

The Influence of the IFYE Experience on the United States Delegates

by Richard Tenney

From 1967 through 1969 I completed two studies on the impact of the IFYE experience on the lives of the US delegates who participated in the program. As a member of the IFYE Foundation Board of Directors - which is currently struggling to quantify the impact of IFYE - I was asked to look again at the results of those studies, now some thirty years old. Perhaps that information, though dated, will be of interest and help to IFYEs today.

In 1967 I wrote, “The inefficiency of communication and understanding among the peoples of the world today does much to create, as well as to continue, the tension and dissension among the people and their countries. Various types of exchange programs have been established to improve communication and understanding.” In spite of the technical advances in communications—most notably today the world wide web or internet—it doesn’t seem that enough has changed with people-to-people communications in the last 30 years. There are still too many armed conflicts, human rights abuses and hungry children in the world today.

However, before we examine the influence of the IFYE exchange program we need to go back some 50 years.

Our Beginnings

During the Second World War many boys and girls had become very close to the struggle as their 4-H clubs had planted “Victory Gardens,” preserved food and written to soldiers overseas. When the war was over the discussion topic at many 4-H meetings was, “What can we do to make sure that this doesn’t happen again?” In answer to this question, 4-H clubs sent clothing, seed and tools to war-torn countries to help people recover. Clubs even “adopted” families and orphans, sending them letters and money. Still these activities did not provide for a personal contact with peoples in other countries. They wanted to really know the people and letters did not satisfy this desire.

In 1946 four Cornell University students, who had been 4-H members, shared with their state 4-H leader the idea that 4-H type programs would be enjoyed by youth in other countries and that understanding was a key to peace. He agreed and suggested they talk with someone in the government in Washington, DC. Shortly thereafter they talked to their elected representatives and to employees at the Departments of Agriculture and State.

In 1947 the National 4-H Club Conference in Washington, DC , was attended by four Germans, who wanted to study 4-H work so that they might have a similar program in their country. The 4-H youth were surprised to find them friendly and agreed that more people in the US should have a chance to know such people. The youth felt the Germans should not be in Washington to study 4-H; but out in the rural communities where 4-H work was being done.

A farm boy from Iowa had attended an encampment for citizenship in New York City in 1946. Following the encampment, the young people were taken to Washington, DC to see some of the

machinery of democratic government. While in Washington the Iowa youth visited the British Embassy, talked with the Ambassador about farm life in the US and invited him to visit. During his visit the Ambassador attended church with the family, helped with farm chores and attended a 4-H meeting. He was so impressed that upon his return to England he arranged for six young farmers to come to the US to live with 4-H and FFA members. They made this visit in 1947.

From these beginnings the IFYE program began as a two-way program in 1948, with seventeen US youth going to seven Western European countries and six Europeans coming to the US.

Measuring Impact

Future issues of the *IFYE News* will contain articles on measuring the impact of the IFYE experience.

"IFYE Impact" Article 1

The Influence of the IFYE Experience on Educational Achievement and Occupational Choice

by Richard Tenney

The IFYE program has, since its beginning, been recognized by most people, who are familiar with the program, as a fine program. They recognize that it has been of value to those who participated as well as to those who heard the "IFYE Story." The general opinion of the program, while not disproved, had very little fact to substantiate it. The generally unproven feeling of "goodness" of the program sparked a number of conversations and comments at various levels. In 1958, the International Farm Youth Exchange Advisory Committee reported:

"As we have grown to appreciate the leader training contributions of the program, participants are viewed less as learners and reporters and more as potential teachers and leaders of related citizenship activities, through which a much larger number of 4-H members and others can learn and grow."

In 1962, in interpreting the expectations of the IFYE Advisory Committee, Jane Kamisato stated:

"The experience was not so much an end in itself, but helped provide opportunities for further growth of delegates as they began to help others."

The 1967 study was to determine what influence the IFYE experience had on the educational achievement and the occupational plans of the IFYE delegate alumni. Approximately one-third of all of the IFYE Alumni who had participated in the program during the eighteen years the program had been operating were surveyed. The respondents were divided into three groups, each representing six years of program operation, (Group I, 1948–53; Group II, 1954–59; and Group III, 1960–65), to identify trends.

Alumni vs Control

Alumni in Group III were compared with a similar group of persons of the same time period who had met the same selection criteria and been selected as IFYE delegates but who had been unable to participate in the program because of reasons such as health, finances, the Selective Service, or foreign country contracts at the national level. These people became Group IV or the Control Group. The two groups were fairly similar as no significant difference was found between them concerning demographic factors such as sex, age, residence, marital status or family size.

