



14th Session of the Regional Committee on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific

In conjunction with the

Asia-Pacific regional workshop on Education 2030: Connecting qualification frameworks, quality assurance and recognition for mobility and employability

Concept Note

Background

As an intergovernmental organisation with a mandate in higher education, UNESCO is well-positioned to provide Member States with a platform for collaboration to foster dialogue on policy, research and practice in pursuing high quality and inclusive lifelong learning opportunities for all. International conventions, such as the Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education, reflect a common understanding of, and joint commitment to, the principles and international norms that are developed and agreed upon by UNESCO Member States in the Asia-Pacific region.

Since the 1970's, UNESCO has initiated six regional conventions on the recognition of higher education qualifications with the aim to promote the free movement of students and professionals across borders. The Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific (the 1983 Convention) was adopted in 1983 in Bangkok, Thailand, and entered into force on 23 October 1985. As of February 2016, the 1983 Convention has twenty-one State Parties. In line with Article 10 of the 1983 Convention, a Regional Committee was established with representatives of State Parties and UNESCO serving as the Secretariat.

Role of the Regional Committee

Since its inception, the Regional Committee has met thirteen times throughout the Asia-Pacific region. The purpose of these meetings is to receive and examine periodic reports submitted by Member States (State Parties and non-State Parties) on the progress made and the obstacles encountered related to ratification and implementation of the convention. In addition, the Regional Committee meeting serves as a platform for Member States and the Secretariat to collect, disseminate and exchange information concerning the recognition of higher education qualifications and to strengthen collaboration within the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

The 2011 Revised Convention

Since the 1983 Convention, higher education in the region has expanded rapidly through the growth of private and public providers, increased cross-border mobility, greater numbers of qualifications earned through open and distance learning (ODL), a more systematic focus on quality assurance mechanisms, and an emphasis on the knowledge, skills and values that lead to sustainable livelihoods. In 2005, Parties of the 1983 Convention acknowledged the need for an updated Convention that reflects current trends and best practices in recognition policies.

The resulting revised convention was adopted in Tokyo, Japan in 2011 and is known as the Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education (the 2011 Revised Convention). As of February 2016, three Member States – Australia, China, and New Zealand – have ratified the 2011 Revised Convention. Five Member States are needed for the Convention to enter into force. During the 14th Session, Member States will be asked to report on the current status of the 2011 Revised Convention with an anticipated timeline to ratification.

Towards a Global Convention

In 2011, recognizing that the regional conventions do not adequately address global dynamics in higher education, Member States called on UNESCO to conduct a feasibility study for a global convention on the recognition of higher education qualifications. The feasibility study was examined by the General Conference at its 37th session in 2013. Member States recognized the potential benefits of a global normative instrument to improve the quality and recognition of their higher education systems.

Building on the substantial progress made on the revised regional conventions, the global convention would complement, not replace, strong regional conventions in order to improve global academic and professional mobility, enhance international cooperation in higher education, and take steps towards global recognition and mutual trust. The global convention would serve to:

- enhance international cooperation in higher education;
- strengthen and promote international mobility in higher education for studies and employment opportunities;
- strengthen and promote lifelong learning and recognition of formal, non-formal and informal learning;
- promote coherence between recognition, quality assurance and qualification frameworks;
- promote new modes of teaching and learning, including online provisions and blended learning.

The 14th Session of the Regional Committee will provide an opportunity for Member States in Asia and the Pacific to learn more about the drafting and consultation process related to the development of a preliminary draft of a Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications and explore how a global convention may complement existing recognition conventions.

Meeting objectives

The objectives of the 14th Session of the Regional Committee are to:

- Gather and examine the latest reports from Member States (State Parties and non-State Parties) on the 1983 Convention and the status of their readiness related to ratification and implementation of the 2011 Revised Convention with an anticipated timeline to ratification for each country;
- Collect, review and approve new initiatives and recommendations from the Regional Committee concerning application of the Convention;
- Consider recommendations related to collecting, processing, classifying and disseminating information on recognition, including the role of a network of National Information Centres;
- Raise awareness and seek views of Member States in relation to the Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications (the Global Convention) and explore how it may complement existing conventions;
- Share information and updates on the implementation of the other regional Conventions;
- Raise awareness about the development of quality tools to support implementation of the regional conventions (e.g. ongoing developments in recognition, quality assurance and qualification frameworks and their complementary actions);
- Share best policies and practices with regards to the Education 2030 agenda and the recognition of qualifications for lifelong learning, including formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Expected output

- A collection of status reports submitted by Member States in Asia-Pacific with regards to the application of the 1983 Convention;
- Regional synthesis report on implementation of the 1983 Convention and level of readiness to ratify and implement the 2011 Revised Convention with a concrete timeline;
- Regional communique/statement that highlights the role of recognition in facilitating academic mobility and employability;
- Report from UNESCO Bangkok on the development of Regional Guidelines on National Qualifications Frameworks in Asia and the Pacific.

Participants

The meeting will be attended by representatives of the twenty-one State Parties to the 1983 Convention. Representatives of non-State Parties will also be invited to attend the 14th Session as observers. In addition to representatives and observers, an estimated 20 invited speakers, resource persons and UNESCO staff are expected to join the meeting. Additional information will be provided upon confirmation of participation in the meeting.

Organisers

- UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, Bangkok, Thailand
- Australian Government Department of Education and Training

- With support from the Republic of Korea Funds-in-Trust

Venue

Meeting venue to be confirmed (Sydney, Australia)

Dates

17-18 August 2016

Language

English will be the working language

Tentative Programme

Optional registration begins at 4pm followed by a welcome function from 5pm on 16 August 2016

14th Session of the Regional Committee (Day 1, 17 August 2016)

- Opening ceremony
- Election of the Bureau of the Committee and adoption of the meeting agenda
- Report from the 13th Session of the Regional Committee and its actions
- Synthesis report on progress by the State Parties
- Synthesis report by non-State Parties
- Raise awareness and seek views of Member States in relation to the Global Convention
- Review and approve new initiatives and recommendations from the Regional Committee
- Discuss follow-up actions
- Welcome dinner

Asia-Pacific regional workshop on Education 2030: Connecting qualification frameworks, quality assurance and recognition for mobility and employability (Day 2, 18 August 2016)

- Overview of Sustainable Development Goal Four, known as Education 2030, and the links between qualification frameworks, quality assurance and recognition
- Thematic working groups on Education 2030 to explore the connections between qualification frameworks, quality assurance and recognition in terms of:
 - a) Relevant and effective learning outcomes (SDG4, Target 4.1)
 - b) Equal access to affordable and quality TVET/tertiary education (Target 4.3)
 - c) Relevant skills for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship (Target 4.4)
 - d) Gender disparities and inclusion (Target 4.5)
 - e) All learners acquire knowledge and skills to promote sustainable development (Target 4.7)
- Review and approve the draft regional communique/statement on the role of recognition in promoting academic mobility and employability in Asia and the Pacific
- Wrap-up and closing of the meeting

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