

State of the Society in 2009/2010

I was privileged to assume the office of vice-president, president-elect, and in 2009/2010 finally president at a period of continuous growth of the Society. Thus, the initiatives and support structures that were launched in 2009/2010 were all devoted to sustain the Society's growth by systematically pursuing three measures: (1) to professionalize the organization of the conferences and the secretariat, (2) to increase the opportunities for professional exchange and dialogue, and (3) to advance the field of comparative and international education.

1. Professionalizing the Organization of the Conferences and the Secretariat

The 53rd Annual Meeting in Charleston. It was an ordeal of a special kind to organize the annual meeting a year after one of the most memorable CIES conferences, held at my own home institution, at Teachers College, Columbia University in New York. My predecessor and departmental colleague, Henry M. Levin, chaired in 2008/2009 the largest CIES conference held to date. Since Teachers College, Columbia University, sponsored the annual conference two years in a row, it was clear that I could not invite the participants back to New York. I recruited former doctoral students—now based at other universities and in different agencies—to serve on the organizing committee for CIES 2009. I saw it as an opportunity to give visibility to new and exciting comparative and international programs, and in particular, those at Lehigh University and the University of South Carolina.

I chose Charleston, South Carolina, as the venue for the 2009 annual meetings and was very fortunate to have the active support of local partners: Christine Finnan from the College of Charleston and Doyle Stevick from the University of South Carolina-Columbia. A total of 1,425 individuals participated at CIES 2009 and a surplus of approximately \$60,000 was generated for the Society. Two institutions provided substantial funds that enabled us to cover the administrative costs: Teachers College, Columbia University and the Open Society Institute (Soros Foundation Network).

The year 2009 marked the 20th anniversary of the dramatic changes in Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and Mongolia. In many countries of the post-socialist region, the Open Society Institute was the first NGO that set up an infrastructure to support educational reform in the region. A former member of the General Education Sub-Board, I approached OSI for a stronger and more visible involvement in CIES. OSI provided a total of \$80,000 to CIES 2009 with which we covered the cost for travel and accommodation of close to 30 participants from OSI-affiliated institutions outside the United States, as well as a large reception, administrative costs, and a lasting endowment for international participants. OSI agreed to contribute \$20,000 for an International Travel Award for Distinguished Service. We purposefully chose not to name the fund after OSI or George Soros so that other agencies will be motivated to contribute to this endowment, which funds international travel for distinguished practitioners to present at CIES conferences.

New Features of the 53rd Annual Meeting. For several years, CIES conferences outsourced the registration services (collection of registration fees and registration of participants) but the conference committee was in charge of coordinating all other organizational aspects of the conference. With the growth of the annual meetings, it became necessary to secure additional professional help. Two new additional services were tested at the CIES 2009 conference: an on-line submission system and a professional conference planning service. The on-line submission

system (by All Academic, Inc.) helped us to manage 1,100 submissions, coordinate the review process, schedule the sessions, and print out the conference program. We set up the system in ways that allowed participants to submit to the general pool, the CIES Special Interest Groups (SIGs), or the New Scholar's Workshop (for doctoral students only). Our conference committee at Teachers College, Columbia University also helped the SIGs and the committees to either create or update their web sites.

Need for Annual Conference Evaluations. Last year, we evaluated the new conference planning features during the (new) board meeting in Charleston. We discussed in particular, the All Academic on-line submission system as well as the inclusion of SIGs in the review process. I also submitted a detailed report on conference planning for the Board of Directors. In addition, we had the CIES 2009 conference evaluated on-line. The secretariat sent out the survey 2-3 weeks after the conference and administered all stages of the survey. The response rate was quite impressive (42% of conference participants). Judging from the conference evaluation, the on-line system greatly resonated with the participants and was seen as an opportunity for the CIES SIGs and committees to become more visible. This year's conference chair, President-Elect Maria T. Tatto at Michigan State University, introduced quite a few changes to the on-line submission system. The changes included, for example, a membership requirement at the stage of abstract submission, changes in the format of the abstract, collection of SIG fees over the conference registration site. Several of these changes were controversial and it was agreed to carefully review them. Given the great degree of freedom granted to President-Elects to test new features, I strongly recommend that the annual meetings be evaluated by the Board of Directors, and that the evaluation instrument be developed by a conference evaluation committee and administered by the Secretariat.

