

Responses from the ISATT Membership Survey

A Report Prepared for the ISATT Newsletter by Dr. Susan E. Elliott-Johns

Introduction

Earlier this year, ISATT members were asked to respond to ten questions surveying members' opinions on a number of issues related to experiences of membership in the association. We extend sincere thanks to the sixty-seven (67) members who took the time to complete and return the survey. Analysis and synthesis of responses to the survey questions was undertaken, and this report prepared to provide all members with an overview of the results of opinions shared by the membership.

Each question has been re-presented below with key themes derived from members' responses as headings and a brief summary of findings. Illustrative responses are included to indicate the nature of recurring responses for each question, and these are identified with *

Conclusions and Recommendations are included at the end of the Report.

1. What makes ISATT special and how is it different from other organizations?

Responses to Q. 1 consistently cited the unique international scholarly community that is ISATT.

TRULY, A UNIQUE INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARLY COMMUNITY:

*A truly international organization; others with which I have been involved are more focused in one national context

*I think it is a more multicultural association than others (For example, AERA)

*The opportunity to engage with colleagues around the world in research and practice focused on critical issues in teacher education

*The fact that it is an association with so many participating members. Focus on research with defined area. (Provide) constant information to members. Own a journal. Increase the holding of local events International focus. Great to hear what is going on around the world, not just the English-speaking world

FOCUS ON TEACHERS & TEACHING – THEORY & PRACTICE:

*Low threshold for scholars to present and communicate their work, and the community (people know each other because of ISATT's small-scale)

*Covers issues for academics who identify themselves as teachers

*ISATT enables academics and teachers with classroom expertise to be seen as equal contributors to an association. Its conferences reflect that and I have found both conferences and journals of great interest and value to me, both in research and in classroom practices

THE HISTORY OF ISATT:

*It has an important history--and is the largest teaching and teacher education organization internationally. It also has strong qualitative research roots

2. Why are you a member of ISATT?

Responses to Q. 2 consistently highlighted the importance for members of the opportunities for collaborative research, the high-quality journal (TTT&P), and enthusiasm for the biennial conferences.

Equally consistently, members valued the small size of the organization which they regarded as enabling and enhancing networking with other colleagues in the field:

TO PARTICIPATE IN A UNIQUE INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARLY COMMUNITY, THE CONFERENCES, COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH, HIGH QUALITY JOURNAL & OPPORTUNITIES FOR MENTORING:

- *Offers opportunities for collaborative research
- *Feel connected and have some good friends within the ISATT community
- *To access the opportunities for global collegiality, collaborative research opportunities, sharing of international perspectives, the biennial conferences, and the TTT&P journal
- *International networking and collaboration
- *Biennial conferences in excellent locations
- *To receive the journal and attend the conferences
- *I really enjoy attending the conference and I regularly read the journal. I have met many interesting scholars through ISATT and I always feel that I am in "my place" as a researcher and teacher educator.
- *I hold a leadership position in the organization and really enjoy working to promote ISATT with teacher educators, teachers and teacher candidates
- *ISATT has guided me to grow as a collaborative and international scholar, which are my lifelong pursuits
- *This society helps connect teacher educators
- *Fosters community, mentoring, and an avenue for scholarship
- *I was advised to join ISATT by my doctoral supervisor
- *To ensure I remain up-to-date with current thinking re teaching, learning and research. High quality publications

ISATT'S SMALL SIZE ALLOWS FOR GENUINE PERSONAL CONNECTIONS AND DIALOGUE

- *Being a member of this organization, I believe I am keeping up-to-date with recent developments and can collaborate with the most well-known names in this field
- *It is a well-organised, professional and friendly organization
- *ISATT values people and that is critical in a professional community. Senior members also take the time to mentor and give newer folk feedback and support
- *I feel close to ISATT epistemology and methodology, to the humanistic "touch". Also, I like that it is not a "mammoth", huge organisation, it still allows for genuine personal connections and dialogue

