



INTERNATIONAL
COUNCIL FOR OPEN AND
DISTANCE EDUCATION

Thirty Years of ICDE

**A selection of ICDE anecdotes from
*My Online Education World: 1980 - 2020***

By:

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Foreword by ICDE Secretary General, Torunn Gjelsvik

On the occasion of ICDE's 85th Anniversary in 2023, I wish you to express my sincere thanks to Morten Flate Paulsen for compiling this selection of personal anecdotes from the past 30 years.

As one of the true international pioneers in the field, Morten Flate Paulsen became the first Norwegian Professor in online education in 2004. In 1987, he was probably the first online teacher in Europe when he led the transformation of NKI from a correspondence institution to an online school. As President of EDEN from 2010-2013 and a member of ICDE's Board of Trustees and later Acting Secretary General, he has played a pivotal role in the international field of open, distance and online education and built a strong network of colleagues and partners from around the globe.

Morten has always, throughout his long career been open, sharing, and kind, and eager to learn from others. His anecdotes truly reflect all this, and comes with photos and personal impressions from meetings with international colleagues and friends, alongside with his research, pedagogical practice and participation in numerous international projects and events.

Thanks to Morten, we can all take part in his memorable journey through this enjoyable read.

Oslo, August 2023



Torunn Gjelsvik, ICDE Secretary General



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Introduction

This is a selection of anecdotes focusing on my experiences with ICDE. They are chosen from the 400 anecdotes included in [My Online Education World: 1980-2020](#) and compiled as a personal contribution to ICDE's 85th anniversary. The anecdotes follow ICDE from the 1988 World Conference in Oslo to the 2019 World Conference in Dublin.

As I made this compilation in 2023, I realised that ICDE had an enormous impact on my online education world, through dozens of ICDE events and many hundred colleagues in the ICDE network. So many good people that have become friends and inspired my online education work.

Great people who contributed to ICDE's success, inspired young scholars, facilitated collaboration around the world and shared research and experiences in our field.

Morten Flate Paulsen

Acting Secretary General of ICDE 2018 – 2019

Member of ICDE's Board of Trustees 2017 – 2018

1988 The ICDE World Conference in Oslo

In 1988, ICDE - the International Council for Open and Distance Education celebrated its 50th anniversary. And the 14th ICDE World Conference was held at the University of Oslo in August. 700 participants from 60 countries. Arranged by Norsk Forbund for Fjernundervisning - the Norwegian Association for Distance Education. The organisation in which Erling Ljoså was president, and Reidar Roll and Turid Widerø worked.

I was there, giving a presentation titled *Computer Conferencing in Distance Education: Experiences with the implementation of computer conferencing in distance education*. More spectacular was our attempt to erect the world largest tower cake at [Henie Onstad art centre](#).

Flipping through the old conference proceeding, I was surprised to see so many familiar names. Scholars whose research I have studied carefully. Colleagues I have enjoyed meeting and exchanging experiences with. Among them who have influenced my online education world are: ICDE Presidents Börje Holberg, Sir John Daniel and David Sewart. Greville Rumble, Paul Bacsich, Tony Bates, Liz Burge, Fabio Chacon, Keith Harry, Michael G. Moore, David Murphy, Som Naidu, Jason Ohler, Bruce Scriven and Armando Villaroel.

One of the papers caught my attention. Angela Castro's introduction started: In the last two years, a small silver platter called the [CD-ROM](#) which uses optical storage technology, has made inroads into academic libraries, art galleries and museums. This small disk measuring only 12.5 centimetres and made from heavily coated polycarbonate plastic which renders it extremely hard, is capable of holding information equivalent to the content of 1,500 floppy disks, or 500 average sized books.

I also found the paper I wrote with Torstein Rekkedal in the proceedings. *Computer conferencing: A breakthrough in distance learning or just another technological gadget?*



Facsimile 1. Pictures in ICDE's Report from the Fourteenth World Conference

1988 The ICDE Secretariat settled in Oslo

The Oslo conference was indeed a breakthrough for ICDE. Our late King Olav V was present along with Norway's Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland who stated that the Norwegian Government would support a permanent ICDE secretariat in Norway.

Just after the conference, the ICDE secretariat was established in Oslo with Reidar Roll as its first secretary general. Among the employees I remember meeting in the early days of ICDE, was [Turi Widerøe](#) who is recognized as the first female pilot in a major airline and [Trond Waage](#) who later became Ombudsman for Children in Norway. A few years later, I also met Ana Perona who made important contributions as ICDE's Assistant Secretary General.

1990 The ICDE World Conference in Venezuela

In November, we drove down to the Norwegian consulate in Philadelphia to obtain my visa for ICDE's 15th World Conference in Venezuela. Used the opportunity to see two of the most iconic sites in American history: Liberty Bells and Gettysburg.

Michael G. Moore took his graduate students to arrange the American Center's ICDE pre-conference workshop on research in distance education. Phil Pinder, Christopher Clark, Toni Garcia and myself in the Caribbean resort town of Macuto on Venezuela's north coast. Where we met 50 researchers from six continents. Börje Holmberg, Dan Coldeway, Liz Burge, Fabio Chacon. Wow.

From Macuto we left for the main conference in Caracas – the first ICDE World Conference situated in Latin America. 1300 participants from 60 countries attended the conference at the Universidad Nacional Abierta. The book of abstract was edited by Marian Croft who later became ICDE's first female president in 1992.

Memories that stuck were the abundance of old, gas-guzzling American cars. The reception at the Norwegian embassy with Torstein Rekkedal, Morten Sjøby and other invited delegates.

1992 The Bangkok Project

ICDE's 16th World conference in Bangkok - the same year Thailand was connected to the Internet. It was my first dual mode conference. Helped [Terry Anderson and Robin Mason to promote and organise the virtual Bangkok Project](#). Before attending the conference at the Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU) in November.

In [DEOSNEWS 2.7](#), I interviewed program chair Bruce Scriven about the conference. Reading it again during the 2021 pandemic when most international conferences struggle to go online, I see the Bangkok Project as real pioneer work - and maybe as the world's first MOOC:

"In order to expand the dialogue and information sharing associated with the ICDE XVI Congress, an innovative use of computer mediated communications is being planned. The

project will port discussions and interactions relevant to the Congress themes on a variety of Internet, UseNet, K12net and Bitnet computer networks. The project will commence one month prior to the Congress and include interactions with the delegates in Bangkok.

Softwords has donated a CoSy conferencing system to be used by delegates in Bangkok. Distance educators from around the globe can participate by accessing established or new distance education discussion lists carried on the various international networks."

In [DEOSNEWS 2.24](#), I followed up interviewing Lani Gunawardena, Torstein Rekkedal, Phyllis Olmstead, Elske Heeren, Tony Bates, Bruce Scriven and David Murphy about their conference experiences. Tony Bates reported on his efforts as moderator of one of the six tracks in the online preconference. Elske Heeren's remarks are also telling:

"As a final remark I would like to mention the six world-wide computer-conferences that have been called the "Bangkok project". I have followed some of these conferences through the DEOS conference list, and would like to conclude that the "Bangkok project" has been more than a great alternative for those who had to stay at home. I have enjoyed both the real conference and the computer conferences."



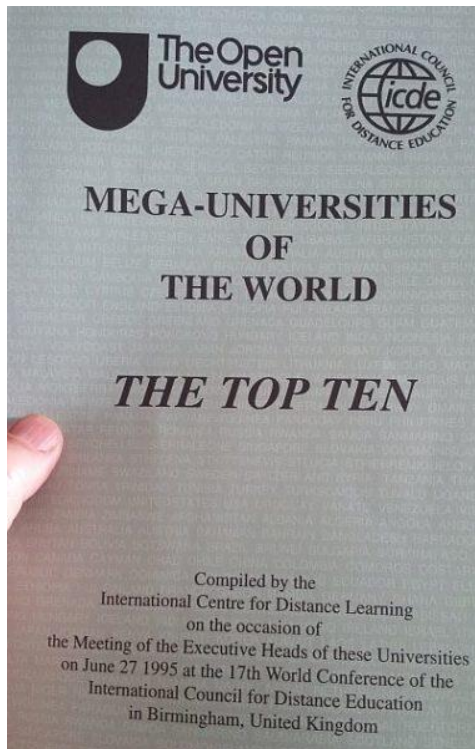
Grateful that Torstein Rekkedal found money on a tight travel budget to take me along to Bangkok. Shared a downtown hotel room with just one bed before we moved on to the university dorms with Morten Sjøby.

Had good conversations with Kjell Åge Bringsrud and Odd Rudjord. Several great tourist moments at the Grand

Palace and on Chao Phraya River. Joined a group of Norwegians on a pub-to-pub tour in one of Bangkok's go-go districts. Somewhat uncomfortable with the forthright and sparsely dressed female clientele in some of the bars. So happy to have Ingeborg Bø as my chaperon.

