The Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific

EIGHTH SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE
In conjunction with the
SEMINAR ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CROSS-BORDER HIGHER EDUCATION ASSESSMENT MECHANISM

Kunming, People's Republic of China
May 24-25, 2005
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202 p.


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REPORT OF THE EIGHTH SESSION
OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE
Introduction

This publication examines progress in regional cooperation which has been made in two areas of Higher Education, the first in creating and recognizing common academic standards and qualifications, and the second in devising ways to ensure the quality of cross-border education programmes. Its contents are based on two meetings that took place in Kunming, China in May 2005, which were jointly organized by UNESCO’s Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, the Government of the People’s Republic of China, and the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO.

Part I provides a report of the Eighth Session of the Regional Committee for the Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific. It specifically focuses on Member State achievements and challenges in implementing the Convention.

Part II documents findings from the Seminar on the Establishment of Cross-border Higher Education Assessment Mechanism. In addition, presentations introducing guidelines for quality provision of cross-border higher education, approaches to mutual recognition of qualifications, accreditation of foreign degrees and verification of foreign education information are included.

The Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific was adopted in 1983. This Convention serves as an important legal instrument in facilitating capacity-building, as well as academic and professional mobility among the higher education community in the region. Currently, 20 countries have ratified the Convention: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Australia, China, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Holy See, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, Tajiskistan, Turkey and Turkmenistan.

A Regional Committee convenes a Session of the Convention every two years to examine periodic reports from Member States and to monitor the implementation of the Convention. The Committee, appointed during each Session, also organizes a seminar in conjunction with the Session to facilitate dialogue among Member States and partners in addressing new issues and challenges facing the recognition of qualifications in the region. The 2005 seminar discussed mechanisms for quality assurance of cross-border higher education, a pressing challenge of the 21st century.
Country reports provided the background for further discussion about how Member States can strengthen their national efforts to ensure the quality of higher education. The reports also enabled participants to recommend revisions to the Convention to suit national and regional contexts.

Countries that have yet to ratify the Regional Convention are encouraged to do so. Assistance from the Regional Committee and other Member States through various platforms and fora is very much welcomed to convince policy makers to take this step to strengthen the recognition of studies, degrees and diplomas in their own countries and across borders.

Progress reports since the Eighth Session will be a highlight of the Ninth Session, which the Republic of Korea will host in May 2007.
REPORT OF THE EIGHTH SESSION
OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
REGIONAL CONVENTION ON THE RECOGNITION OF STUDIES,
DIPLOMAS AND DEGREES IN HIGHER EDUCATION
IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

1. Introduction

The Eighth Session of the Regional Committee for the Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific was held in conjunction with the Seminar on the Establishment of Cross-Border Higher Education Assessment Mechanisms in Kunming, People’s Republic of China during May 24-25, 2005. The meeting of the Regional Committee and the seminar were jointly organized by the UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education (UNESCO Bangkok), the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council (ADCSC) of People’s Republic of China and the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO.

The major objectives of the Eighth Session of the Regional Committee were:

1. To examine the progress made by the signatories on implementing the Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific and the obstacles encountered by the signatories in the application of the regional convention in the last two years since the Seventh Session of the Regional Committee held in March 2003 in Perth, Australia;

2. To facilitate dialogue among state parties to address new challenges and issues facing the region; and

3. To initiate the process of revising the regional convention in view of these new challenges.

Participants were nominated by the member countries and invited by UNESCO Bangkok. Forty participants-representatives from 11 state parties that have ratified the convention, observers from non-state parties, NGOs, IGOs and experts invited by UNESCO – attended the meeting. The first day focused on country reports and strategies for further effective implementation of the Convention, while on the second day invited experts led discussions on mechanisms for quality assurance of cross-border higher education.
2. Official Opening and Greetings

As Secretary of the Regional Committee, Dr. Molly Lee, Programme Specialist in Higher Education of UNESCO Bangkok, warmly welcomed all delegates and observers to the Eighth Session of the Regional Committee for the Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific. She stated the objectives of the meeting and set the targets for the discussions to follow.

Mr. Tian Xiagang, Secretary-General of the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO welcomed all delegates to the Eighth Session of the Regional Committee for the Regional Convention. He emphasized that this meeting was an historic event for China because it marked the first time that China hosted a regional committee meeting despite its being the first country to ratify the Convention in 1984. He challenged the Regional Committee to look at the issues that affect the implementation of the regional Convention, in particular the ones that go beyond academic nature, and respond to the challenges of the accelerating process of economic globalization characterized by trade in services.

Dr. Sheldon Shaeffer, Director of the UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, greeted all delegates to the meeting. He informed the body that cross-border education is an immediate challenge of the century, and that Member States must look at ways to maximize the opportunities that cross-border education offers and minimize the threats of this development. Along the same line, he advocated that the signatories of the Convention should find ways to protect students from low quality education and evolve strategies to increase the portability of students’ qualification. Shaeffer shared recent developments in the six Regional Conventions of UNESCO dealing with recognition of qualifications and in revisions of the conventions by some regional committees over the last two years.

From the People’s Republic of China, Mr. He Fusheng, Deputy Head of the Education Commission of Yunnan Province, welcomed all delegates to Yunnan. He invited all delegates to take some time to visit the places of interest in the wonderful province.

Dr. Yang Wei, Director-General of the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council (ADSC), delivered the keynote address. He shared with the delegates glimpses of China’s achievements in internationalization of higher education. These initiatives include: the signing of bilateral agreements with neighboring countries; the preparation of educational platform for the evaluation of studies, diplomas and degrees in higher education through academic databases; and the development of mechanisms to understand levels of Member States’ degrees in higher education. He was happy to report that these efforts would lead to the eventual development and full implementation of a credit transfer system in the Asia-Pacific region.
3. **Election of Bureau Members**

Nomination for all positions of the Regional Bureau was requested. One set of nominations was proposed by Sri Lanka’s representative, Professor Tillekeratne, as follows:

- Chairman: Dr. Lee Hyun-Chong, Korea
- First Vice-Chair: Dr. Sudhanshu Bhushan, India
- Second Vice-Chair: Ms. Linda Laker, Australia
- Rapporteur: Dr. Ethel Agnes P. Valenzuela, Philippines

The nomination was supported by the representatives of Maldives and Lao PDR. The participants of the session elected these members unopposed and congratulated all new office bearers. Each elected member gave a short message to the participants and observers of the session.

4. **Presentation of Country Reports**

The following is a synopsis of the eleven country reports presented in the session. The full country reports and speaker contacts are in the annexes.

**Australia**

*Ms. Linda Laker, Department of Education, Science and Training*

Higher education in Australia is currently provided by the 36 universities and higher education institutions established by State or Territory Legislation, three other institutions that were established under Australian Government Legislation, three private universities that have been recognized through state acts, and over 100 mainly private higher education institutions, which include theological colleges and providers with specialized interest in particular vocational or artistic fields. There are a total of 944,977 students enrolled in these higher education institutions.

The approval of higher education providers in Australia takes place within a national framework known as the National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Process. These protocols serve as an agreement between Federal and State Governments to establish a common standard and process for the recognition of universities and higher education institutions across Australia. The Protocols also cover overseas higher education institutions seeking to operate in Australia, the delivery arrangements involving organizations, and the endorsement of courses for overseas students.

Recent government initiatives in reforming Australian higher education include the following:
1) **Investments.** Australia’s reform package provided an increased investment of A $11 billion over ten years to be able to assist universities and students to make informed choices, to support higher education by new co-financing arrangements underpinned by public financing, and to increase funding for loans/scholarships for students. It is projected that there would be almost 36,000 new Commonwealth-supported student places, as well as more funding for each Commonwealth-supported student linked to improvements on how universities managed the funding.

2) **Rationalizing Responsibility for Higher Education.** The Australian Government is conducting a review to re-align Commonwealth responsibilities for higher education. The Australian Government will have a greater role in three key regulatory functions (which are under the state and territory governments): governance of public universities; powers of public universities to undertake commercial activities; and the accreditation of new courses and providers.

3) **Review of Australian Accreditation and Approval Process.** The Australian Government is currently reviewing the National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Process. This review explores the specific combination of teaching, scholarship and research that should define universities and other types of higher education institutions. It also creates pathways for non-self accrediting institutions to progress to self-accrediting or university status over time, if desired.

4. **Quality Assurance for Offshore Programmes.** Australia has initiatives to increase funding to the Australian Universities Quality Agency to reimburse the direct costs of offshore audits and allow increased sampling of institutions that operate offshore.

**People’s Republic of China**

**Dr. Yang Wei**

Higher education institutions in China are of three types: regular higher education, adult higher education, and technical and vocational higher education and training. Regular higher education institutions include comprehensive universities, specialized universities/colleges, junior colleges and advanced vocational schools. Senior high school graduates or students with equivalent qualifications may be admitted into Chinese universities or to various kinds of specialized full time colleges. They should have passed the National Matriculation Test, a test that ensures the quality of university students. Currently, there are 651,000 postgraduate students in China, including 137,000 doctoral degree students.
There is an all-round international exchange and cooperation in education that truly embodies the independent foreign policy of the country. The Chinese Government has signed documents on educational exchange and cooperation with over 160 countries and regions. Chinese educational institutions ranging from primary to university levels have established cooperative relations with their counterparts in many foreign countries.

China has sent nearly 700,000 students to study in 108 countries and regions, of which 170,000 have completed their overseas studies and returned home. At the same time, China is also one of the countries in the world that receives a large number of foreign students. China has taken in nearly 620,000 foreign students from 170 countries and regions of the world.

The Ministry of Education approved in 2004 the establishment of the Academic Degrees and Graduate Education Development Center (AGEDC) to establish extensive ties with both foreign and domestic universities and colleges, and to further forge relations with foreign embassies and organizations in China.

India

Professor Sudhanshu Bhushan

India has a large network of more than 16,000 colleges and university level institutions. There are 9.6 million students enrolled in these institutions.

Recent reforms in Indian higher education include improvement in infrastructure and development of quality education through Information and Communication Technology. The University Grants Commission (UGC) has launched a qualitative change in academic infrastructure in higher education to modernize university campuses with state-of-the-art campus-wide networks and to set up its own nationwide communication network named UGC-infonet. There are various schemes for library automation, software for university libraries and the creation of library automation databases.

Other reforms in Indian higher education are resulting from the modernization of syllabi, increased research, networking of universities and departments, and increased allocation of funds. The UGC has been continuously updating curriculum, and the process has been completed for 30 subjects of various disciplines.

Indian universities are also actively expanding the international dimension of their teaching, research and service functions. Cross-border higher education promotes the growth of foreign students in India, as shown by a steady increase of foreign students. It is also reported that the number of Indian students going out to study is high, as reflected in the OECD report.
UGC has constituted a committee on the Promotion of Indian Higher Education Abroad (PIHEAD), which is chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Secondary and Higher Education. The Committee monitors all activities aimed at promoting Indian education abroad. This drive has encouraged many Indian institutions to open their branch campuses abroad.

**Republic of Korea**

*Dr. Hyun-Chong Lee (presented by Ms. Soonho Choi)*

Higher education institutions in Korea can be categorized into 10 groups: (1) universities, (2) industrial universities, (3) universities of education, (4) junior colleges, (5) air and correspondence universities, (6) cyber colleges and universities, (7) technical colleges, (8) colleges in company, (9) graduate school colleges, (10) other miscellaneous institutions.

Korea has made tremendous strides in its higher education with the expansion of institutions and students. It has introduced recent reforms, which can be summarized as follows: (1) Brain Korea (BK) 21 Project; (2) New University for Regional Innovation or NURI Project; (3) Study Korea Project; and (4) the Plan for Restructuring higher education institutions.

Brain Korea Project (BK21) is a government-funded project launched to enhance the international competitiveness of Korean universities through concentrating government funds on education and research activities at graduate schools. It also aims to develop specialized projects to boost research collaboration in universities.

The New University for Regional Innovation, or NURI, is another government-funded project for strengthening the capabilities of colleges and universities located outside the Seoul metropolitan area. This programme is supportive of the Government’s major policy to balance the development of the nation by reinforcing the capabilities of local universities/colleges and by facilitating the development of regional economies.

The Study Korea Project is a comprehensive plan to attract foreign students to Korean colleges and universities that was launched by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development last December 2004. This project aims to invite 50,000 foreign students to Korea by 2010. It also intends to set up an overseas network for attracting foreign students. The project hopes to increase the number of Korean Education Centers in countries such as China, Viet Nam and the Philippines, where students have shown great interest in going to Korea for studies.
Lao People’s Democratic Republic
Dr. Phonephet Boupha

Laos has 5 public-run universities and higher education institutions: the National University, Champasak University, Souphanouvog University, the Polytechnic School and the Vocational Development Center. The Department of Higher, Technical and Vocational Education within the Ministry of Education is responsible for academic management of higher education.

Laos has also introduced reforms in higher education. Some of these reforms are in training and development of university students for the economic sector; structuring higher education into the pyramid shape to improve access to higher education sector; linking higher education closely to production and research; and promoting a cost-sharing, cost-recovery and income-generating system in order to increase the Government’s budget for education.

Laos has not fully implemented the diploma supplement. There is no mechanism at present to manage the recognition of higher education degrees. There are neither quality assurance boards nor accreditation councils in Lao PDR.

Holy See
Reverend Albin Grous

The Holy See is concerned with two categories of universities: (1) ecclesiastical universities and faculties, and (2) Catholic universities and other institutions of higher learning. Ecclesiastical universities and faculty are engaged in teaching and research in sciences proper to the Church. Catholic universities, meanwhile, are found in 70 countries throughout the world, and follow the academic legislative structures of their respective nations. There are 186 ecclesiastical universities, 15 of which have been erected by the Holy See. There are also 50 institutions of higher education in the Asia-Pacific region that grant degrees by the Holy See. Only the ecclesiastical faculties and their affiliated aggregated or incorporated institutes are affected by the Holy See’s adherence to UNESCO’s Regional Conventions.

The Holy See has outlined the rationale for updating ecclesiastical programmes for the study of Canon Law, as well as for the Code of Canons of Eastern Churches. It has also recently focused on the promotion and implementation of the principles of the Bologna Process within the European Union. At present, the Holy See is also a party to four UNESCO Regional Conventions in the field of higher education, namely those for Latin America and the Caribbean (1974), Europe (1979), Africa (1981), and Asia and the Pacific (1983).
The Holy See has encountered difficulty in the recognition of studies, degrees and diplomas in higher education because of its highly specialized curriculum. Its programmes of study leading to non-canonical degrees are not recognized as equivalent to its ecclesiastical curriculum.

**Maldives**

*Dr. Abdul Muhsin Mohammed*

The Maldives College of Higher Education (MCHE), the College of Islamic Studies (CIS), and the Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) provide higher education in the Maldives for Continuing Education. There are also a number of private higher education and training providers. Presently, 4,000 students are enrolled in MCHE degree programmes, and another 2,000 students enrolled in short-term courses.

The Maldives has an accreditation board, which manages the Maldives National Qualifications Framework (MNQF). This framework consists of 11 levels of qualifications, including Certificate I, Certificate II, Certificate III, Advanced Certificate, Diploma, Advanced Diploma, Bachelor’s Degree, Master’s Degree and Doctoral Degree. MNQF sets out minimum entry requirement credit hours and credit points for each of the 11 qualifications. Qualifications obtained abroad are evaluated by the Maldives Accreditation Board of Recognition. In the Maldives, recognition of degrees has not yet emerged as a significant issue.

**Mongolia**

*Ms. Batzaya Tsedev*

Mongolia has 11 universities, 167 institutes/colleges and 6 foreign higher education providers. The six foreign higher education providers import their programmes to Mongolia. Entrants to these universities study for the first two years in Mongolia, and then transfer to the main universities for further studies, where they eventually graduate.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for the development and implementation of nationwide policies related to academic activities, sciences, public education and culture. The Ministry is presently planning to undertake a sector study to initiate reform in higher education. The following aspects shall be evaluated: 1) legal environment of higher education; 2) management and structure of the sub-sector; 3) human, material and financial resources; 4) services for students; 5) strengthening the curriculum, programmes and standards of higher education, and other important issues.

In Mongolia, a diploma supplement is already in place. All diplomas are supplemented with annexes that indicate names of courses taken by the holder, related credits and grades, a title and a final examination grade of a dissertation or thesis defended.
There is no law that regulates the recognition of qualifications awarded by higher education institutions outside the country. The Government of Mongolia sees mutual recognition of qualifications and agreements with other countries as a vital tool to enhance its country’s quality of education and, at the same time, secure rights.

Nepal

Mr. Laxmi Prasad Khatry

Nepal’s higher education programmes start from intermediate courses and lead to research studies. The country has 5 universities, which currently provide education for 207,211 students.

Reform in Nepal’s higher education is focused on quality and equity through provision of student scholarships. Presently, the Government is working to develop the concept of a multi-university system.

Efforts have been made to increase international cooperation for higher education in Nepal. The University Grants Commission has been active in establishing dialogue with national and international institutions.

Some issues relating to mutual recognition of degrees, studies and diplomas in higher education include applying common standards for measurement and evaluation among Member States and signatory countries, and the adoption of common curricular standards in order to support each country’s academic programmes.

Philippines

Dr. Ethel Agnes P. Valenzuela

The Philippine’s higher education is uniquely characterized by the presence of a big number of private higher education institutions and a small number of publicly funded universities and colleges. There are 1,487 private higher education providers and 111 state colleges and universities; there are also about 102 Commission on Higher Education (CHED)-supervised institutions and a small number of special training centers for higher education and specialized degrees.

The Commission on Higher Education charts the direction of Philippine tertiary education through significant reforms, proper resource allocations and international linkages. The priority reform programmes in Philippine higher education are under the Higher Education Development Programme (HEDP). They are briefly described as follows:

- Establishing the Greater Uniformity in Accrediting Standards and Procedures for Higher Education reform package – This package will introduce a monitoring and evaluation system, which will be institutionalized within CHED, strengthen
the system of accreditation, and upgrade the professional board examination. Assistance with software and hardware to develop the capacity of accrediting agencies will be provided by the CHED.

» Rationalizing the higher education system and improving efficiency – This major reform package will conduct programme mapping to identify areas for programme duplication and over-served/under-served areas, and re-direct the State Universities and Colleges programme towards priority disciplines and geographic areas that are not currently served. It also includes the development of typology that could be used for funding,

» Strengthening teacher competencies in Higher Education through major staff development programmes – The programmes will build capacities for managers through training and development activities. They will include benchmarking and specialized courses in strategic planning, quality management, income generation and use of MIS data.

» Strengthening student assistance – Student financial aid will undergo reform by streamlining and targeting better scholars, improving the selection system and instituting the national qualifying examination. These reform packages will be supported by strategic investments and interventions system-wide.

The Philippines has just ratified the Regional Convention on the Regional Committee for the Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific. It also gained acceptance in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Mutual Recognition Project in Engineering Disciplines, and developed policies on transnational education to address the increase in the number of cross-border providers.

Sri Lanka

Prof. K. Tillekeratne

In Sri Lanka, the main institutional system that offers degrees and related qualifications comprises twelve universities of the conventional model and one open university. The present enrolment in Sri Lanka’s conventional universities is 45,000, while there are 25,000 students enrolled in its open university.

To establish comparability of similar programmes of study in different universities, a modularization of course content was introduced. The country has also adopted a bi-semester academic year. This reform has facilitated the formulation of a Common Credit Currency System among Sri Lankan universities. The facilitation of a credit transfer scheme has resulted in much greater opportunities for student mobility.
Sri Lanka recognizes the need for quality assurance, and has taken steps to introduce QA mechanisms within university education. There are four elements of its QA activities, namely: a national framework, provision of guidance and support for academic practice in teaching and learning, setting of standards by developing benchmarks for individual subjects, and the design and implementation of a Sri Lanka Credit and Qualifications Framework.

There is a growing trend in Sri Lanka of conducting academic programmes in the dual mode. The country plans to set up an Open Learning and Distance Education Center in each of the twelve conventional universities.

5. Discussion of the Pilot Project on Diploma Supplement and the Role of APARNET

Linda Laker presented an update on the Diploma Supplement project endorsed during the Seventh Session of the Regional Committee for the Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific. She highlighted the advantages of using the diploma supplement, particularly in promoting transparency of degrees, diplomas and studies. The diploma supplement contains information such as the level, context, and status of studies completed. Among the benefits is the improved recognition of an individual country’s higher education programmes. The diploma also assists international students who study outside of their own countries.

Laker reported that Australian universities have no obligation to adopt the diploma supplement programme. However, eight Australian institutions have voluntarily done so and are now involved in the pilot testing of the project. Initial reports from the pilot testing indicate that there is a need for IT software enhancements for student administration. It is expected that the pilot testing will be fully implemented this year through the Diploma Supplement Task Force, which was established by the DEST.

China commented that the diploma supplement is good for understanding academic programmes, since it promotes verification, security and a system of validating academic documents. However, at present, this is not a priority for Chinese universities.

The Maldives brought out the issue that many universities and countries would like to try out the diploma supplement, but that these universities and countries would need support in order to adopt this worthwhile project.

Molly Lee from UNESCO Bangkok noted that there have been developments in the implementation of diploma supplements in some member countries, and stated that UNESCO is now examining the possibility of providing technical assistance to countries that would try out the diploma supplement to facilitate mutual recognition of degrees, studies and diplomas.
Laker also informed the participants about a recent meeting on the Asia-Pacific Academic Recognition Network (APARNET), which Australia organized in response to agreements made during the Seventh Session of the Regional Committee for the Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific. APARNET has successfully facilitated active exchange of information among Member States. It has provided a platform to store a range of information about regional educational systems. It also has started an e-mail board to facilitate discussions about mobility, which has shown a significant increase in the number of users since its creation. The need to share responsibilities in hosting APARNET was discussed. As a result, Korea agreed to take over APARNET’s maintenance.

6. Key Issues of the three Joint Working Groups on
   a) Online and Distance Education
   b) Establishing Common Terminologies
   c) Training Strategies for Regional Convention

Lee raised concern on the fast developments in open and distance learning (ODL). Issues pertain to the recognition of degrees, intellectual property rights, evaluation of ODL programmes, quality assurance and consumer protection. She emphasized the need for mechanisms to assess and monitor both online and distance education qualifications.

Sharifah Hapsah from Malaysia informed the meeting that assessment of online education poses a lot of challenges to Member States. She explained that ODL provider registration within a country is problematic. One reason is that online providers operate in a setting that is borderless.

Wei reported that China has a domestic distance education programme with 1 million students enrolled.

Ethel Valenzuela informed the group that the Philippine Commission on Higher Education has issued Policies, Standards and Guidelines of Open Learning and Distance Education (OLDE). She explained that the Memorandum Circular requires registration of providers in the host country. At present, the Commission is evaluating the OLDE providers to determine the quality of their programmes.

Lee reminded everyone that a Working Group on Distance Education and Online Education was constituted during the Seventh Session to prepare a paper on the assessment mechanism for online and distance education. The Maldives and other members of that group reported that no meeting had taken place. Meeting participants consequently discussed the need for focus and a clear deadline. The Working Group was reformulated to include: Maldives, India, Philippines, Mongolia and Laos, with India given the role of lead convener. The new group then agreed on the following Terms of Reference:
To document existing regulatory frameworks for Open Learning and Distance Education
To develop a draft regulatory framework for mutual recognition of distance education, e-learning, and open learning qualifications

Issues related to the other two working groups – Common Terminology and the Training strategies for Regional Convention members – were taken up. Australia reported that the development of common terminology is closely linked with the work on Open and Distance Learning as well as the work on revision of the Convention. Lee explained that UNESCO’s training strategy is an integrated approach where seminars that are organized in conjunction with the regional committee meetings and the discussions serve as capacity-building programmes for the Member States. It was suggested that the task of the working groups on Common Terminology and Training Strategies for the Regional Convention be integrated with the other working groups to avoid overlaps.

7. Review of Progress Made in the Ratification and Implementation of the Regional Convention and the Need for Revision

Molly Lee explained developments in the ratification of the Regional Convention and the need for revision (See Annex 5). She discussed the many initiatives of UNESCO towards standard setting, facilitating academic mobility, and promoting mutual recognition of qualifications in higher education. With this in mind, UNESCO has initiated six regional conventions on mutual recognition of degrees, diplomas and studies since 1973. These regional conventions are legally binding instruments, and aim to promote international cooperation in higher education and reduce obstacles to the mobility of teachers and students by a mutual recognition of degrees. According to UNESCO records, more than 130 countries have ratified one or more of the six regional conventions on recognition of studies, diplomas and certificates.

Lee noted that 33 Asia and Pacific countries participated in the adoption of the Convention in 1983. She reported that 20 countries have already ratified the Convention, most recently the Philippines in October 2003. The last meeting of the Regional Committee resulted in the following developments:

- UNESCO Bangkok published the second edition of the Handbook on Diplomas, Degrees and Certificates in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific.
- The Workshop on “Exporters and Importers of Cross-Border Higher Education” was held on 20-22 March 2004 in Beijing, China. This is a training workshop for decision-makers from the Asia and Pacific region focusing on “Exporters and Importers of Higher Education,” and addressing emerging issues linked to the recognition of qualifications and quality assurance.
The Global University Network of Innovations in the Asia-Pacific (GUNI-AP) held an international symposium on “Quality Assurance and Mutual Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education” on 20-21 September 2004, Hangzhou, China, to present case studies of innovative practices at the institutional level among member universities in this network. The symposium had a focus on the way research universities have thus far responded to Quality Assurance and Mutual Recognition in their transition towards a knowledge-based society. The symposium provided a platform to exchange experiences concerning innovative practices and future strategies on quality assurance in and mutual recognition of qualifications between GUNI-AP member universities.

The UNESCO/OECD Australia Forum on Trade in Education Services was held on 10-12 October 2004 in Sydney, Australia. This forum focused on three cross-cutting themes:

- Bridging the divide – differing perspectives on cross-border provision of education
- Trade capacity-building – promoting understanding of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and the trade negotiation process
- Building capacity in quality assurance and accreditation in higher education, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region

The UNESCO Global Forum on Higher Education, Research and Knowledge and UNESCO New Delhi held a Preparatory Expert Meeting for the UNESCO Regional Seminar on the Implication of WTO/GATS on Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific on 9-10 December, 2004 in New Delhi. Participants discussed the issue of GATS and trade in education, specifically focusing on the impact of trade in a system that has weak structures and little capacity. This workshop also launched the capacity-building exercise for quality assurance at regional and national levels as part of strengthened policy and regulatory frameworks in higher education.

A Situation Analysis of Higher Education in eight South-East Asian countries (namely, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam) was launched in January 2005, and the study is set for completion in October 2005.

UNESCO Regional Seminar on the Implications of WTO/GATS on Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific was organized during 27-29 April 2005 in Seoul, Democratic Republic of Korea. The purpose of this seminar was to identify the implications of WTO/GATS for higher education and research policies, as well as to share country and regional experiences.
Lee reminded other signatories of the Regional Convention to impress upon their governments the importance of ratifying the Regional Convention. She highlighted the need to revise or amend some parts of the Regional Convention considering the many challenges of cross-border education. She emphasized the need to consider the process of carrying out revisions, noting that in some cases text may need major revisions, while in others the addition of a subsidiary text to the Convention would serve the purpose.

Sheldon Shaeffer, Director of the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education, cautioned that the revision should make the Convention simple, government-friendly and easy to ratify, but at the same time it should not throw out the essential aspects of the document that are needed for effective implementation.

Wang Yibing, Consultant to the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO, suggested that a small working group could be constituted to work on the revisions that are required in the Convention and to look at their implications more closely. Participants discussed the need to consider legal issues and whether the revision would also require ratification by the signatories. During the discussions that followed, participants agreed that members of the Bureau of the Regional Committee will form such a working group with members co-opted from both state and non-state parties. Nominees from New Zealand, Wang Yibing from China, and Sharifah Hapsah from Malaysia were invited to join the working group.

Thailand expressed interest in ratifying the Convention, and requested UNESCO Bangkok to assist the countries in influencing decision-makers. The Philippines and Lao PDR agreed to share their experiences in ratifying the Convention by preparing a document that would be uploaded on the APARNET. A meeting for policy makers of the Member States to brief them about the need for revision was suggested by a few participants. The possibility of using various other platforms that bring the policy makers together to brief them about the Convention was also suggested for further follow-up.

### 8. Recommendations and Next Steps

As an outcome of the discussions, the following action plan has been developed:

- All signatories to the Regional Convention and the Networks will convince their governments to establish the following in order to facilitate the implementation of the Regional Convention:
  
  a) National Qualifications Framework
  
  b) National Quality Assurance Mechanism
  
  c) National Information System
All participants will contribute to successful information networking through APARNET.

The advantages of diploma supplement in promoting mutual understanding and recognition of qualifications will be disseminated by the participants.

The Assessment Mechanism for Foreign Qualifications will be given attention by all countries, especially in the context of new providers of education.

A working group comprising the Bureau of the Regional Committee and a few co-opted members like New Zealand, Malaysia and China will work on the revisions needed in the Regional Convention and the legal implications of the same.

Based on the recent experiences of the Philippines and Lao PDR, a document highlighting the steps to be taken to ratify the Regional Convention will be developed and made available through APARNET.

To guide policy makers on issues related to handling cross-border higher education, UNESCO Bangkok will develop a toolkit.

9. Closing Remarks

Sheldon Shaeffer commended the group’s active participation in the discussions. He encouraged signatories of the Convention who have not ratified it to continue working towards ratification so that the recognition of studies, degrees and diplomas in the region would be strengthened. He also encouraged all working groups to achieve their targets. He thanked all delegates for the country reports and for providing the necessary updates that truly contributed to the success of the meeting. He acknowledged the warm hospitality accorded by the host organization in making the Eighth UNESCO Regional Convention a great success.

In all, the meeting helped to share experiences and expertise. Signatories to the Convention who have not progressed to ratification of the same have agreed to redouble their efforts. The Republic of Korea, as the Chair of the Regional Bureau, extended an invitation to the Regional Bureau to have the next meeting in Korea during 2007.
Information Note

1. Date
24 (Tuesday) - 25 (Wednesday) May 2005

2. Venue
Expo Garden Hotel (Shiboyuan Dajiudian)
No. 5 Shibolu Avenue
Kunming 650224
People’s Republic of China
Tel: +86-871-5012666
Fax: +86-871-5012898

3. Organisers
UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, Bangkok
Office of the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council of China and Chinese National Commission for UNESCO Beijing, People’s Republic of China

4. Background
When States agree to common rules, notwithstanding cultural differences and traditions, they can draw up an agreement or convention, which are legally binding, or develop a recommendation or a declaration.

UNESCO participates in these efforts through its standard-setting action and serves as a central forum for coordination and discussion.

Among the various initiatives towards standard-setting, facilitating academic mobility and promoting mutual recognition of qualifications in higher education has always been a priority of UNESCO’s higher education programme. With UNESCO’s initiative, six regional conventions on mutual recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees in higher education have been adopted since 1973. With the accelerating pace of globalisation and internationalization of higher education, interest in signing and ratifying regional conventions is growing. More than 130 countries have ratified one or more of the six regional conventions on recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees in higher education initiated by UNESCO. These conventions serve as important legal instruments for international community in facilitating academic and professional mobility.
The regional convention for recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees in higher education in Asia and the Pacific was adopted at the conference of states in Bangkok in 1983, in which 33 countries participated. Since then, the Bureau of the Regional Committee has been monitoring the promotion of the convention. The Regional Committee meets bi-annually and examines periodic reports from the Member States on progress and difficulties in applying the convention.

To follow-up the discussions held and the recommendations drawn up in the seventh session held at Perth, Australia in 2003, the Eighth Session of the Regional Committee is scheduled for 24-25 May 2005. In particular, the eighth session will discuss the strategies to overcome the barriers to effective implementation of the regional convention in the light of the challenges posed by cross-border education.

On the invitation from the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO and the Office of the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council of China to host the Eighth Session, the meeting will be held in Kunming City, Yunnan Province, People’s Republic of China. It will be organised in conjunction with a Seminar on the Establishment of Cross-Border Assessment Mechanisms.

5. Participants

Participation in the meeting is by nomination by the member countries and invitation by the UNESCO-Bangkok. Representatives from around 11 state parties that have ratified the convention will present country reports. Around 15 observers from non-state parties, NGOs, IGOs and experts are expected to attend the meeting. While day-one will focus on country reports and strategies for further effective implementation of the convention, on day-two, invited experts will lead the discussions on mechanisms for quality assurance of cross border higher education.

6. Objectives

The major objectives of the Eighth Session of the Regional Committee are as follows:

- To examine the periodic reports on the progress made and the obstacles encountered by the signatories in the application of the regional convention in the last two years since the Seventh Session of the Regional Committee held in March 2003 in Perth, Australia.
- To facilitate dialogue among state parties to address new challenges and issues facing the region.
- To initiate the process of revising the Regional Convention in view of these new challenges.
7. Agenda and the Expected Outcome

The preliminary agenda of the meeting will include:

- Election of the Chair, the First Vice-Chair, the Second Vice-Chair, and the Rapporteur;
- Review of the progress made to date in the ratification and implementation of the Regional Convention;
- Review of country reports on national policies and strategies for implementation of the Regional Convention and suggestions on how to revise the Regional Convention to suit the national and regional contexts;
- Discussion on the pilot projects for a Diploma Supplement and the role of APARNET; and
- Discussion on the three Joint Working Groups on (a) Online and Distance Education, (b) Establishing Common Terminologies, and (c) Training Strategies for Regional Convention members.

It is expected that as an outcome of this meeting, the member states will increasingly realize the need to strengthen the national mechanisms for quality assurance of higher education and information sharing about higher education. Importance of National Qualifications Framework in facilitating the mobility of knowledge seekers and knowledge workers will be understood. Enhanced support for and commitment to introduce diploma supplement and credit system in higher education can be expected. Draft recommendations on revising the regional convention to cope with the emerging challenges of the higher education system can be another significant outcome.

