



Special Conference Issue

THE THINKING TEACHER

April 2018

Survey Reveals Success of Conference

Although subjective reports indicated that the international conference of IACEP in Guadalajara was successful, the conference committee conducted an e-mail survey in an effort to quantify conferees' reactions. The survey questionnaire was brief—in order to encourage responses. It was sent to 60 conference attendees for whom we had e-mail addresses.

Out of 60 survey forms sent out, 21 were filled out and returned. Each item on the survey was rated on a scale with a range of 1 to 5, 5 being the most favorable, 1 the least favorable. Table 1 shows a summary of the responses.

Table 1. Summary of Responses to Conference Evaluation Questionnaire*

ITEM	MEAN	MODE	MEAN WITHOUT EXTREMES**
Number of Days at 3-day Conference	(2.63)	(3)	(2.70)
Conference Hotel	4.28*Rating	5	4.43
Conference Organization	4.16	4	4.1
Quality of Program	4.37	4	4.33
Keynote Speakers	4.17	4	4.25
Symposia	4.26	4	4.29
Paper Sessions	4.15	4	4.11
Mini-Workshops	4.06	4	3.83
Coffee/Tea Breaks	4.32	5	4.75
Banquet	4.35	5	4.53
Overall Satisfaction	4.30	4	4.39
Will Participate In Another IACEP Conference	100% "Yes"	---	---

*Rating scale: 5=Best ever, 1=Worst ever

**Excluding the one most positive and one most negative rating

Of the 20 responses that were received, 17 were from members of IACEP and 3 were from non-members. Four respondents were students. If we assume that the responses came from a

representative sample of all who attended the conference (a hazardous assumption!), by extrapolation we can surmise that 85% of conference attendees, or 54 individuals, were IACEP members whereas 9 were non-members.

Participants in the survey were asked whether, on the basis of this conference experience, they would participate in another IACEP conference, and every respondent answered affirmatively. In another item they were asked “In your own words, what is your overall impression (level of satisfaction) of the conference?” The free-response comments were in general quite positive and also included good suggestions for future conferences. Sample comments:

Very good presentations, excellent opportunities to interact with colleagues

It was wonderful to meet such interesting and gifted people.

...moments of dialogue and discussion can be given, and this is appreciated.

It was wonderful to meet so many professionals committed to improving cognition, worldwide.

Wish we had more time for discussion.

Overall I am happy with it but I wish there will be more variety of the paper/topics presented. As it was I felt it was more of a workshop than a conference, not that ...

...satisfactory in the sense of presentation, analysis, but needs to be improved in form of getting questions-answers, increasing time span of presentations

Interpretation of the survey. The response rate of less than 50% of those who attended the conference does not suggest that the responses are a representative sample. It is likely that those who responded are, on the average, relatively more positive about the conference, whereas those who did not take the time to respond were probably less positive. In spite of this kind of

limitation, it is impressive that the ratings were uniformly on the very positive end of the scale, with an overall satisfaction rating of 4.3 out of a possible 5.0, and especially that 100 percent of respondents indicated that they will participate in a future IACEP conference.

The hotel and its services were regarded as highly satisfactory, with the hotel itself getting a modal rating of 5—the top of the scale. Catering services were very much approved as well, with coffee/tea breaks and the Tuesday evening dinner receiving some of the highest ratings in the survey.

The free-response comments were mainly positive, and the suggestions were ones that will be helpful for planning future conferences. Some comments addressed perennial problems with conferences; for example, some commentators wanted more time for presentation, but allotting more time per presentation would mean fewer presentations. Many members cannot get funding for their conference expenses unless they are on the program. The program committee worked to reconcile these opposing goals, recognizing that there is never a completely satisfactory solution. The same dilemma was faced regarding more time for discussion and question-and-answer periods; more time, fewer presenters.

