits to participation in the Texas A&M University FAS seminar in Mexico. In that earlier study, Dooley et al. (2008) found (through analyses of the respondents’ perceived changes as a result of their participation) that “collaboration with Mexican faculty and institutions was not as difficult as originally thought; personal relationships were critical for international collaboration” (p. 36) to occur; and, participants gained a deeper “appreciation of the diversity of Mexican culture after participation” (p. 36) in the FAS seminar. The authors also noted that junior faculty members’ workloads and time constraints were added pressures in the promotion and tenure process that prohibited, or at a minimum inhibited, their participation in the FAS seminar. Although this finding is most likely a realistic outcome at all land-grant universities, it is probably a better indicator of the “culture” of scholarship at our institutions, rather than a telling philosophy about internationalization at our schools. The Dooley et al. (2008) study used qualitative analyses of the “pre-reflection–post-reflection” method, first introduced to the AIAEE profession by Jones and Bjelland (2004), and expanded and formalized by Wingenbach et al. (2006).

Hand, Ricketts, and Bruening (2007) studied faculty members’ professional development activities vis-à-vis their international experiences. Faculty reported

“improved teaching techniques, increased integration of international examples, and a heightened global perspective; they perceived student benefits included a more diverse viewpoint on world events, improved interpersonal interactions, and increased post-graduation employability” (p. 148). Faculty also reported their barriers included costs, limited resources, and time commitment.

Finally, one study (Harder et al., 2007) was found in the *JIAEE* that focused on graduate students’ and faculty members’ perceived factors affecting international research opportunities. United States faculty and graduate students perceived an increased level of international collaboration in programmatic and research opportunities after having participated in an international research project (in partnership with a Mexican agricultural university). Personal interests and commonality in research goals facilitated collaboration. Graduate students perceived increased opportunities for research, although language/communication difficulties presented barriers to collaboration. All respondents noted work schedules, lack of university resources, and time constraints as additional barriers to their international research prospects. Harder et al. (2007) concluded that despite the barriers, faculty and graduate students should be recruited and encouraged to participate in international research projects because of the many benefits derived from such experiences.

The theoretical framework was based upon Rogers’ (2003) diffusion of innovations theory. Rogers defined an innovation as “an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption” (p. 12). In this study, the innovation was operationally defined as participation in the 2011 World (AIAEE) Conference in Namibia. Rogers wrote that innovations perceived to have high degrees

of relative advantage are more likely to be adopted; relative advantage is the degree to which an innovation is perceived as being better than the idea it supersedes. However, relative advantage can be counterbalanced by one’s barriers to participation (Schifter, 2000); so, we need to study both relative advantage and barriers.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to explore faculty members’ and students’ pre- and post-reflections about participating in the 2011 World (AIAEE) Conference in Namibia. Research objectives were to

1. Compare participants’ pre- and post-conference reflections about “life” in Namibia,
2. Compare participants’ pre- and post-conference reflections about “agricultural systems/practices” in Namibia,
3. Identify internal and external barriers to participating in international agricultural research or development activities, and
4. Describe participants’ expected personal gains from participating in the 2011 World (AIAEE) Conference in Namibia.

Methods

Background information for the 2011 World (AIAEE) Conference in Namibia as well as the study’s design, participants, and an explicit description of the research instruments are presented to facilitate understanding of this research. Following are subsections for each area.

Context for the 2011 World (AIAEE) Conference

The 2011 World (AIAEE) Conference in Namibia was hosted and supported, in part, by the University of Namibia (UNAM), Agricultural Scientific Society of Namibia (AGRISSON),

International Federation of Information Technology in Agriculture (INFITA), and the International Association of Agricultural Information Specialists (IAALD). INFITA and the IAALD were non-Namibia associations. The 2011 World Conference theme was “*Sustainable Value Chain Agriculture for Food Security and Economic Development.*”

The 2011 World (AIAEE) Conference was only the fourth occurrence in 27 years in which the AIAEE participated in a joint conference with host national institutions/associations. Three previous joint conferences were held in Trinidad/Tobago (1999), South Africa (2002), and Ireland (2004) (J. Elliot, personal communication, January 3, 2012). One must note the importance of this distinction for AIAEE members because, although AIAEE members had separate research paper sessions and business meetings in Namibia, other organizations’ members could, and did, join them for other activities. A pre-conference educational trip (three days) to northern Namibia (mostly for graduate students) and on-campus (three-day) professional development workshops (mostly for UNAM faculty members) were well attended by graduate and faculty members alike. Three- to five-day post-conference educational tours throughout Namibia were offered and well attended by faculty members and graduate students (G. Wingenbach, personal communication, January 16, 2012). Multiple day activities allowed faculty and students ample time to interact with Namibians, thereby increasing opportunities to more fully discuss and understand life and agricultural systems in Namibia.

