

ICETE begins year of conversation on relations between formal and non-formal education

The International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE) held a consultation in November on the topic of 'Formal and Non-Formal Education in Dialogue'. This event launched a year-long worldwide conversation on the issue. Additional conversations have been scheduled for 11 February, 13 May and 12 August 2022, with an in-person conference on 14–18 November 2022. Those wishing to participate in these events or with other questions can consult <https://icete.info/equipping/consultations/c21-22/> or write to Stefani Morton at iceteoffice@gmail.com.

Following are excerpts from the presentation delivered at the opening consultation by ICETE executive director Michael Ortiz.

This is not the first time ICETE has addressed this topic in its more than 40 years. A similar theme became the entire focus and emphasis of the fifth ICETE consultation held in Cyprus in 1984, under the title 'Theological Education by Extension [TEE] Come of Age'. The same focus was adopted a decade later at the ninth ICETE consultation held in 1993 in Thailand, under the theme 'Affirming the Spectrum'. The specific intention of that consultation was to work out effective collaboration within ICETE structures for both formal and non-formal theological education. For some years in the late 1980s and early 1990s, ICETE maintained and funded a Coordinator of TEE Services as an administrative staff post, through which we provided publications, newsletters, and other supporting services to link and encourage TEE programs throughout the world. And so, you are not only a part of this historic global ICETE consultation, but you carry forward the historical ambition of ICETE, to include all sectors of theological education in our conversations, our community and our collaboration for the sake of the church.

Let's listen carefully to this declaration from the manifesto ICETE produced in 1981, shortly after its founding: 'We must embrace a greater flexibility in the educational modes by which we touch the various levels of leadership need, and not limit our approach to a single traditional or radical pattern. We must learn to employ, in practical combination with others, both residential and extension systems, both formal and non-formal styles, as well as, for example, short-term courses, workshops, evening classes, holiday institutes, in-service training, travelling seminars, refresher courses, and continuing education programmes. Only by such flexibility in our programmes can the church's full spectrum of leadership needs begin to be met, and we ourselves become true to our full mandate.'

This declaration from the 1981 manifesto highlights a core value for ICETE, from its very inception, to foster meaningful interconnectedness between all sectors and forms of theological education.

Listen to what was put together at Lausanne Cape Town, 2010, by a group of 150 pastoral trainers who gathered there: 'Since the formal and non-formal sectors of pastoral training have knowingly and



Michael Ortiz, international director of ICETE
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unknowingly allowed ourselves to be divided in heart and efforts, we declare together that we shall endeavor to build trust, involve each other, and leverage the strengths of each sector to prepare maturing shepherds for the proclamation of God's Word and the building up of Christ's Church in all the nations of the world.' Although this was not an official Lausanne statement, it was put together over eleven years ago by a few who attended Cape Town, and who wanted a record of their expressed desire for greater mutuality between all theological education sectors.

Listen to what Ashish Chrispal from Asia had to say in an article he wrote in September 2019: 'We need a two-pronged approach, which comprises both formal and non-formal theological education, with the main focus on the majority world's contextually nuanced styles of learning. It is important not to be elitist and traditionalist, failing to recognize the need for transformation that will lead the church of our Lord Jesus Christ to be rooted and grounded in his Word.'¹

From our ICETE manifesto to the quotes I have just given you and the many others out there, there has been for a long, long time a global plea to have greater community and collaboration among all sectors of theological education, not just for its own sake, but for the sake of the church in its mission. When we reference theological education in our mission statement, we are talking about the whole of theological education, all sectors coming together, to collectively serve the church worldwide.

And let me say this as well: whenever ICETE gathers, has an event, initiates dialogue, or does anything in its role as the hub for global evangelical theological education, those of you mostly in the non-formal arena have a seat at the table along with those from the more formal side.

John Mbiti, a noted African theologian and scholar, wrote in 1974, 'There is a great deal of spontaneous theologizing going on in the Church in Africa. It is informal, quiet, unwritten, unpolished theology, but nevertheless theology in its own way, and a theology which must be allowed a place in the Church universal.'²

Though Mbiti was referencing local theologizing, I want to express a similar sentiment about theological education. Some forms may be lofty and well-structured and credentialed, and some may be informal, quiet, even unwritten and unpolished. But these too ought to have a place within the whole of theological education.