8. Practical Notes

- **Visa Requirement:** For those who need visa formality to enter China, please contact Mr. Yipeng Cao (Tel: +86-10-6609 6883, Fax: +86-10-6601 7912, Email: cyp@moe.edu.cn) Programme Officer, Chinese National Commission for UNESCO, with your contact details.
- **Language:** The language of the meeting will be English. Simultaneous interpretation of English and Chinese will be provided for the opening.
- **Presentation Facility:** Video projector and computer will be provided for presentation.
» **Local Transportation:** All participants will be picked up at the airport, if his/her flight details are made available. Staff members of the local organizer will welcome everyone at the exit of the Kunming Airport. In case of missing the pick-up, you may take a taxi. Fee for taxi from airport to the venue of the meeting will be about 30RMB

» **Weather:** 20-30 C

» **Electricity:** 220V, 50Hz

» **Currency Rate:** 1USD = 8.27 RMB

9. **Correspondence**

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E-mail: sshyan@ynu.edu.cn
Preliminary Agenda

» Opening of the meeting
» Election of the Bureau Members
» Approval of the Agenda
» Presentation of country reports
» Discussion on the pilot projects for a Diploma Supplement and the role of APARNET
» Discussion on the three Joint Working Groups on (a) Online and Distance Education, (b) Establishing Common Terminologies, and (c) Training Strategies for Regional Convention members
» Review of the progress made in the ratification and implementation of the Regional Convention and the need for Revision
» Adoption of the Report of the regional Committee meeting and strategies and recommendations for promotion of the ratification and implementation of the Regional Convention
Eighth Session of the Regional Committee Meeting
(Kunming, China)

Venue: ExpoGarden Hotel, No. 5 Shibolu Avenue, Kunming 650224
Tel: +86-871-5012666, Fax: +86-871-5012898
Date: 24-25 May 2005

Schedule

Tuesday, 24 May 2005

08.00 – 08.30 hrs. Registration
08.30 – 09.15 hrs. Opening of the meeting by the Chair of the Bureau of the Regional Committee (China)
  ● Greeting and Welcome by the Chair
  ● Opening remarks by the Secretary of the Regional Committee Dr. Molly Lee
  ● Welcome remarks by Dr. Sheldon Shaeffer, Director, UNESCO Bangkok
  ● Keynote address by the Chief Guest (to be finalized by China)
09.15 – 09.30 hrs. Election of the members of the Bureau of the Regional Committee to be conducted by the Chair of the Bureau of the Regional Committee (China)
09.30 – 09.45 hrs. Approval of the Agenda to be chaired by the elect-Chair of the Bureau of the Regional Committee
09.45 – 10.15 hrs. Group Photograph and Tea
10.15 – 12.45 hrs. Presentation of country reports (15 minutes for each country paper) to be chaired by the elect-Chair of the Bureau of the Regional Committee

12.45 – 13.45 hrs. Lunch

13.45 – 14.30 hrs. Discussion on the Pilot Project on Diploma Supplement and the role of APARNET – Report by Australia to be followed by discussions – To be chaired by the First Vice-Chair of the Bureau of the Regional Committee

14.30 – 15.00 hrs. Report of the three Joint Working Groups to be chaired by the Second Vice-Chair of the Bureau of the Regional Committee

15.00 – 15.15 hrs. Tea

15.15 – 16.30 hrs. Revising the Regional Convention – Discussion to be chaired by Dr. Molly Lee

16.30 – 17.00 hrs. Adoption of the report of the Regional Committee meeting and strategies and recommendations for promotion of the ratification and implementation of the Regional Convention to be chaired by Dr. Sheldon Shaeffer

17.00 – 17.15 hrs. Closing Session
Country Reports

AUSTRALIA

Ms. Linda Laker

1. Introduction

A. The Australian Higher Education System

Higher education in Australia generally refers to those institutions which award degrees, although they may also award sub-degree level qualifications. These institutions are principally universities that are established by or under Australian Government, State or Territory legislation.

The main purposes of Australian higher education are:

» to enable individuals to develop their capabilities for effective participation in the workforce, for constructive contributions to society and for personal growth and fulfilment;

» to advance knowledge and understanding;

» to aid the application of knowledge and understanding to the benefit of the economy and society;

» to enable individuals to adapt and learn, consistent with the needs of an adaptable knowledge-based economy at local, regional and national levels; and

» to contribute to a democratic, civilised society.

Access to higher education may be based on completion of the Senior Secondary Certificate of Education (Year 12), with admission to undergraduate study often depending on the level and academic achievement of the Year 12 award. In some cases, entry for school leavers may be based on additional requirements such as an interview, portfolio of work, and/or a demonstrated interest or aptitude for the study programme. Most institutions make provision for the admission of mature age students, who may be admitted without the Year 12 prerequisite if they meet other criteria such as relevant
work experience, an entrance examination, a demonstrated aptitude for study and/or completion of appropriate bridging programmes.

**B. Higher Education Institutions**

Higher education in Australia is currently provided by:

- 36 universities and higher education institutions in Australia established by State or Territory legislation;
- three other institutions – the Australian National University (ANU), the Australian Maritime College (AMC) and the Australian Catholic University (ACU), established under Australian Government legislation;
- three private universities (Bond University, University of Notre Dame Australia and Melbourne University Private) which have been recognised through State Acts; and
- in addition, there are over 100, mainly private, higher education institutions which include theological colleges and providers with specialized interest in particular vocational or artistic fields.

Australian universities are generally comprehensive institutions offering a wide range of programmes. They vary significantly in size, ranging from the largest with around 40,000 students down to the smallest at around 2,000 students. Most have between 10,000 and 20,000 students. Many universities are located in the major cities but there is a significant number located in smaller regional centres. The larger universities usually have a number of campuses. Most universities are organised on the basis of faculties or schools, but may also have a number of specialised and/or research centres or institutes. Publicly-funded universities obtain their income from a number of sources: government, course fees, industry investment, bequests and commercial activity.

In 2004, a total of 944,977 students were enrolled in Australia’s higher education institutions. Of these 70 per cent (657,935) were undergraduate students, 27 per cent (257,769) were postgraduate students, and the remaining three per cent were enrolled in enabling or non-award courses. Most students were enrolled in Australian universities.

In Australia, the approval of higher education providers takes place within a national framework known as the National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes. These Protocols are an agreement between Federal and State Governments and they establish a common standard and process for the recognition of universities and higher education institutions across Australia.

Under the Protocols, a new institution must be accredited by a government accreditation authority. Accreditation involves a process of independent review.
The National Protocols recognise two distinct types of Australian higher education institutions – universities and non self-accrediting providers, i.e. institutions which do not have the authority to accredit their own courses.

Universities:

- Protocol 1 specifies the criteria and processes for recognition of Australian universities which, once approved, are not subject to re-accreditation, but are subject to audit by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA). Universities are authorised by governments to accredit their own courses.

Non self-accrediting providers:

- Protocol 3 specifies the criteria which cover the accreditation of higher education courses to be offered by non self-accrediting providers. Every course is individually approved and re-approved on a five year basis by a State Government accreditation authority and the provider is also approved to deliver the course. Non self-accrediting institutions generally provide courses within a limited range of fields of study.

The Protocols also cover overseas higher education institutions seeking to operate in Australia (Protocol 2); delivery arrangements involving other organisations (Protocol 4) and the endorsement of courses for overseas students (Protocol 5).

C. Recent Government Initiatives in Higher Education

Our Universities: Backing Australia’s Future. Following an extensive review of Australia’s higher education system, the Australian Government released a package of higher education reforms in 2003, entitled Our Universities: Backing Australia’s Future. The reforms provide an increased Australian Government investment of $A11 billion over ten years.

The reforms will enable universities and students to make informed choices, supported by new co-financing arrangements underpinned by public financing, increased funding, new subsidised loans and scholarships for students. There will be almost 36,000 new Commonwealth-supported student places and more funding for each Commonwealth-supported student, linked to improvements in how universities are managed. In addition, there are extra funds for regional universities and new schemes and funding to encourage excellence in teaching, more collaboration between institutions and a renewed focus on equity. Many of the reforms are currently being implemented. For further information, see http://www.backingaustraliasfuture.gov.au/policy_paper/contents.htm.

Australian Government funding policies have traditionally directed public funding to the public sector. However, recent reforms have opened Australian Government supported loans (FEE-HELP) to students attending eligible private institutions as well as some
National Priority places in teaching and nursing. For students at private higher education institutions to have access to FEE-HELP, the institution must meet quality assurance and reporting requirements set out in legislation. Over 30 private higher education institutions have met these requirements to access funding.


The Australian Government currently has significant financial and policy responsibility for higher education, while State and Territory Governments retain legislative responsibilities. This has created complex arrangements which lack national consistency and transparency in key areas, and may constrain Australia’s capacity to meet the requirements of a competitive global environment.

On 31 March 2004, the Minister has released a further discussion paper, *Building Better Foundations for Higher Education in Australia: A discussion about re-aligning Commonwealth-State responsibilities*, which explores the issues in the previous paper in more detail, taking into account the findings of reports expressly commissioned by the Australian Government. It suggests that, on the evidence currently available, there may be benefits in the Australian Government having a greater role in three key regulatory functions which are currently the responsibility of State and Territory Governments:

- governance of public universities;
- powers of public universities to undertake commercial activities; and
- accreditation of new courses and providers.

The paper seeks stakeholders’ views on these issues and is available at [http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/policy_issues_reviews/key_issues/commonwealth_state_responsibility_higher_ed.htm](http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/policy_issues_reviews/key_issues/commonwealth_state_responsibility_higher_ed.htm).

**Review of Australia’s Accreditation and Approval Processes.** The Australian Government is currently reviewing the *National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes*, consulting nationally on whether the limited range in types of higher education institutions currently permitted through the protocols provides for a higher education system that can best meet global change and competition. As part of the consultation, the Australian Government has released a discussion paper on 2 March 2005, *Building University Diversity: Future approval and accreditation processes for Australian higher education*, which explores:
the specific combinations of teaching, scholarship and research which should define universities and other types of higher education institutions;

- whether there should be provision for “specialist” institutions covering a narrow field of study in-depth rather than a wide range of disciplines;

- the role of private and for-profit institutions in the future and to what extent regulation of them should be different to regulation of public or not-for-profit institutions;

- the scope to create pathways for non self-accrediting institutions to progress to self-accrediting or university status over time if desired; and

- the potential impacts of changing the current framework.


**Research quality and accessibility frameworks.** The Government is committed to developing quality and accessibility frameworks for publicly-funded research to ensure that research funding goes to those researchers and institutions who can use it to the best effect, and to ensure that the research that is produced can be easily found and accessed by other researchers and the wider community. The Government has released the *Research Quality Framework: Assessing the quality and impact of research in Australia issues paper*. Written responses were to be provided by 2 May 2005. More information is available at http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/research_sector/publications_resources/profiles/research_quality_framework_issues_paper.htm.

**Quality assurance of offshore provision.** The growth of higher education offshore provision has led the Australian Government to undertake initiatives to further strengthen the quality assurance for education services provided overseas by Australian institutions.

The first initiative provides increased funding to the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA), to reimburse the direct costs of offshore audits and allow increased sampling of offshore operations of institutions. The quality of Australia’s provision of offshore higher education will be detailed in an annual aggregate report, prepared by AUQA.

2. Report on Follow-up Actions based on Recommendations made at the Seventh Session of the Regional Committee

A. Diploma Supplement – Pilot Project

Australia has an obligation under the Lisbon Convention to “promote the use of the UNESCO/Council of Europe Diploma Supplement or any other comparable document” (Article IX.3).

A Diploma Supplement is an attachment to an academic or vocational award which describes in an internationally understandable form:

- the award, its level, duration, mode of study and subjects completed;
- the standing of the qualification in employment or professional terms;
- the status of the award and the awarding institution; and
- the national education system at the time of the award.

Its purpose is to make the qualification more portable and its value more transparent. It addresses problems faced by employers and assessing bodies in the recognition of international higher education qualifications.

There is no obligation placed on Australian higher education institutions to adopt the Diploma Supplement, although the Australian Government views the promotion of the Diploma Supplement as an important part of its long-term strategic approach to developing an improved international framework for the recognition of higher education qualifications.

As a first step in meeting Australia’s obligations under the Lisbon Convention, DEST supported six institutions to participate in a pilot project between 2002 and 2004 to develop examples of Diploma Supplements and investigate the implications for institutions to issue them. In 2005, two more universities commenced a second stage of the pilot project.

Those institutions that have completed the pilot project have highlighted views on the use of the Diploma Supplement by students, academic staff and potential employers; the capability of administration systems to issue Diploma Supplements, including cost implications; and have developed samples of Diploma Supplements.

Building on the outcomes of the pilot project, DEST has commenced a consultancy project to identify good practice in developing and implementing award supplements in Australia and internationally, and to develop effective strategies for the promotion of the use of the Diploma Supplement in Australia. This project was completed in April 2005.
The outcomes of the consultancy project will assist the Australian Government to raise the awareness of Australia’s obligations under the Lisbon Convention in relation to the Diploma Supplement and its benefits across the Australian higher education sector.

B. APARNET

The APARNET website was established in fulfilment of the recommendation of the Sixth Session of the Regional Committee. As an electronic network of National Information Centres, it aims to achieve one of the core objectives of the Regional Convention – to assist in the collection, dissemination and exchange of information relating to the recognition of academic qualifications and higher education systems within the Asia-Pacific region. Under Australia’s administration since the Seventh Session of the Regional Committee, the APARNET has been updated with information on the member’s comparative assessment methodologies and educational systems and publications relating to issues of recognition, quality assurance, trade in educational services and capacity building in the region. The APARNET has also been enhanced by the establishment of the e-forum on an independent internet service provider, a factor which will improve flexibility and allow for future growth.

3. Situation Analysis of Cross-border Education

A. Number of foreign students studying in Australia and number of students studying abroad

Australia is primarily an exporter rather than an importer of education services, and during the last decade international students have become a very important part of the Australian higher education scene. Students coming from outside Australia to study at Australian institutions are usually referred to as overseas students, and there were 228,555 overseas students enrolled in Australian universities in 2004, most of them paying full tuition fees. Overseas students represent around 24 per cent of all enrolments.

Higher education institutions are also strengthening their international presence by making some programmes available off-shore. In 2003, 35 per cent of overseas students enrolled in Australian higher education institutions were studying offshore.

According to data reported by overseas economies to the OECD, in 2000 there were 5,358 Australian students studying overseas.

B. Emergent issues relating to cross-border education such as the implications of GATS

The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), to which all WTO members are signatories, provides a framework of principles and rules for trade in services set against
the background of a commitment to the expansion of such trade under conditions of
transparency and progressive liberalisation.

Key emergent issues relating to cross-border education that are of direct relevance to
Australia as an exporter of education services include quality assurance and accreditation
and qualifications recognition. These issues have been brought about by an increase
in the provision of education services across borders and the need for assurance about
the quality of the services being provided, as well as the usefulness of the qualification
gained for the purpose of further study or employment. The GATS may be contributing
to the increase in the provision of education services across borders due to the better
access and conditions negotiated by WTO members; however, it is likely that market
demand on its own has been a major contributor.

It is Australia’s view that the GATS has generated increased discussion of, and attention
to, education services issues internationally. Australia is supportive of the role the
GATS has played in facilitating increased knowledge of issues relating to the cross-
border provision of education services. The GATS also appears to be providing the
impetus for many countries to closely examine their education systems and policies
in order to address key issues so that they can make commitments or offers through
the GATS process, or respond to requests made by other members during this stage of
the current negotiating round. In this way, the GATS may also be contributing to the
development of education policy in many WTO member countries. For example, some
member countries, through the current round, are offering to allow foreign institutions
to provide education services in partnership with local providers in their country and
are developing or amending legislation to create the enabling environment for this.
Many countries see benefits in this for developing the capacity of partner institutions
and also lessening the effects of “brain drain” as students are less likely to leave the
country. However, it is difficult to know which comes first: the desire, driven by either
the Government or the market to make changes, followed by a GATS commitment, or
the request for a commitment made through the GATS which then prompts the country
to make changes.

Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education

A. Degree conferring agencies, quality assurance agencies,
accreditation bodies.

Australia has a highly developed Quality Assurance Framework with responsibility
shared between universities, governments, the Australian Universities Quality Agency
(AUQA) and the Australian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board (AQFAB).
Universities:

» are responsible for academic standards;
» have appropriate governance structures and academic approval processes; are empowered to accredit own awards;
» operate under various codes of practice; and
» have quality assurance processes for teaching and learning and research, which is outcomes-focused.

Australian governments, including the States and Territories:

» legislate to:
  ■ accredit new universities and higher education courses offered by non self-accrediting providers; and
  ■ protect the word “university”; and
» use the National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes to ensure consistency of application. The protocols are currently under review.

The National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes cover the:

» recognition of Australian universities (including protection of term “university”);
» approval of overseas higher education institutions seeking to operate in Australia;
» accreditation of non-university higher education courses;
» monitoring of higher education franchising arrangements; and endorsement of courses as suitable for overseas students.

The role of the Australian Government encompasses:

» ensuring institutional accountability through funding legislation;
» collection and analysis of data from universities to review performance and assess national needs; and
» ensures national data is available on quality including:
  ■ student/staff ratios;
  ■ retention/progression rates; and
  ■ graduate employment/salaries.
The Australian Qualifications Framework:
- provides a coherent system of award descriptors from school to PhD;
- lists all universities, other recognised providers and government accreditation authorities in a register (http://www.aqf.edu.au); and
- ensures integrity of the system.

The Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA):
- is owned by Australian education ministers, the Board contains representatives nominated by the Australian and State/Territory Governments, universities and private higher education providers, plus the chief executive officer;
- audits quality assurance processes in every Australian university every five years;
- audits all government accreditation processes every five years;
- makes audit reports available to the public at www.auqa.edu.au; and
- as of this year, the Australian Government has asked private providers who access Australian Government higher education funding to be subject to quality audit; and AUQA will receive more Australian Government funding to increase the number of offshore audit visits.

B. Recognition of qualifications awarded by higher education institutions within and outside Australia

There are no procedures in Australian law whereby an overseas qualification can be formally recognised in educational terms, and the Australian Government has no official or legally binding process for the recognition of overseas qualifications of Australian permanent residents and citizens or of non-residents. There are different levels of recognition in Australia.

Information and advice on overseas education systems and qualifications (as well as on a range of recognition issues) is provided by AEI-NOOSR. AEI-NOOSR resides in the Educational Standards Branch of the Federal Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) and is the Australian National Academic Recognition and Information Centre (NARIC). AEI-NOOSR, which dates back to 1969, is the national expert and coordinating body on the recognition of overseas professional and educational qualifications. Among other functions (noted in more detail below), AEI-NOOSR facilitates and supports recognition decisions made by other bodies.

In Australia, powers to make decisions about international qualifications lie with the following bodies:
for employment purposes – professional bodies and individual employers;
for registration/licensing purposes – the State/Territory registration boards;
for academic purposes – individual education institutions;
for migration purposes – gazetted assessing authorities.

These bodies determine whether the qualification in question:

- can be compared to an Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) qualification; and/or
- has a suitable coverage of appropriate professional skills and competencies; and/or
- demonstrates an appropriate level of educational/academic skills and achievement.

Tertiary institutions in Australia are autonomous and make their own decisions on qualifications gained overseas for academic purposes.

Overseas-trained individuals seeking to practice occupations which are regulated by government (principally health-related professions, legal practice, and architecture) must seek registration with the relevant State/Territory registration boards. The AEI-NOOSR Guide to Professional Recognition in Australia contains information relating to assessment criteria and processes for a range of professions in Australia. This information is available at http://aei.dest.gov.au/AEI/QualificationsRecognition/RecognisingProfessionalQualifications/GuideToProfessionalRecognition/default.htm.

When the qualifications of overseas-trained individuals are assessed as part of an application for skilled migration, the competent authority is the relevant approved migration assessing authority. Information about skilled migration and assessing authorities is available on the website of the Australian Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (www.immi.gov.au). AEI-NOOSR is responsible for approving assessing authorities before their gazetal by the Minister for Immigration and monitoring their performance to ensure that assessment pathways are fair, accessible, equitable and transparent.

**AEI-NOOSR.** As noted above, NOOSR facilitates recognition decisions and promotes fair, equitable and transparent recognition procedures through a number of products and services.
AEI-NOOSR:

- provides advice to the Australian Government on recognition matters;
- provides a national focus for professional bodies and agencies (including State and Territory Overseas Qualifications Units) involved in the recognition of overseas skills, through the provision of advice and information regarding relevant Government policies;
- assists in the development of assessment skills and encourages best practice by other assessing authorities and university admissions officers, through the provision of advice and professional development programs;
- publishes the Country Education Profiles, which describe overseas education systems and provide guidelines for assessing the comparability of their qualifications to Australian qualifications. The Country Education Profile (CEP) series of booklets covers over 100 countries. They are used by professional bodies, registration boards, migration assessing authorities and State and Territory Governments to inform their assessments of overseas qualifications, and by Australian higher education institutions to inform admissions decisions for overseas students. The information in the CEPs will be available on-line via the AEI Online Shop in late 2005;
- provides advice to Australia’s higher education institutions on the assessment of overseas qualifications for admission purposes;
- undertakes educational assessments of overseas qualifications for individuals;
- provides advice to registration boards and professional bodies with responsibility and competence for assessing the qualifications of overseas-trained professionals;
- assists overseas-trained professionals who are Australian permanent residents to meet professional recognition requirements through funding support programmes;
- promotes the mobility of Australian professionals and the recognition of Australian qualifications overseas;
- provides assessments of teaching qualifications for the purpose of migration under the General Skilled Migration Program; and
- approves professional bodies as assessing authorities under the Migration Regulations 1994 2.26B and monitors recognition pathways and assessment practices for overseas-trained professionals.
AEI-NOOSR does not assess trade-level qualifications, which are assessed by Trades Recognition Australia (TRA), a part of the federal Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (www.workplace.gov.au).

AEI-NOOSR does not formally assess general secondary qualifications, as this is the responsibility of the individual states and territories.

**Overseas Qualifications Units.** Australian State and Territory Governments all maintain offices, known generically as Overseas Qualifications Units (OQUs), which offer settlement services for permanent and temporary residents, including qualifications recognition. The OQUs provide information and an educational assessment service (free in most states and territories), with assessments based on AEI-NOOSR’s published guidelines. The assessments issued by OQUs may be used for general employment purposes, to assist in application for professional registration or membership of a professional body, or to facilitate admission to further study. The OQUs refer clients with qualifications which are not covered by AEI-NOOSR’s published guidelines to AEI-NOOSR for individual assessment. The OQUs are currently supported by AEI-NOOSR through the provision of assessment advice and professional development seminars. Contact details for OQUs are available on the AEI-NOOSR website.

5. International Cooperation, Bilateral and Multilateral Agreements

A. Activities and actions undertaken to date to enhance international and regional cooperation concerning mutual recognition of qualifications in higher education

*Draft UNESCO/OECD Guidelines on Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education.* Australia is an active participant in this collaborative UNESCO/OECD project to develop Guidelines on Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education.

The main purpose of the guidelines is to protect students and the international reputations of member countries from disreputable providers and the provision of poor quality educational experiences. This is especially relevant where gaps in the quality assurance framework leave some cross-border higher education provision outside the protection of quality assurance and accreditation mechanisms.

In the guidelines, cross-border higher education refers to higher education where teaching takes place across national jurisdictional borders. It may include provision by public/private and not-for-profit/profit providers. It includes a wide range of modalities, including face-to-face teaching and distance education.
The guidelines recommend action to six stakeholder groups:

- governments;
- higher education institutions/providers;
- student bodies;
- quality assurance and accreditation bodies;
- academic recognition bodies; and
- professional bodies.

The guidelines will not have any legal status and as such, will not be legally binding. Member countries are expected to implement the guidelines as appropriate in their national context.

The guidelines have been through a six-month consultative and iterative process, involving the OECD Education Committee, OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation Governing Board, participants of past meetings, all UNESCO and OECD countries and the general public.

Discussion of the guidelines is on the agenda for the UNESCO General Conference in October 2005, where, it is hoped, the guidelines will be adopted as a decision of the General Conference. The Education Committee will then recommend to the OECD Council that the guidelines be adopted.

Australia supports the development of an international framework for quality provision in cross-border higher education. It considers that the guidelines are appropriate and endorses their content.

**B. Bilateral and multilateral agreements for recognition of qualifications in higher education**

**Bilateral agreements on recognition of qualifications.** Australia maintains a number of bilateral education, science and training relationships within Europe, the Americas, Africa, the Middle East and Asia. A number of these agreements specifically include cooperation on issues relevant to qualifications recognition.

The Government of Australia and the Government of the People’s Republic of China have an *Arrangement on Higher Education Qualifications Recognition*. The arrangement was signed on 24 October 2003 and aims to facilitate the recognition of higher education degrees and graduate awards to students in Australia and China as well as their academic credentials, so as to make it easier for students to pursue further academic studies in each other’s countries.

In December 1998, the Governments of Australia and Malaysia signed a *Framework Agreement on the Recognition of Academic Qualifications* as a supplement to the *Memorandum of Understanding on Co-operation in Education* between the two
Governments. The Framework Agreement facilitates increased student and academic exchange.

The Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Education and Training between Indonesia’s Ministry of National Education and Australia’s Department of Education, Science and Training was renewed on 10 March 2003. It remains in effect for a further 3 years from signature. Priority areas of cooperation have been identified including higher education and qualifications recognition.

Australia’s Memorandum of Understanding with Thailand was signed on 5 July 2004. It aims to facilitate improved mutual recognition of academic and professional qualifications and enhanced credit transfer arrangements between Australian and Thai institutions of higher learning.

Australia has an Educational Exchange Programme Agreement with India that includes examination of mutual recognition of educational qualifications.

Australia also has an agreement with Saudi Arabia which lists among possible avenues for cooperation, the exchange of information about the equivalence of academic qualifications.

The Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Arrangement. Australia has only one bilateral treaty-level arrangement for the mutual recognition of qualifications, the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Arrangement. In 1996 the Australian Government, States and Territories and New Zealand signed the agreement establishing the Trans Tasman Mutual Recognition Arrangement (TTMRA). The TTMRA forms a significant part of Australia’s and New Zealand’s policy of Closer Economic Relations (CER), which aims to develop an integrated trans-Tasman economy. Under the TTMRA, a person registered or licensed to practise an occupation in Australia is entitled to practise an equivalent occupation in NZ and a person registered or licensed to practise an occupation in New Zealand is entitled to practise an equivalent occupation in Australia, without the need to undergo further assessment of qualifications or experience. Conditions may be imposed to achieve equivalence.

Free Trade Agreements. With the increase in trade in education across borders and the importance of having qualifications recognised for the purposes of further study and employment, improvements in the recognition of qualifications are increasingly being sought through trade agreements.

Under the Singapore – Australia Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA), the number of Australian law degrees recognised in Singapore doubled from four to eight and during a review of SAFTA held in 2004, Singapore agreed to recognise law degrees from an additional two Australian universities. Under SAFTA, Australia and Singapore also agreed to encourage their relevant professional bodies to enter into negotiations on mutual recognition of professional qualifications and/or registration procedures.
The Australia – United States Free Trade Agreement, which entered into force on 1
January 2005, includes an agreement to establish a Professional Services Working Group
to facilitate professional recognition arrangements.

**Multilateral agreements.** Australia is party to two treaty-level UNESCO conventions
on the recognition of higher education qualifications.

**Asia-Pacific Regional Recognition Convention.** Australia became a party to the
Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher
Education in Asia and the Pacific (the Asia-Pacific Regional Recognition Convention) in
1986. Australia is committed to contributing to the development of academic recognition
practices within the region and to promoting the exchange of information between
assessors, as mechanisms to facilitate academic, student and professional mobility.

**Lisbon Recognition Convention.** Australia signed the Council of Europe/UNESCO
Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the
European Region (the Lisbon Recognition Convention) in September 2000. Ratification

The Lisbon Recognition Convention aims to improve the international assessment and
recognition of higher education qualifications. The most important obligations placed
on the Australian Government as a result of ratifying the Lisbon Recognition Convention
concern assessment practices in Australia. These are:

- to endeavour to ensure that the procedures and criteria used in assessment and
  recognition of qualifications (for example, awarded by autonomous higher
  education institutions) are transparent, coherent and reliable;

- to encourage higher education institutions to recognise higher education
  qualifications conferred by a recognised higher education institution in another
  Party, unless a substantial difference can be shown between the qualification
  conferred and the corresponding qualification in Australia; and

- to endeavour to ensure that a holder of a higher education qualification issued
  in one of the other Parties to the Convention can obtain an assessment of that
  qualification upon request.

Other obligations include:

- encouraging all education institutions to comply with any reasonable request for
  information for the purpose of assessing qualifications earned at that institution;
  and

- ensuring that clear and adequate information on its education system is provided
  when requested by other Parties for assessment purposes.
The treaty also obligates Australia to maintain a National Information Centre (NIC). The functions of the NIC are to facilitate access to authoritative and accurate information on the Australian higher education system and qualifications and the higher education systems and qualifications of other parties. AEI-NOOSR is the national expert and coordinating body on skills assessments and recognition, and carries out these functions.

6. Emergent Issues Relating to the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas, and Degrees in Higher Education

A. Issues concerning recognition of academic qualifications in the context of the changing environment of higher education such as e-education, transnational higher education, virtual universities, corporate universities etc.

Quality Assurance in higher education is a topic of significant interest, as it is tied to a nation’s capacity to have its qualifications internationally recognised. Australia is currently exploring the merits of developing bilateral relations with overseas audit/accreditation agencies. Australia is an active participant in various fora to enhance international and regional cooperation concerning recognition of academic qualifications, including the UNESCO/OECD project to develop the Draft UNESCO/OECD Guidelines on Quality Provision in Cross Border Higher Education, which was referred to earlier.

Quality assurance in Australian transnational education. Education is a highly innovative field, and a key innovation has been to deliver Australian education and training to students offshore, known as cross-border or transnational education. There are many different means of transnational delivery, including offshore campuses, twinning arrangements and delivery through partnership arrangements with local institutions. Each year, more than 100,000 international students are enrolled in Australian transnational courses, comprising a quarter of all international student enrolments in Australian education and training.

As providers develop and apply new practices, it is vital that transnational education and training activities continue to meet the demands for quality by international students, their parents, governments and potential employers.

To respond to this challenge, the Australian Government is investing $A10.6 million over four years to assure the ongoing excellence of Australian education and training as transnational activities expand.

The Australian Government is proposing that a national quality strategy for transnational education and training be developed, to draw together the many excellent quality assurance arrangements already in place for offshore delivery in each of the sectors.
The Transnational Quality Strategy will be pursued through activities in two key areas:

- improving communication and promotion of Australia’s quality framework to all stakeholders, within Australia and internationally; and
- strengthening of the national quality framework, which comprises both regulatory and non-regulatory activities.


In a related activity, in 2004 the Australian Government provided $A1.4 million towards competitive grants to assist universities to develop good practice models for quality assuring offshore delivery. Fifteen projects have been funded to examine issues including:

- equivalence of onshore and offshore education delivery,
- selection of suitable offshore partners and agents,
- guidelines for developing and training staff in offshore delivery; and
- teaching in languages other than English.

The Australian Government will promote the findings of these projects following completion.

A number of initiatives are also underway to enhance the auditing of university offshore operations, which is a part of existing quality assurance arrangements.

In relation to the issue of the recognition of qualifications awarded following non-conventional programmes of study (such as on-line study or study at a transnational institution), Australia does not consider that study undertaken by these means is necessarily an obstacle to effective recognition. AEI-NOOSR’s guidelines for the assessment of educational qualifications do not differentiate between qualifications awarded following traditional programmes of study undertaken on campus and those awarded following distance education of some kind, including on-line education or study at an overseas campus of the awarding institution. Instead, AEI-NOOSR’s assessment methodology relies on assessment of a range of factors, including:

- the education system. This can include historical factors and influences, the organisation of the quality assurance measures;
- the status of awarding institutions in the country of origin. This can include the date of establishment of institutions, whether they are public or private, student and staff ratios, library and laboratory facilities, programmes offered, and quality control mechanisms;
entry requirements to the programme of study undertaken. This can include the level of education required for entry to programmes of study, the role of entrance examinations, and the competitiveness of entry; and

the programme structure, including its level, length, structure, orientation, breadth and degree of specialisation.

In particular, AEI-NOOSR’s assessment methodology centres on the status of the awarding institution, and whether it has the appropriate authorisation to make the award in question in the “home” education system.

B. Relevance of the 1983 Regional Convention for Asia and the Pacific to the changing context of higher education and suggestions for its revision

Australia considers that it is of great importance that we use the Regional Convention for Asia and the Pacific and its Committee to continue and intensify our efforts to improve the current arrangements for qualifications recognition in our region. Qualifications recognition is a complex activity requiring a variety of considerations. Australia acknowledges that the assurance of comparable quality between two systems is an important part of the recognition of qualifications and that there is great value in fostering regional quality assurance arrangements. There are considerations other than quality involved in the qualifications recognition process between two or more countries, including:

the differing structure and characteristics of the underpinning systems of school education;

differences in the length, structure or level of specialisation of the respective programmes of study;

differences in the way programmes are delivered (for example, by distance education or by traditional study on campus) which may in some cases lead to different educational outcomes;

variation in the practice of an occupation or profession for which the qualification is intended to prepare graduates where appropriate; and

differing assessment methodologies in the countries concerned. For example, some countries may be more concerned with the length or structure of the programme or the mode of study, while other countries may place more emphasis on the competencies or outcomes achieved at the end of the programme of study and training.
Australia considers that establishing a stronger regional network of recognition bodies and (where possible) bilateral and multilateral recognition arrangements with other countries is the most appropriate and effective way to understand and recognise the differences that exist in higher education sectors in regional countries and to develop effective mutual recognition arrangements. A good, cost-effective example of the value of developing a strong recognition network is seen in the Europe-based ENIC-NARIC Network, while the two APEC professional mobility projects led by Australia illustrate the benefits of multilateral information sharing and network building.

7. Suggestions for the Eighth Session of the Regional Committee
Dr. Yang Wei

1. Introduction

A. Major types of higher education

a) Higher education in China is divided into three types: regular higher education, adult higher education and technical and vocational education and training. In China institutions of higher education refer to universities and various kinds of specialized full-time colleges.

b) The academic degree administration system in China is divided into three levels of relevant central and local government bodies as well as degree-granting institutions.

c) Regular institutions of higher learning include comprehensive universities, specialized universities and colleges, junior colleges or advanced vocational schools. Senior high school graduates or students with an equivalent qualification may be admitted into universities for education in various courses. The founding of universities shall be approved by the State.

d) The length of studies varies for education of different levels: university education usually lasts four years while a number of universities and colleges offer courses that last five years or more. Junior college and vocational education normally lasts two to three years. Postgraduate students consist of Master degree students and Doctor’s degree students. Master degree students usually study for two to three years while it takes three to four years for Doctor’s degree students to complete their studies.

e) In China most of the universities and colleges divide their academic year into two semesters with the first semester starting in September and the second semester starting in February respectively. Summer and winter vacations are legal school holidays, so are such national holidays and festivals as New Year Day, International Labor Day (May the first), International Children’s Day (June the first) and National Day (October the first). But some universities and colleges follow the system of shorter semesters.
B. Degree and Postgraduate Education

a) In 1980 the Thirteenth Session of the Standing Committee of the Fifth National People’s Congress (NPC) of China deliberated on and passed the Regulations concerning Academic Degrees in the People’s Republic of China. In 1981 the State Council approved the Interim Measures for Implementation of the Regulations of the People’s Republic of China on Academic Degrees, which lays down the academic standards for Bachelor, Master and doctor’s degrees and stipulates that the state have the authority to deliberate on and approve of granting degrees, thus establishing the academic degree system in new China.

b) Over the past two decades, China has independently produced a large number of university graduates with Bachelor degrees, Master degrees and Doctor’s degrees, which is an internationally remarkable achievement and provides qualified high-caliber personnel for the construction of its modernization.

c) China has established a degree-granting system which covers almost all academic disciplines and basically guarantees the quality of various academic degrees. Degree-granting institutions confer academic degrees in relevant disciplines in accordance with the Catalogue of Academic Disciplines Which Offer Doctor’s and Master Degrees and Postgraduate Courses.

