

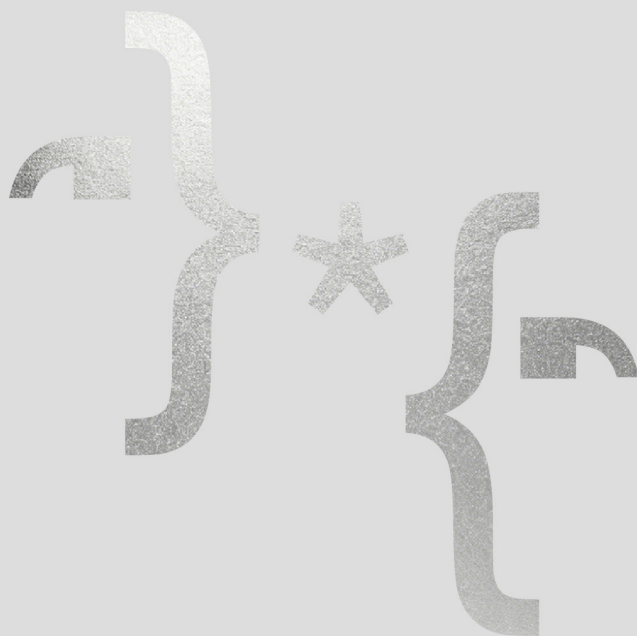
CLOUD



Connecting Leaders Online for
University Digital Transformation



2016



2026

A DECADE IN THE MAKING:
BUILDING, WITNESSING AND COMMITMENT



unesco

CLOUD - Connecting Leaders Online for University Digital Transformation

CLOUD is an original quarterly magazine guided by UNESCO-ICHEI's mission to advance the digital transformation of higher education in developing countries. It presents a multi-perspective view of global developments and innovative practices, from digital transformation strategies to exemplary institutional cases, offering a visually engaging and accessible resource for higher-education innovation. "CLOUD" symbolises "connecting leaders online for university digital transformation". Published both in print and online, it provides an open, inclusive platform for information exchange among higher-education practitioners worldwide. As a two-way window linking Shenzhen with the world, the magazine is available in all six official languages of the United Nations.

Chief of Editorial Board: SHEN Xiaoli

Editorial Board: BI Xiaohan, PAN Feng, SIT Fung, SU Rui, CAO Zian, XU Mingshun

Editor-in-Chief: WANG Yuting, SU Rui

Content Assistants/ Interns: DU Jiaqi, Joseph Lee

Translation: DU Jiaqi

Cover Design: Designed by CREATING (智造) Ltd.

Design and Layout Coordination: SHI Ziai

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Tel.: 0755-88010925

E-mail: office@ichei.org

Address: No. 1088, Xueyuan Rd., Nanshan District, Shenzhen, Guangdong, China, 518055

www.ichei.org

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Professor JIN Li

Director of UNESCO-ICHEI

FOREWORD

Dear Readers,

Welcome to this special issue of *CLOUD*.

Since the adoption of the SDGs and the Education 2030 Agenda in 2015, higher education has entered a period of profound transformation. Technologies continue to evolve at remarkable speed, student populations are expanding, and longstanding disparities in educational resources remain across regions. For decades, UNESCO has worked to advance equitable, inclusive and quality education, seeking to narrow these divides through international cooperation.

Established in 2016 as a UNESCO Category 2 Centre, the International Centre for Higher Education Innovation under the auspices of UNESCO (UNESCO-ICHEI) has grown alongside this global agenda. Responding to the digital transformation needs of higher education in developing countries, ICHEI is committed to advancing the integration of digital technologies in higher education and promoting educational equity through the empowerment of university teachers and institutions.

Ten years are enough for an institution built from the ground up to gather experiences worth sharing — and to pause for both reflection and renewal.

We often describe the growth of UNESCO-ICHEI as a process of "creating something from nothing", because much of our work has taken shape through continuous experimentation in practice. How to localise the IIOE curriculum across diverse national contexts? How to design digital literacy and AI capacity-building programmes that genuinely respond to the needs of our partner higher education institutions (HEIs)? How to transform smart classrooms into spaces that inspire pedagogical innovation? These are questions we have continued to explore over the past decade, and continue to revisit as education itself evolves.

This issue brings together some of the people, stories and moments that have shaped the past decade. We hope these pages offer something worth pausing over, and that you will continue walking alongside us in the years ahead. After all, that has always been one of the reasons *CLOUD* exists.

In October 2023, Professor JIN Li, Vice President of SUSTech, assumed the role of Director of UNESCO-ICHEI. Drawing on his extensive international academic background and broad experience in global cooperation, Director JIN has built upon ICHEI's established achievements while steering it toward a new phase of development, marked by strengthened partnerships and industry-academia collaboration.



| In October 2023, Professor JIN Li, assumed the role of Director of UNESCO-ICHEI



| In May 2025, Director JIN Li chaired the session *Building a Shared Global Vision for Educational Transformation* at the 2025 International Conference on AI and Education



From its earliest conception to its formal establishment as a UNESCO Category 2 Centre, the founding of UNESCO-ICHEI was made possible through shared trust and collective commitment of multiple stakeholders. With the joint support of UNESCO, the Shenzhen Municipal People's Government, and Southern University of Science and Technology, this endeavor of "built something from nothing" was able to take root and grow. This section focuses on the defining moments and key figures of ICHEI's early years, tracing how the institution set out on a path with openness and collaboration, and the decade that followed.



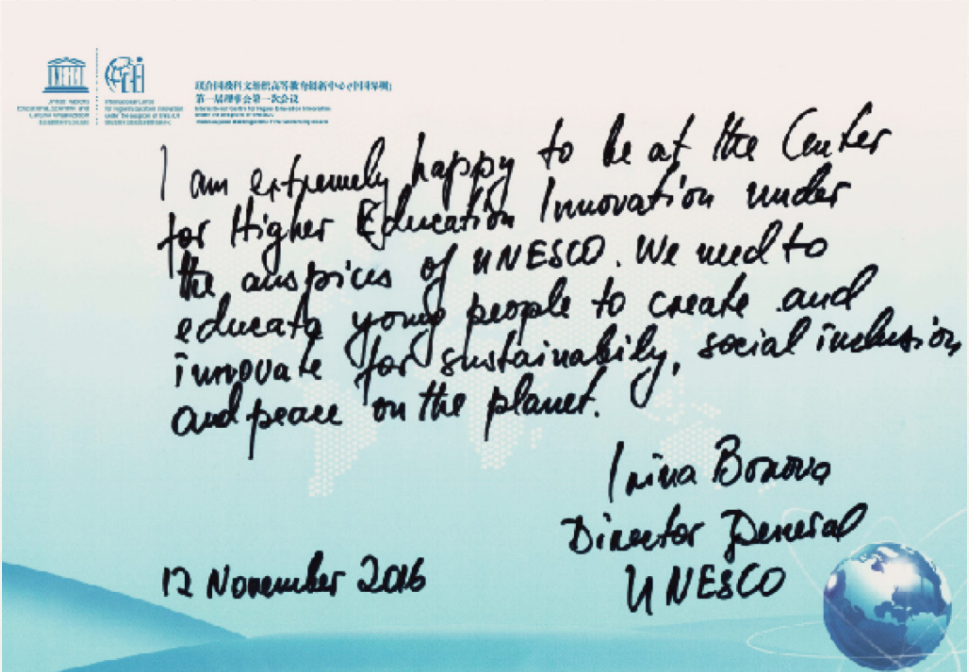
FOUNDING CHAPTER

PIONEERING IN PRACTICE

Approved for establishment during the tenure of Ms. Irina Bokova as Director-General of UNESCO (2009–2017), UNESCO-ICHEI's founding vision of "connecting higher education with technology" was highly commended and affirmed by her. Furthermore, ICHEI's mission and vision to advance the digital transformation of higher education have been warmly welcomed and supported by UNESCO.



On 12 November 2016, Ms. Irina Bokova, then Director-General of UNESCO, attended the first Governing Board meeting of UNESCO-ICHEI



Message on the card: I am extremely happy to be at the International Centre for Higher Education Innovation under the auspices of UNESCO. We need to educate young people to create and innovate for sustainability social inclusion, and peace on the planet. (Irina Bokova, 12 November 2016)

The Shenzhen Municipal Government has been a pivotal driving force throughout the preparation and establishment of UNESCO-ICHEI. Since 2014, Mr. XU Qin, then-Mayor of Shenzhen, proactively spearheaded the initiative to establish this UNESCO Category 2 Centre in Shenzhen.



| Mr. XU Qin, then Mayor of Shenzhen



| DG Bokova held talks with Mr. XU Qin, then Mayor of Shenzhen

Seeing how far UNESCO-ICHEI has come, I feel genuinely proud. It was something I helped bring into existence during my time as Mayor of Shenzhen, built from nothing, step by step, and that makes it particularly meaningful to me. Today, as an international institution rooted in Shenzhen, it has become a real calling card for the city's engagement with the world, contributing to Shenzhen's internationalisation and fostering collaboration in higher education globally. The team is professional, dedicated, and I have nothing but admiration for what they have built.

—Remarks by Mr. XU Qin, then Secretary of the Heilongjiang Provincial Committee of the CPC, during a visit by UNESCO-ICHEI, April 2023

Mr. TANG Qian, former UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education (ADG), has witnessed the entire journey of UNESCO-ICHEI built from nothing. During his tenure, he played a critical role in approving the institution's establishment. Over the years, as a member of the Governing Board, he has consistently supported UNESCO-ICHEI's project implementation, partnership development, and multilateral cooperation.

As a member of the UNESCO-ICHEI Governing Board, I'd like to take a moment to share something a little more personal. UNESCO-ICHEI is a Category 2 Centre under UNESCO — one of those institutions established through a Member State's technical and financial support, working alongside UNESCO to advance its broader mission.

Let me take you back nine years. I was serving as UNESCO's ADG for Education when Mr. LI Ming led a delegation from SUSTech to our headquarters in Paris. I



| Mr. TANG Qian, former UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education

received them in my office. They had come with an idea: to establish a UNESCO Category 2 Centre in Shenzhen.

Now, the timing was, shall we say, complicated. Approvals for Category 2 Centres required sign-off from both the ADG for Education (that was me) and the Bureau of Strategic Planning (BSP), where I happened to also be serving as Acting Director at the time. And the task sitting on my desk? A comprehensive review of UNESCO's nearly 400 existing Category 2 Centres, many of which had long since ceased to function meaningfully and needed to be wound down. So here I was, in the middle of closing Centres, being asked to open a new one. Swimming against the tide, you might say.

And yet, after careful consideration, I went to Director-General Bokova and recommended approval. Why? Three reasons. First, Shenzhen is where China's reform and opening-up took root. It is a city that has always been willing to try something new. Second, SUSTech was an institution with the courage to rethink higher education from the ground up. And third, and perhaps most importantly, Mr. LI Ming himself. There was a quiet tenacity about him that I found convincing.



| On 1 November 2020, the book launch and sharing session for Mr. TANG Qian's publication, *My 25 Years in International Organizations*, was held at SUSTech

I'd be less than honest if I said there were no doubts. As a Chinese national in a senior UNESCO role, had this institution ultimately failed, it would have reflected poorly on my judgement. That was a risk I was aware of.

Over the years, UNESCO-ICHEI has built IIOE, developed Micro-Certification Project and shared curriculum resources across the Global South, and made a real contribution to UNESCO's priority agenda. The UNESCO Beijing Office and the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO both offered their commendations. ICHEI has exceeded, by some distance, what I had imagined when I signed off on it all those years ago.

What makes this institution remarkable is not any single achievement, but the model itself. ICHEI has woven together SUSTech's research strengths, the Shenzhen municipal government's policy backing, and a network of enterprise partners into something that genuinely supports UNESCO's work and contributes to other Member States. Among all Category 2 Centres, I believe this stands out.

