



OCIES Newsletter #2 2016

From the president

Warm Oceanic Greetings to All

I am sure NZ and Australian members would appreciate being in a warmer Oceanic location than they are experiencing at home right now! This second newsletter for 2016 is very much an update of ongoing OCIES activities as reported in our previous newsletter, so my brief message will be largely an acknowledgement of all that is going on and an expression of appreciation to the various OCIES members who are keeping everything on track.

Although the newsletter goes to OCIES members only, we are very pleased with the extent to which information about OCIES and CIE generally has become available to all who seek it, and that dialogue between members and non-members has been enhanced in recent months. Our thanks to Helen Benzie for the time and effort that goes into updating and extending our website, and to David Small for setting up an OCIES group on Facebook. If you're a Facebook user but not already a member, we encourage you to join up either by clicking [the link](#) or searching on Facebook for Oceania Comparative and International Education Society and sending in a request to become a member.

Although it seems no time at all since our last annual conference, furthering the organising and convening of this year's OCIES conference, to be held 24-26 November at Sydney University, has been and continues to be a major and

very time-consuming task. The hard work by the Convenors - Vice President, Alex McCormick, and Secretary, Matthew Thomas, along with Nigel Bagnall – means it is shaping up to be quite an event, as you will see elsewhere in this newsletter and/or by reference to the website,

Other achievements in the last three months have included the publication of a further issue of our journal *International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives* Vol 15 (2); thanks to editor Zane Ma Rhea and the editorial board. Appreciation also to Rebecca Spratt and Zane for the work done on advancing decisions regarding the OCIES Fellowships and Network Grants (reported below).

As mentioned in my previous message, another aspect of OCIES executive committee activity is regular interactions with the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES). I have appreciated the advice and support of Tom Griffiths in dealing with some quite demanding issues arising from ongoing tensions in the WCCES leadership. We remain hopeful of these being sorted during the forthcoming WCCES Executive Committee meetings to be held in Beijing later this month during the World Congress (more on that below).

Very best wishes
Eve

WCCES update

As reported in the previous newsletter, every three years the World Council organises the [World Congress of Comparative Education Societies](#) which is convened by one of the member societies. The 16th World Congress, ‘Dialectics in Education: Comparative Perspectives’ is now imminent. It is being convened by the Chinese Comparative Education Society and will be held in Beijing from 22-26 August.

OCIES will be well represented with sixteen current OCIES members attending, plus another 20 presenters from within Oceania. As the key gathering for all international societies for CIES, the World Congress represents a valuable opportunity to promote awareness about OCIES and the research and issues particular to our region. With three members of the Executive in attendance, we hope to use the conference to strengthen relationships with other regional societies and explore potential areas for collaboration.

Presentations from OCIES members include two panel sessions focused on the role and future of CIE within Oceania, several presentations on research based within Oceanic countries, and a presentation from the recipients of our inaugural OCIES Networking and Fellowships Grant. Members of OCIES are also playing important chairing and organisational roles at the Congress including Brian Denman (current SG for WCCES) and Tony Welch who is convenor of one of the thematic strands. An OCIES get together is planned for one evening during the conference to which all members and others from the region are invited.

Associated events during the Congress include Executive Committee meetings (the OCIES President is a member of the EC) at which the positions of President, Secretary General and Treasurer will be decided for the next three years. A key event on the final day of the World Congress, and open to all members of constituent societies, is the Assembly called to discuss WCCES affairs. The Assembly has a consultative and advisory role and will be presided over by the newly elected President.

2016 OCIES Conference



Frances Vavrus

Matthew Thomas has interviewed Frances Vavrus, one of the keynote speakers coming to the conference.

MT: Tell us about some of your recent teaching, research, or practitioner work and why you're excited about it.

FV: I'm very excited that my colleague at the University of Wisconsin (USA), Lesley Bartlett, and I have recently completed a book that synthesizes a decade of our research and teaching in the area of educational policy and practice. *Rethinking Case Study Research: A Comparative Approach* is a book aimed primarily at post-graduate students who are developing their thesis and dissertation proposals, and are interested in critical, (primarily) qualitative, and contextually-rich research.

MT: What books are you currently reading (or what podcasts are you listening to)?

FV: I have been re-reading two books that I first encountered as a doctoral student: Ruth Behar's *The Vulnerable Observer* and Paul Rabinow's *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco*. Both books raise provocative questions about fieldwork, particularly ethnography, and autobiography, which I am also taking up in a manuscript about my 26 years of engagement in Tanzania. In preparation for WCCES conference in Beijing this month, I'm also reading a book about contemporary China entitled *Street of Eternal Happiness* by Rob Schmitz, a well-known China correspondent for a U.S. radio

program I enjoy.

MT: What advice would you offer early career researchers and students in our field?

