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## 50 Years of the CIESC - Looking Back and Envisioning Forward: Reflections from Past-Presidents

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# 50 Years of the CIESC - Looking Back and Envisioning Forward: Reflections from Past-Presidents

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**50 Years of the CIESC - Looking Back and Envisioning Forward:  
Reflections from Past-Presidents  
50 ans de la SCÉCI – Regarder le passé et envisager l’avenir : Réflexions des anciens  
présidents**

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Introduction by Grazia Scoppio, Royal Military College of Canada

**Abstract**

This paper stems from the panel of past Presidents of the Comparative and International Education Society (CIESC) that was part of the 2017 conference of the CIESC held in Toronto, Canada. The theme of the panel was “Looking Back, Visioning Forward: The Promise of Comparative and International Education” and the panelists were asked to present their perspectives based on their experiences as past Presidents of the Society. Their reflections were gathered to create this combined piece, in order to capture their insights on the past, present and future of comparative and international education.

**Résumé**

Cet article provient du panel avec les anciens présidents de la Société Canadienne d’Éducation Comparée et Internationale (SCÉCI) qui a eu lieu lors de la conférence de la SCÉCI, tenue à Toronto, au Canada. Le thème du panel était : « Regarder le passé, envisager l’avenir : La promesse de l’Éducation Comparée et Internationale », et les panélistes ont été invités à présenter leurs points de vue basés sur leurs expériences en tant qu’anciens présidents de la société. Leurs réflexions ont été recueillies afin de créer cette pièce combinée, afin de saisir leurs perspectives sur le passé, le présent, et le futur de l’éducation comparée et internationale..

**Keywords:** comparative and international education; Comparative and International Education Society of Canada

**Mots-clés :** éducation comparée et internationale; Société Canadienne d’Éducation Comparée et Internationale

**Introduction**

The 2017 conference of the Comparative and International Education Society (CIESC), held at Ryerson University in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, included a panel of some of the past-Presidents of the CIESC. Chaired by Kumari Beck, outgoing CIESC President, the panel’s theme was “Looking Back, Visioning Forward: The Promise of Comparative and International Education” whereby past Presidents of CIESC were asked to contribute their perspectives on comparative and international education and identify potential lessons learned, trends, and future possibilities

of the field. As the panel's theme echoed the topic of this Special Issue of the *CIE Journal*, the panelists were also invited to submit a written version of their reflections to be later combined into one piece. Almost all the panelists submitted their reflections for this combined piece, including two past-Presidents who were not able to attend the conference but had asked a colleague to read their reflections on their behalf. The CIESC past-Presidents' reflections are presented here in chronological order of their presidency, rather than in the order they were presented at the panel. This gives us a sense of the progression of the CIESC as a Society, along with the unfolding of various historical events, at times intertwined with personal narratives and even poetry. We felt it was important to include these reflections in the Special Issue to mark the CIESC 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, because to inform the way ahead of our Society and comparative and international education more broadly, it is important to understand our past. As the saying goes: "you can't know where you're going until you know where you've been" (Unknown).

## **CIESC Past-President 1985-1987, Vandra Masemann**

### **The First Half (1967-1992)**

I will start by paying my respects to the early founders of the CIESC. I first became aware of the Society when the CSSE was founded in 1972, as letters were sent out to faculty members at OISE and elsewhere inviting us to join the new federation of academic societies. But from my colleague David Wilson, I learned about the founding of the CIESC and its participation in the First World Congress in 1970. It was not until I was the Historian of the World Council from 2007-2013 that I read all of the founding papers and saw once again that we owe Professor Joseph Katz at the University of British Columbia a heavy debt for actively promoting the founding of the CIESC and the First World Congress. Professor Lawson's relevant files, which were originally in the CIES Archives at Kent State University, were moved with his permission to the CIESC Archives at the University of Western Ontario.

I cannot summarize all of the information contained in the book chapter written by Majhanovich and Lanlin (2007) about the CIESC, but I do want to mention the names of some other eminent early members – Andrew Skinner, Margaret Gillett, Reginald Edwards, Lionel Desjarlais, Roger Magnuson, and Avigdor Farine. That list takes us to 1973, when I first joined and when Douglas Ray from the University of Western Ontario was the President. After this point, I personally knew all of the people whom I will mention.

In 1975, I suffered the same conflict as many other Canadians by being offered a position in the United States at the University of Wisconsin. This was as a result of having presented a paper at the CIES meeting in San Francisco in 1975. These were the years when Douglas Ray, John Mallea, and Margaret Gillett were President of CIESC. When I returned to Canada, my colleague Shiu Kong, incoming CIESC President, admonished me that I would have to support my Canadian colleagues now.

This was the beginning of my intense involvement with the CIESC, from 1978 to 1995. Daniel Dorotich and Jacques Lamontagne were presidents after Shiu Kong. Jacques and Douglas Ray had been very active with the World Council in the years from 1970 to 1984 and had participated in the early Congresses in Geneva (1974), London UK (1977), Tokyo (1980) and Paris (1984). When I became CIESC President in 1985, they phoned me to suggest that we should form a committee to develop a proposal to host the next World Congress in Canada, which eventually did take place in Montreal in 1989. This Congress took place just three weeks

after the events in Tiananmen Square, and the politics of the World Council meetings were very difficult to deal with when I chaired the Executive meetings in Montreal and later in Madrid. Eventually the Chinese proposal to host a World Congress was withdrawn, and it was not until 2016 that they hosted the long-desired Congress in Beijing. The full story of those times can be found in my chapter in the WCCES histories book (Majhanovich & Zhang, 2007, pp. 39-49).

