A Country Report: Trends and challenges confronting recognition of qualifications in BHUTAN

12th Session of the Regional Committee on Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific

Bangkok, Thailand
21-23rd May, 2013

Sangye CHODEN
Senior Program Officer
Facts about Bhutan

- **Area (Square Kilometer)**: 38,394
- **Population (2012)**: 720,679
- **Administrative Units**
  - Dzongkhags/District: 20
  - Dungkhag/Sub District: 15
  - Gewog/Counties: 205
- **Capital**: Thimphu
- **Currency**: Ngultrum
- **National Language**: Dzongkha
Overview of Higher Education (HE) System

- HE system has undergone major transformation
- The Royal University of Bhutan (RUB) was established in 2003
  Based on a federated college model
  10 constituent colleges and 1 affiliated college
  Caters to about 10% of the graduates from higher secondary schools
- Number of students studying outside Bhutan is increasing annually
- MoE formulated Tertiary Education Policy, 2010
- Tertiary Education Board (TEB); Bhutan Accreditation Council (BAC); Higher Education Planning Division (HEPD) and Quality Assurance and Accreditation Division (QAAD)
Statistics on Higher Education

- Higher Secondary Schools: 61
  - Public: 48
  - Private: 15
- Tertiary Education Institutes (TEIs): 12
- Tertiary Training Institutes: 1
- University: 1
- GER at tertiary level: 32.49%
- Total Students at tertiary level: 14,002
- No. of students outside (4403+721): 5315
- Establishment of 3 private colleges approved in principle
Policies & Guidelines

1. *Tertiary Education Policy (TEP)* - road-map, a guide, and a vision to support robust Tertiary Education system (Governance-structure & process)
2. *Accreditation Principles (AP)* - Principles, standards, and procedures for accreditation of TEIs
3. *Bhutan Qualifications Framework (BQF)* - instrument for recognizing qualifications & credit transfer system
5. *Funding Mechanism for Tertiary Education* - Guide and oversee the funding and financing of TEI
Trend in recognition of qualifications

- Prior to 2012, recognition of qualifications not regulated through a formal Qualifications Framework
- Qualifications recognized by Royal Civil Service Commission (Govt. employees)
- Demand for recognition increased over the years
- In 2008, the Election Commission of Bhutan (ECB) required qualifications of candidates of political parties to be recognized/validated
- ECB designated the Royal University of Bhutan to validate the qualifications of the candidates
- BQF empowered the Bhutan Accreditation Council (BAC) to recognize qualifications
- BAC granted in-principle approval for the guidelines for recognition and/or validation of qualifications
Guideline for recognition and/or validation

1. Submit application form
2. Scrutiny of the documents; verify Completeness of documents; Attested testimonies, Accreditation status of the university; Confirmation from the university; Original documents; Payment of recognition fee
3. Issuance of recognition certificate Secretariat shall either recommend recognition or decline recognition of qualifications BAC endorse the recommendation
4. Appeal- to be made to the Chairperson of the BAC???
Challenges in recognition

- Establish transparent, fair and coherent system for recognition of qualifications (including DE recognition & tools for monitoring quality)
- Establish a system of credit transfer in the TEIs
- BAC and QAAD are fairly new & immature bodies
- Difficulty in building the capacity of relevant bodies
- Lack of professional councils/bodies (BMHC)
- Lack of networking with the QA & degree recognition agencies
- No bilateral arrangements both at national and institutional level
Progress made in ratification of revised AP Convention

- Seeking government’s approval to become a signatory to the revised AP Convention
- Upload the information on the HE systems and TEIs on UNESCO Portal once all the TEIs are accredited
- Share the recognition practices through APARNET when the recognition practice is fully functional
- Agreed to designate either QAAD or HEPD as the National Information Centre
Way forward

1. Build capacity of relevant bodies
2. Develop a transparent, fair, and coherent recognition practice/system
3. Establish a credible system of accreditation
4. Initiate professional development of the assessors
5. Pilot accreditation of TEIs
6. Establish networking with degree recognition & QA agencies, join national & international networks
7. Ratify the revised AP Convention
8. Sign bilateral and mutual recognition agreements both at institutional and national level