3. What do you think might make ISATT more attractive to others?

Responses here included suggestions to make ISATT more attractive to others such as increasing opportunities to access funding to attend international conferences and other ISATT meetings, and ranged from both early career scholars and experienced scholars, as grouped under four additional headings:

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

- *A significantly reduced rate for conference registration often is appealing to those who are not working full-time
- *Increased promotion of travel bursaries, ISATT Awards
- *Attracting young and early career scholars and offering Scholarships or Travel Bursaries not only for students, but also for young Research fellows or researchers
- *Lower fees for the conferences. It's my impression that ISATT charges a very high fee to cover costs of keynote speakers. Given the poor performance of several of the keynote speakers in Salamanca, this

expenditure is dubious at best. Dropping back to one or two keynote speakers of assured quality could allow you to lower fees for registration at the conference

INCREASED COMMUNICATIONS:

- *Creation of a bulletin for the publication of introductory research texts
- *Increased promotion of the wealth of expertise available across the executive leadership and general membership
- *An ISATT blog, maybe?
- *More powerful presentation of the community and its added value
- *The journal and the association could be marketed more deliberately

ON MEETINGS/BIENNIAL CONFERENCES:

- *More regional conferences? I am early career, and international travel is very difficult
- *Create more opportunities for international symposia
- *Advertising, presence at other teaching conferences e.g., Information booths at other large education conferences to promote the organization
- *More visibility of the journal and sessions at the conference designed to help individuals learn how to publish
- *Practitioner scholar strands and research scholar strands in conference program and publications
- *To voice the uniqueness of the Conferences and the ISATT Organisation
- *I think it is fine as it is. Each conference location brings its own flavour and emphasis
- *I wish it were more intellectual and theoretical-- more rigorous. And less "anything goes" and anyone's paper can be accepted. Also wish for more interesting keynotes
- *Very important to include Spanish speaking countries, researchers, professionals' qualification and training, and the development of congresses in Latin America

INCREASE MENTORING/SUPPORT FOR EARLY CAREER SCHOLARS:

- *Knowing how to write a good proposal so that it will be accepted at the conference. Perhaps some support for people who are not fluent in English would be a good thing
- *Perhaps also open a special section in TTTP for young scholars and support them in publishing
- *Senior members, myself included, need to take responsibility to attend sessions at conferences of younger scholars and encourage and advise - no-one is successful without others creating spaces for them.....This is a collective responsibility of those of us who benefited from such support from others

BOOST COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH & PUBLICATION:

- *Development of SIGS – special interest groups, e.g., individuals could work together around a topic producing over time a shared publication or several publications around a specific topic
- *To organize some groups of research themes, so the scholars could adhere in function of their interests, to exchange ideas, to help each other publish
- *Possibly more opportunities to share their work with other more established academics either through written/digital forums or through mini conferences

4. Do you attend the biennial conference(s)?

YES: I have only attended ONE biennial conference = 22

YES: I have attended most (many of the respondents indicated "I never miss") = 35

NO: Not yet = 10

5. Please tell us more about your answer to Q. 4.

Apart from recurring funding issues (e.g., funding, lack of institutional supports, visa requirements), respondents consistently identified conference location as important to their decision whether or not to attend, summer teaching, competing conferences (e.g. EARLI) held at same time, and personal choices and/or circumstances. Responses also highlighted the valuable opportunities ISATT conferences offer to present internationally in a responsive research community:

FUNDING ISSUES:

- *I have limited funds available for international conference travel, so I only get to international conferences every 2-3 years
- *I have attended if I have funding to do so, but sometimes the travel costs are just too much for me.
- *The budget is one of the hindrances. The venue is always set outside Asia
- *I save my research funding to attend this conference
- *I have attended several ISATT biennial conferences since becoming member. VISA regulations and funding issues have however been challenges. ISATT cannot be blamed for any of these however
- *I am retired, but still have several research projects going on in my university, I am not entitled to get the conference fees paid by the university because of the retirement. I should beg for the money, which I do not want to do

