An Overview of International Engineering and Technology Congresses Contributions in Brazil

Claudio da Rocha Brito, Melany M. Ciampi  
COPEC – Council of Researches in Education and Sciences

Vladimir G. Zakharov, Irina A. Avenarius  
MADI State Technical University

Abstract

Brazil’s quick ingression into international educational communities both in North America and in Europe and growth of quality level of Brazilian engineering standards of education became an objective reality in recent years. Its active participation in the work of various conferences and societies all over the world has considerably enhanced old educational traditions and formed a new generation of young engineers capable to resolve many acute problems of Brazil’s national economy in the most efficient way. In many aspects this success is supported by a series of recent conferences intended to increase the role of national engineering education and to attract the recognized international organizations and institutions for mutually beneficial cooperation. The educational policy of Brazilian government has played a decisive part in all these enterprises. The stability of the steady gradual rise of engineering education quality in Brazil is in many aspects caused by organizing regular international conferences where all vital and important problems of engineering education are being discussed in utmost open and lively atmosphere. Theoretical and practical issues are considered in sessions and workshops intended to give an immediate vocational training to young Brazilian educators participating in the event. In their turn, the young professors are eager for applying their newly acquired educative ideas and innovative initiatives to their local universities; and the regular conferences with a participation of recognized educators from foreign and national technical universities give a good basis for that.

1. Introduction

Brazil has been present in international educational communities not only in North America but also in Europe and the growth of quality level of Brazilian engineering standards of education became an objective reality in recent years [1-3]. It is due partly to the active participation in the work of various conferences and societies all over the world that has considerably enhanced old educational traditions and formed a new generation of young engineers capable to resolve many acute problems of Brazil’s national economy in the most efficient way. In some ways the success is supported by a series of conferences with the goal to increase the role of national engineering education and to attract the recognized international organizations and institutions for mutually beneficial cooperation. The educational policy of Brazilian government has played a decisive part in all these enterprises [4-6].
2. Brazil and Engineering Education Conferences.

In many ways it can be said that the gradual rise of engineering education quality in Brazil is caused by the organization of regular international conferences where all vital and important problems of engineering education are being discussed in utmost open and lively atmosphere. Theoretical and practical issues are considered in sessions and workshops intended to give an immediate vocational training to young Brazilian educators participating in the event. In their turn, the young professors are eager for applying their newly acquired educative ideas and innovative initiatives to their local universities; and the regular conferences with a participation of recognized educators from foreign and national technical universities give a good basis for that. Five important conferences on engineering education took place in last years:

- 1999: International Conference on Engineering and Computer Education (ICECE-99), Rio de Janeiro, August 11-14;
- 2000: ICECE-2000, Sao Paulo, August 27-30;
- 2002: 7th International Conference on Engineering and Technology Education (INTERTECH-2002), Santos, March 17-20;
- 2004: World Congress on Engineering and Technology Education (WCETE-2004), Guarujá, March 14-17.

Another international conference on engineering education has been scheduled for 2005 in Bertioga. The period (final of summer and beginning of autumn in Brazil) is the one that has been showing the most favorable because it is not so warm but it is still possible to enjoy the excellent climate of Brazil.

A comparative analysis has been elaborated to demonstrate the undoubted success and progress of these events as well as their influence on formation of young engineers. The analysis utilizes the dates of the first four conferences only, because the analysis of WCETE that happened recently has not been done yet.

Below there is a list of main supporters of conferences that includes both recognized international and Brazilian organizations, which demonstrated their great interest to these events.

The conferences count with the Technical cooperation of:

- IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers);
- IGIP (International Society for Engineering Education);
- SEFI (European Society for Engineering Education);
- INTERTECH (Interamerican Council for Engineering and Technology Education);
- ASEE (American Society for Engineering Education);
- ASIBEI (Iberian-American Association of Engineering Education Institutions);
- ABENGE (Brazilian Society for Engineering Education);
- RBE (Brazilian Network of Engineering);
- NPABS (Brazilian Nucleus of Environmental Researches).

These conferences have as sponsor the largest Brazilian Agency for Development of Science like:
Proceedings of the 2004 American Society for Engineering Education Annual Conference & Exposition
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- CNPq (National Council for Scientific and Technological Development);
- FAPESP (The State of São Paulo Research Foundation);
- CAPES (Coordination for Improvement of Personnel of Superior Level).

And also some Brazilian enterprises like Petrobras the largest petroleum company of Latin America and other local ones.

Fig. 1. Overall participation in four conferences (upper diagram) and most active participants
The overall global involvement into Brazilian conferences (nearly 1000 participants) is illustrated on Fig. 1 that shows the total number of foreign papers presented at four conferences [7]. The Figure reflects the countries that presented not less than three papers at four conferences. The percentage of “continental” participation is shown on a pie-diagram at the top of Fig. 1. As one can see, Brazil, of course, is the chief contributor (558 papers submitted). It is important to underline that Brazilian contributors really present the whole large country: from Rio and Sao Paulo to its most distant regions. These results are very promising and could only be achieved under a constant and steady attention of Brazilian government at all levels of the national education where the engineering education is definitely a priority. The states of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo with the largest concentration of best universities were successfully selected as centers for international forums.