Educational Achievement

These two groups were compared to determine the influence the foreign rural family living experience of the IFYE program (the IFYE experience) had on the type and level of educational achievement. Though the Alumni Group showed a slightly higher gain in years of education by the time of the study, tests failed to show any significant difference in their current educational level. However, when asked to rate the influence of the IFYE experience on education there was a highly significant difference as might be expected with the Alumni rating being nearly double.

Occupational Plans

The groups were then compared to determine the influence that the IFYE experience had on their occupational plans. When comparing the two groups for change in vocational choice between time of application and their occupation in 1967, no significance was found in vocational choice relating to “working with people,” with nearly a third of both groups employed in teaching. However there was a significant difference in changes in occupational areas for the two groups for their present occupation (1967). When asked about future occupational plans this difference became highly significant with one of the most notable differences between the groups being the number of IFYE Alumni who were planning to go into international occupations. Again, when asked to rate the influence of the IFYE experience on occupation, the difference was highly significant with the Alumni rating being double that of the Control Group.

Community Involvement

The 1967 study was also to determine the involvement of the IFYE Alumni in their community using a community participation scale. No significant difference was found between the Alumni Group and the Control Group concerning the number of community organizations to which the respondent belonged. However, the Alumni were found to have a significantly higher intensity of involvement in each community organization - as well as a higher total participation score.

Alumni Trends

Educational Achievement

There was a significant difference found in the level of education at the time of selection among the three Alumni groups with the level rising with each succeeding group. However by the time of the study there was no significance found among the groups with each group having an average of about one half year of education beyond the baccalaureate degree. Also the rating given by the alumni groups for the influence of the IFYE experience on their education increased with each succeeding group for a highly significant difference among groups.

Occupational Plans

When comparing the three alumni groups for differences in past, present and future occupations there was an expected highly significant difference found between men and women in each group but no significant difference among groups for their future occupations. Additional testing revealed a highly significant difference when testing women only from group to group. The Alumni II Group (1954–59) showed over half listing “homemaking” as their planned occupation. (*How times have changed.*) Again when asked to rate the influence of the IFYE experience on their occupational plans there was a highly significant difference among groups, with the younger alumni rating the influence higher.

Community Involvement

As might be expected, with the older groups of alumni having more years to become established in their communities, there was a significant difference among groups for number of community organizations and a highly significant difference for intensity of involvement as shown by higher participation scores of the older alumni.

The Influence of the IFYE Experience on the Importance and Performance of Roles Promoting International Understanding

by Richard Tenney

The development of IFYE alumni roles began with the assistance of program maintenance and development. From that point it moved through "junior leadership" to include establishing pen-pals and study groups, followed by its recognition as being a significant people-to-people program. By 1962, the concept of the roles had developed to the point of involving citizenship-leadership activities. Then there were expressions of concern for the fact that alumni saw themselves more as resource persons than as leaders. By the late sixties there was an effort to spell out the alumni role expectations in relation to leadership and responsibility in projects dealing with rural youth development, world food production and population growth problems.

The purpose of the 1969 study was to determine the correlation and interaction of both personal and program characteristics on the importance and performance of selected roles promoting international understanding as rated and performed by IFYE Alumni.

Roles Studied

Ten selected roles were studied. They were: "To gain and share knowledge and understanding of"

1. Other countries (customs, social life, history, youth programs, etc.)
2. Internationally-oriented subject matter projects in Home Ec., Ag., 4-H, and related fields
3. Foreign policy and international relations
4. U.S.A. local, county, state and national government
5. People-to-people programs (sister clubs, pen-pals, 4-H CARE, etc.)
6. Foreign languages
7. Leadership development (officer training, committee training, etc.)
8. "Understanding Self and Others"
9. Promoting international service projects (UNICEF, American Friends, child support of adoption, support of Mission projects, etc.)
10. Hosting of international visitors (IFYE exchangees, students, American Field Service, etc.)

Alumni vs Control

Again the IFYE Alumni were tested against the Control Group (No IFYE Experience). Members of both the Alumni Group and the Control Group received essentially the same preparation and orientation for an international living experience in addition to meeting the same selection requirements. As a result there was no correlation between the importance of the roles promoting international understanding and the IFYE experience as the respondents of the two groups gave it a mean importance rating of 2.5 (scale of 1-3).

However, thinking that a role is important and actually doing something about it appear to be two different things. There was a highly significant correlation between role performance and the IFYE experience. The Control Group had only a 41% mean performance level for roles promoting international understanding while the Alumni Group performed at a 58% level.

