

## ISATT National Representative Coordinator's Report 2025: A retrospective over six years

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Dear ISATT Community

In this report, I aim to provide an overview of my six-year tenure as ISATT National Representatives Coordinator, supporting a smooth transition for the incoming coordinator.

When I was nominated to take over this post, it was like a dream being handed to me--the huge potential that lay in ISATT's international composition that could be used to fulfill the mission and values ISATT stood for. My vision statement reflected this dream: *"I want to leverage the diverse histories, experiences and perspectives of the global members and the growing digital possibilities for networking to enrich cross cultural dialogue keeping in mind the urgent need to serve the displaced, disadvantaged and diverse children around the world today to build a better tomorrow."*

I saw the means to it through encouraging *"collaborative research undertakings and sharing, and any other potential opportunities for action that open up in our discussions both online and face-to-face."*

Over six years, what once felt like a distant dream has steadily taken shape, transforming into meaningful initiatives. This progress has been made possible by the supportive platform provided by the ISATT Governing Body and the enthusiasm and dedication with which the members have actively engaged in the collaborative initiatives during this period.

### The ISATT collaborative projects

#### *Stage 1: The Past*

Lev Vygotsky's theory of human learning and development suggests that crises serve as catalysts for change. This perspective provided a constructive way to view the educational crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic—an opportunity to transform adversity into meaningful progress. Recognizing the potential for collective knowledge production among ISATT National Representatives (NRs), I initiated an online collaborative project designed to foster a shared space for reflection and dialogue. The project's goal was to create a community where NRs could share their destabilizing experiences—both professional and personal—and collectively explore emerging questions on pedagogy, emotions, assessment and digital inequities in the new situation. As noted by Cheryl Craig in the ISATT Autumn/Winter 2023 Newsletter, collaboration among ISATT members helped move ISATT into "a new paradigm of comparative education."

29 ISATT national representatives contributed actively to the shaping of the new educational narrative emerging in the transitional period between 2020 and 2023. They worked in the double role 1) of providing data individually from their lived experiences through written narratives and virtual interviews, and 2) working collectively as co-researchers and co-authors to make sense of the polarity between the crisis and the optimism within the pooled data. The NRs formed four working groups, each tackling a salient theme that emerged from my initial thematic analysis. Every group had a designated coordinator who organized virtual meetings roughly every three weeks, increasing frequency when necessary. Additionally, I facilitated cross-group dialogue through monthly meetings with coordinators and quarterly discussions with all groups. These gatherings served as crucial touchpoints for presenting work in progress, addressing concerns, and fostering mutual support through shared empathy. The findings from the four studies undertaken during the COVID-19

pandemic were presented at the ISATT conference in Bordeaux and Bari and also compiled into a section in the 40th Anniversary ISATT Yearbook.

### *Stage 2: The Present*

The three-year collaborative project proved to be a uniquely rewarding experience for all involved, prompting an expansion to include the broader ISATT membership. Currently, 70 ISATT members from various countries are engaged in research addressing critical challenges in teaching and teacher education across five key topics:

1. Filling the gaps of online practicum for pre-school and primary education in-service teachers
2. Integration of AI-based tools as part of teacher training: a step towards digital inclusion?
3. The changing roles of teachers in contemporary education
4. Social justice pedagogies in teaching
5. The Dynamics of Geographic Space When Working with International Teacher Educators in Collaborative Research.

Each research group is led by the ISATT member who proposed the topic, ensuring organic leadership and democratic collaboration. This initiative fosters a vibrant, self-driven research culture, allowing members to explore both the rewarding and challenging aspects of collaboration. Findings from these studies will be presented at the ISATT 2025 conference in Glasgow, with discussions underway for publication opportunities.

### *Stage 3: The Future*

The success of ISATT's collaborative projects has been made possible by the organization's progressive and proactive Governing Body. I was honored when ISATT Chair Cheryl Craig invited me to draft a budget to establish a dedicated grant for collaborative projects. With the support of Administrator Daniela Hotolean, Secretary Ruth Kane, and Treasurer Christiana Afrikaner, I seized this opportunity. The Executive Committee members—Stefinee Pinnegar, Luiz Sanchez, Stavroula Kaldi, and Oyoo Samuel Ouma—unanimously approved the proposal.

As a result, the Cross-Cultural Research Collaboration Grant Programme was officially launched in March 2025. Its primary aim is to encourage and support ISATT scholars from diverse countries in conducting international collaborative research, generating fresh insights into global challenges in education and teacher education. The first call for proposals has already been issued.

### **Growth in ISATT membership**

ISATT membership has experienced fluctuations over the years. Retaining members while attracting new ones has required ongoing efforts. In 2021, for example, 17 NRs did not renew their memberships. However, we successfully reinstated nine and welcomed eight new members, maintaining overall numbers.

The dedication of Administrator Daniela Hotolean has been instrumental in tracking membership, following up on renewals, and identifying potential NRs to fill vacancies. Collaborating with her has given me deeper insight into the complexities of what may seem like a straightforward process. Despite periodic fluctuations, ISATT has now surpassed the 200-member milestone—currently standing at 208 members from 52 countries, with active NRs in 49 countries. We are in the process of filling up the remaining three vacancies.

The ISATT collaborative projects have played a significant role in fostering steady membership growth. Additionally, ISATT's biennial and regional conferences have contributed to periodic surges in interest and participation.

### **NRs' contribution to ISATT**

The yearly summaries from the National Representatives (NRs) demonstrate their dedication to promoting ISATT through various means, including newsletters, talks at academic platforms, meetings, and conferences. They have also actively engaged in identifying potential members and reaching out to them individually. Additionally, several NRs have made significant contributions by publishing book chapters and journal articles.

NRs have played a crucial role in bidding for and hosting ISATT Biennial and Regional conferences. For example, Maria Inês Marcondes, the NR for Brazil, assisted Luiz Sanchez, a member of the Executive Committee (EC), in organizing the Regional Conference in September 2024. Similarly, Stavroula Kaldi, an EC member and NR for Greece, conducted another ISATT Regional Conference in November 2024. The upcoming ISATT 2025 conference in Glasgow is being led by the UK NR, Margery McMahon. These NRs have also been instrumental in recruiting new members from their respective regions.

Moreover, several NRs have taken on leadership roles in collaborative projects. Daniela Roxana Andron (Romania), Dorota Werbińska (Poland), Magdalena Kohout-Diaz (France), and Melissa Newberry (USA) are coordinating various ISATT collaborative initiatives, with 16 other NRs actively participating in them.

### **Conclusion**

While significant progress has been made, there is still much to explore and contribute to the future of education and teacher development. Strengthening efforts to engage young scholars will be vital in fostering a more robust academic community. I am confident that the incoming coordinator, Alison Mitchell, will bring dynamic leadership and guide the community to new heights.

Finally, I sincerely thank everyone for their unwavering support and cooperation, which have made my tenure as ISATT NR Coordinator truly enriching and meaningful.

My best wishes

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