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demands of the age and the needs of people. Theological education is after all man's attempt to educate himself with the knowledge of God, and needs to be continually assessed and reassessed in the interests of relevance and in the search for excellence.

However, in labelling theological education 'man's attempt', we must not ignore the overall activity of God in this process; which makes it different from any other educational exercise. Accreditation of theological education must take into account the divine involvement over and above all the procedures we set up for human evaluation of our educational systems. There may be a need for a revolutionary attitude to our accrediting procedures if we accept that ultimately our aim is 'to be approved unto God' ([2 Tim. 2:12](#)).

Renewal of theological education and accreditation procedures must demonstrate itself primarily in a longing for the 'word' to become 'flesh' in each generation and in [p. 286](#) each culture. It is God's word, and that word needs to be actualized to the people to whom we educators are accountable. When God renews he does not merely take the old and patch it up with something new. Let us long for the freshness of God's work, as he takes us through the process of renewal, reshaping and reconstruction. Let us ask for a renewed attitude to the Scriptures, a renewed dependence on God himself and a renewed resolution to root out all that hinders God's complete work, through his desire to 'make all things new'.

Dr. Ken Gnanakan of Bangalore, India, is the General Secretary of the Asia Theological Association. He is well known around the world as an author, theologian and theological educator. [p. 287](#)

The Future of ICAA

Tite Tiénou

The year 1990 marks the beginning of the second decade of life for the International Council of Accrediting Agencies for evangelical theological education. This seems therefore an appropriate time for attending to the question of ICAA's future. I wish to explore this topic under three headings: celebration, challenge, and call to action.

CELEBRATION

It would be imprudent to consider ICAA's future without first taking account of its past. And in focusing on the past, I wish to speak in terms of celebration because we have now reached an important milestone in ICAA's history, the completion of a decade of service. This is a fitting time for us to pause and celebrate God's goodness to us, for enabling ICAA with increasing effectiveness to serve the needs of evangelical theological education worldwide.

ICAA was founded under the auspices of the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship in March 1980, at a special international consultation on evangelical theological education held at Hoddesdon, England. The founding members of

ICAA (ACTEA, AABC, ATA, CETA and EEAA) are all still very active in their respective regions and in the affairs of ICAA today.¹

Organizations such as ICAA are created through a delicate convergence of people, ideas and circumstances. This is not the place to enumerate all who laboured to see ICAA become a reality. But we should note that the immediate impetus came from ACTEA in Africa. ACTEA took the decision to call for the creation of such a body during its 1978 meetings at Miango, Nigeria, and wrote officially to its sister bodies to that effect on 22 December 1978. Somehow the time was right; and less than fifteen months later, ICAA was formally launched.

The founding vision of ICAA was to facilitate international cooperation in evangelical theological education. This is reflected in the fourth purpose stated in the constitution: p. 288

To promote a sense of community among institutions and programmes of evangelical theological education worldwide for mutual stimulation and enrichment.

Since its founding, ICAA has engaged in a wide range of activities in keeping with this original vision. International consultations were held in conjunction with the ICAA meetings at Hoddesdon, England (1980); Chongoni, Malawi (1981); Katydata, Cyprus (1983); and Weissach, Germany (1987). Papers read at these consultations have been published as books, which have offered stimulation to evangelical theological education worldwide.²

In addition to consultations, ICAA initiated a Library Development Programme in 1981, and this continues to benefit theological schools throughout the Third World. In 1982 ICAA adopted terms for associate membership status. This action allowed ICAA membership to be broadened, so that now six associate member organizations also participate in the affairs of ICAA.³ In 1983 ICAA adopted its *Manifesto on the Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education*.⁴ This document has proved of major significance. In 1984 ICAA initiated coordinating services for TEE worldwide. Four years later the *ICAA Compendium* was published. And so, despite the reference to accreditation in its name, ICAA's accomplishments over the years testify to the fact that its scope is much more comprehensive. As one ICAA publication puts it:

ICAA is concerned with the whole range of functions by which evangelical theological education might fruitfully collaborate at the international level.⁵

¹ The full names of these bodies are: Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa, American Association of Bible Colleges, Asia Theological Association, Caribbean Evangelical Theological Association, and European Evangelical Accrediting Association. In 1988 the South Pacific Association of Bible Colleges (SPABC) was also admitted to full ICAA membership.

