Proposal for Special Interest Group
International Education

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The primary occupational activity of most members of IACCP, according to the member survey conducted in 2009, is university level education. In that survey, 76% of respondents were employed in academia (see Gabrenya, 2009). However, IACCP has devoted few resources to meeting the needs of university teaching faculty outside of providing a list of syllabi and classroom activities on its website.

The primary activity of IACCP is scientific communication through publications and conferences. Although our conferences are naturally focused on research and scholarship, for many participants, teaching comprises a large proportion of their normal faculty responsibilities, and often the major proportion. Participants take the role of the researcher while at conferences but must afterwards must return to their other roles as teachers, mentors, or academic administrators. A few attempts to address teaching issues have been made at IACCP conferences. In the 2001 Winchester, U.K. conference, a symposium was organized by Walt Lonner to address teaching concerns. The Communication and Publications Committee held a special session at the 2006 Spetses Congress that included discussion of online teaching resources. More recently, I have presented papers on collaborative teaching experiments conducted by myself and colleagues in Taiwan, China, and Poland.

The flagship publication outlet of IACCP, JCCP, devotes little or no attention to education. Only recently, the teaching resource Online Readings in Psychology and Culture (ORPC) has become an official IACCP publication and has the potential to develop into a more general educational resource. Most textbooks, handbooks, and edited books in cross-cultural and to a lesser extent cultural psychology have been published by members of the Association, but our only collective effort has been in the publication of Congress books. In the 1990s, the Bulletin ran a series of “megareviews” of new cross-cultural textbooks.

IACCP possesses considerable international presence and resources, and its members have extensive international experience and cultural expertise that can be coordinated to create unique resources for university educators. Through a special interest group, IACCP can engage in some of the following activities:

1. Advise the Association on resources needed to support and improve the teaching of cultural topics
2. Provide a forum in which teaching ideas and experiences can be communicated
3. Develop resources of its own, such as teachable cultural media, a master lectures series, and at the most ambitious, a film introducing the field
4. Provide mentoring to young colleagues who are entering the field and will teach cultural courses
5. Develop “best practices” guidelines for various types of courses and educational activities
6. Organize joint teaching projects, such as international collaborative teaching, virtual colloquia or “webinars”
7. Ensure that conference time is devoted to education as well as to research
8. Explore methods for exchange of teaching resources, faculty, and students
9. Provide a “home” within IACCP for members who identify more with education than research but are highly engaged by culture
10. Attract new members to IACCP who might otherwise find it uninteresting due to its research emphasis and the dominance of high-profile researchers at its conferences

International education in various forms can be helpful at both the undergraduate and postgraduate level. Of the 76% of IACCP members who work in academia, 88% are faculty in departments that offer postgraduate degrees. Interest in education is undoubtedly a concern of faculty in these departments as well as in the departments that only perform undergraduate teaching. The proposed SIG might be especially attractive to people who are faculty in countries in which classroom teaching at the postgraduate level is emphasized, in contrast to a research mentorship style of graduate teaching.

The first steps in developing an IE SIG would be to establish communication among members using a discussion list, forum and/or blog on the Association website. Improving website resources would probably be high in the SIG’s agenda, followed by the organization of some conference activities such as a seminar session, a topical paper session, and a social event where SIG members could get to know each other better. A more distal goal might be the organization of an IE preconference workshop.