More broadly, ICHEI embodies something I care about deeply. A year ago, I joined China's Advisory Committee on Building an Education Powerhouse, at the invitation of Minister HUAI Jinpeng. One of its central ambitions is for China to play a more active role in global education governance, not simply by sending officials to international organisations, but by sharing China's educational experience and helping developing countries build their own systems. ICHEI does exactly that. It belongs to both UNESCO and to China's education community, and in that dual belonging, it reflects what a genuine partnership between a nation and an international organisation can look like.

I hope the team here will carry this work forward with the same spirit that got it started. And I hope the support from all quarters will continue.

—Remarks by Mr. TANG Qian at the Conference on *Higher Education Innovative Development Conference: Talent Cultivation Resonating with Digital Intelligence*, 7 December 2024



| In December 2020, Mr. TANG Qian attended the IIOE International Advisory Committee (IAC) Meeting

A Shenzhen Miracle from the Ground Up

Prof. LI Ming: Founding Director of UNESCO-ICHEI, Secretary-General of IIOE Secretariat



We have often described the birth of UNESCO-ICHEI as creating something from nothing. Looking back, though, its emergence in Shenzhen feels less like chance than the meeting of a particular moment, a particular city, and a particular group of people.

The story began in February 2014, with a visit to the Ministry of Education in Beijing. Mr. XU Qin, then Mayor of Shenzhen, Ms. GUO Yurong, then Director-General of the Shenzhen Education Bureau, and I, then Chairperson of the Southern University of Science and Technology (SUSTech) — had travelled there to discuss the development of higher education in the city. In the course of the conversation, Mr. HAO Ping, then Vice Minister of Education and President of the 37th UNESCO General Conference, turned to Mayor XU with a thought: if Shenzhen was serious about internationalisation, might it consider establishing a UNESCO Category 2 Centre?

The Mayor did not hesitate. Shenzhen, he said, was exactly the kind of city that needed one. I volunteered on the spot, and it was agreed that the preparatory work would be taken forward through SUSTech, with me at the helm.

The Shenzhen Municipal Government: Full Commitment

Shenzhen Government took the lead in advancing the establishment of a UNESCO Category 2 Centre in the city. Mayor XU chaired multiple preparatory meetings, while Ms. WU Yihuan, then Vice Mayor, remained closely involved throughout the process. Repeated discussions were held on matters ranging from the institution's name and institutional nature to its office location and funding arrangements, with solutions sought step by step whenever difficulties arose.

Mr. LIU Qingsheng, then Executive Vice Mayor, also paid close attention to the institution's financial foundations, approving and coordinating the allocation of operational funding. As the institution's work gradually took shape and its impact began to emerge, the municipal government's support continued to grow accordingly.



| Mr. XU Qin, then Mayor of Shenzhen



| Ms. WU Yihuan, then Vice Mayor of Shenzhen



| Mr. LIU Qingsheng, then Executive Vice Mayor of Shenzhen

"What Exactly Did You Want This Institution to Do?"

Of all the people who shaped the early course of UNESCO-ICHEI, Mr. TANG Qian, then UNESCO's ADG for Education, was among the most important.



| On 5 June 2014, the signing ceremony of the Memorandum between the Shenzhen Municipal People's Government and UNESCO was held

I still remember Suzhou in June 2014. UNESCO was hosting the *International Conference on Language*, and it was there that the Shenzhen Municipal Government and UNESCO had agreed to hold formal talks and sign a Memorandum of Understanding on the proposed institution. Mayor XU led the Shenzhen delegation; alongside him were Ms. WU Yihuan, Ms. GUO Yurong, myself, and colleagues from the municipal departments. UNESCO was represented by DG Ms. Irina Bokova, ADG Mr. TANG, and other senior officials. The agreement signed that afternoon was modest in appearance, a few pages, a set of signatures, but it marked the first real step towards bringing the institution into existence.

After the signing, ADG pulled me aside with a single question: what, exactly, was this new institution meant to do?

It was a fair question. We were still in the early stages of planning, and much remained undefined. I told him what I believed: Shenzhen had grown into one of the great symbols of China's reform and opening-up, and its advances in high technology, particularly in information and communication technology (ICT), were real and considerable. If it could draw on those strengths to help bring digital capabilities to developing countries, that, I thought, could become its most meaningful purpose. He listened, then smiled: "That's exactly it — precisely what UNESCO needs to advance the SDGs."

He went on to offer a number of practical suggestions drawn from his own experience. Over the months that followed, Ms. HAN Wei, then Director of Human Resources at SUSTech, Mr. LU Chun, then Director of International Cooperation, and I made several trips to Paris to continue discussions with Mr. TANG Qian and colleagues from UNESCO's higher education division. We worked through the institution's positioning, functions, and the purpose and oversight of what would become the *UNESCO-Shenzhen Funds-in-Trust (SFIT)* Project.

Throughout it all, ADG Mr. TANG brought to the table a quality that made the whole process possible: genuine openness. He engaged with flexibility and goodwill, helped both sides work through difficult questions, and steered the negotiations towards an agreement on the founding charter. A collaboration between an international organisation and a Chinese municipal government is not a simple thing to arrange. That it moved forward as smoothly as it did owed a great deal to him.



| In April 2015, the SUSTech delegation visited UNESCO Headquarters

In May 2015, UNESCO convened the *International Conference on ICT and Post-2015 Education* in Qingdao. It was there, under witness of Mr. HAO Ping, that Vice Mayor Ms. WU Yihuan and ADG signed the *Framework Agreement of Trust Fund*.

Looking back, the two UNESCO gatherings, the signing of the MoU in Suzhou in 2014 and the *Framework Agreement of Funds-in-Trust* in Qingdao a year later gradually turned an initial idea into something more tangible. What had once existed only in discussion and planning was beginning to take institutional form.



| On 23 May 2015, the Shenzhen Municipal Government and UNESCO signed the Trust Fund Agreement in Qingdao

Then, on 13 November, 2015, UNESCO's 38th General Conference formally approved the establishment in Shenzhen, China, of the International Centre for Higher Education Innovation under the auspices of UNESCO.



| On 13 November 2015, the 38th Session of the UNESCO General Conference approved the establishment of the Category 2 Centre, International Centre for Higher Education Innovation under the auspices of UNESCO, in Shenzhen, China

The National commission of Peoples republic of China for UNESCO: Threading the Needle

Throughout the establishment of UNESCO-ICHEI, the Secretariat of the National Commission of the People's Republic of China for UNESCO provided us with patient and meticulous guidance. Mr. DU Yue, then Secretary-General of the Commission, took on much of the painstaking coordination work that such an undertaking requires, the back-and-forth between Shenzhen and Paris, the careful management of processes that span different institutions and systems. He visited Shenzhen on several occasions, each time arriving with clear thinking and practical guidance.

It was Mr. DU who introduced us to the UNESCO International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education (INRULED) in Beijing, a Category



| Mr. DU Yue, then Secretary-General of the Commission of UNESCO

2 Centre that had been through the very process we were attempting. Its then Director, Mr. WANG Li, shared with us, without reservation, the full set of documents and institutional rules that governed the Centre's operation. For a team feeling its way through unfamiliar terrain, that bundle of paper was worth more than we could easily say. We have not forgotten the generosity.

After UNESCO-ICHEI was formally approved, its first Governing Board meeting was convened in November 2016. Around the same time, UNESCO DG Ms. Irina Bokova was due to visit China for the *High-Level Forum on Museums*. Recognising a rare opportunity, Mr. DU worked tirelessly behind the scenes to arrange for her to visit ICHEI and attend the Governing Board meeting.

For a Category 2 Centre that had only just come into existence, having the UNESCO DG present at its very first Governing Board meeting was, by any measure, extraordinary. Institutions spend years working towards that kind of recognition. We had it from the start.

DG's presence not only drew international attention to the institution, but also quietly helped define its starting point and sense of purpose within the wider UNESCO family.



| On 12 November 2016, Mr. DU Yue coordinated Ms. Irina Bokova to attend the first Governing Board meeting

Southern University of Science and Technology: A Place to Call Home

Every institution needs somewhere to put down roots. For UNESCO-ICHEI, that place was SUSTech.

From the earliest days of the preparatory work, SUSTech committed itself fully to the institution's establishment. Mr. CHEN Shiyl, then University President, and I, then Chairperson, worked together to provide whatever the institution needed at the institutional level. In May 2015, the University formally established the Centre for Higher Education Research to provide an academic home for the work. President CHEN Shiyl presented me with the appointment letter as its Director; I in turn invited Professors Ms. HAN Wei and Mr. ZHAO Jianhua to serve as Deputy Directors. Ms. HAN went on to become Executive Deputy Director of ICHEI itself, becoming a close and indispensable colleague in the years that followed.



| In May 2015, the Centre for Higher Education Research was established, and CHEN Shiyl presented a certificate to LI Ming

The University provided office space, facilities, and the kind of quiet, practical support that rarely makes it into official records but without which nothing would have functioned. Mr. LU Chun, then Vice President of SUSTech and concurrently Deputy Director of ICHEI, worked tirelessly to resolve the many logistical challenges that arose along the way.



| Ms. JIANG Hong, Chairperson of SUSTech



| Mr. XUE Qikun, President of SUSTech

Over the years, it was the consistency of that support. Leadership at SUSTech changed, as it does — Ms. GUO Yurong, Mr. LI Fengliang, Ms. JIANG Hong, as successive Chairpersons; Mr. XUE Qikun as President, and Mr. ZHANG Ling — but the interest in the institution's work never wavered. Each of them understood, in their own way, what UNESCO-ICHEI could mean: for SUSTech's own international standing, and for the broader mission of helping universities across the Global South navigate the challenge of digital transformation.



| Ms. GUO Yurong, then Chairperson of SUSTech



| Mr. LI Fengliang, then Chairperson of SUSTech



| Mr. ZHANG Ling, Vice Chairperson of SUSTech

The Preparatory Team: Work Done Quietly

Behind every institution that comes into being, there is a period of unglamorous work, including the drafting, the filing, the careful preparation of documents that may never be read

by anyone outside a committee room. For UNESCO-ICHEI, that work fell to a dedicated group of colleagues who gave it their full attention.

In the early stages, we invited Professors QIANG Haiyan and JIANG Kaijun to lead a team of younger colleagues through the painstaking task of assembling the preparatory documentation. It was meticulous, largely invisible work, and it mattered enormously.

In June 2015, several months before the UNESCO General Conference was due to consider the proposal, a three-person expert team arrived at SUSTech. They were led by Professor WANG Libing, then Chief of Section for Educational Innovations and Skills Development at UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, and their purpose was to carry out an independent on-site assessment, which is a kind of quiet due diligence, conducted at arm's length from the applicant, that would inform UNESCO's decision on whether to proceed.

President CHEN presented the University's preparations in person. The team listened, asked their questions, and formed their own judgements. It was one of those moments where all one can do is trust that the work has been good enough, and wait.

The Launch of IIOE: Building Together, Sharing Together

In December 2019, UNESCO-ICHEI and a constellation of partners from across the world came together to launch the International Institute for Online Education (IIOE). 15 universities from 12 countries, 9 technology companies, and a shared conviction that digital education could reach further and mean more than it currently did. Mr. TANG Qian was there, as was Mr. QIN Changwei, then Secretary-General of the National Commission of PRC for UNESCO, Mr. CHEN Yidan, co-founder of the Tencent Charity Foundation, and Mr. Peter Wells, then Chief of the Higher Education Section at UNESCO. Tencent provided funding to help get the initiative off the ground.

A wider circle of academic advisers brought their expertise to bear as well, each contributing in their own field and in their own way. LIM Cher Ping, Chair Professor at the Education University of Hong Kong, joined the work of planning and developing IIOE from 2018, serving as its Chief Expert and investing considerable thought and energy into shaping the platform and its network. Grace Oakley, Associate Professor at the University of Western Australia, worked with us on building the quality assurance framework for the SFIT project. Paul Prinsloo, a researcher at the University of South Africa, supported the IIOE Pilot Project in Nigeria, focused on enabling policy and institutional conditions for digital teaching and learning. Charles Graham, Professor at Brigham Young University, contributed to the IIOE pilot in Mongolia, centred on innovative blended teaching practices for STEM educators.