Some responders suggested selection of a less expensive venue. This is something that conference committees almost always take into consideration. In this case, Mexico was chosen because it is generally less expensive than similar venues in the USA and Canada, and the hotel was selected after investigation of 12 hotels in the area, considering guest room prices, cost and availability of meeting rooms, and support services (e.g., audiovisual equipment and IT support, catering). Even so, the cost for participants was considerable and this should be studied closely for future conferences.

At least one respondent would have liked more opportunity to explore the local attractions—of which there are many in the Guadalajara area. Conferees who were able to take advantage of

the cultural attractions did so mainly by extending their stay beyond the conference days.

Future conferences. Plans are already in the works for regional conferences. A work group has been established to produce a guide for conference planning and organizing, and this will be available to the vice presidents as they prepare regional conferences and to the conference committee for the 2019 international conference. The anticipated schedule is that regional conferences will be held in 2018, because the Guadalajara conference was a substitute for the one that had been scheduled for July 2017 in Geneva and was cancelled. Thus, the next international conference will be held in 2019, putting IACEP back on its biennial schedule.

Students Participate in Conference

The conference in Guadalajara had the considerable benefit of participation by a large number of students, most of whom were studying in university graduate programs in education, special education, psychology, or speech/language education. The majority of the participating students came from the United States, Israel, and Canada. As part of the conference committee's evaluation, several students who participated in the conference were asked to write brief statements about their experience at, and impressions of, the conference. The following are the statements of three participating students.

Participation in IACEP conference

Karin Bar-Zvi Shaked, PhD student, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

My participation in the IACEP conference in Mexico was a huge adventure. First of all, the journey from Israel to Mexico was long but challenging and marked the beginning of the time out of the daily routine. In the beginning, I was very curious to meet people from different countries at the conference. It was a unique opportunity to meet researchers who study varied fields and to listen to their points of view and plans for the future. Also, it was interesting to recognize similarities, differences and problems

that exist around areas of research topics between various cultures and countries. During the conference, the feeling was very pleasant and there was a mutual acceptance, interest and cooperation between the participants, regardless of age. It was very exciting and a great pride to present our research in the conference, and it aroused interest among researchers from various countries. At the end of the conference, the dinner and the musical show were a great ending to a wonderful experience. As a student, I feel that my participation in the conference is an essential step in my professional progress: To be a part of an investigating community, to stay updated with the latest research, and to take part in the cutting edge by way of the international gathering on cognitive education.

I am very grateful to my supervisor, Professor Adina Shamir, who showed me the world of conferences and its benefits. I am looking forward to the upcoming conferences!

Impressions of the IACEP conference

Gila Dushnitzky, PhD student, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

I had the honor to present my research at the IACEP conference in Guadalajara, Mexico last January. The presentations were very interesting and diverse. I had the opportunity to speak and exchange ideas and thoughts with the lecturers and other IACEP members during coffee breaks. The atmosphere was very warm and friendly. The four days of the conference were both enjoyable and very contributing to me.

IACEP Guadalajara from a first-time attendee's perspective

Andrew J. Newcombe, M.S., San Diego State University, USA

I am a graduate student in school psychology at San Diego State University. I attended the IACEP conference in Guadalajara in my capacity as a trainee in Carol Robinson-Zañartu's bilingual project on using thinking skills with US and Mexican students and was a co-presenter in the "Use of mediated thinking skills to enhance

academic interventions in US-Mexican collaboration” workshop.

The IACEP conference provided me with the opportunity to enrich my understanding of cognitive assessment and education. At San Diego State we have training in the dynamic assessment and mediated learning models of cognitive assessment and education. Specifically, we learn the MindLadder tools (Jensen, 2000) and the MiCOSA model of teaching thinking skills (Zañartu, Doerr & Portman, 2015). Although I knew the names of Vygotsky and Feuerstein, I had little acquaintance with their respective bodies of work or legacies in the international body of scientific thought. Coming to the conference, I was interested in learning more about history of cognitive assessment and education and current perspectives and uses of dynamic assessment tools.

