2008
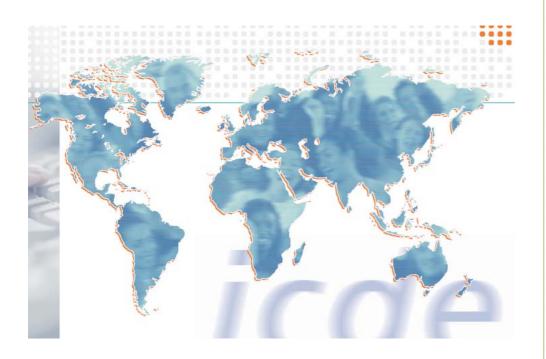
ICDE Annual Activity Report

Summary

There is an imperative need for global dialogue in the field of open and distance learning (ODL). This dialogue must embrace the technological developments affecting most education and training systems around the world today, claims for more systematic collaboration, partnership building and sharing of resources and expertise in the field of distance education. The International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE) offers a unique forum in which this dialogue can take place.

Following a long process of consultation, a number of changes have occurred in the structure of ICDE during 2008.

On 1 January 2008, a newly elected Executive Committee with responsibility for making decisions on policy and strategy in accordance with ICDE's mission began its term of office. Alongside the development of a new medium-term and long-term strategy, ICDE's activities in 2008 focused on:

- increasing ICDE's membership and providing better services

- preparing ICDE for work in projects and task forces together with members

- strengthening ICDE's activities in its host country Norway

- establishing closer ties with UNESCO related activities and programmes

The re-organisation of the Permanent Secretariat in Oslo continued, with new funding allocation priorities. In July 2008, a new Secretary General was appointed. The financial situation of ICDE has improved considerably in 2008 as can be seen from the audited accounts.

Following guidelines received from the Norwegian Authorities, ICDE developed and implemented initiatives to bring together the Norwegian e-learning and distance education community with the more global ICDE constituency.

This document contains a detailed description of activities undertaken by ICDE during 2008.

Oslo, 30 March 2009

Note: This activity report is written in English due to the involvement of ICDE's Business Bodies in its compilation.

Contents

The ICDE

1. Renewing ICDE

In 2008, ICDE celebrated its 70th anniversary. Founded in 1938 in Canada, ICDE provided the only forum in the world where distance education institutions and professionals could meet to discuss important issues, learn from each other and enter into partnerships and business ventures with each other. From around 1995, online or virtual learning institutions also began to apply for membership of ICDE. Over the past ten years, ICDE and its members have been the international leaders in educational development. ICDE offers its members access to extensive worldwide experience and networking in distance and flexible learning at strategic and operational levels. ICDE has members from 90 different countries, representing every continent of the world.

It was with great pride that I entered this impressive organisation as Secretary General in the autumn of 2008. I have enjoyed a long relationship with ICDE, working in member institutions and as a researcher participating in ICDE events. The opportunity to serve in what could be seen as the heart and lungs of the global field of open and distance education is of course demanding, challenging and also a tremendous honour. With its long history, ICDE has all the prerequisites for a bright future.

Work on developing ICDE was intensified during 2008. In April, the Executive Committee undertook an environmental scan with the aim of highlighting key global trends in higher education, adult and distance learning. An examination of these trends can help in the identification of issues confronting higher education in general, and open and distance learning in particular. Further, it can provide ICDE with a framework within which its strategic plan can be developed. Ms Pamela Walsh, a researcher from Athabasca University in Canada, was engaged to carry out the scan in consultation with ICDE members, who were invited to articulate questions and concerns relating to ICDE's future work at a conference organised by the Commonwealth of Learning in June. ICDE members at large have been informed about the study through regular newsletters and given opportunities to comment on it. In October 2008, selected Presidents of member institutions discussed a draft version of the report at the Shanghai Standing Conference of Presidents (SCOP) meeting. The environmental scan was completed in late 2008, and a report, *Global Trends in Higher Education, Adult and Distance Learning,* published in January 2009 (Appendix 1).