It seems that there are three main reasons to make a very favorable ground for further successes in this area:

1. There works a very efficient system CAPES, which coordinates the means to improve the level of the personnel responsible for higher education. Practically, CAPES bears responsibility for all post-diploma education and the quality of the corresponding academic curricula. Besides, CAPES is involved into broadening of the international cooperation and providing young students with scholarship to their education in Brazil or abroad.

2. Strong control of the quality of higher education realized owing to two important factors:
   - General National final examination to receive a diploma of higher education. This examination is considered as obligatory.
   - Program of Institutional Evaluation of Brazilian Universities (PAIUB). The evaluation embraces all the aspects of a university life on a voluntary basis.

3. General progress of engineering in Brazil and a prestigious status of engineer as a specialist.

All these three aspects taken as a whole make the engineering education in Brazil very efficient and promising for young people [8-9]; and a tendency to organize international conferences on engineering education puts Brazil forwards to one of leading positions in this area.

Another aspect that has to be taken into account are the new policies that are rising in the country specially in the Atlantic Coast Region of Sao Paulo state where the recent efforts are focused on the fostering of a whole year business tourism.

3. Conclusion

A rapid penetration of Brazil into international engineering educational process and its active participation in various conferences all over the world allowed resolving many acute problems of national economics in the most efficient way. In many aspects organizing regular international conferences where all vital and important problems of engineering education are being discussed stimulates this success. The work shows a comparative analysis based upon five recent international conferences on engineering education.
The data exposed shows that the conferences have been a success. They can contribute to the dynamic discussions of engineering education in Brazil once they bring what has been done abroad and what has been done in the country. New local policies will provide a better support for this level of conferences once it brings to the Atlantic Coast Region of São Paulo the international tourism that also cooperates to maintenance of jobs and economy. Although it is a small number of conferences in this particular area the rising number of participants shows that it has a future.

Bibliography

CLAUDIO DA ROCHA BRITO
Claudio da Rocha Brito is Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering; President of Council of Researches in Education and Sciences (COPEC), Vice President of Brazilian Nucleus of Environmental Researches (NPABS) and President of Fishing Museum Friends Society (AAMP). He is President of Brazilian Chapter of Education Society of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Inc (IEEE-ES), Member of Administrative Committee of Education Society in USA, Chairman of Working Group "Ingenieurpädagogik in und für Entwicklungsländer" in "Internationale Gesellschaft für Ingenieurpädagogik" (IGIP), Council Member of "International Council for Engineering and Technology Education" (INTERTECH) and Director of Brazilian Network of Engineering (RBE/SP). He is Former Secretary of Santos region of SBPC - Brazilian Association for the Advancement of Science, Former Adviser for International Subjects of the Presidency of Brazilian Society for Engineering Education
MELANY MARIA CIAMPI
Melany M. Ciampi is Vice-President of Council of Researches in Education and Sciences (COPEC), Director of Brazilian Nucleus of Environmental, Researches (NPABs) and Director of Fishing Museum Friends Society (AAMP). She is Vice President of Brazilian Chapter of Education Society of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Inc (IEEE-ES), Member of Administrative Committee of Education Society in USA, Vice Chair of Working Group "Ingenieurpädagogik in und für Entwicklungsländer" in "Internationale Gesellschaft für Ingenieurpädagogik" (IGIP) and Council Member of "International Council for Engineering and Technology Education" (INTERTECH). She is Former State Councilor of SBPC - Brazilian Association for the Advancement of Science, Former Manager of International Relations of SENAC School of Engineering and Technology and Former First Secretary of Fishing Museum Friends Society (AAMP). She is Member of IGIP (International Society for Engineering Education), SEFI (European Society for Engineering Education), ASEE (American Society for Engineering Education) and INTERTECH (International Council for Engineering and Technology Education). She has coordinated and has participated of dozens of organizing committees of events in Brazil and abroad like: the Exhibits Chair of ICECE’99 (International Conference on Engineering and Computer Education), the Technical Program Chair of ICECE’2000, the General Chair of INTERTECH’2002 (International Conference on Engineering and Technology Education), of ICECE’2003, of WCETE’2004 (World Congress on Engineering and Technology Education), of CBPA’2001 and CBPA’2002 (Brazilian Congress of Environmental Researches) and CBPAS’2003 and CBPAS’2004 (Brazilian Congress of Environmental Researches and Health).

VLADIMIR ZAKHAROV
IRINA AVENARIUS
Irina Avenarius is MsC (1969) and PhD (1972) at the Physics Department of the Moscow State University. She is Professor of MADI Technical University, Department of Physics (since 1976) and lecturer of General Physics, Solid State Physics; Assistant Professor of Moscow Mining Engineering Institute, Department of Physics (1974 – 1981). Dr. Avenarius has participation in international conferences and symposiums: IGIP'2000, March 2000, Biel, Switzerland (report), ICECE’99, Rio de Janeiro, August 1999 (Report), IGIP’99, September 1999, Istanbul, Turkey (report); “Engineering Education’ 98”, Moscow, September 1998 and she has 30 scientific and didactic publications in Russian and international journals and proceedings of conferences.