Enjoyed the opening reception with the floating candlelight ceremony in conjunction with the Loi Krathong festival. Gave a presentation titled *DEOS: The Distance Education Online Symposium*. Established new relations among the 800 delegates from 50 countries. Wanted to come back sometime in the future – a dream that came true when I was invited as keynote speaker for the Open University's 40th anniversary in 2019.

1995 Mega-universities in Birmingham



June 1995. The 17th ICDE World Conference in Birmingham. Hosted by the UK Open University. More than 1000 people from 80 countries attended. The conference theme: One World, Many Voices. David Sewart was ICDE President, Programme Chair and editor of the two conference books.

My conference presentation, titled *The NKI Open Electronic College*, focused on our experiences with the second-generation online education systems. The benefits and challenges of moving the college from a closed LMS environment to an open online college. A college that could be accessed via the internet and gave students access to a host of new global services.

The UK Open University admitted its first students in 1971. By the time of the conference, probably the best known and most respected distance education institution in the world. Some OU delegates even promoted a future system that could identify and support students with little progress.

The OU's vice chancellor and former ICDE president, Sir John Daniel, put every effort into the success of the conference. He also wrote the foreword to the influential report *Megauniversities of the World*. A compilation of the ten universities with a student enrolment over 100,000. Produced for the meeting of executive heads of these universities during the conference.

The ten mega-universities included were:

- China: China Central TV and Broadcasting University (CCRTVU)
- France: Centre National d'Enseignement à Distance (CNED)
- India: Indira Gandhi National Open university (IGNOU)
- Indonesia: Universitas Terbuka (UT)
- Korea: Korea National Open University (KNOU)
- South Africa: University of South Africa (UNISA)
- Spain: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED)
- Thailand: Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU)
- Turkey: Anadolu University (OEF)
- United Kingdom: Open University (OU)

Conference members spent a summer evening with entertainment in the Botanic Gardens. During a social break aboard the long canal boats, we realised that the differences between traditional education and distance education started to blur.

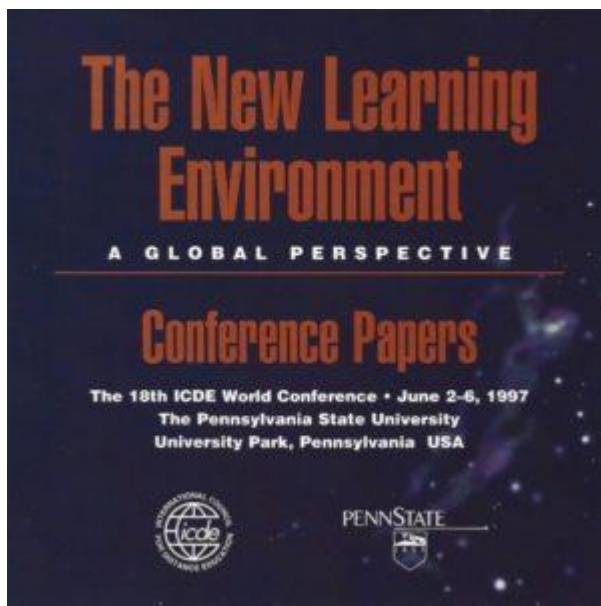
Had a memorable evening at a Birmingham pub. Met delegates who arrived through the

Chunnel that opened a year earlier. Was pleasantly surprised by international colleagues who recognized Norwegian successes of the year. That Liv Arnesen was the first woman to reach the South Pole alone. That Norwegian composer Rolf Løvland won the European Song Contest in Dublin with Secret Garden's Nocturne. That the Norwegian women's team became World Championship in soccer after beating Germany 2-0 in the final.

Discussed Princess Anne's official opening address. Overheard that she arrived driving the Rolls Royce herself with her chauffeur in the back seat. That she parked on the pavement in front of the convention centre. That a traffic warden placed a parking ticket under the windscreen wiper. That a policeman, working for the Royal Family security, advised him it might not be so wise. According to the story, the traffic warden tore the ticket into pieces and put it in a nearby wastepaper bin. An onlooker later removed the bits from the bin. True or not, he had a good story for the Birmingham pub.

Leaving the pub, I told my company that I should return to my Lichfield Challenger 5 tent. A bargain from an outlet near the hotel. Checked that all parts were faultless by pitching it inside the hotel room. The room maid's reaction more than confirmed her prejudice about Norwegian men as outdoor maniacs.

1997 ICDE's 18th World Conference at Penn State



Returned to Happy Valley in June. For the 18th ICDE World Conference at Penn State University. Following the theme: *The New Learning Environment, A Global Perspective*.

The welcome ceremony was held in the main hall of the huge Bryce Jordan Center. Welcome remarks were given by Penn State President Graham B. Spanier, ICDE President Armando Rocha Trindade, ICDE Secretary General Reidar Roll and Program Chair Gary Miller.

Proud that Gary was my thesis advisor. Hoped he was pleased with my latest thesis developments which I presented at the

conference under the title *Teaching methods and techniques for computer-mediated communication*. In a moderated panel with Sugata Mitra, Janet Mei-Chuen Lin and Douglas Shale.

Thinking of my thesis research, I joined a session on research and evaluation led by Michael G. Moore and Alan Tait at the Penn State Conference Center Hotel. Met Ingeborg Bø who gave a presentation about *Quality Guidelines and Standards for the Standing Conference of Presidents*. And my dear Norwegian colleagues Monica Johannesen and Leikny Øgrim at a College Avenue Restaurant. Toasting for Liz Burge who grabbed the microphone during the

closing ceremony and asked if a woman could stand on the main stage.

Starstruck by talking to Nicholas Negroponte after his keynote. But even the most renowned experts appreciate positive comments after their presentations. The visionary founder of the MIT Media Lab and my favourite columnist in Wired presented the new electronic book concept. Fascinated since I read his printed book *Being Digital* with great interest. The influential 1995 publication revolving around digitalization of media and the shift “**from atoms to bits**”. Confirmed my conviction that all educational content could be created, stored and distributed digitally on the web.

So appropriate that we received the conference papers on the CD-ROM in the picture. Probably my first conference CD.

1998 ICDE think tank in Barcelona



In December, I represented NKI at a think tank in Barcelona. Invited as one of twenty-five key players in virtual university development from around the world. To discuss the potential of an ICDE Virtual University. Maybe inspired by the African Virtual University (AVU). A pan-African effort to create an open and affordable distance learning institution. Initiated as a World Bank project in 1997. Developed into an autonomous institution after it was handed over to African governments in 2003.

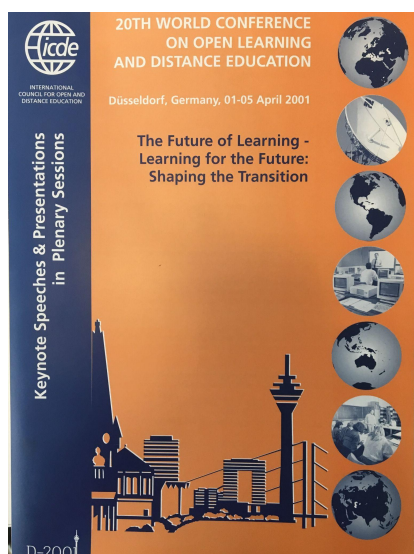
The workshop was hosted by President Armando Rocha-Trindade at Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (OUC). A pioneer open university, established in 1994, which still claims to be the world's first online university. We met in OUC's beautiful Rectorat Villa and stayed at Plaça d'Espanya near the Magic Fountain of Montjuïc and Palau Nacional.

The workshop did not have any tangible results, but I remember an excellent dinner with more than enough wine and several international leaders in the field. Among them: Secretary General Reidar Roll and President Armando Rocha-Trindade representing ICDE. Presidents from several prominent open universities in Asia. Helmut Hoyer from Deutsche Fernuniversität, Dominique Abrioux from Athabasca University and Gary Miller representing the World Campus at Penn State.

I was impressed by the Norwegian Secretary General. How he easily socialised with university leaders from around the world. Gave eloquent and impromptu speeches in English. Knew the formal protocols and mastered the English language. Competencies I wanted to learn.

Returning home early the next morning. In a mute taxi to the airport with Reidar Roll and Ana Perona. I realised that an early morning headache could be part of the learning experience.

2001 The ICDE World Conference in Düsseldorf



In April, ICDE's 20th World Conference was hosted in Düsseldorf by the German FernUniversität. Located in the Düsseldorf Congress Centre on the banks of the river Rhine.

My first visit abroad after Norway on March 25 became a member of Schengen. The European legislation making travelling easier to all European countries except from the UK, Switzerland and the Balkans. Substituting internal border controls within the Schengen Area with stricter controls at the external borders.

The conference was titled *The Future of Learning- Learning for the Future: Shaping the Transition* and focused on the convergence of open, distance and virtual learning.