On the basis of the findings of this report, ICDE will enter into a new era during 2009 when a new strategy will be developed to reposition the organisation. I look forward with interest to the challenges and demands of the coming years in my role as coordinator for the projects, task forces, seminars and other activities which ICDE will initiate.

ICDE has a key strength which has been - and will remain - of tremendous benefit. It is a membership organisation, and one where members are directly involved in decision making and the implementation of plans. Thus, we will be many working together for the renewal of ICDE.

Carl Holmberg
Secretary General
International Council for Open and Distance Education

2.   Introduction

ICDE is the global organisation for flexible learning, deriving its position from:

- the unique knowledge and experience of its members throughout the world
- expertise in the development and use of new methodologies and emerging technologies
- its status within UNESCO as the NGO with formal consultative relations in distance and online education

An important aim of ICDE is to promote intercultural cooperation and understanding through flexible learning throughout the world. Further aims are:

- to contribute to the development of new methodologies and technologies in order to improve lifelong learning
- to foster international collaboration in flexible learning
- to support and develop networks for flexible learning at national, regional and global levels
- to foster collaboration between public and private sector organisations in the area of flexible learning
- to provide a forum where individuals, corporations, institutions, governments and associations can engage in professional interaction in the field of flexible learning
- to encourage the development of good practice and standards in flexible learning

Resources:

ICDE is a membership organisation and members pay an annual fee to support the activities of the organisation. Over the past 20 years, ICDE has also been supported by the Norwegian Government, a contribution which enables the organisation to maintain a permanent Secretariat in Oslo. A third important source is the 'in kind' contribution of members who undertake tasks and projects. Members of ICDE's business bodies carry out their duties in time allocated by their institutions. Their employers also cover their costs for travel to meetings, thus making a considerable contribution to the life of the organisation.

International Recognition:

ICDE's role as an official and active partner of UNESCO goes back to the 1960s. UNESCO recognises ICDE as the Global Membership Organisation in flexible, distance and e-learning, and ICDE works very closely with UNESCO Headquarters in Paris and UNESCO regional offices around the world.

ICDE is also the only affiliate member of the South East Asia Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO) and cooperates on specially financed projects for the development of capacity in distance and flexible learning in the eleven member states of SEAMEO throughout South East Asia.

Host country for the Permanent Secretariat:

Norway has been ICDE's host country since 1988 when former Prime Minster Gro Harlem Brundtland invited the organisation to establish its Permanent Secretariat in Norway, with the financial support of the Government of Norway as "... one of the contributions of this country to international development and collaboration in the increasingly important field of distance education...".

ICDE activities in 2008

Member objectives:

- Steadily to increase the membership over the next five years
- To maintain ICDE's position as the most prominent forum for communication, cooperation, partnership building and exchange of expertise in the field of open and distance learning

Host country objectives:

- To expand and reinforce contacts with Norwegian educational institutions, governmental agencies and other players in the field
- To provide Norwegian educational institutions with access to ICDE's expertise and international network in the field

UNESCO objectives:

- To reinforce the relationship with UNESCO Headquarters in Paris and with its regional offices
- To cooperate more closely with UNESCO regarding capacity building, especially through work on Open Educational Resources

3. ICDE Events

As mentioned in other sections of this report, ICDE celebrated its 70th anniversary in 2008. A new logo was launched, and every event and conference included an element of commemoration in one form or another. The Standing Conference of Presidents (SCOP) meeting in Shanghai in October was the venue for the main celebrations, where hosts Shanghai TV University created a highly festive framework for marking the occasion.

General Aims:

ICDE is a unique forum as the leading network of expertise and experience in flexible learning, e-learning and open and distance education. The membership base is drawn from every continent, and the venues chosen for the meetings therefore rotate among the regions with a twofold aim:

1. To allow international participants to acquaint themselves with different countries, cultures and education systems
2. To give local institutions and host countries the opportunity to showcase their institutions, experts, and educational values and systems to a broad international audience. The audience comprises both those attending conferences and those given access to the materials produced as a result of it.