Study Design

A qualitative case study was used to conduct this research (Schmuck, 2006). Kenny and Grotelueschen (1984) wrote that

qualitative case studies can be characterized as detailed studies of separate cases that identify and describe phenomena, and contribute to the development of theory. Case studies provide detailed and holistic descriptions on the phenomena under study, often using recognizable and non-technical language (Kenny & Grotelueschen, 1984).

Seven faculty members and six students at Texas A&M University were chosen purposefully for the data collection process. Merriam (1998) stated “purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and, therefore, must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 61). Five of the six students enrolled in independent studies courses as part of their 2011 World (AIAEE) Conference participation. The researcher directed some of those independent studies but did not collect data directly from students or faculty responding to this study; a different researcher collected and assisted in the analyses of data.

Prior to participation in the 2011 World (AIAEE) Conference in Namibia, faculty members and students completed a pre-reflection exercise to benchmark their pre-conference reflections about life in Namibia, its agricultural systems/practices, and the internal and external barriers to participating in international agricultural research or development activities. Jones and Bjelland (2004) wrote

Pre-reflection is a process of being consciously aware of the expectations associated with the learning experience...it increases the readiness capacity of students to learn from their experiences, thereby increasing their capacity to reflect upon the concrete experience and increasing the overall learning by the student. *Pre-reflection* provides a

bridge between thinking about an experience and actually learning from the experience. (p. 963)

Following the 2011 World (AIAEE) Conference, faculty and students completed a post-conference reflection exercise. Brockbank and McGill (1998, as cited in Gamble, Davey, & Chan, 1999) noted that

Reflection may be defined as firstly, the process by which an experience is brought into consideration, while it is happening or subsequently; and secondly, the creation of meaning and conceptualization from experience. Critical reflection may develop one's potentiality to look at things as other than they are. (p. 2)

Preflection and post-conference reflection instruments were modified from the originals established by Wingenbach et al. (2006). Both instruments contained similar, open-ended questions (Table 1), and the preflection instrument had four background information questions. To accurately capture participants' pre- and post-reflections, the researcher enlisted assistance to create a web-based survey whereby participants entered their thoughts in an untimed format. Respondents received an invitation to enter (unique login names and passwords) the secured online preflection exercise one month prior to the 2011 World (AIAEE) Conference; the post-reflection occurred within one month after conferees returned to Texas.

Table 1. Participation in the 2011 World (AIAEE) Conference: Online Survey Instrument, 2011

Preflection Instructions and Questions	Post-reflection Instructions and Questions
Instructions: There are no correct or incorrect responses to the essay questions; we are only interested in your honest answers. To complete the essays, no individual research is needed on your part; we only want to know what you think about Namibia.	Instructions: Please remember there are no correct or incorrect responses to these questions; we are only interested in your honest answers.
1. In general, what are your preconceptions, beliefs, and/or views about "life" on the African continent?	1. Overall, were your pre-trip beliefs and/or views about "life" on the African continent changed after participating in the 2011 World Conference? If yes, how were they changed?
2. In general, what are your preconceptions, beliefs, and/or views about "life" in Namibia?	2. Overall, were your pre-trip beliefs/views about "life" in Namibia changed after the 2011 World Conference? If yes, how were they changed?
3. Describe, specifically, your top five pre-trip preconceptions, beliefs, and/or views about life in Namibia.	3. Now that you've experienced Namibia in person, please describe your top five beliefs/views about life there.
4. In general, what are your preconceptions, beliefs, and/or views about "agricultural systems/practices" in Namibia?	4. Again, now that you've experienced Namibia, what are your beliefs/views about its "agricultural systems/practices?"
5. Describe, specifically, your top five pre-trip preconceptions, beliefs, and/or views about	5. Please describe your top five beliefs/views about agricultural systems/practices in