At the moment there are over 651,000 postgraduate students in China, including 137,000 Doctor’s degree students. There are also 783 institutions throughout the country which are authorized to grant Master degree (of which 506 are universities and colleges) and 342 institutions which are authorized to grant Doctor’s degree (of which 273 are universities and colleges). 56 universities have established schools of graduate studies, granting degrees in the twelve academic disciplines of philosophy, economics, law, education, literature, history, science, engineering, agriculture, medicine, military science and management. The professional degrees offered by these universities include MBA, Bachelor and Master of Architecture, Master of Law, Master of Education, Master of Engineering, Doctor and Master of Medicine, MPA, Master of Agricultural Extension, Doctor and Master of Veterinary Science, Doctor and Master of Stomatological Medicine, MPH, Master of Military Science as well as Master of Professional Accounting which was added in the year of 2004. Those who have the equivalent qualifications may also apply for Master and Doctor’s degrees through proper procedures.

d) In 1990 the Academic Degree Committee of the State Council passed the Interim Provisions on Granting Master and Doctor’s Degrees to Off-Campus Students with Equivalent Postgraduate Qualifications and detailed measures for its implementation. In 1998 the Academic Degree Committee of the State Council also issued Regulations concerning Granting Master and Doctor’s
Degrees to People with Equivalent Postgraduate Qualifications, which elaborates upon the qualifications of the applicants, procedures for the acceptance of their applications and granting them academic degrees, as well as the evaluation and approval of institutions which are authorized to do so. According to the Regulations, applicants should have at least five years of working experience in the relevant and related field and have recently published academic theses on domestic or international academic journals or academic books which are of great significance to their work. To ensure quality, the Academic Degree Committee of the State Council annually administers the national English test and comprehensive professional tests.

C. Admission

a) The admission of regular institutions of higher education

- The basic requirements

  Chinese citizens who apply for the National Matriculation Test must love their motherland, abide by the law, and be senior high school graduates or those with equivalent academic qualifications. In addition, they all must take the National Matriculation Test.

- The National Matriculation Test

In China a strict matriculation test system ensures the quality of university students. At the moment reform of the National Matriculation Test is being carried out. While universities and colleges are enjoying more freedom in determining the subjects to be tested, the students also have more freedom in selecting the subjects of the test to take. Attention is being paid to ensure that the content of the test is relevant to reality and the test should be designed to truly reflect testees’ ability. In terms of ways of enrollment, online enrollment will be gradually introduced.

In addition, the National Matriculation Test is now administered in both spring and summer on a trial basis. For universities and colleges which are located in the ethnic regions and use ethnic languages, the administration and organization of the matriculation test and selection of the students are uniformly carried out in the ethnic autonomous regions. Those apply for studies in these universities and colleges needn’t take part in the National Matriculation Test.
b) Levels of higher education

- Non-degree education (normally lasting two to three years)

Students who study on short-term university training courses, in short-cycle vocational colleges, universities of adult education or on two-year education programme will be conferred accredited diplomas or certificates of graduation instead of academic degrees after they have completed all the required courses and passed the tests.

- Degree education (normally lasting four years)

Bachelor degrees will be conferred upon university students who have completed all the undergraduate courses required by the teaching plan and are allowed to graduate after passing all the required tests, with results of their studies and graduation theses indicating that they have a good command of the basic theories in their respective disciplines and possess basic ability to carry out scientific research or technical work.

- Education leading to Master and Doctor’s degrees

Master degrees will be conferred on Bachelor degree holders or any other candidates with equivalent qualifications who have studied in an accredited Master degree granting institution for two to three years after taking the National Entrance Test for MA/MS Candidates successfully, and have passed tests for all the graduate courses as well as thesis defense with results indicating that they are capable of carrying out scientific research or professional work independently.

Doctor’s degrees will be conferred on Master degree holders or any other candidates with equivalent qualifications who have studied in an accredited Doctor’s degree granting institution for three to four years after taking the National Entrance Test for PhD Candidates successfully, and have passed tests for all the PhD courses as well as dissertation defense with results indicating that they are well grounded in the basic theories and systematically possess special expertise in their own fields, are capable of carrying out scientific research independently and have made innovative achievements in science or special technology.

D. International exchange and cooperation

a) All-round international exchange and cooperation in education truly embodies the independent foreign policy of peace adopted by the People’s Republic of China. It is one the important ways in which China commits herself to promoting the cooperation and development of the international community. It is also an important part of China’s endeavor to learn from the experience of
the international community in developing and reforming education so as to facilitate China’s own educational development and reform.

China’s educational exchange and cooperation with other countries is guaranteed by law. Education Law of the People’s Republic of China stipulates that “the State encourages foreign exchange and cooperation in education”. Higher Education Law of the People’s Republic of China stipulates that “the State encourages and supports the international exchange and cooperation in higher education”. Interim Provisions for Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools enunciates that “the State encourages joint cooperation in education between Chinese educational institutions and foreign educational institutions whose academic standards and quality of teaching are generally recognized. The State also encourages Chinese-foreign cooperation in education in new and badly needed academic fields as well as in western regions, remote and poor regions of China”.

China’s international exchange and cooperation in education involves the government, educational institutions and private organizations in multilateral and bilateral forms. The Chinese Government has been very active in taking part in the work of UNESCO and has undertaken a number of cooperative programmes with UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA and the World Bank. The Chinese Government has signed documents on educational exchange and cooperation with over 160 countries and regions. Chinese educational institutions ranging from primary schools to universities have established cooperative relations with their counterparts in many foreign countries. The Chinese universities, in particular, have started multilateral cooperation with foreign universities and enterprises. At present there are over 800 Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run schools in China and private educational exchange organizations have been actively carrying out bilateral and multilateral exchange activities. China Education Association for International Exchange has so far established friendly and mutually-beneficial exchange and cooperative relations with over 160 organizations or groups in 53 countries and regions around the world.

At the moment China’s international exchange and cooperation in education include teacher exchanges, student exchanges, cooperative research and jointly running schools. China sends teachers to a number of countries and recruits teachers from foreign countries as well. China is the country that sends out the largest number of students for overseas studies. For nearly twenty years in the past China has sent 700,000 students to study in 108 countries and regions, of whom 170,000 have completed their overseas studies and returned home. At the same time China is also one of the countries in the world which receive large number of foreign students. Over the past twenty years or so China has taken in nearly 620,000 foreign students from over 170 countries and regions.
around the world. In 2004 there are 86,000 foreign students pursuing their studies in China. Almost all kinds of institutions of higher education in China have established various forms of cooperative relations including joint research with foreign institutions of higher education.

b) Types of foreign students to be admitted and conditions for their admission

- Foreign students must abide by Chinese laws and decrees, comply with the rules and regulations of the universities and colleges where they study, and respect the Chinese customs.

- The undergraduate student: the successful candidate should possess qualifications equivalent to those of a Chinese senior high school graduate and be under thirty years of age. The length of undergraduate studies is four to five years.

- The Master degree student: the successful candidate should possess qualifications equivalent to those of a Chinese university graduate (Bachelor degree) and be under thirty-five years of age. The candidate’s university graduation diploma and Bachelor degree need to be evaluated and accredited. If the candidate wants to study for a Master degree in the same university where he or she has completed his or her undergraduate studies or in another university, he or she has to pass the Entrance Test for MA/MS Candidates. The candidate may be exempt from the Test if he or she is an excellent university graduate and is recommended for and approved of such exemption. The length of MA/MS course is two to three years.

- The Doctor’s degree student: the successful candidate should possess qualifications equivalent to those of a Chinese Master Degree holder and be under forty years of age. He or she should be recommended by two full or associate professors and approved by the university he or she applies to. The length of Doctor’s degree course is three to four years.

- The matriculation test

After submitting applications, those selecting natural sciences, engineering, agriculture and medicine are required to take standard tests in basic mathematics, physics and chemistry while those selecting economics and business management are required to take test in basic mathematics. In accordance with the relevant regulations, these tests are administered by the Chinese embassy in countries where the applicants reside.

- The language requirement
Those who don’t speak Chinese or are not proficient in Chinese and therefore are not suitable for studies must learn the Chinese language first and pass the Chinese Language Proficiency Test before carrying out their professional studies. Graduate students pursuing such courses as Chinese philosophy, economics, law, education, Chinese language and culture, Chinese history, arts and traditional Chinese medicine must study basic Chinese for two years.

- Academic degrees and certificates

After completing studies and passing required tests, students will be given graduation diploma and awarded Bachelor degree, Master degree or Doctor’s degree respectively in accordance with the Regulations concerning Academic Degrees in the People’s Republic of China. Those who fail to pass the tests will be given a certificate of graduate studies.

2. The State Policies and Measures Concerning Mutual Accreditation of Higher Education Degrees and Diplomas

A. Accreditation of foreign degrees and diplomas

The Academic Degree Committee of the State Council approves that the Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange is in charge of the accreditation of foreign degrees and diplomas.

a) Bilateral agreements on mutual recognition of degrees and diplomas

The Chinese Government always believes that mutual recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees and the signing relevant bilateral agreements between two countries are of great realistic significance to promoting personnel exchanges around the world. As a signatory of Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and Pacific Region, China actively develops bilateral cooperation with other countries in its endeavor to fulfill the responsibilities and obligations stipulated by the Convention. So far China has held bilateral talks and signed agreements on mutual recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees with twenty countries and regions such as Sri Lanka (1998), Russia, Algeria, Peru (1991), Mauritius (1992), Uzbekistan (1993), Cameron (1994), Romania (1995), Egypt, Hungry (1997), Ukraine, Mongolia (1998), Belo-Russia (2000), Germany (2002), Great Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand (2003), Austria and Hong Kong (2004). China is now holding relevant talks with more countries. The Chinese Government also encourages and supports domestic universities to engage in exchanges and cooperation with foreign universities.
As to the students from universities accredited by the above-mentioned countries and regions, the Chinese Government will recognize their studies, diplomas and degrees, provided they are able to submit transcripts of their studies and valid certifications.

b) Many countries have not yet signed agreements with China on mutual recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees. However, the Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange (CSCSE) has already gathered information of some those countries and therefore can provide relevant service. So far CSCSE has received enquiries about the accreditation from hundreds of thousands of people and has appraised and accredited foreign diplomas and degrees of over 7,000 returned Chinese students, thus facilitating their effort to find jobs and reorient to life back at home. With more and more enquiries about the accreditation of foreign degrees and diplomas over the recent years, the number of foreign degrees and diplomas accredited has been more than doubled. In 2004 CSCSE has accredited over 11,800 degrees and diplomas for more than 12,000 people, representing an increase of 86.1 percent over the same period in 2003. Besides, the accreditation of foreign diplomas and degrees has increased in terms of the number of issuing countries, educational level and scope. So far CSCSE has extended its accreditation of foreign diplomas and degrees to all countries which receive Chinese students. In addition, it has also started accreditation of degrees and diplomas issued by educational institutions in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan. The level of diplomas and degrees accredited ranges from junior college diplomas to Doctor’s degrees and the scope of diplomas and degrees accredited ranges from foreign diplomas of returned Chinese students, overseas degrees and certificates of higher education issued by Chinese-foreign cooperatively run schools which have been approved by the Chinese Government, and degrees issued by formal universities and colleges in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan.

With years of efforts, CSCSE has established extensive ties with overseas universities and colleges as well as relevant organizations. With the assistance of the Education Section of the Chinese Embassies around the world and of the Education Department of various foreign embassies in China, CSCSE has set up a reference room with comprehensive data about foreign institutions of higher education. In addition, CSCSE has developed an online accreditation system which is now under test run and will be formally in use around the Spring Festival of 2005. With online application, CSCSE will provide more convenient and faster service for the returned Chinese students.
B. The Accreditation Agency of Chinese Studies, Degrees and Diplomas

With more and more Chinese students studying and working in foreign countries over the recent years, the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China approved in 2004 of establishing China Academic Degrees and Graduate Education Development Center (CADGEDC) with a special department in charge of the accreditation of Chinese studies and degrees. China Academic Degrees and Graduate Education Development Center has established extensive ties with both foreign and domestic universities and colleges, and further forges relations with more foreign embassies and organizations in China which require accreditation of Chinese degrees and diplomas. The Center maintains good cooperative relations with countries such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Germany and Austria for which a large number of degrees and diplomas need to be accredited. Besides, Irish, South Korean and British embassies in Beijing also entrust the Accreditation Department of CADGEDC with part of the accreditation work. With emphasis on quality and efficiency, CADGEDC did more and more accreditation work in 2004. By the end of December 28th of 2004, it had received 14,424 applications and completed accreditation of degrees for 13,813 applicants.

To facilitate application and enquiry process and to improve efficiency so as to ensure the quality of accreditation, China Academic Degrees and Graduate Education Development Center has jointly developed an online accreditation application and management system with an Internet company.

3. Problems Existing in the Accreditation of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education

a) As many countries vary in educational and degree systems, there are quite different views about education and qualifications. Differences in school systems, degree standards, the division of disciplines, enrollment, teaching plan, courses on offer, the content of teaching and the quality of students all add to the difficulty in mutual recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees.

b) Even in the same country there are differences in degrees and levels of education among different types of schools and universities. For example, there are differences between full-time and part-time universities as well as between public and private universities. All these universities can confer degrees and certificates of graduation, some of which are not even recognized by their own governments. This greatly reduces the comparability of studies, diplomas and degrees among different countries.

c) Information exchanges among countries on educational and degree systems are quite limited. Furthermore, new changes are taking place in the educational
and degree systems of many countries, which require more information exchanges.

4. Suggestions

a) All the signatories of the Convention should further expand international cooperation between one another, fully understand the academic degree system and graduate education system of other countries, and learn from the success of other countries in their reform of higher education. On the basis of agreements on mutual recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees, the governments of all the signatories should actively explore effective ways of expanding exchanges and strengthening cooperation in research over degree equivalency, degree accreditation and quality assurance system, and further enhance mutual-trust and expand cooperation.

b) All the signatories of the Convention should take effective measures and create a proper channel for their respective executive agents to exchange information on a regular basis. The rapid development of Internet technology provides this exchange with wide dimensions and huge possibilities. All the signatories should strengthen exchanges and mutual-trust by providing samples of studies, diplomas and degrees for each other.

c) In order to adept to the trend of globalization and to promote educational and economic cooperation, all countries should actively bring about the mutual recognition of diplomas and degrees as well as facilitate personnel exchanges.

d) An appraisal and accreditation system should be set up in the Asian and Pacific region and the renowned institutions be entrusted to evaluate the quality of education in this region so as to establish the same criteria.

e) China is willing to open up to all the countries in the world, especially to the Asian and Pacific countries, and to strengthen cooperation in higher education with mutual recognition of diplomas and degrees. China welcomes all the people concerned in the Asian and Pacific countries to come to China for studies, research and educational cooperation.
1. Introduction

The Higher Educational System of the Holy See is quite unique, inasmuch as there are no such educational institutions within the geographical borders of Vatican City. Its academic centers at the university level, however, have a long tradition of excellence and currently exist in forty-five nations throughout the world and an additional thirty-nine countries where their affiliated institutes are located. The Congregation for Catholic Education is the agency responsible for all aspects and levels of education for the Holy See as defined in the Apostolic Constitution, *Pastor bonus* (Articles 112-116).  

The tertiary academic centers for which the Holy See bears responsibility are classified in two groups: a) Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties and b) Catholic Universities, Colleges and other institutions of higher learning. The distinction is made in light of the finality and content of the study programmes as well as the legislation that regulates their relationship to the Holy See through the Congregation for Catholic Education.

Catholic universities are found in seventy countries throughout the world. These, however, follow the academic legislation and structures appropriate to their respective nations. All Catholic universities teach and carry out research, in light of the Christian faith, in the disciplines common to all universities. In addition to their adherence to the local standards regulating institutions of higher education, Catholic universities relate to the Holy See by way of the governing documents, namely, the Code of Canon Law, the Apostolic Constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae* (1990), the related national “Ordinances” for its local application and the Statutes of the Institution. The number of Catholic universities in Asia and the Pacific region is 547. Inasmuch as the degrees awarded by Catholic universities are done so in conformity with local educational standards and with civil approbation, the process of recognition of these degrees outside the countries in which they are granted would correspond to the policies for degrees of that particular nation.

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Only ecclesiastical faculties and their affiliated, aggregated or incorporated institutes are affected by the Holy See’s adherence to the UNESCO Regional Conventions. Catholic universities grant degrees by local civil authority or recognition and do not depend on the Holy See in the same manner. Catholic universities follow the academic legislation and structure of the civil jurisdiction in which they are situated.

A. Brief Description of the Higher Education System

Ecclesiastical universities and faculties are engaged in teaching and research in the sciences proper to the Church. Ecclesiastical faculties may exist alone (free-standing), within an Ecclesiastical university, within a Catholic university, or within a civil university, according to the terms of the appropriate accord. Such institutions are governed universally by the Apostolic Constitution, Sapientia christiana (1979).4

The purpose of Ecclesiastical faculties is defined in a threefold way (cf. Art. 3 of Sapientia christiana): (1) the faculties are to cultivate and promote, through scientific research, their own disciplines, and especially are to deepen knowledge of Christian revelation and of matters connected with it, to enunciate systematically the truths contained therein, to consider in the light of revelation the most recent progress of the sciences, and to present them to the people of the present day in a manner adapted to various cultures; (2) they are to train the students to a level of high qualification in their own disciplines, according to Catholic doctrine, to prepare them properly to face their tasks, and to promote the continuing education of the ministers of the Church; (3) to collaborate, in accordance with their own nature and in close communion with the Hierarchy, with the local and the universal Church in the work of evangelization. Moreover, they confer degrees with the authority of the Holy See through programmes approved by the Congregation for Catholic Education. These degrees are more commonly referred to as “ecclesiastical” or “canonical” degrees. The three primary ecclesiastical faculties focus on the study of Theology, Philosophy and Canon Law. Other faculties may be constituted as “ecclesiastical” inasmuch as they follow the prescriptions of Sapientia christiana. A partial listing of these related fields of study may be found in “Appendix II” of Sapientia christiana.

The fundamental structure of the educational system consists of three cycles. The first cycle is constituted by a three to five year study programme and is aimed at providing an organic introduction to the historical development and the systematic presentation of the subject matter along with its proper scientific methodology. The successful completion of the first cycle merits the Baccalaureate degree. The second cycle, lasting at least four semesters, introduces the student to an area of specialization within the proper field of study. The degree, Licentiate (or License), is granted with the successful completion

of this cycle. The third and final cycle endures for “a suitable time” (usually at least two years). It requires the completion of the candidate’s scientific formation in the area of study through the appropriate research, writing and defense of a dissertation. The successful completion of this cycle merits the Doctorate degree.

The nomenclature of these degrees may be modified according to local usage with the approval of the Congregation for Catholic Education.

The language of instruction in an ecclesiastical faculty is ordinarily the language of the country in which it is situated. Additionally, courses may be offered in Latin or in one of the more commonly used modern languages.

B. Ecclesiastical Centers of Study in the Asia-Pacific Region

Currently, the number of Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties throughout the world number one-hundred-eighty-six (186), as listed in the official yearbook of the Holy See. Of these, fifteen (15) institutions have been erected by the Holy See and are currently operative in the Asia-Pacific region. They include: Australia (1), Sydney: Catholic Institute of Theology; India (8), Alwaye (Aluva): Pontifical Institute of Theology and Philosophy; Bangalore: Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram Pontifical Athenaeum of Philosophy and Theology; Bangalore: Saint Peter’s Pontifical Institute of Philosophy and Theology; Delhi: Vidyajyoti Faculty of Theology; Kottayam: Paurastya Vidyapitham Pontifical Oriental Institute of Religious Studies; Madras (Chennai): Satya Nilayam Institute of Philosophy and Culture;

Pune (Poona): Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth Pontifical Athenaeum of Philosophy and Religion; Ranchi: Faculty of Theology of Ranchi; Indonesia (1), Yogyakarta: Wedabhakti Pontifical Faculty of Theology; Japan (2), Nagoya: Faculty of Theology; Tokyo: Jochi Daigaku - Sophia University; Philippines (2), Manila: Pontifical University of Santo Tomás; Quezon City: Loyola School of Theology; Taiwan (1), Taipei: Fu Jen Catholic University.

In addition to these, there are fifty (50) institutions of higher education in the Asia-Pacific region that grant degrees authorized by the Holy See, by way of Aggregation or Affiliation with one of the Ecclesiastical faculties throughout the world. With the approbation of the Congregation for Catholic Education, the “aggregating” or “affiliating” Ecclesiastical faculty assumes the responsibility for the quality assurance and the standard of the academic programmes leading to the Ecclesiastical degrees which it awards. (cf. Sapientia christiana, Articles 62-63) Ideally, the responsible faculty

should be situated in the same country; however, this is not necessary. The number of affiliated institutions in the region are listed according to nations as follows: Australia - 1; Bangladesh - 2; Fiji Islands - 1; Hong Kong - 2; India - 28; Indonesia - 1; Japan - 3; Malaysia - 1; Pakistan - 1; Philippine - 5; Sri Lanka - 4; Viet Nam - 1. In addition to the number of students studying in Ecclesiastical institutions or institutions affiliated to Ecclesiastical faculties in Asia and the Pacific region, there are students from the region who are pursuing academic degrees in Ecclesiastical institutions in other nations.

C. Recent Reforms in Higher Education Policies and Higher Education Institutions

The opening paragraph of the Decree, *Novo Codice,* promulgated by the Congregation for Catholic Education on 2 September 2002, outlines the rationale for the updating of the Ecclesiastical programmes for the study of Canon Law. It reads: “With the promulgation of the new Code of Canon Law (1983) and the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (1990), the number of students at the Faculties of Canon Law has certainly increased, but at the same time, there is a growing awareness that the curriculum of studies for a license, established in the Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia christiana* promulgated by John Paul II on 15 April 1979 (cf. *AAS* 71 [1979] 469-499), no longer effectively enabled the individual disciplines to be properly explained and assimilated. Consequently there was also an awareness that, having completed the two-year programme of studies for the license, the students had not attained the level of knowledge of the law of the Church required today to fulfill those ecclesiastical offices which demand specialized formation in canon law.” (1)

2. Report of Follow-up Actions based on Recommendations made at the Seventh Session of the Regional Committee

The Holy See’s commitment to promoting higher education goes back to the middle ages, when it granted charters to the first “universities.” With institutions present throughout the world, wherever the Catholic Church is present, the Holy See fosters the values of both the “unity” and the “diversity” evident in cross-border education. The Holy See is interested in further discussion on shared recognition of diplomas and degrees based on mutual respect of the educational legislation of the relative national governments and the Holy See.

The Holy See’s efforts more recently have focused on the promotion and implementation of the principles of the Bologna Process within the European Union. The Holy See has already two types of qualification frameworks already existing: one, primarily emphasizing the structure of institutions of higher education and their studies, and the other, emphasizing the profiles of specific professions important to the Holy See. Both of them are now being adapted to a common terminology and methodological approach aimed at improving international recognition and understanding between educational systems. Moreover, discussions are underway to better highlight quality aspects such as transparency of course-work organization and clear orientation of teaching towards the professional skills envisaged.

3. Situation Analysis of Cross-border Education

The Holy See’s system of higher education, by its nature, is a transnational system. It is established on a set of fundamental principles relative to standards of academic excellence and the discipline of the Catholic Church. These universal principles are to be implemented in the various institutions according to local custom, need and legislation. In this way, a creative tension between a strictly local perspective or an equally strict objective one provides the ambience in which the mission of the universal Church can be integrated within a particular nation.


A. National Framework and Agencies

As stated above, in accord with the Code of Canon Law (Can. 816) and the Apostolic Constitution Pastor bonus (Art. 116), the sole agency of the Holy See responsible for the governance and coordination of higher education is the Congregation for Catholic Education. Inasmuch as the Holy See has jurisdiction over ecclesiastical universities and faculties throughout the world, the prescriptions of Sapientia christiana (Articles 12-14) require a local higher authority responsible to the Congregation for Catholic Education in the person of the Chancellor or Vice Chancellor. This requirement allows for dialogue between universal and local perspectives in maintaining the integrity of the ecclesiastical university and/or faculty and assuring the quality of education as a tertiary institution of a particular nation and accredited by the Holy See.

Because of the international character of the Holy See, the agencies involved at various levels, both institutional and administrative, are international in character. The Congregation for Catholic Education itself has personnel from eleven countries. Special consulting personnel is drawn from different countries both European and other parts of
the world. With regard to mutual recognition of degrees and diplomas as a part of the quality assurance system, the Holy See is part of the ENIC/NARIC network.

B. National Policies on Mutual Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education

There are certain offices in the Church for which an ecclesiastical degree is required. Thus, in conformity with the Convention, there are some instances in which degrees from other institutions, may be recognized for their civil value, but may not be recognized as equivalent to a degree in studies of the ecclesiastical sciences. Notwithstanding the above-mentioned ecclesiastical mandates, degrees earned in an institution of another party may be recognized for teaching in an ecclesiastical academic center, when it is not a question of sacred disciplines or the disciplines connected with them. Moreover, it is possible for a person in possession of a doctorate from an institution of another party to be recognized, even for the teaching of a sacred discipline, provided that the same person has earned an ecclesiastical licentiate in the sacred discipline to be taught.

Each ecclesiastical faculty, however, has a certain level of autonomy to determine equivalency, in conformity of the relative norms and prescriptions, the qualifications of students seeking admission to its programmes of study.

The Congregation for Catholic Education (Address: 00120 Vatican City State, Telephone: +39-06-698-84167, Fax: +39-06-698-84172) has an Office for Authentication (Vidimazione) which assists in obtaining civil recognition in some countries for degrees conferred by the authority of the Holy See. This office guarantees the validity of the document attesting to the academic degree. The holder of such a degree must present it for two additional acts of authentication: at the Secretariat of State of the Holy See and then at the Embassy or at the Consulate of the Nation in which recognition is desired. The civil effects of degrees thus authenticated have their value in accordance with the academic legislation of the various nations.

5. International Cooperation, Bilateral and Multilateral Agreements

The Holy See is now party to four UNESCO Regional Conventions in the field of Higher Education, namely those for Latin America and the Caribbean (Mexico 1974), for the European Region (Paris, 1979), for the countries of Africa (Arusha, 1981) and for the countries of Asia and the Pacific (Bangkok, 1983). Additionally, the Holy See has also signed the documents relating to the Convention of Lisbon of 1997 and is a signatory member of the Bologna Processes. The Holy See is part of the ENIC-NARIC network.

The Holy See participates also, on various levels, in European institutions dealing with various aspects of Higher Education, among others, in the European Council and in the Cultural Convention. For many years, the Holy See has actively taken part at the regular conference on university problems and also in the Committee for Education. The Conference of the Rectors of the Pontifical Roman Universities (CRUPR) is a collective member of the European University Association (EUA) and cooperates actively in its Council (cf. www.unige/EUA.ch), while various single universities are individual members of the same Association.

6. Emergent Issues Relating to the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education

The highly specialized curriculum in an ecclesiastical faculty creates some difficulties relating to the recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees from non-ecclesiastical institutions. While the Holy See recognizes the civil effects of valid academic degrees accredited in their local jurisdictions, the programmes of study leading to non-canonical degrees are not recognized as equivalent to the ecclesiastical curriculum.

Another issue is a need to develop criteria and standards to evaluate and classify degrees based upon study programmes rather than nomenclature. For example, the Holy See uses the nomenclature “Baccalaureate” for all of its first cycle degrees. Difficulties in recognizing the merits of the Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology from outside evaluators could arise. This programme requires a minimum of four semesters of Philosophy and six semesters of Theology in contradistinction to the Baccalaureate in Philosophy, which at present requires four semesters, but with the revisions currently in preparation, six semesters. Thus, while the nomenclature could lead one to assume a corresponding level of competency, this would be incorrect.
1. Introduction

Educational structure in India consists of a large network of 15343 colleges, 304 universities/Deemed universities/Institutions of National Importance. Enrolment of students in higher education institutions was 9.6 million that was closer to the GER of 9 per cent during 2002-3. With 4.3 lakhs teachers and a pupil teacher ratio of 22:1, the higher education institutions in India continue to grow. 20 per cent of the enrolment is in the category of professionals. Added to it is the .42 million enrolment in Polytechnic institutes and .76 million enrolment in Open universities approximating 11 million enrolment. An additional number of 87 thousand Indian students were studying in foreign universities in 2001-02 and around 8000 international students, notably from Asia and Africa, were studying in Indian universities in 2002-03. There are, in addition, 51 Academic Staff Colleges for academic training to the teachers.

There are three levels of qualifications in higher education - undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral levels. Diploma programmes are also available at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels the duration of which varies from less than a year to three years. The undergraduate level consists of three years in general education, four years in technical education and five and five and a half years in architecture and medicine respectively. The second level i.e. postgraduate consists of two years. At the third level, Doctorate in Philosophy (PhD) is of three years duration, including sometimes Master of Philosophy (M.Phil) for a year.

Under the Constitutional provision given in entry 25 of list III under the seventh schedule (Article 246) central and state governments establish Multi faculty conventional universities. These are of both, unitary and affiliating types. Nearly 50 per cent of Universities in India belong to this category. There are also professional universities such as technical, medical, law, agricultural, which are established by state governments. They are also of unitary and affiliating types. The third category is of open universities established by central and state governments. These offer open and flexible education through distance mode using correspondence courses/modern educational technology like interactive TV, etc.

The practice of establishing deemed to be universities under private/joint sector began in 1986. These are established under Section 3(f) of UGC Act. Recommendation of University Grants Commission (UGC) for according the status of a deemed to be university to an institution is to be accepted and notified by the Central Government.
Apart from Universities and Deemed to be Universities, there are also some institutions offering professional Under Graduate (UG), Post Graduate (PG) and research programmes established as Centre of Excellence, some by an Act of Parliament such as Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and others at the instance of the Central Government such as National Law Institutes, National Institute of Design, Indian Institute of Management, National Institute of Fashion Technology, etc.

A. Recent reforms in higher education policies and higher education institutions

The policy of the Government is to bring about improvement in information infrastructure and develop quality education through Information Communication Technology (ICT) integration in the higher education institutions in the country. The UGC has launched an ambitious programme to bring about a qualitative change in the academic infrastructure for higher education. Under this initiative UGC is modernizing universities campuses with state-of-the art campus wide networks and setting up of its own nationwide communication network named UGC-Infonet. Under E-Subscription initiative the universities across the country will also be provided with access to 9000 journals with full text through gate way portal access. Various schemes for library automation, Software for University Libraries (SOUL), creation of Indian bibliographic databases and various training programmes are being launched. Consortium of Educational Communication established by UGC provides education to students across the country via electronic media. Among recent initiatives is the promotion of multi media techniques, video streaming of educational programmes on Internet. UGC has been increasingly supporting colleges and universities for establishing computer facilities. The government has already launched EDUSAT - a dedicated educational satellite with the capacity to telecast 72 channels only for educational purposes.

The 10th plan notes that the basic issue of quality improvement would be addressed through the modernization of syllabi, increased research, networking of universities and departments and increased allocation of funds. Networking through Local area Network (LAN), Wide Area Network (WAN), Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET) would also lead to increased academic activities and research. The university system would be expected to utilize the autonomy it enjoys for innovations in teaching and for pursuing high quality research. The emphasis would be on conferring autonomous status on more colleges, improving the infrastructure and more rationalized funding of research. Through the provision of the means to interact across geographical boundaries of institutions, integration will be increased during the Tenth Plan. Steps will be taken for increased access to Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribes (SCs/STs) students and minorities. Besides, the activities of distance/open universities will be supported to increase access for the northeastern and backward areas. In this regard UGC has taken initiatives in the first two years of planning.
The UGC has been continuously updating curriculum and the process has been completed in 30 subjects in different disciplines. The Academic Staff Colleges (ASCs) have proved to be good instruments for teacher training and orientation. Efforts will be made to widen and enhance the range and scope of ASCs and set up more ASCs to achieve a uniform regional spread. Steps have been taken from time to time for making accreditation of institutions mandatory.

B. Emergence of new providers in higher education

To manage the expansion of higher education in India, under the concurrent list, state governments have also been entrusted to plan development of higher education. Fund shortage has constrained the growth of technical institutions in the government sector.

A new phenomenon in the 1990’s is the emergence of multiple providers of higher education. Among some of the well known in the private sector are being given the status of deemed universities since 1986. They are authorized to confer the degrees. There were many others who did not have such authority to confer the degrees. From the point of view of maintenance of standards and recognition of qualification the private providers of higher education and sometimes-illegitimate providers pose a challenge. In India two such providers of education are private universities not established in accordance with the UGC Act, 1956 and private institutions which are not affiliated to universities. The latter category of private institutions confers foreign degrees in collaboration with foreign universities. Emergence of private providers poses a challenge to policy makers as their operation is also in conflict with non-commercial principles to be followed in education under constitutional provision.

a) Private Universities

With the emergence of private universities under the state Act the Government of India published a Gazette Notification on December 27, 2003, *UGC Establishment and Maintenance of Standards in Private Universities Regulations, 2003*. Some of the important features regarding establishment and recognition of Private Universities are

- Each private university shall be established by a separate State Act and shall conform to the relevant provisions of the UGC Act, 1956, as amended from time to time.
- Private university shall be a unitary university having adequate facilities for teaching, research, examination and extension services.
- A private university established under a State Act shall operate ordinarily within the boundary of the State concerned. However, after the development of main campus, in exceptional circumstances, the university may be permitted to open off-campus centres, off-shore campuses and study centres.
after five years of its coming into existence, subject to some important conditions such as:

(i) The off-campus centre\textsuperscript{10}(s) and/or the study centre(s)\textsuperscript{11} shall be set up with the prior approval of the UGC and that of the State Government(s) where the centre(s) is/are proposed to be opened. UGC retains the power to monitor and close down the centers in the case of unsatisfactory performance. Any off-shore campus(es)\textsuperscript{12} in foreign countries shall be opened only after obtaining due permission from the Government of India and also that of the Government of the host country.

