

THE HISTORY

OF THE

INTERNATIONAL

JOINT COURSE

ON AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

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The History of the JOINT COURSE

After 14 successful JOINT COURSES for agricultural teachers from northern Europe the international committee decided to write the history of the courses.

We do have an international committee, but when you have read this report, you may conclude that there is no organisation and it has worked excellently.

Initiation

The JOINT COURSE owes its origin to a group of gentlemen:

Mr J. C. G. Mellars, Her Majesty's Inspector; U.K. Co-ordinator of inspectors until 1970

Mr John L. Smedley, Her Majesty's Inspector; U.K. Co-ordinator 1970-1983

Mr Brian H. Procter, Her Majesty's Inspector; U.K. Course Director 1970-1985

Mr S. R. G. Downs, Her Majesty's Inspector; U.K. Horticultural education

Mr Peter van der Schans, Director, Ministry of Agriculture, Netherlands

Mr G. Veenstra, Inspector, Netherlands

Mr Ottar Fjærvoll, Principal, Norway

Mr Arne Wold, Ministry of Agriculture, Norway

These initiators were responsible for and partners in agricultural education in their own countries. The initiative to establish the JOINT COURSE was their own. They had not been authorised by anybody to take the initiative.

They believed in learning from each other, and they emphasised as the basis for their initiative the close relationship or friendship which existed between them.

The JOINT COURSES have been held as follows:

1965	Norway	Melsom	1983	Norway	Sarpsborg-Storsteigen
1968	Netherlands	Emmeloord	1985	Ireland	Kildalton – Ulster
1970	UK	Harper Adams-Berkshire	1988	Netherlands	Ede – Horst
1973	Sweden	Stenkvista – Rättvik	1990	UK	Edinburgh-Aberdeen
1975	Netherlands	Wageningen	1992	Iceland	Reykir - Holar-Hvanneyri
1978	Denmark	Veilby – Lyngby	1994	Finland	Mantsäla
1980	UK	Suttleworth-Edinburgh	1996	Sweden	Hvilan

Before the JOINT COURSE

John Smedley and Peter van der Schans met in 1962 at a 4-week international course for agricultural teachers in Zürich in Switzerland. The courses were organised by Centre International d'Etudes Agricole. These courses moved later to another centre and became known as the Zollikofen courses. They are still run every 4th year, but now at Freiburg. Peter van der Schans reports that after the Second World War international contacts between the national authorities for agricultural research, education and extension service in Europe were greatly influenced by the Marshall Plan and the contacts were notably personal in character.

Many people made study trips to the USA within the framework of the Marshall Plan. They met regularly, mostly in Paris at meetings set up by OECD.

This "regular conference of directors in agricultural education" existed for many years. The "Cha-Cha-Cha" played an important role. They were Chavan from France and Chaponnier and Chatelain from Switzerland. From the Netherlands director N. J. A. van Keulen and J. M. Penders from the extension service often went

to Paris. They advocated an international course in agricultural education and extension.

Switzerland started the above mentioned courses and the Dutch later started an international IAC-course in Wageningen. Mr van Keulen taught at Zürich and defended the Dutch opinion that an agricultural school need not to have a school farm but access to practical schools.

General Ideas about the JOINT COURSE

The main objective was that one should learn about each other and learn from one another.

In Zürich the initiators were together with educationalists from the whole world.

They found in the Zürich course it was impossible to identify common problems in agricultural education, because individual experience and cultural background differed so widely among participants from different parts of the world.

The strict discipline and the work ethos did not appeal to John Smedley and Peter van der Schans. The atmosphere was probably necessary because of the large differences in experience and culture of the participants, and it was reinforced by American participants, who at times gave the impression, that they had to check whether their Marshall dollars were being well spent in Europe.

In the scarce free time during the course John Smedley and Peter van der Schans concluded, that it should be possible to arrange international meetings of agricultural teachers, which were designed to meet more specifically the kind of problems which we were meeting in the schools and colleges of agriculture - particularly in northern Europe.

Initial Steps

When Mr Smedley returned to the U.K. he discussed the ideas with his inspector colleagues and it was decided to plan an initial international course somewhere in Europe and so design it that the content would be more closely related to the experience and problem of agricultural teachers in a region of northern Europe.

They didn't want to be too specific at this early stage but hoped to build up experience. One of the English inspectors, Mr H. L. Fenn had personal contact with Ottar Fjærvoll at Melsom in Norway, so Mr Fjærvoll was approached and John Smedley went to Norway in the early part of 1965 to discuss possible arrangements for a Joint International Course in the summer of 1965. Mr Fjærvoll was a great support and worked hard to make the course a great success. Norway at that time had just appointed a young inspector, named Arne Wold, who for many years became a great supporter of the JOINT COURSES. Their enthusiasm reflected the close relationship and little bureaucracy in Norway and the U.K. at that time.

This enabled Mr Fjærvoll to realise the first JOINT COURSE, and he is remembered as a person with great charisma.

