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# International Centre for Higher Education Innovation under the auspices of UNESCO

Empowering Higher Education Institutions in Developing Countries | Constructing the Future of Higher Education Digital Transformation

# About Us

The International Centre for Higher Education Innovation under the auspices of UNESCO (UNESCO-ICHEI) was approved by the 38th General Conference of UNESCO held on November 13, 2015 as a UNESCO Category II centre jointly established by UNESCO and the Shenzhen Municipal People's Government of the People's Republic of China on June 8, 2016. UNESCO-ICHEI is the only Category II centre focusing on higher education in China.

## Mission

UNESCO-ICHEI works closely around the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Education 2030). Relying on the advantages of Shenzhen's information and communications technology (ICT) sector, UNESCO-ICHEI focuses on the need for digital transformation in developing countries along the Maritime Silk Road. The organisation carries the mission of expanding the opportunities for lifelong learning and quality and equitable education through collaborations with flagship universities in various countries to strengthen their capacity in online and blended teaching and learning (OBTL) as a way of promoting digital transformation in higher education institutions in Asia and Africa.

## Functions

UNESCO-ICHEI fully exerts its four main functions of knowledge production, capacity building, technical support, and information sharing by developing international higher education cooperation programmes with developing countries in Asia and Africa, in an effort to construct a global network based on the principle of "extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits".

## Organisation

UNESCO-ICHEI is supervised by its governing board whose members are composed of various stakeholders, with the Centre Director, Executive Deputy Director and Deputy Director in charge of organisational management. UNESCO-ICHEI has established an International Advisory Committee (IAC) to provide specialist advice on the centre's work and strategic planning. UNESCO-ICHEI currently consists of four major departments: International Institute of Online Education (IIOE) Management Centre, Global Partnership and Programme Office, Knowledge Production and Communications Centre, and Administrative Affairs Office.



**LI Ming**  
Director



**LU Chun**  
Deputy Director



**HAN Wei**  
Executive Deputy Director

## Flagship projects: UNESCO-Shenzhen Funds-in-Trust (SFIT)

On May 23, 2015, Shenzhen Municipal People's Government and UNESCO signed the Framework Funds-in-Trust Agreement to Support UNESCO's Activities in Favour of Education Development in Asia and Africa, and Shenzhen Municipal People's Government funded the establishment of the UNESCO-Shenzhen Funds-in Trust (SFIT).



### UNESCO-SFIT in Asia: Information and Communications Technology (ICT)-driven Higher Education Innovation and University Capacity Building

UNESCO-SFIT in Asia develops the self-assessment framework of blended learning for quality higher education in Cambodia and Sri Lanka, and conducts related capacity building, educational practice and academic research. This programme propelled regional strategic cooperation among stakeholders to integrate the application of ICT into higher education, thereby promoting interaction between teachers and students, optimising curriculum design, improving organisation governance, and enhancing global collaboration towards achieving SDG4.



UNESCO-SFIT in Asia focuses on ICT-driven talent cultivation, which formed the UNESCO Policy Brief as a widespread policy guidance document in Asia-Pacific. The Asia project handbook is also included in the UNESCO Digital Library and is widely promoted and used as a typical case study.

### UNESCO-SFIT in Africa: Strengthening Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Africa

UNESCO-SFIT in Africa comprises three parts:

1. Establishment of national quality assurance agencies in Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, and Togo.
2. Institutional capacity building of established quality assurance agencies in Egypt, the Gambia, Malawi, Namibia, Senegal and Zambia.
3. Consolidating the existing quality assurance network in Africa and promoting the internationalization of higher education in Africa through sharing of best practices and development of mutual recognition tools in quality assurance.



Assist 4 countries in building national quality assurance agencies from scratch, 6 countries in consolidating the capacity building of existing quality assurance agencies. In May 2022, UNESCO-SFIT in Africa outcome meeting was held at the UNESCO World Higher Education Conference (WHEC2022).

The UNESCO SFIT project has become a successful case that plays an exemplary role regionally. UNESCO assessed that the project has played a unique and significant role in supporting UNESCO to fulfil its mandate in higher education, and has become a model of South-South cooperation.