David Wilson and Ralph Miller were also intensely involved in this period. Keith McLeod, Ruth Hayhoe, and Louise Cornell as the CIESC Secretary also contributed greatly at those CIESC meetings in the 1980 and early 1990s. My life was also made more complicated by being the CIES President after my term with the CIESC expired. Finally, I was also on the Steering Group for the Education for All Conference held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990. I have written a paper about my EFA experience for this Special Issue of the CIE journal. Douglas Ray was also on the Canadian Commission for UNESCO at that time and was active in the consultations during that period.

I want to compare the modes of communication during this first period and as they are today. During the period of the 1960s to the late 1980s, the business of the CIESC was done entirely by hand-written letter, typewriter, and duplicator, as can be seen in the archival files. A CIESC Newsletter that was duplicated and sent out twice yearly, and notices of dues from the CSSE and the CIESC Call for Nominations were sent out by letter. A directory of all CIESC members was compiled yearly with their names, contact details and professional interests listed, and published in the second Newsletter each year. All conference organization was communicated by mail – submissions, acceptances, and draft program details. The draft program was published in the CIESC Spring Newsletter, which came out in March or April. All Minutes of Executive meetings were published in English and French in the Fall Newsletter. The CSSE printed the final program of all the societies in one document, as is the case today. Members also communicated by telephone, as the numbers were listed in the directory.

Finally, the CIE journal was also an important organ of scholarly communication. It was fairly easy for all members to know who their colleagues were across Canada. My memories of the early period are of the great contributions of Douglas Ray and David Radcliffe as Editors at the University of Western Ontario, and continuing anxieties about funding the journal. I might point out that its title, *Canadian and International Education*, was also meant to allow for submissions on First Nations education, a distinction that no other journal in Comparative Education has ever made. It was also intended that inter-provincial comparative studies could be published in the journal.

Several characteristics of the involvement of Canadians in the international field during this period were of note. Even though we were a very small society, we played a large role in the First World Congress in 1970. We were eager to support an international initiative such as the World Council, and the mood in Canada after Expo '67 at that time was outward-looking to the wider world. Second, many of our major players at that time were also involved in the American CIES, partly because many of them were Americans, and partly because the CIES allowed them to participate in a larger conference in their specialty. About one tenth of the CIES Presidents have been Canadian. A few of our members also attended CESE meetings in Europe and later in Asia and Africa. Lastly, the Canadian presence and participation in the EFA Conference in Jomtien was strong, in part because of the US withdrawal from UNESCO, which led to several major meetings being hosted by the Canadian Commission for UNESCO.

## **The Second Half (1992-2017)**

I am going to leave it to my successors to provide most of the material for the second half of our history. The EFA conference in Jomtien did in a sense provide a demarcation between the two eras. The rise of computer technology made a huge difference to the way scholars communicated with one another, organised their conferences, and shared their research results. My own career in Canada was interrupted once again by a teaching stint at the Florida State University, a term as Secretary-General of the WCCES as a result of the illness of Raymond Ryba, and commuting to Buffalo and Pittsburgh after my return to Canada in 1998. During these years and up to the present, Deo Poonwassie, Eva Krugly-Smolksa, Peter Fan, KP Binda, Suzanne Majhanovich, Cecille dePass, Alan Pitman, Nombuso Dlanimi, Marianne Larsen, Lynette Schultz, and now Kumari Beck have served the Society well.

## **Visioning Forward**

You will be able to read much more about my views for Visioning Forward in the article for this Special Issue by Mary Drinkwater, Stephen Bahry et al. Here, I will just highlight some of my major thoughts. My major concern is communications. As I outlined above, the first half of the CIESC's history was made without the use of personal computers, iPhones, websites, or the social media. However, the implementation of privacy laws has resulted in less ability of CIESC members to communicate with one another. There is no comprehensive list of members, their contact details, and interests. The Newsletter is no longer published in a predictable sequence. The website and the mass emailing serve the functions that the Newsletters served formerly. The result is what has been called the individuation of communication. Messages are delivered to members on a screen, but there is no sense of members of a community receiving the same messages. The experience of downloading the CIESC programme App or responding to Twitter while at the conference is primarily an individual one. Facebook provides some semblance of community when photos are posted at the conferences. It is my view that the CIESC needs to improve its communication among members so that they experience being part of a community of comparativists. A password-accessible directory that is compiled after members give Express Consent to the release of their details to fellow members is an achievable goal. A regular Newsletter is also a way to record the regular business of the Society by making Minutes accessible to members.

This point leads me to thinking about how to leave our legacy in an accessible state for the future. We need to pay more attention to recording the passage of time and our footprints in those sands. I could not even find a list of past editors of the CIE journal, even on the website. Nor are the names of the Past Presidents of the CIESC listed since 2007 when Majhanovich and Zhang's chapter was published. I could also not find any list of past winners of all of the awards except for the recent David Wilson award. Although the CIESC Archives have been established at the University of Western Ontario, the papers of many people I have mentioned in this talk are not in those Archives. A related topic that other archives are dealing with is the digitization of their holdings. We need to have a consistent and systematic set of records that can be digitized.

My last point concerns the goals of our society. We need to think if we have achieved these goals or if they have changed. I leave that task to the next generation. Listed on our website are the [goals](#) of our founders. We need to examine to what extent we are achieving these goals, and how we might better do so in future.