² Paul Bowers, ed., *Evangelical Theological Education Today: 1—An International Perspective* (Nairobi: Evangel, 1982), and *Evangelical Theological Education Today: 2—Agenda for Renewal* (Nairobi: Evangel, 1982). Robert Youngblood, ed., *Cyprus: TEE Come of Age* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1984), and *Excellence and Renewal: Goals for the Accreditation of Theological Education* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1989).

³ These are: The Committee to Assist Ministry Education Overseas (CAMEO), USA; Evangelical Association for Theological Training (AETTE), Brazil; Education Division, Church of God (USA); International Correspondence Institute (ICI), Belgium; Program for Theological Education by Extension (PTEE), Jordan; Overseas Council for Theological Education and Missions (OCTEM), USA.

⁴ *Theological Education Today* 16:2 (April–June 1984), 136–143. Spanish and French versions have also been issued.

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Challenge

While we may legitimately celebrate ICAA's past, we cannot afford to ignore the many challenges which it is about to face in its second decade. I highlight here those that I consider the most crucial.

In a general way, the essential challenge of ICAA's second decade could be simply stated: to recover and expand the original vision which led to ICAA's creation. Here are some specifics of what that would mean.

As we have seen, ICAA was inaugurated [p. 289](#) to attend to much more than accreditation, as its constitution and early documents testify. Consequently, the first challenge before us is to move forward in making ICAA a full service agency, not limiting its role merely to providing avenues for international recognition of degrees. The fact is that ICAA's larger role is unique. It is, as far as I know, the only established medium for international contact and collaboration in all aspects of evangelical theological education. If its function were to be restricted to accreditation, what person or organization would carry out this larger purpose? Accreditation is surely a vital element of ICAA's original vision; but it is not the only one, nor should be. ICAA is called primarily to humble servanthood, not to regulatory authority or empire-building. Developing a full range of services for evangelical theological education internationally bespeaks servanthood; limiting ourselves to accreditation can promote for us an unfortunate image of merely being the international academic police.

ICAA should also continue to strive to become truly international in perspective, in membership representation, and in staffing. To date, Hispanic Latin America is not effectively represented, nor are the evangelical theological educational structures of Britain, Canada and the USA. In this day of globalization of theological education, we should diligently work to keep ourselves international in fact as well as in appearance.

ICAA needs to nurture a sense of community and cross-fertilization among all forms of evangelical theological education worldwide. It should promote the modes for such fellowship and a sense of mutual identity. Similarly ICAA should establish itself as the forum for informed reflection and discussion within theological education worldwide. While ICAA has already made some contribution in these areas, I am suggesting here that we should become much more actively engaged.

The next challenge for ICAA concerns its role in the renewal of evangelical theological education. Here it must continue to articulate an effective ongoing call to renewal in this critical area of the church's life. ICAA should function not as reinforcement for traditional patterns, but as a true catalyst for renewal. (In doing so, however, it must not become a forum for castigating some forms of theological education while favouring and promoting others.)

In light of the above, TEE presents yet another challenge for ICAA. In keeping with its vision, ICAA should furnish evangelical TEE with international networking and support services, and confirm an integral role for TEE within ICAA, alongside residential structures. If ICAA accomplishes that, it will render a major service to contemporary theological education.

Lest you should think that I am calling ICAA to abandon accreditation altogether, I hasten to add that accreditation itself remains a challenge for us. ICAA should continue to nurture the means to ensure that our accreditation programmes are achieving the highest operational quality, and are therefore deserving of full public credibility. We must not [p. 290](#) allow our accreditation services to be cheapened by inadequate standards, inadequate procedures, or inadequate administrative practices. Nor, with respect both to TEE and to residential accreditation, should we endanger the larger enterprise through a careless assumption that credibility can be achieved simply through a forceful assertion of quality.

Quality may be asserted, but credibility must be won, by a persuasive demonstration of quality as judged by the wider public. This is just as essential a component of accreditation as is the component of quality. Our accreditation systems must take this component of credibility fully into account.

