



INTERNATIONAL
COUNCIL FOR OPEN AND
DISTANCE EDUCATION

MEDIA RELEASE

WORLD CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION FOR ALL

600 of the world's leading experts in open and distance education gathered in Maastricht, The Netherlands, 7-10 June 2009 for the 23rd annual World Conference of The International Council for Open and Distance Education or ICDE. The local host was the Open University of the Netherlands, and the event included the annual conference of a European association, the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities - EADTU.

CONFERENCE PROFILE

Delegates from the distance and e-learning communities of 70 countries around the globe discussed ideas and initiatives under the theme **Flexible Education for All: Open – Global - Innovative**.

The conference was streamed live on the internet and participants from around the world were able to interact online with keynote presenters and panel discussions. Leading researchers and practitioners of distance learning discussed issues relating to the provision of education across the globe using new technologies and ensuring access to education for all.

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

The conference featured key figures from education, development and industry.

Brenda Gourley, Vice-Chancellor of the Open University, UK and **Barney Pityana**, Vice-Chancellor of the University of South Africa spoke of the challenges facing educators and institutions in both the northern and southern hemispheres, the opportunities offered by the digital age, and the problems facing universities today.

Sam Pitroda, the man responsible for laying the foundation for and ushering in India's technology and communications revolution in the 1980s, and current advisor to the Prime Minister of India, spoke about his country's work to leverage India's knowledge strengths to become a knowledge economy. Pitroda spoke of India's need for new, low-cost models of learning, where the teacher's role is that of mentor and where the quality of people is the bottom line. He also warned of a pending "bubble" in the education sector, arguing that post-secondary education has, in many cases, become too expensive to be sustainable.

Manuel Castells, one of the world's leading new age intellectuals, encouraged the open and distance education community to challenge the present and rethink the future. He observed

that students are actively choosing online and distance education over the classroom based face-to-face approach. They wish to learn, not to be taught.

The provision of education in the 21st century is intimately connected with advances in technology. Representatives from **Royal Philips Electronics, Pearson, Blackboard** and **Google** contributed their perspectives on the challenge of creating a worldwide sustainable knowledge and skills economy.

PRIZES OF EXCELLENCE

It has become a tradition for The International Council for Open and Distance Education to conclude its World Conference by honouring outstanding contributions to open and distance education.

Asha Kanwar, Vice President of the Commonwealth of Learning received the ICDE Individual Prize of Excellence for her outstanding work in leading the creation of low cost technology options for delivering education to the developing world.

Gary E. Miller, former Associate Vice-President for Outreach at the Pennsylvania State University, received the Prize for Lifelong Contribution for his work in the field of distance learning. Dr. Miller was the founding Executive Director of Penn State World Campus, one of the first global distance university programmes.

Shanghai TV University was awarded the ICDE Institutional Prize of Excellence in recognition of its work in using broadcast and digital technologies to reach diverse sections of society from civil servants to migrant workers.

24TH ICDE WORLD CONFERENCE TO BE HELD IN BALI

The 24th World Conference will take place in Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia hosted by Universitas Terbuka, a leading Asian distance learning provider. The conference will be held 2-5 October, 2011.

For further information and pictures: www.ou.nl/icde2009

For the conference broadcast archive: www.avacast.nl/icde2009

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