### **CIESC Past-President 1993 – 1995, Deo Poonwassie**

Since fall, 2016, I have had a few discussions with Cecille DePass, in which we relived some important aspects of CIESC's contributions to the Canadian academy, the CIES and to the World Council. I would like to emphasize my role with the Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCUNESCO). I was on the Executive of CCUNESCO for seven years. Within CIESC, we made the case to CSSE that due to CIESC's focus on comparative and international education, that CIESC would represent, CSSE. This was done. As I remember, Cecille was the CSSE representative to the Education Sectoral Commission of CCUNESCO and, further; she was a Former Chair/President of that Sector. In CCUNESCO, I was instrumental, in actively negotiating with representatives of the Commission, to ensure that CCUNESCO represented, Canada's demographic changes. By this, I mean that there was diversity and inclusion of First Nations and Visible Minorities on its Board. When I retired, the Director stated that the conscience of CCUNESCO had left. I hope that CIESC has continued to play an active part in CCUNESCO, if this is not the case, CIESC should make a concerted effort, to once more, be CSSE's official representative to the CCUNESCO.

### **CIESC Past-President 1997 - 1999, Peter Fan**

I was active mostly in the 1990s mainly doing the programs of the annual conferences. In my days, I was one of the few voices from the school systems, being a teacher and a high school administrator. Direct experience and applications were some of my major concerns with a focus on the development of the individual student. No doubt, the last and lasting memory of my involvement in CIESC and CIES was that of my taking part in a panel in the final plenary session of CIES on the theme of Globalization in OISE at the turn of the century. We were all very concerned, although as far as I remember no one could quite pinpoint in which direction the process of globalization would go. Now, over a decade later, we witness certain consequences that we did not see and/or may not like to see: the re-structuring of the international order, economically and politically; the gap between the very rich and the poor; those who formerly controlled the political and economic order now have to retreat to racism, or some would like to call it Ethnic Nationalism. Where do these changes leave our students?

Canada, for now, is at the privileged position of being at a point that is rather middle of the road, in terms of ideas, trade and political relationships among the powers that dominated the world in the last two centuries and the emerging economies. Given this, I would say, fortunate position, what do we say to our young people? What global vision, personal values, life preparation in terms of careers, style and families do we try to help our students to explore.

I was ordained a Permanent Deacon of the Catholic Church upon my retirement in 2004. I am tempted, as a teacher and a person with religious faith, to ask the question, "What do we tell our students on issues regarding eternity, eternity that not only invokes faith in life after our worldly existence, but also how do we express that faith, if you like CONSCIENCE, while we are alive. Is it a faith in the human being based on love and compassion? Or is it based on self-interest and personal, ethnic or national security? Are we conscious of our orientation and act to help human societies to develop peacefully with the ultimately fulfillment of the person? Every single thing we say in the education milieu, whether it is in the classroom, socially, the emphasis of the curriculum, now in the social media, has an impact. Is it planned and operated in an

atmosphere of compassion, acceptance and mutual growth? I pray that more and more people, in Canada and beyond, take these concerns across national and ethnic boundaries.

It is wonderful to be in touch again. As the sustained growth of CIESC shows that so long as we have a group of people gathering to study, understand and act out of genuine concern for the wellbeing of humanity, our impact would go beyond academic studies into eternity. Enjoy the celebration. Look forward to reading your deliberations in the journals. May God bless you all and your work.

### **CIESC Past-President 2001 – 2003, Suzanne Majhanovich**

For the special issue of this journal to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CIESC, the journal editors proposed two themes: history and background, and future of comparative and international education research in a globalized and diverse world, and they asked potential authors to address one of more of the themes. For my reflections as Past President of the CIESC (2001-2003), I propose to talk about how I came to join the society, how comparative education has changed over the years, and the challenges our society faces.

I joined the CIESC in the late 80s. Comparative and International Education was not my natural research home since I am a linguist and taught pedagogy of second/foreign language acquisition. So, when I attended CSSE back in the 80s, it was usually to present at the Canadian Association of Curriculum Studies (CACS) or at the Canadian Association of Teacher Education (CATE). However, Western Faculty of Education had a long and strong tradition of Comparative Education, and Douglas Ray<sup>1</sup> and David Ratcliffe, who at that time were editors of the Journal, then called *Canadian and International Education*, urged me to become involved in the CIESC. Probably it was our chronic condition of trying to attract new members that led them to invite me to the society, but their arguments for joining the group were persuasive and I began to send in conference proposals for the CIESC program. I was warmly welcomed by comparative educators across Canada. They were very kind in comments on my initial presentations. But I also on the recommendation of Douglas and David became involved in the executive of the society, and so I became Secretary-Treasurer/Newsletter Editor, then Program Chair, then Vice President and President in 2001, and later also became editor of the Journal. Through those roles I came to meet many of the prominent comparative educators as well as graduate students in the field and found them by and large an impressive lot. I have always found the conference presentations of the CIESC and its SIG CERN (Citizenship Education Research Network) to be highly interesting and pertinent to issues of global concern. Social justice and equity have been strong themes that have been studied by members of the CIESC. In a sense, Comparative and International Education has become an eclectic organization that welcomes researchers from many different areas into its fold—sociology, anthropology, linguistics, policy and politics, for example, are fields that comfortably work in Comparative and International Education. As a result, the methodologies associated with Comparative/International Education are highly varied related to the kind of study undertaken. I see this as a very positive development.

As a member of CIESC, I also became aware of the World Congresses, which I first attended in Rio in 1987 and I have attended most World Congresses since that time. Like most of CIESC members, I also joined and began attending the annual conferences of our sister US

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas Ray was President of CIESC from 1973-75.



Society, the CIES, and have even attended several of the conferences of our European associates through the Comparative Education Society of Europe (CESE).