Target Group

The courses were intended for inspectors, principals, teachers and others engaged daily in the training of young farmers and horticulturists. Forestry was not excluded, but did not appear prominently, though Scandinavian teachers were very interested in the subject. Inspectors tended to take the lead during the first courses, but gradually the teachers became more involved in course content and were in majority numerically. Recently employed representatives from institutions which are not colleges but linked to or dependent of education have attended in increasing numbers.

Family members began to be included as participants. Numbers of family members were more significant from some countries than from others. It has always been at a modest level. Arne Wold would limit the total size to two buses.

John Smedley provides these comments about the target group:

“It was left for each country to decide the composition of its participant group. Where a participating country had a number of agricultural education/training inspectors they were present at the international courses in larger proportion than a country, which had only one inspector. It was not possible to dictate to participating countries, which they should send - especially as each country was financing its own participation group. Each country decided for itself, which its participants should be. There was no intention to exclude any particular group providing the participating country thought it would be beneficial for them to attend.

In the U.K. we invited a practical farmer to attend one of the courses with us. But we were keen to involve leading farmers in the development of education, and this was one way in which we could inform them, what we were doing to train entrants to the farming industry.

Inspectors tended to be the key persons during the courses until the time of my retirement in 1983. The personal contacts (on which the organisation of the courses depended) began during the early days in Zurich and they continued to be the key feature in the planning of the international courses. An important characteristic of the programme of courses was the strength of relationship between the individual national organisers. And in the early years of the courses this meant the inspectors from each country. If agricultural teachers become more involved in the organisation I think that would be a good development.

Any changes in methods of organisation or of the interests involved in planning programmes might require care in ensuring that the main objectives of improving the experiences of agricultural teachers, in ways which subsequently would benefit students, have not to be forgotten.

Family members were always made welcome, although sometimes when accommodation was limited the numbers involved had to be watched. Initiators did not undertake detailed planning for the family members but simply responded to request from families to be included. I always thought it was a very good thing to include family members (if they could be accommodated) as their presence strengthened relationships between participants.”

Number of Participants

	<i>NL</i>	<i>UK</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>DK</i>	<i>Ir</i>	<i>Ic</i>	<i>Fi</i>	<i>OT</i>	<i>Sum</i>
1965	2	27	18	1					3	52
1968	24	21	2							47
1970	25	28	6	8	1					68
1973	24	35	17	24	4					104
1975	32	25	9	10	11	1				88
1977	26	4	8	11	18	4				71
1980	31	30	8	12	9	4	1	1		96
1983	28	31	20	14	8	4	1	1	2	109
1988	29	23	10	21	10	4	3	2		102
1990	31	32	13	30	18	7	10	4	5	150
1992	21	19	12	20	11	1	20	7	14	150
1994	22	2	14	10	9	3	4	24	9	97
1996	22	0	14	22	4	2	2	17	5	88
1998										

Countries

The JOINT COURSE was started as an activity among The Netherlands, U.K. and Norway. The intention was to gather 20 participants from each country every 2 or 3 years.

The first 3 courses were thus held in Norway (1965), Netherlands (1968), and in England (1970). But Mr Bekkevik who had finance responsibilities in Norway felt itself small in relation to the other two nations as far as agricultural education was concerned.

They convinced Sweden to be host in 1973, and already in 1968 Mr Procter from England invited Denmark to participate, and Mr I. C. Mortensen was the first Danish participant taking part in 1970 in England.

The intention was in 1973, that Scandinavia should be one third with Netherlands and England being each one third. The courses were intended to be held every 2 or 3 years rotating in these 3 thirds. But the activities became still more popular. The number of participants exceeded the formerly mentioned 60. It was doubled,

and gradually Ireland, Finland and Iceland had the opportunity to participate. They were eager to present their own country, organising a JOINT COURSE. This is reflected in the statistics.

Arne Wold: “It was emphasised, that it should not be a formal organisation and it should not be carried by national agreements but by mutual friendly relationship and enthusiasm. Norway had before the war got pedagogical inspiration in agricultural education from Germany, particularly Wilhelmshaven, but particularly Ottar Fjærvold said that ideas and principles might also be obtained elsewhere, and as he was a little anglophile, he was looking towards England, where he knew a certain Mr Fenn, who was among the participants at Melsom.”

Subjekts

Right from the beginning the program for each course consisted of a presentation of agricultural education in the host country, normally put into the frame of the agriculture it is intended to serve and related to the general education on which it builds.

Moreover one or more specific topics are illustrated and discussed. These specific topics are listed in the following.