- A Private university shall fulfill the minimum criteria in terms of programmes, faculty, infrastructural facilities, financial viability, etc., as laid down from time to time by the UGC and other concerned statutory bodies.

- The programmes of study leading to a degree and/or a post-graduate degree/diploma offered by a private university shall conform to the relevant regulations/norms of the UGC or the concerned statutory body as amended from time to time.

- The admission procedure and fixation of fees shall be in accordance with the norms/guidelines prescribed by the UGC and other concerned statutory bodies.

The Supreme Court of India in its historic judgement (2005) announced the closure of a large number of private universities which were found to be inferior in quality.

Under the existing provision as stipulated in the section 2f of the UGC Act spelling the need of a separate Act for the establishment of a university has the advantage that it will put a check on the over/unplanned expansion of universities. Supporters of private initiatives in higher education, however, argue that the establishment of private universities needs to be facilitated to meet the demand but at the same time necessary measures have to be taken to regulate the same to ensure required standards of education. Thus a situation is the one

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item “Off-campus centre” means a centre of the private university established by it outside the main campus (within or outside the State) operated and maintained as its constituent unit, having the university’s compliment of facilities, faculty and staff.
\item “Study centre” means a centre established and maintained or recognized by the university for the purpose of advising, counseling or for rendering any other assistance required by the students used in the context of distance education.
\item “Off-shore campus” means a campus of the private university established by it outside the country, operated and maintained as its constituent unit, having the university’s compliment of facilities, faculty and staff.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
in which there is excess demand for higher education in India. Government through UGC Regulation (2003) is committed to maintain standards of higher education in private universities. There is need to ensure mechanism for the quality assurance of private universities.

2. Cross Border Higher Education

Higher education institutions are actively expanding the international dimension of their teaching, research and service functions. Cross Border Higher Education (CBHE) refers to the international, intercultural and interdisciplinary aspects of curriculum and the teaching/learning process and is reflected in increasing mobility of students, programmes, teachers, researchers, scientists and institutions. Movement of students\(^\text{13}\) and the movement of teachers, researchers and scientists\(^\text{14}\) are the embodied form of CBHE and the movement of programmes, institutions\(^\text{15}\) and the mode of delivery through the distance electronic way\(^\text{16}\) may be said to be the disembodied form of CBHE. An interesting phenomenon is the universities moving beyond the national frontiers in a global knowledge economy.

An important point regarding meaning of cross border higher education refers to the use of the term in two distinct ways – an educational and the trade perspective. In actual practice both may co-exist together, there is also a difficulty of reconciling the two standpoints although they need to be separated for differing policy support and domestic regulations. Differing perspectives have also different implications on the mutual recognition of qualifications.

So far as developing countries are concerned trade in education offers opportunities not in terms of direct gains but in terms of embodied gains – gains resulting from large number of students acquiring better education and specialized skills and the teachers and the researchers being exposed to new curricula, delivery practices, evaluation methods, besides their increasing specialization in the disciplines of their choice. This would then provide medium and long term benefits to the country. Mobility of teachers would help them to practice some of their experiences earned abroad in their own countries. Some countries in South Asia are already experiencing the entry of foreign universities

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\(^\text{13}\) Movement of students to another country for study abroad is popularly called mode 2 under GATS.

\(^\text{14}\) Movement of natural persons such as teachers, scientists, and researchers to another country for a short period is covered under mode 4 of GATS articles.

\(^\text{15}\) Movement of programmes and institutions such as under franchisee, twinning, programmatic collaboration or branch campuses leading to single or joint foreign degree in foreign country is covered under commercial presence abroad which is mode 4 supply of education under GATS.

\(^\text{16}\) Distance education particularly in electronic version is covered under mode 1 supply of education under GATS.
in their respective countries. The present experience is that entry is purely guided by commercial motives, that too in limited areas. Branch campus is not the preferred mode of operation and it is twinning, franchisee and programmatic collaboration that are made with some private universities and institutions\textsuperscript{17}.

A. Inflow of Foreign Students in India

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<th>Asia</th>
<th>2000-01</th>
<th>2001-02</th>
<th>2002-03</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Africa</td>
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<tr>
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<table>
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<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>748</td>
<td>872</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total                 | 7,783   | 8,137   | 7,756   |

Source: Association of Indian Universities Selected Educational Statistics 2002-03.

\textsuperscript{17} Report on Foreign Education Providers in India, 2005 National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi.
The number of foreign students in India is given in Table-1. In the year 2000-01 the number of foreign students was 7783 and in 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 it was 8137 and 7756 respectively. The majority of the students who are coming to India are from developing countries.

Majority of students are from Nepal followed by Mauritius, Kenya, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Foreign students also come to India from South and Southeast Asia, Middle East and Africa. The low cost and high quality of Indian education system is a big attraction for the students of these countries. Therefore any effort to attract the foreign students to India should focus on understanding the requirements of the students from these regions. Outflow of Indian students abroad

Table 2 shows that USA is the most preferred destination for Indian students who want to go abroad for higher studies from India followed by UK, Australia, Canada and France.

| Table 2. Country Wise Number of Students Studying in Foreign Universities |
|---|---|---|---|
| S.No | Name of the Country | Number of Indian Students Studying in |
| 1 | Australia | 4,578 | 6,195 | 9,539 |
| 2 | Belgium | 113 | 129 | 137 |
| 3 | Canada | 867 | M | M |
| 4 | France | 185 | 239 | 309 |
| 5 | Germany | 1,282 | 1,412 | 2,196 |
| 6 | Italy | 67 | 115 | 138 |
| 7 | Japan | 195 | 202 | 199 |
| 8 | Malaysia | 91 | 714 | 497 |
| 9 | New Zealand | 201 | 355 | 952 |
| 10 | Norway | 102 | 103 | 114 |
| 11 | Philippines | 83 | 66 | 80 |
| 12 | Sweden | 85 | 97 | 122 |
| 13 | Switzerland | 93 | 120 | 162 |
| 14 | Thailand | M | 56 | 104 |
| 15 | United Kingdom | 3,962 | 4,302 | 6,016 |
| 16 | United States | 39,084 | 47,411 | 66836 |
| Total | 43,046 | 55,192 | 77,725 |
| Grand Total of all those 49 Countries where Indian students are studying | 51,414 | 61,977 | 87,987 |

N = Negligible, M = mission/not available

Source: Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development - UNESCO Institute of Statistics
In this era of Globalization and Internationalization of higher education the movement of skilled and unskilled persons will definitely grow in larger proportions than any previous time in history. Therefore, along with movement of labour forces across borders a lot of movements will also occur among students, teachers and researchers. However the main challenges for the policy makers will be to raise the standard and quality of higher education across Indian universities, keeping in view the larger educational goals of equity. Along with this the challenge will also be to ensure that the foreign institutions coming to India also fit in with the developmental goals of our nation.

C. Foreign Institutions in India

1990’s saw the emergence of foreign universities operating in India in collaboration with private institutions in India. A research study conducted by NIEPA on ‘Foreign Education Providers in India’ brings out some of the salient features of their operation. There were 131 Indian institutions collaborating with foreign institutions. The list, however, may not be fully exhaustive. It may be observed that in different states the foreign education providers were concentrated in metropolitan cities and some other cities where the prospects of vocational courses exist on a large scale. Information also shows that at present only USA and UK have shown their interests in making collaboration with Indian partners. There are other potential countries such as Australia, New Zealand and Canada who are constantly watching the developments and the government stand on any regulation regarding Foreign Education Providers. At present these countries are organizing educational fairs and have also representatives to attract Indian students to their respective countries.

Majority of the Foreign Education Providers provide professional/vocational courses. Out of the total sample of 131 institutions, 107 were providing for vocational courses, 19 for technical course and only 5 for general education. The data shows that in the category of vocational courses – management courses were the most popular. Business Management and Hotel Management constitute approximately 80 per cent of the total number of courses.

The Commercial Presence of foreign institutions has led to the multiple methods of collaboration to deliver any foreign programme. Some of the programmes used only one method or some of them used multiple methods for the same programme. The collaborative arrangement under the commercial presence varies from institution to institution. There are, in general, four categories of delivery of foreign programmes in India.
Table 3. Types of Operation of Foreign Institutions in India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Collaboration</th>
<th>Numbers of collaboration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Twining Arrangement</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franchise</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offshore Campus/Branch Campus</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programmatic collaboration include joint course design, credit transfer etc</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Above result is based on a sample of 50 institutions, taken from ‘Foreign Education Providers in India’, NIEPA, New Delhi, 2005

Table 3 shows that the maximum numbers of programmes are offered under the twinning arrangement. In fact, this is one of the preferred methods for the foreign institution to attract the international students to the home country. The programmatic collaboration that consists of joint course and the joint degree provision by the institutions of the home and the host countries has the second rank in India in terms of the supply of education services by foreign institutions. The reason is that the Indian partner may prefer to design a programme with the inputs received from the foreign institution and offer the programme in India completely to make it cost competitive. Another reason may be that through this mode Indian private partners prefer to have a brand name of a foreign university in the absence of any regulation allowing private institutions to award the degree.

There are reportedly only two Franchisee institutions in India. The fourth category in which the foreign education providers can show their presence is Branch campus. None of the foreign institution came under this category. The reason may be that presently there is no domestic regulation for the operation of a foreign institution in India. But after the regulation the number of branch campus might increase. The opening of branch campus requires an investment in terms of infrastructure. Without any concrete regulation, their growth cannot take place.

D. Indian Institution Abroad

Many Indian institutions are opening their branch campuses abroad and are rated high in quality. However, the number of such institutions abroad is lesser than foreign institutions in India. In the higher education segment some deemed universities such as Birla Institute of Technology (BITs) Pillani and Manipal Academy for Higher Education (MAHE), Manipal and private institutions such as NIIT India, besides some public institutions like Delhi University, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU),
Shreemati Nathibhai Damodar Thackersey (SNDT) college, Mysore university and Madras university are making their presence felt abroad. There are good prospects of popularizing Indian education abroad by enlarging the participation of Indian universities by taking pro-active policy measures.

The contribution of Indian students in the Silicon Valley has helped in enhancing the brand value and the global standard of IITs. Besides the students from India wherever they have gone have excelled in their field. The recent success of Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) has also helped to ensure the competitive strength of the educational institutions and the human resources in India. This has increased the awareness among the various countries around the world about the high standards of Indian education system. The success of Indian students abroad is also one of the factors which has motivated students from South and South-East Asia, Middle-East and Africa to choose India as a destination for higher education, where the education is not only of good quality but also of lower cost, compared to the developed countries. Government of India has taken various initiatives to promote Indian education abroad.

The Government, in April 2002, constituted the Committee on Promotion of Indian Education Abroad (COPIEA) under the chairmanship of Secretary, Department of Secondary & Higher Education. The COPIEA will monitor all activities aimed at promoting Indian education abroad and will regulate the operation of foreign educational institutions to safeguard the interests of the students and the larger national interest as well. (10th Five year plan) UGC has responded to globalization in a very positive way. It has initiated a programme for the Promotion of Indian Higher Education Abroad (PIHEAD), which will run through the tenth five-year plan (2002-07). Besides Ed cil has taken up schemes to promote Indian education abroad.

The government has created an exclusive scheme called Direct Admission of Students Abroad (DASA) wherein 15 per cent of seats have been reserved in premier technical institutions such as the National Institutes of Technology (formerly the Regional Engineering Colleges) and centrally funded institutions for foreign nationals/People of Indian Origin (PIOs)/Non-Resident Indian (NRIs).

E. Issues relating to Cross Border Education

Education in India is considered as a social service. It is accorded a status of public good. Recently the recognition of education sector as a tradable service sector under the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS) – World Trade Organisation (WTO) regime has made it imperative for many countries to understand the duality of education as a social and tradable service. In the absence of any policy to regulate the foreign education service providers, India has witnessed autonomous liberalization of the sector intensifying the duality of education. Thus at present symbolic presence of foreign universities in India may, in future, turn towards commercialization. This goes against Central government or the Supreme Court’s view that education is not for profit.
Concerns expressed in promoting the commercial presence of foreign educational institutions is that higher education will be limited to the select few as there will be high price for any foreign degree to be acquired. Another concern is that commercialisation will promote privatization that will, in turn, enhance the cost of higher education. Thirdly; commercialisation will adversely affect the public higher education. The government may slowly withdraw from its commitments to higher education seeing that the alternate mechanism of funding is gaining support from international sources. Fourthly, it is feared that developing countries may be flooded with foreign and private providers delivering essentially profitable subjects.

Effective regulation on the entry of foreign institutions is necessary giving all safeguards to protect but, at the same time, promoting foreign institutions in terms of the priorities set by the government. It is also important to point out that much of the concerns can be effectively dealt with, given the process of certification of quality of foreign institutions and the mutual recognition of qualification.

The policy of FDI in 5 sub-sectors of education services under GATS – primary, secondary, higher, adult and others - is through automatic route. This means that any foreign enterprise can invest in education sector either on its own or with Indian partner without permission of Foreign Investment Promotion Board. They can transact money through the RBI. In the present context foreign investment in the educational sector is small. Under UGC Act the degree granting authority rests with the universities established under central or state act. Foreign degree provider institution, even allowing for liberal FDI through automatic route, cannot ipso facto operate. Hence in the absence of enabling domestic regulation FDI through automatic route in higher education is ineffectual. In the primary and secondary education there is no such regulatory requirement yet FDI is not forthcoming in practice as other enabling provisions for entry are not supportive.


To address the issues of quality, the National Policy on Education (NPE) (1986 & 1992) and the Plan of Action -1986 and 1992 interalia recommended the establishment of national accreditation procedures. The UGC acted on the policy recommendations and established the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) in 1994 as an autonomous body with the mandate to assess and accredit institutions of higher education or the units thereof in the country. The All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) set up the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) in September 1994, in order to assess the qualitative competence of educational programmes in the engineering and related areas from the diploma level to the postgraduate level. While AICTE takes care of the regulatory role, NBA does programme accreditation. The Indian Council for Agriculture Research (ICAR) established its Accreditation Board (AB) in 1996 to set, enforce and
monitor compliance with norms and standards for agricultural education in India. It is proposed to complete the accreditation process for all the Agricultural Universities with their 200 constituent colleges by the year 2003-2004. The Distance Education Council and the National Council of Teacher Education are working on their accreditation procedures in collaboration with NAAC. The response of the higher education system to the quality assurance mechanisms has been very positive and encouraging.

A. National Framework and Agencies – Names, Functions, Division of Roles among these Agencies, Etc.

In India there is at present growing concern for quality education. NAAC and NBA are entrusted with the responsibility of quality assurance. Need is also being felt for the establishment of National Qualifications framework. Association of Indian Universities (AIU) is charged with the responsibility of granting equivalence to the foreign degrees. It has brought out a number of publications including “Universities Handbook” which is a comprehensive Publication containing the names of all the Universities – complete postal address, telephone/fax numbers, affiliated Colleges, etc. the book also contains information on all the university courses at undergraduate, postgraduate, doctorate and post-doctorate levels in various disciplines including medical, engineering, management, computer, agriculture etc. their eligibility requirements, duration physical facilities, faculty positions etc. the aforesaid publication is available at India Mission abroad for reference/Information of the students.

The details of the foreign examinations recognized by AIU, as well as by the Universities in the country have been incorporated in publication ‘Equivalence of Foreign Degrees’.

B. Degree Conferring Agencies, Quality Assurance Agencies, Accreditation Bodies

Universities are established by the acts of parliament and legislative assemblies of states that lay down the procedures for the functioning of the university and its institutions. Various statutory regulatory and professional bodies have been established under the acts of Parliament to co-ordinate, guide and regulate the standards of education and functioning of higher education providers in the country. The domestic regulations in higher education in India fall under the scope of constitutional provisions, particularly, entry 66 of list I and entry 25 and 26 of list III of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India. Various Acts of Parliament and State Assemblies enacted under the scope of these entries, policy statements issued by the Central Government, regulations made by the regulatory bodies and the universities in India and judgments of Supreme Court of India provide details of measures to be taken to achieve excellence in education and to curb malpractices.
a) NAAC Initiative

To ensure quality in higher education institutions, NAAC was established on 16th September 1994 as an autonomous affiliate of the UGC. In its journey for a decade towards quality assurance it has so far accredited 2088 colleges and 113 universities in India. NAAC has been able to identify top quality colleges and universities through the process of external accreditation. A quality movement through the Internal Quality Assurance Cell and government initiative to support the quality upgradation needs to be built, as quality is the top concern in the mutual recognition of degrees. To begin with, the quality institutions identified by the NAAC can be part of the process of mutual recognition of degrees in India.

b) National Board of Accreditation

National Board of Accreditation was established in 1994 under section 10(u) of AICTE Act, 1987. It has been set up to assess and accredit the technical and professional institutions in the country and to make recommendation to the concerned authorities for recognition and derecognition of qualifications. There has been accelerated effort in accreditation of programmes. Total numbers of programmes accredited are 1522.


The University Grants Commission (UGC), India’s premier policy-making and regulatory body for state-funded higher education provides for the list of degrees specified for the purposes of section 22 of the University Grants Commission Act, 1956. Ensuring recognition of qualifications within the country is well in place as the usage of the term “University” is regulated by UGC and the degree awarding power is vested only with university level institutions. Further, the consistency of the nomenclature of the awards is ensured through a registry, which is periodically updated and published by UGC, for the benefit of the institutions and other stakeholders. These features have enabled all the full member universities of AIU to formally agree to recognize the awards of each other on a reciprocal basis. Universities from Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan have become associate members of AIU fulfilling the criteria laid down by AIU and they enjoy the recognition benefits.

The details of the foreign examinations recognized by AIU, as well as by the Universities in the country have been incorporated in publication ‘Equivalence of Foreign Degrees’.
India has been positive about extending mutual recognition of qualifications beyond the country, especially in the Asia Pacific region. It is a signatory to the regional convention of UNESCO for recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees in higher education in Asia and the Pacific adopted at the conference of states in Bangkok in 1983, in which 33 states participated. India ratified the convention on 2nd August 2000, which entered into force on 2nd September 2000. Experience indicates that the regional convention has promoted a congenial atmosphere to remove the procedural bottlenecks to make student mobility possible. However, this does not guarantee automatic recognition of qualifications and institutions continue to have their own screening mechanisms and criteria. In the process of screening, the reservations expressed by the institutions are about three major issues:

a) Inconsistency in the levels and structure of the different national systems of higher education,

b) Lack of appropriate mechanisms that assure the quality of educational provisions in some countries, and

c) Absence of a reliable mechanism or nodal agencies that can be referred to on mutual recognition issues.  

4. International co-operation, Bilateral and Multilateral Agreements

A. Activities and Actions Undertaken to Date to Enhance International and Regional Co-operation concerning Mutual Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education

To enhance international and regional co-operation, movement of professionals has produced compulsions to settle the issue of mutual recognition of qualifications in higher education. India has entered into active dialogue both at bilateral and multilateral levels to settle Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA). Consequent on the successful operation of India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (ISLFTA), the Government of India and Government of Sri Lanka have agreed at the highest level to undertake negotiations towards concluding a bilateral Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). A joint study group set up to explore the possibilities of deeper economic cooperation of both the countries submitted its report in November, 2004.

18. These points were noted by Antony Stella in country paper of India in the 7th Regional Convention held in Australia in 2003. These points hold true even today.
On the subject of Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) it states that the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) have (Memorandum of Understanding) MOU with Sri Lanka for undertaking bilateral programmes of conducting courses. However MRA’s are preferred to MOUs as former is more binding. The desirability of working towards MRAs in Health services particularly Medical, Dental and nursing services was noted. The context is that the Apollo Hospital was set up in Colombo with Indian investment and Indian medical personnel. MRA would facilitate the Mode 3 and Mode 4 supply of services. It is suggested that MRAs would enable Indian doctors and also Nurses to work in Sri Lanka. In many ways it would also facilitate Mode 3 and Mode 4 of various other services but in particular in ICT services, financial services, accountancy services. Hence MRA is the crucial issue to be resolved.

Under India Singapore comprehensive economic co-operation agreement mutual recognition of degrees have been granted.

B. Bilateral and Multilateral Agreements for Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education

In the context of multilateral agreements India has taken initiative under GATS. India along with other countries is considering proposing elements on qualification requirements and procedures for discussion in the ‘Working Party on Domestic Regulation’. The issue of recognition of qualification is looked at from the point of facilitating the movement of natural persons.

Following suggestions have been made by India and some other countries for consideration under GATS Article VI:4.

- Transparency requiring provision of information on qualification requirements for various professional services and qualification procedures i.e., administrative or procedural rules relating to administration of qualification requirements
- Availability of mechanisms such as conducting required examinations at reasonably frequent intervals and open for all eligible participants including foreign applicants. The possibility of using electronic means for conducting such examinations, wherever feasible, and of providing opportunities for taking such examinations in the home country of the foreign services supplier should also be explored.
- Fees charged by the competent authorities should have regard to the administrative costs involved and should not become a barrier in themselves for practicing the relevant profession
Reasonable time frames should be met for verification of the foreign professionals competence to supply the service so as not to prejudice the service supply itself.

Appeal review channels should be provided for non-recognition of qualifications. Further possibility of re-submission of applications and other materials substantiating the case for meeting the qualification requirements should be allowed.

The existing contact points provided for under Article IV-2(b) may need to be strengthened so as to provide a mechanism for supply of information on qualification requirements and procedures to interested service suppliers of developing country members.

It is important to note that above suggestions relating to qualification requirements and procedures for consideration of Working Party on Domestic Regulation under GATS are more practical and will set the pace for recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees in Higher Education that would in turn facilitate the movement of students, programmes and institutions as well.

5. Emergent Issues relating to the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education

As cross border supply of education by multitudes of providers proliferates across the world markets, systems and mechanisms to facilitate credit transfers of courses/programmes would need to be worked out across the countries both in the case of face to face and Open and Distance Learning (ODL).

In the case of ODL only recognized programmes should be allowed. When the distance learning programmes are offered across national borders, the issue of customization to local needs, would either have to be met by the provider institution (which is a desirable cause of action in the interest of quality assurance) or be provided by the local host institution as part of the terms of the agreement. Similarly mutually accepted provisions for mutual recognition of qualification for the purposes of further education or employment will need to be put in place.

The system of compulsory accreditation of Universities/Institutions admitting foreign students will help in strengthening efforts in preventing non-serious low quality Higher Education Institutions.

In the first phase, institutional accreditation of universities and institutions/colleges intending to admit international students may be insisted. The second phase may involve requirement of accreditation in collaboration with the professional agencies of specific programmes for which foreign students are to be admitted for commencing programme/subject accreditation in near future. In India NAAC may act as umbrella organization.
for accreditation and monitoring, in case multiple accreditation agencies are allowed to operate. Placement of student may be ensured only in accredited HEIs/courses. In this way a system of compulsory accreditation for international students may be built.

System of accreditation may similarly be considered for foreign institutions imparting education in India. At present the Government of India is considering the regulation on the entry of foreign universities in India. The regulation will consider the accreditation procedure for such foreign universities. Only such Indian institutions which have high accreditation rating may be allowed to export programmes. Alternatively some highly reputed Indian education providers having international accreditation may also be considered genuine players. (i) NAAC’s suggestion for compulsory accreditation should be given due consideration to promote cross border higher education. (ii) Regulation on the entry of foreign universities needs to be put in place.

One of the major issues in mutual recognition of degrees is harmonization in both years and content and this can be done by a professional organization. The European countries have harmonized the degrees to a great extent. Hence the degrees are mutually recognized.

Under cross border education, foreign universities can offer online admission. It can offer courses and take examinations online. Conferment of degrees is possible through physical transmission of degrees. At present there is no domestic regulation to restrict or regulate online delivery of courses. Even if restriction is imposed, technology can defeat regulation.


Since 1983 the regional convention on the recognition of the studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific adopted in Bangkok, there has been changes in international higher education in terms of new providers of education, new modes of delivery and the cross border delivery of education including both degree and non-degree programmes. It is also important to note that various bilateral negotiations have taken place. The emergence of GATS as multilateral platform for the services sector including GATS has opened a new dimension to the discourse on mutual recognition of qualifications. Accordingly there is a need to revise the regional convention and adopt a suitable framework for the promotion of quality assurance in various countries, harmonization of degrees, adoption of choice based credit system. More importantly, the scope for quality assurance of private providers, distance education mode and e-learning need to be evolved through a regulatory system.
7. Suggestions for the Eighth Session of the Regional Committee

In the context of knowledge revolution and the aspirations of the countries for greater economic strength through enhancing bilateral and multilateral cooperation the mobility of professionals, programmes, institutions and students has become important. The Eighth Session of the Regional Committee should take a more practical standpoint of facilitating the movement of natural persons. The practical problems exist in the form of non-availability of information for qualifications of professionals and also the mechanisms for possessing those qualifications for practice or to work in another country. These are pointed out in section 5. These need to be taken up on an urgent basis in a bilateral and multi lateral framework in GATS negotiations. This would in turn ensure the mutual recognition of qualifications of the professionals who want to move to another country for short period. Along side this is a more long term approach to the mutual recognition of qualification should be considered in order to facilitate the movement of students, programmes and institutions which include a broader agenda of establishment of national qualifications framework, compulsory accreditation of institutions and programmes and the credit transfer facilities. The eighth Convention should therefore have this short term and long term perspective under consideration.

References


**1. The system of Korean Higher Education**

Institutions of higher education in Korea are established in three ways. National institutions are founded, administered, and financially supported by the national government, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development. Public institutions are founded, administered, and financially supported by local governments. Private colleges and universities are founded and administered by individuals or organizations. Financial resources for this type of institution come from individuals, organizations, and tuitions fees as well as government funds. Higher education institutions in Korea can be categorized into 10 groups: (1) universities, (2) industrial universities, (3) universities of education, (4) junior colleges, (5) Air and Correspondence Universities, (6) Cyber colleges and universities, (7) technical colleges, (8) Colleges in company, (9) graduate school colleges, and (10) other miscellaneous institutions. Table 1 presents number of institution, faculty, and enrollment by types of institution as of 2004.

It can be said that the higher education system in Korea is rather centralized in that important matters regarding administration of higher education institutions including criteria for the foundation of colleges and universities, the establishment of academic department, student quota, faculty hiring, credit hours, and degree conferring, follow the laws and ordinances of education. Other matters usually follow school regulations of individual institutions. The ministry of Education and Human Resource Development is the major government agency that plays a significant role in overseeing and coordinating higher education policies.

The Korean Council for University Education (KCUE) is another agency in charge of coordination of higher education. The Korean Council for University Education, which is a non-profit, non-governmental organization, is a national advisory body established in 1982 in order to promote co-operation among membership universities in Korea. Currently, two hundred and three 4-year universities in Korea are members of KCUE by the law mandatorily. Major functions of KCUE are: (1) to conduct institutional and programme assessment of universities, (2) to coordinate and hold consultations of college admissions policies and practices and to provide information of college admissions to the public, and (3) to develop and conduct in-service programmes for faculty and administrative staffs. KCUE also play a crucial role in mediating between the central government and the university community with regard to formulating higher education policies.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutions</th>
<th>Enrollments</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Student-Faculty Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>University</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>376,413</td>
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<td>Public</td>
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<td>Private</td>
<td>145</td>
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<td>Sub-total</td>
<td>171</td>
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<td><strong>Univ. of Education</strong></td>
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<td>National</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23,335</td>
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<td><strong>Air and Corr. University</strong></td>
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<td>National</td>
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<td><strong>Cyber College and University</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Graduate School College</strong></td>
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<td>Private</td>
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<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
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2. Recent Reforms in Higher Education Policies and Higher Education Institutions

A. Backgrounds of Recent Reforms in Higher Education Policies

During the last several decades, Korea has made tremendous strides in its higher education. The number of higher education institutions in Korea increased from 142 in 1970 to 411 in 2004. During the same period, the number of students in colleges and universities increased by about 17.7 times (from 201,436 to 3,555,115). The number of faculty in post-secondary institutions also increased greatly from 10,435 in 1970 to 62,631 in 2004 (Please see Table 2).

This rapid growth of higher education has contributed to the national development enormously. Access to higher education has been expanded greatly, which is reflected in the remarkable progress in the entrance ratio of general high school students to colleges and universities (Figure 1). More than anything else, quality workers who benefited from higher education played a significant role in developing Korea, which was trying to making a transition from an agricultural country to an industrialized one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No of Institutions</th>
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<td>1985</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>1,277,825</td>
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<td>372</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>3,555,115</td>
<td>62,631</td>
<td>56.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Educational Statistics, KEDI

However, the rapid growth of higher education brought several problems. A major drawback of the rapid growth is that a quantitative expansion was not accompanied by a qualitative advance in higher education. While colleges and universities sprang up across the nation, backed by public and private expectations about higher education, conditions of higher education has not been improved. It has been pointed out that contrary to our expectations, some indicators such as student-faculty ratio show that conditions of higher education have been rather deteriorated (Please see Table 2). The Korean higher education community is now faced with public criticism that Korean higher education is
not responsive to public demands any longer, nor is it internally competitive. In particular, the advent of informationalization and globalization invites new challenges to colleges and universities. As the world moves on from an industrial society to a knowledge-based society, colleges and universities should provide such education that can equip students with knowledge and capabilities required for an informationalized society. Globalization requires higher education to provide such education that meets the global standard. In a globalized society, colleges and universities have to compete with institutions not only in their home country but also in other countries around the world.

**Figure 1. Entrance Ratio of High School Students to College By Nation**

Continuing decease in the college-bound population is another major challenge to colleges and universities in Korea. According to recent population growth projections, college-bound population (age 18-21) will drop from 3,278,000 in 2000 to 2,336,000 in 2020. The number will go down further to 1,511,000 in 2030. This huge drop in college-bound population means that colleges and universities will undergo fierce competition with each other in order to recruit students. Decrease in college-bound population is a huge threat to Korean colleges and universities, especially for privates institutions and institutions located outside the Seoul metropolitan area; because these types of institutions have disproportionate difficulties in recruiting students and securing their financial conditions.
B. Recent Reforms of higher education at the national level

Recent reforms of higher education at the national level can be summarized by the following four projects: (1) The Brain Korea (BK) 21 Project; (2) The NURI Project; (3) The Study Korea Project; (4) The Plan for Restructuring higher education institutions.

a) Brain Korea (BK) 21 Project

The Brain Korea (BK) 21 Project is a governmental funding project for enhancing the international competitiveness of Korean universities. The BK 21 project focuses on nurturing highly qualified R&D manpower through concentrating governmental funds on education and research activities at graduate schools. Specifically, the BK 21 project aims to develop world-class graduate schools by boosting research capabilities. It also aims to develop specialized regional universities and to increase collaboration between universities and industry. Finally this project aims to reform university system including admission system, faculty review system, and university management system. This multi-year funding project is planned to allocate $1.2 billion over 7 years (from 1999 to 2005).

The BK 21 project has been implemented based on the following principles: (1) allocating fund based on “selection and concentration,” (2) more financial support for advanced applied fields, (3) university reform as a prerequisite to funding, (4) investing more than 50 percent of funding to graduate students, and (5) strengthening the tie between universities and industry. In addition, it is notable that the BK21 fund is allocated primarily base on ‘research team’ rather than individual university. This team-based feature of the BK21 funding makes it easier to clarify the goal of the programme and to assess the performance of the beneficiary of the BK21 fund.

With the announcement of the project in June 1999, the fund has been invested in the field of science and technology, plus in the field of humanities and social science. The BK 21 money has been also allocated to regional universities and to facilities for the exclusive use of graduate schools in the BK 21 project. Eleven specialized graduate schools and 317 project teams were selected to receive financial support. These groups currently undergo annual and interim assessment. Summary of research teams selected for the BK 21 project is as follows:

- Science and Technology
  26 Primary Project Teams from 14 universities (22 cooperative groups)

- Humanities and Social Science
  18 Primary Project Teams from 11 universities (2 cooperative groups)
The BK 21 project, which is greatly different from previous governmental support for universities, has brought innovative changes in universities. The funding principle of “selection and concentration,” together with the financial support closely linked with universities’ own efforts to reform, has spurred universities to reform curricular, admission policies, and faculty review systems, and so on. More than anything else, the creation of research-centered environments in universities is one of the most remarkable results of the BK 21 project. Table 3 highlights the accomplishments of the BK 21 project.

Table 3. Selected Accomplishments of the BK 21 Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Before BK</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of papers (per researcher)</td>
<td># of papers (per researcher)</td>
<td># of papers (per researcher)</td>
<td># of papers (per researcher)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science/Technology</td>
<td>3,842 (2.74)</td>
<td>4,545 (3.24)</td>
<td>4,657 (3.27)</td>
<td>5,698 (3.72)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Impact Factor per Paper (Science & Technology)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Science/Technology</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>1.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. International Patent (Science & Technology)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Science/Technology</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>457</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D. International and Domestic Journals (Humanities & Social Science)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Before BK</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of papers (per researcher)</td>
<td># of papers (per researcher)</td>
<td># of papers (per researcher)</td>
<td># of papers (per researcher)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities/Social Science</td>
<td>288 (1.10)</td>
<td>303 (1.13)</td>
<td>555 (2.02)</td>
<td>624 (2.3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E. Number of Students & Researchers supported by BK 21 Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M.A/Ph.D students</td>
<td>8,414</td>
<td>12,083</td>
<td>11,403</td>
<td>11,808</td>
<td>13,173</td>
<td>56,681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researchers</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>1,136</td>
<td>1,218</td>
<td>11,277</td>
<td>1,406</td>
<td>5,511</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The New University for Regional Innovation (NURI) Project is another innovative governmental funding project for strengthening the capability of colleges and universities located outside the Seoul metropolitan area (Seoul, Incheon, and Kyunggi-do). The NURI Project, which is aligned with the major national policy of “Balanced Development of the Nation,” focuses on: (1) reinforcing capabilities of local colleges and universities and (2) linking capacity-building of local colleges and universities to promoting and facilitating the development of regional economy. Specifically, the NURI project aims to develop college curricular by specialized areas, which is closely aligned to characteristics of the regional economy, thereby improving competitiveness of colleges and universities. The NURI project also aims to promote regional development by training high quality manpower; this project will cultivate college graduates through various educational programmes reflecting demands of labor market as well as needs of regional industries and these highly qualified college graduates are expected to invigorate the regional economy. Another essential purpose of the NURI project is to establish a collaboration system, called the Regional Innovation System (RIS), in which higher education institutions, local governments, research institutes, and corporations build partnerships for mutual development and improvement (Please refer to Table 4).

