



ATA

The Official Newsletter of Asia Theological Association

news online

FORMAL AND NON-FORMAL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN DIALOGUE

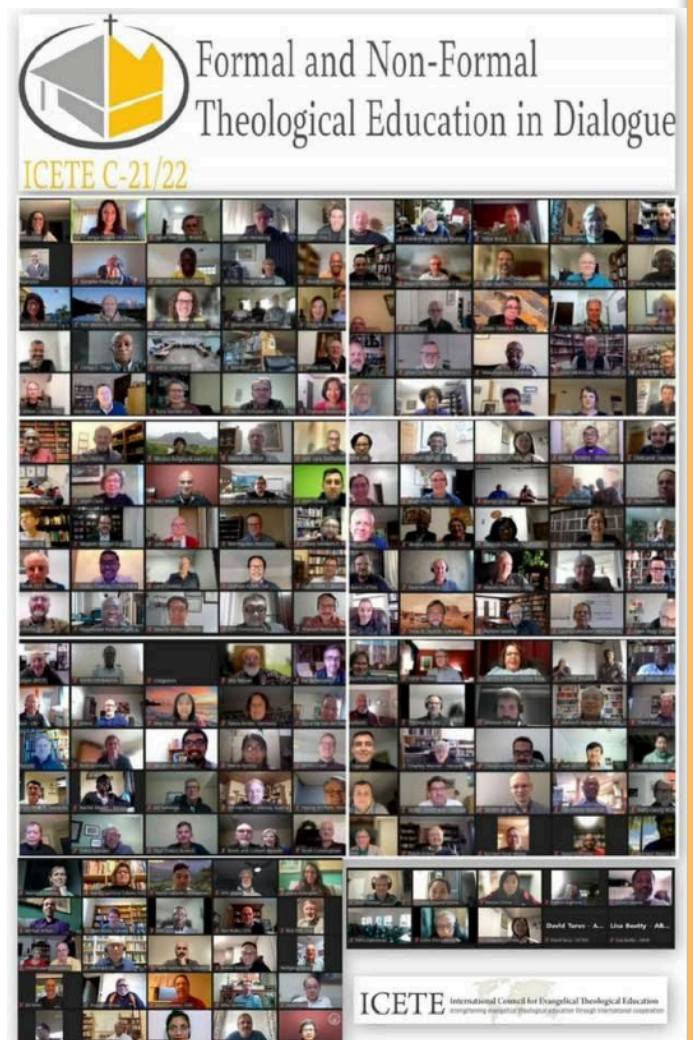
By Angelica De Vera
Research and Communications Officer

“Connecting formal and non-formal education is one of the pillars of any lifelong learning policy.” ~ UNESCO

Last November 16 and 17, the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE) held its first fully online consultation with the theme “Formal and Non-Formal Theological Education in Dialogue”. It was, in many ways, historic! Apart from being the first fully online consultation, it was also the largest ICETE gathering thus far and had the largest number of countries represented- along with the greatest number of languages served in an ICETE consultation! ATA took part in this historic gathering in many ways as Dr. Theresa Lua, ATA General Secretary, is part of the planning committee and even facilitated the panel discussion on the second day and ATA CAED members, Drs. Graham Aylett and Qaizer Julius, who likewise represented Increase Association, the network of TEE providers, were among the speakers. All the participants were warmly welcomed by Dr. Michael Ortiz, ICETE International Director.

Over the course of the 2-day consultation, theological educators involved in both the Formal and Non-formal sectors from different parts of the globe shared their thoughts and experiences on how both Formal and Non-Formal Theological Education, despite the gaps and differences, are critical in equipping the whole church for the

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whole mission of God. The first day of the consultation focused primarily on the Gap between Formal and Non-Formal Theological Education while the second day focused on how that gap is impacting the church. Additionally, towards the end of the consultation, the draft of the new ICETE Manifesto for Theological Education was presented (more on page 3).

This global conversation certainly highlighted the gap between Formal and Non-Formal Theological Education. While undoubtedly Formal and Non-Formal Theological Education are different in numerous ways, it is rare for Theological Educators to take the time to sit down together and muse over them and their implications in equipping the church. As this consultation provided the opportunity for Theological educators to do just that, the walls of distrust between the two sectors, along with the underlying assumptions that have kept those walls standing, were identified, and put forth.