1200 participants from 85 countries could choose between 150 conference sessions, accompanying exhibitions and a typical German conference dinner on Rhine River boats. The conference also provided an internet café since Internet access was hard to find in hotels and conference venues. However, something important started to happen after an alliance of vendors in 1999 decided to collaborate on the IEEE802.11 wireless communication standard. A standard they termed WiFi.

I was one of the many members of the International Programme Committee chaired by Helmut Hoyer, Rektor of the FernUniversität. Recognized for the first time a presentation about Learning Objects and the SCORM e-learning standard that was introduced the year before. Heard about a free online encyclopaedia that was launched in January. Developed by a community of volunteers working for Wikipedia.

Observed that most papers still focused on traditional distance education. Read the collection of nine papers about Student Services at the UK Open University. Written by David Sewart, Mary Thorp, Greville Rumble and others. Eighty pages including tentative conclusions that *"...web-based courses have the potential to be more cost efficient than television based distance learning courses, but are less efficient than radio or print-based courses"*.

So, it was nice to be on a discussion panel with representatives of some of the few institutions having extensive experiences with: *Converting Print-based Distance Education Programs to Online Distance Education Programs*.

In the panel, Dominique Abrioux, Peter Cookson and Alan Davis represented Athabasca University. Jocelyn Calvert from Deakin University and Bruce King from University of South Australia presented Australian experiences. My mentor and supervisor Torstein Rekkedal

and I shared our NKI findings. Findings we already had presented in the IRRODL article: [The NKI Internet College: A Review of 15 Years Delivery of 10,000 Online Courses](#).



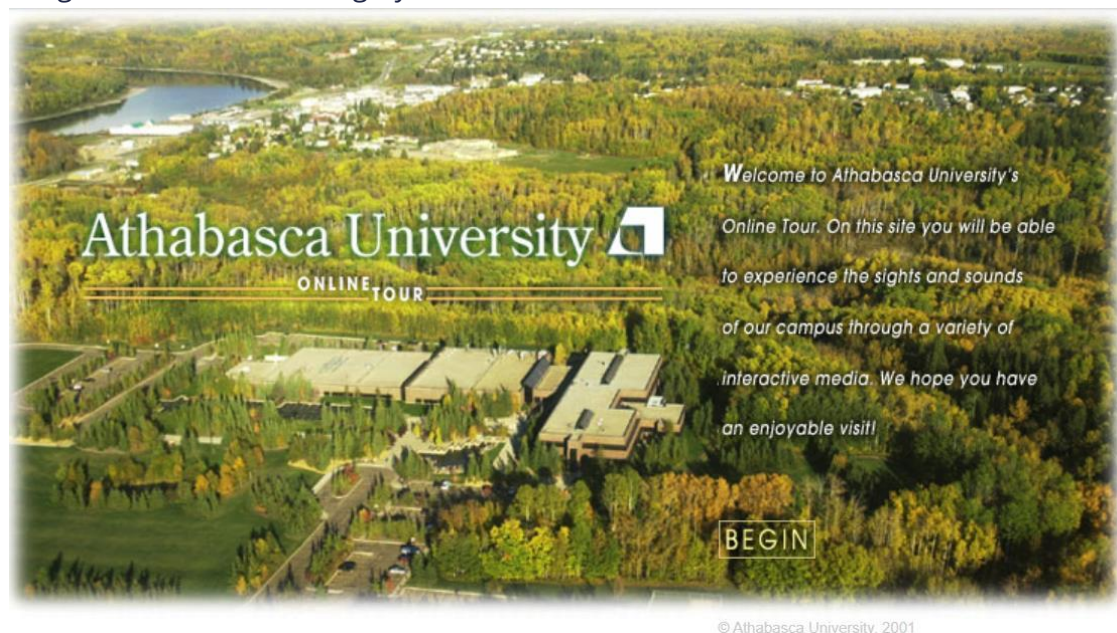
My most memorable conference moment came when Torstein Rekkedal was awarded the ICDE Prize of Excellence for Lifelong Contribution to the field of open learning and distance education. He was the third person in ICDE's history to receive this prestigious prize. The two previous recipients were Otto Peters and Börje Holmberg, and I was able to convene the three of them for a photo session.

2005 Edmonton, Athabasca and ICDE

Flew to Edmonton in May. The capital city of Alberta. The Canadian province powered by its oil and gas industry. Learned from a Norwegian oil engineer in the neighbour seat that tar sand and fracking were controversial terms.

Invited by Terry Anderson who took me on a guided tour to West Edmonton Mall. One of the world's largest. With hotels in the mall. Where couples spent their honeymoons. Seriously?

Athabasca University. Canada's Open University. I knew the campus from the online tour in the screenshot and finally got the opportunity to visit it in Athabasca. A remote campus — in a town with a population of 3000. With students at a distance and many faculty members living in Edmonton and Calgary.



Screenshot 1. A 2005 screenshot of Athabasca University online tour

The drive from Edmonton took about two hours north on highway 2. Arrived in time to give a lunch presentation for the staff about: Collaboration in *Independent Study - the NKI*

experience. Joined the dinner party honouring Dominique Abrioux when he ended his ten-year term as President of Athabasca University. He was also ICDE's Vice-President for North America. Frits Pannekoek took over as the new president of Athabasca University in June.

At the cursor moment, it is worthwhile to notice AU's footprint on ICDE. Since Dominique Abrioux was ICDE's Vice-President for North America and the later AU Presidents Frits Pannekoek and Neil Fassina both became ICDE presidents. Three ICDE notabilities I met several times.

2012 SCOP back with EDEN in Lisbon

LISBON SCOP 2013

LEADERSHIP FOR CHANGE
| IN A TIME OF OPENNESS

LISBON | 27 | 30 NOVEMBER 2013

20 YEARS AFTER SCOP IS RETURNING TO LISBON TO CELEBRATE AND REINVENT ITSELF

67 DAYS LEFT

HOME

ABOUT SCOP 2013

PROGRAMME

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

REGISTRATION

CONTACTS



Welcome from Professor Tian Belawati, President of ICDE

This year we are very fortunate to have the opportunity to hold the ICDE Standing Conference of Presidents (SCOP) in the place where it all started 20 years ago, Lisbon, Portugal ... [more >](#)



Welcome from Professor Paulo Dias, Rector of Universidade Aberta

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to the 2013 International Council for Open and Distance Education Standing Conference of Presidents under the topic of Leadership for Change in a Time of Openness... [more >](#)



Welcome from Professor António Teixeira, President of EDEN

I'm delighted to invite you to a memorable event which will address the most pressing discussion of the moment: Leadership for change in a time of openness and increasing societal impact of online education ... [more >](#)

ORGANIZED BY:



Found it appropriate to check in to hotel Estoril EDEN. To attend the Presidents' Summit in Lisbon. Glad our efforts had resulted in closer connections between ICDE and EDEN. One

tangible result was that EDEN substituted its biannual open classroom conference with the joint president's summit.

So, the Presidents' Summit 2013 was hosted by Universidade Aberta at the Communications Museum in Lisbon from 27-30 November. As part of the university's 25th anniversary celebrations. Organised in collaboration with EDEN and ICDE. The overarching theme was Leadership for Change in a Time of Openness.

It was ICDE's twentieth Standing Conference of Presidents (SCOP) since Universidade Aberta hosted the very first in 1993. Summits allowing Rectors, Presidents and CEOs of open universities and distance education institutions to share experiences. And influence the global education agenda.

High level and prestigious meetings. Initially staged by the impressive honorary committee for the second SCOP Summit in 1994:

- Gro Harlem Brundtland, Prime Minister of Norway
- Jacques Delors, President of the European Union
- Nelson Mandela, President of the Republic of South Africa
- Frederico Mayor, Director General of UNESCO
- Mario Soares, President of Portugal
- Antonio Ruberti, Commissioner for Science, Research and Development of the EU.

SCOP meetings since inception

| Year | Host | Place |
|------|---|---------------------------------|
| 2011 | The State University of New York Empire State College | New York City, USA |
| 2010 | University of South Africa | Pretoria, South Africa |
| 2009 | Universitat Oberta de Catalunya | Barcelona, Spain |
| 2008 | Shanghai TV University | Shanghai, China |
| 2007 | Open Universiteit Nederland | Heerlen, The Netherlands |
| 2006 | Lillehammer University College | Lillehammer, Norway |
| 2005 | Fernuniversität in Hagen | Cologne, Germany |
| 2003 | Universitat Oberta de Catalunya | Barcelona, Spain |
| 2002 | University of South Africa | Pretoria, South Africa |
| 2001 | Fernuniversität in Hagen | Neuss, Germany |
| 2000 | Brazilian Association for Distance Education | São Paulo, Brazil |
| 1999 | ICDE | Vienna, Austria |
| 1998 | University of Southern Queensland | Noosa, Queensland, Australia |
| 1997 | Universidade Aberta | Lisbon, Portugal |
| 1996 | Lillehammer University College | Lillehammer, Norway |
| 1995 | The Open University UK | Birmingham, UK |
| 1994 | The State University of New York | Saratoga Springs, New York, USA |
| 1993 | Universidade Aberta | Lisbon, Portugal |

SCOP 2012 will be held 12-15 November in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, hosted by Hamdan Bin Mohammed e-University. This will be the first occasion on which the SCOP meeting takes place in the Middle East.

