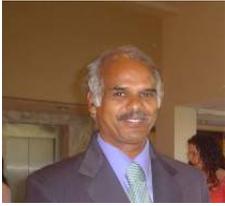


My ISPA Malta Conference Experience



Dr. Panch. Ramalingam, India, Recipient of Cal Catterall Fund Award

I received an email on 22nd March, 2009 from Dr. Janet Muscutt, Chair of the Cal Catterall Fund Committee (CCF), notifying me that I had been awarded CC Funds to attend the 31st ISPA International Conference in Malta from 7th to 11th July, 2009. It was an exciting moment for me to share with Prof. B. Mukhopadhyay, Secretary of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology (IAAP), who was instrumental in helping me apply for the grant. In the evening I shared this exciting information with my wife and children as well.



From day one I started preparing for the conference in Malta, getting permission to attend the International conference and preparing for my presentation. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Prof. J.A.K. Tareen, the Vice-Chancellor of Pondicherry University, for his encouragement and support for all academic endeavours in Pondicherry University and for permitting me to attend this International Conference. I also would like to tell you about my experience.

On 6th July, 2009, I landed in Malta. This journey was not only to represent the IAAP and the Pondicherry Psychology Association (PPA), but also to enhance my knowledge of diversity in international school psychology. The conference began on 7th July with the Leadership workshop given by ISPA central office, in which I participated. The workshop was an eye-opener for me to understand the effective functioning of ISPA and its keen interest in uplifting the School Psychology at the International level.

That evening we attended the opening ceremony in which 340 delegates from 40 countries of the world participated. The welcome dinner that evening was the first Malta experience for us to have Maltese food. We have indulged in *Pastizzi*, a Maltese pastry made of mashed peas and cheese and interacted with local Maltese people. We enjoyed talking with many new colleagues from various parts of the world.



The second day of the conference began with keynote speech by Dr. Robert Sternberg followed by parallel sessions. I attended the enlightening ethics workshop given by Drs. Mary Stafford and Thomas Oakland. During the lunch break our interaction group meeting was held with Dr. Henning Nielson, Denmark, and me as leaders. This was an interesting opportunity to meet colleagues from other countries to discuss professional issues and various issues related to professional development and school psychology. We discussed several topics related to cross culture issues, school psychology in different countries, and how the school psychologists work in a diversified environment. I participated in the *Supervision of Headmasters* workshop as well. It related to headmasters' contributions to the well-being of all involved in schools.

In the evening of the second day the ISPA General assembly was held. The Cal Catterall Awards were distributed to recipients at this



assembly. I received my award at that time and it was a great honor for me.



On the third day, Thursday, 9th July, the parallel sessions continued. This day I presented a paper on *Need Analysis for School Psychologists in India*. Ms. Liza Padovani, Educational Psychologist, Malta chaired the session and I enjoyed presenting my research results at this presentation.

On Friday, 10th July, I visited various places in the Malta cities with colleagues and enjoyed variety of conference presentations. The presentations sparked engaging conversations with colleagues that were interesting.

The final day of the conference, Saturday, 11th July, was the most anticipated day of our stay in Malta” as we anxiously waited for Dr. Voigt’s presentation. Dr. Erika E. Voigt, Convenor of ISPA’s Retiree’s Interest Group, presented on *Retired? About-to-Retire? – After Profession Resource Group*. In her presentation she highlighted the good practices of school psychologists. She also shared her experience with others and asked the delegates to give their experience for good practices. After her presentation I attended a session in which Prof. Peter Farrell, former ISPA president from the University of Manchester, United Kingdom, shared his long-standing expertise on *School Psychology: Meeting the needs of all children in a fast changing world*. The session was very interesting and thought provoking.

The final session of the 2009 ISPA Malta Conference was started with a presentation of memorable photographs taken during the conference. Dr. Paul Bartolo presented the summary of the conference proceedings and the session ended with musical concert. The Farewell Dinner was arranged at Fortina Hotel Lido facing the Valletta bastions. Barbeque Dinner, *delicious Maltese food*, was enjoyed by all. Musical events, ISPA lucky draw, and sharing of experiences made us feel the ISPA community spirit.

After enjoying the five-day interactive conference in Malta, I visited other European countries and reflected on the academic experience that I had in Malta. The ISPA Conference was excellent and I learned a lot during my visit to Malta. I want to thank the Cal Catterall Fund Committee for awarding me the funds that allowed me to make this visit to Malta and to enhance my understanding of school psychology throughout the world.