Specific Topics

<i>Course no.</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Specific topics</i>
<i>I.</i>	1965 No	Agricultural education in host country, pedagogical principles
<i>II.</i>	1968 Ne	Agricultural education in host country.
<i>III.</i>	1970 U.K.	Agricultural education in host country.
<i>IV.</i>	1973 S	Agricultural education in host country. Audio-visual aids.
<i>V.</i>	1975 Ne	Agricultural education in host country.
<i>VI.</i>	1977 DK	Curriculum content. Teacher training.
<i>VII.</i>	1980 U.K.	Staff training. Curriculum development.
<i>VIII.</i>	1983 No	Teacher training. Main environmental problem in each country.
<i>IX.</i>	1985 I r	Amenity gardening and farm based industries. Services for farmers. Agri-Tourism.
<i>X.</i>	1988 Ne	Computer technology in agricultural education. The environment in agricultural education.
<i>XI.</i>	1990 Sc	1. Towards Harmonisation of European Qualifications. 2. Problems the European Rural Sector is Facing with regard to Diversification, Depopulation and the Needs for Retraining
<i>XII.</i>	1992 Ic	Statement on Qualification map. Environmental curriculum. Plant Protection Certificate.
<i>XIII.</i>	1994 Fi	Quality in education and products. Networking and Internationalising
<i>XIV.</i>	1996 S	Co-operation School-Working life. Nature conservation – Environment - Landscaping. Education for rural development.
<i>XV.</i>	1998 Ne	Information technology and Communication technology. Structure of educational qualifications. Amalgamation/fusion of colleges

Duration of Course

From the beginning of the JOINT COURSES the length of each course was two weeks.

Later expectations towards joint course still maintained the course at duration of at least one week. The expectations were that participants should without hurry be able to obtain a global view of the host country and the conditions for agriculture as well as for agricultural training.

The specific items tended to require an increased proportion of attention, and group discussions found its way also to the JOINT COURSES requiring time.

In most cases and particularly when the course had 10 days duration it was divided in two parts. Some participants were not able to be absent from home for the whole time, and possibly also for the host country it could be easier to divide between two centres. For the majority of participants the division served to get acquainted with a larger part of the country.

Language

The JOINT COURSES began with the English language as the only and common language facilitating communication. This was one of the reasons to limit the participating countries to those around the North Sea.

It has worked very satisfactorily providing a good opportunity for the participants to brush up their English and may be motivating them to study the language.

During the first courses group work was carried out with an Englishman as chairman and another as secretary facilitating the process, but this consideration has gradually disappeared as the general command of the English language improved.

Organisation

No formal organisation has ever been set up to organise the JOINT COURSES.

The initiators were in fact a small committee, and they organised in turn the courses every 2 or 3 years. They had a considerable influence in their own country, enabling them to organise a JOINT COURSE, and the impression was, that they were really able to get everybody in their country to join the efforts in hosting the course.

Who in each country took over the responsibility to organise a course varied from country to country according to the culture in the country. In most countries the ministry responsible for agricultural education took over, but if or when the ministry was reluctant to do so, other patterns ensued, possibly due to the concern of the persons involved.

Arne Wold emphasises: "We were very determined to avoid bureaucracy."

These "modus Vivendi" were listed in a document from July 17th 1992 prepared for the organising committee by the British delegation leader Mr Bernard Chandler.

Eventually an organising committee was listed by a hosting country, which may have felt the need of such a committee to legalise the efforts. It has never been questioned if the persons listed had any authorisation or democratic background!

But experience tells us, that it has worked. It is like England, which never had a constitution! The framework of the courses has been unchanged, and after each of the recent courses a report has been prepared. The later editions have been rather voluminous, but each participant has received a copy.

Lists with addresses have certainly served as a network for exchange and visits on many occasions.

Between the courses only a minimum of common activity is reported, but the future host has been very concerned about how to prepare a JOINT COURSE, which might present the country in the most satisfactory way from the participants' points of view.

To ensure the relevance of the topics it has been a tradition, that the above mentioned organising committee was invited for a preparatory meeting some 8 months before the course.

Finance

Each JOINT COURSE has had to be self-financing.

The host country has been responsible for its JOINT COURSE.

As a principle the participants have paid the fees as well as travelling.

The possibilities for the participants to get the expenses reimbursed have varied from country to country and from time to time.

In order to minimise the fee each national organising committee has worked intensively to obtain grants and various ways of support.

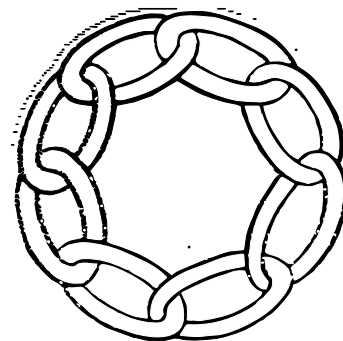
Some of the courses have been sponsored by commercial industrial organisations, agricultural co-operatives and farmers' organisations but often by ministries. (Norway + NL).

Level

The national committees organising their JOINT COURSE have involved themselves and have been able to involve their colleagues to an unexpected extent. In several cases they have also been able to convince sponsors about this exceptional event. This has led to, the JOINT COURSES being exceptionally valuable for each participant, and they have been very well esteemed at agricultural schools in the involved countries and possibly outside the normally participating countries, also.

Logo

At the occasion of the XIth JOINT COURSE in Iceland 1992 the organising committee asked the agricultural teacher and artist Trausti Eyjólfsson to develop a logo for the course. The 8 golden rings symbolises 8 participating countries. At the end of the course the logo was accepted as a logo for the JOINT COURSES in general, and colours representing a host country may be added.