3.1. ICDE Prize of Excellence

The ICDE Prize of Excellence was inaugurated in 1999 as the global prize for excellence in distance and online learning. The Prize is awarded to deserving institutions and individuals on the basis of merit alone, and regardless of political or cultural considerations.

The ICDE Prize of Excellence winners for 2008 were announced at the SCOP meeting in Shanghai, with the Individual Prize of Excellence going jointly to Professor Brenda Gourley, Vice Chancellor of The Open University of the United Kingdom, and Professor Helmut Hoyer, Rector of the FernUniversität in Hagen, Germany.

3.2. Conferences in 2008

3.2.1. Standing Conference of Presidents, Shanghai, China

ICDE organises a Standing Conference of Presidents (SCOP), on an annual basis. This is a closed meeting of policy level decision-makers representing ICDE member institutions and aims to promote information exchange, cooperation, and advocacy activities.

The 2008 SCOP meeting held on 18-19 October was entitled "The Building of the Learning City: New Challenges, New Opportunities and New Strategies Facing Open and Distance Education", and brought together experts from ICDE member institutions, UNESCO, the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) and the Observatory on Borderless Education shared views on the future of distance education.

While celebrating ICDE's 70 years of existence, the meeting looked also to the future of the organisation. In a membership driven organisation like ICDE, future aims must be clear, transparent and inclusive driven by a meaningful vision and strategic plan for the coming years, and shaped by all stakeholders. The SCOP meeting served as the basis for the development of both the vision and strategic plan.

Shanghai TV University (STVU), founded in 1960, was the hosting institution. It is an open university, with a teaching network connecting 60 branch schools and teaching centres around Shanghai. In 2007, enrolment reached 112,592 students, and its annual enrolment for non-degree training courses exceeded 500,000 students.

China is the most populated country in the world and it is also fast positioning itself as a key world player in the field of education, though its challenges are as great as its potential. By bringing SCOP to Shanghai, ICDE wanted to increase members' awareness of the challenges that Chinese institutions face, and of the opportunities for collaboration that this enormous country offers. Approximately 80 University Presidents from around the world participated in the Conference.

The ICDE Secretariat was active primarily in the following areas:

- Academic Programme planning in cooperation with the host
- Dissemination of information
- Participation in the production of publicity material, both printed and electronic
- Selection of speakers and coordination of logistics with the host institution
- Correspondence with participants and facilitating visa issues

3.2.2. Global Forum on Open and Distance Education

The Global Forum on Open and Distance Education in Shanghai was held immediately after the SCOP meeting, on 19-21 October. The Forum was organised by ICDE in cooperation with UNESCO and STVU, and was sponsored jointly by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU), the UNESCO Network/ Chair in ODL for East Asia, the Shanghai Distance Education Group (SDEG), the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO, and Shanghai Municipal Educational Commission.

The creation of the learning city has been both a focal point and a regular conference theme in education and society for decades. However, the accelerating pace of economic globalization and rapid urbanization in the developing world, the widening gap between and within nations, and the deteriorating environment, mean that there are many new challenges to face, new opportunities to explore and new strategies to formulate. The theme of the Forum was "The Building of the Learning City: New Challenges, New Opportunities and New Strategies Facing Open and Distance Education" with the following three sub-themes:

- Government policy, partnership building and the special mission of open and distance education
- Meeting growing and diversifying learning needs, and the needs of marginal and disadvantaged groups in particular
- The building of public learning platforms and the application of open educational resources

The Global Forum attracted approximately 400 participants from 45 countries.