Professors CHENG Jiangang and HAN Xibin, from Tsinghua University's Institute of Education, brought together a team of education technology specialists from China and abroad, and over the course of more than two years, worked alongside us to produce four significant knowledge outputs: a research report on the digital transformation of higher education teaching, and three practitioner handbooks, on blended learning reform, on teaching competence development for higher education faculty, and on teaching competence development for vocational education teachers.

Beyond individual advisers, several UNESCO regional offices and Category 1 centres became close partners. Under the leadership of Professor ZHAN Tao, then Director of UNESCO's Institute for Information Technologies in Education (UNESCO IITE), UNESCO



On 8 December 2023, UNESCO-ICHEI convened the IAC Meeting

IITE and ICHEI developed a sustained and substantive collaboration across multiple projects. Professor Shahbaz Khan, Director of UNESCO's Regional Office for East Asia, helped bring several joint initiatives to fruition.

What Lay Behind It All

Looking back now, it is perhaps no coincidence that ICHEI took root in Shenzhen, a city long shaped by openness, experimentation and a willingness to venture into the unknown.

Above all, We owe our deepest gratitude to the Shenzhen Municipal Government, Southern University of Science and Technology, and the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO, whose guidance, trust and support made its establishment possible.

Ten years on, ICHEI has grown into an active and respected member of the UNESCO family in the field of digital transformation in higher education. Yet what remains most vivid in my memory are not the milestones themselves, but the people who extended a hand when everything still existed only in possibility.

UNESCO-ICHEI, in the past, today and in the years to come, will never forget those who walked alongside us at the very start of this journey!



Professional Ethos of UNESCO-ICHEI: PROFESSIONAL, EFFICIENT, OPEN-MINDED, FORWARD-LOOKING

UNESCO-ICHEI's growth would not have been possible without its longstanding and close collaboration with UNESCO. UNESCO Headquarters, National Commission of the People's Republic of China for UNESCO, as well as regional offices and Category 1 institutes, have all provided invaluable support in project implementation and international cooperation. United by a shared vision for education, we have worked side by side to bring numerous initiatives into reality.

This section highlights these enduring partnerships with the UNESCO family, looking back on the stories of collaboration and progress we have written together.

UNESCO BONDS GUIDED BY A SHARED VISION



The Secretariat of the National Commission of the People's Republic of China for UNESCO has long been an important guiding partner of UNESCO-ICHEI, playing a pivotal role in helping the institution integrate more effectively into the UNESCO system and expand its international cooperation network.



Mr. QIN Changwei, Secretary-General of the National Commission of the People's Republic of China for UNESCO

UNESCO-ICHEI deserves full recognition for its accomplishments, particularly the significant progress achieved through the IIOE project. Looking ahead, it is highly recommended to continue to build its brand. As ICHEI's most influential collaborative platform, the IIOE should be further enriched to fully leverage its brand effect. At the same time, it should focus on cultivating a strong brand identity within its research domains. By formulating long-term blueprints around frontier issues in higher education innovation, the institution should conduct systematic research and produce flagship reports, thereby effectively fulfilling its leading research role within the UNESCO framework.

May UNESCO-ICHEI continue to thrive and achieve even greater success.

—Remarks by Mr. QIN Changwei, at the *Third Meeting of the Third Governing Board of UNESCO-ICHEI*, 8 December 2025

The UNESCO East Asia Regional Office has long been a pivotal partner of UNESCO-ICHEI. With the support of its current Director, Mr. Shahbaz Khan, both sides have cooperated closely on multiple initiatives, jointly advancing UNESCO's regional agenda for educational cooperation.

Over the past decade, UNESCO-ICHEI has become an important partner in advancing innovation, digital transformation, and international cooperation in higher education. Through initiatives such as IIOE and *CLOUD*, it has helped connect institutions, ideas, and people across regions, while supporting more open and future-oriented approaches to learning.

These experiences demonstrate the significant value of partnership, dialogue, and knowledge-sharing in helping institutions respond to rapid technological change with both ambition and responsibility. Looking ahead, I am confident that UNESCO-ICHEI will continue to play a vital role in shaping more inclusive, innovative, and human-centred higher education systems.

—Congratulations by Mr. Shahbaz Khan on the occasion of UNESCO-ICHEI's 10th Anniversary



On 7 December 2024, Mr. Shahbaz Khan delivered a speech at the *Higher Education Innovation and Development Conference: Talent Cultivation Resonating with Digital Intelligence*

UNESCO IITE and UNESCO-ICHEI have long shared a common commitment to advancing the digital transformation of education, making IITE one of the UNESCO-ICHEI's closest and most enduring partners. Under the leadership of Mr. ZHAN Tao, then Director of UNESCO IITE, the two institutions worked hand in hand to explore innovative approaches to harnessing information technologies in support of transformation and innovation across higher education.



| On 7 December 2023, Mr. ZHAN Tao attended the IIOE Global Partners Summit

UNESCO-ICHEI is something of a star among UNESCO's Category 2 Centres. The leadership team brings genuine vision and breadth of perspective, and the colleagues share a spirit of innovation and quiet determination. What has been achieved over the past 10 years is, frankly, remarkable. The IIOE's global network of partners, its online courses and training resources available in all six official UN languages, the IIOE Pioneer Award focused on AI literacy, the Women Leading Change in Africa programme — each of these is a testament to what open collaboration can produce, and together they have made a real difference to educators around the world, particularly in developing countries.

—Professor. ZHAN Tao, Former Director of UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education (UNESCO IITE)

A longstanding champion of higher education innovation, Mr. Peter Wells, former Chief of UNESCO's Higher Education Section and now Head of the Education Unit at UNESCO ROSA, has witnessed the growth of many of UNESCO-ICHEI's landmark initiatives, including the launch and evolution of its flagship programme, IIOE.

UNESCO-ICHEI has done a great deal of practical work in strengthening digital and AI literacy among higher education professionals. The IIOE Micro-Certification Project for Enhancing Digital and AI Competencies of University Teachers and the Women Leading Change in Africa initiative are particularly well aligned with our priorities in southern Africa, and both have given us much to think about.

I very much hope we can build on what already exists between us. One possibility would be to work jointly with the Southern African Regional Universities Association, drawing on IIOE's curriculum resources to develop teacher training programmes and foster the kind of experience-sharing that the region would genuinely benefit from.

—Peter Wells, Head of the Education Unit, UNESCO Regional Office for Southern Africa (UNESCO ROSA), during a visit to UNESCO-ICHEI, 13 November 2025



| In December 2023, Mr. Peter Wells attended the IIOE Global Partners Summit

As a long-standing friend of UNESCO-ICHEI, Mr. WANG Libing, the current Chief of the Health and Education Section at UNESCO and former Chief of Section for Educational Innovation and Skills Development, UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, shared a deep bond with the institution from its beginning.



| On 28 February 2023, Mr. WANG Libing attended the *International Higher Education Digital Transformation Conference*

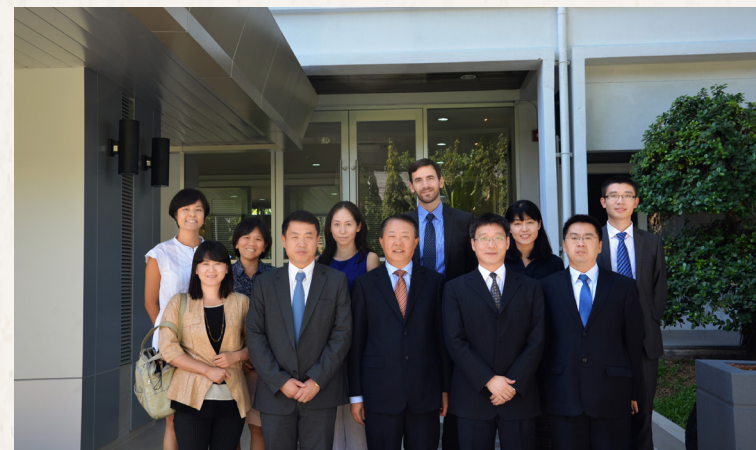
On behalf of UNESCO, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Shenzhen Municipal Government for its longstanding support of UNESCO-ICHEI.

Shenzhen is a place where, as the saying goes, seeds take root the moment they are planted, and flourish the moment the sun comes out. On the project front, the Asia-Pacific component of the Shenzhen Trust Fund has concluded with good results, and the Africa component is on track to wrap up next year. These are achievements that belong to both the Shenzhen Municipal Government and ICHEI, and I hope that all parties will continue to support UNESCO's work going forward.

During the pandemic, the IIOE platform proved its worth. It is, in many ways, a genuine ecosystem, not just a platform. ICHEI itself has made real progress, but so too have partners in Africa and the Asia-Pacific. The universities that the institution has brought on board, or is in the process of engaging, are among the leading institutions in their respective regions. The starting point is high, and the potential for long-term impact is considerable.

—Mr. WANG Libing, speaking as UNESCO's representative among the Board members, summarising the First Meeting of the Second Governing Board of UNESCO-ICHEI, 6 November 2020

Since its establishment, UNESCO-ICHEI has maintained close collaboration with UNESCO bodies and regional intergovernmental organisations. Through these partnerships, it has continuously expanded the reach and impact of its initiatives while creating opportunities for educational partners to grow together through connection, exchange, and shared learning.



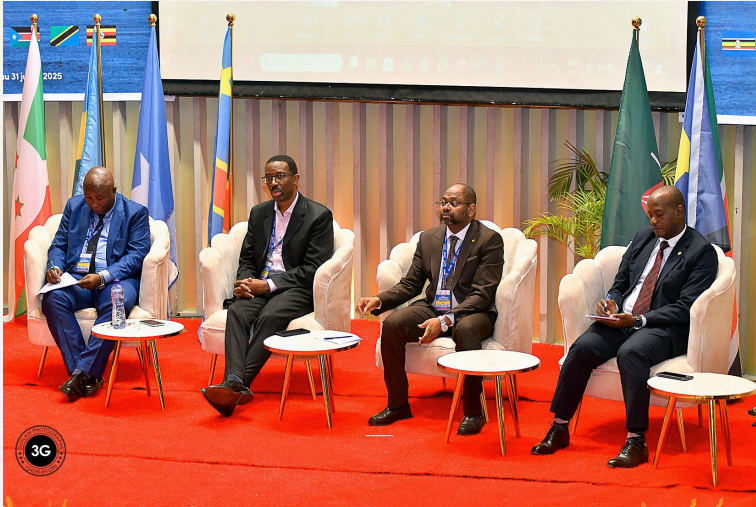
| In December 2015, UNESCO-ICHEI visited the UNESCO Bangkok Office



| In March 2026, UNESCO-ICHEI visited officials from the Education Sector at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris



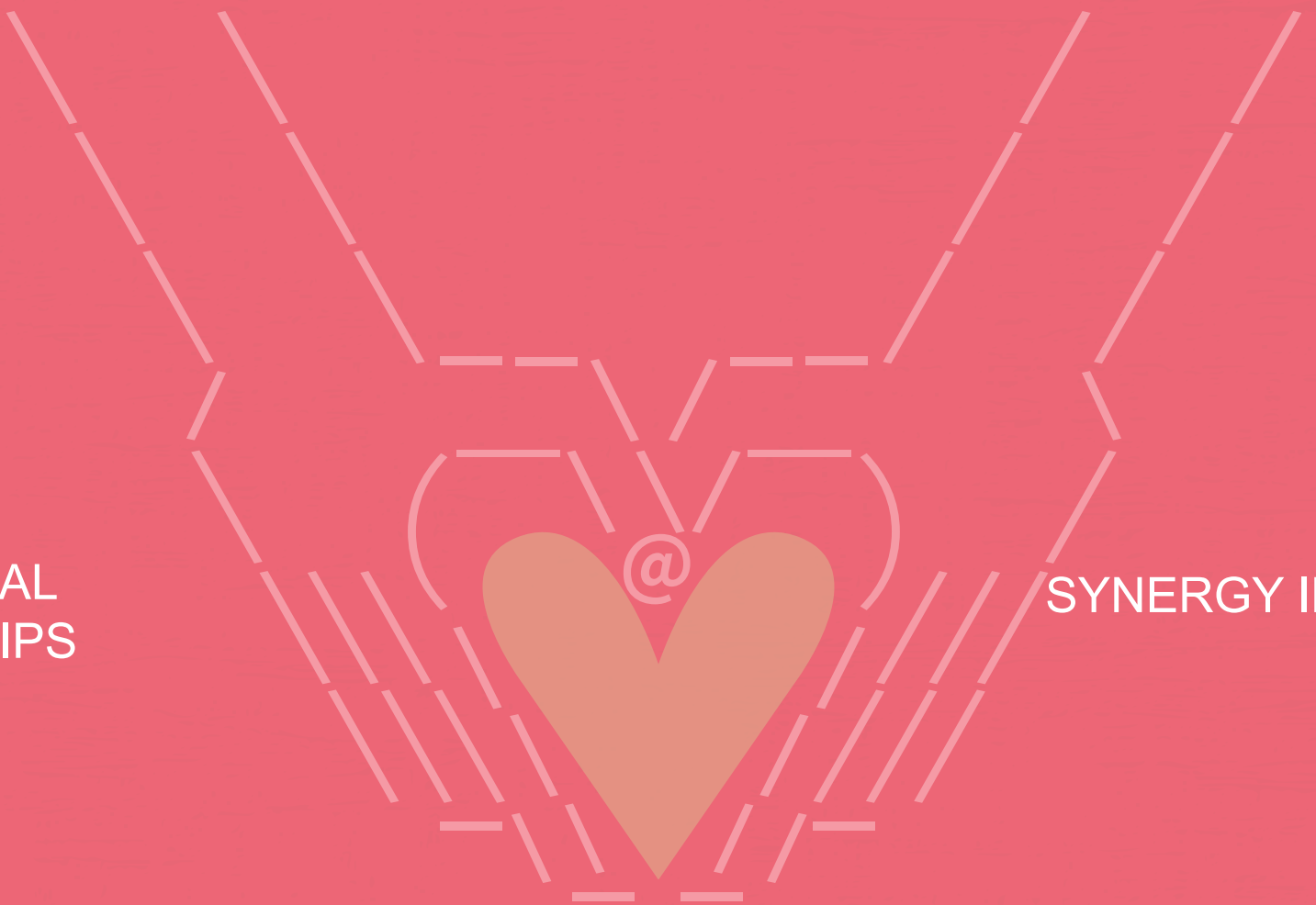
| In April 2018, UNESCO-ICHEI met with Mr. ZHAN Tao, then Director of UNESCO IITE in Education, in Moscow



| Management Team of the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA)



| In April 2026, UNESCO-ICHEI visited the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO)



MULTILATERAL PARTNERSHIPS

The growth of UNESCO-ICHEI and IIOE has been shaped by the long-standing support and active engagement of partner HEIs around the world. Through the IIOE platform and its global network, HEIs have contributed to policy dialogue, capacity building, curriculum development, localised training, and collaborative research, exploring pathways

SYNERGY IN DIVERSITY

for digital transformation rooted in their own educational contexts. Centred on perspectives from the Global South, this section reflects on the collective efforts behind the digital transformation of higher education: a process built through consultation, collaboration, and shared commitment across regions and institutions.

The map illustrates the global network of UNESCO and IIOE training centres and regional centres. Key locations include:

- UNESCO HQ IAU** (Paris, France)
- UNESCO IITE** (Moscow, Russia)
- UNESCO RCQE** (Djibouti, Djibouti)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Mexico, Mexico)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Argentina, Argentina)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Venezuela, Venezuela)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Mali, Mali)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Senegal, Senegal)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Ghana, Ghana)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Nigeria, Nigeria)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Zambia, Zambia)
- UNESCO RCSE** (South Africa, South Africa)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Botswana, Botswana)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Lesotho, Lesotho)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Swaziland, Swaziland)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Mozambique, Mozambique)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Madagascar, Madagascar)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Mauritius, Mauritius)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Reunion, Reunion)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Mayotte, Mayotte)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Comoros, Comoros)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Seychelles, Seychelles)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Maldives, Maldives)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka)
- UNESCO RCSE** (India, India)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Pakistan, Pakistan)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Bangladesh, Bangladesh)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Nepal, Nepal)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Mongolia, Mongolia)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Kazakhstan, Kazakhstan)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyzstan)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Uzbekistan, Uzbekistan)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Tajikistan, Tajikistan)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Turkmenistan, Turkmenistan)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Georgia, Georgia)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Armenia, Armenia)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Russia, Russia)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Belarus, Belarus)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Ukraine, Ukraine)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Poland, Poland)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Czech Republic, Czech Republic)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Slovakia, Slovakia)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Hungary, Hungary)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Romania, Romania)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Bulgaria, Bulgaria)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Greece, Greece)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Turkey, Turkey)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Cyprus, Cyprus)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Israel, Israel)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Jordan, Jordan)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Saudi Arabia, Saudi Arabia)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Iraq, Iraq)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Iran, Iran)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Afghanistan, Afghanistan)
- UNESCO RCSE** (China, China)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Hong Kong, Hong Kong)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Macau, Macau)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Taiwan, Taiwan)
- UNESCO RCSE** (South Korea, South Korea)
- UNESCO RCSE** (North Korea, North Korea)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Japan, Japan)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Philippines, Philippines)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Vietnam, Vietnam)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Laos, Laos)
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- UNESCO RCSE** (Thailand, Thailand)
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- UNESCO RCSE** (Indonesia, Indonesia)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Malaysia, Malaysia)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Singapore, Singapore)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Australia, Australia)
- UNESCO RCSE** (New Zealand, New Zealand)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Fiji, Fiji)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Tonga, Tonga)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Samoa, Samoa)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Vanuatu, Vanuatu)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Solomon Islands, Solomon Islands)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Papua New Guinea, Papua New Guinea)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Timor-Leste, Timor-Leste)
- UNESCO RCSE** (East Timor, East Timor)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Micronesia, Micronesia)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Marshall Islands, Marshall Islands)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Kiribati, Kiribati)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Tuvalu, Tuvalu)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Nauru, Nauru)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Palau, Palau)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Federated States of Micronesia, Federated States of Micronesia)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Northern Mariana Islands, Northern Mariana Islands)
- UNESCO RCSE** (American Samoa, American Samoa)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Guam, Guam)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Virgin Islands, Virgin Islands)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Cayman Islands, Cayman Islands)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Anguilla, Anguilla)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Antigua and Barbuda, Antigua and Barbuda)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Barbados, Barbados)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Belize, Belize)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Costa Rica, Costa Rica)
- UNESCO RCSE** (El Salvador, El Salvador)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Honduras, Honduras)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Nicaragua, Nicaragua)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Panama, Panama)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Colombia, Colombia)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Ecuador, Ecuador)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Peru, Peru)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Bolivia, Bolivia)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Paraguay, Paraguay)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Uruguay, Uruguay)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Argentina, Argentina)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Brazil, Brazil)
- UNESCO RCSE** (Chile, Chile)



In June 2023, the IIOE Uzbekistan National Centre was established at Tashkent University of Information Technologies (TUIT).

Dear colleagues and partners at
UNESCO-ICHEI!

On behalf of Tashkent University of
Information Technologies, we warmly
congratulate you on your 10th anniversary!

Over the past years, UNESCO-ICHEI
has made a significant contribution to the
development of higher education, digital
transformation, and international coop-
eration. We highly value our collaboration
and the opportunities it has created for
enhancing the skills of educators and
integrating modern technologies into education.

We wish UNESCO-ICHEI continued success
and look forward to strengthening our
partnership in the years ahead.

Sincerely,

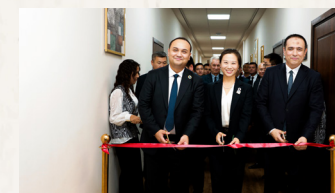
Marat Rakhmatullaev

Sherbek Normatov

Professors of Tashkent University of Information
Technologies.



Professor Makhkamov Bakhtiyor
Shukhratovich, Rector of TUIT



On 26 September 2025, UNESCO-ICHEI
held the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the
Smart Classroom in Uzbekistan



In June 2023, UNESCO-ICHEI visited the
IIOE Uzbekistan National Centre (TUIT)

Dear colleagues and partners of UNESCO-ICHEI,

On behalf of Tashkent University of Information Technologies, we warmly congratulate you
on your 10th anniversary.

Over the past years, UNESCO-ICHEI has made a significant contribution to the
development of higher education, digital transformation, and international cooperation. We
highly value our collaboration and opportunities it has provided for enhancing the skills of
educators and integrating modern technologies into education.

We wish UNESCO-ICHEI continued success and look forward to strengthening our
partnership in the years ahead.

— Professors Marat Rakhmatullaev and Sherbek Normatov (TUIT)



In May 2022, the IIOE Egypt National Centre was established at Ain Shams University (ASU).

| IIOE Egypt National Centre Team



| Professor Mohamed Diaa Zain El-Abedein, President of ASU



| Mahmoud El-Metini, former President of ASU



Since our partnership began, we've built a strong network of 25 Egyptian HEIs. Together with UNESCO-ICHEI, we've empowered educators and students through digital teaching and learning.

We held national policy dialogues and leadership symposia, and we introduced the IIOE Micro-certifications project. As we look back with pride, we also look forward to more courses, more policies, more innovation and more impact on Egyptian higher education

—Congratulations from Ain Shams University on the occasion of UNESCO-ICHEI's 10th Anniversary



In October 2021, the first IIOE National Centre was established at University of Engineering and Technology (UET), Lahore in Pakistan.



| Professor Shahid Munir, Vice Chancellor of UET, Lahore



| On 10 July 2019, the first Smart Classroom was inaugurated at UET, Lahore



| UET Team and Professor LI Ming, Founding Director of UNESCO-ICHEI

If I were to reflect on a single memorable experience from our partnership with UNESCO-ICHEI, it would be the establishment of the very first Smart Classroom at our campus. It began as an innovative pilot project and transformed into a nationwide revolution. Seeing the Higher Education Commission replicate our UET Smart Classroom model across more than a hundred universities in Pakistan; was a truly defining moment. It was the recognition that our partnership was no longer just about institutional growth, it was about national technological revolution.

The impact of our collaboration over the years has been informative, moving beyond our legacy as an engineering-focused institution. UET has evolved into a powerhouse for digital pedagogy and artificial intelligence. With IIOE's support, we have empowered over 3000 learners and 1000 faculty members. I am proud to share that we are looking forward to a future of higher education as a human-machine collaboration, through micro-credentials, continuous professional development and AI integration.

—Congratulations from University of Engineering and Technology, Lahore on the occasion of UNESCO-ICHEI's 10th Anniversary



In April 2022, the IIOE Indonesia National Centre was established at the Indonesia Cyber Education Institute (ICE-I).



| Professor Ali Muktiyanto, Rector of Universitas Terbuka and Chair of the Consortium of the ICE-I

Our collaboration within IIOE has created real impact for educators across Indonesia, such as the recognition through the IIOE Higher Education Digitalisation Pioneer Case Award in 2025. A few moments for history, such as the Cyber Education Forums, where we introduce lectures to both micro course design, and innovative approach to collaborative virtual learning. The international webinar and micro-certifications were powerful moments of knowledge exchange. Showing how Indonesia is actively contributing to global dialogue. A particularly meaningful milestone was the international seminar at Telecom University.

On a personal note, this partnership has always felt meaningful, not just as a professional collaborations, but as a shared mission to expand access, promote lifelong learning and ensure that digital transformation remains inclusive.