¹ Ashish Chrispal, 'Restoring Missional Vision in Theological Education', *Lausanne Global Analysis*, September 2019.

² John Mbiti, 'Theological Impotence and the Universality of the Church', *Lutheran World* 21, no. 3 (1974): 251–60.

JOURNALS AND NEWSLETTERS WITHIN THE GLOBAL THEOLOGY DEPARTMENT

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<http://jahrbuch.iirf.global/>

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WEA RLC Research and Analysis Report (periodic)

<https://worldea.org/whoweare/newsletter-signup>

Inaugural Theological Education Consultation in Africa

by David Tarus, executive director, Association for Christian Theological Education in Africa

About 80 African theological leaders from across Africa gathered on 26-28 November in Nairobi, Kenya, for the inaugural consultation of African Theological and Christian Networks. The consultation focused on how theological education could contribute to sustainable growth in churches and in African society to achieve the aspirations of Agenda 2063 (<https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview>), the African Union's framework to transform Africa.



Under the auspices of the All Africa Conference of Churches, 14 networks of African theological institutions, Pan-African denominations and other Christian organizations participated. This is the first time these networks have collaborated in a theological consultation.

Topics covered at plenary sessions included theological education and sustainability, curriculum development, integrative theological education, theological research, collaboration in theological education, and African public theology. Breakout sessions probed these themes more deeply.

Various publishers donated books and resources for participants to use in their theological institutions. These included the *African Study Bible* (donated by Oasis International), *African Public Theology and African Hermeneutics* (Langham Literature), and USB flash drives with resources on church engagement in communities (Tearfund).

In his keynote address from an Anglophone African perspective, J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu from Trinity Theological Seminary in Legon, Ghana, emphasized that Agenda 2063 challenges the church in Africa to be theologically sensitive to the development of the continent and its flourishing. Concerns about theological education in Africa come from its perceived inability to speak to the African experience and to make an effective connection with sustainable church growth. Asamoah-Gyadu said theological education should help the African church ensure numerical growth while facilitating human flourishing that lies at the heart of Christian soteriology.

Fohle Lygunda, executive director of the Africa Center for Interdisciplinary Studies based in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, argued in his keynote address from a Francophone

African perspective that it is not possible to talk about sustainable theological education in Africa without talking about how theology is understood and lived on the continent. The real problem for theological education in Africa may not be primarily education per se, but rather the theology itself that is delivered. Therefore, Lygunda contended, we must first clarify what theology we wish to teach, as it relates to what God desires for Africa, while engaging with Agenda 2063 as an outline of what leaders in Africa want.

Participants committed to engaging with Agenda 2063 theologically in the core curricula of theological institutions and to developing sound biblical and theological education within transformative curricula that are relevant, integrative and contextual, with sustainable resource mobilization and research capacity that aim to regain the African continent's lost dignity.

Respected theological leaders considered the consultation a turning point in theological education in Africa. Not only did it facilitate collaboration between different theological networks and denominations, but it also provided a platform for African theological leaders to engage practically with socio-political aspirations to transform Africa. A coordinating group will take the initiative further by producing a series of publications offering perspectives on Agenda 2063. Special work groups will examine the sustainability of theological education, curriculum development, research, community-focused theological education and the interface between formal and non-formal theological education in Africa. Regional and national consultations are also being considered.

We thank God for the way he guided the consultation despite various challenges. We also appreciate the generous support from Tearfund, Cornerstone Foundation, Kerk in Actie, Presbyterian World Mission and Theological Education in the Anglican Communion that made the consultation possible. Please pray with us that God will continue the work he has started so that theological institutions in Africa will equip pastors and church leaders to facilitate the growth of both churches and African society.

For more information on the consultation, contact me at actea.africa@gmail.com or director@acteaweb.org, Bosela Eale at boselaale@aacc-ceta.org or Sas Conradie at sas.conradie@tearfund.org.



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ICETE publishes book on theological education by extension

A newly released book on theological education by extension (TEE) offers global perspectives on TEE's effectiveness as a response to the training needs of today's church, and it also shows the model's adaptability to varying contexts in different parts of the world.