3.2.3. International Conference in the Dominican Republic

In 2007, ICDE signed an agreement with The University of the Caribbean (UNICARIBE) to organise an International Conference in Santo Domingo on 24-26 November 2008. The Dominican Republic is one of few Latin American countries where distance education has been practised extensively since the 1980s, and the country is committed to providing learning opportunities to all Dominicans and learners throughout the region through ODL. UNICARIBE is a higher education institution with over 16,000 enrolments, which seeks to educate its students to meet the needs of society through a humanistic and innovative approach in the fields of science and technology, within a framework of academic excellence.

The theme of the conference was: "The Current Challenges of Virtuality", and comprised the following themes:

- Distance Education as an element of Social Inclusion and Civic Participation
- Research and Development in Distance Education
- Construction and Knowledge Management through Distance Education

International conferences are ICDE's response to regional needs for collaborative platforms. This particular conference allowed Latin American professionals to interact with their peers in other regions using their own language, with simultaneous translation to English, Spanish and Portuguese. The main speakers were: Prof. Lalita Rajasingham, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand; Dr. Michel Moore, Pennsylvania State University, USA; Rector Imma Tubella, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Spain; and ICDE President Dr. Frits Pannekoek, President of Athabasca University, Canada. There was extensive coverage of the conference in the main national newspapers, highlighting the importance of this event for the country.

The ICDE Secretariat's tasks in this conference were related to international marketing through dissemination as well as monitoring of financial aspects. The conference attracted approximately 380 participants from the region and beyond.

3.3. Planning for future ICDE conferences

3.3.1. 23rd ICDE World Conference on Open Learning and Distance Education, Maastricht, the Netherlands, 7-10 June 2009

ICDE has been organising World Conferences on open and distance education on a regular basis since 1938. These conferences are major events usually attracting around 1,500 participants from 80-90 countries, with 400-500 presentations on varied issues relating to open and distance education. They give unique access to international and regional views and to invaluable and detailed information about trends, policy, strategic thinking and developments in distance teaching around the world. The organisation spends an average of three years organising and planning each World Conference.

The 23rd ICDE World Conference represents a major drive towards focusing on the future of education and training. The conference is sponsored by UNESCO and The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO). Its main theme is "Flexible Education for All: Open, Global, Innovative", and includes topics related to open educational resources, virtual mobility, quality, capacity building, and assessment.

The Open Universiteit Nederland is the host of this conference and the scientific programme committee is chaired by Professor Dr. Fred Mulder, the Rector of the Open Universiteit Nederland. The European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU), the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), the Brazilian Association of Distance Education (ABED), and the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) have agreed to participate actively. It is ICDE's aim to cooperate with an even wider number of major regional educational associations, in order to provide a broader platform for participation, presentation, collaboration and networking, and in order to reach a global audience in our common field of interest and activity.

The chosen venue is Maastricht, the oldest city in the Netherlands, which has a modern convention centre with the necessary infrastructure, good public transport connections, and a good range of hotels, cultural and social activities.

During 2008, the Permanent Secretariat was heavily involved in the following activity relating to the 23rd ICDE World Conference:

- Overall planning and promotion
- Financial management: budgeting, reporting and control of the final accounts
- Programme planning: academic content, speakers, call for papers, appointment of programme committee members, participation in the selection of papers, correspondence with authors
- Production of printed conference material, including design, and editing: first announcement, call for papers, final programme, production of signs for venue and badges
- Website production: design, content, functionality, coordination with IT experts on online system for handling abstracts and papers

- Production of proceedings in both electronic and printed versions: editing of content and design
- Mailings: coordination of mailings to 10,000 ICDE contacts, acquisition of new addresses
- Management of logistics: coordination with conference centre, catering companies, providers of technical equipment and planning in relation to the facilities available
- Planning of social events and entertainment
- Negotiations with hotels over accommodation, and with transport companies over transport to and from venue
- Coordination of activities concerning security in the venue and local regulations
- Correspondence with participants comprising several thousand mails per year, visa applications and other secretarial support to participants (1,500 participants expected)
- Coordinating activities with all stakeholders including ICDE, the host institution, conference venue, potential sponsors and exhibitors and patrons

3.3.2. Standing Conference of Presidents 2009

During the final months of 2008, preparations for the 2009 SCOP meeting began. The meeting will be organised in cooperation with the Open University of Catalonia in November 2009.