Objectives - Mission Statement

Some efforts have now and then been made to define the objectives of the JOINT COURSES and make them up to date. The U.K. course-director 1970-83 Brian H. Procter states, that the objectives of the course was to learn about each others agricultural provision and to try to understand the industry which it served.

In 1994 in Finland the following was accepted as a **mission statement**:

The International JOINT COURSE enables senior personnel from various countries in land based vocational education mainly at senior secondary level to:

- * exchange views and information about educational developments in their own countries;
- * develop and maintain contacts for networking and the exchange of students and staff between countries;
- * gain technical and socio-economic information about the land-based industries of the host country;
- * gain information about the culture and organisation of the host country.

DESCRIPTION OF THE COURSES

The JOINT COURSE 1965 in Norway

The course was held at Melsom Agricultural College, situated 100 km south-south-west from Oslo. It had Ottar Fjærvoll as an outstanding principal and participants remember him as a charismatic leader of the first JOINT COURSE.

Probably the English proposal to set up a JOINT COURSE was delivered to him in 1965, and the fact that he organised the course the very same year shows his enthusiasm and his ability to convince the ministry (Arne Wold ea.) and colleagues about the idea.

He was president for the national committee for training in agriculture and was thus able to use the secretariat from there as a secretariat for the course, and as principal he could use the college resources as he thought necessary.

His mastery of the English language was reasonable and he spoke good English, although when he was asked, where he learned it, he answered: "From some dirty books".

The course was 7 days and it was a unity, but 5 days were spent at Melsom and 2 days in the Telemark Sceter (mountain meadow), because Fjærvoll wanted to show the participants the value and life quality of mountain farming.

Arne Wold had just been appointed by the Ministry of Church as a junior advisor for the agricultural schools. He had been very keen to ensure a sound financial base for the course, and for the Telemark excursion too, with one exception remember Mr van der Schans. He was unable to persuade the Norwegian government, that the participants deserved an aperitif before the meal. This gave the two Dutch observers the opportunity to show the Vikings their gratitude for the "royal" reception by offering an alcoholic aperitif.

The JOINT COURSE 1968 in the Netherlands

The course was held at Emmeloord Agricultural College. It was a meeting planned as bilateral with participants from England and The Netherlands with just two observers from Norway.

Each morning a Dutchman made a speech about a subject in The Netherlands and he was followed by a British speaker, who spoke about the same subject and how it was treated in his country. The subjects were agriculture, agricultural education, agricultural changes, agricultural production and food quality.

Course leader Peter van der Schans expressed his wishes that the course might contribute to the participants coming closer to each other, and that it might increase rural, social and economic welfare as well as contribute to better qualities and quantities of agricultural production.

Mr van der Schans recalls that the English participants arrived by the night ferry and had already visited the vegetable auction in Naaldwijk before 9 a.m.

Afterwards they were received at the ministry by the director-general Mr J. W. Wellen, who had interrupted his holiday for this occasion. The reception took place at the 7th floor.

The English participants remarked, that the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture had reached "a much higher level" than the Ministry of Education in their country, which looked after matters concerned with agricultural education. After the reception, the participants left to see the field trials of the horticultural seed-producing company "Sluis en Groot", (now Sandoz Switzerland).

They then travelled over the dike at Emmeloord. The next day, Peter van der Schans opened the course there with an introduction about agricultural education throughout Dutch education facilities. "By coincidence, the Mammoet Law also came into effect that day", says Peter van der Schans.

Participants admired the late Mr G. Veenstra who had been responsible for the training of agricultural teachers. He always was dressed in an impeccable style and emphasized his position with his own elegance and smoking his cigar.

The course organisers emphasised their confidence in the participants allowing them two afternoons free in Amsterdam during the latter day's excursion.

The JOINT COURSE 1970 in England

This was held at Harper Adams College in Shropshire in the Midlands and at the Berkshire College in the south of England July 11th - 24th.

This was the first time some Swedes and a single Dane appeared among the participants. While the Dutch had shown their practical schools the Englishmen were asked to illustrate pedagogical principles carried out on the college-farm.

The Dutchmen without school-farm may have been wondering how much the Englishmen utilised the farm for teaching, when Mr R. D. Park demonstrated: "What we are doing and why".

The main theme was "Vocational education and practical training". Potting of flower-plants was demonstrated as training and a general diversification between education and training was debated.

We were convinced about the distinction between education and training only when the adjective “sexual”, was put in front of it. Everybody accepted sexual education, while some found sexual training a little more delicate.

A visit was paid to the extension service centre at Reading and a river trip by boat on the Thames was not only a nice experience but served a social aspect and so did the Welsh singing in the evening. From Berkshire we also reached Windsor Castle and Kew Gardens, while teacher training was demonstrated at Wolverhampton Technical College.

Some participants taking an early morning walk met Mr T. Park of Moulton in a good mood, and when they questioned him, they got the answer: “I don’t know what time it is, and I don’t know, where I am, but at this time, I don’t want to be anywhere else”.