Participating in a recent digital book launch, WEA leaders applauded *TEE for the 21st Century: Tools to Equip and Empower God's People for His Mission* as a valuable resource showing how TEE has been used effectively to train the fast-growing number of church leaders today.

'I am excited about this book, because it talks about quality in theological education. What is quality, and how do we measure quality in theological education? Through extensive research and amazing stories, this book shows us that TEE is an effective approach in equipping God's people for kingdom service. It has been instrumental in building disciples and multiplying churches especially in difficult places', said Theresa Lua, WEA Director of Global Theology and General Secretary of the Asia Theological Association (ATA).

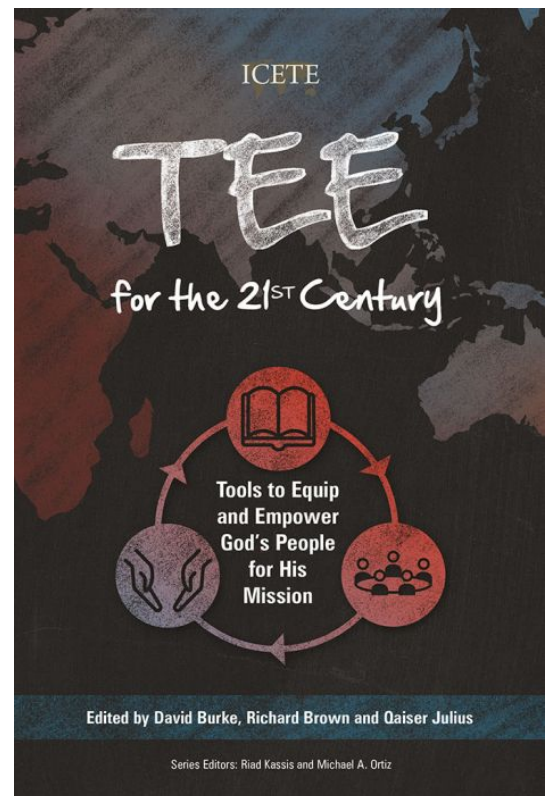
Lua added, 'I find this book helpful to accrediting agencies like ATA because it provides excellent framework and tools in doing proper assessment of TEE programs. While this book is about TEE, it is also helpful to other forms of theological education. It provides helpful insights in ensuring that theological education is indeed serving the mission of the church in the world.'

WEA Secretary General Thomas Schirmmacher stated, 'TEE has found a way for a really good structure, which is needed in education to adapt to many, many situations around the world where theological education is very much needed but cannot follow the traditional way. I congratulate all the authors and editors of this superb book.'

In the preface, Michael A. Ortiz, ICETE's international director, writes, 'On occasions, the global landscape for theological education encounters the need for adjustments. Over recent years, a significant portion of the changes have stemmed from the call for theological education that is not from the top down, but rather driven from the bottom up, namely from needs grounded in the church. ... Throughout its history, TEE has provided accessible, relevant, practical, and contextual training for the church. *TEE for the 21st Century* reassures its reader of TEE's established model. Even so, still more remains to be done, and perhaps this work might enthuse others to innovatively draw future theological education nearer to, and for the sake of, the church.'

Authored by a global team of discipline experts brought together by the Increase Association, this book speaks to the real-life training needs of today's church. Addressed to leaders, teachers and practitioners, it offers a robust framework for critically evaluating the impact of TEE on the formation of whole-life disciples in a wide variety of contexts and locations. With a proven track record across Asia, Latin America and Africa, TEE has a role to play in the church's future, empowering every member to fulfil their God-given calling to ministry and mission.

TEE for the 21st Century can be ordered online at <https://langhamliterature.org/tee-for-the-21st-century>.



Impactful Bible exhibition in Brest, Belarus

by Johannes Reimer, WEA Director of Public Engagement and Global Director of WEA's Peace and Reconciliation Network

Very few cities of Europe are so connected to the Bible translation as Brest, a city in Belarus on the border with Poland. In Reformation times, the city was ruled by the Lithuanian Grand Duke Mikolai Radzivil the Black (1515–1565), who ordered the second-ever Protestant translation of the Bible into a European language (Polish). The Brest Bible was published in 1563 and became a foundation for several translations into other Eastern European languages, including one into modern Belarusian by the Baptist pastor and social reformer Lukash Dziekuc-Malei (1888–1955). All modern Belarusian translations, regardless of denominational connection, have built on Dziekuc-Malei's work; most of them were done in or near Brest.