3.3.3. 24th ICDE World Conference on Open Learning and Distance Education

As mentioned earlier in the report, the planning cycle for World Conferences is rather long. Thus the planning for the 2011 World Conference has already begun. The general outline of the event is in place and contracts will be signed and other formalities agreed upon early in 2009.

4. ICDE and Norway: Activities for Norwegian members and contacts

Since its establishment in Oslo in 1989, the ICDE Permanent Secretariat has been partly financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research. ICDE's main priority for 2007 and 2008 was to expand and reinforce contacts with Norwegian educational institutions, governmental agencies and other players in the field, and to provide them with access to ICDE's expertise and international network.

4.1. International tailor-made activities providing added value for Norwegian institutions

ICDE offered Norwegian institutions the opportunity to take part in a study tour to China, beginning with the 2008 SCOP meeting in Shanghai, and followed by visits to selected institutions in other parts of the country. ICDE has increased its Chinese membership during recent years, including both universities and governmental authorities. Even though they face significant challenges, many of these institutions are well advanced in the field of distance education, particularly in terms of utilising the latest trends and developments within educational technology.

Norwegian institutions benefitted from visiting institutions that are accustomed to different methods and traditions, but it was also a great opportunity for Norwegian institutions to showcase the Norwegian tradition and experience within distance education to the expanding Chinese market. The Norwegian participants were given the opportunity to present at the various meetings and visits, and also at the SCOP meeting where they spoke to an international audience.

ICDE collaborated closely with Norway Opening Universities, the Norwegian Association for Distance and Flexible Learning (NFF), and ICDE members in Norway on this initiative. There were 17 Norwegian participants representing the University of Oslo, University College of Oslo, Norway Opening Universities, Addisco, University College of Bodø, University College of Østfold, Sogn og Fjordane University College and NFF.

The one week programme included visits to Shanghai TV University, China Central Radio and TV University, Tshingua University Beijing, Innovation Norway in Beijing and the Norwegian Embassy, as well as the National Examination Education Authority in Beijing. In addition, they participated in the SCOP meeting and the Global Forum. Tailor-made activities were organised, including special meetings for the group with Vice Chancellors from Universities in Australia and the United Kingdom, who gave an overview of the trends in ODL in their respective countries. Case studies on challenges in the field of ODL from China, Brazil, India, Malaysia, South Africa, New Zealand and Canada were also presented. Please see the programme in Appendix 2 for more details.

The ICDE Permanent Secretariat took responsibility for logistical planning and coordination for this study tour.

4.2.   The facilitation of exchange with international colleagues

Every year, the ICDE Permanent Secretariat in Oslo arranges for international delegations to visit Norwegian institutions in order to share experience. In July 2008, a delegation from Shanghai TV University visited the Secretariat, followed in August by a delegation from the Government of the Basque Countries in Spain. Meetings were arranged with representatives from the Ministry of Education, NKI and NFF in order to exchange ideas and explore opportunities for future cooperation.

4.3. Participation in events organised in Norway

ICDE partakes actively in events organised by Norwegian institutions and organisations in the field of e-learning and distance education. In 2008, ICDE participated in NFF's annual conference, where the Secretary General delivered a keynote speech. The Secretary General also represented Norway in a meeting of the Nordic Council, held in Iceland, and co-organised by NFF.

5. Publications

ICDE publishes content based on the experience of institutions around the world, covering the latest trends in open and distance learning and dealing with both the challenges and opportunities. Access to this material is of great value to our members, and ICDE makes it available in both printed and electronic formats.

