

AN EVALUATION OF THE ROLE OF ICASE



Supporting and promoting science education internationally

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To ICASE member organisations

(and founding member associations where these
are no longer ICASE member organisations)

Dear President/Chairman,

On behalf of the ICASE Executive Committee, may I seek the support of your organisation to undertake an **EVALUATION OF ICASE**. Its purpose is to redefine the scope and operation of ICASE for the benefit of Science Teacher Associations worldwide.

An evaluation of ICASE has been requested by member organisations in the light of changes taking place on the international scene and the impact of major ICASE constitutional changes that took place approximately 10 years ago. There are no boundaries to matters that can be discussed, or recommendations made, but the attached questionnaire is intended to give some direction.

Unfortunately, ICASE is not in a position to pay for services rendered and would need to rely on the goodwill of organisations. This means that no formal, face-to-face meeting is planned. The ICASE Executive Committee will take it upon itself to:

- collate all comments received;
- compile a report, based on the submissions, which will be circulated to all members by the end of 2009.

The report is intended to allow all member organisations to:

- make specific recommendations to be considered at the next ICASE General Assembly (28th June 2010 in Tartu, Estonia – immediately before the World Conference)

I attach a short history in the hope this is useful in guiding your evaluation your ICASE.

I thank you, in advance, for your positive response,

Jack Holbrook
ICASE President on behalf on the ICASE Executive Committee
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Ps An electronic copy of the ICASE constitution is available on request

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The Evaluation Questionnaire

Please answer the following statements by placing a tick or x in the appropriate box. Additional comments are welcome to be added after the questionnaire. Comments are specifically solicited where disagreement or strong disagreement is indicated and where no reaction is indicated (no response given for a particular item).

Nr	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	The focus of activities undertaken by ICASE should be governed by its member organisations (as stated in the ICASE constitution).				
2	A major activity of ICASE is to disseminate information emanating from its member organisations.				
3	A major communication mechanism to be used by ICASE is its website.				
4	ICASE is expected to organise regional conferences/symposia under the guidance of the regional representative.				
5	ICASE is expected to relate to, interact with and disseminate information from, other international bodies in the field of science education.				
6	The major source of ICASE funding should derive from its member organisations.				
7	ICASE should have a position statement(s) agreed by the member organisations.				
8	All ICASE policies are expected to be derived from motions put forward by its member organisations.				
9	The main benefit to member organisations in being a member of ICASE is the dissemination/exchange of ideas, information and developments.				
10	ICASE has a responsibility to assist in the setting up of new science teacher associations in countries where none currently exist.				
11	ICASE needs to be solely a voluntary organisation with no paid staff of its own.				
12	Member organisations are expected to disseminate the name of ICASE and its activities among its own members on a regular basis.				
13	ICASE should be involved in projects, regionally/internationally on behalf of members				
14	ICASE should produce an annual report (sent to member organisations) detailing its finances and activities.				

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15	In return for being the governing body of ICASE, its member organisations are expected to take responsibility for the effectiveness of ICASE.				
16	Member organisations can dismiss any ICASE official at any time by simple majority vote.				
17	ICASE should be guided by an Executive Committee which is required to put forward a 6 year plan of future intention at each General Assembly.				
18	Member organisations are responsible for ensuring their organisation is suitably represented at ICASE General Assemblies.				
19	Member organisations are responsible for ensuring the ICASE General Assembly has a quorum and that the agenda covers their expectations.				
20	My association/organisation, being a member of ICASE, has made a strong contribution to publicise and guiding ICASE to function.				

Thank you

Additional Comments you wish to make

1.

ICASE – a historical outline 1973-2008

The beginning

ICASE has been in operation for over 35 years, functioning as a coordinating body between Science Teacher Associations around the World. It has elected officers (approx. 15) who see ICASE functioning through guidance from its member organisations.

ICASE began in 1973, when Associations decided to link together and individuals put money into a hat to initiate ICASE. Since then this international umbrella organisation has endeavoured to **meet the needs** of its members. This was never easy, as funding was always an issue, especially whenever ICASE officers were not fully supported by their member organisation (a key factor limiting science educators from developing countries).