Interactive Website. At last year's meeting of the Board of Directors the secretariat, Hilary Landorf and Benjamin Baez at Florida International University, suggested establishing an interactive website that would allow us to update the website information of the Society, CIES committees and SIGs more easily, set up discussion forums for asynchronous communication, hold virtual meetings, administer on-line surveys, manage databases (e.g., membership database), and collect fees through a secure server (e.g., SIG fees, possibly eventually membership fees). I assisted the secretariat with exploring the various options (including purchasing server space to post large files, such as, for example, historical material, podcasts, video material) and I anticipate that the Board of Directors will review the suggestions in the board meeting this year and implement the website over the course of the coming year.

2. Opportunities for Professional Exchange and Dialogue Among the Members

Regional CIES conferences. CIES's tradition of holding regional conferences was revived this past year. Lehigh University organized the Northeast regional conference (October 9-10, 2009), Kent State University the Midwestern regional conference (October 23-24, 2009), and UCLA CIDEC the Western conference (November 12-14, 2009). I attended all three conferences and found them to be extremely well organized and well attended, ranging from 70-170 participants. The regional conferences were great opportunities for graduate students to present work in progress and to meet professionals as well as peers and faculty from other universities. They also generated great enthusiasm among the graduate students who helped organize and host the regional conferences. University of Massachusetts at Amherst also indicated an interest to host this year's Northeastern regional conference. In addition to conferences in the other two regions, I hope that we will see a Southern regional chapter of CIES emerge in the near future.

CIES Newsletter. Thanks to Roger Gonzalez, Fernanda Pineda and Hilary Landorf at Florida International University, the CIES newsletter has become a very informative and well-written quarterly bulletin. The recent issues included short opinion pieces, interesting debates and videos. This change in direction is now reflected in the name change from *CIES Newsletter* to *CIES Perspectives*.

Special Interest Groups. I interpret the internal differentiation of the Society, that is, the establishment of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) as a direct consequence of the growth of the annual meetings. SIGs are great community-builders and help our conference committees to compose panel sessions that are coherent and of high quality. They are also outstanding tools for recruiting new members that otherwise would be hard to reach. This year the Board of Directors approved three new SIGs: Latin America, Eurasia, and Global Literacy. A fourth SIG – Education for Sustainable Development – submitted the required documentation and the review is scheduled for this year’s meeting of the Board of Directors. At this year’s meeting of the Board of Directors we will revisit the general SIG policies as articulated in the CIES constitution’s by-laws, re-evaluate the requirements for establishing a SIG, and systematize the collection of SIG dues.

Participation from Developing Countries. For a Society that is committed to a partnership with educational experts based in developing countries, it is vital to increase the participation of educational experts from these countries in all activities of the Society, including our annual meetings. The purpose of the newly established “CIES International Travel Award for Distinguished Service in Educational Service” is to increase the presence of educational experts who serve in countries where international projects are implemented. Other international organizations are invited to contribute to this inter-agency endowment fund, initiated by CIES and OSI/Soros Foundation. In addition, a few members of this year’s Ad-hoc Committee on the Advancement of Comparative and International Education, notably Nancy Kendall (University of Wisconsin-Madison) and Andrew Shiotani (Teachers College, Columbia University), advocated the introduction of a more differentiated fee structure for membership and conference registration that would create an incentive for educational experts from developing countries to participate in our activities.

Jackie-Kirk Memorial Fund. Last year the CIES community was shattered by the tragic news about our active member Jackie Kirk, who died in the line of professional service. She was killed while she was on mission for the International Rescue Committee in Afghanistan. Last year, then-President Henry M. Levin asked an ad-hoc committee to organize a special event during CIES 2009 as a tribute to Jackie Kirk’s work in education and emergencies as well as girls education. The special event greatly resonated in the CIES community as well as among Jackie Kirk’s friends and family. In response to the request of several CIES members who suggested establishing a more permanent forum that keeps her name and accomplishments alive, I appointed the Ad-hoc Committee for a Jackie Kirk Memorial Fund that would brainstorm ideas and explore potential funds for regularly carrying out an activity at CIES annual meetings. The committee was composed of Ratna Ghosh (chair), Claudia Mitchell (McGill University; former dissertation advisor of Jackie Kirk), Karen Monkman (De Paul University), Karen Mundy (University of Toronto, OISE). The committee managed to secure funds and provide suggestions on how to best honor Jackie Kirk’s contribution to the field of comparative and international education. The husband of Jackie Kirk, Andrew Kirk, committed \$20,000 Canadian dollars and the International Rescue Committee \$10,000 to the fund that will enable CIES to launch a book award that relates to education in conflict and post-conflict societies, girls education or other themes that relate to Jackie Kirk’s work.