Source: The ICDE Membership Pack 2011 at <https://issuu.com/icde/docs>

We were welcomed by UAb Rector Paulo Dias, ICDE President Tian Belawati and EDEN President António Teixeira. Among the prominent speakers and session chairs were Alan Tait, Tony Bates and António Teixeira. Along with Mandla S. Makhanya, Belinda Tynan and Tian Belawati. ICDE celebrities I met for the first time. People I had no idea would soon become so important to me.

The social program included a reception at the Lisbon Town Hall as well as tours to the Fado Museum and Sintra. And a group picture including many good friends and familiar faces.



I'm hiding behind Rory McGreal and Tony Bates. Among the people in the foreground are Fred Nickolmann, Ingeborg Bø, António Teixeira, Maxim Jean-Louis, Alan Bruce, Torhild Slåtto, and Mandla Makhanya. Further back Lina Morgado, Maria J. Spilker, Debora Arnold, Lisa Marie Blaschke and Costas Tsolakidis.

One noteworthy outcome from the summit was The ICDE Policy Forum 2013 report. Titled [Directions and Challenges for government and institutions when post-secondary tertiary education moves into the MOOC territory: public policies and institutional strategies in the digital learning age.](#)

Still proud the report was authored by my Aberta students: Angelina Costa, Cecília Tomás, Maria J. Spilker, Paula Cardoso, Paula Silva and Sandra Brás.

2017 Joining the ICDE Board of Trustees

ICDE President Mandla Makhanya joined us via Zoom from UNISA in South Africa. As we met February 15, 2017, in the office ICDE shared with FUN at Lilleaker in Oslo. When Helmut Hoyer and I formally took over as chair and vice chair of ICDE's Board of Trustees. After David Sewart, former Director of Student Services at the Open University in the UK. And Svein O Haaland, former Rector of Lillehammer University College in Norway.

Our task was to monitor the conduct of the Secretary General and the members of the Executive Committee. Together with board members from three continents. Tian Belawati, Stavros Xanthopoulos and Meg Benke. As a Norwegian, I had a special obligation to follow ICDE's operation as a company supported by the Norwegian government and registered in Norway.

An honour and an interesting opportunity to get thorough insight in ICDE's work and strategic documents. An unpaid assignment I accepted when I heard the workload primarily was to write the annual appraisal report.

I later realised how much I underestimated the workload and responsibility.



ICDE, International Council for Open and Distance Education

15. februar 2017 · 🌐



A new Board of Trustees for ICDE have been elected, and a hand over meeting from outgoing to incoming Chair and Vice Chair was conducted in Oslo earlier this month. A warm thank you to outgoing members and a warm welcome to the new Board of Trustees! <https://goo.gl/F4y3fu>



From left in the picture: Board members Morten Flate Paulsen, Svein O Haaland, David Sewart and Helmut Hoyer. Secretariat members Caroline Seville, Gard Titlestad and Torunn Gjelsvik.

2018 ICDE Board in my Oslo winter wonderland

The ICDE Executive Committee met in Oslo January 22 and 23, 2018. At the Lysebu conference centre. Close to Nordmarka, my childhood's precious winter sport refuge. Where

we had to ski more than 300 km in one season to get the children's gold badge in cross country skiing.

Reminded me of the ICDE dinner I attended at the nearby Holmenkollen Park hotel on April 28, 2014. Concluding an ICDE executive meeting and international workshop on policy for Open Educational Resources (OER) and less used languages – such as Norwegian. Nine partners from eight countries summed up results from the [LangOER project](#) – in English. Enjoyed interesting talks with Maxim Jean-Louis. Wondered if he was interested in hosting an ICDE conference in Canada. Laughed when the sommelier retorted “MAGNUM” when Maxim asked which wine he preferred.

Back to the 2018 meeting. Gard Titlestad and Torunn Gjelsvik represented the ICDE Secretariat. Helmut Hoyer and I the Board of Trustees. We met the new ICDE Board as Belinda Tynan was constituted President. Met her, Neil Fassina and Hyzel Rymer for the first time. Said hello to Tolly Mbwette as he joined in via video from Tanzania.

Realised that Gard had arranged a horse sleigh surprise when we heard the jingle bells. A memorable and cold experience. With beautiful views over Oslo in a frozen winter wonderland. Maybe not so much appreciated by people living closer to the equator. At least, I came home with a better understanding of the geographical and cultural challenges ICDE faced as a truly global organisation. And new insight for the Board of Trustees' appraisal report.



2018 In Genova with EDEN and ICDE

Helmut Hoyer called me several times in Genova. As I attended EDEN's annual conference in June. Asked if I could take over a period until ICDE could find a new permanent Secretary General. Since Gard Titlestad was about to retire.

A challenging position to hold on top of my responsibilities in NooA. But realised that it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. And that few others had followed ICDE more closely since the secretariat was established in Oslo in 1988.

So, I spent the conference days contemplating the future. Consulted Alan Tait. And decided to accept if I could serve until the end of 2019. To host the upcoming ICDE World Conference.

The EDEN's 27th annual conference at the University of Genoa was organised with the Italian Education and Media Conference (EMEM). The theme was: *Exploring the Micro, Meso and Macro - Navigating between dimensions in the digital learning landscape.*

Making me reflect on the huge differences between my two priorities NooA and ICDE.

Remember communicating with EDEN President Airina Volungeviciene, Vice President Sandra Kucina Softic, Andras Szűcs, António Teixeira and Alan Tait about a new EDEN Fellow council. That the conference dinner took place at the huge aquarium with spectacular views of the old Genova Port. And the discussions about blockchain technology in education. Spurred by a recent article in Forbes titled [Imagining a Blockchain University](#).

The article quoted Joshua Broggi, the founder of Woolf Development, a platform startup that would use distributed ledger technology to remove higher education intermediaries, support decentralised governance and ensure data security. Broggi claimed that they would use blockchain to manage custodianship of student tuition, enforce regulatory compliance for accreditation and automate administrative processes. Compared the platform to Uber for students and Airbnb for academics.

Most memorable was the establishment of the EDEN Fellows Council. And the EDEN Fellow's meeting. In which I gave a short presentation including this statement:

I'm worried that **open and distance education becomes less flexible as mainstream education becomes more flexible.**

Traditional distance and online institutions are merged with, or acquired by, larger mainstream institutions that intend to become more flexible. The result is often that the smaller institutions must adapt to the more rigid culture and systems of the larger institutions. National quality assurance schemes and agencies establish schemes for online education that are founded on not so flexible mainstream education.

Headed home from Genova with the train Nice. Along the beautiful Riviera di Ponente. The coast of



the setting sun. Visited a former colleague in the picturesque town of Imperia and spent a night in Ventimiglia. An experience that increased my desire to explore more of the wonderful Italian coasts.

2018 Commemorating Ingeborg Bø

The Bryn church was filled with people to commemorate Ingeborg Bø on August 16. Exactly 30 years after she hosted ICDE's World Conference in Oslo.

I was nervous. Had accepted to say some words in the church. On behalf of three organisations close to Ingeborg's heart. Flexible education Norway, EDEN and ICDE. Three associations I entered in her footsteps.

Emotional since she was my most trusted ICDE and EDEN mentor. As I followed her battle with ALS. The gruesome disease my father struggled with. So, when my children grew up without grandparents, I wished we had a grandmother like her.

The obituary I posted at ICDE's website included the following:

Obituary: Ingeborg Bøe

It is with great sadness that we receive the news that Ingeborg Bøe died on Monday August 6th after a long battle with ALS.



Ingeborg was born on the Bryn Farm in Oslo, Norway on November 13, 1939. She studied languages at the University of Oslo and spent one year as an exchange student in Oregon.

Ingeborg Bøe had been active in the field of online, open, flexible and technology-enhanced learning in Norway and internationally for over 30 years. Throughout these years, she brought enthusiasm and energy to the field in various positions at several institutions.

We are amongst many who will remember her radiant, inclusive and caring personality. She was my most trusted mentor when I needed professional advice on ICDE and EDEN.

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She served as a member of the ICDE Board of Trustees and Chair of the ICDE Election Committee for over a decade and was key in the reorganisation of ICDE in the new millennium.

She was also a member of different boards of directors in other institutions for adult and distance education as well as several national and international committees. Ingeborg was a member of the Board of Directors of the European Foundation for Quality in

E-learning (EFQUEL) and a member of the Awarding Body UNIQUE, the Quality Label for the Use of ICT in Higher Education.