—Congratulations from the Indonesia Cyber Education Institute on the occasion of UNESCO-ICHEI's 10th Anniversary



| Prof. Paulina Pannen, Senior Expert, Indonesia Cyber Education Institute



| On 25 April 2024, the Southeast Asia Regional High-Level Policy Dialogue was held in Jakarta, Indonesia



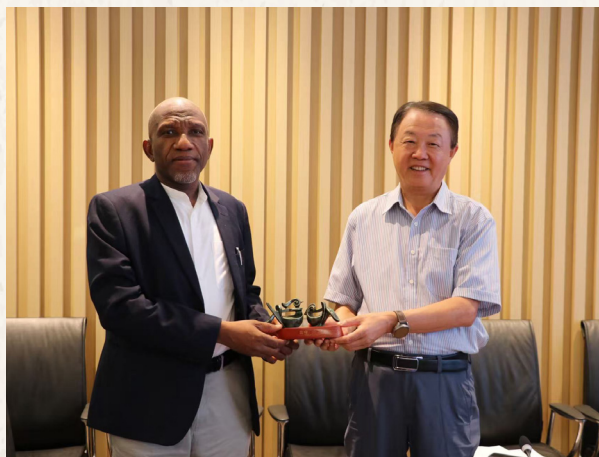
In April 2022, the IIOE Nigeria National Centre was established at Ahmadu Bello University (ABU).

One of the most memorable collaborations has to do with the national dialogue that we organised in collaboration with UNESCO-ICHEI in which on the issue of developing a consensus framework for the use of AI in Nigerian higher education. We were able to gather stakeholders from government, regulatory agencies, academia, students, international organisations and industry, in collaboration with UNESCO-ICHEI. And the outcome of that national dialogue was a consensus framework document. Along with the National AI Strategy, it was used by the National Universities Commission to develop the policy on the responsible and ethical use of AI in the Nigerian university system.

—Congratulations from Ahmadu Bello University on the occasion of UNESCO-ICHEI's 10th Anniversary



| Professor Adamu Ahmed, Vice-Chancellor of ABU



| Professor Kabiru Bala, former Vice-Chancellor of ABU, with Professor Li Ming, Founding Director of UNESCO-ICHEI



| In December 2023, the IIOE Nigeria National Centre attended the inaugural Pioneer Case Award Ceremony



| On 18 July 2024, UNESCO-ICHEI, together with the IIOE Nigeria National Centre co-organised the Nigerian National Policy Dialogue

In January 2022, the IIOE Malaysia National Centre was established at University Putra Malaysia (UPM).

To UNESCO-ICHEI Team

Congratulations for reaching this milestone and it has been a pleasure working with great dedication and commitment. We really hope our collaboration will be stronger and prosperous.

UPM Team


ISMI ARIF

To UNESCO-ICHEI Team,

Congratulations for reaching this milestone and it has been a pleasure working with great dedication and commitment. We really hope our collaboration will be stronger and prosperous.

— Professor Ismi Arif of UPM

Over the years, it has been truly inspiring to see UNESCO-ICHEI bridging people together and advancing innovation in higher education. One thing I especially appreciate is the spirit of collaboration, how different ideas and people come together to create something truly meaningful.

One experience I clearly remember was participating in the launch of the Smart Classroom. What made that experience so memorable was not only the teamwork and dedication that went into making it happen, but also witnessing online learners actively participating in classroom interactions. It was a powerful reminder that technology is changing the way we learn and making education more open and connected.

— Congratulations from University Putra Malaysia on the occasion of UNESCO-ICHEI's 10th Anniversary



| Professor Ahmad Farhan Mohd Sadullah,
Vice-Chancellor of UPM



| On 27 May 2025, the MAXHUB Smart Classroom was launched at the IIOE Malaysia National Centre (UPM)



In January 2022, the IIOE Mongolia National Centre was established at Mongolian University of Science and Technology (MUST).



In July 2025, UNESCO-ICHEI and MUST signed *Joint Action Plan on Capacity-Building and Recognition of Digital and AI Competencies in Mongolia's Higher Education Sector*



UNESCO-ICHEI and the IIOE Mongolia National Centre team



Professor Namnan Tumurpurev, Rector of MUST

Over the years, we have built a strong and meaningful partnership together. Together, we have established a smart classroom, contributed as a founding member of IIOE and successfully implemented initiatives such as Lightboard-based course development, Blended Learning Capacity Building for STEM Teachers and IIOE Micro-Certification Project, all of which have achieved positive results. In 2025, we also co-hosted the East Asia High-Level Policy Dialogue in Mongolia with UNESCO-ICHEI, which further deepened our cooperation and exchange. We greatly value this partnership and look forward to continuing our work together to advance innovation and digital transformation in higher education.

—Congratulations from Mongolian University of Science and Technology on the occasion of UNESCO-ICHEI's 10th Anniversary



On 7 November 2021, the IIOE Zambia National Centre was established at Mulungushi University.



| Professor Royson M. Mukwena, Vice-Chancellor of Mulungushi University (IIOE Rotating Chair for 2026)



| Professor Brian Halubanza, Director of the IIOE Zambia National Centre



| In May 2025, UNESCO-ICHEI attended the IIOE Zambia National Centre event

I'm honored to share this milestone as UNESCO-ICHEI has helped us move from dialogue to practical actions through AI training, institutional partnerships and national leadership in digital education. A memorable milestone has been a success rollout of Micro-Certification programmes and AI training for educators and institutions.

—Congratulations from Mulungushi University on the occasion of UNESCO-ICHEI's 10th Anniversary

BRIDGING INDUSTRY AND EDUCATION



Industry-academia collaboration has been a constant thread running through UNESCO-ICHEI's decade of practice. From the establishment of smart classrooms, to the co-development of the IIOE platform and learning resources, and to training programmes on digital literacy and AI applications, the deep engagement of industry partners has brought numerous initiatives to fruition across the world.

EMPOWERING LEARNING FUTURES



This section looks back on the journey of collaboration between UNESCO-ICHEI and its industry partners, tracing the trust and support from the private sector that have helped bring international cooperation projects into reality and supported the Pioneer Award.

Huawei and UNESCO-ICHEI share a strong foundation and long-standing partnership. Since 2015, the two sides have carried out sustained and practical cooperation through projects such as the Huawei ICT Academy and IIOE, jointly advancing smart education, digital talent development, and international exchange, and establishing a stable and productive collaboration framework.



In October 2018, Mr. FENG Baoshuai, Director of Huawei Talent Development Department, attended the Second IAC Meeting of UNESCO-ICHEI



In September 2020, UNESCO-ICHEI attended HUAWEI CONNECT and was recognised as one of Huawei's five 2020 Excellent Global Talent Ecosystem Partners

Huawei has long believed in the power of ICT to drive innovation in education, and it has been a genuine pleasure to work alongside UNESCO-ICHEI in exploring how digital technology can transform higher education. As one of the co-founding partners of IIOE, Huawei and UNESCO-ICHEI have built up a broad and sustained collaboration, spanning capacity building in higher education across developing countries in Asia and Africa, digital talent development, and smart education initiatives. UNESCO-ICHEI is also a valued partner in Huawei's global talent ecosystem, with active involvement in the Huawei ICT Competition and related programmes. The connection between Huawei's ICT Academy network and the IIOE Alliance has helped both sides advance the internationalisation of higher education in meaningful ways.

Working with UNESCO-ICHEI over the years, we have come to appreciate more deeply that using technology to promote equity in education, and harnessing digitalisation to raise the quality of higher education, is work that matters on a global scale. Through our collaboration, Huawei has not only brought its leading ICT expertise and industry experience into international education projects, but has also broadened its own engagement with the global education ecosystem.

—Congratulations from Mr. MA Yue, Vice President of Huawei and CEO of the Intelligent Transportation Business Unit



On 14 January 2022, Mr. MA Yue attended the First UNESCO-ICHEI Global Enterprise Summit

Tencent has been one of the institution's most steadfast and valued partners. The establishment and growth of IIOE were made possible in part through the generous support of the Tencent Charity Foundation. As a member of the UNESCO-ICHEI Governing Board at the time, Mr. CHEN Yidan, Founder of the Tencent Charity Foundation, participated in multiple Board meetings and has closely followed and witnessed ICHEI's growth and development over the years.



In June 2016, Mr. MA Huateng, Chairman and CEO of Tencent, participated in the International Meeting on Innovation and Entrepreneurship Education



In October 2021, Mr. TANG Daosheng, Senior Executive Vice President of Tencent and CEO of CSIG, paid a visit to UNESCO-ICHEI



In May 2016, Mr. CHEN Yidan, Founder of the Tencent Foundation, and Professor LI Ming, Founding Director of UNESCO-ICHEI

From the very beginning, UNESCO-ICHEI chose to focus on online education as a core entry point. I think that was a far-sighted decision. During the global pandemic in particular, ICHEI achieved impressive results in advancing digital cooperation in higher education across developing countries, and showed a real ability to seize new opportunities as they arose. Seeing that progress has been genuinely encouraging, and I look forward to the Centre continuing to build on its strengths in online education, deepening collaboration, broadening its reach, and contributing more to the global digital transformation of higher education.

At the end of the day, social progress depends on education. When I founded the Yidan Prize in 2016, my hope was to support the development of education and, by connecting educators and institutions around the world, to encourage the exchange and sharing of ideas. Education and internationalism have always been at the heart of what the Yidan Prize stands for, and that sits very naturally alongside UNESCO-ICHEI's long-standing commitment to international education cooperation, digitalisation, and the sharing of knowledge.

—Charles CHEN Yidan, Co-founder of Tencent, Founder and Honorary Chairman of the Tencent Foundation, Founder of the Yidan Prize, and Founder of Wuhan College, speaking at the Governing Board meeting



In 2023, with the support of the BYD Charity Foundation, the inaugural IIOE Higher Education Digitalisation Pioneer Case Awards were launched. The award-winning cases showcased the innovative efforts and practical achievements of

universities across developing countries as they navigated the wave of digital transformation. The Awards also reflects BYD's ongoing commitment to advancing digital transformation in education and promoting wider access to quality educational resources.



| Mr. WANG Chuanfu, Chairman and President of BYD Company Limited



| In December 2023, the inaugural Pioneer Case Award was presented with the support of the BYD Charity Foundation

BGI Group has been one of UNESCO-ICHEI's key partners in advancing industry-academia collaboration. Drawing on real-world industry applications, the two sides jointly developed the series of "AI + Life Sciences" courses. BGI also served as the title sponsor of the Second IIOE Higher Education Digitalisation Pioneer Case Award.

I am delighted that BGI Group is supporting UNESCO-ICHEI's 2025 IIOE Higher Education Digitalisation Pioneer Case Award. The way I see it, technology ultimately has to serve people. Whether we are talking about genomics or the digitalisation of education, the goal is the same: to make a real difference to more people's lives. I hope that through our collaboration, we can work together to promote life sciences education and talent development, and contribute more to the prevention and treatment of rare diseases, global health, and human wellbeing more broadly.

On the practical side, I strongly believe in the importance of South-South cooperation. Learning is becoming increasingly fragmented and online, and in that context, we are keen to work through the IIOE platform, the network of national centres, and the Smart Classroom initiative, combining BGI's own experts and curriculum resources, to develop more multilingual training and capacity-building programmes that help developing countries nurture local talent.

I have always felt that life sciences education needs more global collaboration. Looking ahead, we hope to work with UNESCO-ICHEI to develop joint life sciences courses and certificates, organise international seminars, and build bridges between our respective platforms for curriculum sharing. We are also keen to explore, through UNESCO-ICHEI's platform and networks, the possibility of establishing laboratories in regions such as East Africa, bringing more educational and research resources directly to where they are needed.

—Mr. WANG Jian, Chairman and Co-founder of BGI Group, speaking at a partnership meeting, 25 February 2025



In February 2025, Mr. YIN Ye, Director and Chief Executive Officer of BGI Group visited UNESCO-ICHEI



In February 2025, Mr. WANG Jian, Chairman and Co-founder of BGI Group visited UNESCO-ICHEI

In 2023, UNESCO-ICHEI launched the Higher Education Digitalisation Pioneer Case Awards. Rooted in the IIOE digital education ecosystem, the Awards were established to recognise, inspire, and disseminate best practices emerging from the digital transformation of higher education. They also seek to identify innovative approaches that are adaptable and transferable across different contexts, supporting their wider adoption and growth throughout the Global South.

