

ICPIC CONFERENCES: SOME GUIDELINES

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PREMISE

The following document presents some guidelines for the organization of ICPIC Conferences. They are not intended to be regulations, requiring strict adherence, but, offered in the quite literal sense, as guide-lines: lines of action, drawing upon the experience of previous organizers, which can help provide future conference planners an orientation in the process of planning. The Biennial ICPIC conference is a partnership between ICPIC as an organization and the member organization (or individuals) hosting the conference. As such, guidelines offer general directions, which can – and even should – be open to local interpretation in light of the needs, concepts, and plans of the organizers within their specific contexts. In interpreting these guidelines conference organizers are invited to carry forward ICPIC’s spirit, finding opportunities to mirror its mission and values within the structure of the conference itself.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

ICPIC, as the global network of people and centres involved in philosophical inquiry with children, might be thought of as a Great Community of Inquiry, connecting educators across 5 continents and more than 70 countries who are working to transform education through the development of Communities of Philosophical Inquiry as an educational practice. For many, this transformation of education is best described as a social educational movement seeking to empower children as makers of meaning and as actors in the world.

We might say that biennial ICPIC conferences instantiate this Great Community of Inquiry as a vibrant form of life, as expressed within a specific context and focussed around specific questions and issues, ICPIC conferences aim to provide participants with opportunities:

- To meet fellow-members of ICPIC and, more generally, the wider group of people interested in Philosophy For Children from around the world, in order to share experiences, to exchange

ideas, to co-construct new agendas and to identify collaborative opportunities that promote and further the agenda of philosophical inquiry for/with children;

- To contribute to ‘keeping the tradition of P4C in good order,’ by promoting its generativity, dynamism through forms of self-reflection and critique which allow for an openness to the critical revision of its own beliefs, ideas, concepts, and practices on the one hand (an openness to what Lipman called *contestability*) while accepting the responsibility that comes with being part of a long-standing movement, with specific social and educational aims and traditions of discourse on the other
- To build upon the existing legacy of Philosophy for Children in accordance with Dewey’s idea of ‘connectedness in growth,’ (in which innovation emerges out of prior experience). As such, the conference aspires to provide opportunities for co-exploring new horizons in which the original inspiration of P4C can be continuously re-imagined.

From these very general traits the rationale and features of an ICPIC Conference emerge: an ICPIC Conference should not be considered as a typical academic congress, although some characteristics of the latter may surely be built into it, insofar as, for instance, classic paper sessions may serve to present new theoretical insights and relevant empirical research. However, it is highly desirable that the spirit of the community of inquiry (COI) animates the whole organization of the conference by offering participants COI interactions through which they are provided the possibility of being engaged in a common reflection on what is heard or experienced.

Additionally, the balance between research -oriented presentations and pedagogically-oriented workshops may be considered pivotal, insofar as participants, while surely interested in the advancement of research, may be attracted also by new ways of realizing philosophical inquiry in classrooms or in alternate educational settings.

WHO ORGANIZES AN ICPIC CONFERENCE?

Any P4C centre or institution (e.g. a university), or hosting individuals are welcome to submit an application to host an ICPIC conference providing that they:

1. are current members of ICPIC and
2. engaged in promoting Philosophical inquiry with /for children and youth in their region (such that the conference will help them further vitalize the P4C movement in their own specific context).
3. are able to sustain the initiative* (*financially and organizationally)

THE PROCESS OF THE SELECTION OF THE CANDIDATES

The ICPIEC Executive Board (from now on the IEB) will launch a call for interest as close to 6 months as possible before the period in which the upcoming conference will take place. Prospective organizers of the conference will be requested to send a letter of intent by a one month deadline, according to the guidelines. After this first step the candidates will submit their full proposals to the President of ICPIEC within two months after the deadline for the sending of the letter of intent. In the proposals the following information *at least* should be presented:

- a) *The title of the conference*: it is highly recommended that a reference to P4C or to philosophical inquiry is present in the title.
- b) *The topic of the conference*: in keeping with the general framework of P4C, each conference will seek to attend to a specific aspect, or thematic perspective in order to make progress with it through the spaces of the conference, such topics or questions might relate to research/practice tradition and the interests of the proponent or with the demands of the geographical area in which the conference is situated. The proponent also is also expected to be able to explain the relevance of their choice for both their own context and for the movement - for instance, why this particular topic has salience locally and the way they envisage the topic might contribute to the development of P4C) (for instance, helping to keep it in good order, dynamic and generative).
- c) *The significance of the conference for the context/geographical area*: because the ICPIEC conference is a relatively rare resource, those wishing to host a conference are expected to be able to speak to the relevance of hosting the conference in their community: How is the chosen topic relevant to the educational concerns of the local community? What makes this the 'right' time for them to be hosting the conference? Is the community ready for it? In what ways do they envisage the conference being leveraged to further local P4C efforts? How might it help promote dialogue between the P4C tradition and the needs of the local educational system (in its formal, non-formal and even informal dimensions)? It would be desirable that there be connections between these considerations such that they strengthen each other and create a compelling picture.
- d) *The logistics (e.g. accommodation, catering, and transport)*: Overall costs – the cost of the conference will need to be set at a level that does not excessively inhibit ICPIEC members from participating (we say excessive, because any cost immediately inhibits some potential

participants, the issue is not to become a conference of the financial elite). Any proposed expenses beyond the conference fee (dinners, entrance fees) also need to be transparent. The proponent is expected to indicate how it would be able to sustain the initiative; for instance, by sharing its plans for gaining support through synergies with local (political/social/cultural) institutions and how it would manage if sponsorship was lower than expected.