Preflection Instructions and Questions	Post-reflection Instructions and Questions
agricultural systems/practices in Namibia.	Namibia.
6. What do you think are the opportunities for participating in international agricultural research or development activities?	6. Now that you've traveled abroad, what do you think about participating in international agricultural research or development activities?
7. Describe, specifically, the top three "internal barriers" that prevent you from participating in international agricultural research or development activities.	7. Thinking about your recent international experience, please describe your top three "internal barriers" that would prevent you from participating in international agricultural research or development activities.
8. Describe, specifically, the top three "external barriers" that prevent you from participating in international agricultural research or development activities.	8. Thinking about your recent travels, please describe your top three "external barriers" that would prevent you from participating in international agricultural research or development activities.
9. What do you expect to gain "personally" from participating in this international activity?	9. Did you fulfill your expectations of personal gains from participating in this international activity? Why or why not?

Note: Questions 1 and 6 were not analyzed for this study.

Data were coded (e.g., FFc = Female Faculty, MSt = Male Student, etc.) to protect respondents' anonymity and then were thematically analyzed using content analysis. Content analysis is a "reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material" and identifies "core consistencies and meanings" (Patton, 2002, p. 453). Data were examined for recurring word patterns; themes were derived from those patterns. To ensure rigor, an external evaluator reviewed the data analyses, resulting in the confirmation of thematic patterns.

The study is limited in its generalizability by its representative participant group. Additionally, the ability to probe deeper into respondents' answers was limited by the use of a survey instrument, which may have limited the depth of the findings.

Results

Background information is provided to help the reader better understand the respondent group. Faculty members and graduate students at Texas A&M University were asked three questions during the preflection exercise that provided descriptive content for this study (Table 2). Respondents included four female and three male faculty members, and three female and three male students (five graduates and one undergraduate). Among the faculty members, twice as many had traveled to Africa and/or Namibia, and had participated in a study abroad course or research abroad project, than lacked this background. Less than one-half of the students responded positively to the same background information questions (Table 2).

Table 2. Frequencies for Respondents' Background Information

Questions	Faculty (n = 7)		Students (n = 6)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Have you traveled to Africa prior to the July 2011 trip?	5	2	3	3
Have you traveled to NAMIBIA prior to the July 2011 trip?	2	5	0	5
Have you ever participated in a study abroad course or research abroad project?	7	0	2	4

Life in Namibia

The first objective was completed by analyzing respondents' data for questions #2 and 3 on the pre- and post-conference reflection questionnaires. Participants' pre-conference reflections about "life" in Namibia centered on depicting Namibian life as being *poverty-stricken*, where *classism* still exists because of European influences, but it was also a country *rich in natural resources* despite a *desert existence*. Faculty members and students provided similar input, from which these themes emerged. A few responses related to communications, with a focus on modern luxuries (Wifi, e-mail, etc.) being present in large cities but lacking in rural areas. Preflective thoughts about "life" in Namibia were best summed up by several faculty members' comments.

- FFc: "They have more people living below the poverty line, but this doesn't mean that everyone does, and I expect there to be upper, middle and lower income levels evident. 1) Not expecting skyscrapers; 2) Different style of public transportation; 3) More poverty visible; 4) Interesting wildlife; and, 5) Different education system."
- MFc: "A hard way of life; Gender issues; Racial inequality; and A broad gap between the "haves and have nots."

Students' preflective thoughts were more focused on *food* (MSt: "The food of

Namibia will be heavy on meat, rice, cassava, and fruit," FSt: "I expect to see a corn/barley based staple food") and *living conditions* (MSt: "Lots of empty land," "Rural population struggles with collecting adequate water for family use," FSt: "typical comforts will be missed (internet, cell phone...etc.), cold showers, dirty toilets").

Post-conference reflections about Namibian life revealed changes in respondents' beliefs about how Namibians coped with daily conditions. Faculty members commented on how Namibians in rural areas (witnessed on pre- and post-conference activities) *maximized resources* (FFc: "all showed how dedicated Namibians are to working with the resources they have and with developing new resources, physical and human ones," and MFc: "People everywhere can be happy with or without material items"). Also evident was respondents' *standardization of culture*, in that daily Namibian routines were viewed as resembling those found in the U.S. (e.g., FFc: "I truly believed that I would not have access to many things in my typical routine. So wandering through the grocery stores, driving through the small towns, and visiting the Etosha National Park presented strikingly similar experiences to life in the United States"). Students responded more about the *lack of visible poverty*, than did faculty members. Several students commented about Namibia's *socioeconomic status*, with some comparing it to that of South Africa, although South Africa's Gross Domestic Product was 36 times greater than

Namibia's (\$14.6B) in 2010 (CIA World Factbook, 2011).