Appointing an Executive Secretary

However, from the 1st major international event, in 1978 on Integrated Science, and operating alongside UNESCO, ICASE continued to grow and activities became more numerous. By 1985, the honorary secretary/treasurer could no longer cope and the position was split to involve an Executive Secretary and a Treasurer. Both positions were still honorary. The persons were appointed by the Executive Committee, rather than elected as in the case of the Executive Committee itself. The other main difference was that the appointed persons had no vote in Executive Committee meetings.

ICASE operations 1973-1989

From 1973-1989, ICASE was expanding, organising regional symposia, publishing teaching notes (commemorative series) and proceedings of events, as well as producing a quarterly newsletter. Symposia were largely self-funding events, but publishing costs were rarely met from sales. This was not so much because of lack of demand, but because of the ability of ICASE officers to reach individuals. ICASE maintained stands in larger annual meetings and conferences, displayed its wares and sold a variety of publicising materials e.g. T-shirts.

Institutional Membership

In 1989, ICASE opened up institutional membership to University Faculties/Departments and by 1997 this became the fastest growing area of membership. It helped enormously to offset the support offered to small STAs, mainly in the developing world, who were unable to afford the minimal membership fee (US\$35 in those days), or if they could afford it, they were not able to pay because of the non-exchangeability of currencies.

The ICASE journal

From 1990, ICASE **stopped its newsletter** in favour of a quarterly journal. Much effort went into developing the journal and encouraging individual, as well as libraries, to subscribe, but the journal was **never self-financing**. It existed on voluntary labour at all levels and was able to keep printing and postage costs to a minimum.

ICASE (up to 1997)

Nevertheless ICASE continued to prosper and by 1997 had a membership of 148 organisations and institutions. It had organised 10 regional symposia in Asia, one in Latin America and had started to arrange international days in the ASE and NSTA annual meetings. It was getting too large for the voluntary secretary/treasurer system (and by now also a hon.

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journal editor had been added) and there was also the fear that it was not involving sufficient personnel (especially, for example, as the President was an ICASE officer for 12 years -4 as President-elect, 4 as President and then 4 as past President).

Major Change of Constitution

In 1997, ICASE proposed to its member organisations that there should be a change of constitution. A majority of organisations agreed. ICASE set up a secretariat (within ASE) and paid a person part-time to handle business affairs. The positions of Executive Secretary, Treasurer and Journal Editor were converted to **elected committee positions** and a Management Committee was set up involving President, Past President, or President-elect Secretary and Treasurer. Regional representatives were expected to play a stronger role than in the past, although ICASE funds were not expected to be needed (**they would seek support from their respective national STAs**).

Alas ICASE started to struggle. A number of problems emerged.

1. The treasurer was new (for the very first time since the existence of ICASE in 1973).
2. Regional representatives were no longer arranging symposia (although one was held in Brazil in 1999 and Europe initiated a series of regional meetings from 1998-2004).
3. Events were developed more through ICASE links with UNESCO, then with CEFIC, and then with ICI, before international funding dried up completely by 2004.
4. The secretariat did not function as hoped, especially in attracting additional funding via increased membership or increased subscribers to the journal. Contacts with member organisations began drying up.
5. The secretary **was separated for the secretariat** and no longer had a firm grasp of developments and the strong link between secretary and treasurer, that had been the hallmark of the developments in the 1980s and 1990s, had all but disappeared.

ICASE today

The role of ICASE was being challenged and member organisations, included some of those which were founding members, withdrew membership. ICASE started to build mounting debts from the lack of subscribers to the journal and removed virtually all other activities in an effort to keep the journal alive (as the only visible sign of ICASE).

The major ICASE activity now became the World Conference, first held in Malaysia (2003) and then latterly in Western Australia in 2007. ICASE funding became very dependent on the surplus from the World conferences. Involvement in STA annual meeting dwindled and links with institutional members was not sustained. Slowly membership declined and subscribers to the journal declined. By the last ICASE General Assembly ICASE was faced with the dilemma of whether to dissolve the organisation. **This was not agreed by the Governing Body (the member organisations)**. However, no remedy was put forward.

Need for Action

Clearly some action becomes necessary. If ICASE is to continue it must regain the trust and support of its members. Questions need to be explored e.g.

1. Who controls ICASE and how ?
2. How should ICASE function with respect to the membership ?
3. What is the range and direction of activities ?

Without the support of its member organisations, the rationale for ICASE (as indicated in the ICASE constitution), is lost and ICASE no longer serves a useful purpose in its current format.