Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education

Twelfth Session of the Regional Committee
Bangkok  21-23 May 2013
UNESCO Regional Conventions

- 6 Regional UNESCO Regional Conventions (dating from 1975 – 1983)
- Asia and the Pacific Regional Convention adopted at the International Conference in Bangkok in 1983
- 21 Countries have to date ratified the Regional Convention
Eighth Session – Kunming 2005

- Recommended that the 1983 Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas, Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific be revised.
- Working party established
- Further discussion occurred at the Ninth Session in Seoul in 2007
- Revised draft developed during 2007-08
- Working Party Report forwarded to the Tenth Session in Manila, 2009
Why Revise the Regional Convention?

- Significant changes in Higher Education over 25 years
- Exponential growth in private and public providers
- Increase of cross-border providers
- Increase in communication technology
- Massification in Higher Education which has changed the governance and administration of higher education
- Emergence of life-long education and learning
- Qualifications earned through distance education learning
- Development of national qualifications frameworks
- Development of assessment tools to measure learning outcomes
- Need to build national capacity and sustainable higher education systems.
Directions to the Working Party

• Ensure that it reflected the needs of the Asia and the Pacific Region
• Revision – not a new Convention as some countries had gone through a very long process for ratification
• Reflect the changes that are going on in Higher Education – e.g. Cross-border education, blended learning etc.
• Make it a dynamic tool that continue to meet the needs of the region in the future.
The Tenth Session accepted the revised Regional Convention with modifications.

Recommended that the Working Party finalise the Revised Regional Convention

Working party accepted modifications during 2009

Revise Regional Convention forwarded to UNESCO General Conference in October 2009, which agreed to convene the International Conference of States during 2010-2011.
2010 - 2011

- The Working Party accepted further changes and modifications to the Revised Regional Convention during 2010.
- The Working Party met again in June 2011 to consider all changes prior to finalising the Revised Regional Convention and sending out to all States.
- The Revised Regional Convention was further revised at the last meeting of the Working Group in October 2011.
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International Conference of States
Tokyo 25 – 26 November

- Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education adopted by the Conference
- 7 States and the Holy See signed the convention without reservation.
- A minimum of 5 States must go through their domestic procedures of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession before the Convention will enter into force.
What are the similarities?

- Still retains a number of sections with text unchanged
- Also incorporated some of the annexes added to the Convention over the last twenty years
- Consistent with the intent of the Lisbon Convention and some of the other Regional Conventions that are currently being revised.
Questions & Answers

- Is this Convention open to just countries from Asia-Pacific?
  No. This Convention is open to all UNESCO members & the Holy See.

- Are countries required to have a National Information Centre before signing?
  No. This is something can be developed later.

- Does this Convention also apply to Professional Qualifications?
  No. This Convention only applies to qualifications in higher education.
Questions and Answers

- What are the advantages of signing this convention?
- There is now greater movement of students from Asia-Pacific region studying in Europe and North America and require their qualification to be formally recognised.

- Is a country required to automatically recognise an international qualification?
- No. This is about countries establishing a fair and transparent process.
Questions and Answers

- Does signing this Convention mean changing our country’s legislation? No. Regional Conventions do not supersede a country’s legislation.
- Can our country sign this Convention as well as the Lisbon Convention? Yes. This Convention is based on the Lisbon Convention.
- Can we sign tomorrow but out country ratify, access or approval later? Yes. In fact most countries will take time to formalise ratification, accession or approval.
Issues for further development

- Employment
- National Information Centres
- Substantial Difference

- Recognition of qualifications for employment purposes

- More information about what is required to “establish” a National Information Centre to within resources and Governance structure.

- Sections IV, V and VI all use the term Substantial Difference. This requires further development and work.