Synthesis of Country Reports
Progress Towards Ratification and Implementation

UNESCO Bangkok, Secretariat of the Regional Committee on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific

14th Session of the Regional Committee, 17-18 August 2016
Sydney, Australia
Young people today are the most connected and the most open-minded generation the world has ever seen...

- Ms Irina Bokova
Director-General of UNESCO
International Youth Day, 12 August 2016
Synthesis of country reports

I. Background

II. Aims and methods

III. Results and analysis

IV. Question and answer
   I. Breakout group discussions
Background:
UNESCO’s Five Functions
Background: UNESCO’s role as Secretariat of the Regional Committee

Five inter-related dimensions for standard-setting instruments:

1. Improve visibility
2. Ratification
3. Implementation
4. Monitoring and
5. Cooperation

Source: UNESCO strategy on standard-setting instruments in the field of education (2015-2021)
Background:
Rules of Procedure (1990)

“The function of the Committee shall be to promote the application of the Convention. It shall receive and examine periodic reports from the Contracting States on progress to date and difficulties met with in applying the Convention, as well as studies on the Convention prepared by its Secretariat” (Rule 2.1)

Source: Rules of Procedure, 1990
Background: Main elements of the 2011 Tokyo Convention (excerpt)

- **Article II**: Ensure competent recognition authorities implement the Convention
- **Article III**: Make appropriate arrangements to assess qualifications (i.e. basic principles)
- **Article IV, Article V and Article VI**: Assess or recognise qualifications unless a “substantial difference” can be shown
- **Article VII**: In conformity with the Party’s regulatory requirements, make all reasonable efforts to develop procedures to assess the qualifications of refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation
- **Article VIII**: Provide relevant information, including developing and maintaining a National Information Centre (NIC)
- **Article IX.3**: Appoint a member of its NIC to the network of NICs in Asia-Pacific

Source: 2011 Tokyo Convention
Aims and methods

- Promote application of the 1983 Bangkok Convention
- Assess status of ratification and implementation efforts of the 2011 Tokyo Convention
- Provide a basis for discussion, including proposing new initiatives
- *Not* intended to be an ending point or definitive statement on implementation by State parties or non-State parties, but instead to generate discussion and recommendations for the application of the regional conventions
Results and analysis:
36 Country Reports submitted for the 14th Session

- **11 State Parties**
  Australia, China, Holy See, Lao PDR, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Philippines, Republic of Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea and Sri Lanka

- **25 Non-State Parties**
  Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Cook Island, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, IR Iran, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Niue, Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea(PNG), Republic of Nauru, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Viet Nam
Results and analysis: Recognition authorities

Competent recognition authorities (Article II, 2011 Tokyo Convention)

- Who is/are the competent authority/ies for academic recognition in your country? (34/36)
  - Ministry of Education: 53%
  - National Information Centre: 6%
  - Higher education institutions: 15%
  - Other: 27%
Results and analysis: Basic principles

Access to an assessment - Holders of qualifications issued in one of the Parties shall have adequate access, upon request to the competent recognition authority to an assessment of these qualifications in a timely manner (Article III.1, 2011 Tokyo Convention)

- Is access to an assessment regulated at national level (national law, government regulation, other legal act)? (35/36)
  - Yes: 71%
  - No: 29%
Each Party shall ensure that the procedures and criteria used in the assessment and recognition of qualifications are transparent, coherent, reliable, fair and non-discriminatory (Article III.2, 2011 Tokyo Convention).

- Are the assessment criteria and procedures regulated at national level (national law, government regulation, any other legal act)? (35/36)
  - Yes: 69%. Top five criteria:
    - Quality/accreditation
    - Recognition status of the awarding institution
    - Type of awarding institution
    - Nominal duration (time needed to complete a given programme)
    - Admission requirements
  - No: 31%
Results and analysis: Criteria and procedures

- If the assessment and recognition procedures are standardized and regulated at national level, elements of the procedure include (26/36):
  - Documents required: 92%
  - Time limit: 81%
  - Description of the assessment process: 81%
  - Status of recognition or assessment report: 77%
  - Fee charged or not: 69%
  - Other: 19%

- Are there assessment and recognition criteria and procedures (both or one of them) available online? (31/36)
  - Yes: 65%
  - No: 36%
Results and analysis: Time limit

Decisions on recognition of qualifications shall be made within a reasonable time limit specified beforehand by the competent recognition authority and calculated from the time all necessary information in the case has been provided. If recognition is withheld, the reason for the refusal to grant recognition shall be stated (Article III.5, 2011 Tokyo Convention).

- Is the time limit regulated at national level (national law, government regulation, or any other legal act)? (35/36)
  - Yes: 54%
    - Range: 3 days to 365 days (1 year)
  - No, but it is regulated by HEIs: 29%
  - No time limit: 17%
Results and analysis: Right to appeal

If recognition is withheld, or if no decision is taken, the holder of the qualification shall be entitled to make an appeal through appropriate procedures in each Party within a reasonable time limit (Article III.5, 2011 Tokyo Convention)

- In cases where recognition is withheld, or if no decision is taken, is there a possibility for an applicant to appeal? (31/36)
  - Yes: 74%
  - No: 26%

- Is information about the applicant's right to appeal published and available online? (31/36)
  - Yes: 32%
  - No: 45%
  - No, but can be found in other sources: 23%
Results and analysis: Substantial difference

Each Party shall recognise, for the purpose of access to each of its higher education programmes, the qualifications issued by the other Parties that meet the general requirements for access to these respective higher education programmes, unless a substantial difference can be shown between the general requirements for access in the Party in which the qualifications were obtained and those in the Party in which recognition of the qualifications is sought (Article IV.1, 2011 Tokyo Convention).

