GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES
ON THE RECOGNITION OF
HIGHER EDUCATION
QUALIFICATIONS

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Outline

- The context
- UNESCO’s action as a standard-setter in higher education
- Current work towards a global normative instrument
- Next steps
The Context

Recognition – a global issue impacted by changes in higher education

- increased internationalization
- globalization
- technology and its role in making higher education more accessible, affordable, available
- diversification of provision and providers
- demographic challenges
• the massification of higher education and the increased focus on quality, quality assurance and the need for robust frameworks
• mobility - of people, higher education programmes and institutions – both inter and intra-regional
• the move towards building regional higher education and research areas

the need for a global framework
UNESCO as a standard-setter in higher education

- Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (1974)
- Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the Arab and European States Bordering on the Mediterranean (1976)
- Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the Arab States (1978)
- Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Certificates, Diplomas, Degrees and others Academic Qualifications in Higher Education in the African States (1981)
Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific (1983)

Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees concerning Higher Education in the States belonging to the Europe Region (1979)

A “new generation” of recognition conventions:

- Europe (1997)
- Asia and the Pacific (2011)
- Africa – draft revised Convention will be examined at the ICS to be held in Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia, 10-12 December 2014
Towards a global normative instrument

- Tokyo, November 2011
- Feasibility study (2012)
- International experts’ meeting (Nanjing, People’s Republic of China, October 2012)
- UNESCO Executive Board (Spring 2013) and General Conference (37th session, 2013)
- The General Conference invited the Director-General to initiate the process of elaborating a global convention on the recognition of higher education qualifications
The Experts’ meeting

- An Experts’ meeting was convened on 10-11 July 2014
- The group – global, representing a wide range of recognition stakeholders
- Objectives – to analyze current context and future trends in recognition; identify the aims of a global convention; and recommend effective implementation mechanisms
Trends in higher education that will impact recognition

- The diversification of provision and providers
- The diversified and growing student population
- Demographic trends and the mobility that they will entail
- The emergence of new models of internationalization of higher education
- Changes in the paradigm of learning
- Employability, competition, rankings
- Quality assurance and qualifications frameworks
- The blurring divide between higher education and postsecondary vocational education and training
Aims:

- Raise awareness of recognition at the policy level
- Encourage inter-regional cooperation and mobility
- Raise the visibility in the public mind that the world is moving towards a far more global higher education community hence the need to build a more equitable and more transparent higher education sector worldwide
- Promote cooperation in recognition between regions and bilateral levels
- Provide a frame for sharing good practices in recognition
Basic principles:

- Equity and the importance that qualifications be assessed in the same way regardless of the country of origin of the qualifications
- Recognize higher education as a public good
- Adopt the principle of substantial difference
- Build trust; enhance graduate employability; reaffirm institutional autonomy
- Quality assurance as a major part of recognition processes
- Foster the establishment of networks of recognition experts
- Develop a global instrument that is not overly prescriptive
Key issues:

- Build on the regional recognition conventions and help revitalize/operationalize the less active ones

- Trust and transparency – critical factors of a global convention, as well as for the regional ones
Articulation with regional recognition conventions

- The need to do a comparative analysis of existing regional conventions and to have a clearer view on the recognition challenges in each region
- Focus on improving the current status of existing regional recognition conventions
- Guiding principles: equity and ethics; fairness; transparency and non-discrimination; mutual trust; flexibility (in education as in recognition principles); focus on recognition
Implementation modalities – guiding principles

- Ensure proper participation and wide ownership
- Include flexible conditions that do not put barriers to implementation
- Monitor what works and what does not in the regional conventions, and help build capacities to strengthen the regional recognition conventions
- Bring together regional players in recognition to identify barriers to recognition and modalities to overcome them
- Foresee the development of tools
Next steps

- Finalize the draft report of the Experts’ meeting and socialize it with the experts for finalization
- Draft the preliminary report requested by the General Conference and consult broadly on the key aspects
- Develop the political dialogue around the issue of the global recognition convention
- Convene another Experts’ meeting to discuss the draft preliminary report for the General Conference
Together we can complete successfully this challenging project!

Thank you!