As Comparative and International Education has evolved, it has expanded its horizons such that now language learning is very much a part of its research purview, especially in a world on the move with large migrant groups seeking to acculturate in their new environment; language learning is an important aspect of inclusion in a different society and becoming an active citizen in it.

It is interesting to note how the field has changed. In the 70s and 80s international education tended to be related to development work abroad. The comparative side of the field was more associated with “hard”, often quantitative, research comparing education systems in different countries of the world. It was almost a requirement that more than one country had to be included in any study. Many of the European and Asian Societies do not even include “international” as part of their titles, perhaps trying to convey the notion that they are “serious” research societies conducting important comparative studies on education around the world. The practical development work that fell under the “international” area was a bit down-played as were single country studies. Interestingly enough, this was not the case in Canada where arguments were made that the various education systems within Canada and its diverse population provided grounds enough for single country comparison. The term international has gained a new connotation in a globalized world. Now internationalization is very much associated with mobility of people across the globe for various reasons—working in the global market, fleeing war-torn, famine ravaged countries, seeking higher education in the developed world and other purposes associated with our globalized world.

Certainly, internationalization has become an important part of universities in the Western World as they seek to attract promising scholars from elsewhere. Their motives are not completely altruistic as many comparative scholars have pointed out, since enrolling foreign students has proven to be a lucrative business for universities given the high tuitions international students must pay for the privilege of studying in a Western University.

I wanted to touch on some of the ongoing challenges faced by our society. Because we are eclectic in our interests, we attract scholars from many different fields and that is a plus. But it is also a problem because they may at times wish to return to their original area of expertise be it in policy/administration studies, higher education, adult education, applied linguistics and the like. That means that our membership can vary for CIESC conferences depending on where people who identify both with CE and another area of study choose to present their work. A constant goal of our society as long as I have been associated with it has been to attract more members. This problem comes in part from the organization of the CSSE. When the CSSE was founded, CIESC was a founding society but fell under the umbrella administration of CSSE. Some of our sister organizations like Higher Education and Adult Education never became part of CSSE but remained apart. Comparative Education societies in other countries are stand-alone organizations, not under the umbrella of a larger educational society. Were our founders wrong to submit themselves to CSSE? Should we have stayed separate? Most members of CIESC are also members of CIES but it is also true that many of our prominent Canadian comparative and international educators do not even belong to CIESC but only associate with CIES. What can our society do to encourage Canadian comparative educators to see CIESC as their research home? We have many Quebec colleagues working in CE but few choose to belong to the CIESC preferring to associate rather with the European society AFEC (Association française

d'éducation comparée) or with their Quebec networks. How can we develop stronger ties with our francophone comparative education colleagues?

Returning to my fondest memories of membership in the CIESC, I have to mention the many social get-togethers our group always had every year at the congress wherever it was held in Canada. The CIESC dinners were always a lively occasion and opportunity to talk to other Canadian comparative educators that one perhaps only saw once a year at the congress—and also perhaps to plan some joint research projects, special publications or special colloquia. I have brought along some pictures from previous conferences for you to look at. Perhaps you will recognize some of our members who have contributed so much to our society and to the field at large. I have sent electronic versions of some pictures to our outgoing President Kumari Beck hoping that she can perhaps find a way to post them on our website.

As for initiatives our society might consider for the future, I would suggest making contact with our European and Asian sister societies to pursue possibilities for collaborative research and perhaps special publications in our and their journals. In the meantime, I hope our society will continue to work for social justice, building bridges in our globalized world in a time where some see exclusion and wall building as a priority.

### **CIESC Past-President 2003 – 2005, Cecille DePass (with Sonia Aujla- Bhullar)<sup>2</sup>**

#### **Gardening in CIESC: A visioning activity in two voices**

The inclusion of the Presidents' Panel at the CIESC Conference offered an opportunity to incorporate distinctive perspectives, lived experiences and different voices in meaningful ways. Accordingly, I (Cecille) invited Sonia Aujla-Bhullar, to collaborate with me, in order to, conceptualize and research our oral presentation's form, content, key issues and flow. Representing selected aspects of CIESC's past and present, my voice encouraged the audience to participate willingly, in the unfolding, presentation. Based on current leadership activities within CIESC, Sonia's poetic voice depicting its present and hopes for the future, adopted a mellow presence which moved, "front and centre" in the emerging dialogue (Freire, 1987). Our voices highlighted the rich international, intergenerational legacy to be passed to the next generation of CIESC's members and leaders. A graphic series of PowerPoint slides with major concepts, Sonia's original poetry and photographs of plants from her grandmother's and other well-known gardens, as well as, music from "Shephard's Call" by Ronu Majumdar and Tarun Bhattacharya were designed deliberately, to be integral and indispensable parts of the presentation (DePass, 2006, 2017).

#### **Summary of Script**

For several weeks, working together, we scripted, and rehearsed the presentation. Parts of which included the following dialogue:

**Cecille:** In our CIESC garden we spotlight in vibrant colours, phrases and images, symbolic and imagined characteristics of a future CIESC, which exists in our minds and dreams. Sonia and I

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<sup>2</sup> Dedications from **Cecille:** to the late Mathew Zachariah, Evelina Orteza y Miranda, & David Wilson (doctoral & academic advisors and mentors); from **Sonia** to her grandfathers, the late Hardev Singh Chahal and Ajit Singh Aujla, and as importantly, to her grandmothers, Mohinder Kaur Chahal and Prakash Kaur Aujla who are very much alive and still tackling actively, imposed societal prejudices (symbolically and literally).

will prompt you to think of the garden, which we will cultivate. To do so, we identify the vegetation, which anchors the garden, at different times and in different seasons. Our garden is based on enhancing the strengths and structural characteristics, which CIESC has developed, pruned and shaped, during the past 50 years.