### Table 4. Evaluation and Selection Process of NURI Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Responsible Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Planning the NURI Project and Announcement</td>
<td>MOE and HRD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Submission of Project Proposal by Project Team</td>
<td>Project Team in Each Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Review of Proposals by Regional Innovation Council</td>
<td>Regional Innovation Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Evaluation of Project Proposal</td>
<td>MOE and HRD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Selecting Project Teams</td>
<td>MOE and HRD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Report to ‘Ministerial Meeting for HRD and Committee for Balanced National Development’</td>
<td>MOE and HRD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Annual and Interim Evaluation on Performance Indicators set by Project Team</td>
<td>MOE and HRD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** MOE and HRD refers to Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development.
The NURI project is implemented by the following strategies. First, the project is planned and implemented in region-led, decentralized, and bottom-up manner; for instance, a project team consists of various stakeholders in the region and a project plan is reviewed by ‘Regional Innovation Council.’ Second, to enhance investment efficiency, the NURI fund is distributed in lump-sum package including wages, operation costs, equipment purchase fees, scholarships, and repair cost. Third, the project is managed by the performance-based management system. That is, annual and interim evaluation of the project is implemented, based on key performance indicators set by the project team.

Through the NURI project $1.4 billion will be allocated over 5 years (from 2004 to 2008).

c) Study Korea Project

The Study Korea Project is a comprehensive plan to attract foreign students to Korean colleges and universities, launched by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development last December 2004. As globalization emerges as a key issue, colleges and universities have begun to take a growing interest in meeting global standards by recruiting foreign students. Accordingly, the focus of Korean governmental policies regarding international education is geared to ‘recruiting foreign students to Korea,’ rather than sending Korean students abroad. Recognizing several shortcomings in previous policies regarding foreign students recruitment, the Korean government set up a renewed policy on attracting foreign students to Korea, named “Study Korea Project.” This project plans to invite about 50,000 foreign students to Korea by 2010.

The Study Korea Project can be summarized as the following six aspects: First, Korean government scholarship programme will be expanded and reorganized through the Study Korea Project. For instance, it is planned to increase the number of government-invited foreign students to about 150 per year on a gradual base (Currently, the government invites about 55 foreign students to Korean colleges and universities each year). The Study Korea Project will be implemented with close ties with the government, higher education institutions, and the industrial sector; the industrial sector will present its demand for foreign workforce, based on which the target countries and areas of study will be selected. And the industrial sector will provide foreign students with internship opportunities and consider them for employment after graduation.

Second, the Study Korea Project aims to set up overseas network for attracting foreign students and activate it. To this end, the Korean government will utilize embassies or governmental agencies stationed overseas as a center for inviting foreign students. It is also planned to increase the number of Korean Education Center in regions such as China, Vietnam, or the Philippines, where students have great interest in studying in Korea.
Third, the promotion of ‘Study in Korea’ will be strengthened. The government will utilize collaborative networks among agencies to disseminate systematic and strategic information about studying in Korea.

Forth, the Study Korea Project also includes the plan to improve the study and living conditions for foreign students, thereby alleviating difficulties encountered by the students. Specifically, it is planned to increase the number of university lectures taught in English as well as Korean language programmes to facilitate foreign students’ study in Korea. To improve living conditions, dormitories for foreign students at a number of universities are under consideration with the collaboration between local governments and universities.

Fifth, the Korean government will make multi-pronged effort to disseminate Korean language programmes and cultural events. The government will provide preparatory courses for the Study Korea Project scholarships through overseas Korean Education Centers and Korean schools. The administration of the Korean Proficiency Test will be expanded in southeastern Asian countries as well. In addition, both online and offline contents for learning Korean language and culture will be developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

Finally, it is planned to establish an efficient administrative support system to formalize policies to attract foreign students. The Ministry of Education will continue to cooperate with the Ministry of Justice for simplifying procedures to issue student visa. Currently, the Ministry of Education is considering to set up a ‘responsible school system,’ under which schools with good records (accepting qualified students and low percentage of illegal residents in their foreign students body) will be granted incentives whereas schools with bad records will have disadvantages.

d) Restructuring the system of higher education institutions in Korea

In conjunction with the increased number of institutions over the last thirty years, decreasing college-bound population causes less competitive colleges and universities to suffer from severe financial constraints. This situation leads to deteriorated quality of higher education in general and ultimately to the closure of such institutions. In the midst of growing concerns about quality in higher education, the call for restructuring colleges and universities emerged. To induce restructuring colleges and universities, the Korean government announced the plan for restructuring colleges and universities last December 2004. Main element in the restructuring plan is to provide financial support to university merging. This active involvement of the government in restructuring colleges and universities sparked great controversy, and discussion and criticism over this issue are still under way.
Dr. Phonephet Boupha

1. Introduction

A. Brief description of the higher education systems in terms of number and types of institutions (state, private), enrolment and government agencies in charge of co-ordination of higher education

The higher education system is an integral part of education system Figure 1. In line with the changing economic structure, measures are being undertaken to improve the efficiency, quality and equity of higher education.

Between 1975 and 1995, there were higher education institutions which were considered to provide university-level programmes, namely the Pedagogical Institute, the National Polytechnic and the University of Medical Sciences. Each of these institutions provided specialized professional training of at least four years duration in Lao language that was open to graduates of upper secondary schools. In order to harmonize and to rationalize the higher education system, the Government decided to merge all the higher education institutions to form one National University in June 1995. Due to the requirements of the provinces in the south and in the north two new universities were created in the South and respectively in the North namely Champasak University and Souphanouvong University. The private education has been developed quickly after the release of the Prime Minister’s Decree on Private Education of August 1995 in promoting the investment in education and providing a regularly framework within the context of national education system. The growth of private education seems to be a boom in the last few years due to the increase of school-leavers of upper secondary schools and the limits of students’ intake in the public higher education institutions. The enrolments have been steadily increased from year to years.

In the academic year 2003-04, there are 22 universities and colleges of which 19 are private.

The total enrollments of both public and private universities and colleges are 29,041 students /10,650 females (36.7 per cent), of which 5,666 students/2,688 females (47.1 per cent) in private colleges. In the public universities and higher education institutions there are 125 students/27 females (22.3 per cent) at master degree, 17,551 students/7,064 females (40.2 per cent) at bachelor degree and 11,490 students/3,589 females (31.2 per cent) at the higher diploma level.
Besides the normal training system there are fees paying system for higher education and bachelor degree. In all faculties at the National University there are 11,360 students/6,633 females (58.4 per cent).

There are 5 run-public universities and higher education institutions as following:

- National University was established in 1995 and has the total enrolments of 19,675/6,576 females (33.4 per cent), of which 10,903 students with fee paying/6,622 females (60.7 per cent).
- Champasak University established in 2002 in the south province with total enrolments of 1,147 students/445 females (38.7 per cent) of which 290 students with fee paying.
- Souphanouvong University established in 2003 in the north with total enrolments of 548 students/205 females (37.4 per cent).
- Polytechnic School run the higher education course on land mapping with total enrolments of 120 students/44 females (36.7 per cent) of which 42 students with fee paying/11 females (26.2 per cent).
- The Vocational Education Development Center run a higher vocational education teacher course with the total enrolments of 47 students/13 females (27.7 per cent).

The Department of Higher, Technical and Vocational Education within the Ministry of Education is in charge of coordinating of higher education in terms of academic management.

**B. Recent reforms in higher education policies and higher education institutions**

The main directives of higher education are as follows:

- Train the students for all economic sectors;
- Improve the efficiency and the quality of management and teaching activity of Higher Education in order to move closely to the international standards;
- Develop higher education in the pyramid shape in proportion to technicians and skill workers;
- Improve access to the higher education sector;
- Link higher education closely to the production and research;
- Promote and establish the cost-sharing, cost recovery and income generating system in order to increase the fund from many sources other than the government budget.
In terms of relevance and management, the revised Decree of NUOL of 9 June 2000 stipulated the academic and administrative autonomy of the University.

The NUOL has substantial institutional autonomy in relation to the academic functions of curriculum/programme design and development, selection and admission of students, determination of the criteria and procedures for student progression and staff appointment and promotion, the determination and award of qualifications and the nature and directions of its research activities. In addition the NUOL has also the financial autonomy which could be satisfied to the administrative processes.

The Ministry of Education has the right to recognize the academic degrees or award certificates granted by an institution of higher education or external agency (state/professional body, etc.)

The National University is responsible to the Minister of Education for the criteria and programmes of study for these qualifications and for their conferment and award.

The previous curriculum of higher education institutions was rather narrow, designed specially for the needs of the concerned ministries. The new curriculum of the NUOL, wider and more complex is a credit system.

The National University and the Ministry of Education has undertaken action on the question of inter-sectoral curriculum coordination and integration and transfer of credit, especially in technological and science-based professional education. It is necessary to make arrangements for a nationally based curriculum development system in order to facilitate the transfer of credit within the system and reduce wasteful duplication and barriers to student progression between programmes and institutions and to recognize the credits and validate some equivalence of diplomas and degrees granted by higher education institutions and external agency.

The duration of the foundation studies at the National University has been reduced from two to one year since the year 2004 while in Champasak and Souphanouvong still have two years foundation of studies due to the educational background in the provinces.

C. Emergence of new providers of higher education

New providers of higher education have been increased and challenged the higher education system in Lao PDR. The Champasak University was established in the year 2002 with 4 faculties with the objectives to recruit the graduates of secondary school from the South part and the Souphanouvong University was established in the year 2003 with the objectives to recruit the graduates from secondary school from the north part. Many educational programmes have been accredited and imported. Some institution and educational education programme have been accredited through the international co-operation.
There are 12 faculties and schools at the National University as following:

1. Faculty of Education
2. Faculty of Social Sciences
3. Faculty of Sciences
4. Faculty of Letters
5. Faculty of Economics and Business Administration
6. Faculty of Forestry
7. Faculty of Agriculture
8. Faculty of Law and Administration
9. Faculty of Medical Sciences
10. Faculty of Engineering
11. Faculty of Architecture
12. Faculty of Foundation Studies

The academic programmes offered at the National University are the undergraduates and higher diploma and postgraduate programmes.

a) Undergraduate and Higher Diploma:
   - The Bachelor Degree Programme consists of one year of basic sciences and four years of specialized studies at the various faculties except for the Faculty of Medical Sciences, which comprises of 6 years of specialized studies.
   - The Higher Diploma Programme consists of three or four years of studies. This programme is organized at four faculties: the Faculty of Engineering, the Faculty of Architecture, the Faculty of Forestry, and the Faculty of Agriculture.

b) Postgraduate programmes:
   - Training specialist in Pediatrics and Gynecology at the faculty of Medical Sciences.
   - Master Degree Programme at the Faculty of Engineering through a cooperative programme with Hanoi University of Communication and Hanoi Water Resources University.
   - Master Degree programme at the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration through a co-operative programme with Viet Nam University.
Besides this the NUOL includes the following centers:

a) The Teacher Development Center (TDC), which is attached to the Faculty of Education, aims to provide services and training for teachers and educational administrators for secondary schools.

b) The Population Studies Center (PSC) is funded by the UNFPA and is attached to the Office of the President. Its objectives are to: (1) develop and implement curriculum in population studies at NUOL and, (2) promote and carry out research in the related fields.

c) The Lao-Japan Center for Human Resource Cooperation (LJ Center) is funded by JICA. Its objectives are: (1) to offer Japanese Language courses, (2) to offer business courses, and (3) to promote a good understanding between the Lao and Japanese people.

d) The Asean Research Center (ARC) is attached to the Office of the President, and funded by the Korean Foundation for Advanced Studies, Republic of Korea. It aims to promote research among the young staff of NUOL and to promote a good understanding among Asian countries.

e) The Lao-Japan Technical Center is attached to the Faculty of Engineering funded by JICA. With the objectives to train the maintenance of the computers and related devices.

f) The IT Center is attached to the Office of the President which manages all IT matters at NUOL.

g) Center for Environment and Development Studies is attached to the office of the President. It is established as a center for research and bachelor of Environmental Science and Management. The main objective of the center is to educate graduates capable of dealing with the challenge of the sustainable management of Lao PDR’s natural resources in the light of increasing development pressures.

There are 3 Faculties at the Champasak University as following:

1. Faculty of Agriculture
2. Faculty of Economic and Business Administration
3. Faculty of Education

There are 3 Faculties at the Souphanouvong University as following:

4. Faculty of Agriculture
5. Faculty of Economic and Business Administration
6. Faculty of Education.

Some new Faculties such as Engineering, Architecture will be established through the recently Korean Loan agreement Project.
The institute of tropical medicine relevant to the Ministry of Health was created in the year 2000 in Laos through the French cooperation (Francophone) with the objectives to recruit some students from the French speaking countries to continue the masters’ degree education programme in tropical medicine.

The master’s programme in chirurgic was accredited with the French cooperation of CCL.

It is to be noted that besides to normal educational programme all public higher education institutions tend to offer the fee-paying educational programme in order to provide the opportunities to the student-leavers of secondary schools to access to higher education and also to generate income to cover the operation costs of the institutions since the government budget are limited.

In addition the private education institutions have also imported some educational programme especially in English and business administration and ICT and delivered the diplomas and degrees referring to the Prime Minister’s decree on the authorization to the Directors of private institutions to sign the diplomas and degrees of their educational programmes accredited. The private educational programmes were monitored and evaluated by the Department of private education in terms of quality assurance.

2. Report on Follow-up Actions based on Recommendations made at the Seventh Session of the Regional Committee

- Pilot projects for a Diploma Supplement
  Following the recommendations of the Seventh Session of the Regional Committee some ideas of the implementation of the pilot projects for a Diploma Supplement have been discussed but not much has to be done to the lack of regulations or mechanisms to manage the recognition of the higher education degree. There is not yet existing quality assurance boards and accreditation council.

- The role and function of APARNET
  The role and function and APARNET is committed to provide information on the Higher Education system, programme, quality assurance, and the issues pertaining to the recognition of higher education degree and diploma and the progress of the ratification of its convention which is a good advantage for the countries accessed to the internet.

- Working Groups working on the common terminologies should be involved by Lao PDR.
Due to the reorganization of the department, the assignment and the responsibility of people concerned and also due to the difficulties in accessing to the internet, Lao PDR could not be involved systematically in the planned activities.

There is to be noted that some terminologies relating to the higher education system, accreditation, recognition and quality assurance should be defined by the joint working groups not only through on-line but through the mail.

Therefore there is a need to plan all relating activities in details for the joint working groups so that each working group could be committed to the concerned activities.

3. Situation Analysis of Cross-border Education

The cross border education become familiar through the exchange of staff and students through international cooperation including bilateral and multilateral co-operation.

A. Movement of academic staff, students, programmes and institutions across borders

The movement of academic staff, students, programmes and institutions across borders have been promoted through the international co-operation with the means of agreements, convention, twinning and networks.

B. Number of foreign students studying in the country and number of students studying abroad

The study in Lao PDR is open to all foreigners who are interested in studying within Lao educational system. At present there are 248 students studying at the different faculties coming mainly from China, Viet Nam, Cambodia and Myanmar. Before 2004 there were also students from USA, Australia, Thailand etc.

Academic staff and students from the public universities have been and are being trained in overseas. From 2001 to 2004 the movement of academic staff and students to study abroad at the doctoral degree, master degree, bachelor degree and higher diploma has been increased from 444 students/114 females to 846 students/236 females, which is almost two fold.

From 1,015 teaching staff at the National University 140 staff are being trained and studying abroad for doctoral degree, post graduates degree, bachelor degree etc.
C. Types of higher educational institutions and programmes imported into and/or exported out of the country

The institute of tropical medicine relevant to the Ministry of Health was created in the year 2000 in Laos through the French co-operation (Francophone) with the objectives to recruit some students from the French speaking countries to continue the master’s degree education programme in tropical medicine.

The master’s programme in chirurgic was accredited with the cooperation of CCL.

Along with the formal in-service training the distance learning in English, French and some professional disciplines have been conducted within the staff development programme of the National University.

Lao language were exported out of the countries through the cooperation agreement between universities.

4. Emergent Issues relating to Cross-border Education such as the Implication of GATS

The mobility of staff and students leads to the issues of the validation of the certificates and diplomas and the recognition of degree and diplomas. The quality issues of the inputs to the higher education institutions and universities are concerned with the education system since the years of schooling in Lao PDR are 11 years. One year of foundation study at the National University and 2 years of foundation studies at the other universities will remain the issues to be addressed. In addition the quality of public and private educational programmes have to be discussed among the practitioners and professionals.

The validation of the certificate and diplomas of the sending and receiving countries needs to be discussed through the policy dialogue.

The benchmarks needs to be evaluated by using the best practice of performance indicators for higher education institutions or universities.


A. National framework and agencies – names, functions, division of roles among these agencies, etc.

Though there is an increase in enrollment in higher education, the quality improvement of higher education in Lao PDR is a preliminary concern. The concept of quality embraces many factors such as the governance/management, teachers, students, teaching and
learning programmes, research, financial resources, instructional materials and equipment including the optimizing use of the information and communication technologies and institutional environment.

Quality assurance is crucial and requires a system analysis and evaluation of its achievement of teaching and learning from self evaluation and external review to demonstrate the transparency and accountability.

In order to ensure the quality of higher education, the Ministry of Education had undertaken the following measures which leads to the higher education status and credentials at variance with generally acceptable norms for the higher education level:

a) Improving the admission system to higher education by setting the system of entrance examination through the non-quota system. The quota and non-quota students will be judged using the three decision criteria: (i) equity, (ii) merit, based on school-based academic performance, and (iii) financial need.

Quota students: Assignment by the Ministry of Education through the authority of the provinces, the local Department of Education, also called the entrance by quota. The students are selected by scrutinizing of their transcripts of the studies at secondary school and the results of their leaving examination.

Non-quota students: selection by entrance examination. The student who are assigned by the above procedure can apply to the National Entrance Examination, which is organized at Vientiane Municipality and some provincial centers at the same date and same time.

b) Great efforts in formulating legislation and framework have been made to ensure the standards and objectives of the system of higher education.

c) There is thus a potential for proliferation of courses, programme which stated in the recently promulgated Decree on the profile of Curriculum of July 2001 to meet the requirements of quality in higher education. There is to be noted that the curriculum have to keep up date with the needs of labour market.

d) Employer studies and career guidance should be introduced to improve the relevance of the programmes and meet the requirement of employers, parents and the community and the labour market.

The Department of Higher, Technical and Vocational education Ministry of Education is the coordination body of higher education.

Until now there are not yet existing a national framework and agencies on quality assurance. The validation of higher education diploma and degree have been evaluated by the Committee nominated by the Prime Minister in 1993. The Committee for
diplomas and certificate validation was comprised from representatives from different ministries under the chairmanship of the vice-Minister of Education and have the mandate to validate the diplomas and degrees of overseas and formulate the regulations on the recognition of qualifications higher education institutions. In the practice the validation of the diplomas is referred to the comparison of the different education system conducted in 1993.

At the present the Ministry of Education is being taken action to revise the validation of the diplomas of higher education by using the handbook on Diplomas, Degrees and Other Certificates in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific and submit to the Prime Ministers’ Office for approval with the objectives to consider the diplomas or certificates holders and consequently the remuneration of its concerned holders. It is to be noted that the education system from Lao ODR outlined in the mentioned handbook 2nd edition has to keep –up date with the reform of the vocational and technical education since 1997.

B. Degree conferring agencies, quality assurance agencies, accreditation bodies, etc

The profiles of the higher vocational diploma programme, bachelor programme and master’s programme have been officially determined by the Ministry of Education. The general principle settlement, the organization of teaching and learning, the use of credit system and the duration of study, the structure of curriculum, the morality of student and the registration, the evaluation of the learning and the successful of the study have been stated in the Decree of the higher education profile on Higher Education Diploma, Bachelor’s programme and respectively Master’s programme dated of 17 July 2001.

The Ministry of Education has the right to recognize the academic degrees or award certificates granted by an institution of higher education or external agency (state/professional body, etc.).

According to the education law the universities has the right to confer the academic degrees and award certificates as accredited or approved by the Ministry of Education.

The National University has the right to confer academic degrees and award certificates as follows:

1. Doctoral degrees
2. Masters degrees
3. Graduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificates
4. Bachelor degrees
5. Diplomas
6. Diplomas of foundations studies.
With reference to the constitution of the National University of Laos of October 2001, the university has the right to confer the diplomas and degree to the graduates of the NUOL and also recognize the diplomas and degree of the higher education institutions for entering to the NUOL or take the entrance examination.

So far there is little to monitor or assure the quality of NUOL activities at three levels:

- At the Departments/Faculties level to monitor or assure the quality of delivery of programmes.
- At the institutional level (Higher Education Institution or University) to assure that the Departments, faculties have created quality assurance mechanism and making effective use of them.
- By an external body to the university.

With the assistance of the curriculum and Self Accreditation Advisor, under the past post secondary education rationalization project, the university organized workshop at the level of key teaching staff and initiated the understanding and the policy of self-accreditation and quality assurance in National University.

To facilitate the smooth functioning of quality assurance activities, the NUOL needs to develop and formalize a quality assurance system. The system must be built on the existing good basis of the NUOL and will consolidate them by hierarchy of action and procedural guideline.

The quality assurance system will function by sequence of some process such that the process of planning approval, delivery, modification and review of the educational programmes. For running the quality assurance cycle, the National University set up a quality assurance task force or teaching and learning quality committee which consists of the representatives of each faculty. The task force will initiate action to develop the quality system. The two others universities follows also the same guidelines of the National University.

The Ministry of Education is being taken in action with the National University in considering to establish the quality assurance board.

C. **Recognition of qualifications awarded by higher education institutions within and outside the country: laws and policies adopted since 2000, etc.**

Referring to the educational law of 2000, the Ministry of Education has the right to recognize the academic degrees or award certificates granted by an institution of higher education or external agency (state/professional body, etc.).
In so far the recognition of qualifications awarded by higher education institutions within the country are based on the curriculum profile of the Ministry of Education approved in 2001. The recognition issues have been discussed at the university council level. The recognition of qualifications awarded by higher education outside the country are based on the agreement between institutions and also the revised handbook of higher and certificates of higher education of the UNESCO and the Asia and the Pacific dated of 2003.

6. International Co-operation, Bilateral and Multilateral Agreements

One of the essential first steps for which the countries and universities concerned must assume primary responsibility is institutional reform and particularly adaptation to specific needs. At the same time, international cooperation for institutional development has a vital role to play in ensuring access to and in facilitating the transfer of knowledge and giving the best practice.

International cooperation is one of the important activities which contribute to the development of higher education in terms of quantity and quality.

Lao PDR places much importance on international cooperation through bilateral and multilateral cooperation and could benefit from these co-operation based on national, regional and international needs. The establishment strong relationships with similar institutions in other countries has been promoted in order to exchange experiences and facilitating staff and student exchange, provide opportunities for training teachers and develop joint research and development programmes.

Different projects have been successfully through the assistance from many countries and international organizations.

The Ministry of Education has signed the cooperation agreement with many countries which includes staff and exchange students.

- **Activities and actions undertaken to date to enhance international and regional co-operation concerning mutual recognition of qualifications in higher education**

To enhance international and regional cooperation concerning mutual recognition of qualification in higher education, Lao PDR has sent also senior staff to take part in different meeting, conference or seminar organized by international organization concerning the education cross-border the quality assurance and the recognition of qualifications etc. of which participants could share experiences with other countries and take best practices.
Bilateral and multilateral agreements for recognition of qualifications in higher education

With reference to the signing agreement through bilateral cooperation, number scholarships have been provided for Lao students who have been or will be automatically recruited to the institutions of the receiving countries. The validation process has been recognized by the sending country after the completion of the study of the students. The recognition and validation of higher diplomas and degrees have been evaluated by the Ministry of Education referring to the consensus of the committee for validation of the diplomas, degree and certificates.

The National University of Laos is cooperating with many foreign universities, institutions and organizations in training and students and staff exchanges, joining research and post graduate programme. The NUOL is member of ASEAN University Network (AUN) and involved in the committee for quality assurance, and also member of Agence Universitaire de la Francophone (AUF), Greater Mekong Sub-region for Academic and Research Network (GMSARN) and the ASEAN Universities Network Society for Engineering Education Development Network (AUN-SEED-NET).

The National University of Laos has established cooperation with 63 foreign universities, institutions and organizations in training and students and staff exchanges, joining research and post graduate programme by cooperating with 1 University in Australia, 1 University with Canada, 6 Universities with China, 9 Universities in France, 2 Universities in Germany, 10 Universities/institutions in Japan, 8 Universities in the Republic of Korea, 2 Universities in Thailand, 3 Universities/Institutions in USA and 11 Universities in Viet Nam.

7. Emergent Issues relating to the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in HE

Issues concerning recognition of academic qualification in the context of the changing environment of higher education such as e-education, transnational higher education, virtual universities, corporate universities, etc.

The issues that needs to be addressed are the comparison of the educational system of different countries of the sending countries and the receiving countries which leads to the validation of the diplomas, degree and certificates holders and consequently the decision and attribution of remuneration of the concerned.

The delivery modes of educational programmes, the quality of the educational programmes and the reputation of the institutions needs to be evaluated by the interested state parties.
Relevance of the 1983 Regional Convention for Asia-Pacific to the changing context of higher education and suggestions for its revision

The 1983 Regional Convention for Asia-Pacific is relevant to the changing context of higher education and cross border education as a whole, specially the aims were well spelled out in article 2 (a), (b) and (c) which would give good understanding and mutual benefit from the regional and world-wide cooperation in the matters of comparability and recognition of equivalence of studies and academic qualifications but some concrete measures needs to be complement to it. In addition the context of Education for All need to be added in the convention as higher education should be integrated into the processes of Dakar framework and the in to the processes of the national action plans.

8. Suggestions for the Eighth Session of the Regional Committee

Policy dialogue should be organized to facilitate the implementation of the regional convention of the recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees in higher education in Asia and the Pacific.

UNESCO should organize the inter-regional seminar on the mutual recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees in higher education with the objectives to discuss on the educational programmes, its contents and lengths of the curriculum and share the best practices of the arrangements of the recognition and validation of qualifications and to disseminate the information on the network which could promote the wide cooperation among the state parties of the mentioned convention.

Follows to the recommendations of the Seven Session of the Regional Committee, meeting should be organized for working groups to discuss on the planning activities and its Implementation. The working methodologies should not only through on-line approach but face to face are required for discussions and explanations since the analysis of the concerned issues should be proved.
1. Introduction

Higher education in Maldives is provided by the Maldives College of Higher Education (MCHE), College of Islamic Studies (CIS), Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) and a number of private institutions. Many students pursue higher education and training overseas. The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), is the government agency responsible for facilitating the growth of higher education and training and to provide policy and logistical guidance to the sector in Maldives.

Maldives College of Higher Education (MCHE) is the only degree-granting institution. MCHE currently offers 5 certificate programmes, 11 advanced certificate programmes, 10 diploma programmes, 4 advanced diploma programmes, and 6 degree programmes. Its faculties include: Health Sciences, Hospitality and Tourism, Management and Computing, Engineering Technology, and Marine Studies. MCHE is governed by a College Council. Presently, about 4,000 students are enrolled in MCHE’s long-term courses, i.e. courses that are up to or longer than one-academic year. About 2,000 students are enrolled in short-term courses.

College of Islamic Studies (CIS), former Institute of Islamic Studies, offers 4 certificate programmes, 4 diploma programmes and 1 advanced diploma programmes to a student population of about 300 full-time students in these programmes.

Centre for Continuing Education (CCE), former Non-Formal Education Centre, focuses mainly on providing technical, vocational and continuing education. CCE offers 28 certificate programmes, to a student population of about 300 full-time students and coordinates the teaching in the Technical and Vocational Stream at secondary schools across the country.

Private sector participation in higher and continuing education is growing. Eighty-six private institutions are registered with the Government to date. Many of them offer certificate and diploma level programmes in computer studies, information technology, management, and business studies. 145 short and long-term certificate and diploma level programmes conducted by such institutions were registered in 2005. It is estimated that about 3000 students would be enrolled with such private institutions at any given time.

It is estimated that 1000 to 1500 Maldivian students are pursuing diplomas, degrees and graduate qualifications abroad at any given time. This number is significant in consideration of the country’s small population size of 270,000. Many of them are on
scholarships, while an increasing number of students are funding their own studies. The most popular study abroad destinations for Maldivians are Malaysia, India, Sri Lanka, United Kingdom, Australia and Egypt. The increasing number of students studying abroad has lead to the need to develop a policy and procedure for Government’s recognition of qualifications earned abroad.


A. Recognition of qualifications awarded by higher education institutions within Maldives

The Maldives Accreditation Board (MAB) of the DHET manages the Maldives National Qualifications Framework (MNQF). This Framework consists of 11 levels of qualifications including Certificate I, Certificate II, Certificate III, Advanced Certificate, Diploma, Advanced Diploma, Bachelor’s Degree, Master’s Degree and Doctoral Degree. MNQF sets out minimum entry requirements, credit hours and credit points for each of the 11 qualifications. All qualifications issued by MCHE and private institutions must fit requirements of one of the 11 qualifications of MNQF.

MNQF provides a coherent framework that facilitates quality improvement, quality assurance, and private sector participation in post-secondary education. It also ensures that students, employers, education providers and the community at large comprehend the learning outcomes involved in various qualifications. The main objective of the MNQF is to provide learners, employers, and education providers with qualifications that are nationally standardized and quality assured. Specifically, MNQF is designed to:

- rationalize and recognize various industry, vocational and academic qualifications within a coherent system;
- support flexible and continuous upgrading of knowledge and skills through life-long learning; and
- provide a framework for private education providers to demonstrate credibility and quality.

The provider of a course of study, leading to any of these qualifications, is required to submit a course document detailing the following: credit points, entry-requirements, curricular content, qualifications of instructors and details of academic and physical facilities available for course delivery. Policies and procedures regarding examinations and assessment, granting of advanced standing (if any), student record keeping, attendance, disciplinary matters and fee payment are required to be detailed in the course document. A panel appointed by MAB would review the course document and provide the approval to commence a course of study. Following the commencement of
the course of study, MAB reviews the progress of the course by a process observation, document analysis, and student and staff interview.

Theoretically, MNQF allows all qualifications to have a purpose and interrelationships. The theoretical framework is designed to provide articulation from one qualification to the other, by recognizing prior learning. MNQF is designed to provide pathways for learning.

The intended beneficiaries of MNQF include the learners, the employers, and the providers of education and training. Learners benefit by increased transferability and mobility through recognition of qualifications from various institutions and sources. Employers benefit through assurance of quality of qualifications relevant to the industry needs. Education and training providers benefit by validating the quality of their courses and certificates and by offering standards-based training for nationally recognized qualifications.

B. Recognition or Validation of Qualifications Offered by Institutions Abroad

Qualifications conferred by institutions abroad could be submitted to the Maldives Accreditation Board for recognition. Most candidates submit such qualifications with respect to application for Government employment and scholarships. The process is voluntary and is subject to a service fee of US$7.78. A standing panel constituted by MAB, consisting of 8 members, reviews and recommends qualifications issued abroad for validation. The MAB’s “Panel for Validation of Overseas Qualifications” considers the following principles in validating such qualifications.

- The qualification should be issued from an institution that is recognized and registered in the institution’s home country.
- The original of the qualification, including a valid transcript and any other relevant supporting documents, should be available.
- The concerned qualification’s academic-load, in terms of credit points, or the duration, in academic years, should fit that of the relevant qualification in the MNQF.
- The concerned qualification’s entry requirement should meet the entry requirement of the corresponding qualification of the MNQF.
3. International Co-operation, Bilateral and Multilateral Agreements

Apart from the Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific, no bilateral or multilateral agreement is followed in recognition of qualifications in higher education. However, with respect to recognition of qualifications issues abroad, MAB continuously collects and updates information from institutions in countries where Maldivian students study abroad. In this regard, MAB liaises with respective accrediting bodies and national authorities. When a qualification from a previously unknown institution is submitted for validation, every effort is made to obtain detailed information regarding the institution and the concerned qualification. In this regard, MAB is developing a data-base of institutions from which Maldivian students obtain qualifications abroad.

4. Emergent Issues and Suggestions Relating to the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees

A. Recognition of overseas qualifications

Overseas qualifications validated by MAB’s Panel on Validation of Overseas Qualifications in 2004 include: 73 certificates, 54 diplomas, 131 bachelors’ degrees, 4 graduate diplomas, 33 Master’s degrees and 2 doctoral degrees. Up to 31st March 2005, a total of 122 qualifications have been validated and 6 were rejected. Those qualifications were rejected primarily due to lack of information from institutions or due to the institution not being formally recognised in the home country.

Gathering information about institutions and their academic programmes is a challenging task. The status of new institutions with respect to home-country recognition and credibility is still more difficult to clarify. An agreed protocol for sharing of accreditation information among agencies would be helpful for accreditation bodies such as MAB.

The unavailability of current information at MAB about existing validation mechanisms is also a major handicap. Therefore, regional training in this regard is suggested.

B. Trans-national higher education, and e-education

Validation of qualifications resulting from trans-national higher education, and e-education is an emerging issue. In the absence of an internationally-applied criterion for accreditation of e-education, MAB applies the following principle, in addition to those listed on the previous page. That is, students who undertake such courses must register their enrolment in the respective course with the Department of Public Examinations. The pertinent academic assignments and examinations of the respective course must be supervised by a person who is recognized for that purpose by the Department of Public Examinations.
C. Recognition of Maldivian qualifications in the Asia Pacific

The recognition of Maldivian qualifications in Asia Pacific regional countries has not emerged as a significant issue. It is so because a relatively few Maldivians, with qualifications from home institutions, have tried to obtain university placements, or transfer of academic credits, or employment, in regional countries. However, the growing number of students pursuing higher education at home, coupled with the narrowing employment market, is expected to entice Maldivians to seek work and study opportunities abroad. Therefore, international recognition of Maldivian qualifications abroad is expected to emerge as an issue in the future. Keeping this situation in sight, MAB’s goal is to facilitate the development of an internationally credible post-secondary education in Maldives.