More seriously the course leader John Smedley reports, “that the main characteristics of the programme was the strength of relationship between representatives of the organising countries. We had the support of governments, of course, in our endeavours but the programme of international courses were stimulated and led by personal contact between the chief representatives in each participating country. We had a common aim, which was to serve the needs of agricultural teachers and to widen our professional horizons by learning together from each others experiences. We were fortunate in working towards these aims that we were allowed to plan and work together in the international field in ways which we felt best suited the teachers. It was, of course, a very enjoyable experience and we made many friends, many of whom we shall not forget.”

The JOINT COURSE 1973 in Sweden

Norway and England had proposed to bureau chief Gösta Ericsson that the next JOINT COURSE should be held in Sweden. He again went to Bernt Anderson, director in Skolöverstyrelsen. He organised that the first part was run at Stenkvista Agricultural College and the last five days at Rättvik Agricultural College in Dalarna. July 29th - August 8th.

The previous trends to locate the course at two different centres was perhaps intensified in Sweden making the two parts more equal, but the latter was still a little more touristical.

Subjects were mainly an introduction to the Swedish society and particularly to the agricultural education recently being integrated into the secondary education in Sweden.

Contributions were also given from other countries concerning general subjects in agricultural education such as “Objectives”, “Curriculum development”, “Adult education and advisory service” and “Audio visual aids”. Group discussions emphasised particular aspects of these subjects.

There was keen discussion between Englishmen and Swedes concerning the new Swedish education system in a common high school with fewer places than students. As admittance was based upon theoretical results the Englishmen asked whether any special considerations were given to farmers' sons.

But the Swedes were satisfied also with girls from urban families, and Thure Sjödal demonstrated, how they were trained on the school farm as well as on neighbouring farms. Bertil Larsson organised cross country running for the participants. Visit to Old Uppsala reminded us of the past and the University of Uppsala about the future.

Every evening there was a social programme, and although we were in Sweden it became also possible to open a bar at the course!

The JOINT COURSE 1975 in the Netherlands

The course was run at the IAC-building at Wageningen University followed by an excursion to North Holland and the polders, August 3th-13th.

Mr P. A. A. Kakebeeke presented to us the Mammouth Act which described any education in the Netherlands from primary school to university enabling youngsters to find their way vertically and horizontally. It was also intended to give the education system more flexibility to adapt to pedagogical and social developments.

We were intended to distinguish between h.a.v.o., m.a.v.o. and l.a.v.o. and in agricultural education between L.B.O., M.B.O. and H.B.O. (H=higher; M=medium and L=lower).

Being in Holland the subjects were not only traditional agriculture but also horticulture and not least food

technology.

With students entering agricultural schools at the age of 12 and teaching them many general subjects the Netherlands demonstrated immense number of students and also a large number of schools. The importance of the practical-schools was emphasised Education in farm management was demonstrated at an international level. When the Danes replied with a more practical approach, the Dutch told them, that this was not management but just production-practice. Teaching management should be independent of the product produced.

Outside the agenda environmental concern was discussed, and now the Danes told the Dutch, that ecology was different from economy!

This JOINT COURSE illustrated the big variety in Dutch agriculture including a visit to a practical school for mushroom growing and the flower auction at Aalsmeer. Participants will remember it as a very hot summer where we enjoyed a visit to "Hoge Veluwe" with the Kroeller-Moeller Museum and the reception by the Minister of agriculture at St. Hubertus Castle. Visit to the Heineken Brewery was particularly pleasant in these hot days.

The JOINT COURSE 1977 in Denmark

This course was held July 31st to August 10th and it was divided between Vejby in Jylland and Lyngby at Sjælland.

In Denmark the ministry did not wish to get involved in the JOINT COURSE activities, and The Association for Agricultural Colleges took the responsibility to organise the course. But with the argument, that in other countries the ministry is responsible the minister produced a 25.000 kr bill as a valuable subsidy. But the course was also sponsored by farmers associations and agricultural colleges.

Before the course each country had prepared a condensed sheet for each subject area in agricultural education defining the content in an abbreviated syllabus. This resulted in a 100 pages report describing relatively detailed the objectives for different subject-areas in the participating countries.

Also the teacher training had been described, and this was all presented and discussed at the JOINT COURSE. The teacher training was followed up by a visit to the Agricultural Information Service, which co-ordinated teacher training and production of educational materials.

We were introduced to the municipal administration as we were received at the town hall in the small city of Ebeltoft, the larger in Arhus and in the capital of Copenhagen. Danish co-operatives were presented and supported the course with a cheese-party and a visit to Tivoli, while Farmers Union hosted the final dinner.

Before that we were received at the agricultural university and the agricultural colleges at Vinding, Kalo, Dalum, Sydsjælland, Tune and Næsgaard.

But probably the main impression from the course is how the pedagogical ideas from N. F. S. Grundtvig still were dominating the whole educational system including the agricultural education and how the organisation of also the advisory service is left to the farmers, Parliament being confident, that it is run conscientiously and with maximum benefit.

The JOINT COURSE 1980 in the United Kingdom

The Course was held at Shuttleworth College in England and East of Scotland Agricultural College at Edinburgh in Scotland, July 23rd - August 4th

Participants will remember this course with particular pleasure as the Shuttleworth College formerly was the house of one of the British industrial gentlemen with a servant in each bell-pull and the bell-pulls were still there. Servants were missing but our hosts made us feel very comfortable.