## Flagship projects: International Institute of Online Education (IIOE)

In April 2020, UNESCO-ICHEI, along with 15 partner higher education institutions worldwide alongside 9 enterprises, jointly initiated International Institute of Online Education (IIOE), which is an open educational resources platform. With funding support from Tencent Foundation, IIOE promotes the development of global higher education through multiple channels, such as the joint contribution and shared benefits of content resources, digital empowerment of teachers, ICT hardware and software support, academic research, and knowledge production and communication, to advance the digital transformation of global universities and improve the digital application capabilities of teachers.

IIOE was selected as Success Story of Jointly Building a Community with a Shared Future in Cyberspace at 2021 World Internet Conference. IIOE is the only educational project and UNESCO-ICHEI is the only international organisation selected.



### IIOE Global Network

IIOE brings together partners from the world's top higher education institutions, informatisation enterprises and international organisations, creating an international ecosystem of South-North-South cooperation and promoting the global digital transformation of higher education. IIOE has built more than 600 online courses in six languages, namely Chinese, English, French, Arabic, Spanish and Russian, in collaboration with global partners.

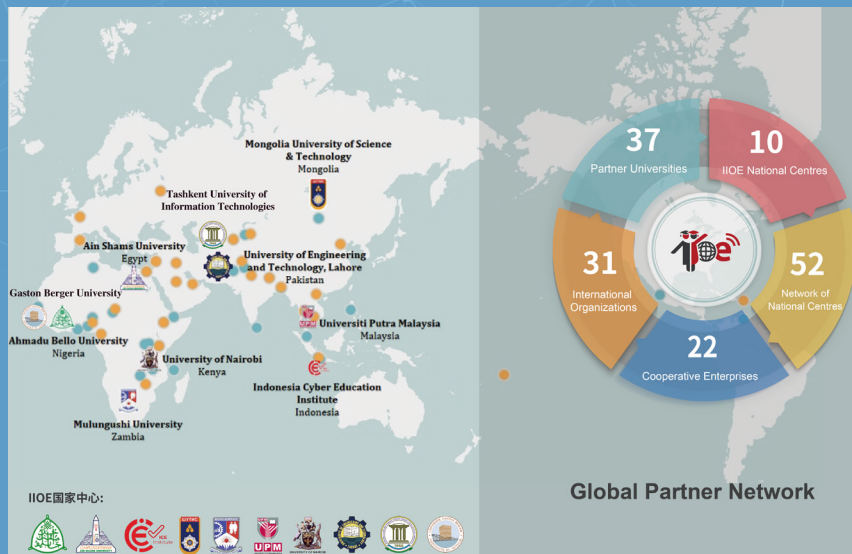
IIOE's services reach over 10,000 teachers in 135 countries and regions, with a network of partners in around 40 universities worldwide.

### IIOE National Centres

In key project countries, UNESCO-ICHEI partnered the local flagship institutions with long-standing partnerships to establish IIOE National Centres and build a network of national universities.

The IIOE National Centres are empowerment hubs for teacher training, digital teaching and learning, and digital transformation of higher education in the project countries, and have the endorsement of the host governments (ministries in charge of higher education).

To date, UNESCO-ICHEI has established IIOE National Centres in ten institutions in Asia and Africa, and covers 49 higher education institutions globally through IIOE National Centres.



# IIOE Online Platform

IIOE is an open online learning platform aimed at helping HEIs build a sustainable environment for online blended learning and offers courses and training resources in the six official languages of the United Nations (Chinese, English, French, Arabic, Spanish and Russian).



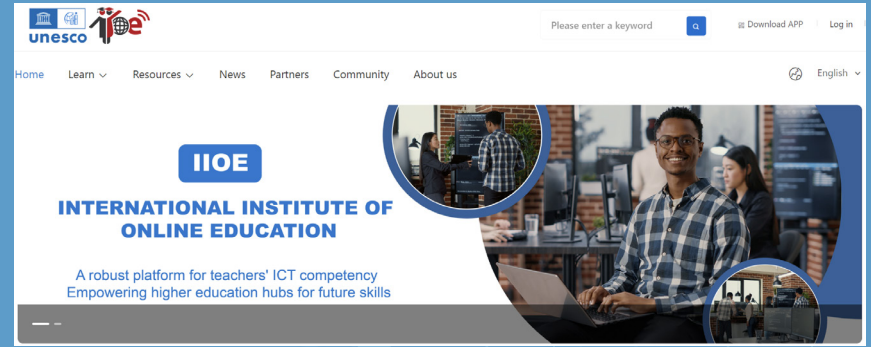
Benchmarking industry-leading LMS platform architecture to improve platform availability/scalability/security.