- FSt: "I had no idea that Namibia would be as developed in appearance. We did see some poverty, but traveling through Namibia reminded me more of West Texas than anyplace in Africa I have seen."
- MSt: "Life in Namibia is socioeconomically similar to that of South Africa."
- FSt: "Almost everywhere we went, everyone had a cell phone."

Agricultural Systems/Practices in Namibia

Objective two was derived from respondents' data for questions #4 and 5 on the pre- and post-conference reflection questionnaires. Participants' pre-conference reflections about Namibia's agricultural systems and practices clustered around traditional views of *pre-mechanized production practices*, *land tenure systems*, and *small-scale subsistence agrarian communities*. Students wrote more about their beliefs, whereas faculty members were more likely to provide short list responses. Examples of the thematic areas derived from the pre-reflection exercise included:

- MSt: "Ethnic divisions still cause tension in society. White families still control productive commercial agriculture land; Agrarian communities dominate social and economic systems; Majority of black African communities rely on local production and/or small rural vendors for getting food supplies."
- FSt: "I expect to see agricultural development still at the rudimentary level as compared to

that of developed countries like the US. Agricultural development that involved the use of limited inputs with poor yields/production."

- MFc: "Less mechanized. Different species of domesticated animals; Less mechanization of agriculture; Wide discrepancy between small holders and large landholders; and Agriculture that is less research-based."

Post-conference themes emanating from respondents' reflections about Namibia's agricultural systems/practices included *environmental concerns* (MFc: "agricultural production can be increased, but it has to be done in the context of their environment and constraints;" FFc: "They have a difficult task balancing agriculture with the environment and wildlife conservation"), *food security* (FFc: "Food security is a much bigger concern than food safety;" MSt: "crop production will continue to be low and food security over time will be a challenge"), and *modernization* (MFc: "U.S. should not view Namibia/Africa as having antiquated agricultural practices that no longer are beneficial or prosperous;" FSt: "Developed agriculture system in the south of the country with good handle on animal diseases, meat processing, marketing, and breeding").

Barriers to Participating in International Agricultural Research or Development Activities

The third objective was answered by analyzing respondents' data for questions #7 and 8 on the pre- and post-conference questionnaires. As a group, participants' pre-conference reflections centered on cultural illiteracy, time (apart from family), and finances as the primary barriers to participating in international agricultural

research or development activities. Faculty members were more concerned about *time*, and *acquiring similar research interests*, whereas students mentioned *financial concerns*, and *travel factors* (e.g., “airline difficulties,” “potable water,” and “politics”) as barriers prohibiting their international involvement.

The most prevalent themes emerging from the post-conference reflections centered on *finances*, *familial displacement*, and oddly, *language skills*, although all commented that Namibia’s English-speaking population posed no difficulties in communications; apparently language skills in a non-U.S. location weighed heavy on respondents’ minds.

Expected Personal Gains from Participation in the 2011 World (AIAEE) Conference

The final objective was answered by analyzing respondents’ data for question #9 on the pre- and post-conference reflection questionnaires. Participants’ pre-conference expected personal gains from participation in the 2011 World (AIAEE) Conference were focused on *cultural understanding (appreciation of Namibian culture)*, *networking*, and *increased knowledge about international research*. Considering the 2011 World Conference was extremely far from the U.S., several faculty members commented that the travel experience itself would be a life-changing event (e.g., “This is going to stretch me and make me think about areas of the world that I don’t think about regularly”).