From 2003 to 2007, she served as President of the European Distance and E-learning Network (EDEN). After that, many of us feel that we belong to the EDEN family. In 2007 she was granted the title EDEN Senior Fellow.

Ingeborg spent 15 years as the Executive Director of the Norwegian Association for Distance Flexible Education (NADE), now FUN. She was also a member of the international editorial board of the journal LLine, Lifelong learning in Europe and speaker and member of programme committees at several national and international conferences.

Her professional life was dedicated to the field of open and distance education in different positions. She started her career at NKS, one of the biggest distance education institutions in Norway.

In recognition of her many years of exceptional service to distance education, her broad expertise in the field, her enthusiasm in fulfilling her positions and her dedication to the field, she was in 2009 awarded the Norwegian King's Medal of Merit in silver for service in the fields of art, science and industry and for outstanding public service.

After retiring she became the President of Seniornett Norway and ran her own consulting practice. After being diagnosed with ALS, she helped share information and knowledge about the disease.

Her progressive, optimistic and sensible approach helped shape ICDE as we see it today. She has remained a respected and treasured member of our professional community and a true symbol of ICDE. Her positive spirit, sparkly personality, and contagious energy will be missed and remembered with the fondest of memories.

2018 Celebrating ICDE's 80 years, 200 institutions and 15 million students

"Can we celebrate ICDE's anniversary?" The first questions I remember from my young colleagues when I started as acting secretary general of ICDE in July. Maybe they had heard that celebration is one of my four favourite online education words?

So, we searched the archives and published some ICDE history on the web. Invited our FuN colleagues for cake on August 23. To celebrate the 80th anniversary of ICDE's first world conference. A conference that attracted 87 delegates from 5 countries. To the Empress Hotel on 22, 23 and 24 of August 1938 at Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. ICDE was then called ICCE (International Council for Correspondence Education).



ICDE, International Council for Open and Distance Education

23. august 2018 · 🌐



Happy 80th Anniversary ICDE from the Secretariat and Fleksibel utdanning Norge colleagues here in Oslo!



From left: Jean-Baptiste Milon, Snorre Qveim-Leikanger, Georgia Soares, Petter Kjendlie (FuN), Caroline Seville, Morten Flate Paulsen, Anaïs Røed Malbrand, Ebba Køber (FuN), Kari Olstad (FuN) and Torunn Gjelsvik (FuN).

The anniversary was a welcome opportunity to focus on something pleasant after a tough period for the secretariat. Since I needed to secure additional staff and competence as three out of seven employees either retired, moved on to a new employer or started maternity leave. My impression was that the rest considered quitting.

So, my priority was to motivate the staff to continue and secure more people. I prolonged the short time contracts, engaged Julie Schiering and Rita Chan as new Advisers. Alan Tait and Torhild Slåtto as special advisers in 20% positions. So, I had ten people in the secretariat. Nearly all working part-time on short term contracts. The number of full-time equivalent employees in 2018 was 5.7. In addition, we had contracts with third-party providers for accounting, auditing and ICT and much volunteer work contributed by members.

Helmut Hoyer's support as Chair of the Board of Trustees (BoT) was crucial. I really appreciated that Jan-Atle Toska accepted to become vice-chair of the BoT. And that Jens Uwe Korten was appointed as Chair of the Election Committee after Ingeborg Bøe. The other committee members were Marci Powell and Barney Pityana.

Other ICDE members engaged in a host of activities around the world. Noteworthy examples were the development of these three reports:

1. *Alternative digital credentials*
2. *Global guidelines for ethics in learning analytics*
3. *Global quality in online, open, flexible and technology enhanced education - analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.*

2018 also marked 30 years with support from the Norwegian Government and a permanent secretariat in Oslo. As a part of the anniversary celebration, we offered free institutional memberships in the fall. So, at the end of the year, we reached 250 individual members and welcomed the University of Bergen as our 200th member institution. According to our estimates, these institutions together had about 15 million students.

In 2018, the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research decided that ICDE from 2019 should apply for financial support from and report to the new Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education (Diku). The Ministry's guidelines for ICDE support stated that the grant should promote international work within distance and flexible learning. Further, ICDE should contribute to expanding contacts with Norwegian educational institutions and authorities to give them access to ICDE's expertise and networks in international distance learning.

2018 The Open Education Leadership Summit in Paris

Yellow vests. Required for motorists in case of emergency. And a highly visible and available uniform for the French populist grassroots movement. Demanding lower fuel prices, economic justice and political reforms. During the Open Education Leadership Summit at *Le Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers (CNAM)* in Paris, December 3-4.

A summit ICDE organised in collaboration with the Open Education Consortium (OEC), the French Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MESRI) and the French Ministry of National Education and Youth (MENJ).

The conference steering committee had a networking meeting with ICDE and OEC board members at Bistrot Renaissance on Sunday. A nice evening and a welcome first opportunity to meet face-to-face with Paul Stacey, Perrine de Coëtlogon and Jacques Dang. After extensive online activities during the conference planning. And my frustrations related to the French bureaucracy. Solved with the good work of Caroline Seville and Snorre Qveim-Leikanger.

At the opening session I welcomed about 200 leaders and senior managers from 50 countries. Introduced distinguished colleagues from the conference organisers: ICDE President Belinda Tynan, OEC President Sophie Touzé, strategic counsel for digitalisation at MESRI Mehdi Gharsallah and chief digital officer at Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers (CNAM) Thierry Koscielniak.

The summit had two concurrent strands of activities: thematic keynotes and roadmap creation. The thematic keynotes focused on various forms of open education. Including Open Educational Resources (OER), MOOCs, open access, open science, open data and open-source software. OER recommendations, blockchains, micro-skills and open badges.

OEC's executive director Paul Stacey explained the roadmap procedures (See www.oeconsortium.org/2019/01/oels2018/). And the participants joined in vivid collaborative groups to create thirteen roadmaps. Roadmaps that illustrated open education leaders' areas of interest at the moment:

1. MOOCs – Peace and Conflict Resolution
2. Sustainable Development Goals
3. Open Education Practices & Pedagogy
4. Nursing OER
5. Open Recognition & Badging
6. Use of OER in Rural Locations & Global South
7. Open Education Implementation & Culture Change
8. Research on Open Education
9. Open Education Policy & Advocacy
10. Open Assessments
11. OER Coaching
12. Moodle.net
13. Multilingual OER and OER for Language Acquisition

The cocktail dinner was located at Musée des Arts et Métiers. CNAM's Museum of Arts and Crafts. Displaying an original version of the Foucault pendulum, the original model of the Statue of Liberty and Blaise Pascal's first mechanical calculator. An interesting venue well suited for social networking. To be reminded that the French football team won the 2018 world championship in Russia. To be intrigued by Belinda Tynan's interest in graffiti. Reminiscenced by Som Naidu about our common history in open education and the changing interpretation of the term open. And reminded of my limited knowledge about online education in Africa through colourful conversations with Tolly Mbvette. The ICDE Board Member from Tanzania who passed on too early in July 2020.

ICDE has a partnership with UNESCO, dating back to the 1960's. So, it was a welcome opportunity to visit the UNESCO House at rue Miollins with Belinda and Caroline. Belinda ordered an Über taxi and reminded us that we needed passports to enter the UNESCO House. The visit also included a brief meeting with Trine Jensen at the International Association of Universities (IAU).



From top left: Paul Stacey, Belinda Tynan, Sophie Touzé and Morten Flate Paulsen. This picture shows one slide from Ebba Ossiannilsson's presentation about the summit at ICDE's session on Online Educa 2018.

2018 Potsdam Portfolio

Travelled with my young and bright ICDE colleagues Snorre Qveim-Leikanger and Jean-Baptiste Milon to Potsdam on December 13. To meet with the EPICA partners at Seminaris SeeHotel. And discuss our Strategic Partnership for Co-Design of an Innovative and Scalable ePortfolio.

A project co-funded by EU's Horizon 2020 programme. Including businesses, organisations and universities in Europe and Africa: ICDE, OUC, MyDocumenta, ICWE, the African Virtual University, the Open University of Tanzania, Makerere University and Maseno University.

Project coordinator Jean-Baptiste Milon started the meeting with a progress update since the previous Tanzania meeting in July 2018. Rebecca Stromeyer welcomed us to Potsdam. And I was introduced to the competent, devoted and cheerful participants.

It was nice to reconnect with Ildikó Sünci Mázár who was appointed as member of EPICA's External Advisory Board. And I had a lot of fun and interesting talks with Marcelo Maina, Rebecca Stromeyer, Edephonc Nfuka and Marilena Cabral. Eager to learn more about the African Virtual University from Marilena. And about Rebecca's entrepreneurial work with ICWE, Online Educa Berlin and eLearning Africa. An important annual conference I unfortunately have never visited. Even though the first conference took place in 2006 at the UNECA Headquarters in Addis Ababa.

