

# Conference Report 2006

Writing the conference report is always a pleasure and as usual I would like to thank all the keynote speakers, workshop presenters and the most important people at the conference: the delegates. I am always impressed at the level of expertise the delegates bring and their enthusiasm for practice teaching and field education. I know for some who carry on teaching students as singleton practice teachers with often no reduction to their heavy caseloads the conference is a lifeline, a place where they come and refuel their batteries and also have some fun. Thanks are also due to Salma Siddique who has joined the conference Committee this year and put together the programme of keynote speakers. Also, as always, a special thanks for the wise and witty chaireing executed by Jennifer Bernard.

Thank you to those of you who took the time to fill in the feedback sheets, as usual we will try and act upon your suggestions. The returns showed an 86% satisfaction quotient for the conference as a whole. Some people even added a higher grading for some of the questions!! Two of the sheets asked for the conference to go back to two days. However, the decision to go for the pattern we followed this year was in response to feedback from previous conferences, in order to facilitate more free time so that delegates can talk informally and share with each other. For these reasons the 2007 conference will follow the same pattern as this year. One respondent expressed disappointment that there were not as many international delegates as in previous years. Those of you that attended will be aware that we suffered the loss at short notice of a speaker from Brazil and another from Azerbaijan. The latter speaker was unable to get a visa despite concerted efforts on our behalf by Steve Ambler and Adrian Black. Ayatakin will be attending next year and I am looking forward to her presentation.

Feedback on the workshops was for the most part very positive. One in particular received rave reviews and this was the one presented by Bassima Schbley. She gave a view on the life of Muslim women in Iraq.

Those of you who are regular attendees may be aware that after the Second international Conference we took the decision to limit the numbers to 80 as this number enabled the voice of the practice teachers to be heard loud and clearly. However, given the interest that has already been shown for the 2007 conference we have decided that we will not cap attendance for next year.

In terms of the venue we have to weigh up the basic accommodation that it provides against the high level of service, the location and the excellent food. As always there is a list of reasonably priced local hotels and guest houses for those of you who feel unable to stay in a venue with shared facilities.

One item on the programme which received almost universally excellent feedback was the live band after the conference dinner. As usual we have listened to what you have said and we have already booked the Plastic Beatles for the Seventh International Conference.

There were some problems with information getting to delegates whose booking forms were sent in by training departments, there will be a change to the booking form for next year to ensure that it is explicit in gaining the information about each delegate so that we can contact them directly. This should solve the problem about information not being passed to the delegates.

The call for papers is in this issue of the Journal and as soon as I get confirmation of the costs for next year from Ripon St John the booking forms will be ready to send out. I have already taken several bookings for next year, the majority are from countries outside the UK and Europe. Given this evidence so early on it would seem that the terrorist factor, that led several overseas delegates to decide not to travel in 2006, is having less effect. The programme of keynote speakers is due to be finalised shortly and I will then send out the programme. Workshop selection will take place in February and as soon as I get confirmation from the presenters I will endeavour to send out the list in advance of the conference to give delegates more time to choose those they wish to attend. I can only do this if workshop presenters stick to the published deadlines. Several were unable to do this for this year; consequently the final lists were not finished until two days before the conference.

We will continue to offer bursaries for next year, despite the fact that a substantial minority of those taking this up this year did not attend the workshops and some of the keynotes. This was disappointing given that I had a waiting list for these places. We will also offer a number of free places to outstanding students. If you have an excellent student and they would like to attend please email me at the address on the call for papers and I will facilitate their attendance.

Several delegates' feedback stated that that they would have liked a list of conference attendees. Those regular delegates will know that we used to do this; unfortunately data protection means that we have to get permission

from each delegate to provide this . I was unable to do this within the timescales this year. For next year I propose that I will add a permission slip to the booking form so that those that return the forms in good time can have their names on the list if they so wish.

During the conference I spoke directly to some of the practitioners who attend every year and encouraged them to submit workshop applications, some politely told me they were far too busy and the conference was an oasis in their year. Several however said that they would seriously consider this, so without naming names (you know who you are!!)I would like to urge you to do this as you all have a wealth of experience that would really enhance the learning opportunities for delegates.

As always, I would urge you to contact us if you have heard excellent speakers elsewhere, that you would like to see at the conference. Send me the details and I will contact them with a view to giving them a platform at forthcoming conferences.

We are entertaining a proposal to put on a series of regional events. The first of these will take place in Scotland in November and is themed around the production of a guest edition of the Journal for 2007 edited by Salma Siddique, and reflecting the contribution of keynotes and delegates from Scotland. If you have an idea for a day workshop in your area and would like to be involved, again contact me at the address on the call for papers 2007. Moreover, if you are interested in becoming involved with the conference committee, for example giving some time in early February in peer reviewing the workshop proposals, please do get in touch as we would value your contributions.

I will sign off this report with the sentiment that I am very much looking forward to seeing some of you again next year in York. In the meantime I hope that you will continue to support the Journal as it goes forward under the able and energetic leadership of Steve Ambler.

Very best wishes

Lynda Deacon  
Managing Editor and Conference Chair