- e) *The possible dates of the conference (at least a general indication of the month).* Here it is desirable for the proponent to have already done due diligence around dates of religious and national holidays and educational calendars that might affect its own community and the communities of ICPIIC members. Having said this it is well understood that given ICPIIC's membership spans 5 continents, no one day is going to be suitable for everyone.

Rather than simply vetting the proposal, the IEB will enter into a dialogue with the proponent in order that the final version of the proposal both meets the requirements of an ICPIIC Conference (as they have been suggested in the introduction and is as compelling as possible). In this sense the IEB will work with the proponents to clarify how the proposal in all its aspects might best contribute to the development of the P4C movement and to the attainment of the ICPIIC's goals.

In the case that more than one proposal is submitted, the IEB will offer equal support to the fine-tuning of all proposals with all the proponents in the spirit of helping each one make its most compelling case. When the final versions are available, the executive will then establish a poll of ICPIIC members to determine where the conference will be held. The IEB will give no voting indication and the choice will be made exclusively by the membership. The IEB will confine itself to guaranteeing the regularity of the poll and communicating its outcome.

In the case where only one proposal is submitted, the executive will work with that one community in the above-mentioned ways in order to arrive at a final version. The President of ICPIIC will then communicate the name of the next conference host to ICPIIC members through the mailing list and website.

The whole process before the poll, in the case of more than one candidate, should not last more than one month. The poll will last two weeks and the results will be communicated by the ICPIIC President through the ICPIIC mailing list and website.

As a recap of the timeline guidelines:

- 6 months before the upcoming conference: call for interest launched by the IEB;
- 5 months before the upcoming conference: deadline for sending a letter of intent on the part of candidates for the organization of the subsequent conference;
- 3 months before the upcoming conference: deadline for sending full proposal(s) for the organization of an ICPIC Conference according to the present guidelines;
- 2 months before the upcoming conference: end of the fine-tuning of the proposal(s) through a dialogue between the candidate(s) and the IEB;
- 1.5 month before the upcoming conference: end of the poll (if more than one proposal is submitted).

This timeline aims at making possible the ‘passing of the baton’ from the organizer of the upcoming conference to the organizer of the subsequent one during the conference.

THE PROCESS OF ORGANIZATION OF THE CONFERENCE

The nominated centre/institution will establish a local committee and an international committee, the former being composed of the people involved in the organization of the conference, the latter of exponents of P4C world. The IEB can support the organizer in the identification of people who might form the international committee but the final choice is a task for the proponent, though one constraint is that all members of the committee be members of ICPIC. The international committee will be in charge of vetting the paper proposals submitted for the conference. Although the criteria for the acceptance or rejection of the proposals will be decided by the organizer – who is in charge of preparing the text of the CFP – together with the international committee. The ICPIC IEB strongly recommends that the formation of the international committee respects gender diversity and global diversity by involving people from different areas of the world. It would be advisable that the two committees are established at least one year before the Conference.

The nominated centre/institution will have the sole responsibility for the organization, however the IEB will collaborate with the local host as a partner, thus ensuring that the conference meets the general purposes of an ICPIC Conference (as set out above). In this collaboration/partnership the IEB takes the responsibility to respond in a timely manner to the thinking of the organizing community as it shares with the current executive the conference’s emerging form and content (including, for example, potential candidates for the role of key-speaker if there will be one/some at the conference, the structure of the program, pricing, marketing). Conversations about these issues are expected to take place within a timeline that allows for suggested changes and revisions before plans go public. In particular:

- As far as key speakers are concerned, while they do not need to be part of the P4C movement, they should be chosen not only in accordance with the topic of the conference and with the interests of the organizer but also in light of the contribution they might make to the development of Philosophy for Children. In this perspective, a recommended procedure is that the organizer comes up with a plan as to the key-speakers, that this plan is subsequently shared with the IEB, before being published, in order that the organizer and the IEB can explore together whether and how the identified key-speakers, particularly if they are alien to P4C, can be engaged in a fruitful dialogue with the P4C tradition. The ICPIE IEB strongly recommends that the choice of the key-speakers respects gender diversity and global diversity. It would be advisable that the key-speakers are identified at least 9 months before the conference.
- As far as the structure of the conference is concerned, the design is a task of the organizer, who should endeavour to ensure a balance between more academic formats (e.g. lectures or typical paper sessions) and COI interactions. A recommended procedure is that the organizer comes up with a plan as to the structure, that this plan is shared with the IEB, before being published, in order to explore how a balance can be established between the original design and ICPIE's mission and values (for instance around inclusivity).
- As for the other organizational aspects, such as the conference website, the rate of the fees, the social events etc., the responsibility and control belongs fully to the organizer. The ICPIE IEB confines itself to recommending that in the fixing of the fees, and in any decision about social events etc., it is taken into account that many ICPIE members come from low income countries and/or do not belong to institutions (such as universities) and therefore are called upon to privately fund their own participation. Accordingly, it would be advisable to deal with these aspects by looking for a balance between the organizer's desire to provide those memorable experiences that incur additional costs, and the real financial constraints of members (for instance by establishing fee scales etc.).
- As far as the review process of the paper and poster submission is concerned, this will be managed by the local committee in cooperation with the international committee. The letters of acceptance or rejection will be signed and sent by the Head of the local committee.
- Certificates of attendance will be organized by the local organizing committee (to be distributed at the conference), these will be signed by Head of the local committee and by the President of the ICPIE. (Templates are available)

During the whole process of organization the IEB will act as an interface and a support for the organizer, by providing suggestions, by drawing upon the experiences of previous conferences, and by giving advice on specific issues, if requested. The IEB, moreover, is committed to giving the widest publicity to the event through all the channels that the ICPIC has at its disposal.