D. The Academic Nature of MNQF

The current MNQF is biased to fit formal academic learning and credentials. MNQF does not fully acknowledge, or provide details of how employment-oriented training programmes will be accredited and laddered into the formal credentialing system. Defining of occupational competencies, standards and performance assessment criteria is complex, because such definitions do not readily align with excellence in academia. Therefore, MAB is working towards developing an internationally-recognizable criterion for accrediting employment-oriented training.
1. Introduction

The Mongolian Higher Education System

There are several types of higher education institutions in Mongolia: universities, institutes and colleges. They award various academic degrees, including diploma, bachelor’s, master’s and doctor’s degrees. At present, there are 184 higher education institutions with a total of 123,824 student population and 11,555 faculty members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of institutions</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>National/Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutes and Colleges</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branches of Foreign Universities</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (MECS) (http://www.mecs.pmis.gov.mn) is the government body responsible for the development and implementation of nation-wide policies related to academic activities, sciences, public education and culture. The Ministry sets the standards for each level of education, approves textbooks, supports local educational agencies, awards licences to set up higher educational institutions.

The Ministry has planned to undertake education sector studies in 2005 in 7 sub-sectors, including Higher education. The Ministry considers it as a crucial step to generate necessary inputs to reform higher education in the country. In this regard it aims to review and analyze the current situation and identify priorities and magnitude of further policy interventions, strategies and resource mobilization with appropriate mechanisms to ensure effective implementation. The following aspects are envisaged to be covered in the studies: (i) a legal environment of higher education; (ii) management and structure of
the sub-sector; (iii) human, material, and financial resources development; (iv) services for students; (v) strengthening of curriculum, program and standards of higher education, and any other important issues.

2. **Report on Follow-up Actions based on Recommendations made at the Seventh Session of the Regional Committee**

In Mongolia, a diploma supplement is already in place. All diplomas are supplemented with annexes that indicate names of courses taken by the holder, related credits and grades, a title and a final examination grade of a dissertation/a thesis defended.

3. **Situation Analysis of Cross-border Education**

In academic year 2004-2005, there are 630 foreign students from 14 countries studying in Mongolia. For the same period, we estimate there are some 1496 Mongolian students studying overseas. But this number refer only to the number of students studying through the Mongolian Government grants or through bilateral agreements. Actually, we believe the exact number of students studying abroad is much bigger but we have no reliable statistics available for those students studying on private expenses.

The Government of Mongolia has been putting emphasis on creating a favorable legal environment to attract investment and attention of prestigious foreign universities to open their branches and import their programs to Mongolia. As a result, currently in Ulaanbaatar we have branches of foreign 6 universities: University of Buryatia, University of East Siberia, University of Kemerovo, Moscow University of Energetics, Moscow Academy of Economics. Entrants to these universities study for the first two years in Mongolia then they are transferred for further studies to the main universities where they graduate. The language of teaching is Russian in those universities. The visiting professors from the main universities come to Mongolia to teach in their respective universities.

An International college called ‘MIU’ has been established by Korean investors. The teaching is provided in the English language, which attracts students from neighboring Russia and China.

Lately, there is a growing tendency of the Mongolian universities to cooperate with Chinese universities and exchange their students.

At the national level higher education is administered through the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The Ministry is responsible for the formulation of higher education policies and programmes administration.

The National Council for Higher Education Accreditation (NCHEA) (http://www.accmon.mn) is an autonomous body that provides accreditation at both institutional and program levels. The objective of NCHEA is to develop a procedure to assure quality in higher education institutions and to provide technical assistance and consulting services to improve the overall performance of these institutions.

The State Professional Inspection Agency (SPIA) is a government agency that monitors and assesses the implementation of educational policies, regulations, and laws develop recommendations if needed.

Respective higher educational institutions that offer the programs confer their degrees in Mongolia. Students, who successfully accomplish course requirements for their programme, are accepted to take a final examination or defend a thesis. The rector/president of the institution establishes the final examination committee comprising professors and leading specialists in the field, including staff from related ministries. The rector/president approves decisions of the committee.

Currently there is no law that regulates the recognition of qualifications awarded by higher education institutions outside the country. However, the Government of Mongolia has been working actively and making special efforts to establish agreements with other countries concerning mutual recognition of qualifications in higher education.

5. **International Cooperation, Bilateral and Multilateral Agreements**

The Government of Mongolia sees mutual recognition of qualifications and agreements with other countries as a vital tool to enhance quality of education and, at the same time, secure rights of degree holders to be employed consistent with their professional status. As mentioned above, the Government places much emphasis on establishing these agreements and fortunately, these vigorous efforts have resulted in the signed bilateral agreements with Cuba, the People’s Republic of China, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Similar negotiations on establishing agreements are also underway with countries such as Austria and Poland.
6. Emerging Issues relating to the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education

In the context of the changing environment, recognition of academic qualifications, especially of virtual or e-education is going to be one of the challenges in Mongolia in the near future. So far, we have not faced with these types of issues, but definitely it is going to be on an agenda once students start bringing similar type certificates or degrees. In this regard, sharing experience with other countries who have already faced with the same kinds of challenges would benefit Mongolia greatly. Another issue is how to distinguish or identify certificates awarded by non-reputable providers or ‘diploma mills’. Perhaps, one way of solving this problem would be exchange of information between countries of the region.

7. Suggestions for the Eighth Session of the Regional Committee

In spite of the obvious progress with the promotion of the Regional Convention much remains to be done in the face of the changing environment in higher education. In this regard, exchange of information between relevant organizations of the region will be be of great importance. It is important to establish a mechanism to make sure that critical information (e.g. methods of detection of fraudulent certificates or name of providers of these type of certificates) are known throughout the region.
Mr. Laxmi Prasad Khatry

1. Introduction

a) General Information

Education has been accepted as the primary means of a country’s all-round development. Nepal’s higher education programmes start from intermediate courses leading to research studies. After completing higher level of schooling, the students are eligible to enter into higher education. The higher education system has been realized as an effective means of economic and social development to reducing poverty by way of developing human resources that can compete at the international level for all round development of the country and support for the national economy. Accordingly the system gives responsibilities to the institutions of all levels of education by way of making them capable to take leadership on educational front.

b) The following table describes the scenarios of higher education of Nepal.

Table 1. Number of Students in Different Colleges in 2003/04

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Universities</th>
<th>Constituent</th>
<th>Affiliated</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Campus</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tribhuvan University (TU)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>123,556</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mahendra Sanskrit</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1,480</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kathmandu</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2239</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Purbanchal</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Pokhara</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>127,866</td>
<td>393</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c) Recent policies of government for higher education:

As per the 10th plan, the government has adapted the following policies of higher education:

- The government will adopt the principles of cost recovery in higher education. The amount of Government’s share will be gradually reduced at the higher level of education as it moves upward.
In order to develop a regional institutional base for higher education, TU affiliated institutions at the local level will be merged into regional universities. Institutional development will be ascertained on a cost-sharing basis with stakeholders and communities.

Encourage programmes for mobilizing master’s level students in community development services.

d) Recent reforms in higher education policies:

- The government is much more concerned with quality and equity at higher education level.
- The universities are providing scholarships to their students from the grants and resources they receive.
- The government has initiated a reform and finance program through World Bank funded project where financial, academic, and administration autonomy of universities and campuses will be the main thrust.
- The government is initiating regional universities and open universities with the concept of multi universities.
- The MOES is working for developing a national curriculum framework, which integrates the grades primary to 12.

e) Emergence of new providers of higher education

Private higher education providers are emerging especially after the 90s. Out of total enrolment majority of enrolment cater by the private sectors and higher education business is one of the profitable and growing businesses in the country. Kathmandu University, one of the leading emerging private university of Nepal providing major technical streams.

2. Situation Analysis of Cross-border Education

Increasing number of students is showing interest to go out side the country especially in American and European universities as well as Chinese and Indian universities. However, some students from abroad are also enrolled in Nepalese universities especially in the field of technical area like the medical sciences.

a) Factor affecting the movement of academic staff and students

The existing situation of Nepal concerning higher education reveals that the following factors are affecting the movement of academic staff and students:
Higher motive/ambitions.
- Higher aspiration to get a better jobs and earning.
- Higher interest to be inclined toward well developed technological innovations.
- Higher ambition to get a better status in the international field of education.
- Higher ambition to contribute to the national field of education.

b) Number of students studying abroad

The following Table 2 describes trends of studying abroad.

Table 2. Number of Students Studying Abroad on Self-Financing Scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>686</td>
<td>877</td>
<td>1,238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh/</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Other”</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1,063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>978</td>
<td>962</td>
<td>1,062</td>
<td>1,153</td>
<td>1,386</td>
<td>1,377</td>
<td>1,689</td>
<td>1,879</td>
<td>1,654</td>
<td>2,823</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Scholarship Section, MOES

* Data of UK for year 1995-2000 and data of Russia for year 2003 are included in others. The figure includes only those students who have taken permission for foreign currency exchange or no objection from the Ministry of Education and Sports.

c) Types of higher educational institutions and programs imported into and/or exported out of the country

Basically, Nepal has the following higher education institutions and in the global context many tasks have still to be determined concerning the importing and exporting of the educational programmes:
d) Emergent issues relating to cross border education.

The prevailing situation of Nepal gives birth to the following issues relating to the cross border education:

- Need for relevance of curricula in the Nepalese context.
- Need for developing mechanism for recognition to foreign qualifications.
- Application of the acquired knowledge and skills in national fields of education.


a) The Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) has been made responsible to develop policies on higher education. The higher education and educational management division of the ministry takes a lead in these matters.

b) The universities are responsible to award degrees to those who fulfill the curricular requirements.

c) There is growing demands to provide license basically to the completers of technical, vocational and professional education.

d) Nepalese universities have developed certain rules and regulations for those who desire to change their faculties for inter-disciplinary studies.

e) The Curriculum Development Centre of Tribhuvan University has been made responsible to look after the recognition of qualification in higher education concerning foreign universities.

f) An attempt has also been made to give accreditation to students holding degrees from national and foreign countries under the umbrella act.

g) Initiatives have been taken to establish the Accreditation Council within the framework of the University Grants Commission (UGC).
4. International Cooperation, Bilateral and Multilateral Agreements

Efforts have been made to increase the international cooperation for higher education in Nepal. Even though many tasks have yet to be settled by the government in this regards, the door is open for the higher education institutions, national as well as international, to meet their aspirations and needs. The MOES is flexible in this regard. The University Grants Commission is also active on these issues; it is initiating dialogues with national and international institutions.

5. Emergent Issues relating to the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education.

The following statements have been regarded as the emergent issues relating to the recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees in higher education.

a) Apply common standards for measurement and evaluation among the countries to work for the recognition

b) Establish similar agencies in all the concerned countries to work for the recognition

c) Adoption of similar curricular contents to contribute substantially to support each other’s academic programmes.

6. Suggestions

The discussion, in my opinion, should be concentrated basically on particular types of issues, and appropriate workable mechanism. It should, in particular, explore the following issues in greater detail:

a) Identifying particular area of cooperation.

b) Increasing regional cooperation focusing on the specific needs of the Asia and the Pacific region.

c) Exploring ways for making higher education affordable to the low-income generations.
1. Introduction

The Philippine government implemented reforms of the educational system at the dawn of the 21st century. New competitive challenges, identified weakness of the system and the technological revolution going on ushered in the Philippine educational reform spearheaded by the Congressional Commission on Educational Reform. The team has formulated legislative measures, policies and structural reforms of the educational system which brought new opportunities and social changes in the country.

The Department of Education (DEP Ed) is now solely in-charge of the basic education. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) was established through Republic Act 7722 or the Higher Education Act of 1994 while the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) was established through Republic Act 7796. CHED was mandated by law to oversee the higher education system in the country. It is tasked to set and enforce minimum standards for academic programmes; supervise both private and public institutions; direct research activities; rationalize higher education programmes and develop centers of excellence. It has direct supervisory authority over private and public colleges and universities that offer higher education degree. TESDA is now the national agency that sets standards, coordinates, monitors and allocates resources for technical education and vocational training in the country.

The trifocalization of the educational system was directed to make Philippine education more relevant and responsive to the needs of a globally competitive human resource base.

2. Philippine Higher Education

Philippine higher education is uniquely characterized by the presence of a big number of private higher education institutions and a small number of publicly-funded universities and colleges. Although higher education is not free and compulsory, it is still very extensive enrolling about 2.5 million students in more than 10,000 academic programmes and 1,718 higher education institutions all over the country. Table 1 shows the distribution of higher education institutions by category.
The private higher education sector in the Philippines is composed of sectarian and non-sectarian institutions. Sectarian institutions are run by religious organizations generally either Catholic or Protestant. Because about 85% of the population is Catholic, there are more Catholic private institutions of higher learning than those established by the other religious groups combined. Catholic private higher education institutions are also perceived to be performing very well. Non-sectarian institutions are those, which are owned by private corporations.

State universities and colleges (SUCs) are created by acts of national legislature and supported by annual government appropriations. They operate as autonomous institutions in terms of developing their academic programmes and conferring degrees with little or no attention to minimum educational standards prescribed by CHED. The Chairman of the Commission is the chairman of the board of all State Universities and Colleges as introduced under Republic Act 8292 or the Higher Education Modernization Act. Furthermore, CHED is responsible for approving annual budget of state universities and colleges to the congress.

Philippine higher education institutions offer a wide variety of degree programmes, associate, diploma, baccalaureate, graduate degree courses at the master’s and doctoral levels. The length of study for baccalaureate degree is for four (4) years except for engineering (5 years), dentistry and veterinary medicine for six (6) years, law (8 years) and medicine (8 years). An undergraduate degree is required for admission to law and medicine.

The Philippine academic year begins in June and ends the following March. Most universities and colleges conduct schools for two semesters. A few universities conduct classes in trimester and quarter system basis. Students enjoy English instructions both at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

### Table 1. Distribution of Philippine Colleges and Universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Universities and Colleges</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Colleges and Universities</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Colleges and Universities</td>
<td>1,487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHED Supervised Institutions</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Government schools (Military/Police, Special Schools)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,718</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The Philippine academic year begins in June and ends the following March. Most universities and colleges conduct schools for two semesters. A few universities conduct classes in trimester and quarter system basis. Students enjoy English instructions both at the undergraduate and graduate levels.
3. Recent Reforms in Philippine Higher Education

CHED charts the direction of Philippine tertiary education though significant reforms, proper resource allocation and international linkages. The priority reforms in Philippine higher education is under the Higher Education Development Project or the HEDP which will be implemented from 2004 to 2009. Among the salient higher education reforms under the HEDP are:

A. Establishment of Greater Uniformity in Accrediting Standards and Procedures for Higher Education Institutions

The HEDP introduced the improvement of quality assurance system to upgrade higher education curricula to international standards. To achieve this, the following reforms will be introduced:

- A monitoring and evaluation system will be institutionalized within CHED;
- The system of accreditation will be strengthened;
- The Professional Board Examinations will be upgraded.

The first reform in quality assurance is to revise higher education curricula so as to ensure competency required for professional practice and the identification of minimum learning outcomes and core competencies. The curricular revision and benchmarking will be conducted by the CHED Technical Panel, representatives from the Professional Regulation Commission and relevant industrial and economic sectors. CHED staff and officials of higher education institutions will also be trained to identify core competencies and learning outcomes, ad to translate these into assessment instruments.

A more focused approach on accreditation of programme will be introduced to complement the new institutional monitoring and evaluation system as to reduce the pool of programmes for accreditation to manageable portion. This new monitoring and evaluation system will be established within CHED to ensure that:

- Student outcomes reach international standards;
- HEIs perform effectively in terms of continuous improvement, efficient use of resources and high graduation rates;
- HEIs are effective in addressing policy issues including those relating to equity; and
- Information about higher education in the Philippines is disseminated effectively.
CHED is revising the guidelines on accreditation to better include appropriate world-class practices on quality assurance. Assistance on software and hardware to develop capacity on accrediting agencies will be provided by the Commission on Higher Education.

B. Rationalizing the Higher Education System and Improve Efficiency

Another major reform package is the rationalization of higher education system. The first intervention will lay the foundation for a more efficient and effective system in delivering public higher education and services and for a more flexible regulatory framework for private higher education provision. The second will improve management at the sector level by improving the higher education management information system, and introducing and implementing graduate tracer studies. The third intervention will strengthen management of higher education institutions through training programmes for managers of both public and private HEIs. The main areas of reforms are:

a) Programme mapping to identify areas for programme duplication, over-served and underserved areas and redirect SUCs programme to priority disciplines and towards geographic areas that are not served.

b) Development of an HEI typology which could be used for funding allocation. It will also provide a basis for identifying SUCS with the greatest potentials for development to international standards.

c) Corporatization of SUCS- There are two ways to achieve corporatization. One is by privatizing all or some aspects of the management of the SUCs or the transfer of SUCs to the private sector. The programme will try to identify SUCS which could promote fiscal autonomy. Assistance will also be provided to implement the corporatization scheme in selected SUCs.

C. Strengthening Teacher Competencies in Higher Education, through Major Staff Development Programme

The Philippine higher education reform programme seeks to improve the quality of higher education by building the capacity for managers of HEIs in both public and private institutions through training and development activities. The reform will also include international benchmarking, provision of specialized courses in strategic planning, quality management, income generation, and the use of data from management information systems. A training of around 3500 presently employed teaching personnel to the levels of Masters Degree in priority fields such as science, mathematics, engineering, information technology, English and social sciences will be targeted.
D. Strengthening Student Assistance

The Philippine student financial aid requires major reforms to improve its equity, effectiveness and efficiency. Three programmes will be introduced under the Higher Education Development Project. First, the scholarship programmes will be streamlined and targeted better. Overlapping aid programmes will be consolidated under two major programmes: (a) a national programme of scholarship vouchers to meet the tuition and living costs of students with the greatest need and highest merit; b) an umbrella programmes of integrated regional tuition grants for needy students with high merit.

Second the selection system will be improved. Potential eligibility for national scholars and regional tuition grants will be determined through: (a) calculations of an eligibility index based on a uniform set of verifiable needs; and (b) performance in a standard national test. Socio-economic eligibility and financial eligibility indices will be developed and pilot tested.

Third, the existing administrative structure for student financial assistance will also be modernized and simplified. Students can apply for aid electronically, by mail or in person at CHED regional offices. There would be the development of procedures, computerization and related cost for a much simplified and efficient administrative structure.

These reforms programmes have been introduced from 1994 and will continue to be implemented until 2009. The programmes are accompanied by seven strategic investments that will exert broad impact in improving higher education. Each of these interventions is either a system-wide or targeted critical points of leverage system.

4. Policies on Transnational Education in the Philippines

In the year 2000, the Commission on Higher Education embarked on internationalization of higher education. Internationalization of Higher Education initiatives included policy issuances and funding support to encourage and promote academic linkages and the active participation of CHED in transnational education. Among the policy directives issued were: (1) Policies on International Linkages and Twining Programmes; (2) Policies on International Practicum Training Programme; and (3) Policies on Transnational Education.

CHED allowed the following universities and colleges from the Philippines from entering academic collaborations as stated in CHED Memorandum Order (CMO ) No. 1 series of 2000, CMO No. 15 series of 2002 and CMO No. 6 series of 2003:

   a) Those with Center of Excellence (COE) and Center of Development (COD) status;
   b) Those which are granted “Autonomous and Deregulated”; and
   c) Those with accreditation Level II and above.
In its Policy on Transnational Education, CHED allows high performing universities and colleges to offer programmes in collaboration with foreign educational institutions. This shows the importance given by CHED on the transnational provision in higher education. This is also to keep high standards to the almost 2.5 million students enrolled in the country. However the policies also required registration of foreign educational institutions in the Commission on Higher Education especially if the programme is offered in the country. The usual documentary assessments are required even if the foreign providers are just offering their programmes in collaboration with local universities and colleges.

CHED Policies has ruled on conventional educational services offered by foreign educational providers and the open learning and distance education mode offered by big providers. It must be pointed out that these schemes are commonly proposed in the country. The new developments on transnational education included the application to CHED of foreign educational processing centers to handle their distance education offering. Likewise, there is now a trend on the increasing number of Filipino faculty teaching in the neighboring countries through academic linkages. These are indications that cross-border education are being encouraged and supported by the Philippines.

5. Status of Mutual Recognition Programmes of the Philippines

One of the most dramatic developments in the country is the flow of Filipino higher education graduates out of the country to work. The rise of professionals and contractual workers moving out of the country created a rush for the Philippine government to work on the acceptability and portability of its higher education degrees, diplomas and certificates.

In 2001 the Philippines has been able to be gain acceptance in the APEC Mutual Recognition Project in engineering disciplines. Philippines are now into the recognition of Architecture and accountancy programmes in the APEC member economies. The Philippines was admitted and accepted by APEC member economies to maintain an APEC Engineer Register using a transparent system of assessment to facilitate the mobility of professional engineers for cross-border practice within the region. Through the project, Filipino engineers and architects will be recognized as practicing professional engineers in the participating economies and will facilitate trade in engineering services between participating economies. Our admission on the APEC Engineer Register have provided engineering professionals with a high degree of mutual exemption from further assessment when practicing in any of the participating economies.

In October 2003, Philippines has ratified the UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Degrees, Studies and Diplomas in the Asia Pacific region. The ratification instrument was deposited with the Director-General of the UNESCO and entered into effect in December 2003. Treaty is entered into force last December 2003. This development is
perceived to address the requirements of UNESCO member states in the recognition of higher education degrees, diplomas, certificates and studies. After the ratification, the Philippines also embarked on bilateral agreement to promote recognition of degrees as part of its internationalization plan.

6. Emerging Issues Relating to Cross-Border Education

Higher education across borders is a phenomenon that includes the movement of students, teachers, and academic content whether physical or virtual. The Philippines has not been left out in this phenomenon. Philippine higher education institutions have rapidly expanded in the last decade to accommodate the growing number of higher education students both from the country and the neighboring countries as well.

There are new initiatives of universities and colleges to always have international scope. There are now emerging International Colleges and International Baccalaureate Institutions, International MBA and the like. However, it should be noted that generally, post-secondary education services supplied by other countries come under international linkages, academic consortia, academic exchange, joint-degree or twinning programmes.

In the Philippines, no foreign institutions of higher learning are allowed to operate by setting up its subsidiaries or branches, local branch or satellite in higher education one hundred per cent (100%). This is mainly due to the constitutional prohibitions as embedded in the pertinent provisions of Article IV of the Philippine Constitution, of which I quote:

“No alien and no firm, association or partnership, corporation or any form of business organization formed, organized or chartered or existing under laws under than those of the Philippines, or which is not a Philippine national or more than forty per cent (40%) of the outstanding capital of economic activity in the Philippines or in the Philippines or be registered, licensed or permitted by the Securities and Exchange Commission or by any bureau, office, agency, political subdivision or instrumentality of the government, to do business or engage in any economic activity in the Philippines.”

This legal impediment limits the participation of foreign educational provider in the Philippines. The country cannot legally bind itself in trade in higher education services one hundred percent (100 %) unlike many advanced countries and all other trade services as indicated in the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trades(GATTs) .

Higher education has increasingly been market-oriented. However, this decade witnessed the big roles played by for-profit providers offering higher education services across borders. To create a legally binding framework, Philippine and foreign higher education institutions embarked on twinning or consortia type of arrangement eliminated this
barrier brought by the constitutional prohibition. There are new markets for short-term courses and certificate programmes offered in the country for health care programmes, language training and computer literacy.


Aware of the current state of Philippine higher education, CHED has pursued major development initiatives to promote quality education. These development initiatives are:

**Standard Formulation.** CHED sets Policies, Standards and Guidelines on the academic programmes under the permit and recognition system. Institutions apply first for permit on their programme and after completing all the requirements and meeting the standards of CHED, an institution applies for a higher level, which is the recognition system. With the assistance of CHED’s technical panel of experts, CHED has reviewed and revised all academic programmes to meet the demands of the times. These policies, standards and guidelines offered new requirements for curriculum, qualifications of deans, faculty and staff, classrooms and laboratory, equipment, library facilities and other services. The revision of existing policies and guidelines are products of international benchmarking initiatives and assessment results by the quality assurance team. Higher education institutions are required to comply with policies and standards set by the Commission on Higher Education. Non-compliance with CHED standards and low performance of graduates in professional examination can result to withdrawal of permits by the CHED.

**Accreditation.** Another mechanism to ensure quality of academic programmes is through accreditation. It is a mechanism that ensures educational quality in the various fields of disciplines. Institutions of Higher Education do not limit themselves with CHED permit or recognition status, they also work on higher level of accreditation which is voluntary but very well recognized and used by CHED for granting enhanced status to higher education institutions. This quality assurance system is through the voluntary accreditation offered by an umbrella organization called the Federation of Accrediting Agencies of the Philippines.

The Federation of Accrediting Agencies of the Philippines (FAAP) as the umbrella organization of accrediting agencies has accredited a total of 597 higher education programmes in 1998-1999 and 743 in 2000-2001, hence, an increase of 24 per cent (Table 8). Of the 743 programmes, 643 are baccalaureate, 65 are Master’s and 5 are Doctoral. In terms of accreditation level, 152 are Level I, 445 are Level II and 146 are Level III. The number of HEIs with accredited programmes in 1998-1999 is 152 and 160 in 2000-2001, hence, an increase of 5.3 per cent and 226 in SY 2003-2004.
There are four levels of accreditation awarded to applicant institutions. The following levels are:

- **Level I**: Applicant status
- **Level II**: Accreditation requirements are met
- **Level III**: Programmes are of International Standards
- **Level IV**: World-class Programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accreditation Levels</th>
<th>Number of Institutions with Accredited Programmes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level I</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level II</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level III</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level IV</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2. Accreditation Status of Philippine HEIs**

*Incentives and Enhanced Status.* CHED has embarked on providing HEIs with incentives and rewards for promoting quality education rather than using regulatory functions. Two hundred seventy-five (275) higher education institutions leading in the various disciplines have been identified by CHED as the Centers of Excellence (COEs) and Centers of Development (CODs). These institutions demonstrate the highest level of standards in instructions, research and extension services at the programme level.

In recognition of selected private schools with consistent good quality education, research and extension services, 30 private institutions were granted autonomy while 24 were granted deregulated status by the Commission. Most of these schools are also the COEs and CODs.

**8. Concluding Remarks**

The Philippines has been implementing key recommendations of the 1998 Philippine Education Sector Development Study and the 2000 Congressional Commission on Educational Reform. The priority actions recommended by the experts are the components addressed by the Higher Education Development Project. The three objectives being addressed to improve the system are the rationalization of higher
education; improvement in the quality of educational achievement and enhancing access and success in higher education levels of the educational system.

Internationalization of higher education remains at the forefront of these reform programmes considering the pictures of cross-border education and the implementation of trade in education services. This general shift is towards providing higher quality of education for the global students. Increased globalization and awareness on international trends have created impact on Philippine higher education institutions.

The Philippines is yet to address major impediments on cross-border education but it promotes an accommodating environment for international twinning, networking and linkages. The participation of the country in UNESCO, GATTS and similar undertaking will improve the capacity of Philippine higher education in running joint-schools or consortia across borders in the future.
Prof. K. Tillekeratne

1. The Higher Education System

In Sri Lanka the main intuitional system which offers degrees and related qualifications comprises twelve Universities of the conventional model and one Open University. These Universities derive their legal authority to offer degrees by an Act of Parliament. While each University enjoys academic autonomy all of them come under the purview of the University Grants Commission (UGC) whose functions include the disbursement of funds, formulation of student-admission criteria and setting administrative guidelines and norms. The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Directors (CVCD) serves as an advisory body of the UGC. Each University has its own governing body called the Council, the Senate which is the highest academic policy making body, the Faculty Boards of study which report to the Senate, and a plethora of committees to facilitate decision making at all levels.

The twelve conventional Universities admit students into the undergraduate programmes directly from the senior secondary schools and provide undergraduate education without levying fees. The present enrolment of undergraduates in these Universities stands approximately at 45,000 which represent slightly more than 2% of the relevant age group.

These Universities may also conduct fee levying courses such as Bachelors Degree programmes for external students and postgraduate programmes. These opportunities are widely made use of and the numbers presently enrolled in such programmes are in excess of one hundred thousand.

The Open University offers a very wide variety of fee levying programmes of study and the number of students registered currently stands approximately at 25,000.

Outside the system of Universities, Sri Lanka also has a few degree awarding institutions, created by Acts of Parliament, to service special sectors of national activity – an example being the National Institute of Education which, apart from performing a variety of other educational functions, also offers Diplomas, Bachelor and Master courses for school teachers and educational administrators who are in service.
2. Modularization of Course Content

As a first step towards establishing comparability of similar programmes of study in different Universities, the Universities of Sri Lanka have completed the modularization of the course contents and adopted a bi-semester academic year.

Together with the modularization a fully-fledged course-credit system with the usual attendant characteristics has been adopted.

This form of assessment has facilitated the formulation of a Common Credit Currency (CCC) system among the Sri Lankan Universities. The formal establishment of a Credit Transfer Scheme (CTS) among the Universities has resulted in more extensive and fairer opportunities for student mobility within the system. Moreover, it has helped to consolidate the gains already made through the adoption of a modularized credit based system.


The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Directors (CVCD), having recognized the need for Quality Assurance (QA) in the Sri Lankan Universities, took steps to introduce QA mechanisms to the University sector. A joint committee of the UGC and the CVCD under my chairmanship coordinated the World Bank funded QA project in the University sector during the period 2001-2004.

Since 2001, the QA project has had four key elements, the foundations of which are all now in place.

The four elements are:

a) a national framework for quality assurance based upon a system of external peer review, building on universities’ internal review procedures;

b) provision of guidance and support for academic practice in teaching and learning that disseminate existing good practice across higher education and suggests examples of how practice might be further developed and improved;

c) setting standards by developing benchmarks for individual subjects;

d) the design and implementation of a Sri Lanka Credit and Qualifications Framework that will enable universities to respond more quickly and effectively to the demand for university education and to the changing needs of the employment market.
4. The Way Ahead

The current status and the future vision of Quality Assurance in Sri Lanka are encapsulated in Figure 1.

The main objectives of the next phase of the QA project are to address each of the four strands above to enable:

a) completion, refinement and full implementation of processes that have now been successfully piloted (this applies to institutional and subject reviews, and the Credit and Qualifications Framework, and includes some additional consultancy work to support the establishment by the UGC of the proposed Agency for Quality Assurance);

b) expanding activity, already successfully established in some areas, to cover all relevant areas and activities (this applies to the work begun through the Academic Procedures Handbook and to the subject benchmark statements);

c) strengthening and expanding the network of senior staff to form a key resource group, with representatives in each university, to work with their colleagues to embed quality assurance and enhancement activity firmly within each institution.

5. Impact of Globalization on Higher Education

Radical elements in the country are totally opposed to commodification of education; they denounce as unacceptable the notion of education being a tradable commodity; they strongly support the notion of education remaining a public good.

In a situation where the Government is not in a position to meet the total demand for higher education, it is desirable to allow the transnational providers of education to operate within a regulatory framework.

Transnational education falls into two broad categories:

- Programmes conducted in the distance mode using new information and communication technologies; and

- Programmes conducted in the traditional classroom setting but use peripatetic lecturers from the mother University or locally hired instructors.

In the latter category the participation of personnel from the mother University at the launching of programmes is a strategy employed with the sole purpose of attracting students. It is regrettable that in some instances the mother University is not even represented at the Convocation ceremony for the award of Degrees.
Thus there is much to be desired in the practices of the private providers of education conducting Diploma/Degree courses on behalf of non-resident mother-institutions which have been increasing in numbers in the recent years.

Presently the work related to QA is handled by the Standing Committee on QA of the UGC, the successor of the joint UGC-CVCD committee on QA, the probable fore-runner of a fully fledged QA Agency in Sri Lanka. The ambit of the standing committee on QA extends over all the higher educational institutes including the private providers of higher education.

6. Diploma Supplement

The University of Kelaniya, among the Sri Lankan Universities, has taken the lead in making preparations for issuing a four-page Diploma (Qualification) Supplement modelled on the format provided at the Seventh session of the Regional Committee held in Perth. The term Qualification Supplement is preferred, because of the unfamiliarity of the term Diploma Supplement among the employers. It provides greater transparency about the awarding institution, contents of the qualification and the grading system.

7. Switching to Dual Mode Delivery

Sri Lankan Universities engaged in conducting programmes of study in the external mode have realized the need to bring the programmes in line with those conducted for internal students. In order to bring about the change a few Universities are exploring the possibility of employing the dual mode delivery. It has been proposed to set up a Department of Open Learning and Distance Education in each of the twelve conventional Universities to prepare the ground for implementation of dual mode.
Quality Assurance Project – Sri Lanka

Universities
Institutes of Tertiary Education

University Grants Commission
Committee of Vice-Chancellors
Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission
Professional Associations

University Senates

Sri Lankan Qualifications
Framework—guidance on the level, volume and nomenclature of academic awards

Sri Lankan Academic Procedures Handbook – guidance on academic practice e.g. programmeme approval

Guidelines for APEL,®
Guides to good Practice, for flexible learning provision, including ODL and e-learning

Credit Transfer System for Sri Lanka

Quality Assurance Handbook* Training of Reviewers*
Institutional and Subject Reviews†

Subject Benchmarking△
and academic standards

Benchmarking®
of Learning
Resources and Research environment

Institutes of Tertiary Education

University Senates

Inter University Subject Committees

Faculty Boards
Employers

Employers

Intra University

* Already completed
© To be completed by May 2006
† In progress
△ 11 Subject Benchmarks completed
09 Subject Benchmarks under preparation
10 Subject Benchmarks to be prepared
Progress in the Ratification and Implementation of the Regional Convention and the Need for Revision: Report from the Secretariat

When States agree to common rules, notwithstanding cultural differences and traditions, they can draw up an agreement or convention, which are legally binding, or develop a recommendation or a declaration. UNESCO participates in these efforts through its standard-setting action and serves as a central forum for coordination and discussion.