**Sonia:** We plant and nurture some beautiful trees and plants such as: apple and plum trees; cilantro; green onions; strawberries; lavender; mustard; mint; spinach; zucchini; marigolds; tulips; daffodils; daisies... in order to create a CIESC garden which honours, respects and treasures diversity: “The garden teaches us there is something we are all capable of doing. Only with something so small that can be in everyone’s hand can we challenge the empire” (Vandana Shiva).<sup>3</sup>

**Cecille:** Should we speak about the philosophies and theories, which we wish to plant? Or should we simply, allow the garden to evolve? Sonia, let our imaginations take wings!

**Sonia:** An extract from one of my poems, tells of my dream for CIESC’s garden:

#### **Fields of Punjab**

The fields of Punjab

Or as my elders would describe the work

*Keth da kham*

Not being able to see this, my imagination fills with the images described by Dada and Bibi. The strength of women’s backs, arms, legs as one of my mothers’ explains her day with the ever present tired smile as she recalls the precision and example of *menth*.

My first time in Punjab was a glorious event of immersing myself in the smells and tastes of Punjabi food made on the *chula* and being, oh so thankful, to be born into a culture that creates songs from seeds.

What is in these gardens, these fields?

There are stories here to tell, ones that make you feel and question the contradictions as you see snow covering your Canadian home.

**Cecille:** For some 40 years, in weeding and planting, my Calgary garden (literally and symbolically), I include: such hardy trees as, an ash and two massive conifers. My garden is complemented with several perennial flowering plants, e.g. peonies and tulips. Each year, a few annuals, pansies and petunias add vibrant colours. All of the vegetation grows really well, in the great white north. Peonies, originally from China, are the country’s national flower. Tulips, I understand, came originally from Persia, and are mentioned in The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam. Did you know that versions of some coniferous trees like the fir and pine can grow in the tropics? It would be interesting to do some historical and contemporary research concerning the seeds of plants, flowers—of course, specific types of trees which cross borders to become well established parts of their respective milieu. One of my gardening magazines mentions a family originally from England, whose mother brought some of her favourite seeds to Canada. Her plants thrive in her British Columbian garden.

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<sup>3</sup> Vandana Shiva’s quotes are easily accessed online. In 2003, I heard Shiva speak in Pune, India. She has made a lasting, indeed, a lifetime impact on my thinking.

**Sonia:** “Seed is not just the source of life. It is the very foundation of our being” (Vandana Shiva).

**Cecille:** Are there supportive voices, which allow the new to flourish? Musil (1990) suggests that: “Without a vision the people perish”, however, I think that if we garden together in CIESC “we can dream a world of collective survival, [in which] we all flourish” (p. vii). If CIESC continues to focus on issues of social justice, diversity and inclusion; if CIESC promotes concerns for the world’s children and the most vulnerable people at home and abroad, then our future is ensured.

**Sonia:** Diversity in our gardens as nature’s way...Neither oppressive nor perfect... an extract from my poem captures these thoughts.

### **Our Garden**

Is it loud, catching the breath of those who pass-murmurs of disappointment or irritation with the “overgrowth”?

Are there hidden, quiet spots that you cannot reach nor see unless shown? How do eyes catch the rose that grew from concrete? (Shakur, 1996)

Pathways and perfectly manicured green lawns?

Chaotic magnificence that is wild but planned?

Keep your eyes down

Oppression in our gaze...

Yet, the flower will trespass this gaze and blooms throughout time and contradictions?

Catches your breath

breathes life anew.

**Cecille and Sonia:** CIESC’s future rests in our hands.

An unanticipated, yet fitting ending: Having stood, facing the audience, throughout the presentation, we made eye contact, and moved simultaneously, towards individuals in the room. We stood smiling, with arms stretched wide open, in welcoming stances. Non-verbally, Cecille and Sonia, encouraged everyone in the room to stand too, and to join us in a very large circle with our arms raised and linked. By reaching outwards, by linking arms, everyone depicted hallmarks of CIESC’s lengthy history --- the collaboration, collegiality and joie de vivre for which it is known, nationally and internationally.

### **CIESC Past-President 2005 – 2007, Allan Pitman**

There are four elements that make CIESC an outstanding organization in the field of C and I education research and teaching to which I will draw attention. First: Its membership reflects the diversity of Canada’s history. Consider the members who have been its Presidents and how it reflects the evolving membership of the Society and of Canada.

Second: The breadth of interest contained within the Society reflects one vital aspect that too many theorists and researchers have been too slow in recognizing. Research into and with First Nations and other indigenous peoples in Canada by some of our members, over many years, drives home one of the major failings of much C & I work – the reduction of the comparative to that of nation states as a unit. Remember that, within Canada, the majority of our indigenous peoples are members of First Nations – plural: there are also the Inuit, Innu, Metis. This aspect

is not only important methodologically. I hope to see even greater encouragement for the participation of indigenous scholars in moves to reverse the historically set direction of the comparative lens.

Third: The Society has contributed beyond its size in the production of a quality journal, *Canadian and International Education*. With the strictly limited budget available, its existence speaks to the level of commitment of its members as editors, contributors and reviewers. Finally: The Annual Conference participation in the CSSE Congress illustrates my fourth element. It is one of the most student-friendly of such conferences. This does not mean any diminution of quality; rather, it reflects the vitality of ongoing research agendas whereby mutual respect and expertise grows and provides generational change on a continuous basis. Two final thoughts, both related to ideas of “quality.”