One of those assumptions is that Formal Theological Education deals with the intellectual and with questions of why; whereas Non-Formal Theological Education deals with the more practical and with questions of how. Since Formal Theological Education leads to a recognized degree, it has resulted in a sort of elitism where it is considered higher than Non-Formal Theological Education. The deep mistrust between Formal and Non-Formal Theological Education has led to a lack of coming together and helping one another.

While indeed Formal Theological Education has a lot of strengths- and it is those strengths that have made it the preference of many leaders- Non-Formal Theological Education has reached places and audiences that Formal Theological Education cannot, especially in difficult areas where the church is the minority. Furthermore, Non-Formal Theological Education has more flexibility to change, adapt, and innovate, allowing more relevance.

Formal and Non-Formal Theological Education was meant to complement and enhance each other.

There is a mutual dependence. And with the great need to train workers for Biblical ministry, one cannot claim superiority over the other. For the church to be fully equipped for God's mission, efforts towards forming partnerships for integrated learning pathways must be made. As with all of life, relationship is key and both Formal and Non-Formal Theological Education should walk in parallel with one another for the sake of the church.

This global conversation between Theological Educators in both the Formal and Non-Formal Sectors of Theological Education over the course of the 2-day online consultation has been rich and sharpening, but



that's just the beginning! This consultation was designed to be an ICETE Academy course which makes it possible for those who registered to engage in pre and post consultation discussions which have been very engaging and insightful.

So, the conversation continues and is ongoing via the ICETE Academy! But apart from that, there are also three more online events in 2022: 11 February, 13 May, and 12 August- all leading up to a physical gathering on the 14th to the 18th of November of the same year (location TBD).

It's not too late to join in the conversation! Enroll at the ICETE Academy and look for C- 21/22: Formal and Non-Formal Theological Consultation in Dialogue- and by doing so you will also have access to the recordings and participate in the ongoing conversation. Go to <https://icete.academy/> to join in and be part of this historic and relevant conversation! ♦

A Fresh Vision for Theological Education: The new ICETE Manifesto

Last November 17, during the second day of the ICETE consultation, the draft of the new ICETE Manifesto for Theological Education was presented. This new Manifesto is the result of the ICETE board decision made in June of 2020 to refresh the vision of Theological Education expressed in the ICETE Manifesto 40 years ago.

Dr. Bernhard Ott, Chairman of the European Council of Theological Education, was tasked to form and lead an international team with the task of presenting a first draft of a new, forward-looking manifesto at this year's consultation. ATA was represented in the global team by Dr. Paul Cornelius.

This Manifesto uses the term 'theological education' in a broad sense. We can define this wide

understanding of theological education in three ways:

1. Beyond "professional ministry": We understand theological education in a broader sense, than education for "the ministry" of the professional and ordained clergy. It is about appropriate theological education for all God's people.

2. Beyond "academic": While higher education, with its emphasis on academic teaching, scientific reasoning, research and interdisciplinary dialogue, makes an essential contribution to Christian theology, theological education must not be limited to academic discourse.

3. Beyond "formal": We understand theological education in a broad sense including formal and non-formal education and learning.

The full draft of the new ICETE Manifesto is available on the ICETE Academy under the Course "C21- 22 Formal and Non-Formal Theological Education". ICETE invites all registered participants to read the document carefully and engage with it, providing feedback and comments on the said document. The final version of this new Manifesto will be presented during the in person gathering in November 2022. ♦



AVAILABLE MID-2022

Contains essays from 15 expert contributors from all over the region.

Addresses major topics from a uniquely Asian perspective, such as:

- The Family in Biblical and 21st-century Perspective
- Obedience and Filial Obligation
- Bribery and Corruption
- Creation Care

Firm about accomplishing its mission: The Results of the ATA Best Practices Survey

As part of the Vital SustainAbility Initiative (VSI) strategy planning process, ATA and ScholarLeaders International (SLI) created and sent a best practices survey to a purposive sample of ATA constituents. The survey received responses from 61 schools from 21 countries. Most respondents know ATA well, having been ATA members for 10 or more years. In addition, 9 ministry partners and 7 church/denominational leaders responded to separate surveys. The SLI team collected and analyzed the data, and prepared a 19-page report that describes ATA best practices, highlights results, and analyzes opportunities for growth, improvement, and strategy planning.

Below is the executive summary:

Strengths: Responses from member schools, partners, and church leaders highlighted several strengths in ATA's ministry. Overall, ATA has a strong reputation for accomplishing its mission.