The project used an ePortfolio solution developed by MyDocumenta. And explained an academic ePortfolio as a digital collection of a student's course-related work. For example, essays, posters, photographs, videos, artwork, and other aspects of a student's life. Such as volunteer experiences, employment history and extracurricular activities. ePortfolios should be online and support student learning. The student should decide who can view the ePortfolio and what artefacts get added. ePortfolios should remain the student's property after finishing university.

We had some spare time to visit the Potsdamer Weihnachtsmarkt and the Sans Souci Palace. A rococo palace built by the Prussian King Frederick the Great. A summer palace which French name translates to – without worries. A place the king could escape the pomp and ceremony of the royal court. Enjoy his personal taste for design, decoration and homosexuality.

Returning home, the constant notifications from my mobile phone made me realise how important the free WhatsApp Messenger had become in Africa. Allowing the project members to send text and voice messages, make voice and video calls. To share images, documents and user locations.

You can read more about the EPICA project at <https://www.epica-initiative.com/>

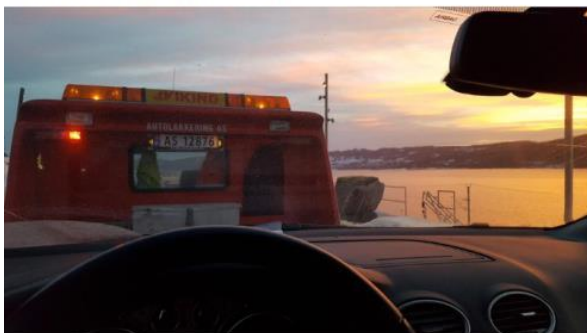
3rd EPICA Consortium Meeting, December 2018, Germany

It was attended by representatives from all partner organisations of the consortium: ICDE (NO), MyDocumenta (ES), Open University of Tanzania (TZ), Maseno University (KE), Makerere University (UG), Open University of Catalonia (ES), the African Virtual University (KE) and ICWE (GE).



2019 Lifelong Learning in Lillehammer

Morten Flate Paulsen
13. februar 2019 · 🌐
"Driving" home from Lillehammer with a flat tyre.



Drove home from Lillehammer February 13. Along Norway's largest lake. Lake Mjøsa. On the truck bed of a rescue car. With a flat tyre.

Had welcomed over 300 delegates from more than 30 countries to the [Lillehammer Lifelong Learning Summit](#). On behalf of ICDE. Together with Kathrine Skretting. Rector of INN – Inland Norway University of Applied Science. Exactly 25 years after the opening of the successful Lillehammer Winter Olympics.

Recalled ICDE president and conference chair Neil Fassina's eloquent introductions to panels and keynote presentations. Asha Kanwar's and Diana Laurillard's keynotes. Caroline

Sevilles' video interviews with prominent delegates. Informal conversations with Tian Belawati and Alastair Creelman. With George Ubachs about EADTU and its virtual mobility matrix.



Appreciated the excellent Lillehammer Conference team: Mette Villand, Brit Svoen, Yvonne Fritze, Per Eriksson and Jens Uwe Korten.

Wondered if NordFlexOn would take off after the inaugural meeting at the conference. Become a successful Nordic network for online education? Or another disappointment in my quest to foster Nordic cooperation? Anyway, ICDE volunteered to host it from 2019 to 2023.

Impressed by editor Ebba Køber's efforts to present current matters on flexible education in Norway in the conference issue of [Synkron](#). Focusing on artificial intelligence, virtual mobility and quality in online education.

Froze in the cold, sparkling and magic moments from Hunderfossen Winter Park. Esperava que Carlos Alberto Oliveira e sua delegação brasileira aproveitassem o inverno na Noruega. Hoped that Tian Belawati appreciated visiting the Snow Hotel, Ice Bar, Ice Cathedral and the Fairytale Restaurant. All close to the Olympic Hafjell Ski Arena.

Morten Flate Paulsen
12. februar 2019 · 🌐

It was an honour and a pleasure to welcome Norway's Prime Minister Erna Solberg to our conference today. As a Norwegian, I was both proud of and impressed by her excellent key note presentation.



.. Glad I dared to sing Happy Birthday. From the podium. With a microphone in my hand. Far beyond my comfort zone. To follow Ann Tait's secret request. Surprise Alan on his anniversary!

Recalled welcoming Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg. Appreciated her keynote presentation. Stating that lifelong learning is a human right not a privilege. That flexible learning solutions are essential to the development of inclusive and sustainable societies.

"We cannot accept that people become outdated," she declared. "Continuous education is important in a time of major changes in the way we work. Many people will

have changed jobs and even careers as a result of digitalisation in society. Both in order to keep the competitive edge and to prevent anyone from being excluded from work life, it is important to succeed in lifelong learning."

Glad we were able to settle [The Lillehammer Lifelong Learning Road Map for Lifelong Employability](#). Including these three levels of recommendations:

Governments and intergovernmental organisations should:

1. support lifelong learning opportunities for all, for personal development, for social inclusion, for sustainability for society and business
2. advocate, implement, monitor and increase incentives for lifelong learning
3. establish a system for cooperation between employees, employers and educational institutions for building a lifelong learning ecosystem (including organisational, financial and methodological infrastructures)
4. promote regional and global partnerships
5. focus on developing the human capabilities needed to thrive in a sustainable digital age.

The education sector and public/private enterprises should:

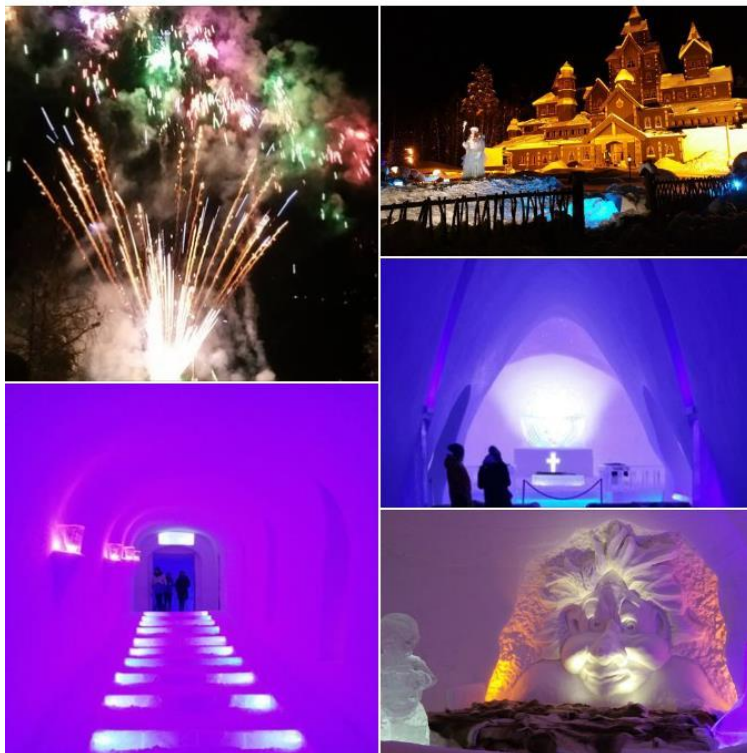
1. prepare educators for the digital world of work and study, including support to innovate collaboratively and sharing pedagogic designs to support diverse learners
2. provide seamless pathways between formal non-formal and informal learning, for recognition, credentialing and creation of educational resources
3. establish financially viable continuing education processes for employers and society
4. use technologies that are relevant, flexible, accessible and affordable for all
5. promote accessible lifelong learning opportunities that can be applied across cultures, languages, ages and abilities
6. acknowledge and recognise different accreditation systems.

Educators should:

1. ensure that learners feel that their competences, skills and their knowledge are useful and life-enhancing
2. apply distant, online education and blended approaches designed to encourage critical and empowered thinkers, consumers and citizens, reflecting the global human experience
3. integrate vulnerable groups as part of the lifelong process to be, to know, to do and to live together
4. encourage learners to become self-motivated and self-confident to develop their knowledge, soft skills and digital literacy
5. facilitate peer-to-peer learning and interactions, and at the same time develop personal learning environments (PLE) and personal educational networks (PEN).

Morten Flate Paulsen
 11. februar 2019 · 🌐

Some magic moments tonight from Hunderfossen Winter Park with colleagues at the ICDE Lillehammer Lifelong Learning Summit.



2019 UKOU's fiftieth anniversary celebration

I was invited to a black-tie dinner hosted by Baroness Martha Lane Fox in London on May 16, 2019. To represent ICDE at Open University's 50th anniversary. Along with students, teachers, stakeholders and celebrities. So, I had the opportunity to meet Sir John Daniel. Hear David Attenborough talk about his long-standing relationship with OU and its early collaboration with BBC. Listen to Robin Wilson's recollections of OU's early days. When his father Harold Wilson's Labour government founded the university in 1969 and the first students enrolled in January 1971. Since then, over two million people across 157 countries had taken up courses hoping to change their lives.