### **Comparative education research within the university**

Traced through the policy associations made by governments in both documents and in the Ministerial structures under which they are placed, a trajectory emerges across many nations and jurisdictions whereby the role of universities has been redefined from being centres of culture and the preparation of members of the traditional professions to members of systems tied to national economic development. Knowledge has been repositioned from a common good to become a commodity. In terms of governmental policy, education (including universities) have seen shifts in Ministerial organization from education and the arts, then to education and technology and more recently as education and employment. This trend has been linked with two other shifts: the move to systemic mass tertiary education and the redefinition of human capital from being linked to the common good to a personal asset – this latter is in large part a reflection of the growth of the role of neoliberal governmental philosophy.

In this context, the role of universities is increasingly being defined in terms of quality. This is a particularly important issue and just what we mean by quality is central and should concern us all now and in the future. The *Oxford Dictionary* gives two contradictory meanings:

Of things:

- An attribute, property, special feature or characteristic. Primary, secondary, etc. qualities: see adj.
- The nature, kind, or character (of something). Now restricted to cases in which there is comparison (expressed or implied) with other things of the same kind; hence, the degree or grade of excellence, etc. (Murray, 1971, p. 2383).

The first definition is comparative in the sense that one individual or institution is able to display more or less of a specified variable/characteristic. The second describes an individual in terms of its characteristic(s), which makes it unique.

We have seen a shift from the second to the first meaning of quality in relation to universities, and just how those comparators are determined have profound consequences. Not least has been the accompanying shift reflected in funding, from socially desirable institutions funded by the public for the public good, to components in the economic system supplying a commodity – knowledge – for individual gain. Units then become revenue generating units, subject to market forces. This in turn drives not only which of these units survive, but at a deeper level what programs within those survivors gain support. In education a shift to scientism and a re-emerged scientific reductionism has seen the rise of brain science, for example, and the shift from sociological concerns. Funding of research projects, within a diminished priority framework, is further limited by demands for so-called “evidence-based” projects. The term as used here is highly misleading, referring as it does to research methodologies based upon

comparative data derived from r on universalised variables, much along the lines proposed by Campbell and Stanley in the early 1960's. This latter is deeply worrying for comparative and international education work.

### **Comparative methodologies and qualit(y)(ies)**

I have for a long time been preoccupied by appropriate methodological approaches to comparative research, arising out of too-common experiences of hearing reports of international research and development work and of international comparative studies which have not worked out as planned or theoretically expected. Influences on my thinking have been the writing of *Annales* school historiographers, grounded theory, science study and actor network studies. A common thread in all of these approaches has been the desire to treat the individual case and to give what is at times described as a thick description. The value of this is that we can compare objects, social groups or whatever by comparing and contrasting characteristics of what make Each unique.

The notions of quality come into play here. Does quality refer to what makes a thing unique – its distinct quality or qualities – or does quality refer to a comparison in which one thing has a greater or lesser quality than another? In the English language, the word “quality” has two very different – indeed, almost contradictory – meanings. The *Oxford Dictionary* definitions come into play again here: Is it a case of better and worse, or of what makes something what it is?

As I pointed out in my 2007 Presidential Address, “These usages date from at least the fourteenth century, as traced by the dictionary’s compilers. There is an essential contradiction in the two usages of the word, in that the first definition seeks out that which is unique or different about the object; the second focuses upon the commonality between similar objects and claims to evaluate in terms of comparative excellence.”

So what are the implications for comparative and international education research and development? I fear for funding of research, which is not immediately practical in the sense of being an economic resource in a narrow and short-term sense. Politically, “soft power” is taking a back seat to zero-sum power relations economically and militarily. There are, however, numerous approaches to the methodology of C & I research, and there is much we can draw upon from deeply thought-out positions of other workers in the social sphere. The challenge – a reasonable one and one which can be answered – is to make clear the insights and guidance that other approaches can offer.

It is an excellent time to reconsider the location of the eye in comparative and international education research endeavours. An obvious starting point is postcolonial theory, with its positional turn and with its questioning of the binaries of developed/undeveloped and north/south, for example.

For approaching comparative education research, I suggest visiting (or revisiting) the *Annales* researchers and their concerns with notions of *mentalité* and *longue durée*; for international development, here the work of Braudel, Lefebvre are valuable. We might also pay attention to action research and its premises of reversing the power relationship between the “researcher” or project developer and the “subject” or “client”. From feminist theory, standpoint theory informs us of the difficulties in seeing the world through the historical perspective of others; an insight which, taken with Gadamer’s ideas concerning horizons, places one’s own position in relation to others and the scope of one’s horizon. The overlapping of horizons

becomes a measure of sorts of the capacity of one to see another's view of the world. The importance of standpoint theory is well captured by Bowell:

Feminist standpoint theorists make three principal claims: (1) Knowledge is socially situated. (2) Marginalized groups are socially situated in ways that make it more possible for them to be aware of things and ask questions than it is for the non-marginalized. (3) Research, particularly that focused on power relations, should begin with the lives of the marginalized. Feminist standpoint theory, then, makes a contribution to epistemology, to methodological debates in the social and natural sciences, to philosophy of science, and to political activism.

We might take the non-scientized elements of grounded theory to heart in our approaches. Guba & Lincoln and Charmaz come to mind in reminding us of the importance of reversing the link between theory and observation, building theory about a given situation grounded in the observations and data collected within the case. A newer methodological approach has emerged within science theory, actor network theory. Here, Latour, Cullen and Moll provide valuable entry points. In particular, this approach draws explicit attention to the non-human elements that act in the development and maintenance of networks of human interaction with each other and their environments. As for CIESC, I have derived so much from my activities within the Society and with many of its members. For this I am truly grateful.