Among the various initiatives towards standard-setting, facilitating academic mobility and promoting mutual recognition of qualifications in higher education has always been a priority of UNESCO’s higher education programme. With UNESCO’s initiative, 6 regional conventions on mutual recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees in higher education have been adopted since 1973. They are as follows:

- The Latin America and the Caribbean convention on mutual recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees in higher education adopted in 1973;
- International convention on the recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees in higher education in the Arab and European States bordering on the Mediterranean in 1978;
- Convention on the recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees in higher education in the Arab States adopted in 1978;
- Regional convention on the recognition of studies, certificates, diplomas and degrees and other academic qualifications in higher education in African States adopted in 1981;
- The regional convention on the recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees in higher education in Asia and the Pacific adopted in 1983;

These UNESCO Regional Conventions on the recognition of qualification are legally binding instruments. The main objectives of the conventions are to promote international cooperation in higher education and to reduce obstacles to the mobility of teachers and students by a mutual recognition of degrees and qualifications between the countries that have ratified them. Under the regional convention, members are required to take
all feasible steps within the framework of their national systems and in conformity with their constitutional, legal and regulatory provisions to facilitate academic mobility. They are to encourage the competent authorities concerned, to give recognition to certificates of secondary education and other diplomas necessary for access to higher education, awarded in other Member States, with a view of enabling their holders to undertake studies in institutions of higher education situated in the territory of the receiving state, subject to all academic admission requirements. Where no legal instruments prevail, recognition is a matter of mutual information on the qualifications provided. This enables a comparison to be made between the regulations for the qualification in question and the regulations for the relevant profession or academic qualification in the receiving country. If there remains a significant difference between the qualification and local requirements, it depends on the willingness of the competent authority as to how the differences may be overcome.

With the accelerating pace of globalization and internationalization of HE, interest in signing and ratifying regional conventions is growing. More than 130 countries have ratified one or more of the six regional conventions on recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees in higher education.

**Progress Made in Asia and the Pacific**

The regional convention for recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees in higher education in Asia and the Pacific was adopted at the conference of states in Bangkok in 1983, in which 33 countries participated. Since then, the Bureau of the Regional Committee, that consists of representatives from the governments that have ratified the Convention, has been monitoring the promotion of the convention. The Regional Committee meets bi-annually and examines periodic reports from the Member States on progress and difficulties in applying the convention. The major mandate of Bureau of the Regional Committee is to promote the application of the convention, examine periodic reports from the Member States on progress and difficulties in applying the convention and building partnership with stakeholders for its implementation. So far twenty Member States have ratified the Convention – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Australia, China, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Holy See, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Turkmenistan.

During the period after the Seventh Session of the Regional Committee held at Perth, Australia in March 2003, Philippines has joined the list of countries that have ratified the Convention. The following activities of UNESCO Bangkok have contributed to further promoting the Convention:
a) UNESCO Bangkok published the Second Edition of the Handbook on Diplomas, Degrees and Certificates in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific.

b) The Workshop on “Exporters and Importers of Cross-Border Higher Education” was held on 20-22 March 2004 in Beijing, China. This is a training workshop for decision makers from the Asia and Pacific region focusing on “Exporters and Importers of Higher Education” and addressing emerging issues linked to the recognition of qualifications and quality assurance.

c) The Global University Network of Innovations in the Asia-Pacific (GUNI-AP) held an international symposium on quality Assurance and Mutual Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education on 20-21 September 2004, Hangzhou, China, to present case studies of innovative practices at the institutional level among member universities in this network. The symposium had a focus on the way the research universities had responded to Quality Assurance and Mutual Recognition in their transition towards a knowledge based society. The symposium was expected to provide the platform to exchange experiences of innovative practices and future strategies on Quality Assurance in and Mutual Recognition of Qualifications between GUNI-AP member universities.

d) The UNESCO/OECD Australia Forum on Trade in Education Services was held on 10-12 October 2004 in Sydney, Australia. This forum focused on three cross cutting themes:

- Bridging the divide – differing perspectives on cross-border provision of education
- Trade capacity building – promoting understanding of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and the trade negotiation process; and
- Building capacity in quality assurance and accreditation in higher education particularly in the Asia-Pacific region.

e) The UNESCO Global Forum on Higher Education, Research and Knowledge and UNESCO New Delhi held a Preparatory Expert Meeting for the UNESCO Regional Seminar on the Implication of WTO/GATS on Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific on 9-10 December 2004 in New Delhi. The issue of GATS and trade in education, specifically focusing on the impact of trade in a system that has weak structures and little capacity was discussed. This workshop also launched the capacity building exercise for quality assurance at the regional and national level, as part of strengthened policy and regulatory frameworks in higher education.
f) A Situation Analysis of Higher Education in eight Southeast Asian countries, namely, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam was launched in January 2005 and the study is expected to be completed in October 2005.

g) UNESCO Regional Seminar on the Implications of WTO/GATS on Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific was organized during 27-29 April 2005 at Seoul, Republic of Korea. The purpose of this seminar is to identify the implications of WTO/GATS for higher education and research policies, to share the experiences among countries and regions.

Emerging Challenge: Implications of Cross-Border Education

The differing national context among the countries of the region is not a new challenge to the implementation of the Convention. What is emerging as a major challenge, of late, is the implication of cross-border education. In the Asia-Pacific region, the issue concerning the implications of WTO/GATS on higher education has become urgent as many countries are facing the challenges from the international trade and cross-border provision of higher education. Discussions of international trade in higher education have become polarized according to countries’ interest and culture. Exporters of higher education assert that it will increase the variety and amount of education services. Importers warn that WTO/GATS will undermine the public education system and destroy intangible values with which higher education has been contributing to the establishment and development of its society.

UNESCO is aware that the implications of WTO/GATS on higher education should be viewed from an educational aspect, not solely by economical one. As the internationalization of higher education develops, a scheme for a bi- or multi-lateral cooperation concerning quality assurance, accreditation and recognition of qualifications has become an important issue. From this perspective and within the framework of UNESCO’s main ideas on higher education, there is a need to revisit the Convention. At present, the convention refers to the mutual recognition, by State Parties, of qualifications issued by institutions part of the educational system of a Member State. It does not cover adequately qualification recognition and quality assurance related to the new providers, new delivery means and new qualifications in cross-border education. This calls for revisiting the Regional Convention.
What Happened Elsewhere?

The Europe Convention (1979) has been the first to be updated. It is now known as the 1997 ‘Lisbon Convention for the Europe Region’ and is a joint document of the Council of Europe and UNESCO, a first of its kind. It represents a significant landmark in recognition practices in Europe through the introduction of the following key concepts:

a) It shifted the focus in favour of the applicant in the process of recognition by entitling them to a fair recognition of their qualifications within a reasonable time limit, according to transparent, coherent and reliable procedures;

b) Recognition should be granted unless substantial differences can be shown;

c) It emphasized the importance of information and networking at the expert level, in particular through national information centres and the ENIC network that meets annually;

d) Though it offered a solid legal framework, it also promoted recognition practices through instruments of a lesser binding nature such as codes of good practice or recommendations and guidelines.

For Transnational Education, Lisbon Convention has adopted a Code of Good Practice that lists 11 principles (see Appendix I). The 1981 Arusha Convention is currently being revised to address new needs posed by assessing the qualifications earned through distance education. A study prepared as the basis for the revision process underlines the need to establish quality assurance mechanisms specific to the needs of open and distance learning, to assure the credibility of the learning outcomes and to ease the transfer of credits within and between national borders. Trust and credibility are keys to this process.

Developments with regard to the Lisbon Convention and Arusha Convention illustrate the ability of the regional conventions to be updated to respond to the recent developments in cross-border education. Efforts have been initiated to update the Mediterranean Convention. During the UNESCO/Norway Forum held in May 2003 and the World Conference on Higher Education + 5 meeting held in June 2003, it was agreed that the conventions need to be revised to respond to the challenges and opportunities of globalization and to facilitate the recognition of qualifications and transparent arrangements for quality assurance.
Next Steps

The analysis of the progress made in Asia and the Pacific and comparison with the Lisbon context indicates that ensuring the following core elements in the Member States of Asia and the Pacific has to be the first step:

a) Convergence in understandings about qualifications for which National Qualifications Framework (NQF) can be a way forward.

b) Assurance about the quality of qualifications by a national quality assurance (NQA) mechanism which has the capacity to cover CBE also.

c) Reliable information about the above for which national information system (NIS) or an appropriate mechanism at the national level is necessary.

d) Regional networking of the national information mechanisms for which APARNET can become the platform.

e) Implementation of Diploma Supplement and Credit scheme (See Appendix II).

f) Specificity in the assessment mechanism for foreign qualifications including those obtained through CBE.

For immediate attention: Revising the convention may not be beneficial if the Member States are not ready to commit themselves to ensure the basic things: NQF, NQA and NIS. Introducing credit scheme and diploma supplement also need immediate attention.

For short term attention: Streamlining the information flow to APARNET to serve as the regional information system.

For discussion: The major aspects to be discussed are the “feasible steps” to be taken up by the state parties as given in the Convention. In the present form, they seem to be very general and do not guide the Member States on specific actions to be taken to facilitate academic mobility. Compared to the Asia-Pacific Convention, the Lisbon Convention is more specific. As mentioned earlier, the Lisbon Convention has shifted the focus of the recognition practices in favour of the applicant by entitling them to a fair recognition of their qualifications within a reasonable time limit, according to transparent, coherent and reliable procedures. It emphasizes that recognition should be granted unless substantial differences can be shown.

The set of Criteria and Procedure for Assessment of Foreign Qualifications that runs to a 26-page document, and adopted by the Lisbon Convention, spells out clearly action to be taken by the Member States. For example, under “Assessment procedures” applicants have the right to information and the recommendations list specific steps as below:
a) The competent recognition authority should give all applicants an acknowledgement of the receipt of their application.

b) National information centres, competent recognition authorities and other assessment agencies should publish standardized information on the procedures and criteria for the assessment of foreign qualifications concerning higher education. This information should automatically be given to all applicants as well as to persons making preliminary inquiries about the assessment of their foreign qualifications.

c) The time normally required to process recognition applications, counted from such time as all relevant information has been provided by applicants and/or higher education institutions, should be specified to applicants. Applications should be processed as promptly as possible, and the time of processing should not exceed four months.

d) National information centres, competent recognition authorities and other assessment agencies should provide advice to individuals enquiring about the possibilities and procedures for submitting formal applications for the recognition or assessment of their foreign qualifications. As appropriate, in the best interests of the individual, informal advice should also be provided in the course of, as well as after, the formal assessment of the applicants’ qualifications, if required.

e) National information centres and competent recognition authorities should draw up an inventory of typical recognition cases and/or a comparative overview of other education systems or qualifications in relation to that of their own country as an aid in making recognition decisions consistent. They should consider whether this information should be made available to applicants with the proviso that this information serve only as an indicative guide, and that each application will be assessed on an individual basis.

A similar strategy that spells out the criteria, procedure, as well as rights and responsibilities to Member States and the applicants may be needed for the Asia-Pacific.
Appendix I

Code of Good Practice
in the Provision of Transnational Education

adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee
at its second meeting, Riga, 6 June 2001

PREAMBLE

The Parties to the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (the Lisbon Recognition Convention),

Conscious of the rapid development of transnational education, characterized by those arrangements and partnerships between institutions and organizations in which the students are located in a different country to the one where the institution providing the education is based, and of its impact on higher education globally, but also specifically in the Europe Region;

Conscious in particular of the challenges posed by transnational education institutions and programmes operating outside of the framework of any national education system;

Being aware of the fact that transnational higher education is rapidly expanding, due mainly to the growing and seemingly limitless uses of the new information technologies in providing educational services in a world of borderless higher education;

Convinced that national systems of higher education are, and will continue to be, entrusted inter alia to preserve the cultural, social, philosophical, and religious diversity of the European Region while also being expected to promote various forms of international and global co-operation;

Attaching great importance to the academic quality of study programmes and degrees awarded by higher education institutions engaged in transnational education;

Considering that, regardless of the procedures adopted for establishing and providing educational services, higher education institutions should comply with those standards of performance in teaching and learning that are required by the present and future development of knowledge, technology and the labour market;
Acknowledging that facilitating the recognition of qualifications awarded through transnational arrangements will contribute to promoting both the mobility of students and that of study programmes between higher education institutions and systems;

Having regard to the Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning higher Education in the European Region that provides an overall normative framework for dealing with academic recognition matters;

Having regard also to the Codes of good practice developed and monitored by some of the major providers, such as:

§ Code of Ethical Practice in the Provision of Education to International Students by Australian Universities, Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee;
§ Quality Assurance Code of Practice: Collaborative Provision, United Kingdom Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education;
§ Principles of Good Practice for Educational Programmes for Non-U.S. Nationals;

Mindful that such Codes provide working frameworks from the perspective of the sending institutions/systems of higher education, and that they have to be complemented by the perspectives of the receiving institutions/systems;

Having regard also to the Diploma Supplement developed jointly by the European Commission, the council of Europe and UNESCO and aiming to provide supplementary information facilitating the assessment of qualifications;

Confident that ethical principles and values should closely guide the international and global co-operation between higher education systems and institutions;

Conscious of the need to find commonly agreed solutions to practical recognition problems in the European Region, and between the States of this Region, and those of other regions of the world, in an ever more global space of higher education;

Conscious of the need to permanently update the implementation mechanisms of the principles and provisions of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, thus keeping up with the pace of new developments in higher education co-operation;

Have agreed on the need for:

§ A Code of Good Practice in the provision of higher education study programmes and other educational services by means of transnational arrangements;
§ Recommendation on procedures and criteria for the assessment of foreign qualifications, with a view to implementing the Code of Good Practice and to facilitating the recognition of qualifications awarded following completion of transnational study programmes/courses of study;
§ and for these to be considered as fully complementary and mutually supportive documents.
Section I. Terminology

Terms defined in the Lisbon Recognition Convention are not mentioned here again and shall, for the purpose of this Code of Good Practice, have the same meaning as in the Convention. The following terms, listed in alphabetical order, shall have the following meaning:

Agents
Third parties, such as brokers, facilitators, or recruiters, that acts as intermediaries between awarding and providing institutions for establishing transnational educational arrangements. An agent is not usually involved in the provision of educational services.

Agreement
A document agreed formally by the partners that contain all collaborative arrangements made between the awarding and providing institutions.

Awarding Institution
A higher education institution issuing degrees, diplomas, certificates or other qualifications.

Educational Services
Any study programme, course of study or parts of a course of study that leads, after successful completion, to a qualification. This also includes services such as preparatory/introductory modules to facilitate access to a course of study, or training modules that lead to professional development.

Partners
The awarding and providing institutions involved in transnational arrangements.

Providing Institution
An institution or organization which is delivering all or part of a study programmeme.

Transnational Arrangements
An educational, legal, financial or other arrangement leading to the establishment of (a) collaborative arrangements, such as: franchising, twinning, joint degrees, whereby study programmes, or parts of a course of study, or other educational services of the awarding institution are provided by another partner institution; (b) non-collaborative arrangements, such as branch campuses, off-shore institutions, corporate or international
institutions, whereby study programmes, or parts of a course of study, or other educational services are provided directly by an awarding institution.

Transnational Education

All types of higher education study programmes, or sets of courses of study, or educational services (including those of distance education) in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based. Such programmes may belong to the education system of a State different from the State in which it operates, or may operate independently of any national education system.

Section II. Principles

1. **Transnational arrangements** should be so elaborated, enforced and monitored as to widen the access to higher education studies, fully respond to the learners’ educational demands, contribute to their cognitive, cultural, social, personal and professional development, and comply with the national legislation regarding higher education in both receiving and sending countries. In the case of collaborative arrangements there should be written and legally binding agreements or contracts setting out the rights and obligations of all partners.

2. **Academic quality and standards** of transnational education programmes should be at least comparable to those of the awarding institution as well as to those of the receiving country. Awarding institutions as well as the providing institutions are accountable and fully responsible for quality assurance and control. Procedures and decisions concerning the quality of educational services provided by transnational arrangements should be based on specific criteria, which are transparent, systematic and open to scrutiny.

3. **The policy and the mission statement** of institutions established through transnational arrangements, their management structures and educational facilities, as well as the **goals, objectives and contents** of specific programmes, sets of courses of study, and other educational services, should be published, and made available upon request to the authorities and beneficiaries from both the sending and receiving countries.

4. **Information** given by the awarding institution, providing organization, or agent to prospective students and to those registered on a study programme established through transnational arrangements should be appropriate, accurate, consistent and reliable. The information should include directions to students about the appropriate channels for particular concerns, complaints and appeals. Where a programme is delivered through a collaborative arrangement, the nature of that arrangement and the responsibilities of the parties should be clearly outlined. The awarding institution is responsible for and should control and
monitor information made public by agents operating on its behalf, including claims about the recognition of the qualifications in the sending country, and elsewhere.

5. **Staff members** of the institutions or those teaching on the programmes established through transnational arrangements should be proficient in terms of qualifications, teaching, research and other professional experience. The awarding institution should ensure that it has in place effective measures to review the proficiency of staff delivering programmes that lead to its qualifications.

6. Transnational education arrangements should encourage the awareness and knowledge of the **culture and customs** of both the awarding institutions and receiving country among the students and staff.

7. The awarding institution should be responsible for the **agents** it, or its partner institutions, appoint to act on its behalf. Institutions using agents should conclude written and legally binding agreements or contracts with these, clearly stipulating their roles, responsibilities, delegated powers of action as well as monitoring, arbitration and termination provisions. These agreements or contracts should further be established with a view to avoiding conflicts of interests as well as the rights of students with regard to their studies.

8. **Awarding institution** should be responsible for issuing the qualifications resulting from their transnational study programmes. They should provide clear and transparent information on the qualifications, in particular through the use of the Diploma Supplement, facilitating the assessment of the qualifications by competent recognition bodies, the higher education institutions, employers and others. This information should include the nature, duration, workload, location and language(s) of the study programme leading to the qualifications.

9. **The admission** of students for a course of study, the **teaching/learning activities, the examination and assessment requirements** for educational services provided under transnational arrangements should be equivalent to those of the same or comparable programmes delivered by the awarding institution.

10. **The academic work load** in transnational study programmes, expressed in credits, units, duration of studies or otherwise, should be that of comparable programmes in the awarding institution, any difference in this respect requiring a clear statement on its rationale and its consequences for the recognition of qualifications.

11. **Qualifications** issued through transnational educational programmes, complying with the provisions of the present Code, should be assessed in accordance with the stipulations of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.
Diploma Supplement

The Diploma Supplement was initiated by UNESCO and revised jointly by UNESCO, the European Commission and the Council of Europe to provide additional information on students’ qualifications. A subsidiary text to the Convention for the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon 1997), it is a tool for promoting the transparency of higher education qualifications (Lisbon Recognition Convention Section IX. Article IX.3). The Diploma Supplement explains the contents of the qualifications delivered by higher education institutions in an internationally understandable form. It was piloted in 35 institutions and is meant to always be used with the diploma, never alone.

Details of the Diploma Supplement

Information Identifying the Holder of the Qualification

Family name(s):
Given name(s):
Date of birth: (day/month/year)
Student identification number or code: (if available)

Information Identifying the Qualification and its Originating Institution

Name of the qualification: (in original language)
Name and type of awarding institution: (in original language)
Name and type of institution administering studies: (in original language)
Language(s) of instruction/examination:

Information on the Level of the Qualification

Level of qualification:
Access requirements(s):
Main field(s) of study for the qualification:
Information on the Contents and Results Gained

Mode of study:
Normal length of programme:
Programme requirements:
Components, courses, modules or units studied:
(if this information is available on an official transcript this should be used here)
Individual grades obtained:
Grading scheme, grade translation and grade distribution guidance:
Overall classification of the award: (in original language)

Information on the Function of the Qualification

Title conferred by the qualification: (in original language)
Access to further study:
Professional status conferred:

Additional Information

Additional information:
Further information sources:

Certification of the Supplement

Date:
Signature:
Capacity:
Official stamp or seal:

Information on the National Higher Education System(s)

General overview of the educational system(s)
Description of the national higher education awards structure(s).
SEMINAR ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CROSS-BORDER HIGHER EDUCATION ASSESSMENT MECHANISM
SEMINAR ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CROSS-BORDER HIGHER EDUCATION ASSESSMENT MECHANISM

1. Introduction

The Seminar on the Establishment of Cross Border Higher Education Assessment Mechanism was held in conjunction with the Eighth Session of the Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher education on 26 May 2005 in Kunming, China. The Seminar was organized by the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in Asia, the Pacific and Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council (ADCSC) People’s Republic of China and the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO.

2. Opening Session

Dr. Molly Lee (UNESCO Bangkok) welcomed all delegates to the seminar. She informed the group that the seminar endeavors to assist Member States and signatories to share information on current developments in cross border higher education. Dr. Sheldon Shaeffer, Director of UNESCO Bangkok emphasized the commitment of UNESCO to help the member states to handle the challenges of cross border education. Dr. Cao Heping, Vice President of Yunnan University, shared how China has progressed and expanded its infrastructure and development in higher education through cross border provisions. In regard to the seminar, he looked forward to an open and candid discussion among party states to address the challenges of cross border education in Asia and the Pacific Region.

3. Quality Assurance of Cross-Border Education

Ms. Wai Sum Wong, Director, Institute of Quality Assurance, Hong Kong

Ms. Wai Sum Wong made a presentation on “Quality of Cross Border Education: Setting up Assessment Mechanisms: the Role of Governments and Quality Assurance Agencies”. She explained the attractions of cross border education for importing and exporting countries and gave full details on the types and levels of cross border education as follows: (1) establishing overseas branch campuses; (2) collaborating with an overseas tertiary institutions or commercial agent; (3) validation of a program in importing country; (4) delivery of courses in distance learning mode; and (5) pure distance learning mode.
Information on common quality issues on cross border education was shared by Ms Wong. These issues refer to the use of misleading or incorrect information, presentation of fraudulent documents, default on fees and cessation of courses, and low quality of course delivery.

The importance of the role of government in encouraging and exhorting cross border education providers to ensure quality of courses and establishing a regulatory system has been recommended by Ms. Wong as a mechanism to safeguard quality of cross border education. The regulatory framework shall enable the government to collect information on the market and the operation of cross-border education. It also helps government to provide information to students and consumers and safeguard quality of cross border education.

In Hong Kong, a regulatory framework functions as a mandatory system of approval or registration of cross border provision. It may also be through a voluntary system of approval or registration which may be based on incentives. It is however recommended that a country contemplating to regulate cross border education should be able to determine first the legislative requirements and the administrative measures before a regulatory framework is introduced.

Ms. Wong presented Hong Kong’s model on how it has coped with the challenges of cross border education. Hong Kong followed a legal framework by defining regulation ordinance. It also defined the scope and level of non-local education and stipulated the criteria for registration including the process, powers and penalties and consumer information. Ms.Wong recognized the vital role of quality assurance bodies in cross border education. She also recognized the difficulty in awarding complete equivalence of degrees as this is difficult to achieve. Moreover, she shared the prime importance of mutual recognition as this poses practical difficulties of operating in different countries.

During the discussion that followed, Maldives requested elaboration on the voluntary and mandatory registration of cross border courses. Ms. Wong explained how the two systems operate in Hong Kong. Australia reminded the regional committee members on the fundamental need to have strong domestic quality assurance process in place to efficiently handle cross border education. Korea identified cultural issues as a critical factor in establishing and recognizing cross border education. Mr.Yang acknowledged Ms.Wong’s effort in presenting a comprehensive lecture on cross border education.
4. MEDA Network Project

Mr. Eric Schwartz, Project Manager, Canadian Information Center for International Credentials and Ms. Zeynep Varoglu, Division of Higher Education of UNESCO Paris

Mr. Eric Schwartz explained the experience of the ENIC-NARIC Networks (Europe Region) in the use of information and communication technologies in the context of credential recognition activities. He discussed how Information and communications technologies offer extremely useful tools to assist in carrying out the information gathering and dissemination aspects. They can be implemented and used with relative ease and at a comparatively affordable cost. In the European region, these tools have been used to good effect and with tangibly positive results: the listservs and the Web site.

He also pointed out the weaknesses of listservs and web sites. These tools suffer from the same ones that come up with the use of emails, and have the same effect of reducing their reliability and increasing the level of frustration with the medium. He highlighted the following problems: Technical problems; Junk mail, Viruses, Spam; Overload; and Language issues.

The Web is the second internet tool that the ENIC-NARIC Networks use to improve and promote the circulation of information and the reliability of the available information. The members of the network established their own Web site with two overall goals in mind: facilitate access to reliable information, and promote their visibility. The site is designed so as to provide access to the following resources: national profiles, legal framework section, recognition tools section, upcoming events space, and useful links page. Additionally, the Web site provides a password-protected area for quick access by the members of the networks to various restricted documents.

Mr. Schwartz’s session demonstrated how the ENIC-NARIC Web site project has proved quite successful in concept and implementation. More and more, national centres contact the listserv and site administrators on their own initiative to notify them of changes in staffing and of updates to their own web sites that necessitate changes to the ENIC-NARIC Web site. This indicates that both tools have become an integral part of their working environment. He expressed his hope that the experience of ENIC-NARIC web site project would be useful to the Asia and the Pacific countries in planning their information sharing strategies.

Ms. Zeynep Varoglu updated the participants on the 6 normative regional recognition instruments adopted mainly in the late 70’s and 80’s. She discussed about the many challenges faced by all Members States in the light of massive technological developments and changes brought by cross border education and lifelong learning. The Mediterranean convention is the one that is set for revision to cope with these challenges and final revision is foreseen to come out in 2006-2007. The Mediterranean
convention will establish a working group to revise the contents of the convention. She also explained about the creation of Mediterranean Information centers. She discussed about the challenges faced by the group and issues on capacity building for committee members. She also emphasized the need to foster involvement of all countries in the development process and training need of staff especially on linguistic skills, use of ICTs and other evolving issues.

The presentations were followed by active interactions where participants sought more information about the working of the MEDA project and the implications to the national governments such as financial implications and human resource requirement.

5. UNESCO-OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross Border Higher Education

Ms. Zeynep Varoglu, Assistant Programme Specialist, Division of Higher Education, UNESCO, Paris

Dr. Lee, chair of the session, informed the body on the growth of cross border education through distance education, academic franchises, web-based campuses, IT academies, trade in education and the growing commercialization of higher education. With all these developments, UNESCO felt the need to provide an educational response to this development. Further, UNESCO has the mandate to address cross border education as indicated in the documents of the World Conference on Higher Education (WCHE) held in 1998, and the follow up meeting held after five years – WCHE+5 in 2003.

Following the introductory remarks by Dr. Lee, Ms. Zeynep Varoglu presented the guidelines for quality assurance in cross-border Higher Education jointly developed by UNESCO and OECD. The guidelines aim to provide an international framework for quality provision in cross-border higher education that would:

- Enhance the protection of students/learners against the risks of misinformation, low-quality provisions and qualifications of limited validity;
- Increase international validity and portability of qualifications by increasing their readability and transparency;
- Increase transparency and coherence of recognition procedures; and
- Encourage international cooperation among agencies.

She explained how the guidelines are based on the principle of mutual trust and respect among countries and recognise the importance of national authority. They are non-binding. All countries in the world were invited to participate in the elaboration of guidelines: nearly all 30 OECD countries and more than 30 non-OECD countries came to the drafting meetings. National and international NGOs directly participated in the
drafting meetings. She emphasized that the guidelines are the educational responses of UNESCO and OECD and they do not have any motive to promote trade in education. She also highlighted that the guidelines are not just addressed to governments; they address also other groups of stakeholders.

During the discussions that followed, some of the participants expressed their view that the UNESCO-OECD joint initiative will help develop the national capacities and international co-operation especially for emerging and developing economies, in dealing with cross border education.

6. Approaches to Quality Assurance and Mutual Recognition of Qualifications in GUNI-AP Membership

Dr. Antony Stella, Adviser, National Assessment and Accreditation Council, Bangalore, India and Consultant, UNESCO Asia and the Pacific Regional Bureau of Education

Dr. Stella gave a background on the establishment of the Global University Network for Innovation –Asia and the Pacific (GUNI-AP). With the guidance and support of UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education, Bangkok and the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO, the network was formally established equipped with a Plan of Action adopted in its first General Assembly hosted by Zhejiang University in 20-22 September 2004, Hangzhou, China.

GUNI-AP membership consists of China, Thailand, Australia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, and Malaysia. The network specifically spelled out its objectives as:

- To organize trace and case studies of innovations in each member university in facing challenges in transition towards an information and knowledge-based societies.
- To collect best practices of innovations from member universities in terms of governance, restructuring curricula, staff policy, linkage with the world of work, accreditation and quality assurance, dual and mixed mode, distance and open learning, internationalization in globalization;
- To promote collaboration between member universities through exchange of staff, students and managers, joint programs, trainings, meetings, publications and website; and
- To provide policy makers and the UNESCO with fresh ideas, practices and recommendations regarding innovations in higher education.
Dr. Stella reported the case studies of GUNI-AP members in relation to quality assurance and mutual recognition. She related that in all the eight founding members, the last two decades have witnessed major changes at the national level in terms of priority, pattern of governance, changing pattern of finance, emphasis on quality and relevance and international dimension in higher education.

In the eight countries, internal quality assurance and institutionalization of quality assurance strategies could be observed. More and more higher education institutions initiate internal quality assurance mechanism and institutionalize them. There is also quality consciousness in teaching as well as in research.

In the area of internationalization, the eight countries have emphasized internationalization of their curriculum, enhanced staff participation in international events, and the established strategic partnership within and among member universities.

There have been new steps adopted in strengthening research capabilities of higher education institutions among GUNI-AP members. Universities were tasked to adopt “publish or perish” policy, a policy leaning towards applied research, and has tendency to assess research performance indicators of higher education institutions. Pooling of resources, a greater interdisciplinary approach to research and attention to efficient management of research have been observed.

The case studies also perceives GUNI-AP members to embark on staff upgrading their qualifications, making higher qualifications essentials for position such as professorship and performance assessment.

In terms of mutual recognition initiatives, the GUNI-AP members have developed action plans and frameworks for future development. They also prepared strategies to enhance academic reputation and mutual recognition of qualifications. The desire to increase mobility of students and their credentials is evident among the GUNI-AP members.

It was noted that GUNI-AP is not just a platform for sharing ideas but it has also potential to initiate concrete action plans. It is hoped that GUNI-AP will expand its membership to ensure critical mass for pilots on mutual recognition.

Maldives asked about the progress made among the GUNI-AP members on recognition of qualifications and asked the presenter on the reasons why it seems there is reluctance among GUNI-AP members to promote mutual recognition at this time. Dr Stella gave clarification that the eight members have not really shown reluctance in mutual recognition but mutual recognition takes time and that the network is still in the initial stages of implementing such arrangements. The eight member universities are still absorbing the sharing of experiences and building on their strengths.
7. Accreditation of Foreign Academic Qualifications and Certification of Overseas Educational Information

Mr. Che Weimin, Director, Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange

Mr. Weimin discussed about the accreditation service for foreign academic qualifications which China started since 1991. The Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange issues accreditation certificates to Chinese students who studied overseas, to students who got joint-degree with foreign universities and to overseas students who study in China. The major documents for submission are: transcript of records, thesis, passport and visa and certification from Chinese embassies.

Mr. Weimin informed the body that there are over 25,000 students applying for certification of overseas degrees, diplomas and certificates.

Dr. Padoongchart asked about the criteria for establishing equivalency for overseas degrees in the country. He said that the criteria are based on the criteria used in relevant countries. He further explained that recognition of degree may not be the same as providing equivalency.

8. Workshops

The highlights of the two parallel workshops, namely: Working Group 1- Information Sharing in the Asia Pacific Region and Working Group II - Assessment of cross border education are as follows:
Workshop I: Information Sharing

Chairman-cum Rapporteur: Ms. Zeynep Varoglu

Group 1 provided details on the importance of information sharing on the recognition of degrees. The group tried to answer five Ws – What, Where, When, Why (what for?) and How – in three dimensions – national, regional and international.

**What:** There should be enough and clear information to assist the recognition of degrees, studies and diplomas. It may include a description about the national system of education, where the higher education system stands in that structure, details such as qualifications framework, data provided in the diploma supplement, various quality assurance arrangements, agencies that operate in higher education sector, list of recognized higher education institutions, procedure for recognition of foreign qualifications, definition of terminologies used in all these descriptions, and contact persons who would respond to queries from other Member States.

**Where:** The information should be available in places where stakeholders can have easy access to data. It should be available on line, in websites and in the computers dedicated to information sharing in immigration offices and embassies.

**When:** The information should be available all the time.

**Why?** The information sharing may serve many stakeholders for many different purposes such as – to enable governments to make recognition decisions, to facilitate student mobility and to facilitate professional mobility. All these purposes will lead to “recognition issues” and “credential evaluation”.

**How:** The information should come from a reliable and responsible national source. It may build on existing mechanisms and with re-organization of already available resources. However, it requires political support.

The participants agreed that information should take many forms and APARNET is a tool to enhance formation sharing among member states. This tool should be given support by members and should be actively used by member states.
**Chairman-cum Rapporteur : Dr. Sharifa Hapsah Bt Syed Hasan**

Dr Sharifah gave a background on the Asia Pacific Region stating that the region contains the largest market for higher education and has high unmet demands for students to attain quality education. This demand has led the rising number of cross border education in the region. She raised the point that there is a huge potential for market from cross border education providers and there are also evidence of abuse and misrepresentations. To visit these developments, she asked participants to share significant trends and policies on cross border education in their country. The prevailing regulatory mechanism and issues on cross border education in the region are as follows:

**Philippines** – Philippines has instituted regulatory policies for on-line and distance education and transnational education. These policies are in effect since 2002. Philippines reported that at present there are no foreign universities established in the Philippines as this is prohibited in the Philippine constitution. However, the Commission on Higher Education allows twining, joint-degree and inter-university linkages. Cross border education proved to be hard to regulate considering the complexities of registration and monitoring of programs offered on complex modes.

**Korea** – The Ministry of Education has less regulation with Korean universities as they are autonomous. Every university handles its own cross border programs, issues and concerns. The government respects this autonomy.

**Malaysia** – Dr. Sharifah reported that they have multiple systems for cross border education. There is 2+1 system where students study for two years in Malaysia and one year abroad. There is also a 3+0 model where students study entirely in Malaysia. She also reported the presence of foreign universities already established by acts of legislation in Malaysia.

**Mongolia** – The government provides scholarship to students for them to study abroad. There are 500 universities listed where students can study. There are also 6 branches of foreign universities in Mongolia which are all Russian.

**China** – There are national examination program for students. A number of foreign universities have signed agreements with Chinese universities.

**Sri Lanka** – There is no checks and balance on cross border education. The foreign schools register at the Board of Investment and foreign providers operate without quality assurance.
The chairman asked the group on the models for assessment of cross border using the following indicators:

- legal framework
- criteria or standards
- list of recognized foreign universities
- criteria for admission from special zones

*Korea* discussed the essential criteria to include students and faculty ratio and the licensing of academic fields.

*Australia* discusses the need for regulation of both local and foreign universities and the importance of audit exhibits. Foreign providers should follow National Protocols for cross border education. There is a need to follow the National Qualifications Framework and that this could be a topic in the near future.