Post-conference reflections included *experience integration into local curricula* (FFc: “Most of my previous thoughts had been very one-sided, what can my students get out of it, typically skill based. Now I have a stronger belief that the skill is only a small part of what a student or faculty member gets out of participating in these

activities.”), *professional networks*, (MSt: “I made many contacts that will prove useful in beginning a career in international agricultural development”), and *increased research knowledge* (FSt: “Yes I did fulfill my expectations of participating in this program. I learned a lot from the research presentations, round table discussions and the Pre-conference tour. I was also able to network with colleagues and senior experts in the field of Agricultural Education and Extension”). Rogers’ (2003) use of relative advantage (the degree to which an innovation [idea, practice, or object] is perceived as being better than the idea it supersedes) has applicability to personal gains. Respondents considered their gains as a result of attending (as opposed to not attending) the 2011 World Conference, which produced specific useful attributes that could not have been acquired by not participating in the conference. Future studies should explore factors affecting or affected by relative advantage, and other aspects of Rogers’ (2003) diffusion of innovations theory.

Conclusions, Recommendations, and Implications

The 2011 World (AIAEE) Conference in Namibia provided selected Texas A&M University faculty members and students alike the opportunity to experience a country very different, yet somewhat similar to, their own state. The pre-reflection and post-reflection exercises produced similar results to those found by Harder et al. (2007) and Wingenbach et al. (2006). In both cases, those researchers found U.S. participants’ perceptions of Mexico, its agricultural systems and culture were transformed after having participated in faculty-guided experiences. Students, and researchers, had more positive, progressive beliefs about Mexico and its agricultural systems during the post-reflection exercises

(Harder et al., 2007; Wingenbach et al., 2006). Consistent with those findings, respondents' perceptions about Namibian life and its agricultural systems/practices were changed, most notably from participation in pre- and post-conference field experiences beyond the conference venue in Windhoek, Namibia.

Rogers' (2003) use of relative advantage is clearly supported by the fact that only conferees had opportunities (field experiences beyond the conference venue) to experience innovations (ideas, practices, or objects) that changed their perceptions about Namibian life and its agricultural systems/practices. Future AIAEE conferences in non-U.S. locations should include pre- and post-conference experiences, apart from the conference venue, to broaden participants' perspectives about host country life and agricultural systems/practices. Future AIAEE conferences in U.S. locations should have similar experiences for non-U.S. participants so their views are broadened about U.S. life and agricultural systems/practices.

Dooley and Rouse (2009) reported that participants in the Texas A&M University FAS program had changed personally and professionally, most notably through improved teaching techniques (also found by Hand et al., 2007), such as incorporating case studies and more international topics in their curriculum. In similar fashion, faculty members participating in the 2011 World (AIAEE) Conference in Namibia realized that the very experience itself would provide curricula enrichment for their future courses at Texas A&M University. Also, Dooley et al. (2008) found faculty members' networks for research collaboration in Mexico increased through the FAS program, as was found in the study by Harder et al. (2007). Students who participated in this study noted increased opportunities to conduct research

and/or collaborate on research projects in Namibia, after having attended the 2011 World (AIAEE) Conference. Perhaps students were more optimistic about future research projects in Namibia than were faculty members because of enamored feelings about travel to Namibia. Just as likely, maybe faculty members disassociate actual research projects from research conferences in non-U.S. sites because of a greater sense of programmatic barriers to the research process in foreign lands. Additional research into this phenomenon is warranted if the AIAEE is serious about expanding its role and impact in international agricultural and extension education research programs.

Finally, the preflexion/post-reflection process, introduced by Jones and Bjelland (2004) and formalized by Wingenbach et al. (2006), was found to be a worthy exercise for students and faculty members alike in this study. However, the process can be improved too. Future studies of this nature should determine the sources of respondents' perception base. Did they study statistics on Namibian life and/or its agricultural practices? Were respondents' preflexions based on something other than scientific fact, such as "I think that..." or "I heard that..." or were they based in research specifically about Namibia?

A close examination of the barriers to participating in international agricultural research or development activities revealed very similar issues reported in earlier studies (Briers et al., 2010; Dooley et al., 2008; Harder et al., 2007; Wingenbach et al., 2006); resources (i.e., time, financial, institutional support) and personal confidence (i.e., language skills, cultural literacy) continue to limit faculty members' and students' full engagement in international experiences. Can these barriers be lessened or removed entirely from our collective efforts at globalization of our institutions? Additional AIAEE conference

research should be conducted to find solutions at lessening and/or removing such barriers. U.S. and non-U.S. conference sites offer much to enrich conferees' experiences; we need to continue developing greater understanding of our collective international experiences. And, we need to share those experiences with others who cannot attend the annual AIAEE conference.

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