## **CIESC Past-President 2009- 2011, Nombuso Dlamini**

### **Introduction to CIESC**

The late Helen Harper introduced me to CIESC. At that time I was a student at OISE doing my PhD. Helen was somewhat of an academic guide to me - she helped me in that journey of learning to conference, to connect to people, and to be able to talk about my work and make it visible to people who didn't know much about it. At this time I was doing research examining the interplay between practices of language use and language choice in the construction and negotiation of social identities. Indeed, my very first publication, "these lions speak Zulu too", was inspired by conversations I had with Helen in which I had expressed disdain over an ad at the subway station about newly arrived SA lions at the Toronto zoo. They were said to be new, novel and expressed themselves in Zulu. Fired up by Helen, I wrote about the problematic of presenting the language of the "other"; about power dynamics, racialization and the demeaning of identities that are associated with certain languages- and in this case, the African identity. Looking back, I realized that Helen acted on what she believed. She was an advocate for gender parity; questioned white privilege and ensured to interrogate her position and that of others like her in educating other people's children.

Later, after being part of the critical pedagogy network for a while, Helen invited me to join CIESC. At that time, I didn't know a lot about CIESC or about CSSE for that matter; I was just learning to conference. Later, she helped me understand the implications of conferencing in the academy and in scholarship development generally. When she suggested that I become a member at large for CIESC, I told her I didn't know what I would do there. And her response was 'you will learn when you take up that role'. Gladly, I discovered that in the association itself, the roles of members at large were not neatly defined, which made it possible for me to carve something for myself. Now looking back, I realize that my CIESC trajectory was very much influenced by Helen's beliefs. If CIESC is a comparative and international association; its

discursive practices had to be reflective in both scholarship and in the subjectivities that embodied that scholarship.

### **As president**

My tenure as president of CIESC did not mirror the time in which I was member at large. For starters, Helen moved to the US to join her partner who later became her husband – a move that restricted her activities with CIESC – although she continued to be involved, somehow. I started my presidency with very little guidance; there was no holding of hands and I just did things as they came along. As VP, I was barely involved- I actually do not remember doing anything beyond attending the annual CSSE meeting. There was no information on programming or on what the association was doing in general; I felt like a bystander and I remained as such. So when I started my presidency, I wanted to do things differently. I am not sure that I succeeded.

### **Annual presidential keynote**

There is one thing though that as President, I remember doing differently, which was the way that I did my keynote. For my keynote, I invited three of my graduate students at York University to share the platform with me. Just on Sunday, I received a text message from one former student and it said “happy anniversary friends! Imagine, six years ago we presented at our first congress together”. This text prompted me to do more reflection on my role as CIESC scholarship and what my students and I learned as its members. What did we talk about and how did our talk address issues in comparative education? Each of my students, had expressed desire to know what to do in a conference, how to engage the audience, and how to meet professors whose work they read. I took this curiosity as invitation to nature and guide these students in similar ways that Helen had done with me over two decades ago.

### **Ideas presented**

A theme for our joint keynote presentation was to look at the concept of “new-ness” in urban spaces as well as address the way that young people experience these spaces. I spoke about the complexity of urban experiences and the subjects that embody those experiences. My efforts in framing the discourse of “new-ness” in the urban environment drew from Bhabha’s concept of ‘transitional’ temporality. I also used Antonio Gramsci’s assertions about the interconnectedness between the old and new in understanding ‘new formations’. He writes, “what exists at any given time, is a variable combination of old and new... a momentary equilibrium of cultural relations” (Gramsci, 1987, p. 398).

Dr. Audrey Hudson, now lecturer at the Ontario School of Arts and Design presented on “Encountering Shakespeare Anew”. She began her talk by saying, “When conceptualizing the western literary canon (e.g. Shakespearean writings) there are many ideas that one comes to mindfully encounter and newness is not one of them. Equally, when articulating Hip-Hop, it is riddled with ideas of newness and urbanity. In examining the pedagogical potential of hip-hop through its poetic attributes and creative expression, let us consider how Hip-Hop can aid Shakespeare to be/come (a) new”. Audrey’ presentation asked the audience to think deeply about the coming together of “old” and “new” artistic expressions through popular culture and she urged us to think about – culture’s movement with time.

Dr. Natalie Davey, now working as Literacy Lead for the Toronto District School Board, presented a piece on “Encountering New Spaces Old Memories: Finding Home Anew”. She stated, “Packing boxes for a move, be it a new home or a new job, means filling them with



memories and deciding what to leave behind or throw away. Being in the midst of moving homes and teaching jobs all in one fell swoop has made me keenly aware of the dialogical relationship between space and memory. Memory is situated in experience and yet the spaces in which we remember are often not the spaces where the memory originated". She urged the audience to think about how the act of remembering is directly affected by the space in which we situate the analysis of our recollected experiences.

Sam Teele, PhD Candidate, York University, presented the piece, "Encountering New in Everyday". He said, "In attempts to keep pedagogy relevant, current and responsive to the needs of an increasingly global community, educators have begun pointed exploration into educating for "global perspectives." This is in response to an increasingly persistent call to adequately prepare our students to be able to remain competitive and active in a global knowledge based economy." Sam asked the audience to think about how efforts to think and act "globally" might in fact create tensions in "new" local and community building efforts, especially in education.