The inaugural Pioneer Awards were supported by the BYD Charity Foundation, while the second Pioneer Awards received sponsorship from BGI Group and BGI Education.



| In December 2023, the inaugural Higher Education Digitalisation Pioneer Case Awards Ceremony was held in Shenzhen



| In September 2025, the Second IIOE Higher Education Digitalisation Pioneer Case Awards Ceremony was held in Singapore

Industry–academia collaboration serves as a key pillar in advancing the digital transformation of higher education. The Smart Classroom project is jointly supported by Southern University of Science and Technology (SUSTech) in providing academic expertise, industry partners in supplying hardware and software infrastructure, and UNESCO-ICHEI in establishing technical standards, and has been implemented across IIOE partner institutions.

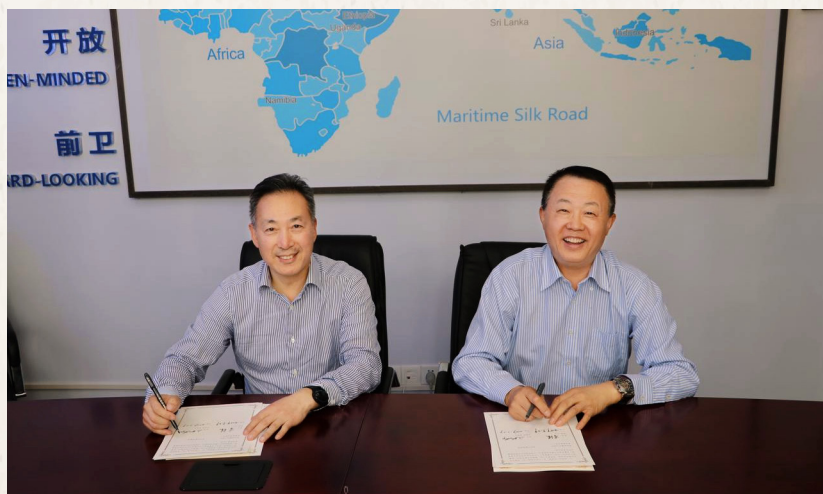
To date, Smart Classrooms have been established and put into operation in 17 countries across Asia and Africa, including Pakistan, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Mongolia, Indonesia, Uganda, Kenya, The Gambia, Nigeria, Nepal, Malaysia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Ghana.



WEDON Education Group has been one of UNESCO-ICHEI's earliest and most important industry partners. Together, the two sides have enabled the implementation of Smart Classroom projects across multiple countries in Asia and Africa. They have also continued to deepen collaboration in initiatives such as the IIOE Hong Kong Training Centre and the France Training Centre, further expanding international networks for educational cooperation and exchange.

Warmest congratulations to UNESCO-ICHEI on reaching this tenth anniversary. Throughout the journey, IIOE has stayed true to UNESCO's founding spirit — using online education to carry knowledge to every corner of the world, and making education genuinely accessible to all. Looking ahead, we will continue to follow UNESCO-ICHEI's lead, working to develop more people with the digital and innovative capabilities that the future demands, and contributing to the growth of both education and industry.

—Congratulations from WEDON Education Group on the occasion of UNESCO-ICHEI's 10th Anniversary



On 29 March 2017, UNESCO-ICHEI and WEDON Education signed a Smart Classroom donation agreement, establishing a partnership to build the first batch of Smart Classrooms across six countries in Asia and Africa (Pakistan, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Djibouti)



Ms. LAN Haiqing, Global CEO of WEDON DEMOS Group, with Professor LI Ming, Founding Director of UNESCO-ICHEI, On 4 July 2024



On 8 December 2025, Mr. WANG Duanrui, Chairman of WEDON-Demos Group Limited, attended the *Third Meeting of the Third Governing Board of UNESCO-ICHEI*

The China Education Information Industry Innovation Platform has maintained ongoing collaboration with UNESCO-ICHEI to promote the implementation of Smart Classroom projects in countries including Mongolia, Indonesia, Uganda, Kenya, the Gambia, and Nigeria.



| In April 2022, the Smart Classroom was launched at the University of Nairobi, Kenya



| Mr. ZHANG Yu, Secretary-General of the China Education Information Industry Innovation Platform

Looking back on our time working together, what stands out most vividly is the period of the pandemic. At that difficult moment, the Platform rallied its member enterprises to work shoulder to shoulder with UNESCO-ICHEI, responding urgently to educational needs around the world, helping countries in the Global South set up online classrooms, overcoming time differences and technical barriers, and delivering online teacher training to universities across multiple countries. That spirit of solidarity under pressure is something I will not easily forget.

Building on UNESCO-ICHEI's international reach and networks, our member enterprises have long provided smart classroom solutions to countries across the Global South, working closely with local governments and universities on talent development, participating in overseas outreach and cultural exchange, and sharing China's experience in education digitalisation. This is what the partnership is about, and it is also, I think, a concrete expression of building a community with a shared future for humanity: complementary strengths, and outcomes that benefit everyone.

——Congratulations from Secretary-General ZHANG Yu on the occasion of UNESCO-ICHEI's 10th Anniversary

MAXHUB

MAXHUB has worked closely with UNESCO-ICHEI to advance the Smart Classroom initiative, supporting its implementation in countries including Malaysia, Nepal, and Algeria. Through this partnership, the two organisations have contributed to the development of digital learning environments and the adoption of innovative teaching practices in HEIs.



| In April 2021, Mr. DENG Yigang, CEO of MAXHUB, visited UNESCO-ICHEI

MAXHUB has been a proud partner of UNESCO-ICHEI for several years. MAXHUB has long been focused on providing intelligent solutions for education, dedicate to work with all sectors of society to build a better digital future. Together we contribute to donating 10 Smart Classrooms across 10 countries, supporting UNESCO 2030 education agenda and driving digital transformation in higher education worldwide.

One of the most memorable moments was seeing our first Small Classroom come to the life at Universiti Putra Malaysia, in March 2024. Since then we were expanding to Tribhuvan University in Nepal, and soon, the University of Science and Technology Houari Boumedienne in Algeria. These classrooms aren't just about technology. They are about empowering the educators, enhancing learning experiences and bridging education gaps in developing countries.

Our partnership with UNESCO-ICHEI has opened doors to meaningful connection with university, government, ministry and education leaders across Asia, Africa and the Arab region.

—Congratulations from MAXHUB on the occasion of UNESCO-ICHEI's 10th Anniversary



| On May 21, 2026, the unveiling ceremony of MAXHUB Smart Classroom was held at Tribhuvan University in Nepal

GuangZhou Dazzleview Intelligent Technology Co., Ltd. has been one of the important partners of UNESCO-ICHEI in the field of smart education. Together, the two sides have advanced the implementation of Smart Classroom projects in countries including Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Morocco, and Zambia, providing support for the development of digital teaching environments in local HEIs.



| On 13 December 2024, Mr. WU Zhen tao, Chairman of Dazzleview, attended the High-Level Policy Dialogue in Africa held in Dakar, Senegal

At Dazzleview, we have always focused on innovation in smart education environments, and it has been a real privilege to work alongside UNESCO-ICHEI and SUSTech, and together with Cadi Ayyad University in Morocco and Mulungushi University in Zambia, to build smart classrooms in the field.

Working with UNESCO-ICHEI has been valuable in more ways than one. We have been able to put cutting-edge ICT into real classroom settings, expand our presence in overseas education markets, and gain a much deeper appreciation of what it means to use technology in the service of educational equity. Going forward, Dazzleview will continue to harness technology to help raise the quality and effectiveness of higher education in developing countries, and to support more balanced access to education.

—Congratulations from Mr. WU Zhen tao, Chairman of GuangZhou Dazzleview Intelligent Technology, on the occasion of UNESCO-ICHEI's 10th Anniversary



| The inauguration of the Dazzleview Smart Classroom at Kyrgyz National University, September 2025

Jiangxi KMAX Industrial Co. Ltd. has maintained ongoing collaboration with UNESCO-ICHEI in the field of digital education applications. The company has provided VR/AR teaching support equipment to IIOE partner HEIs, further enriching digital teaching scenarios in higher education and contributing to the enhancement of teaching and institutional management capacity.

As a corporate partner of UNESCO-ICHEI, KMAX is proud to have worked together across more than 10 countries and regions, bringing Chinese technology and solutions to support the digital transformation of higher education around the world. We are particularly glad to have contributed to IIOE National Centres in Mongolia, Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria and beyond, deploying KMAX's own technology, including virtual reality, to support learning and talent development on the ground.

—Congratulations from KMAX on the occasion of UNESCO-ICHEI's 10th Anniversary



Mr. CUI Kailong, Vice President of Jiangxi KMAX Industrial Co. Ltd



On 31 July 2025, representatives of the Venezuelan Ministry of Science and Technology, together with UNESCO-ICHEI, visited KMAX



UNESCO-ICHEI introduced KMAX's VR software and hardware solutions to the then Vice President of Venezuela



China Pocy Group shares a common vision with UNESCO-ICHEI in promoting international cooperation in vocational education, advancing educational equity, and strengthening talent development. In 2025, China Pocy Group supported the High-Level Policy Dialogue in East Asia, contributing to the deepening of regional educational exchange and cooperation.

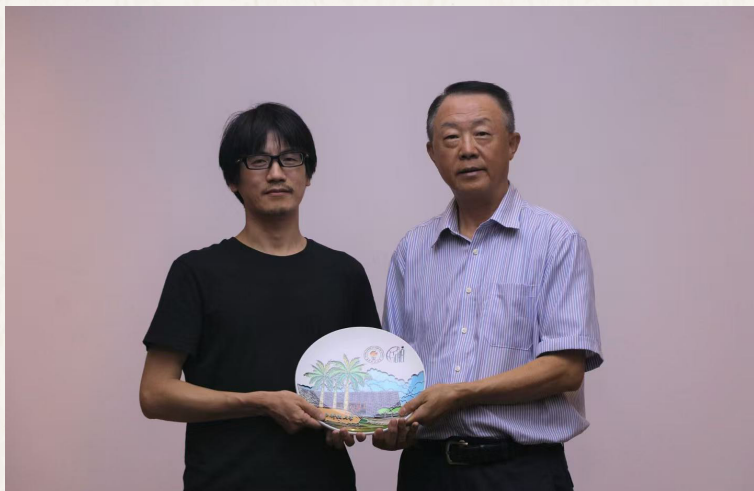


| Mr. YAO Yichun, Chairman and President of China Pocy Group



| On 30 June 2025, representatives of China Pocy Group attended the 2025 High-Level Policy Dialogue in East Asia

Jiker, a longstanding partner of UNESCO-ICHEI, worked closely with it on the technical development of Version 1.0 of the IIOE Platform.