- **Accreditation:** Viewed as ATA's primary purpose, accreditation provides quality assurance for member schools through ATA's rigorous standards. Schools appreciate what they learn through the self-evaluation process. ATA accreditation gives members credibility, promotes concern for theological and spiritual formation, and deepens a sense of Asian contextual identity.

- **Publication:** ATA's publications uniquely empower Asian voices in theology. All stakeholders value ATA's publications – from its newsletter to its commentary series to its monographs. This has become even stronger through partnership with Langham Publishing.

- **Events:** Member schools particularly appreciate the networking, information sharing, and training at ATA events, including the general assembly, theological consultations, and workshops. During COVID, participants mostly saw the pivot to online events as a strength but look forward to meeting face-to-face again (while some hope that online events may continue).

- **Value Added Services:** Members rated these services as helpful. They especially valued faculty development and curriculum workshops. Over 70% of ATA schools indicated an awareness of the free resources available through ATA's membership in ICETE Academy.

- **Leadership:** Participants view ATA staff as an asset. Staff members' character and competency, their approach to leadership, and the legacy of the latest leadership transition serve schools well and provide healthy leadership models.

The overall satisfaction rate for ATA's services is high. Nearly 80% of schools reported that their hopes for ATA membership had been fulfilled at a high level (i.e., at a "4" or "5" on a five-point scale). Only 3% gave a rating below "3".

ATA builds strong partnerships internally among members as well as with other international organizations. Organizations that received multiple mentions include GATE, ICETE, Langham Publishing, and SL's Vital SustainAbility Initiative (VSI). Several participants also noted AGST schools as examples of partnership within ATA.

Suggestions for improvement: Respondents affirmed many of ATA's practices. They appreciate its contributions to each school's mission. They also

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offered several practical suggestions for improvement, often centered around specific ATA services.

- **Accreditation:** Rating their satisfaction with accreditation higher than any other ATA service, schools value the accreditation process. However, they also believe it can improve. Suggestions included having a preliminary meeting (perhaps virtual) to orient a school to the site visit. This briefing would prepare schools for their time with the VET. In addition, ATA could develop a more streamlined process for submitting documents, perhaps through an online portal or a Dropbox folder. ATA could also use that platform to share sample syllabi or other documents developed by one school that others might find beneficial. Finally, a less common but repeated critique was that ATA must ensure that all schools achieve the same rigorous standard.

- **Unity:** Another area for improvement is unity, especially as developed through ATA events and publications. Most participants affirmed ATA events as important for networking. However, numerically, unity ranked lowest among the surveyed areas. Barriers for participation included cost, distance, and language. Even though respondents appreciated the move online, time zone differences created challenges for some – especially international partners.

- **The Church:** ATA serves the church; stakeholders believe that ATA best serves the church by serving its member schools well. To do this more effectively, ATA might consider how to foster dialogue between churches and seminaries. Developing a process to listen to church leaders might inform accreditation standards and help set publication priorities.

- **Diversity:** ATA serves a broad constituency, and many respondents stressed the importance of continuing to listen to a breadth of voices as ATA develops new ideas, seeks to serve the church, and identifies topics for future events. Respondents desire consistent, timely communication across ATA services, whether related to events, engaging the church, identifying issues, developing partnerships, or strengthening organizational leadership.

- **Finances:** Regarding financial stability, most respondents affirmed the need for ATA to collect dues and charge membership fees. They also suggested continuing to develop fundraising within

Asia, reducing the need for Western support. Simultaneously, multiple respondents listed cost among their challenges, and several schools encouraged ATA to provide more scholarships (for event attendance, further studies, writing sabbaticals, etc.). One participant suggested that ATA promote economic koinonia among members in which wealthier schools help poorer ones.

Read the full report here: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1w9UX0wT8_F4dpsRFJDIBKKijdOQYyRSJ/view

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Once again, thank you to all those who participated in this survey. And thank you so much to all of you who make up our ATA community and have contributed to who we are today. We look forward to serving you better in the days, months, and years to come!

Press on in this journey with us...

Throughout the month of October, the different ministries of ATA gathered to meet to identify ATA's Strengths and Weaknesses, along with the Opportunities and Threats for the organization. After each session, each team discussed and drafted their strategic initiatives, along with the objectives for each initiative and the activities under each objective, for the next 4 years (2022- 2025).