Focusing on learner-centric user experience design to create an international certification-based learning platform in the six official languages of the United Nations.



Sharing data with national centres and partner institutions to support tiered and graded digital coordinated operations.



## Flagship Projects: Smart Classroom

The Smart Classroom project focuses on improving infrastructure for HEIs in developing countries in Asia and Africa to support online and blended learning and accelerate the digital transformation of higher education.



In collaboration with a group of leading enterprises on educational technology in China, UNESCO-ICHEI jointly deploys Smart Classrooms supported by cloud computing, big data, Internet of things, and artificial intelligence in one partner HEI from each programme country as an exemplary project. The establishment of Smart Classrooms will support multimedia learning, automated management, online and offline blended teaching experiments, localised curriculum development, cross-campus resource sharing, learning analytics, and comprehensive teaching management to meet the basic needs for digital transformation in HEIs. Every Smart Classroom can accommodate 50 users for teaching and hosting seminars, training and forums.

### Corporate Donors

WEDON Education Createview Edu-Tech Seewo OS-EASY Ltd.



### Project Layout

UNESCO-ICHEI has planned 7 phases of the Smart Classroom Project, with a total of 40 projects, 18 in Asia and 22 in Africa, of which 12 Smart Classrooms have been successfully delivered.

### Future prospect

The Smart Classroom project will be carried out in collaboration with Beijing Kingsoft Office Software, Inc. and Jiangxi KMAX Industry Co., Ltd to further enhance digital capabilities.

Kingsoft Office offers WPS Cloud Pro software, a cloud office service that provides document management, document cloud storage, document permission control, document sharing, network office and other functions.

Based on VR technology, KMAX provides partner institutions with a digital solution for overseas vocational skills training that integrates hardware, software, curriculum and operational services.

# Knowledge Production

UNESCO-ICHEI is actively conducting research on the digital transformation of higher education, with a focus on promoting the digital hybrid teaching capacity of teachers, and strives to become a facilitator and thought leader in the digital transformation of universities worldwide.

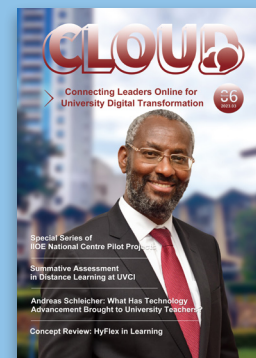
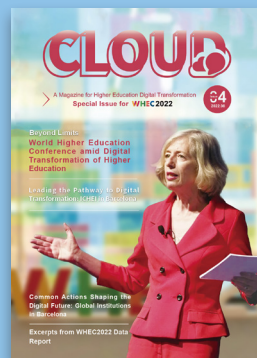
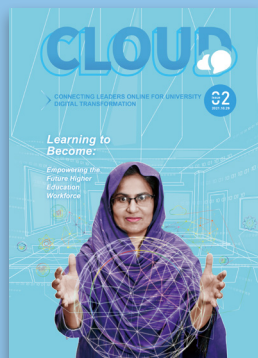
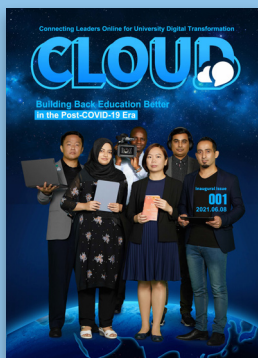
UNESCO-ICHEI and the Institute of Education at Tsinghua University jointly conducted a series of studies on the "Digital Transformation of Higher Education", which resulted in the Research Report on Digital Transformation of Higher Education Teaching and Learning and three handbooks, including Handbook of Educational Reform through Blended Learning, Handbook of Teacher Professional Development in Higher Education, Handbook of Teacher Professional Development in Technical and Vocational Education and Training. The Research Report on Digital Transformation of Higher Education Teaching and Learning was officially launched worldwide in 4 languages (Chinese, English, French and Spanish) during the 3rd World Higher Education Conference (WHEC2022).