3. Advancing the Field of Comparative and International Education

Ad-hoc Committee on the Advancement of Comparative and International Education. Last year's Ad-hoc Committee on the Future of Comparative and International Education was initiated by Past President Henry M. Levin and chaired by Alexander Wiseman (Lehigh University). The ad-hoc committee presented a series of valuable recommendations on how to advance the field. It became clear at last year's meeting of the Board of Directors that the committee embarked on a monumental task that requires a more long-term and thorough discussion. I therefore charged this year's Ad-hoc Committee on the Advancement of Comparative and International Education with the task of developing recommendations on what needs to be changed with regard to the scope of activities and the organization of CIES in order to (a) serve our members better, (b) promote the field of comparative and international education more effectively, and (c) make comparative and international education recognized as an academic and professional field. I set up this year's committee as a multi-year ad-hoc committee with strong board representation, including the Vice-President, President-Elect and myself. Gilbert Valverde (SUNY-Albany) chaired the committee and it is expected that the committee will continue with its important work over the next one to two years. The charge for the committee includes a detailed description of issues that need to be resolved in order to collaboratively develop a solid vision of where the Society should be moving in the future. This year's committee focused on reviewing the proposed updates and adjustments in the constitution that were prepared by Erwin Epstein. One of the key questions is whether CIES has already achieved a size and a level of complexity that makes it necessary to hire an Executive Director and part-time staff who, among other things, will be charged with organizing the annual meetings. The ad-hoc committee recommended to the Board of Directors to assess financial and other considerations of hiring an Executive Director over the next 2-3 years.

CIES Archives. The CIES historian Erwin Epstein (Loyola University Chicago) has established the Historian's Corner on the CIES website and made important documents publicly accessible. The goal of the Society should be to make more historical documents publicly available, both from our own archives at Kent State University as well as from other special collection libraries. I met with Erwin Epstein and visited the CIES archives at Kent State University in October (during the Midwest regional CIES conference). Based on the meeting and the visit, I have come to realize the urgent need for action. I will urge the Board of Directors at the meeting in Chicago (1) to invest more in the preservation of archival material, (2) to regulate the kind of documents that must be submitted by CIES officers to the archives, and (3) to find ways to digitalize CIES archival material and thereby make it publicly better available. Erwin Epstein has been in close contact with Cara Gilgenbach (faculty of library sciences and in charge of the CIES archives at Kent State University that are associated with the Gerald Read Center) and has come up with a plan of action that will be discussed during the meeting of the Board of Directors in Chicago.

Resource Centers on the Teaching of Comparative and International Education. Several universities have launched digital resource centers that help to advance the teaching of comparative and international education. The following two are hyper-linked with the Historian's Corner of the CIES website: Comparative and International Course Archive Project (CIECAP) at Loyola University Chicago and the Comparative Education Instructional Materials Archive (CEIMA) at Bowling Green State University. The new International Teaching Resource Center (iTRC) at Lehigh University will be hyper-linked to the Historian's Corner of the CIES website in the near future. The CIES historian has also solicited and secured support from the Board of Directors to collect information on comparative and international education programs and to make that information publicly available.

WCCES. Several members of our Society participate actively in committees of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES). It is not clear, however, how else CIES as one of the most active and largest member associations could support the activities of WCCES, in particular, advancing comparative and international education outside the United States. This is an issue that should be considered for further exploration.

Other

I would like to end my report with an observation, a suggestion, and an expression of gratitude.

CIES Membership: The Problem with the Fluctuating and Small Membership. Two unexpected observations that came to my notice during my presidency were the relatively small membership number and the relatively low participation in elections. Far less than half of our members participate in the annual elections; 20 percent are required by constitution. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that the conferences have grown significantly in size, both in terms of the number of panels offered and in terms of the registered participants. With a few remarkable exceptions, the registration count was until the late 1990s far below 1,000 participants. The last five conferences, however, we had 1,000 – 1,800 registrants. It is important to note that the exponential growth only applies to conference attendance but not to membership subscriptions. Even though the exact membership numbers are difficult to assess – because of the switch from a rolling subscription period to a January – December subscription period – the increase in membership is minimal as compared to the increase in conference attendance.