Things are indeed moving forward with our strategic planning process. Please continue to journey with us by praying for us as we move on to the next phase of the process in the first quarter of 2022: Financial integration, ATA Board Planning Session, Final Strategic Plan, Budgets, and Projects.

Thank you so much and we look forward to seeing a stronger ATA, an ATA able to better serve its member institutions, in the years to come! ♦

Responding to the Times: the 2021 accreditation visits

Evaluation visits have been a regular part of the ministry of ATA. But when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, these visits were no longer possible. Yet the need for accreditation evaluation remained. In response to this ongoing need, ATA pursued the online evaluation of programs.

To guide this process, the CAED prepared Guidelines for Online Site Visits (OSV). Online site visits have the same procedures, good practices and criteria that are outlined for normal site visits. The Evaluation team examines the same standards and guidelines for accreditation and accompanying evidence that are seen in normal site visits.

In the OSV, at least one member of the Visiting Evaluation Team (VET), usually the local member, does an actual visit to the campus. Online video conferencing is limited to 4- 5 hours a day interspersed with breaks. Each session lasts no more than one hour. This is to reduce the screen stress and allow more time for debrief and preparation for the next day. Thus, the visit is conducted over 4-5 days instead of the usual three days.

Through the use of technology and the help of committed VET Convenors and members, ATA was able to conduct online site visits to the following institutions:

ACTS College, Singapore, January 25-29
VET: Jonathan Ro (Convenor), Rahmiati Tanudjaja, Kwa Kiem Kiok

Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary, March 15-19
VET: Jonathan Ro (Convenor), Chiu Eng Tan, Victor Sadek, Paul Cornelius

Nepal Theological College, March 22-26
VET: Arun Sarkar (Convenor), Vishwas Padole, Gambhir Rai

GETS, California, April 26-30
VET: Paul Cornelius (Convenor), Ronnie Poon, Joseph Shao

Tao Sheng Theological Seminary, Taiwan, July 19-23
VET: Jonathan Ro (Convenor), Lily Chua, Percy Deng

Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, July 26-30
VET: Jonathan Ro (Convenor), Lily Chua, Dick Eugenio

Nepal Baptist Bible College, August 2-6
VET: Arun Sarkar (Convenor), Vishwas Padole, Bal Sharma

AGST Nepal, August 9-13
VET: Arren Bennet Lawrence (Convenor), Jonathan Ro, Kumar Aryal

China Evangelical Seminary, Taiwan, August 23-27
VET: Ronnie Poon (Convenor), Jonathan Ro, Erwin Chen

Global Mission Seminary, California, September 13-17
VET: Jonathan Ro (convenor), Minfu Hsu, Joseph Tong

Asian Pastoral Institute, Singapore, October 18-22
VET: Arun Sarkar (convenor), Rahmiati Tanudjaja, Kwa Kiem Kiok

Holy Light Theological Seminary, November 8, 10-12
VET: Ronnie Poon (Convenor), James Taylor, Jean Lee

Amanat Agung Theological Seminary, Indonesia, November 8-12
VET: Jonathan Ro (Convenor), Rahmiati Tanudjaja, Sooi Ling Tan

East Asia Theological Seminary, Korea (Contact: Miyon Chung), December 6-10
VET: Jonathan Ro (Convenor), Samson Uytanlet, Lee Kyng Jik

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We praise God for technology that has allowed us to meet the need of schools for evaluation visits. More OSVs are scheduled during the first quarter of 2022. But we hope that as the pandemic situation in Asia improves, we can continue with our regular accreditation visits again.

2021 Hybrid Evaluation visits by the ATA India Chapter

Similarly, the ATA India chapter conducted Online Site Visits to evaluate three institutions; namely, India Baptist Theological Seminary, Kerala (Feb 8-12); Caleb Institute, Delhi (June 5-8), Kerala Baptist Bible College and Seminary, Kerala (July 19-21). Moreover, when travel in the country opened up before and after the second wave of Covid pandemic, physical evaluation visits were conducted to nine institutions; namely, Baptist Seminary of South India, Karnataka (March 8-10); Mt Terogvu Theological College, Nagaland (March 15-17); New India Bible Seminary, Kerala (March 18-20); Trinity Theological College, Jharkhand (April 5-7); Union College of Theology and Mission, Nagaland (Sept 13-15); Nito Theological College, Nagaland (Sept 14-16); Southern Asia Leadership Institute, Tamil Nadu (Oct 18-20); Life Transforming College International, West Bengal (Dec 6-8); Nav Bharat Bible College, Bihar (Dec 9-11).

