



AAOU-2008 Conference Report

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The 22nd Annual Conference of the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) was held on Tuesday 14th, Wednesday 15th and Thursday 16th October hosted by the Tianjin Radio and TV University, in PR China. This year 2008 was also the 50th year anniversary celebration of Tianjin RTVU. The AAOU Board Meetings were held on the first day of the conference, on Tuesday afternoon. This is a brief summary of the Conference (for their web pages see <http://aaou.tjrtvu.edu.cn/en/zym.html>).

This Conference was held at the very new Tianjin Saixiang Hotel, in an Industrial Zone at about 40 minutes by car from the main railway station. The hotel itself opened three days earlier, and in case the final participant in the parallel sessions was speaking over the allotted time, then we were reminded of the deed by the concrete drilling. The hotel staff were trying very much, and the telephones and internet connections had some problems. Of course, the restaurant staff were new, but succeeded in providing excellent five-star service at all times. The Conference hosts had superb courteous and effective staff on call from before, throughout and after the Conference. They also efficiently greeted participants at the airport, train station, or wherever, and helped with transportation to and from the hotel. A conference desk was set up in the main entrance lobby area, for registration, information and administration throughout the duration. Several various sightseeing trips were arranged for the Friday after the Conference. The numbers of English-speaking volunteers such as from the Tianjin Foreign Studies University were eager and abundant, and they heartily

reflected the impressive volunteer spirit by students at universities in China this year - notably during their hosting the Olympics and Paralympics two months earlier. The participants had access to free limited internet services. Participants could enjoy a cultural theatre performance on Thursday evening showing ethnic Chinese dances. The weather was cool and comfortable.

The Conference was organised by the Tianjin Radio and TV University President Professor Xuefei FENG. The theme of this year's conference was 'New Development, New Trends and New Missions of Open and Distance Education in Asia and the World'. The President of the AAOU, Professor Atwi SUPARMAN of the Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia, chaired the Board Meetings, and presented the first Keynote Speech. His speech was entitled 'New Trends and Challenges in the Use of Internet in Asian Distance Education'. This Paper was by Atwi SUPARMAN, Udan KUSMAWAN & Aminudin ZUHAIRI.

This year, the conference had a new schedule arrangement with seven Keynote Speeches on the Wednesday, all the Parallel Session presentations on Thursday morning, and the Closing Ceremony and Awards Presentation on that afternoon.

The second Keynote Speech was by the President of the ICDE Dr Frits PANNEKOEK entitled 'The Future is Now : Open and Distance Higher Education Today'.

The third Keynote Speech was presented by the President and CEO of the Commonwealth of Learning Sir John DANIEL, entitled 'Distance Education Across Borders'. This Key Paper was by Sir

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John DANIEL, Asha KANWAR, Paul WEST & Stamenka UVALIĆ-TRUMBIĆ.

The fourth Keynote Speech was by the President of the Open University of Japan (OUJ) Professor Hiromitsu ISHI entitled 'New Trends in Lifelong Learning and Distance Education in Light of the Japanese Experience'.

The fifth Keynote Speech was by the Professor Peter JARVIS of the University of Surrey, UK, Editor of the International Journal of Lifelong Education, entitled 'Facilitating Experiential and Existential Learning Through Distance Education'.

The sixth Keynote Speech was by the Chairman of China Open Resources for Education Professor Fun-Den WANG entitled 'Open Education Resources - Concept, Status and Frontier'.

The seventh Keynote Speech was by the Former President of the AAOU and President of the China Central Radio and

TV University (CCRTVU) Professor Ge DAOKAI entitled 'New Mission of Open University : China Perspective'.

Surprisingly only one of the printed Papers of the Keynote Speeches gave us literature references for our further study, and this was the Paper by Professor Hiromitsu ISHI.

We are very pleased to congratulate Weiyuan ZHANG who was awarded the 2008 AAOU Meritorious Service Award.

The conference was crowded with many participants as well as the very helpful volunteers. There were almost 500 participants in total, from about 20 different countries.

Payame Noor University, Iran, was selected and agreed to host the 23rd AAOU Conference in 2009. We look forward to visiting Payame Noor University after many years of their keen participation in the AAOU (<http://www.pnu.ac.ir>).

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