Realised that Open University had been a role model for more than 100 open universities that later were established around the world. Listened to touching student testimonials. Acknowledged how much open universities meant for millions of students. Ordinary people and students with special needs. Single mothers, immigrants and inmates. Maybe an opportunity for Julian Assange who recently was arrested in London after seven years in Ecuador's embassy?

On May 17th we went to the Seamen's Church. To celebrate the Norwegian constitution day. Had coffee and waffles with some of the many Norwegian tourists, students and residents in London. Followed with a parade and festivities in Southwark Park.

Ended the stay at the old Swan Pub May 18. Enjoyed the festive atmosphere as people from several countries cheered their national favourites in the Eurovision Song Contest. Felt the Spirit in The Sky when KEiiNO briefly topped the score board. The Norwegian band formed by singer and songwriter Tom Hugo, pop singer Alexandra Rotan and Sami rapper Fred Buljo. However, the Dutch table near the Arcade took home the victory.

2019 In Thailand with ICDE



Had a wonderful vacation in the last week of July. In Chaba Cabana Beach Resort at the Ko Samui Island. One night in Bangkok - as tourists. With adventurous Tuk Tuk rides, exotic food in Chinatown and a tourist cruise on Chao Phraya River. Strolled the lively local market near the hotel. Selling snacks, handcrafts, fake designer goods and unfamiliar food. Scorpions, crickets and maggots?

Took a taxi to Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU) August 1-3. To attend the International Conference of Distance Education: Research and Innovation for a Digital Society. My first visit since the ICDE World Conference in 1992.

The university co-organized the conference with the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), UNESCO's Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education (UNESCO Bangkok) and ICDE.



Before the conference started, Caroline Seville and I met with the presenters in the ICDE organised session. Paul Stacey from the Open Education Consortium talked about: “Open Education: Where are we now, What next”. Mark Brown from the Irish National Institute for Digital learning presented: “Mega trends on the horizon – From AI/ Blockchain/ Alternative Credentials to what the future will hold”.

Wesley Teter moderated the ICDE panel discussion on “Being Open about Open Education: Building OER repositories the challenges faced and

the solutions to overcome”. The distinguished panellists were Chularat Tanprasert, Zhang Xiangyang, Jean-Marc Meunier and Tian Belawati.

My keynote presentation was titled: *Innovations in online education. Some pioneering developments and current opportunities*. A presentation that motivated me to write the first anecdotes in My Online Education World.

Reminised about the establishment of STOU and the 1992 ICDE World Conference at STOU. Over lunch with Wichit Srisa-an. Founding president of STOU, current chairman of the STOU Council and former Minister of Education in Thailand. Had interesting conversations with Ethel Agnes Pascua-Valenzuela about her work at the SEAMEO secretariat. And Wang Libing about UNESCO Bangkok.

Ended the day in a very nice restaurant garden with Caroline Seville. Thanking her for the excellent preparation of the ICDE conference session.

The social programme included a visit to Siam Niramit. Where we learned about Thai history and culture at the outdoor museum. Before we attended an immersive performance about Thai cultures and religions. Lots of beautiful traditional costumes, dancers and sceneries in combination with cutting edge sound and light technology.

We also toured the impressive Ayutthaya Historical Park. With the amazing ruins of the old city of Ayutthaya which was the capital of Thailand until it was destroyed by the Burmese army in 1767.

After the conference, we spent a day at the floating market. Ended up in a sales exhibition for artful handcrafts with Rattip Phukkeson. Our nice, hardworking facilitator, guide and Head of International Affairs who deserves a big *khàawp khun* (ขอบคุณ) for making the visit to STOU one of my best conference experiences ever.

2019 Representing ICDE with OsloMet in Nepal



Flew Qatar Airways via Doha. Arrived at the comfortable Summit Hotel in Kathmandu on September 13. Invited by Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet) to give a keynote at the closing conference for the NORHED Quantict project. A six-year project funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). To integrate ICT in Nepalese education. A collaborative project between Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu University and OsloMet.

My colleagues Monica Johannesen, Leikny Øgrim and Ellen Carm were the Norwegian project members. And local guides. Explained how improved ICT infrastructure could give more people access to education. As Nepal struggled to recover from the April 2015 earthquake which killed 8,964 people. Made hundreds of thousands homeless.

Booked a one-day guide who showed us the area. Holey cows in the road. Defined as Nepal's national animal in the constitution. Continued to Nagarkot and lunch by the Hotel at the End of the Universe. Saw many colourful prayer flags. Meant to spread peace and prosperity with the wind. Going back, the dirt road was blocked by an excavator in a two-metre-deep trench. So, we started to walk as the driver waited in the car. The pedometer reached 20 000 scenic steps before he caught up with us. Ended up at the Kathmandu Durbar Square in front of the old royal palace of the former Kathmandu Kingdom.

Took a taxi to Chandragiri and the cable car to an altitude of 2551 metres. Somewhat annoyed that the young girl offered me a senior ticket. But it was soon eclipsed by the magnificent view to Himalaya and the 8848-metre-high Mount Everest. The world's highest mountain. First climbed in 1953 by Tenzing Norgay from Nepal and Edmund Hillary from New Zealand. The first Norwegian expedition got a lot of publicity when it reached the peak in 1985. Maybe because it was led by Arne Næss jr. who was about to marry Diana Ross. More than sixty Norwegians have followed. Two women and six men only in 2019.



Telecom had reached Mount Everest. Since 2007, the climbers had been able to phone home with mobile phones. And Chinese Huawei was about to make 5G available in 2020. But over 300 people had died during expeditions to Mount Everest. And Robin Fisher was one of several climbers who perished in May. Just after he posted an Instagram warning from Basecamp 3. About tough conditions and fellow climbers who succumbed.

The ICT in education conference was held at the Yellow Pagoda Hotel. In her welcome address project manager Ellen Carm emphasised that the conference focused on three broad areas of ICT integration in education: access, quality and equity. My keynote was titled *Flexibility and cooperation in online education. Some international developments and opportunities*. Talked with Padam Raj Pant about ICDE and e-learning initiatives at the Nepal Open University. A quite new institution established by an act of parliament in 2016.

After the conference, we strolled the beautiful neoclassical Garden of Dreams and took a cab to Thamel. An area with many backpackers, inexpensive shops and cafes. Ended up with some beer in the nice garden at Kathmandu Guest House. Where we talked about the extraordinary hospitality and friendliness provided by all the Nepalese people we had met.

2019 ICDE's 28th World Conference in Dublin

I had attended ICDE World Conferences on four continents. The Dublin Conference was my first and only as Acting Secretary General. So, it was a unique experience to be in the centre of all the activity together with my ICDE colleagues, local hosts Mark Brown and Mairéad Mhichíl from the National Institute for Digital Learning (NIDL) at Dublin City University (DCU).

November 3 started with pre-conference workshops at the DCU St Patrick's Campus. And ICDE's Global Presidents' Summit (GPS). A unique forum for Presidents, Vice-Chancellors, Principals, and Rectors from ICDE member institutions. Engaging in discussion, debate, and learning in globally relevant topics. As usual, I was impressed by Neil Fassina and Belinda Tynan who planned, facilitated and summarised the summit.

Unaware of how much the world would change the next year, I signed an agreement with the Korea National Open University (KNOU) as host for the 2020 ICDE Leadership Summit.



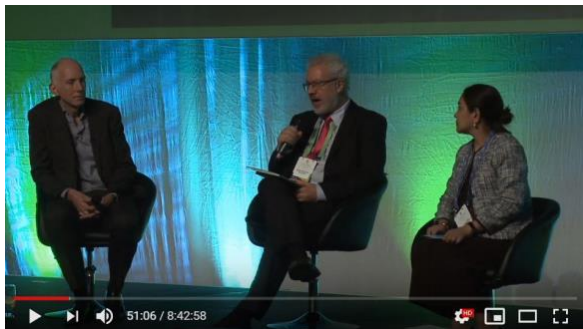
Pictures from the GPS and signing ceremony

Before the GPS dinner, we had a short ICDE Executive Committee meeting. Memorable and special because it was the last for me as acting Secretary General, for Belinda Tynan as President and for Asha Kanwar and Tolly Mbwette as members of the EC. The three

incoming EC members were Som Naidu, Mark Nichols and Carlos Alberto P de Oliveira. Neil Fassina was chosen as the next President.

The main conference started on November 4 at the Dublin Convention Centre. Attracting about 1000 delegates from some 80 nations. The conference theme was *Transforming Lives and Societies*. Focusing on new models of open, online and digital learning in a wider context of the Sustainable Development Goals.

My day was filled with meetings organised by Caroline Seville. Five one-to-one meetings to set up Memorandums of Actions with officials from OERu, The European Association of



Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU), Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) and The Southeast Asia Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO).