5.1. Open Praxis, the electronic journal of ICDE

ICDE's electronic journal is one of the most important communication channels the organisation offers for exchange of information and academic content. The journal also publishes the best papers from conferences, as well as papers submitted by ICDE members, after a process of peer review. Two issues of the journal were published in 2008.

The tasks of the ICDE Permanent Secretariat include:

- Development of the journal's agenda and content for the year in collaboration with the editor and the editorial board
- Collection of material from correspondents and general sources
- Selection of papers and news
- Coordination with correspondents on future issues and topics
- Editing of material, publication on the website, lay-out and graphic design
- Providing information to members about new issues and content

5.2. Newsletters

Once a month, an ICDE newsletter is sent to all 6,000 contacts in our database with updated information in short electronic format. The Permanent Secretariat's staff selects the themes, often in relation to other activities being developed by the organisation or its members, carries out the research, and produces the content prior to distribution. In addition to these newsletters, ICDE members receive information and updates about new projects, and relevant reports and publications in the field of open and distance education.

5.3. ODL and Right to Education project

This project is a collaborative initiative between six scientific journals with influence in the international field: the Asian Journal of Distance Education, Distances et savoirs, the Journal of Asynchronous Learning Network, ICDE's Open Praxis, and EURODL. At the beginning of 2007, there was a joint call for papers by the journals on the topic of Distance Education and the Right to Education, based on the UN Declaration of Human Rights. This theme could be approached from multiple points of view; pedagogical, sociological, economic, political, legal. ICDE has ensured Norwegian representation in this project by inviting Prof. Svein Odvar Haaland to be a member of the scientific committee, which will evaluate all the papers sent to us.

The committee comprises:

- Svein Odvar Haaland, Open Praxis
- Terry Anderson, IRRODL
- John Bourne, Journal of Asynchronous Learning Network
- Carl Holmberg, Open Praxis
- Ramesh C SHARMA, Asian Journal of Distance Education
- Alan Tait, EURODL
- Martine Vidal, Distances et savoirs
- Monique Grandbastien, Distances et savoirs
- Pierre Moeglin, Distances et savoirs

The abstracts selected by each journal were published in their original language on a common website, with open access; they will also be published in printed version in 2009. Authors benefitted from broad international dissemination, and their work was presented to a UNESCO international conference on distance education and the universal question of the right to education in October 2008, organised in conjunction with the European Distance and E-learning Network (EDEN) Research Workshop in Paris.

More information can be found at: http://www.distanceandaccesstoeducation.org/index.aspx.

5.4. Book on Best Practices in Distance Education in China

China has been a priority country for ICDE over the last decade. Contact with the Chinese authorities and Chinese institutions has been fluid and successful. Several conferences were held to promote international dialogue, an EC project was undertaken, and the website translated into Chinese, with hosting in Shanghai.

The book "Best Practices in Distance Education in China" is based on ICDE papers and published material from recent years. ICDE was represented on the Editorial Committee with responsibility for the revision and selection of material, contacts with authors and proofreading. The book was launched in conjunction with the SCOP meeting held in Shanghai and is available in both English and Chinese versions.

5.5. Book on the "Regulatory Framework for Distance Education Systems in Latin America and the Caribbean"

Spanish title: "EL MARCO REGULATORIO DE LA EDUCACIÓN A DISTANCIA EN AMERICA LATINA Y EL CARIBE"

This book was compiled by Marta Mena, Claudio Rama and Angel Facundo and published in Bogotá by Universidad National Abierta, with sponsorship from the University, ICDE and VIRTUAL EDUCA. It contains contributions from 26 experts with research on, and comparative studies of 15 countries in the region. The book was launched during the ICDE International Conference in the Dominican Republic.

5.6. Proceedings from the ICDE International Conference in Toluca, Mexico

ICDE has organised annual conferences in Latin America for the last seven years with venues such as Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Lima, San Juan de Puerto Rico and Toluca. Each has been very well received in terms of participation and papers submitted. The 2007 conference was hosted by the Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey. In February 2008, ICDE published a selection of 150 papers from the conference on the members section of its website.