We pray that ATA's ministry of evaluation visits will continue unhindered in the coming days. ♦



CALVIN
THEOLOGICAL
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FACULTY OPENINGS

We invite applications and nominations of qualified individuals for the following positions:

History of Christianity

With duties in the PhD program
Responsibilities to begin
July 1, 2022

Old Testament

Responsibilities to begin July 1, 2022

For more information and to submit applications or nominations, visit calvinseminary.edu/about/employment

We also anticipate openings (full-time or adjunct or affiliate faculty) in the following areas or combinations: New Testament, Philosophical Theology, Preaching/Communication, Latino/na Ministry Program Leadership and would welcome applications and nominations for these positions as well.

We want faculty members who engage students, the church, and the wider culture through teaching, mentoring, preaching and scholarship.

We especially encourage applications from women and members of ethnic minority groups.

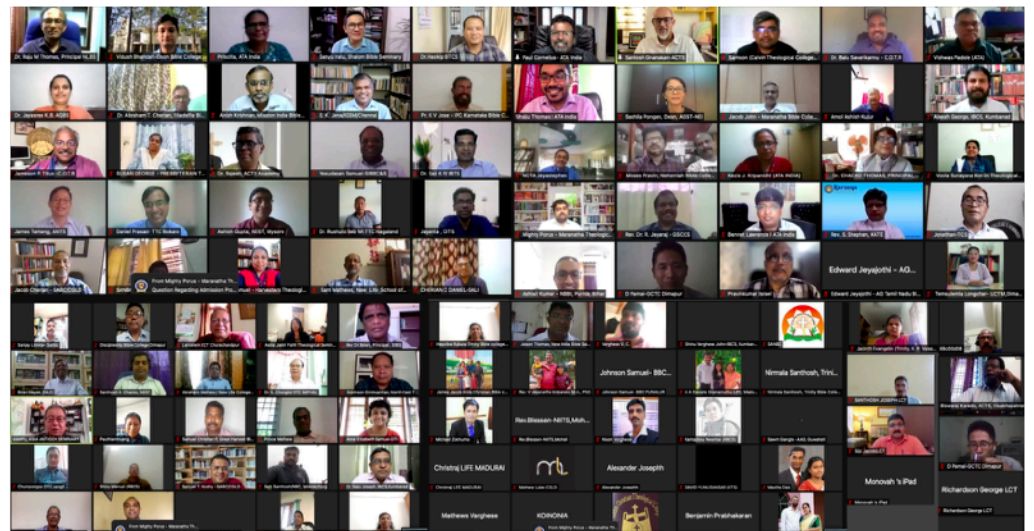
Tenure track faculty members are asked to be committed to the confessions and mission of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

ATA India's Workshop on Theological Education and Annual General Meeting



A workshop on Theological Education was conducted in Coimbatore, South India by ATA India Chapter on the 16th of Oct, 2021. Faculty from the six ATA institutions in the city of Coimbatore attended the workshop. Dr. Paul Cornelius, the Regional Secretary of ATA shared about Theological Education as *Missio Dei*. Dr. Bennet Lawrence shared about Formations in Theological Education while Rev. Shaiju Thomas shared about Online Learning. Institutions such as Bethel Faith Spark Bible College, Karunya Academy For Theological Education (KATE), New Creation Theological Academy, South Asian Institute of Leadership And Cultural Studies, (SAILCS), South India Baptist Bible College & Seminary, and Southern Asia Leadership Institute were benefited by the workshop.

Paul Cornelius presented the report of the Regional Secretary and Dr. Jacob Cherian presented the treasurer's report with the audited statement of accounts. The meeting was convened by ATA India's Chairman, Mr. Santosh Gnanakan. Apart from the regular business, this a good opportunity to address



On the other hand, ATA India's AGM was held on September 30th, 2021. Due to the Covid pandemic, the meeting was held online. Over 100 leaders of ATA institutions in India participated in the meeting. Dr.

key questions related to accreditation and online education. The participants appreciated the time to meet together despite having the meeting online. ♦



*"For unto us a Child is born, to us a Son is given,
and the government will be on His shoulders.
And He will be called Wonderful Counsellor,
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."
Isaiah 9:6*

*Have a joyous Christmas and
blessed New year 2022!*

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