IACEP is unique among the conferences I have attended both because of its size and the diversity of its attendees. There were significant contingents of scholars from Israel, the United States, Russia, Slovakia and Mexico, all of whom represented different traditions of cognitive assessment. The smaller setting of IACEP Guadalajara facilitated intimacy and conversation among these diverse groups. The opening keynote by Yuriy Karpov on the Vygotskian approach to instruction generated a healthy debate about the respective legacies of Vygotsky and Feuerstein. As a first-time IACEP attendee it was fascinating to see how lively the discussion was decades after Vygotsky and Feuerstein published their works, and I found the history lesson about the origin of cognitive education instructive. A key takeaway was that the basic tenet of cognitive education has always been that cognitive abilities are not static but modifiable. Remembering this principle will inform my use of dynamic assessment and mediated learning in my professional career.

The conference theme "Culture and Cognition" attracted several interesting presentations on cognitive assessment and education with cultural

and linguistic minorities. Highlights included Feuerstein, Tzuriel, Cagan, Yosef, Devisheim and Falik's presentation on using dynamic assessment in the selection of students of Ethiopian origin for Israeli universities, Robinson-Zañartu and Aganza's discussion of culturally responsive mediated learning, and Kovalčíková's discussion of using cultural assets to improve the executive function of Slovakian Roma people. Using cognitive assessment and education to shift perceptions of minority and vulnerable populations was a common theme. Feuerstein and colleagues used dynamic assessment to show universities how Ethiopian-origin students were capable learners. Robinson-Zañartu and Aganza gave specific tools for identifying cultural assets often overlooked in Latino students' education. Kovalčíková found thinking skills embedded in the cultural values of Roma people and connected those skills to prompting executive functioning in the school environment.

The most impactful part of the conference was, in my view, becoming acquainted with the work happening around the world using cognitive assessment and education to support and advocate for minority ethnic groups and vulnerable populations. In addition to the work highlighted above, other presentations focused on students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Intellectual Disabilities and the cognitive assessment of migrant youth. It was clear to me that the legacies of Vygotsky and Feuerstein are kept alive by those who continue to prove that vulnerable individuals are capable of growth, whatever their disability status, culture or language may be.

References

- Jensen, M. R. (2000). The MindLadder model: Using dynamic assessment to assemble and use knowledge. In C. Lidz & J. G. Elliott, *Dynamic assessment: Prevailing models and applications*, pp. 187-228. Amsterdam, NY: JAI/Elsevier Science.

Zañartu, C. R., Doerr, P., & Portman, J. (2015).
Teaching 21 thinking skills for the 21st century: The MiCOSA model. Pearson.

Conference Abstracts Available in English and Spanish

Abstracts of all presentations given at the XVI Biennial Conference of IACEP are posted at the web site, www.ia-cep.org, in both English and Spanish. Presentation of the abstracts in Spanish was done in recognition of the host country, Mexico, and the host region, South America and the Caribbean region. Translations to Spanish were done by Carol Robinson-Zañartu and her students at San Diego State University. All members of IACEP have free access to materials posted at the web site, including these abstracts as well as current and all past issues of the *Journal of Cognitive Education and Psychology* (JCEP) and *The Thinking Teacher*.

To get to the conference abstracts, log on to <http://ia-cep.org/keynotes-scientific-program-mexico/conference-program-and-abstracts>

To get access to past issues of JCEP log on to <http://ia-cep.org/membership/login>, "JCEP journal".

To get to past and current issues of The Thinking Teacher, log on to <http://ia-cep.org/membership/login>, "Newsletters".

Some Pictures from the Conference





THE THINKING TEACHER



IS an online publication of the International Association for Cognitive Education and Psychology (IACEP), published bi-monthly for members of IACEP and friends of effective thinking and learning

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