5.7. Report from the Open Educational Resources project

UNESCO and ICDE established a task force to study the issue of Open Educational Resources (OER). Their final report and recommendations were published during 2008. The work of the task force is further described under 7.1 below.

6. The ICDE website as ICDE's main channel of communication with its members

As a global organisation dealing with IT based learning, it is imperative that our website solutions and functionalities respond to high level expectations. In 2007 and 2008, the further development of better and expanded online services was one of the top priorities of the organisation, and it remains so today. One of our objectives is to be the main source of reference for professionals in the field. Time and resources have been allocated to the conceptualization, planning and implementation of those services and new functionalities. According to the expertise required in each case, the tasks are developed in house and/ or by IT professionals. The management and maintenance of the site remains the responsibility of ICDE's staff. Nearly all of ICDE activities are related in one way or the other to the website: ICDE events with their own linked sites, all dissemination of information, special online spaces for project cooperation, online publications, and translated versions of the website. As the website is a dynamic tool, there is a continual need for development and updating. Every week, several new articles are uploaded, including news from members. ICDE staff members spend considerable time undertaking research on trends and issues, with the aim of reflecting cultural and regional diversity that is represented in the organisation.

7. Attendance at conferences and meetings by ICDE officers and personnel

Conferences and meetings are important platforms where ICDE can communicate information about activities and events and make contact with potential new members, while gathering information about new trends in the field of ODE. ICDE officials were present or represented at a number of international conferences and meetings where, due to geographical proximity, it was natural to attend. Information booklets about ICDE were distributed at conferences, posters displayed and presentations made by ICDE staff. ICDE officials were present at the following events:

- SEAMEO meeting, Indonesia, May 2008
- Commonwealth of Learning's PCF5 on "Access to Learning for Development", London, UK, July 2008 (panel)
- ABED Annual Conference, Santos, Brazil (keynote, opening and closing addresses)
- UNESCO-CONFINTEA regional workshop in preparation for the World Conference on Lifelong Learning, Seoul, Korea, October 2008
- Nordic Council Meeting, Iceland, December 2008 (keynote)
- Online Educa Berlin, Germany, December 2008 (seminar, meetings)

8. UNESCO related activity

Through its representative at UNESCO, Professor Bernard Loing, ICDE plays an important role in the overall activity of the UNESCO/ NGO Liaison Committee.

8.1. OER Task Force Project

The concept of Open Educational Resources (OER) has become one of the most important themes in the world of education in recent times. UNESCO has already taken an interest in this development, and ICDE's members have unique knowledge and experience to share. ICDE perceived that there was a need to work formally together to explore the rich potential of opportunities within OER, building on the specific strengths of ICDE members, but in full awareness of the possible risks involved. This work can thus lead to a framework for the creation of a global direction within the field.

UNESCO and ICDE discussed the idea of establishing a task force to deal with the issue of OER and thus lead the way in this new arena in 2006. Negotiations moved forward and the ICDE Global Task Force on Open Educational Resources was launched at a meeting that took place at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris in November 2006, with strong support and participation from that organisation. The second meeting was held in the Netherlands in June 2007, and the third meeting in

Shanghai in October 2008. Electronic communication allowed for regular dialogue between those involved.

The mandate of the Task Force was to develop a report on Open Educational Resources adding specific ICDE flavour and value by adopting the self-and-distance-learning perspective rather than the current mainstream content-in-classroom perspective. The final report was presented at the SCOP meeting in Shanghai in October 2008 (please see Appendix 3). The task force was lead by Professor Fred Mulder of the Open University of the Netherlands.

The ambition now is that ICDE will take the lead in continued work on OER for the sector of Open and Distance Education. Based on recommendations, ICDE will take on defined roles. Among them will be contributions to raising awareness, the development of further collaboration with regional and national ODE associations and other international organisations, and the development of practical reports or handbooks that relate OER to ODE.

