Long before open and distance education and blended learning (and the use of sophisticated technologies) were accepted educational practices in higher education, Professor Atwi Suparman was one of the few people who saw their potential, and believed they were a practical solution to a national and even global problem in providing equal access to quality higher education. He was a key figure in establishing the institution that became Universitas Terbuka. More than that he occupied senior positions in that university overseeing Information Systems and Student Affairs, becoming over the years an educational technology expert, virtually inventing instructional design for distance education even before it was established in Indonesia, and putting it into practice. He rose to become Rector of the university and under his leadership many developments took place including the redefinition of vision and mission, technology harnessed, quality assurance introduced, and investments made in human resources and infrastructure. By 2010, Universitas Terbuka had almost 650,000 students making it one of the mega universities of the world.

Clearly Professor Suparman had enormous influence and impact in his own university but he had impact far beyond its borders. He is a person who loves to share his knowledge and experience and has been described as a “walking encyclopedia of knowledge when it comes to leadership, instructional design, educational technology and issues of distance education in general.” This is recognized by the awards he has received: both the AAAOU Meritorious Award and the ASEANnale Distinguished Award cite his dedication to promote quality learning in higher education as well as his commitment.

The ICDE award seeks to recognize a person who not only represents significant contributions to the international community of open and distance education, it also recognizes a “global facilitator for inclusive, flexible, quality learning and teaching in the digital age.” Atwi Suparman’s work throughout his life has impacted on hundreds of thousands of students and staff as well as institutions across Asia and beyond.