PERSONAL CHOICE/CIRCUMSTANCE:

- *I will attend the conference when it is held in the place where I have never been to
- *Unfortunately, I had to withdraw from the 2017 ISATT Conference due to heavy work commitments.
- *The timing of the conference is not always good. As long as it does not clash with other compulsory activities, I try to attend. e.g. It is very difficult when the conference is over the 4th of July to attend for me as it is a big holiday for many US families.... **and** I try to attend when summer teaching does not conflict with the dates
- *It is a very good conference it is difficult to attend all interesting conferences
- *I had a young child and only now is it becoming feasible

OTHER REASONS FOR ATTENDING/NOT ATTENDING:

- *ISATT conferences offer awesome opportunities for sharing current research in teacher education
- *I appreciate the scientific high level of the conference and its impeccable organization
- *Early career scholars are eager to get their papers published and their research work recognized. ISATT could provide more space for the support of young researchers
- *I like ISATT conferences because they are small, this allows me to join the conversations with colleagues in the field
- *It is a very good conference but too big
- *Since 2003, I have attended 5 out of the 8 biennial conferences. The three I missed were due to exceptional circumstances. Nevertheless, I contributed and participated from distance through various ways. I try never to miss any conference.

6. Are you aware that ISATT offers a biennial Collaborative Research Grant?

YES: 38 (only 2 of those indicated they had applied for a CRB at some time)

NO: 29

7. Are you aware that ISATT offers biennial Travel Bursaries?

YES: 38

NO: 29

8. How do you get your ISATT news?

The majority of responses to Question #8 indicated *Newsletter/Website/Network* as their source of ISATT News, with *Newsletter/Website/Others* a close second choice. In addition, a small number of the 67 responses also identified *Facebook* (4) and *Research Collaborative* (8)

9. From your point of view, what are the main aspects an international association like ISATT should promote?

Respondents expressed appreciation of opportunities available as mentors and mentees as well as for conducting collaborative research internationally. These recurred over and over again in responses, along with perceptions of ISATT as facilitating (and fuelling) collaborative research networks:

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATIVES:

- *Collaboration and publication across (shared) international boundaries
- *Collaborative research opportunities; e.g., establishing an international network of scholars with a focus on Improving the quality of teacher education programs
- *Research collaboration between different countries and active partnerships in applying for joint funding would be helpful
- *Opportunities for scholars from regions with struggling economies to participate in an international meeting
- *Global communication around shared issues
- *Promotion of cross-cultural research
- *Collaboration across diverse contexts e.g., Comparative aspects of teacher education research, different approaches that can be identified and where and how is teacher education confronted with the same problems?

MENTORING THE FUTURE OF ISATT – EARLY CAREER SCHOLARS:

- *Greater attention to diversity in terms of journal publications – including designated spaces for early career scholars
- *Mentoring of graduate students
- *Sponsoring of writing retreats, especially for early researchers, and as an extension of the biennial conferences

ISATT AS A COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH NETWORK:

*Collaborative research as a means to transfer and share knowledge. This can be deliberately be targeted to lead to establishment of links between the developing and developed economies

*Learning from each other and the international challenges we face as teacher educators and researchers

*Cross cultural studies of teacher education, opening avenues for further collaboration and publication, celebrating teachers and teaching

*Quality research; approachable & supportive academics; excellent conferences

*Social gatherings and professional networking

*When I was young, I was enthusiastic when I was encouraged by more experienced researchers. We called it "the ISATT spirit". It is what I would like to be created/cherished

10. From your point of view, what activities (e.g., travel bursaries, collaborative research grants, ISATT Awards) would you STOP? START? CONTINUE?