| Mr. YAO Shanglang and Mr. LI Ming

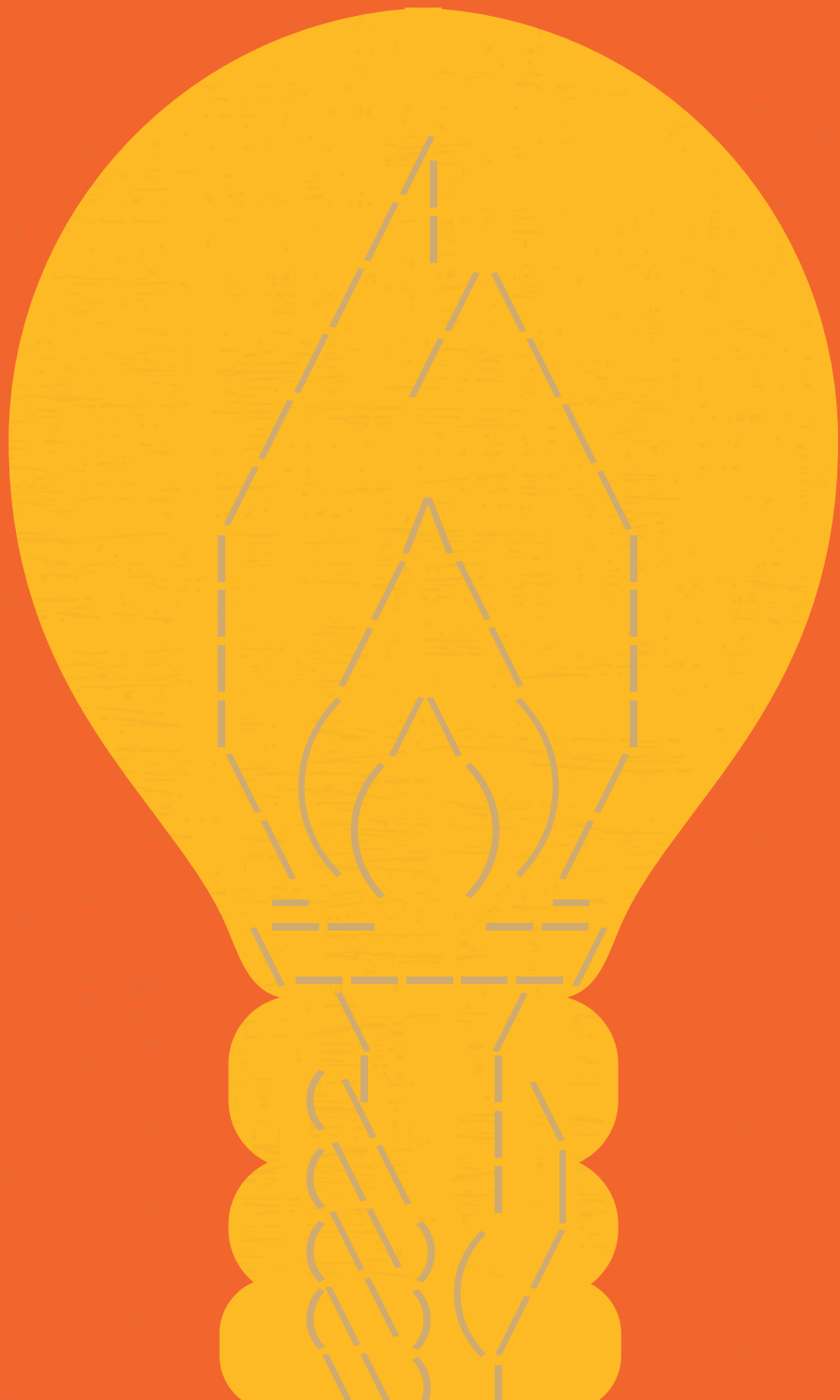


| During the COVID-19 pandemic, Jiker provided vital technical support for UNESCO-ICHEI's digital capacity-building initiatives

Wisdom House has been one of UNESCO-ICHEI's longstanding corporate partners. Through a shared commitment to expanding access to knowledge across linguistic and cultural boundaries, the two sides have collaborated on the Arabic localisation of the IIOE platform, the development of the Arabic-language website, and the translation of educational resources and courses.



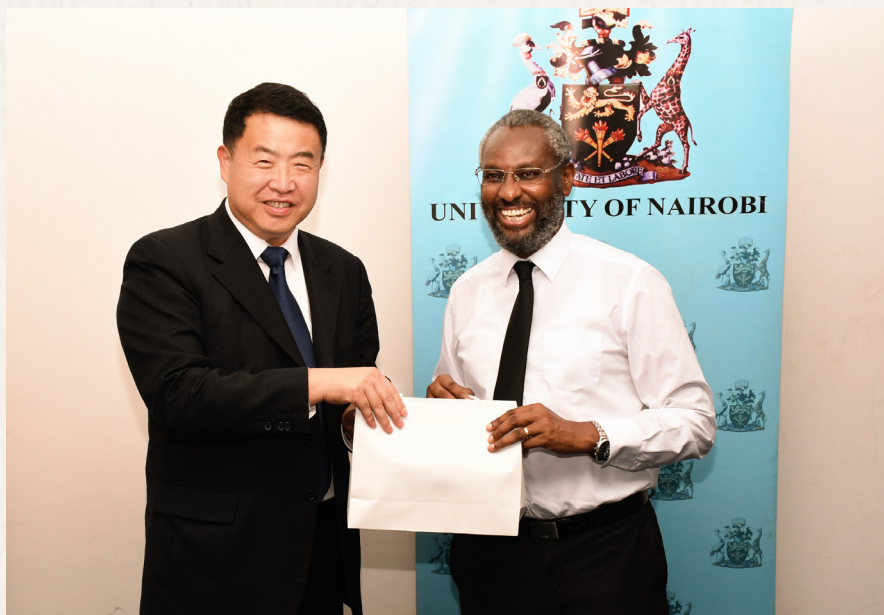
| On 26 March 2021, UNESCO-ICHEI and Wisdom House formalised their intention to collaborate through the signing of a cooperation agreement



PEOPLE AT UNESCO-ICHEI PASSING THE TORCH

At its heart, the story of any institution is a story of people. Throughout the preparation, establishment and growth of UNESCO-ICHEI, scholars, partners and friends from different sectors have offered their support, encouragement and dedication. Successive leaders, colleagues and generations of young professionals have each contributed to shaping the character of UNESCO-ICHEI and leaving their mark on its journey. This section brings together their reflections and messages, tracing how the institution has grown over the past decade through a shared sense of commitment carried forward from one generation to the next.

Mr. LU Chun, former Vice President of SUSTech and former Deputy Director of UNESCO-ICHEI (2016–2023), currently serves as Vice President of City University of Hong Kong and Executive President of City University of Hong Kong (Dongguan). He witnessed firsthand the birth and growth of UNESCO-ICHEI.



| In March 2023, ICHEI visited the University of Nairobi, Kenya, where Mr. LU Chun met with then Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Stephen Kiama

“Ten years ago, I had the privilege of helping to establish this UNESCO institution in Shenzhen. Having been there from the beginning, I know first-hand what it takes to bring together the mission of an international organisation and the spirit of a city that has always been willing to try something new. I have watched UNESCO-ICHEI grow

from its earliest roots, through exploration, through finding its footing, into a genuine force for higher education innovation across the Asia-Pacific.

Shenzhen has always been a city that writes its own story through boldness and a willingness to go first; UNESCO-ICHEI has taken that same spirit and turned it into something with international reach, responding to the demands of the times through ten years of steady, grounded work.

Standing at this new juncture, and looking ahead to a world shaped by technological change and shifting global dynamics, I have three hopes for UNESCO-ICHEI. The first is that it continues to champion educational equity. The second is that it keeps pushing on quality and innovation. The third is that it remains a sincere bridge between civilisations.

On the occasion of this tenth anniversary, I extend my warmest congratulations to all colleagues and to the many partners who have supported UNESCO-ICHEI along the way.

—Congratulations from Mr. LU Chun on the occasion of UNESCO-ICHEI's 10th Anniversary



| Mr. LU Chun, then Deputy Director of UNESCO-ICHEI

Ms. HAN Wei, former Executive Deputy Director of UNESCO-ICHEI (2016–2023), currently serves as Executive Vice President of Xi'an Peihua University and Executive Deputy Secretary-General of the IIOE Secretariat. She has played an instrumental role in UNESCO-ICHEI's growth and advancement.



| In June 2023, Ms. HAN Wei led a delegation to visit Uzbekistan

Looking back, the past decade has been quite a journey. From UNESCO-ICHEI's establishment and international review process to the launch of Smart Classrooms, IIOE National Centres and Micro-certifications, UNESCO-ICHEI has always tried to



| Ms. HAN Wei, then Deputy Director of UNESCO-ICHEI

remain both forward-looking and grounded, responding not only to the theory of digital transformation in education, but to its real challenges in practice.

Among the many initiatives over the years, *CLOUD* magazine remains especially close to my heart. It emerged from a simple belief: that a UNESCO Category 2 Centre should do more than run projects, it should also contribute knowledge and foster dialogue. As digital transformation and smart education advanced rapidly, we felt the time was right to create a platform of our own. Even choosing a name took time and reflection. We eventually settled on *CLOUD* (Yunji), hoping it would become a space that connects — connecting people, ideas, and educational traditions with the possibilities of the future.

In its early days, we devoted considerable thought to the magazine's structure and editorial direction. Over time, it grew through the generous support of experts, educators and partners across the IIOE community. I hope *CLOUD* will continue to flourish and contribute to UNESCO-ICHEI's broader mission of knowledge-sharing and international collaboration.

—Congratulations from Ms. HAN Wei on the occasion of UNESCO-ICHEI's 10th Anniversary

Mr. WANG Guobin, former Deputy Director of UNESCO-ICHEI (2020–2022), provided extensive and practical support to UNESCO-ICHEI during his tenure, drawing on his rich experience in legal affairs and public administration.



Mr. WANG Guobin, former Deputy Director of UNESCO-ICHEI



Mr. WANG Guobin, then Deputy Director, and Prof. LI Ming, then Director

CLOUD has served as a vital bridge for UNESCO-ICHEI's external communications and the dissemination of its achievements. Over the years, it has continued to grow in maturity, while its brand volume has steadily expanded. I sincerely admire the dedication of all colleagues at UNESCO-ICHEI and extend my heartfelt congratulations on its remarkable accomplishments.

As a key collaborative pillar of UNESCO, UNESCO-ICHEI has forged ahead with perseverance over the past decade. Its roles in capacity-building and ecosystem development have become increasingly prominent, making meaningful contributions to advancing education modernisation and improving the quality of education in developing countries.

Looking ahead, may UNESCO-ICHEI continue to build on its momentum and reach new heights of excellence.

—Congratulations from Mr. WANG Guobin on the occasion of UNESCO-ICHEI's 10th Anniversary

Distinguished professionals who have supported the development of UNESCO-ICHEI
(listed in alphabetical order)
Distinguished professionals who have supported the development of UNESCO-ICHEI
(listed in alphabetical order)



CHEN Yuehong
Dean of School of Humanities and Social Sciences, SUSTech



LI Shaoxian
Programme Consultant of Arab Region of UNESCO-ICHEI; Director of China-Arab Research Institute of Ningxia University



QIANG Haiyan
Professor; involved in the preparatory work of UNESCO-ICHEI since 2014



XU Zhenghe
Foreign Academician at the Chinese Academy of Engineering (CAE); Founding Dean and Chair Professor of the School of Engineering, SUSTech



CHENG Jiangang
Educational Technology Advisor to UNESCO-ICHEI; Professor at Institute of Education of Tsinghua University



Lim Cher Ping
Chief Expert of IIOE; Chair Professor of The Education University of Hong Kong



SUN Xiangyang
Consultant of IIOE "AI+Cross-Border E-Commerce" Micro-Certification Project Consultant; Chairman of Cross-Border E-Commerce Professional Committee, China Customs Society



YANG Jin
Consultant for International Cooperation of UNESCO-ICHEI; former Chinese ambassador and permanent delegate to UNESCO



Grace Oakley
Deputy Dean of the Graduate School of Education at the University of Western Australia; Consultant for IIOE Quality Assurance 2.0 and for the "Empowering Higher Education Institutions For Digital Teaching and Learning in Egypt" project



LIU Jiang
Chair Professor, Department of Computer Science and Engineering, SUSTech



SUN Yanfeng
Consultant for Latin America and the Caribbean of UNESCO-ICHEI; Institute of Latin America Studies, China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations



ZHAO Jianhua
Senior Expert of UNESCO-ICHEI; Deputy Director of Center for Higher Education Research, SUSTech



HOU Shengtao
Professor; former Director of the Department of International Cooperation, SUSTech



MIAO Fengchun
Former Director, Education Information and AI in Education Division, UNESCO



TANG Min
Consultant for Industry-University-Research of UNESCO-ICHEI; Chairman of China Cross-Border E-Commerce 50 People Forum



ZHU Zhiting
Special Advisor of UNESCO-ICHEI; Tenured Professor at East China Normal University



JIANG Kaijun
Professor; involved in the preparatory work of UNESCO-ICHEI since 2014



Paul Prinsloo
Researcher at the University of South Africa, provided guidance for the "Empowering Institutional Policy Implementation for Digital Teaching and Learning in Nigeria" pilot project



WANG Min
Industry-Academy Cooperation Senior Consultant of UNESCO-ICHEI



ZHONG Zeyu
Secretary-General, China Association of Trade in Services

Ms. BI Xiaohan

Deputy Director of UNESCO-ICHEI



Over the past 10 years, UNESCO-ICHEI has grown from a pioneering initiative into a thriving and influential force. These ten years have also been a journey of growing together with UNESCO-ICHEI through shared commitment and perseverance. I witnessed firsthand the IIOE take shape from nothing, evolving step by step into a key driver of the digital transformation of higher education across the Global South.