- Is there a definition of the term “substantial difference” at national level? (35/36)
  - Yes, there is a nationally regulated definition: 23%
  - No. It is up to the competent recognition authorities to interpret the term: 54%
  - No. There are regulations or rules at institutional level: 23%
Results and analysis: Substantial difference

- Please provide a list of what may be considered a **substantial difference** between a foreign qualification and a corresponding national qualification (31/36)
  - Institution or programme is not accredited (i.e. quality assured): 77%
  - Differences in programme content/courses: 77%
  - Nominal duration of study is more than one year less: 68%
  - Different access requirements: 65%
  - Online studies: 52%
  - The institution is recognised in the home country, but not listed in other databases: 52%
Results and analysis: Substantial difference

In addition to the case of substantial differences between the corresponding qualifications, please provide any other reason why a foreign qualification is not recognised in your country by a competent recognition authority or why it is not recommended that it be recognized (14/36):

- “There are some cases lacking required endorsement by authorized body in the host country”
- “Cannot be verified by our reasonable investigation”
- “Qualifications from institutions is Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain and US are preferred over qualifications earned from institutions in Asian Countries.”
Results and analysis: National Information Centre (NIC)

Each Party shall take adequate measures for the development and maintenance of a national information centre that will provide higher education information. The form of the national information centre could vary (Article VIII.3, 2011 Tokyo Convention).

- Has a National Information Centre (NIC) been established and are its responsibilities regulated at national level? (35/36)
  - Yes: 40%
  - No: 60%
    - “Approval...pending from the government”
    - “Information can be obtained from the Ministry...”
    - Recognition processes is still on development stages
Results and analysis:
Development Stages of NQF in Asia-Pacific

Note: Stages above based on report for EU SHARE: AQRF and NQF, 2015

n = 28/33
Results and analysis:
Development Stages of NQF in Southeast Asia

- No Survey Response
- No Intent to Create NQF
- No Progress
- Planning Stage
- Design Stage
- Structures Documented
- Structures Operational
- Structures Established (5 yrs.)
- Ongoing Review

n = 8/11
Results and analysis:
Development Stages of NQF in the Pacific

n = 13
Results and analysis: Current challenges

- Obstacles and needs for ratifying and implementing the 2011 Tokyo Convention in your country (e.g. other comments or needs for UNESCO to consider) (20/36)
  - We need to learn more from other systems of higher education.
  - I do not see serious obstacles (e.g. technical assistance)
  - Agencies handling the domestic processes are constantly changed
  - Background materials from UNESCO (e.g. lack of awareness about the national benefits of the 2011 Revised Convention)
  - Lack of financial resources to establish an NIC
  - No obstacle, but needs some more time for consideration and acceptance
  - With the growing demand for international cooperation in this space, there needs to be more effort put into success indicators. What are the benefits and how do we measure them? What role do the UNESCO recognition conventions play in this space? How do we increase collaboration between organisations responsible for NQFs, QA and recognition?
Results and analysis: Current challenges

- What are some current challenges and initiatives to **strengthen connections between qualification frameworks, quality assurance and recognition?** (28/36)
  - Need more technical capacity building (e.g. staff training)
  - Lack of coordination among different sectors/entities
  - Lack of sufficient financial resources, human resources and knowhow
  - The connection between qualifications framework, quality assurance and recognition is, to a large extent, stronger in TVET
  - Qualifications frameworks and referencing do not, by themselves, deliver mobility or quality or recognition. The challenge is to explore solutions that harness national and regional qualifications frameworks to fully realise this objective.
Results and analysis: Readiness to ratify the 2011 Tokyo Convention

- Status of your country’s readiness to ratify the 2011 Tokyo Convention (24/36)
  - Approval is pending
  - Ready and close to ratification
  - Conducting consultations: The preliminary phase for consideration and acceptance of the issue has been initiated.
  - Ratification requires modifications in our regulation based on the decision of the relevant committee, therefore it requires 3-5 years
  - None in place
Questions?
Discussion and action planning

“Ladies and Gentlemen, don’t leave Sydney without an action plan...”

- Mr. GJ Kim, Director, UNESCO Bangkok
Discussion

Session objectives

- Seek views of Member States related to ratification and implementation of the 2011 Tokyo Convention with an anticipated timeline to ratification for each country (e.g. building on past efforts, give time for delegates to outline the ratification process and timeline)

Small group discussion (40 min)

- Outline the ratification process and expected timeline
- Share with colleagues and the Secretariat at UNESCO
  - Experts: Delegations from Australia, China and New Zealand
Thank you!

UNESCO Bangkok
Secretariat of the Regional Committee

Contact:
eisd.bgk@unesco.org