FV: Although it may seem counter-intuitive as an early career researcher and student, my advice is to imagine your future self in 5, 10, or even 25 years as a way to guide decision-making about the kinds of projects you take up and how you intend to engage in them. For example, if you feel committed to long-term engagement with a particular community, then spending time early in your career studying the language and history of the community is critical, and so too are finding ways to collaborate and to make meaningful contributions to community endeavors.

MT: Can you tell us one fun fact about yourself?

FV: I have a terrible sweet tooth, which led me as a young child to learn how to bake to satisfy it. By the time I was in 4th grade, I had my own cake-decorating equipment and have been baking/decorating cakes and cookies ever since. Fortunately, I also enjoy cycling and most forms of exercise to offset my excessive calorie consumption.

MT: What most excites you about the 2016 OCIES Conference?

FV: There are two things that excite me a great deal about the conference. First, this will be my first trip to Oceania, and I am delighted to have this opportunity to engage with colleagues in the region about issues of mutual concern. Second, the theme of the conference addresses my interest in postcolonial scholarship that explores the politics of 'uniformity' and of 'universal' claims about knowledge in education and other fields.



Vaka Pasifiki conference

Last month I was fortunate to be able to attend and present at my first Vaka Pasifiki conference. Overlooking the bay in Honiara, the Solomon Islands National University hosted what was the third of three 'Vaka's', as attendees affectionately call the conferences, that emerged from the Rethinking Education in the Pacific initiative and extensive decolonising work being done by Pacific educators in recent times.

There were an impressive 400+ presentations by teachers, principals, policy makers, researchers, and various combinations of these, from around the Pacific region. It was truly a feast in all senses, from the considered perspectives and striking examples of shared praxis, to the delicious reception generously sponsored by the Ministry of Education. The USP choir and dance group also offered a visual feast in their moving performance called 'Malaga' over three nights at the Museum, in conjunction with the conference. All of it was made possible by the clearly committed and talented organising team, amongst whom are long-standing and new OCIES members: Dr Seu'ula Johanson-Fonua, Dr. Jack Maebuta, Professor Kabini Sanga, and one of our keynote speakers for the fast-approaching conference in Sydney, Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba. My apologies that I cannot mention everyone here. I'd like to thank them for welcoming me and former OCIES President Dr. Julie McLaughlin, and all attendees, so very warmly to board the Vaka and share in this important historical, ongoing work in the region.

Dr Alexandra McCormick

Scholarships winners

The winners of scholarships to support attendance at the 2016 conference will be announced in the next newsletter.

OCIES fellowships and networks

2016 Successful Applicants

Thank you to all of those who submitted applications to the OCIES Fellowships and Network Grants, offered for the first time in 2016. We are pleased to announce that a total of AUD \$5,000 has been granted to one successful application. Details of the successful application are provided below and the recipients will be presenting at the OCIES 2016 Conference in Sydney in November, so if you're interested to learn more we strongly encourage you to attend the conference!

2017 Funding Round

We are also pleased to announce that a second funding round for the OCIES Fellowships and Network Grants is now open and we welcome applications for 2017 activities. The closing date is 28 October, 2016. The criteria and an application form are now available on the website. We have also provided some further information and suggestions about the type of activities eligible for funding under this grant. Please take a look and if you have any further questions, feel free to contact us via the website.

Exploring the Purposes, Pedagogies, and Pursuits of Comparative and International Education Coursework within Oceania

Dr Ritesh Shah (University of Auckland), Dr Matthew Thomas and Dr Alex McCormick (University of Sydney)

This mixed methods research aims to investigate the pedagogical means through which the field of CIE is formed and reformed in undergraduate and post-graduate coursework across two higher education institutions in Oceania. It seeks to understand instructors' pedagogical approaches and students' lived experiences in the classroom but also the enduring understandings of CIE they may use in their future work as educators, international development practitioners, and educational or social policymakers. The project is positioned as the first stage of a potentially longer-term initiative aimed at strengthening the ways CIE is taught in the region, with a particular goal of ensuring that it represents and reflects the diverse epistemic communities and interests of Oceania in its entirety. Key outputs from this activity include a range of conference presentations (e.g., OCIES 2016 and 2017, WCCES 2016, CIES and UKFIET 2017) and papers produced on key findings as well as a practice-oriented pre-conference workshop at the 2017 OCIES Conference about teaching comparative education.

Journal update

The next issue of the *International Education Journal: comparative perspectives* will be a special issue of articles based on 2015 conference presentations and come out in September. A final general edition will be out in December. To read more visit the [Journal site](#).

Join or renew

Is your membership due now? Would you like to join OCIES?

Please see details on the membership area of the website under [Join and renew](#).

Contribute to the next newsletter

The final newsletter for 2016 will be a pre-conference edition in October. Please consider sharing your news and ideas with the OCIES community. Send contributions to helen.benzie@unisa.edu.au
