



ICETE 2009 Consultation Report

As the world turns under the individualism of modernity, many Christians around the world are thinking in new ways about the importance of community. The same holds true for

“evangelical theological educators”, men and women from all over the world who have been gifted and called by God to equip the people of God. What they teach and model in the seminary, is then reproduced by their students in the churches and replicated as the church reaches out to the world.

Since 1980, the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE), a fellowship of approximately 1000 theological schools in 113 countries around the world, has been calling together theological educators from all over the world to a time of consultation and networking, to discern together the times and relations between the soil of the eternal Word of God in which we are rooted and the changing world we are called to reach and serve.

The 2009 ICETE Triennial Consultation took place from 5 to 9 October in Sopron, Hungary, bringing together 176 leaders in theological education from all over the world as well as attendees from the local area. Six nations were represented from the Americas; seven from Africa; nine from Asia and Australia; twenty-one from Europe; and three from the Middle East. These 46 national representatives, representing the broadest spectrum in geographical, cultural, economic and denominational terms, bonded together for 5 intense days of consultation on the theme:



“Energizing Community: Theological Education’s Relational Mandate”. The consultation was brilliantly served by notable teachers and thinkers such as Hwa Yung (Malaysia), Henri Blocher (France), Geoff Tunnicliffe (Canada), Doug Birdsall (USA), Joseph Shao (Philippines), Oscar Campos (Guatemala), David Baer (USA), Daniel Bourdanne (Chad), Riad Kassis (Lebanon) and Chris Wright (UK).



Many other voices came into this chorus

and the entire gathering was both a prophetic voice and listening ear at the same time.

Hard and deep questions were faced with sincerity:

- What is the biblical basis for theological education’s relational mandate?
- What are the potential risks and limitations of such a mandate?
- In what ways would our schools change if we were to take seriously the centrality of community and prioritize the relational alongside the cognitive and practical?
- What is the impact for long-term ministry of this community emphasis on young leaders training in our theological schools?
- How can the theological college truly listen to the needs of the Church community and integrate those into its learning community?
- How does the relational mandate help train our students to speak to the world’s needs?

ICETE was likened to a “docking station” in which the ICETE international and regional network leadership, along with ICETE partners, associates and affiliates connected to theological school and church leaders, global parachurch organizations (WEA, Lausanne) in order to envision how relational thinking and strategising can impact missional outcomes “on the ground”.

The morning plenary sessions were complemented in the afternoon by "Intersect" professional workshops on themes such as:

- Seeing theological education through a relational lens
- Lausanne: Towards 2010 and beyond
- Global challenges and opportunities for evangelicals
- Non-profit management
- Langham Literature: from distributing books to growing them
- Practising relational intelligence in theological education
- Integral mission and theological education
- Critical challenges: The disappearing MDiv, the Bologna Process, is IT taking over theological education?
- Shaping global theological education locally
- Technological solutions for theological education in the network generation
- Mission beyond evangelism
- Doing theological education in community
- Overseas Council's vision for theological education
- Character formation in theological education
- Biblical and theological foundations for curriculum development
- Lessons from the history of the Bible College movement in the UK

The evening sessions were capped appropriately by small group "connect" prayer groups in which conference attendees experienced relationality right there at the conference. An "Expo" of various resource providers was also a strategic connecting point.

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A renewed vision for community and a "relational revolution" in theological training programmes can influence thousands of graduates all over the world who will lead thousands of churches and thereby influencing great numbers of believers for relational witness in the Church and for the world.

Consultation attendees were already talking about possible themes and strategic outcomes for the 2012 ICETE



Consultation. Informal contacts throughout the Consultation showed clearly that the level of attendee satisfaction was very high and taking these days away from ministry and context was considered as time well spent. The informal conversations, meetings and connections of ICETE leadership, school leaders, resource providers for theological education and church-based educational leaders will bring about results that we can only imagine.