They reminded us also about the Battle of Britain. One of the former owners was a keen aviator and racing driver and had built an air-field, which served during the war, and a museum had been built.

During the course a demonstration of flying Spitfires, Lancasters and Flying fortresses took place followed by a performance by the very modern Red Arrows.

Concerning agricultural education we were impressed by the emphasis the British lay on the practical training in manual skills, and much of the teaching is with teacher and students wearing rubber boots!

Student assessment and course validation was discussed as well as staff development.

The course itself was a staff development for the participants as we visited very classical places as Rothamstead Experimental Station (plants) and Silsoe Institute of agricultural engineering.

Visits were also paid to Cambridge and London, and one evening was spent with small groups in private homes. Everybody wanted to do something special. Mr Blossom, the principal of Hertfordshire College of Agriculture and Horticulture wanted to be remembered and his wife advised him to sing a song for the participants. So he stood up on a chair and sang, and he reached his objective!

The transfer to Scotland by buses was drowned in rain, but a sword-dance and a reception at Edinburgh Castle were unforgettable highlights. Modern raspberry-farming and venison-production was a glimpse of future agriculture, but Bob Nelson also gave a glimpse of the modular-system, which became the main subject 10 years later.

The JOINT COURSE 1983 in Norway

The course held July 27th - August 5th and it was divided in 7 days at Kalnes, Sarpsborg and 3 days at Storsteigen Agricultural College. The participants were a total number of 109, mainly as planned, but a couple came from Australia, 4 from Ireland, 2 from Iceland and one from Finland.

Each participating country had prepared beforehand 2-4 pages showing their system of agricultural education. This collection is still available.

Ottar Fjærvoll was still going strong and presented agriculture, where the objective was Norwegian self-supply of major food-articles, but with a regionalisation with preference to regions threatened by depopulation.

An excursion to Østfold showed links between agriculture, history and scenery with an evening by the Olsok-celebration. Also in Norway an evening was spent in groups visiting farm-families.

Each delegation presented an environmental problem essential in their country.

They were:

Norway: Acid rain

U.K.: Poisoning of the air

Ireland: Poisoning of the ground water

Netherlands: Use of cultivated land for agricultural, recreational and other purposes

Denmark: Use of pesticides and herbicides

Sweden: Safety regulations and responsibility

A high-land tour included visit to the bull-station for red cattle and to cottage-farming in mountain areas above the timber line. Storsteigen has its own mountain-farm where the participants had the opportunity to taste "prim", a soft "cheese" which is condensed whey from goat milk. Apparently the taste was not enjoyed by everybody although they politely tried.

The JOINT COURSE tradition to declare: "The bar is open" was not practised at Kalnes, as the school board had emphasised to director Arne Wold that the absence of alcoholic drinks should be maintained at the school during the JOINT COURSE.

But the Irishmen succeeded in Mr Wolds private house to find goose-berry-wine! Also his store of beer was emptied although we learned from the English and Irish the pub-tradition to let a pint last for a whole evening.

Some participants also remember that the Norwegian towels were too small to cover a corpulent agricultural teacher, and others experienced for the first time busses with "No smoking".

The JOINT COURSE 1985 in Ireland

The JOINT COURSE in Ireland was a unique occasion for co-operation between Eire and Ulster. The main part was run at Kildalton Agricultural and Horticultural College under the auspices of ACOT/TEAGASC, which co-ordinates education, research and extension service for Irish agriculture.

Youth training programmes were major subject. It was questioned if education responded to the changing demands for farming and rural industry, for manpower and social demands. Farm relief service and the related training for this in different countries were presented. So was agro-tourism, and the following days illustrated Irelands potential as a tourist resort. This green island with very mild climate was a unique occasion for the JOINT COURSE to present itself at its best with the result that after the sunny days coming to the final dinner we got “the thunder weather of the century” turning off the current to the kitchen preparing dinner.

We were impressed that touring the country our Irish colleagues were able still to point out farmsteads and castles as nests for Cromwellians. It is 350 years ago that the Englishman Oliver Cromwell hectored Ireland claiming that there was not a tree to hang a man on, not a lake to drown him in and not soil enough to bury him.

Particularly we remember after a long excursion in the Connemara region we arrived at the Franciscan Brothers Agricultural College for a dinner, which terminated at 11 p.m. with the information, that now we have a 3 hours entertainment. It was no joke. And I enjoyed every minute from this performance “A taste of Ireland”.

The last days we were hosted by the agricultural colleges in Ulster, and we felt pleasant, but we also got an impression of the tension, which has been too common for years.

The JOINT COURSE 1988 in the Netherlands

This course was run at the practical training school for horticultural engineering at Ede and at the practical-school at Horst July 19th - 29th.

A document for the course was prepared beforehand, which in 2-6 pages for each participating country explained, how the agricultural education in the country was built up and what were the objectives at the different levels of training.