UNESCO-ICHEI launches its quarterly flagship publication, CLOUD, for global partners and higher education stakeholders, with the aim of connecting higher education practitioners around the world through knowledge and information sharing, project developments, data and best practices related to the digital transformation of higher education worldwide. Published in the six official languages of the United Nations, CLOUD focuses on themes such as building back education better in the post-COVID-19 era, empowering the future higher education workforce, and the WHEC2022.

In addition, as an international think tank focused on the digital transformation of higher education, UNESCO-ICHEI has published dozens of research and practice reports over the years, in collaboration with a variety of global and regional institutional partners.



## CLOUD



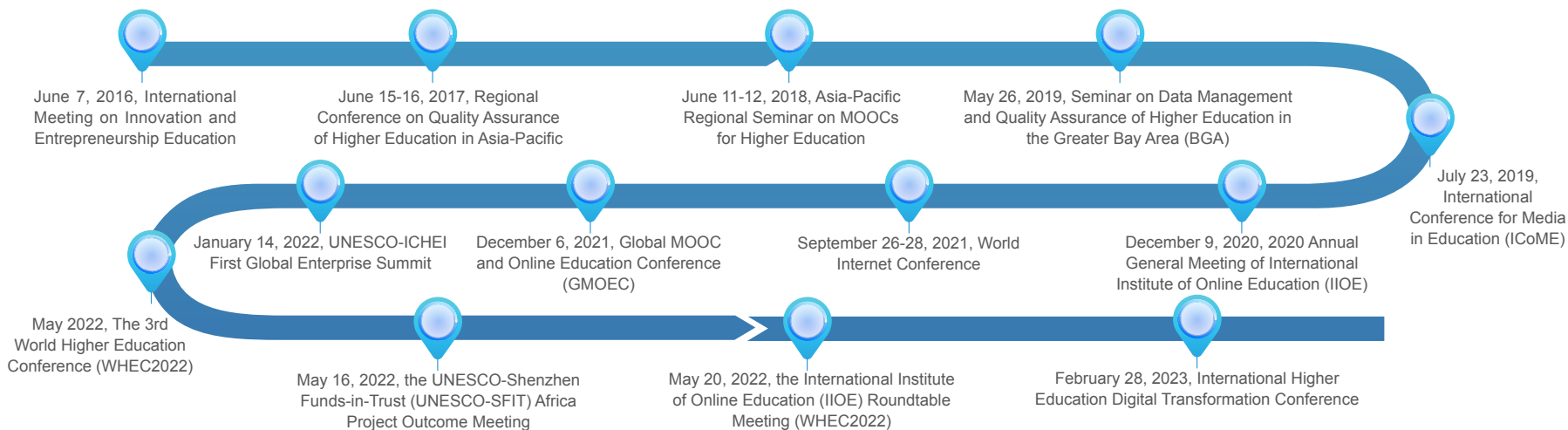
## Capacity Building Seminar

Since 2017, UNESCO-ICHEI has participated in the organisation of multiple international capacity-building seminars. These seminars are a foreign assistance training project hosted by the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, undertaken by the Shenzhen Association for Promoting International Economic & Technological Cooperation (APIETC), and co-organised by Southern University of Science and Technology and UNESCO-ICHEI. Past seminars have focused on the massification of higher education in China, ICT in education, artificial intelligence, online learning, big data and cloud computing, information management system in higher education, etc. The seminars have provided training for 227 trainees from 30 countries, the majority of whom are officials in the Ministry of Education, administrators in higher education institutions, teachers and IT engineers from the Asia Pacific, Africa and the Middle East.



## Hosting and Participating in Multiple International and Regional Global Conferences

UNESCO-ICHEI has hosted and participated in various international and regional global conferences both online and offline to establish a platform for communication and cooperation with global partners and experts.





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