Against the backdrop of rapid evolution of AI, UNESCO-ICHEI has continued to innovate its approaches and broadened its partnerships. I am deeply grateful to have worked alongside like-minded colleagues and collaborators from every corner of the world, turning ideas and discussions into concrete initiatives and on-the-ground projects.

In the decade ahead, I look forward to continuing this journey with even more friends and partners.

Mr. PAN Feng

Deputy Director of UNESCO-ICHEI



Ten years of cherished time, now crystallised, as craftsmanship has built this platform of connectivity. Digital intelligence has grown rapidly, enabling collective efforts to transcend boundaries.

Honoured to have walked alongside UNESCO-ICHEI for two years, I witnessed ideas take root and extend their influence across wider horizons.

May UNESCO-ICHEI stay true to its founding aspirations and uncharted ambitions. May the light of technology kindle every passion and illuminate every path ahead, writing a new and brilliant chapter in the story of global higher education innovation.



Mr. SIT Fung

Assistant Director of UNESCO-ICHEI & Chief of the Global Partnership and Programme Office

Having spent just over three years at UNESCO-ICHEI, I feel fortunate to have witnessed its deepening commitment to global education cooperation. Through the Global Partnership and Programme Office, we have worked closely with partner institutions around the world, developing the Micro-certifications project for teachers' digital competency, strengthening industry-academia collaboration, and seeing first-hand how educators across universities in Global South have steadily built their digital literacy. As we mark this tenth anniversary and look to what comes next, our focus remains the same: harnessing technology, fostering multilateral cooperation, supporting locally-led operations, and ensuring that the benefits are genuinely mutual.



Mr. CAO Zian

Chief of the IIOE Management Centre

UNESCO-ICHEI's first decade has been a journey shaped by a shared commitment to educational equity and international collaboration. Through IIOE, technology has been harnessed to connect partners across the globe, translating ambitious goals into practical action—from advancing the application of emerging technologies to strengthening talent development. In doing so, the vision of Education 2030 has become not a distant aspiration, but a tangible reality for educators and learners alike.

It has been a privilege to contribute to this work. Along the way, I have come to appreciate that lasting impact begins with people. With passion for the mission and confidence in the future, I warmly congratulate ICHEI on its 10th anniversary and look forward to the journey ahead!



Ms. SU Rui

Chief of the Knowledge Production and Communications Centre

Marking this 10th anniversary alongside the Knowledge Production and Communications Centre, helping to document and reflect on what has been built, feels like a real privilege. Leafing through the pages of *CLOUD* and looking back on the work behind the Micro-Certification Project, research reports, and the Pioneer Award, I am struck by how our partners have brought genuine warmth to the idea of digital transformation in higher education, making it something lived and felt, not just discussed. This work has given me a place to bring both my professional expertise and my enthusiasm to something that truly matters.

As a new chapter begins, I look forward to continuing this journey with UNESCO-ICHEI, pursuing excellence, embracing innovation, and shaping the future together.



Mr. XU Mingshun

Chief of the Administrative Affairs Office

My first day at UNESCO-ICHEI happened to coincide with its 5th anniversary, and six years later, I now find myself witnessing its 10th anniversary while serving in a dual role spanning both administration and programme work. From Programme Officer to Chief of the Administration Affairs Office, I am deeply grateful for the diverse experiences and opportunities ICHEI has given me. Its spirit, "professional, efficient, open-minded, and forward looking", continues to inspire me in contributing to efforts to bridge the digital divide across the Global South. As UNESCO-ICHEI embarks on its next decade, I look forward to continuing this journey together!

2014.06

Shenzhen Municipal Government and UNESCO signed a Memorandum of Understanding



UNESCO-Shenzhen Funds-in-Trust

2015.05

UNESCO-Shenzhen Funds-in-Trust Agreement established

2016.06

UNESCO-ICHEI inaugurated in Shenzhen

2016.11

UNESCO DG Irina Bokova attended the first Governing Board meeting

2017.03

WEDON Smart Classroom Project launched in 6 countries across Asia and Africa



2022.05

UNESCO-ICHEI participated in the WHEC in Barcelona and hosted the IIOE Roundtable

2023.05

UNESCO-ICHEI renewed its mandate, entering a new eight-year cycle

2026.06

UNESCO-ICHEI celebrated its 10th anniversary

2025.07

Launch the IIOE "AI+Industry" Micro-Certifications

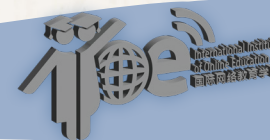
2024.04

Southeast Asia Regional High-Level Policy Dialogue held in Jakarta

Voices, Journeys, Connections

2019.12

International Institute of Online Education (IIOE) established



2020.12

UNESCO-ICHEI relocated to its permanent home at the SUSTech International Conference Centre



2021.06

UNESCO-ICHEI marked its 5th anniversary; flagship magazine *CLOUD* launched



2023.12

IIOE Global Partners Summit and inaugural Pioneer Award Ceremony held



Ms. JIANG Hong
Chairperson of SUSTech



| On 7 December 2024, Ms. JIANG Hong attended the *Higher Education Innovative Development Conference: Talent Cultivation Resonating with Digital Intelligence*



| In October 2025, Ms. JIANG Hong attended the leadership handover ceremony of UNESCO-ICHEI

I have always felt that the relationship between SUSTech and UNESCO-ICHEI is one of genuine mutual dependence, each drawing strength from the other. What UNESCO-ICHEI does is, at its heart, deeply aligned with SUSTech's own mission of exploring higher education reform in China and driving educational innovation. The development of IIOE is particularly worth recognising. Using emerging technologies such as AI as a starting point for education research and international collaboration is not only doing something of real value for global education. It also sits very naturally alongside SUSTech's identity as a research university, helping to ensure that research findings find their way into teaching and talent development in meaningful ways.

Mr. LI Ming has a quality that is genuinely rare: an entrepreneurial spirit. The fact that UNESCO-ICHEI has grown from nothing into what it is today, steadily building its international presence, owes a great deal to his perseverance and leadership. SUSTech's own early development, too, was shaped in no small part by his dedication.

Taken as a whole, UNESCO-ICHEI's choice to focus on higher education innovation as its core mission is something with both real significance and lasting value.

——Remarks by Secretary of the Party Committee of SUSTech, Ms. JIANG Hong, during a visit to UNESCO-ICHEI, 18 July 2023

Prof. YANG Xueming

Chair of the Governing Board of UNESCO-ICHEI and
Vice President of SUSTech



On 8 December 2025, Chair YANG Xueming presided over the Third Meeting of the Third Governing Board of UNESCO-ICHEI



On 20 May 2026, Chair YANG Xueming (right) and Director JIN Li (left) attended the 2026 Leadership Policy Dialogue in South Asia.

“

This was my first time attending a UNESCO-ICHEI Governing Board meeting, and listening to the reports on its work, budget, and future plans left a strong impression. Over the years, UNESCO-ICHEI has built up an influential body of work in digital higher education and AI-enabled learning, and its partnerships in Africa, Southeast Asia, and beyond are clearly well-rooted. These are hard-won achievements, and they reflect the fact that UNESCO-ICHEI has found its footing.

To my mind, one of its greatest strengths is that it has brought together international cooperation, higher education innovation, and digital technology in a way that actually works. It is not simply running projects, but building a global network for educational exchange, and that has real significance for both the promotion of inclusive education and the deepening of international collaboration.

At the same time, I hope UNESCO-ICHEI and SUSTech will find ways to work more closely together going forward. UNESCO-ICHEI has rich international resources and an extensive network of partners, and SUSTech itself is looking to strengthen its international profile. There is considerable scope for collaboration, around international exchange, student engagement, faculty partnerships, and more, that would bring more SUSTech staff and students into genuine contact with what UNESCO-ICHEI has to offer, and help translate its platform into real momentum for the university's international development.

——Remarks by Chairman YANG Xueming at the Third Session of the Third Governing Board Meeting, 8 December 2025

WORDS FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



We close this issue with words by Mr. SHEN Xiaoli, Editor-in-Chief of *CLOUD*. He has long served as the Chief Cultural Officer of UNESCO-ICHEI and has been deeply involved in the founding and editorial development of *CLOUD* magazine, leaving a lasting imprint on ICHEI's external communications and narrative shaping. He witnessed the growth of this institution through a cultural lens, and documented its people and stories.



SHEN Xiaoli

Chief Culture Officer of UNESCO-ICHEI;
Chief of *CLOUD* Editorial Board

Charge the void to reckon with being;
knock upon silence and seek out sound.
— LU Ji, *Wen Fu* (Rhapsody on Literature)

The 159th day of 2026.
The 3,650th day of UNESCO-ICHEI's life.

Ten years, completed today.
As though everything before this moment
was preparation.

Ten years ago.
This very place.
Southern University of Science and
Technology —
where the clock first ticked.

On this day in 2016,
on the campus of SUSTech,

a brand-new plaque gleamed brightly in the
sunlight:
International Centre for Higher Education
Innovation under the auspices of UNESCO.

These have been ten years of building
something from nothing.

Led by Founding Director Professor LI Ming,
Supported by UNESCO, by Shenzhen
Municipal Government, by SUSTech, by
everyone who believed before there was
anything to believe in,
Carried by a spirit of relentless exploration
and bold innovation,
a UNESCO Category 2 Centre took root in
this city.
Call it what it is: a Shenzhen miracle.

A great mission, planted in Shenzhen city
that was itself once a blank page —
to lift higher education in the developing
world,
to blaze a trail through sheer effort,
to embrace the world through vision.

Ten years of finding the path by walking it.

IIOE was born — co-founded with universities
and enterprises across the globe,
IIOE national centres established where they
were needed most,
a platform opened to learners everywhere.
Micro-Certifications. Pioneer Award. Smart
Classrooms
bringing digital infrastructure to universities
across Asia and Africa.

Connecting leaders online for university
digital transformation,
CLOUD— flagship of UNESCO-ICHEI's own
making, a journal without borders,
rooted in the belief that knowledge, shared,
multiplies,
committed to serving the digital capacity
building of higher education across the
developing world.

Ten years of glory and of dreaming.

Ten years — from zero to one, from local to
global,
a complete journey of pioneering and
transformation.

As a witness,
My bond with UNESCO-ICHEI runs through
most of ten years.
Standing at the side,
I have almost lived through an entire growth
of the innovative community,
from its first spark to full flame.

A chance on the surface, a destiny beneath.

There exists a living model of innovation:
the wisdom of leadership,
the atmosphere of trust and inclusiveness,
the international storytelling by a team of
young blood.

A corps built on professionalism,
A culture driven by efficiency,
A system grounded in openness,
A formation standing at the forefront.

This journey,
Marked by colleagues working tirelessly
across the globe,
Inspired by partners engaging with the world
with confidence and grace.
Along this journey,
I witnessed the institution sowing seeds and
tending fields,
I appreciated its perseverance, and
celebrated its harvest.

The new succeeds the old,
Each day, born fresh, is moving forward
without pause,
Ten years of walking, and the heart still
blazes.
Now we are standing on the threshold of
time:
Beneath our feet, an urgency gathers force,
In our ears, a call echoes.

As Emerson said —
What time truly tells can never be grasped in
fleeting moments.
The future cannot be predicted, but the
future can be made.
May we stay forever young, forever moved
to tears, forever on the road...

As UNESCO-ICHEI celebrates its tenth anniversary, *CLOUD* also marks five years since its inaugural issue. Over the years, every edition has been shaped by the dedication, insight, and collective efforts of its Editors-in-Chief, successive Editorial Board members, and editorial team. Their shared commitment has transformed *CLOUD* into a vibrant platform for exchanging ideas, connecting partners, and showcasing innovative practices from across the global higher education community.