Pollution was now a main topic. Different countries explained how they met the demand for increased environmental concern. The Dutch demonstrated the size of the problem in an animal-intensive area. They found a solution in purifying water while others wanted the water not to be contaminated.

Biological control of pests was demonstrated in large glasshouses with flower production and at firms developing the controlling agent, the predator.

Computer technology as a medium in agricultural education was demonstrated by Englishmen and Dutchmen.

Interesting and pleasant visits were paid to farm families, to the University of Wageningen, to the Flevohof Information Centre, to the Airborne Museum at Arnhem and Kroller-Muller Museum with van Gogh collection. The Ministry of Agriculture made a reception at “De Koperen Kop” after which we had to pass an examination in bicycling. South Holland with Zealand and the Horst region has a very intensive production and large companies were visited. They aimed at reducing pollution combining diets for animals with a minimum of waste. Particularly impressive was the Storm surge barrier at Eastern schelde, which will protect the Netherlands against flood and high-water in the North Sea.

The final evening was one big surprise party with the NCB-cabaret.

The JOINT COURSE 1990 in Scotland

This course was held July 24th to August 2nd at Edinburgh and at Aberdeen. At Edinburgh it was held at the University of Edinburgh with accommodation at Pollock Hall. In Old Aberdeen we were accommodated at Crombie-Johnston Hall of Residence.

The course had two main themes:

1. Towards Harmonisation of European Qualifications.
2. Problems the European Rural Sector is facing with Regard to Diversification, Depopulation and the Needs for Retraining.

The Scotchmen gave their contribution towards harmonisation and the other participating countries set up a demonstration of posters illustrating the education in each country. 8 mixed nationality groups were formed

with the objective to set up a JOINT COURSE statement about harmonisation or comparability of qualifications. In between were visits to agricultural colleges and the role of agricultural training board. In the plenary debate Bob Nelson convinced many about the Scottish modular system, where each subject is isolated and may be taken by the students as options. He illustrated the modular system equal to the Danish Lego-system for children, but Jakob Kjaer argued that as far as education is concerned, he preferred the Russian Babuska-system, where the student is the unit and who during a course may pass to a bigger edition.

Mr M. Alder from U.K. said about harmonisation: "The difficulties of creating a completely new awards structure, compatible with the educational process in all participating countries, are recognised as being of a magnitude that would severely limit progress." Tony Fox, U.K. said about diversification in education: "I become increasingly convinced that it is not knowledge but the means of gaining knowledge, which I have to teach". Scottish autonomy was demonstrated not only by the pedagogical discussions but also by reception at Edinburgh Castle by the Scottish Minister of Education and several performances and visits. The national dish "hagijsh" was presented in a way that everybody regarded it at Dalhuse Castle as a delicacy.

From the charming city of Edinburgh we were transferred to the Granit town of Aberdeen where we felt a great hospitality, saw beautiful characteristic buildings, a rough nature and a prosperous oil-industry, but also here agriculture was a vital activity.

Thus the subjects at Aberdeen were diversification in agriculture and distance learning. The many group discussions during the course concluded in a final statement:

The JOINT COURSE recommends that the following actions be taken by the delegates of each country:

1. That exchange of students and staff should continue and expand including students taking elements of their course in other colleges and countries.
2. That appropriate governmental and other agencies are informed of the work of CEDEFOP in respect of harmonisation of qualifications and competencies.
3. That where appropriate, delegates make representation through governmental organisations to ensure that CEDEFOP recognises the need to expand the area of its work beyond the boundaries of EEC, and that the speed at which it is working needs to increase considerably.
4. That national bodies undertaking development of qualifications/criteria be encouraged to work together towards a trans-national system for Europe.
5. That requests are made to OECD representatives within each country to request that the conference which exists for higher education in agriculture be extended to cover vocational education levels and that it should monitor progress on harmonisation of qualifications in this sector.

The JOINT COURSE 1992 in Iceland

This course was run at the 3 agricultural colleges in Iceland: Reykir mainly horticultural, Holar in the north, specialized in horses and Hvanneyri with agriculture in the west from July 9th - 19th.

During some years new partners and new ways of working in the JOINT COURSES had appeared. Ireland had participated from 1977 and had run a course very successfully in 1985. Iceland and Finland had shown an increasing interest during participation in the late 80'ies. Now we were looking forward to the JOINT COURSES in Iceland 1992 and Finland 1994. We found this would increase our horizon and they probably felt a need for increased connection to their neighbouring countries. For some of them the English language was more useful than the traditional Scandinavian.

Concerning ways of working certain continuity had appeared. Modular courses and qualification map had been introduced in Scotland 1990 and they should now be further illustrated in Iceland. That was why several participants were able to contribute to the qualification map, which also in Iceland was presented by Mr .Bob Nelson from Scotland. One of the most specific subjects "Plant protection" was decided to be further analysed. A representative from each country was elected to send details of the countries plant protection education to the secretary of the group Olav Sejerøe .If possible at the next meeting in Finland a common plant protection module should be developed.