November 5 started with an ICDE team meeting at breakfast with Caroline Seville and Julie Schering. Then a panel conversation with Ethel Agnes Pascua – Valenzuela and Simon

Nelson about his plenary presentation on FutureLearn. Noted that FutureLearn had passed 10 million registered users.

Commented that ICDE members had been pioneers in online learning for decades. For example, FutureLearn came out of OUUK which also initiated and promoted many other online learning innovations. They started using the Canadian computer conferencing system CoSy in 1986 and then enrolled 1400 students in the world's first large-scale online course (Introduction to ICT and social issues). In 2005 they chose the open source LMS Moodle. The conversation was streamed at

<https://youtu.be/-MA7MWMdhpY?t=2970>

I further chaired a session with presentations by several old colleagues as shown in the screenshot from the conference app. Melissa Schuurman was the youngest of the presenters and my only new acquaintance. But I still remember her presentation on Customised Training for Online Faculty. Probably since I recognized many of her experiences as a long time Moodle system administrator and course designer.



I also attended our scheduled meetings with the Flexible Learning Association of New Zealand ([FLANZ](#)) and the European Distance and Elearning Network ([EDEN](#)).

Later, I represented ICDE at the [NordFlexOn](#) meeting for Nordic delegates. The 33 attendees established a working group to promote collaboration for individuals working with flexible education. ICDE offered to host a free network service for members of ICDE or one of the Nordic associations for flexible education in Denmark ([FLUID](#)), Norway ([FuN](#)) or Sweden ([SVERD](#)).



On November 6, I signed the contract for the 29th ICDE World Conference to be hosted in Natal, Brazil. On behalf of UFRN, Professor Ricardo Valentim, Coordinator and researcher of LAIS, signed the contract on behalf of the Office of the Dean of UFRN.

Left: The Brazilian delegation and ICDE staff after the signing ceremony.

The gala dinner was hosted in the Round Room at the Mansion House. The official residence of Dublin's Lord Mayor. There, I had the pleasure of announcing the ICDE Awards and Prizes. Ingeborg Bø and Fred Mulder were both awarded Honorary ICDE memberships posthumously. It was an emotional moment for me when Alan Tait presented his personal laudation of Ingeborg Bø - since they both had been important mentors for me. Rory McGreal's personal recognition of Fred Mulder was also memorable. Before the Dublin conference, only eleven people had received the ICDE Honorary Award.

Atwi Suparman was awarded the ICDE Prize for Lifelong contribution to the field of online, open and distance education. The Prize of Excellence was awarded to Wayne Macintosh. I was also delighted to acknowledge Inés Gil Jaurena for her devoted work as Editor of Open Praxis since 2011.



Awards, prizes and acknowledgements during the Dublin Gala Dinner

I remember the Dublin conference as the best experiences in my professional career. And it was an exquisite pleasure to present the closing remarks on November 7. Watch them at <https://youtu.be/XysBgoXse7g>



The remarks included titbits of what I heard from the many happy delegates who appreciated the taste of Ireland through the Irish greetings, the Irish 101 online course, the guided tours and the really impressive cultural and social programs.

The Event conference app gave us easy access to attendees, conference pictures, voting tools and social media channels. Personally, I was happy to see the Lillehammer Lifelong Learning Road Map included in the app.

Many delegates appreciated the innovative digital posters and virtual paper presentations. Others pointed out the award ceremonies, the best paper awards and the informal conversations in the exhibition area. Others agreed that the very personal student testimonials and the Irish Minister of Education's presentations were especially inspiring.

Finally, I was pleased to announce that Torunn Gjelsvik would take over the position as ICDE Secretary General in January. The first woman to hold this position. A good solution for ICDE, Torunn and me.

But I envied Torunn when I introduced the Brazilian Ambassador Eliana Zugaib. Who welcomed us to the next ICDE World conference in Brazil. Since Brazil has a special place in my heart. But none of us knew that the Coronavirus disease 2019 had started to spread.

2019 Online Educa ethics, big data and technology

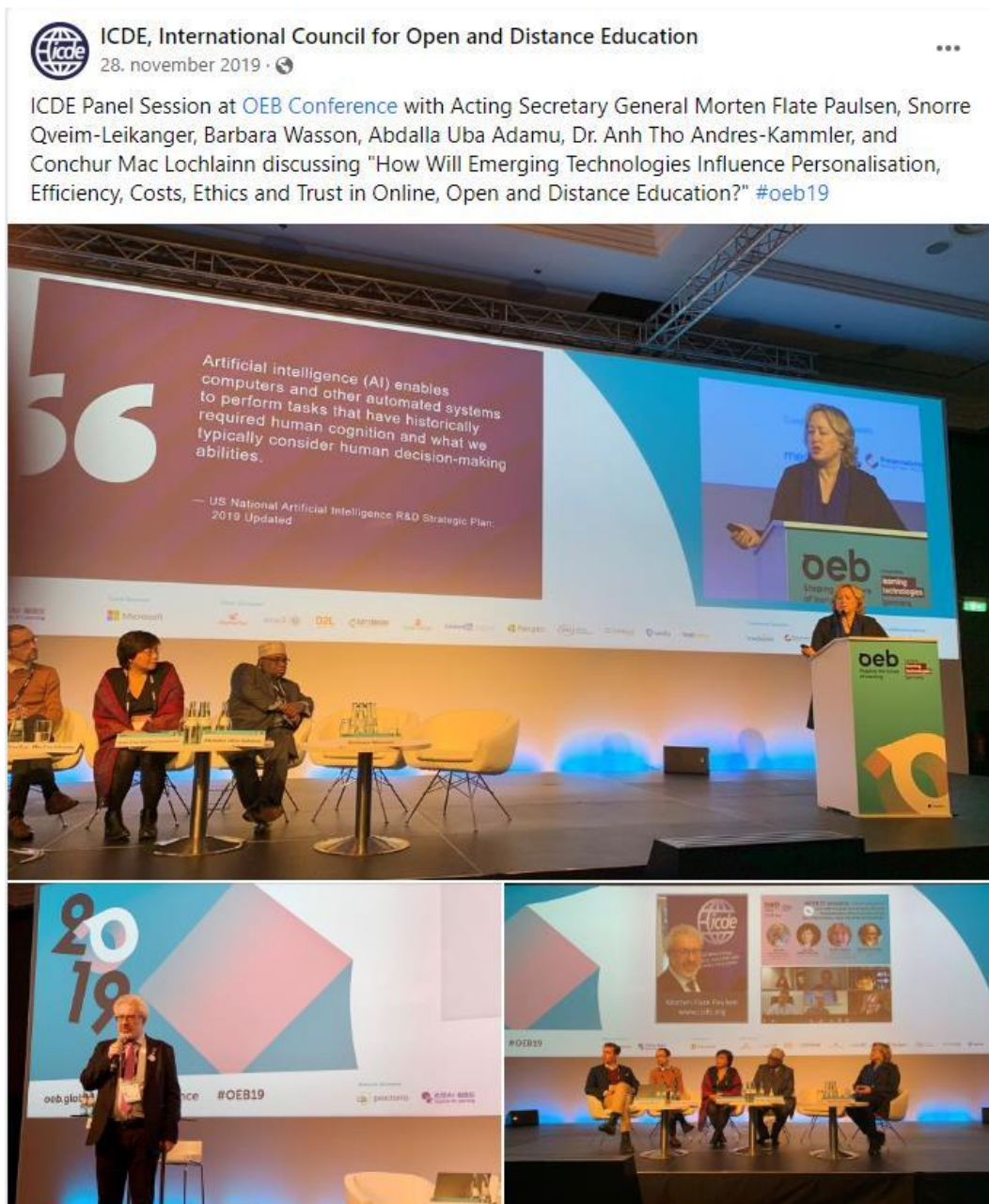
Chaired a thought provoking ICDE panel on ethics, big data and technology. At Online Educa in Berlin, November 28. Inspired by a Wall Street Journal video titled How China is using artificial intelligence in classrooms. Showing primary school children with AI cameras and brain-wave trackers. Allowing teachers and parents to monitor and analyse their behaviour.

Asked the panellists how emerging technologies would influence personalisation, efficiency, costs, ethics and trust in flexible education.

Still remember Barbara Wasson's opening statement. That AI enables computers to perform tasks that have required human cognition and human decision-making abilities. Followed by an interesting discussion among the other panellists: Snorre Qveim-Leikanger, Abdalla Uba Adamu, Anh Tho Andres-Kammler, and Conchur Mac Lochlainn.

A discussion that triggered my thinking. About personal data collected by the TikTok app introduced in 2016 by the Chinese company ByteDance. The security in telecommunication networks depending on technology from the Chinese company Huawei. The enormous number of surveillance cameras in cities. Consequences of massive use of facial recognition. And application of big data and learning analytics.

Went home more worried about the future. With George Orwell and Aldous Huxley on my mind.





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