Following the 2021 symposium, the regional library of Brest organized a Bible exhibition from 22 September to 24 October. With some assistance from evangelicals, the library published 2,000 catalogues for the exhibition. More than 1,500 visitors attended, including school classes, groups of university students, intellectuals and ordinary citizens of Brest. There was a special tour for the deaf, and some companies organized a visit for their workers. All visitors took with them a reprint of Dziekuc-Malei's translation of the Gospel of Luke.



A display from the Bible exhibition in Brest © WEA

My wife and I visited the exhibition on 22 October, just as a group of students from the philosophical faculty of the University of Brest were walking through it with their professor. The students loudly expressed their excitement. The library and local evangelicals had trained about 5 library workers and 40 volunteers from different churches of the city, and they made for a very warm welcome.

One visitor to the exhibition commented afterwards, 'I have always intended one day to read the Bible. But due to my busy life, I have always pushed the decision ahead of me. Now, having heard the presentation, I will not only take the Gospel of Luke with me—I will surely read it!' Others reacted similarly. Many were fascinated to print the first page of the Brest Bible on an ancient printing press.

The Brest ethnologist Ivan Chaichits commented on his visit to the exhibition on Facebook: 'I was especially impressed by the Samizdat editions from the Soviet times. People published the Bible on their own and hid the content under a book cover of a first reader, for example. It is a great exhibition for those who are interested in the theme, as well as for those who study printing in general.'

Today, Belarus is a deeply divided nation politically. The Bible exhibition in Brest was seen by the organizers as a contribution towards national unity. Spiritual renewal around God-given ideals is what a divided society needs; partisan solutions usually just deepen the gap, disturbing even more people. For Belarusians, a people with deep religious roots, spiritual renewal is the only way back to unity, and noting the Bible's historical impact can encourage such renewal. I am deeply thankful to the Brest authorities who made this exhibition possible.

(Editor's note: On December 1, the National Library of the Republic of Belarus held an academic conference on the Bible's role in the formation of democratic societies. Dr Reimer delivered a paper at the conference. The event received broad coverage in the Belarusian media, marking a new opening of the academic world in that country to the Bible and Christianity.)

WEA Secretary General Visits Museum of the Bible

On a recent trip to Washington, DC, WEA Secretary General Thomas Schirmmacher visited the Museum of the Bible, enjoying a guided tour and meeting with Chief Executive Officer Harry M. Hargrave. This museum, which opened four years ago, offers a variety of exhibits and experiences aimed at making the Bible more accessible to Christians and non-Christians alike.

After the tour, Schirmmacher commented, 'The museum is really not meant for the pious—although they won't be disappointed! Rather, it is made for everyone, so that the ordinary American or international visitor who comes to see Washington's many famous museums might increasingly include the Museum of the Bible in their list of "must-see places".'

Schirmmacher noted the museum's unique contribution in helping Christians and non-Christians better understand the history of the Bible itself and also the story of salvation it contains. He expressed his appreciation to the Green family, owners of the Hobby Lobby retail stores, for their vision and long-term commitment to the Bible and its trustworthiness.



Thomas Schirmmacher in the replica of old Bethlehem © WEA/Timothy K. Goropevsek

The eight-story, 430,000-square-foot museum is located three blocks from the US Capitol. In addition to its own exhibits and immersive, personal experiences, the museum contains a number of pieces on loan from the Vatican museum and the Vatican library. The Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) has a 20-year agreement with the museum to supply artifacts for the fifth-floor exhibit space, marking the first time the IAA has agreed to a permanent exhibit of artifacts outside Israel. An entire floor of the museum is dedicated to the notable role of the Bible in the history of the United States.

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Editor: Bruce Barron (bruce.barron0@gmail.com)

Editorial Team: Peirong Lin, Esther Haberland, Rei Lemuel Crizaldo, Johannes Otto, Martin Warnecke

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