In fact, I was surprised to learn during my archival research at Kent State University that CIES already in 1963 (7 years after the establishment of the Society) had 1,100 individual members.¹ In the period 1963-2009, conference attendance increased ten times or more, yet our membership only doubled. In other words, one would expect a much higher membership given the growth of the annual conferences. For the past few years, we have been constant at approximately 2,000 individual and 1,000 institutional members. The exact figures for November 2009 were 2,234 individual members and 889 institutional members, disregarding the difference in the counting methods due to all kinds of transitions (related to the conference and to the fiscal year). Typically, the figures for individual membership increase shortly before and during the annual conferences. The problem, however, is that we have not been able to steadily increase the number of members and engage a larger number of members beyond the annual conferences.

There is a need to analyze the current membership benefits (subscription to the journal *Comparative Education Review*, the newsletter and the listserv; reduced rates for conference registration), the membership fee structure, and the method of collecting membership fees. We have started to discuss some of these issues in this year's Ad-hoc Committee for the Advancement of Comparative and International Education. In addition, the interactive website that the current Secretariat has been exploring is another tool that would allow us to manage our own membership database, create networking opportunities, present a knowledge base on our field, collect membership fees and registration fees (possibly also for regional conferences). The current contract with the University of Chicago Press is in effect until June 2012. I strongly recommend that the Board of Directors review in mid/late 2011 (presidency of Ratna Ghosh) the agreement with the University of Chicago Press. Currently, the Press collects the membership fees. It might be financially more advantageous for us if we have the CIES treasurer collect the membership fees and pay the publisher rather than the other way around (as it is currently done).

¹ Source: Memo of Barbara A. Yates, Secretary of CIES (University of Illinois – Urbana), on November 19, 1963 to the CIES Executive Committee. Yates reports a count of 1,100 individual members.

Finance. The move to a more permanent infrastructure (e.g., in the form of an Executive Director) and other ideas for sustaining the growth of the Society require financial resources. My term was overshadowed by the financial downturn that started in October 2008. Despite the economic crisis, the financial contributions to CIES were impressive thanks to the revenue generated from the membership dues, the CIES 2009 conference in Charleston, the endowment for the international travel grant (Open Society Institute), and the generous contributions for the Jackie Kirk Memorial Fund (Andrew Kirk and International Rescue Committee). Upon request of the President-Elect Maria T. Tatto, the registration fees were raised for the CIES 2010 conference, making it very likely that the trend of the past few conferences to generate sizeable revenue will continue. However, we could be more strategic with regard to our financial investments. CIES holds total assets of over half a million US dollars. The CIES Financial Investment Committee, chaired by Peter Mook (members: Hilary Landorf, Steven Klees, Ruth Hayhoe, Martin Carnoy) has been very active this year and advised the treasurer on where to invest. It will be important to continuously review the investments made.

The Secretariat, the Past Presidents, and the Numerous Volunteers. This year, we must unfortunately search for a new home for the CIES secretariat. The treasurer and secretary have decided not to submit an application for a second re-appointment. For the past six years, the CIES secretariat has been in excellent hands at Florida International University in Miami. In its most recent composition, the secretariat was composed of Professors Hilary Landorf and Benjamin Baez and graduate assistant Fernanda Pineda. Hilary Landorf, in particular, directed the secretariat and our gratitude to her and her team is beyond words. They have been our reliable and efficient partners and took charge of the day-to-day operations of the Society. Their merits are numerous and our gratitude is immense. We will greatly miss their competent services as treasurer and secretary of CIES. The search committee for the new secretariat is composed of four past presidents: Victor Kobayashi (chair), William Cummings, Ruth Hayhoe, and Val Rust. We hope to find a suitable secretary and treasurer that are able to assume their service to CIES in July 2010.

During my tenure as president of CIES, I was moved by the great number of past presidents, former members of the Board of Directors but also regular members who served this past year on CIES ad-hoc or standing committees. I would like to thank on behalf of CIES all these colleagues who spent numerous hours for advancing the Society and the field of comparative and international education.

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