

CONFERENCE REPORT

XV WORLD CONGRESS OF COMPARATIVE EDUCATION SOCIETIES Buenos Aires, June 2013

Anne Hickling-Hudson

Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane

The 15th World Congress of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES) was held from 24 - 28 June this year in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Just over 1300 comparativists registered, 170 panels were timetabled, each with multiple presentations. At least 80 different nationalities and regions were represented.

These World Congresses, occurring every three years, are significant events in the global celebration of comparative and international education. The WCCES is the umbrella organization coordinating 39 comparative and international education societies across the globe. In the 21st century, congresses have been held in Korea, Havana, Sarajevo, Istanbul and Buenos Aires, with the next one, the 16th, to be held in Beijing (see <http://www.wcces.com>).

I attended the Congress as an invited panelist, a Past President of the WCCES and a member and Past President of the Australian and New Zealand Comparative and International Education Society (ANZCIES).

Argentina's SAECE as host of the Congress

The 15th Congress was hosted by the Argentine Society of Comparative Studies in Education (SAECE), and was supported by Argentina's national Ministry of Education. The five-day Congress was effectively implemented by teams led by President Norberto Fernández Lamarra, who was also acting in his capacity as Vice President of WCCES, and by Congress convenor, Cristian Perez Centeno.

The Congress was held at UBA, the *Universidad de Buenos Aires*, which is celebrating its bicentenary. From the city-centre location of the university, participants enjoyed an urban college environment as well as the thriving cultural life of Buenos Aires. The organisers provided a pre and post Congress visitors' program to take in Argentina's landscapes and cultural heritage.

Participants and Panels

Congress participants included 55% from Latin America and the Caribbean, over 25% from North America, and the rest from Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific region. The titles of the seven Plenary Session panels (see list below) give a glimpse of the breadth of education issues explored under the broad conference theme: *New Times, New Voices*.

Titles of Plenary Session Panels at the WCCES.

1. Institutional reconfigurations of the comparative education field. New voices, new societies.
2. Fifty years after Angicos. Paulo Freire, popular education and the struggle for a better world that is possible.
3. Revisiting the Delors Report.
4. World culture recontextualized. Alternative approaches to the global/local nexus.
5. Education investments and equity: economic contributions to comparative education.
6. Democratization of education systems: educational policies for new times and actors.
7. Postcolonialism, social movements and gender in a new world.

Election of the WCCES President

A major event at each WCCES Congress is the election of the next WCCES President. Votes of member societies are registered both by postal (email) vote and by representatives of Constituent Societies who are present at the Executive meetings. This year, the member societies elected Professor Carlos Alberto Torres of UCLA as WCCES President for the three-year term 2013 - 2016.

As Carlos Torres notes in his inaugural letter to the WCCES, it was fitting that he, a scholar born and raised in Argentina and based in the USA, was elected at a Congress held in Latin America (<http://www.wcces.com>). Professor Torres has

already had a distinguished career, having authored or edited more than 60 books, over 200 research articles, book chapters, and entries in encyclopedias in several languages. He is a fluent speaker of Spanish, Portuguese, and English.

Professor Torres' international reputation is particularly illustrated through his lifelong dedication to the philosophy and work of Paulo Freire. At the XV World Congress, at the opening plenary academic session, he led a panel of experts to explore the legacy of Paulo Freire. The other panelists were Nelly Stromquist of the University of Maryland, and Anne Hickling-Hudson of Queensland University of Technology.

WCCES General Assembly

At the WCCES General Assembly, held on 28 June, the final day of the Congress, business matters included the following:

- **Announcement of the 2016 World Congress in Beijing, hosted by the China Comparative Education Society (CCES).** Professors Wang and Liu announced the 2016 Congress and invited comparativists to Beijing to attend the meeting.
- **Tributes** were made to outgoing President Wing On Lee for his service and contributions to the WCCES, also to outgoing Vice President Fatma Gök.
- **Welcome and Congratulations** were extended to new President Carlos Alberto Torres, elected in the Wednesday meeting, and to incoming Vice President Yingjie Wang.

- **A pro-UNESCO statement** was voted on and issued, in which the WCCES supported UNESCO and deplored the action of some member states to refuse to pay dues as a way to reject decisions of UNESCO's General Conference (<http://www.wcces.com>).