All our presentations were about making connections to the global, learning to live with the past while making efforts to engage the everyday and create the future. But looking back, I see now that I was engaging my students in similar ways that Helen had engaged me – though I did not realize that at the time. My thoughts about the future of CIESC are: that we should strive towards creating a culture of success for and with those that we work. To ensure that they see possibilities in working with us regardless of the spaces they come from and their subjectivities.

### **CIESC Past-President 2011 – 2013, Marianne Larsen**

Birthdays are a time for celebration, and (as I recall at my own 50<sup>th</sup> birthday), they are also a time for reflection about one's beginnings and one's life. And so I begin with what Cornell West, in his talk last night, called a critical inventory of the self. I am here before you as a past-President of the CIESC, but I need to begin by acknowledging the sources of strength in my life. Primarily those sources have been my mother and father, Susan and Bent Larsen, immigrants who came to Canada from England and Denmark in the 1950s, like so many immigrants before and after them, to make a better life for themselves and for their children to come. From my mother and father, I learned about kindness and especially kindness and compassion towards the vulnerable, weak and the small.

Jesus whom, for me, is the most radical and revolutionary individuals in history who stood by the side of the 'wretched of the earth' the poor, the prostitute, people with disabilities, and the homeless has also been a profound influence on me. He is my role model and all that I do is inspired by his message of non-violence and love for all.

Who else am I? I am an individual with a chronic illness who, 7 years ago, was told by my doctor, that I have only 3 months to live. (Obviously, he was wrong!) I am a mother of a 10-year-old son and a stepmother of 2 teenage daughters. I am a citizen of London, Ontario; I am involved in the local In the Zone movement to plant native plants to revitalize the Carolinian ecosystem within which we live. And so on...

What is significant, to me, is that my work within the academy - including the CIESC – cannot be understood separate from all that constitutes this inventory of myself. My academic work is profoundly shaped by all of these sources and spheres of influence in my life. I interact within all of these spheres – together they shape how I see and act in the world. As James Baldwin has said, "I refuse to move forward without consideration of where I've come from."

So now let me shift the focus from me to the world within which I live. There is no doubt in my mind that we live in a time of crisis, distress, anxiety and, for many, civil strife and violence. Listening to sessions at this conference, it is clear that our world is still characterized by xenophobia, racism, sexism, heterosexism, poverty and widening gaps of income inequality and other forms of exclusion, loneliness, and struggle. Despite the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, there still exists too much inequality between FNMI and settler Canadians with respect to even the most basic of human rights such as housing, water, food, and education. But you don't need to attend an academic conference to know that we live in troubled times. Just go outside and walk along Yonge Street where you will see young pregnant women begging for money, homeless men with their prized and loved dogs, and others in various stages of distress.

Where does comparative and international education stand in all this muck? I do believe, as I heard in Kumari Beck's Presidential Address, that the problems of comparative and international education are really the problems of education and of society and the world at large. Just as you cannot understand me, as a former CIESC president, without reference to all that I am, the sources and supports of inspiration, as well as challenges and barriers I have faced, we cannot understand who we are as a society without reference to the world at large within which we exist.

So we must continue to research and document the troubles, trials, and tribulations of the world and the role that education plays in perpetuating violence and inequality, and the potential of education for social and justice-based change. Critique is crucial, but as this is a birthday we are talking about, celebration is also essential. We need to – no, must – celebrate the achievements we have made in the world. I would not be here if not for the struggles of the feminist movement to make it possible to open the academy to women. We need to remember that smallpox is now eradicated worldwide and, despite what we know about widening income equality gaps, it is important to remember that over the last 25 years have seen significant reductions in the depth and severity of extreme poverty in the Global South and a decrease in the absolute number of people living in extreme poverty.

There is hope in the world despite the darkness, and thus there is hope within the academy. I have seen and heard many examples of hope at this conference such as promising pedagogical practices like experiential overseas education and internationalized curricula. I believe, as Airini from Thompson Rivers University, said in the panel yesterday, that there is still room for idealism and the existence of openings for change. And Kumari Beck, in her talk about Nalanda University in India noted that Nalanda means “no stopping the gift of knowledge.” I think that is a wonderful way to think about the work that we do as comparative and international education researchers as being guided by the idea of endless giving.

I remain hopeful. If Homa Hoodfar, the retired Concordia University professor who was held in Iran's notorious Evin prison, for 112 gruelling days can remain hopeful, we must too. But I have come to believe that despite our sense of self-importance of the work that we do within our field of comparative and international, that hope also lies beyond the borders of the academy. In many ways, I agree with Eve Tuck who says that we can't trust the academy. (Thank you to Katie Macdonald for sharing that in her presentation.) And Celeste Snowber who yesterday, during the double-panel, reminded us that the academy is a very small place in relation to the rest of the world. Positive social change can happen, but I am more wary about whether corporatized higher education can be the site of radical resistance. There are many more possibilities for social change happening right now, outside of the academy, within communities, organizations, etc. that are working collectively to improve the world around them. We need more than academic

debates and discussions. As Desire Yamutuale asked on Sunday, “Were we in academia just idealist? Maybe we aren’t doing the right thing to right what is wrong.”

We must engage with our times, but we must do that from whence we have come. We need in our world today more integrity, morality, honesty, courage and fortitude, but above all, we need humility. That is why I began with myself and end with myself too. As Jalauddin Rumi (n.d.), the 13<sup>th</sup> century Persian, Sunni Muslim poet wrote, “Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself.”

Thank you all for the opportunity to have served your society. I have learned so much from all of you who have been visibly and invisibly involved in the CIESC, our conferences, journal and everyday workings of our academic society. Thank you to all of my graduate students who are here (and those who were unable to make it) for all you have taught me about what it means to live and embody a pedagogy of love (Darder, 2002).

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