Another important challenge for ICAA has to do with relationships. ICAA must cultivate effective relations with other international evangelical bodies and movements, encouraging wider familiarity with ICAA's existence and role, demonstrating that ICAA can be a useful, necessary and reliable partner in achieving the larger evangelical agenda. This includes, first and foremost, good relationships with our parent body, the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship, as well as with its study unit on theological education, and with WEF itself. We must also build relationships with regional and continental bodies, international evangelical funding agencies, and the Lausanne movement. The challenge here is that ICAA must begin to play its needed role within the larger international evangelical context.

An added benefit of ICAA's increased international visibility would be that effective contact and dialogue could be established between First and Third World structures for evangelical theological education. Such contact and dialogue should also be established with evangelical missions structures, especially those now embracing Third World missions initiatives.

As ICAA recovers and expands its original vision, it should help to sharpen the concern for theological education within the evangelical world. By this I mean that ICAA must become the voice for theological education on the global scene. We should begin ongoing measures to help international evangelicalism better improve its understanding of the strategic importance of theological education. In the arena of competing emphases in international evangelicalism, the significance of theological education is often eclipsed. May we seize the opportunity given to us.

CALL TO ACTION

Having looked at some of the challenges for ICAA in its second decade, we are now ready for some specific proposals. My call to action will reflect the challenges already outlined.

1. In order to facilitate a sense of community, mutual familiarity, and common purpose, I submit that ICAA should re-establish its newsletter from earlier days, or produce a similar internal publication.
2. I propose that ICAA issue an international directory of associations and agencies involved with evangelical theological education. In addition to being a p. 291 handy, needed reference tool, such a directory would serve to identify ICAA's intended constituency worldwide, and provide information about it. Such a document was issued in 1982, listing 23 bodies, but it was not widely distributed. A greatly expanded edition is now needed. Further updated editions could be issued on a regular basis.
3. ICAA must continue its series of international consultations on a biennial basis. We must make sure that these consultations attract wide representation and address key issues of the larger agenda of evangelical theological education. In this connection, ICAA welcomes the joint workshop between North American seminary leaders and Third World theological educators at Lausanne II in Manila. We must also seek an early opportunity to sponsor a broad consultation involving mission umbrella agencies such as IFMA and EFMA, the Third World Association of Missions Agencies, and comparable bodies from Europe and elsewhere.

4. In order to enlarge its membership, ICAA should actively recruit associate members from around the world. We should also grant our associate members a more efficient voice in the direction of ICAA affairs. For example, the ICAA associate membership should be granted representation on the ICAA executive.
5. We need to accord priority to improving cordial cooperative relationships with our parent body, the World Evangelical Fellowship Theological Commission. To achieve this, we should for example request a permanent representation of ICAA on the executive committee of the Theological Commission.
6. I also suggest that ICAA aggressively bolster its public relations in order to increase its visibility. If we do not attend to this, ICAA may be no more than a well-kept secret.
7. It is of urgent importance that we should republish the ICAA *Manifesto on the Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education* in a handy, attractive format, in order to facilitate wide distribution. We should also actively promote familiarity with its contents among our constituency, and find the means to focus commitment among theological educators to its practical implementation, lest the *Manifesto* remain one more document filed in the archives.

May God grant ICAA's second decade to be even more fruitful than its first.

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The Contextualization of Overseas Theological Education

Michael Griffiths

We all know that good exegesis requires the context of a text to be given proper consideration. The text means what it means, because of the context in which it is found. In a similar way, good theological education depends upon how it relates with its own context. Traditional academic theological education has tended to become more and more detached from any context at all apart from its own internally inherited criteria. For us, good theological education must be defined as that which relates to its own context, in the churches whose workers it seeks to train. It can never be an independent, autonomous ideological island. It needs also to relate to its own social, cultural and historical context. We must not allow it to become isolated or distanced from the realities of the churches and the societies it seeks to serve. Just as those teaching individual disciplines have to be forced off centrifugally into their own little world, so also we have to resist the temptation to think and act as though we each reign in little theological kingdoms of our own, independent of, and unrelated to the rest of the real world. The world of the library (and even more the world of the computer terminal) can become a private fantasy world where theological Walter Mittys lead their own secret, and sadly irrelevant lives!