*While the majority of responses generally reflected members' satisfaction with continuing **all three** 'as is' – ISATT Travel Bursaries, Collaborative Research Grants, and Awards – a sampling of other responses with potential significance for ISATT moving forward (re. STOP? START? CONTINUE?) have also been grouped below:*

STOP: publishing a paper copy of the journal and use the money for travel bursaries

STOP: nothing; **CONTINUE:** everything; **START:** more collaboration for people within the network

START: pre-conference or forums for new researchers, a policy for alternating the conference location between richer countries and poorer countries, when the conference is in a country that struggles economically be sure to include a high proportion of local researchers

START: I think that some form of mentorship should be established

CONTINUE: Travel Bursaries, Collaborative Research Grants, ISATT Awards

CONTINUE: All three! They suit different sectors of ISATT's population

SAMPLE RESPONSES SPECIFIC TO TRAVEL BURSARIES:

Student travel bursaries seem interesting for attending conferences. Grants for researchers funded by the association seem unnecessary.

SAMPLE RESPONSES SPECIFIC TO COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH GRANTS:

it is difficult to have the collaborative research grants without a partner to collaborate with. Thus those grants often go to someone who is likely already connected

OTHER SAMPLE RESPONSES:

*I would like to see some support for classroom practitioners engaged in research as well as strong marketing of the Association and its benefits to teachers in schools

*Wish there were a way to make it less expensive (the travel less than the actual meeting costs) -- or at least defray those travel costs. This is largely why my doctoral students do not attend ISATT meetings

*MORE calls for collaborative research needed

*I always question Awards?

*As I have mentioned here, ISATT must continue to be the ISATT as it is currently. So... CONTINUE being the ISATT that we have NOW

*All three sound good but are not relevant to me

*I think you are doing good work. It is essential, in the life of organizations like this one, that members feel valued and that opportunities are available. It is important to avoid a sense that a few people are important and everyone else isn't

*I do not know any of them. I need to get informed

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions:

Listening to ISATT members' own voices in these survey responses will offer valuable insights and a number of innovative suggestions for moving forward strategically and best serving current members. Not surprisingly, opinions vary (e.g., in Q. 5 where one respondent felt the small conferences were great, "I like ISATT conferences because they are small, this allows me to join the conversations with colleagues in the field", while another expressed a very different view, "It is a very good conference but too big." We acknowledge members must make individual choices consistent with their own situated contexts and circumstances, and that it is simply not possible to please "all of the people all of the time". However, as the ISATT Executive Committee, we continue to do our best and are committed to continuous improvement.

Several of the responses to Questions #3, #5, #9 and #10 offer valuable insights and better understandings of members' perspectives as well as suggestions for moving forward with a common vision as an international organization that serves teachers, teacher educators, and researchers. Communication is a shared responsibility. While we certainly cannot afford to assume all are fully aware of the benefits of ISATT membership and must continue to actively promote Travel Bursaries, CRGs and Awards, biennial conference and regional conference information, active attention to communications is also needed in order for members to stay well informed, and to actively participate in ISATT.

Recommendations:

1. Continue to support and promote ISATT as a unique, international, scholarly research community where members feel valued and welcome.
2. Increase efforts to sustain effective communications and activities *between* biennial conferences, and continue to offer regular updates and information for members through network communications (e.g., website, listserv, Newsletters). +Consider the addition of SIGs.
3. Ensure promotion of, and broader access to, Travel Bursaries, Collaborative Research Grants, and actively encourage more nominations for ISATT Awards. Consider other fundraising avenues (i.e., in addition to membership fees), in order to increase availability of bursaries, grants etc.
4. Increase efforts to mentor and actively involve early career scholars and graduate students.
5. Facilitate increased and ongoing opportunities for collaborative research and publication.
6. Review biennial conference organization guidelines, including registration costs, selection of keynote speakers, and rigour of review processes for inclusion on the programme; also review provision of relevant pre-conference sessions for graduate students and early career scholars.
7. Continue to advocate for bids to host the biennial conferences in diverse economic and geo-political regions to promote inclusivity and increased participation in all areas of the globe.
8. Continue working to welcome practitioners as well as academics in the membership of ISATT.

Once again, many thanks to all of the respondents, 67 in total, who completed and submitted their responses to the ISATT Membership Survey.

Susan E. Elliott-Johns, PhD.