8.2. UNESCO Chairs' Meeting in Shanghai

In conjunction with ICDE's SCOP meeting in Shanghai, a UNESCO Chairs' meeting was held at the same venue. Institutions in East Asia holding UNESCO Chairs had the opportunity to meet and discuss matters of mutual interest with officers from UNESCO headquarters in Paris.

8.3. Dr. Bernard Loing becomes President of the UNESCO-NGO Conference

Following ICDE's long term aim of developing a closer relationship with UNESCO, ICDE's General Delegate at UNESCO, Dr. Bernard Loing, was elected President of the NGO Conference and President of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee during the International Conference of NGOs held in Paris in December 2007. This Conference represents the 350 international NGOs which have an official partnership with UNESCO, and the Liaison Committee is its implementation arm.

Dr. Loing's new and important role gives ICDE the opportunity to reach a broader international audience, with direct access to governmental delegations and focus on distance education and capacity building. It also means a new commitment and responsibility, and Dr. Loing is actively supported by the Permanent Secretariat in his tasks. Dr Loing will hold this office until December 2009.

9. New Officials in ICDE

Election of the ICDE Executive Committee

The new ICDE Constitution very clearly places policy decisions in the hands of the Executive Committee. "There shall be an Executive Committee responsible for making policy decisions in accordance with ICDE's mission and constitution" (Article 6.1). The President, whom the Executive Committee appoints, has a particular role: "The President has oversight of and responsibility for policy matters and is responsible to the Executive Committee and its members" (Article 6.12). The Board of Trustees does not have any direct responsibility for policy, though it may have contact with policy through its monitoring of officers. The board has responsibility for "advising the Executive Committee proactively and reactively on particular matters" (Article 7.1), which implies some reference to policy.

Policy making is the responsibility of the elected members of the Executive Committee under the leadership of the President. The Executive Committee is also responsible for all other matters not specifically allocated to another business body or the Secretary General (Article 6.2). And it is the body to which the Secretary General will bring matters of an unusual kind, matters of great importance and matters with substantial financial implications (Article 8.4).

The Executive Committee will consider the financial situation of ICDE including funding from membership fees, funding from the Norwegian Government and funding from other sources and will

receive regular reports from the Secretary General on the operation of the Permanent Secretariat. But it will also look outwards to the members, their needs and the world of open and distance learning in general. And it will do so to no small extent through the portfolios which are agreed for the individual members of the Executive Committee, which together will support the strategy which it has determined (Article 6.15).

Elections for positions on the Executive Committee were held in November/ December 2007, with candidates representing the following countries: South Africa, United Kingdom, Brazil, Canada, New Zealand, Argentina, Singapore, China, Portugal, USA, Korea, Israel, Sweden, Norway, France and Romania. The elected officers are:

ICDE Executive Committee, term of office: 1 January 2008 – 31 December 2011

President: **Frits Pannekoek,** President of Athabasca University, Canada	**Denise Kirkpatrick,** Pro Vice Chancellor, Learning and Teaching at the Open University, UK	**Nyameko Barney Pityana,** Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of South Africa, UNISA, South Africa	**Marta Mena,** General Coordinator of PROCAE, Cabinet of Ministers, Argentine Government, Argentina	**Fredric Litto,** President of the Brazilian Association of Distance Education - ABED, Brazil	**Paul Grimwood,** CEO of the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand, New Zealand

Permanent Secretariat

On 31 May 2007, Ana Perona was appointed as Acting Secretary General to the Permanent Secretariat. The process of appointing a new Secretary General was begun in the spring of 2008 by the Interim Board of Trustees and the Election Committee, and the new Secretary General, Carl Holmberg, began his tenure on 1 July 2008.

Oslo, 30 March 2009

Appendices

1. Global trends in Higher Education, Adult and Distance Learning
2. Study Tour to China, Programme
3. Open Educational Resources Task Force Final Report