But certainly what will be best remembered by the participants was the experience or excitement of being in this unique country close to a nature, humans have to adapt them to and in a culture, where telling from one generation to the next (the sagas) is more important than the written documents and in a society with plenty of space.

But still the hosts gave us the impression, that environment and pollution was also a major concern in Iceland. Tourist attractions were visited giving us a glimpse of history, geography, geology, trade and industry.

During the excursions we admired how they were able to utilise hydro and thermo energy not only to bathing in hot lakes but also to grow bananas in the winter garden at Reykir, where we had a wonderful dinner.

Gretar Unnsteinsson got everybody in Iceland to cooperate for our benefit. His concern about the timetable passing the large lava-prairies made him repeat: "I don't want to push you, but ..." We left this JOINT COURSE with an unforgettable experience tasting meat of shark and drinking "The black death". An evening at Holar and a final dinner at Hvanneyri were genuine pearls.

The JOINT COURSE 1994 in Finland

This course was run July 1st - 8th with main emphasis at Mantsala College of Agriculture but with some days also at Helsinki, both in the south of Finland.

By arrival I got the impression that nothing was planned, but the first day passed without problems. So did the next. And by the end we realised, that everything had happened right at the time scheduled. How is it possible to run a course, where we at anytime meet what we find most desirable right at that time? We must ask Kaia Arpiainen. Everything was done with a diligence, which reminded me about the Finns winter war against Russia, when operations impossible occurred behind the enemies lines. That it had been a hard time was obvious when we visited the trenches from the war. The fact that the Finns after all lost the war was because they did not have the mobile phone, by which Kaia adjusted everything planned for the course.

During recent years more European countries had been invited to send guests to the JOINT COURSES and when we were in Finland, the Finns wanted primarily their neighbours to learn about the JOINT COURSE. Thus we had a participant from each of following countries; Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Switzerland and Germany.

The organising committee felt it useful to define the objectives for the JOINT COURSE, and they agreed upon the statement printed earlier in this paper.

The main themes were "Quality in education and products" and "Networking and internationalising". The most modern networking facilities were demonstrated and discussed.

Quality in education turned out to be a key question, which might be deled with also in future courses.

In Iceland Olav Sejerøe had got the task to analyse possibilities for a common plant protection module. Reporters from all countries had send material about plant protection education in their countries. All the information from the different countries was presented and a lot of similarities appeared. In a working group the minimum requirements for a common Plant Protection Module leading to a Plant Protection Certificate was agreed upon. Such a Plant Protection Module which after a successful examination will lead to a Plant Protection Certificate should be accepted as the requisite qualification to apply agrochemicals in all the countries.

At Harju and Kotka Forestry colleges we had a demonstration of technique applied in traditional forestry as well as the most sophisticated, and we saw a portable sawmill working.

Even a sea-journey in the Finnish Skärgård was enjoyed in the warm summer night, which never ended. Sauna and bathing in the lake was experienced but the mosquitoes, against which the Dutch had protected themselves, did not appear.

The JOINT COURSE 1996 in Sweden

The course was held August 2nd-9th at Hvilan Horticultural College near Malmö but in close co-operation with all the other agricultural colleges in the region and also with the University department at Alnarp.

The main topics were:

1. Co-operation between school and working life
2. Nature conservation - Environment - Landscaping
3. Education for rural development

The topics were reflected in many visits in the region but particularly by contributions from the university concerning life-long learning as part of the solution to the problems. This was followed by a discussion type called: "Crack the barrel", where each discussion group has the opportunity to call an expert in the matter, they are concerned about.

At the university a particular unit called MOVIUM found itself as a link between research and practice guiding 24 seminars a year and preparing a bulletin 6 times a year concerning the above subjects.

"Student guarantee" was a concept to look at the quality of education -a debate initiated in Finland. A questionnaire presented may be applied anywhere.

Torsten Madsen from the Kristianstad University made us to reconsider situations from our teaching: "The rules of the World are changing. It is time for the rules of teaching to change with them", he quoted from Hargraves. He accepted "Learning by doing", but he preferred "Learning being productive" and we discussed how an increased part of our training may be performed on farms. He defined understanding as the capacity to utilise, what you have learned in another context.

Students should be eager to keep on learning after school, and at an examination we should allow the students to show whether they are able to apply theory to a concrete situation.

Madsen said, that students seldom understand what kind of questions science is an answer to.

But as work places may be too few, you should make the school work like a firm/farm.

A new concept was introduced at the JOINT COURSE. It was: "KISS". It came after the long speeches, and it was an abbreviation of: "Keep It Short, Stupid!" May be also this report.

Again the Scandinavian summer was enjoyed by the participants, but pleasure of the JOINT COURSE was not least due to the organiser, who on the national level was Bertil Larsson and on the local level due to the everyday dear advises from Margareta Schjanberg-Larsson at Hvilan.

She said, we would always be welcome back!



Post Scriptum

As a participant in the major part of the JOINT COURSES I have been asked by the international committee to collect the above material. I want to express my thanks for the task and I want to thank all the participants I have met during the courses. You have all contributed to make these courses a particular pleasure for me. They have been highlights in my career as an agricultural teacher.

Jakob Kjaer