The performance of Role 9 by the Alumni Group (34%) was disappointingly low in relation to their performance of the other nine roles. This low performance may be due to their failure to translate the values and insights gained from the IFYE experience into their day by day life “here” instead of simply telling people about “things over there.” They have had greater opportunity to perform through their community organizations as the 1967 study showed they had significantly higher community participation scores than the Control Group.

Alumni Trends

IFYE Alumni, who had participated in the Kamisato study in 1962 regarding their roles, were again asked to provide information concerning role importance and performance. During the passage of time from 1962 to 1967, IFYE alumni had a highly significant increase in both their importance ratings and performance percentages. In 1967, the Alumni rated every role higher and more performed each role than in 1962. During this same period of time their role effectiveness (the correlation between rating of importance and actual performance) increased from significant to highly significant.

There was no significant difference between the leadership and resource capacities for either role importance ratings or role performance percentages. Ratings of all ten roles for importance indicated the resource capacity to be only slightly higher in each case than the leadership capacity. This same relationship held true for the performance of all the roles. This relationship of leader to resource was similar to that found by Kamisato in 1962.

**The Impact of IFYE: A Positive Influence on Participants,
But More Questions Need to be Answered**
by Richard Tenney

The studies show that other factors being similar, there is a definite influence on a person who has had an “IFYE type experience.” We can also see that the influence is positive as it relates to the promotion of international understanding, a major objective of the IFYE program.

Observations

The following observations can be made in regard to the impact of the IFYE experience:

1. A person who has had an “IFYE type experience” will perform higher in the **promotion** of international understanding roles than a person who has not had this type of experience - even though they may give similar ratings to the **importance** of these roles.
2. As years have passed the IFYE alumni have attached increasing importance to the promotion of international understanding and have performed accordingly.
3. IFYE alumni are becoming more effective in their role performance relative to their role expectations.
4. Persons who are high in community leadership are higher in role performance.
5. Persons with higher levels of education are higher in role performance.
6. Persons with the IFYE experience showed a much higher rating for the influence of the experience on their education, even though the level of education attained was similar to other persons.
7. Persons with the IFYE experience showed a much higher rating for the influence of the experience on their occupational plans. When considering plans for the future this rating was double that of those who had not had an IFYE experience.
8. Persons with an IFYE experience have a higher intensity of involvement in their community organizations as well as higher total participation.

My Personal Experience

IFYE has had a great impact on my life. Several years after returning from my IFYE experience I decided that I wanted to do graduate work in education and international agricultural development to prepare me for an international career in that area. Following my completion of a PhD in Agricultural Education in 1969, with emphasis on international education/extension and agricultural development, I found myself working as a communications specialist for the University of Nebraska’s large USAID project in Bogotá, Colombia. (This was like going home for my wife, Mary Lou, who had been an IFYE there in 1960-61.) There I provided leadership and advised the Mass Communications program of ICA (Colombian Agricultural Institute).

Since my four years work in Colombia I have spent an additional seven years working overseas on projects in Brazil, Guatemala and Samoa (formerly Western Samoa). Back in the USA I worked as the Director of Student Affairs for a large international high school youth exchange program. In addition, I served as a faculty member for several International Agriculture courses at Cornell

University. In recent years Mary Lou and I have been active in our church's Volunteer in Mission projects, with work in Costa Rica, Lithuania, and in various parts of the United States. We both have to say, our IFYE experience has been the cause of a very serious case of a healthy disease called "International Interest and Involvement." IFYE created the interest and provided us with the experiences and training for many of our life's activities.

Questions That Go Begging

In this series of articles I have reported the findings of some studies to measure the impact of the IFYE experience. However, this information is now nearly 35 years old. Some general and specific questions that are begging to be answered are:

1. Are these findings still valid?
2. What changes have been wrought by the passage of time and aging of the participants?
3. How does this experience fit into today's world—which is very different than that of some 50 years ago when the IFYE program started? What changes may need to be made in the IFYE program to make it more relevant today and into the future?
4. What has been the impact of the experience of living in the United States on the IFYE exchangee—education, occupation, community participation, promotion of international understanding, etc.?
5. What needs to be done in an effort to assist IFYE alumni, and other people with similar international experiences, in recognizing and utilizing more existing opportunities for the promotion of international understanding?
6. With so many opportunities today for global awareness and communication, is IFYE still a viable means of creating interest in promoting international understanding?
7. What has been the impact of IFYE on the lives of those persons who have heard the "IFYE story?" What kind of a difference has it made in their lives?
8. How can the IFYE program participants show others that the IFYE experience is a valuable investment?

Those of us who have had the IFYE experience know that it made a difference in our lives. Lets make a renewed effort to see that others see this difference as well so we can all work together to promote better international understanding and world peace.

"IFYE Impact" Article 4