*Malaysia* sees the importance of equivalency framework and the ladderization so people can have mobility. Malaysia also needs articulation principle on who can be admitted and given exit credit under the cross border education. There is a problem on recognition of programs obtained from cross border mode as there are universities which are self accrediting.

It was discussed that WTO and GATS are issues to be confronted by higher education institutions and government responsible for education. The trade in education services allows cross border education to flourish and safety nets have to be established.

### 9. Closing Session

Dr. Hyun-Chong Lee, chairman of the Eighth Regional Convention on the Recognition of Degrees, Studies and Diplomas in Asia and the Pacific expressed his appreciation for the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Asia and the Pacific Region and the Chinese National Commission.

Dr. Molly Lee of the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education took the opportunity to thank all members for presenting comprehensive updates and for active participation in the seminar workshops. She stressed the importance of APARNET and the National Information Centers to exchange information among members. She encouraged signatories to ratify the convention so that more countries will be officially being members of the Regional Committee on the Recognition of Degrees, Diplomas and Studies in Higher Education.

With vote of thanks and the agreement that the next Regional Committee Meeting will be held in Korea in 2007, the meeting came to a close.
Annex 1

Agenda

» Opening of the meeting

» Safeguarding the Quality of Cross-Border Education: The Role of Governments and Quality Assurance Bodies

» MEDA Network Project

» Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education

» Approaches to Quality Assurance and Mutual Recognition of Qualification in GUNI-AP Membership

» Foreign Degree Accreditation and Verification of Foreign Education Information

» Workshops
  ■ Workshop 1: Information Sharing
  ■ Workshop 2: Cross Border Education in Asia and the Pacific

» Closing of the meeting
Annex 2

Schedule

Wednesday, 25 May 2005

08.30 - 09.00 hrs.  
**Opening Session**  
Dr. Sheldon Shaeffer  
Dr. Molly Lee

09.00 - 10.00 hrs.  
**Quality Assurance of Cross-Border Education**  
*Presenter*  
Ms. Wong Wai Sum, Director  
Institute for Quality Assurance in Education  
Hong Kong

10.00 – 11.00 hrs.  
**MEDA Network Project**  
*Presenters*  
Mr. Eric Schwartz  
Project Manager  
Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials  
Canada  
Ms. Zeynep Varoglu  
Assistant Programme Specialist Higher Education Division  
UNESCO, Paris

11.00 – 11.15 hrs.  
Tea

11.15 – 12.15 hrs.  
**UNESCO/OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education**  
*Presenter*  
Ms. Zeynep Varoglu
12.15 – 12.45 hrs.  **Trends and Approaches to Quality Assurance and Mutual Recognition in GUNI-AP Membership**

*Presenter*

Dr. Antony Stella, Adviser
National Assessment and Accreditation Council
India

12.45 – 13.45 hrs.  Lunch

13.45 – 14.00 hrs.  Introduction to the Workshops

Dr. Molly Lee

14.00 – 15.30 hrs.  Parallel Workshops

**Workshop 1: Information Sharing**

*Chair-cum-Rapporteur*

Ms. Zeynep Varoglu

**Workshop 2: Cross-Border Education in Asia-Pacific**

*Chair-cum-Rapporteur*

Dr. Sharifa Hapsah Bt Syed Hasan

15.30 – 16.00 hrs.  Tea

16.00 – 16.45 hrs.  Reporting Back by the Rapporteurs of the workshops to be chaired by Dr. Molly Lee

16.45 – 17.15 hrs.  Closing Session
Annex 3

Safeguarding the Quality of Cross-border Education: the Role of Governments and Quality Assurance Bodies

Ms. Wong Wai Sum

Introduction

Participation in another country’s education system is by no means a new phenomenon. Students have traveled to study abroad and there has always been the exchange of scholars and researchers. In more recent years these educational transfers are supplemented by the “export” of education from one country to another, and this can take many forms, ranging from the delivery of courses in the importing country, to the delivery of courses through distance learning mode.

With the globalization of education and the development of new forms of educational transfer, the issue of the Quality Assurance of “transnational education”, or “cross-border education” has assumed greater significance than ever. As any other form of trade, educational exports bring benefits to both sides. They bring the advantages of the educational system and culture of the exporting country to the importing country and supplement the domestic supply in the importing country or provide an educational alternative to its population. The exporting institutions gain from more student intake and fees, and benefit also from the educational interchange. There are thus mutual benefits for both the importing and exporting countries.

However, notwithstanding the expected advantages of educational imports, there have been increasing concerns about the actual benefits received by the importing country. In particular, there are concerns about the quality of some of the imported education and questions are raised as to whether the adverse effects of poor quality provision will dilute or even outbalance the presumed benefits. The problems are exacerbated by the fact that the scale of imported education in some countries takes on a gigantic dimension, and secondly, the fact that not many countries have implemented regulatory mechanisms to deal with the problem. Nor is there always sufficient consumer awareness to inhibit the spread of low quality provision.

To gauge the impact of cross-border education, one has to realize both the size of the student population involved in the importing country, as well as the resources being absorbed by this type of provision.
Using the example of Hong Kong to give an idea of the size of this trade, we have more than 900 courses operated by foreign institutions locally, with an estimated student population of around 50,000, and annual expenditure on course fees estimated in the region of US $1 billion dollars. As most of the courses imported are at degree or postgraduate level, the impact of any low-quality courses upon the work force and upon the economy and its competitiveness cannot be ignored.

**Problems of Quality of Cross-Border Courses**

What are these problems of quality encountered in cross-border educational provision? Usually, the problems can be categorized into the following:

- **Misleading or dishonest information**, or false claims relating to the courses: including information regarding the delivery of the courses (matters of course content, teaching, resources, staffing etc.), false claims relating to the status or recognition of the courses (claiming that they are recognized by the government or professional bodies)

- **Fraudulence** such as default on fees, or **cessation of programmes** due to financial difficulty of providers

- **Poor quality of courses**

Some common examples include:

- Lower standard of courses e.g. shortened or reduced content, less choice of modules/electives for students
- Lower entry requirements/exit requirements e.g. lower entry standard, less requirement of prerequisite study,
- Lower requirement for graduation
- Poor or inadequate teaching resources e.g. use of unqualified or inexperienced staff, use of poor quality or unsuitable learning materials for students, lack of or inadequate library resources, laboratories etc.
- Undesirable teaching/delivery mode e.g.
  - use of unsuitable teaching mode such as intensive/block teaching
  - shortened course duration/fast track progression

The impact of the various defects relating to cross-border provision can have serious impact. With incomplete, misleading information or exaggerated claims made by course providers, the ability of students to make a rational, informed choice will be affected, with the result that students may end up enrolled on courses which do not satisfy their expectation. Good-quality local provision may also suffer from the competition of low-
quality imported courses when there is insufficient consumer information or awareness. And with the existence of poor quality courses in the market, students end up with qualifications that are not valid or recognized by employers, or which do not equip them well for the job market. And even when they end up finding a job, the low-level skills they acquire will affect their performance and worse still, pose hazards to users of their service and the community. At the same time, the financial interests/investment of students are at stake when unscrupulous providers, or unprofitable providers fail to deliver their courses or fail to enable students to complete their programmes of study, in the situation where there is no consumer protection for students.

**Types of Cross Border Education**

To understand the background for problems of quality arising in some of the cross-border educational offerings, one needs to understand that these cross-border activities assume different formats, including:

- Setting up of a branch campus of the higher education institution
- Collaboration with a local partner where the exporting institution/awarding institution controls much of the course design and course delivery (teaching and assessment)
- Collaboration with a local partner where the course design comes from the home institution but course delivery is shared
- Collaboration where the course delivery is largely delegated to local partner
- The awarding institution validates a course designed and taught by a local institution
- The exporting institution employs purely distance learning mode of delivery – printed materials and/or electronic delivery

It can be seen from the above that even though the qualification is awarded by an overseas institution, there are many modes of delivery, including different formats of collaboration with local partners and sharing of responsibilities. Coupled with the fact that the awarding institution is operating from a distance, it is not unexpected to have problems affecting the quality of courses: problems arising from mis-communication/non-communication between the awarding institution and the local partner, from failed responsibilities, from over – delegation to local partners, disagreement over input or delivery, inadequate or ineffective monitoring etc.
Possible Factors leading to Problems of Quality

When problems of quality arise these are often bound up with the special nature and circumstances of cross-border education. Thus although the exporting institutions should bear primary responsibility for the quality of their educational offerings, one should also understand the special environment that they operate in and the nature of problems which may sometimes be under-estimated. Moreover, compared to local/national educational provisions, this new form of education is often less regulated or safeguarded by external quality assurance mechanisms. Hence, problems of quality arise due to the following circumstances/possible reasons:

At the institutional level:

» **Insufficient understanding of nature of cross-border education.** Cross border education is a whole new form of educational provision requiring special planning and consideration. However, many institutions may not fully understand this and may under-estimate the complexity of the issues involved in the planning of cross-border education. For instance, there are issues of adaptation to the local educational environment, issues of understanding the needs of the local students, the quality of the local intake, and the quality and supply of local teachers and other support. And sometimes, to overcome the difficulty posed by operating in a distant country, institutions may change the mode of delivery, and sometimes choose a mode of delivery with which they are not experienced, such as distance learning, and/or which the local student population is not adapted to. There is sometimes over-reliance upon new modes of delivery such as electronic delivery for which there is inadequate understanding or preparation.

» **Inadequacy of institutional quality assurance mechanisms.** The operation of cross border education necessitates the exercise of tight quality control, but some institutions may not realize the need for a full-fledged system of control and quality assurance. Or where one exists, its implementation may not be vigorous, or there may be over-delegation and insufficient monitoring within the institution.

» **Unfamiliarity with or lack of understanding of local education systems.** Unfamiliarity with the local situation may lead to wrong academic decisions being made, for example, admission standards may be compromised when students are admitted on the basis of inappropriate local qualifications in the importing country of which the awarding institution has little knowledge.

» **Difficulty in obtaining local resources.** When institutions offer cross-border courses they are operating in a foreign environment and often have to rely on local resources, such as local staff, and library support. Adequate resources of appropriate quality may not be readily available.
» **Over reliance upon inexperienced local partners.** The delivery of cross-border education is sometimes a shared responsibility between the exporting institution and its local partner. Some of these local partners may be non-academic/commercial organizations. Sometimes too much delegation may be given to the local partner with insufficient involvement of the awarding institution in the major academic decisions and in monitoring the quality of the courses.

Factors at the macro-level:

» **The inadequacy of quality assurance systems at the national level to control or monitor the quality of cross-border education.** Where it is insufficient to rely entirely upon the effectiveness of the cross-border providers to ensure quality, it would be incumbent upon the national quality assurance systems to safeguard the quality of this type of education. However, although many countries have established accreditation and quality assurance systems, many of these are focused on the national education system and not geared towards the monitoring of cross-border education.

» **The inadequacy of information sources for students and consumers.** Cross-border education has relied heavily for their survival on market forces, and normally one would expect that only good quality courses could survive in the market. However, students are not always discreet consumers, and sometimes courses of study are chosen for reasons other than their quality. Furthermore, consumers are often faced with a lack of clear and accurate information regarding the nature and status of individual courses or the recognition of the qualifications they lead to. Thus where there is a dearth of clear and accurate information and guidelines for consumers, low quality provision continues to thrive in the market, and some consumers may end up with poor-quality courses and invalid or dubious qualifications.

**The Possible Role of Governments in Importing Countries**

What role can or should governments in the importing countries adopt in the face of the mushrooming of cross-border education? Governments can adopt a laissez fair policy and allow cross-border education a free range in the market, as was the case in Hong Kong before a regulatory framework came into place in 1997. The arguments for this policy is that of free trade between countries and free choice for consumers, and also, that the market can distinguish between good quality and poor quality provision, with the result that poor provision will fail to survive.

However, when one witnesses the continued existence of instances of poor quality provision, then there is realization that the market cannot by itself play a regulatory role. As previously discussed, students/consumers are not always rational or well informed
in their choice, and further, the “quality” of study programmes may not always be their top priority.

Another possibility is then perhaps for governments to play an exhortation role by encouraging higher education institutions to have a higher regard for the quality of their cross-border provision, and to put in place monitoring systems for their courses. The success of this approach depends on the intention as well as ability of the providers to assure the quality of their provision. Even where the intention and goodwill exist, it may not always be easy or practical to rely on the efforts or the self-discipline of the providers, considering that the providers have to operate from a distance, and in many instances collaborate with local partners in the importing countries. We have already examined, in the previous section, the possible reasons and circumstances leading to inroads on the quality of cross-border courses.

What remains is thus the option of establishing a regulatory system. The purpose of a “regulatory” system is two-fold: Firstly, it enables the government to gather data and information on the cross-border education operating within its territory, such as the type of courses, type and origin of providers, size of the student population etc. Secondly, and more importantly, it enables the government to regulate or control the offer of such provision to ensure/ enhance its quality, and/or to fashion it in accordance with national agendas.

A regulatory framework can work in two ways: (1) Permitting the operation of cross-border education on condition that it meets certain criteria/conditions, that is, it would be illegal to operate if criteria are not met, and/or (2) Providing incentives if the stipulated conditions/ criteria are met, e.g. Recognition of qualifications for employment purposes, or eligibility for student loans etc.

Thus, although it appears that a regulatory system is one which needs to be mandatory, it is however possible to consider a voluntary system, or to have certain features of voluntarism within a regulatory framework such as a system of incentives. These are among the broad policy questions which need to be considered by the government before it introduces any system to govern cross-border education.

Questions to Consider in Setting Up A Regulatory System

In deciding to set up a regulatory system, there are major questions which governments need to consider. In the following discussion, examples will be drawn from the Hong Kong experience to illustrate the roles of government and the quality assurance body, and the issues and questions facing them in setting up a regulatory system for cross-border education. These include:
The choice of organization for the regulatory role: The government has to decide on the appropriate authority to undertake the regulatory role: it can be undertaken by governmental authorities or by independent bodies such as accreditation or quality assurance bodies; or, the role can be shared or divided between government and the quality assurance body as appropriate. In the case of Hong Kong, the role is shared by the government, which acts as a Registration body (the Non-local Courses Registry), and the quality assurance body, which performs Assessment on the cross-border courses.

Defining “cross-border” education and deciding on the scope of regulation: It is firstly necessary to define the scope of cross-border education and it is not always easy to do so. For instance, should the regulatory system cover “joint awards” offered by overseas institutions jointly with local institutions? Should the system include “distance learning” courses, and if so, is it practical to do so?

The Type and Level of Cross-border Education: Government has to decide on what should come under the purview of the regulatory system. Should the system cover only higher education courses and academic courses, and how should these be defined? In the case of Hong Kong, both academic and professional courses are required to be registered.

Should the system be enacted by legislation or administrative measures: a system backed by legal enactment may be easier to enforce. However, it takes time to draft and to pass legislations. Also, any legal regulation binds the enforcer as much as the bodies being regulated and there is less or little discretion allowed. Changes may also require amendments to the law.

Choosing between a mandatory and a voluntary system: This is tied in with the choice of a legal or administrative system. Where the government wishes to regulate or ensure the quality of cross-border education or to put in places consumer protection measure, then a mandatory system could be more effective. In the case of Hong Kong, a mixed system exists – there is legal/mandatory regulation enacted by the government, but in addition there are voluntary features.

Deciding on criteria for approval/registration: This is perhaps one of the most important questions facing any government or quality assurance body. If a primary purpose of a regulatory system is assuring the quality of cross-border provision, then how should “quality” be defined, and who should define it? A pertinent question is whether the same standard/quality should be expected of cross-border education and the local provision. In other words, should one single system of quality assurance apply across the board to both imported and local educational provision?
Criteria for Approval/Registration: Choice between the Free Market and Regulation of Quality

When governments consider establishing a regulatory framework for cross-border education, it takes a giant step away from the policy of a free market for education, and this is the case in Hong Kong when in the early 1990s. The government, which traditionally upholds the principle of a free market, found it necessary to introduce some form of consumer protection in the face of increasing problems of quality surfacing in cross-border forms of education. The next question is then how much control and regulation should there be and what are the standards to be applied. Hong Kong has traditions of respect for the free market and consumer choice, and also traditions of academic freedom and autonomy. Thus when any form of regulation is to be introduced, the government needs to face a balancing act between consumer choice on the one hand, and the autonomy of the tertiary institutions of the exporting countries on the other.

In the attempt to choose a middle ground, the regulatory system in Hong Kong on the one hand adopts a two-tier approach, by setting up

- A legal framework for registration, plus
- A voluntary system for accreditation

While on the other hand, it adopts the concept of “comparability”.

**Concept of comparability.** The basic tenet of the law in Hong Kong, the Non-Local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance, requires that courses offered which lead to higher academic qualifications of an overseas/non-local tertiary institutions, should be of comparable standard and quality as courses offered in the home country leading to the same qualifications. The law requires that “effective measures” be in place to ensure this comparability. Thus, what is required of the cross-border courses is not compliance with local standards in Hong Kong, or a certain set of standards stipulated by the Hong Kong government or local accreditation body. This threshold standard of “comparability” sets a standard which is easily acceptable to the exporting institutions/countries and in theory at least, poses no extra burden upon them. Thus when the law was enacted in Hong Kong, it achieved the policy objective of introducing minimum protection for consumers, while the scope and criteria of regulation are not so prohibitive as to restrict what was already a booming market for cross-border education and the wide choice it offers to consumers.

It is noteworthy that the concept of “comparability” is one which is promulgated in the UNESCO/ OECD draft Guidelines on Quality Provision in Cross Border Higher Education. In the draft <Guidelines for higher education institutions/providers>, it is recommended that providers should “ensure that the programmes they deliver across borders and in their home country are of comparable quality....”
The totality of the learning experience. In employing the concept of “comparability” of the imported course and the home course in Hong Kong, we recognize the impracticality of expecting equivalence, for unlike a physical product, the educational experience cannot be reproduced in totality when taken out of its roots in the academic community and academic environment in the home campus. Thus, comparability focuses on the totality of the learning experience. It is not expected that the same features and support should exist for the imported course as for the home course, if there are acceptable alternatives and compensatory features to guarantee minimum comparability, for instance, teaching may be augmented by qualified and experienced local staff; electronic links to the home institution may provide the necessary library support, together with provision of suitable learning materials for students. Or, distance learning may be supplemented by the provision of tutorials by qualified local staff. Thus, in contrast to some regulatory systems which stipulate minimum quantitative requirements (for example, for staffing), Hong Kong adopts a more flexible judgemental process to ensure the comparability of the learning experience.

National/cultural requirements. By implicit extension of the concept of “comparability”, the law in Hong Kong does not require that imported courses of study should cater specifically for the local environment or culture nor are they required to incorporate any local elements. Thus again, no extra burden is placed upon the exporting institutions (which may of course make their own local adaptations). However, education is a national prerogative and countries have different national agendas. It would be highly acceptable if governments do require any imported educational provision to have regard for the cultural/linguistic characteristics of the country or to take into account national or economic developments.

Voluntary accreditation. The second part of the framework in Hong Kong introduces a voluntary system of accreditation outside of the legal framework. This falls outside of the legislation, but the exporting institutions (and their local partners in Hong Kong) may, in addition to registration, seek accreditation on a voluntary basis from the local accreditation body, the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation for any individual programme. The standards of accreditation are local academic standards in Hong Kong. Programmes which achieve accreditation gain additional status and incentives: e.g. graduates of the accredited programmes are recognized as having the same status as those from local tertiary institutions when they apply for government appointments, and students may also apply for low-interest government loans.

Thus it is possible to have an effective system of regulation, based upon the concept of comparability, which is not over-restrictive and which does not dampen the market; while a second tier of regulation, outside of the legal framework and voluntary in nature, can be introduced which sets higher/more restrictive standards.
**Features of a Legal Framework**

The enactment of legislation for the regulation of cross-border education provides the legal backing and the means of enforcement for the regulatory framework. As an example, the Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance in Hong Kong contains the following features:

Definitions:

- Clear definitions of cross-border education (“non-local courses”), and the scope and level of cross-border education to be regulated (“higher academic qualification awarded by a non-local institution”, and “non-local professional qualification”).
- Distinguishes between courses which should seek registration and those which can seek exemption
- Courses which are of pure distance learning nature are not covered by the ordinance (may seek voluntary registration)

Registration:

- Stipulation of the criteria for registration (e.g. concept of “comparability” for academic courses
- Courses may be registered subject to conditions
- Sets up a system for initial registration and for continual monitoring (annual returns)

Consumer protection measures:

- makes it illegal to offer cross-border courses or to advertise any such courses which are not registered (stipulates penalty for illegal operation)
- stipulates that course providers may not collect fees more than three months in advance, and have satisfactory arrangements for refund in case of cessation of courses
- makes it illegal to publish “false or misleading” advertisements relating to courses
- prevents course providers from making false claims about the recognition of their courses by employers
- requires providers to seek permission for the use of specific premises for their courses

Appeal system:

- Stipulates criteria for cancellation of registration
- Sets up an appeal system including procedures and timeframe
Disclosure of Information to the Public:

- A register of all registered and exempted courses is made available to the public for inspection

**Role of Accreditation/Quality Assurance Body**

Where the regulatory role or assessment role for cross-border education is assigned to the accreditation/quality assurance body, then the accreditation body might be expected to perform, *inter alia*, the following tasks:

- Setting out clear procedures for assessment/registration and providing accessible information on these
- Setting out the criteria for registration, or where these are already stipulated by law, giving interpretation to these criteria and clarifying these to providers, students, and the public
- Handling appeals or assisting government to handle these
- Reporting cases of illegality to government or take action as appropriate
- Setting up a database of assessed courses, building up precedents of cases and compiling statistics and analysis of courses as appropriate
- Communicating and cooperating with quality assurance bodies in the exporting countries and with international bodies for the exchange/sharing of information and practices
- Assisting the government to publicize the regulatory framework for cross-border education, and handling enquiries from course providers/students, and the public
- Drawing up codes of good practice for the reference of course providers and their local partners

The task faced by any quality assurance or assessment organization is not an easy one, especially where a large number of courses are involved, bearing in mind that the providers are at a distance and it is not always easy to obtain or to verify information. Institutions may sometimes feel that their autonomy is being challenged and it may require patience to convince institutions of the need of the regulatory system and any suggested changes or improvements to their courses. Quality assurance bodies may also face a difficult task when the same organization has to deal with both local provision and cross-border education, and where different criteria and procedures apply. Moreover, due to the nature of cross-border education, there are often limitations to the effectiveness of the regulatory system. Consumers, therefore, have to be educated to understand that they also have a role to play, such as exercising careful and rational
choice and reporting on poor quality courses and poor practices, but this again, is not an easy task. Nevertheless, the task of government or the quality assurance body is not always a hard and thankless one and we do witness improvements in the market of cross border education as a consequence of the regulatory system.

This paper has concentrated on the role of governments and of quality assurance bodies with regard to cross-border education. However, as promulgated in the draft UNESCO/OECD Guidelines, different stakeholders including higher education institutions, professional bodies, academic evaluation bodies, and student organizations all have a complementary role to play.

7 May 2005
MEDA Network Project

Seminar on Establishment of Cross-Border Education Assessment Mechanisms, Kunming, China, May 25, 2005

- Introduction
  - The ENIC-NARIC Networks
  - Listserv
  - Website

- Listserv (Discussion Lists)
  - Strengths
    - Is user-friendly (simple to use)
    - Promotes information dissemination
    - Promotes the flow and exchange of ideas
    - Gives instant access to a pool of experts
    - Is helpful for working parties
    - Is a repository of past messages
  - Weaknesses
    - Computer and network glitches
    - Spam and viruses
    - Overload of messages

- Listserv
  - Technical and Financial Considerations
    - Setting up our own system or contracting out
      - Internet Connection
      - Software Purchase
      - Technical Expertise and Assistance

- Listserv (Discussion lists)
  - A few numbers
    - In existence since 1997
    - Around 190 members in 2005
    - 1276 messages circulated since June 2002

- Listerv (Discussion list)
  - Using our listerv
    - By email (the "normal" way)
    - aparmet@mercury.maledge.com.au
    - On the Web: http://www.aparmet.org/forum.htm


- Web site
  - History and rationale
    - Vilnius 1999
    - Provide a single access point to information
    - Ease everybody's workload
    - Give the networks a presence and raise their profile


- Web site: Guiding Principles
  - Create an efficient "portal"
  - Avoid and reduce duplication
  - Provide access to reliable and up-to-date information (go to the source)


- Web site
  - Current content
    - Legislative framework
    - National profiles
    - Other resources for Europe
    - Other regions of the world
    - Members' Area


- Web site
  - Projects
    - A section for the general public
      - FAQs and questions to ask
    - Fact sheets on specific issues


- Web site
  - Strengths
    - A focused, compact and easy-to-navigate site
    - A site that is easy to keep up-to-date
    - A "window" into and for both networks
    - Reinforces a sense of community for the centres
    - Is the result of a collaboration between centres
    - Provides centres with a model to follow

- **Weaknesses**
  - Basically "structural"
  - Decisions and actions are decentralised
  - Financing
  - Site is slow to grow, to develop further
  - Hidden costs
  - Long-term survival

- **Website**
  - Official launch: Fall of 2002
  - More than 5 million hits in 2004 (15,000/day)
  - More than 360,000 page views in 2004 (89/day)
  - More than 150,000 visits in 2004 (410/day)

- **Website (Statistiques)**

- **A few numbers**
  - Requests for information received through the Web site: 2002: 20
    - 2003: 118
    - 2004: 221
    - First quarter of 2005: 100-

- **Questions and discussion**
Annex 5

Guidelines\(^1\) for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education

Jointly elaborated by UNESCO and the OECD

1. Introduction

Purpose of the Guidelines

The Guidelines aim to support and encourage international cooperation and enhance the understanding of the importance of quality provision in cross-border higher education\(^2\). The purposes of the Guidelines are to protect students and other stakeholders from low-quality provision and disreputable providers\(^3\) as well as to encourage the development of quality cross-border higher education that meets human, social, economic and cultural needs.

Rationale for the Guidelines

Since the 1980s, cross-border higher education through the mobility of students, academic staff, programmes/institutions and professionals has grown considerably. In parallel, new delivery modes and cross-border providers have appeared, such as campuses abroad, electronic delivery of higher education and for-profit providers. These new forms of cross-border higher education offer increased opportunities for improving the skills and competencies of individual students and the quality of national higher

\(^1\) These Guidelines are not legally binding and member countries are expected to implement the Guidelines as appropriate in their national context.

\(^2\) In these Guidelines, cross-border higher education includes higher education that takes place in situations where the teacher, student, programme, institution/provider or course materials cross national jurisdictional borders. Cross-border higher education may include higher education by public/private and not-for-profit/for-profit providers. It encompasses a wide range of modalities, in a continuum from face-to-face (taking various forms such as students travelling abroad and campuses abroad) to distance learning (using a range of technologies and including e-learning).

\(^3\) In this context, ‘disreputable providers’ refer to degree and accreditation mills.
education systems, provided they aim at benefiting the human, social, economic and cultural development of the receiving country.

While in some countries the national frameworks for quality assurance, accreditation and the recognition of qualifications take into account cross-border higher education, in many countries they are still not geared to addressing the challenges of cross-border provision. Furthermore, the lack of comprehensive frameworks for co-ordinating various initiatives at the international level, together with the diversity and unevenness of the quality assurance and accreditation systems at the national level, create gaps in the quality assurance of cross-border higher education, leaving some cross-border higher education provision outside any framework of quality assurance and accreditation. This makes students and other stakeholders more vulnerable to low-quality provision and disreputable providers of cross-border higher education. The challenge faced by current quality assurance and accreditation systems is to develop appropriate procedures and systems to cover foreign providers and programmes (in addition to national providers and programmes) in order to maximize the benefits and limit the potential drawbacks of the internationalization of higher education. At the same time, the increase in cross-border student, academic staff, researcher and professional mobility has put the issue of the recognition of academic and professional qualifications high on the international cooperation agenda.

There is therefore a need for additional national initiatives, strengthened international cooperation and networking, and more transparent information on procedures and systems of quality assurance, accreditation and recognition of qualifications. These efforts should have a global range and should emphasize supporting the needs of developing countries to establish robust higher education systems. Given that some countries lack comprehensive frameworks for quality assurance, accreditation and the recognition of qualifications, capacity-building should form an important part of the overall strengthening and co-ordination of national and international initiatives. In this light, UNESCO and the OECD have worked closely together in the development of these Guidelines for quality provision in cross-border higher education (“Guidelines”). The implementation of these Guidelines could serve as a first step in the capacity-building process.

The quality of a country’s higher education sector and its assessment and monitoring is not only key to its social and economic well-being, it is also a determining factor affecting the status of that higher education system at the international level. The establishment of quality assurance systems has become a necessity, not only for monitoring quality in higher education delivered within the country, but also for engaging in delivery of higher education internationally. As a consequence, there has been an impressive rise in the number of quality assurance and accreditation bodies for higher education in the

4. See footnote number 3.
past two decades. However, existing national quality assurance capacity often focuses exclusively on domestic delivery by domestic institutions.

The increased cross-border mobility of students, academic staff, professionals, programmes and providers presents challenges for existing national quality assurance and accreditation frameworks and bodies as well as for the systems for recognizing foreign qualifications. Some of these challenges are described below:

a) National capacity for quality assurance and accreditation often does not cover cross-border higher education. This increases the risk of students falling victim to misleading guidance and information and disreputable providers, dubious quality assurance and accreditation bodies and low-quality provision, leading to qualifications of limited validity.

b) National systems and bodies for the recognition of qualifications may have limited knowledge and experience in dealing with cross-border higher education. In some cases, the challenge becomes more complicated as cross-border higher education providers may deliver qualifications that are not of comparable quality to those which they offer in their home country.

c) The increasing need to obtain national recognition of foreign qualifications has posed challenges to national recognition bodies. This in turn, at times, leads to administrative and legal problems for the individuals concerned.

d) The professions depend on trustworthy, high-quality qualifications. It is essential that users of professional services including employers have full confidence in the skills of qualified professionals. The increasing possibility of obtaining low-quality qualifications could harm the professions themselves, and might in the long run undermine confidence in professional qualifications.

Scope of the Guidelines

The Guidelines aim to provide an international framework for quality provision in cross-border higher education that responds to the above-mentioned challenges.

The Guidelines are based on the principle of mutual trust and respect among countries and on the recognition of the importance of international collaboration in higher education. They also recognize the importance of national authority and the diversity of higher education systems. Countries attach a high importance to national sovereignty over higher education. Higher education is a vital means for expressing a country’s linguistic and cultural diversity and also for nurturing its economic development and social cohesion. It is therefore recognized that policy-making in higher education reflects national priorities. At the same time, it is recognized that in some countries, there are several competent authorities in higher education.
The effectiveness of the Guidelines largely depends on the possibility of strengthening the capacity of national systems to assure the quality of higher education. The development and implementation of the UNESCO regional conventions and further support to the ongoing capacity-building initiatives of UNESCO, other multilateral organizations and bilateral donors in this area will sustain and be complementary to the Guidelines. These initiatives should be supported by strong regional and national partners.

The Guidelines acknowledge the important role of non-governmental organizations such as higher education associations, student bodies, academic staff associations, networks of quality assurance and accreditation bodies, recognition and credential evaluation bodies and professional bodies in strengthening international co-operation for quality provision in cross-border higher education. The Guidelines aim to encourage the strengthening and co-ordination of existing initiatives by enhancing dialogue and collaboration among various bodies.

Cross-border higher education encompasses a wide span of modalities that range from face-to-face (taking various forms such as students travelling abroad and campuses abroad) to distance learning (using a range of technologies and including e-learning). In implementing the Guidelines, consideration should be given to the variety of provision and its different demands for quality assurance.

2. Guidelines for Higher Education Stakeholders

The Guidelines recommend actions to six stakeholders5: governments; higher education institutions/providers including academic staff; student bodies; quality assurance and accreditation bodies; academic recognition bodies6; and professional bodies.

Guidelines for Governments

Governments can be influential, if not responsible, in promoting adequate quality assurance, accreditation and the recognition of qualifications. They undertake the role of policy coordination in most higher education systems. However, it is acknowledged throughout these Guidelines that in some countries, the authority for overseeing quality assurance lies with sub-national government bodies or with non-governmental organizations.

In this context, it is recommended that governments:

5. In the Guidelines, the distinctions among these stakeholders are made based on the functions and it is recognized that the different functions do not necessarily belong to separate bodies.

6. Academic recognition bodies include qualification recognition bodies, credential evaluation bodies, and advisory/information centres.
a) Establish, or encourage the establishment of a comprehensive, fair and transparent system of registration or licensing for cross-border higher education providers wishing to operate in their territory.

b) Establish, or encourage the establishment of a comprehensive capacity for reliable quality assurance and accreditation of cross-border higher education provision, recognizing that quality assurance and accreditation of cross-border higher education provision involves both sending and receiving countries.

c) Consult and coordinate amongst the various competent bodies for quality assurance and accreditation both nationally and internationally.

d) Provide accurate, reliable and easily accessible information on the criteria and standards for registration, licensure, quality assurance and accreditation of cross-border higher education, their consequences on the funding of students, institutions or programmes, where applicable and their voluntary or mandatory nature.

e) Consider becoming party to and contribute to the development and/or updating of the appropriate UNESCO regional conventions on recognition of qualifications and establish national information centres as stipulated by the conventions.

f) Where appropriate develop or encourage bilateral or multilateral recognition agreements, facilitating the recognition or equivalence of each country’s qualifications based on the procedures and criteria included in mutual agreements.

g) Contribute to efforts to improve the accessibility at the international level of up-to-date, accurate and comprehensive information on recognized higher education institutions/providers.

Guidelines for Higher Education Institutions/Providers

Commitment to quality by all higher education institutions/providers is essential. To this end, the active and constructive contributions of academic staff are indispensable. Higher education institutions are responsible for the quality as well as the social, cultural and linguistic relevance of education and the standards of qualifications provided in their name, no matter where or how it is delivered.

In this context, it is recommended that higher education institutions/providers delivering cross-border higher education:

7. An important and relevant initiative for this is the statement “Sharing Quality Higher Education Across Borders” by the International Association of Universities, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, the American Council on Education and the Council on Higher Education Accreditation on behalf of higher education institutions worldwide.
a) Ensure that the programmes they deliver across borders and in their home country are of comparable quality and that they also take into account the cultural and linguistic sensitivities of the receiving country. It is desirable that a commitment to this effect should be made public.

b) Recognize that quality teaching and research is made possible by the quality of faculty and the quality of their working conditions that foster independent and critical inquiry. The UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel and other relevant instruments need to be taken into account by all institutions and providers to support good working conditions and terms of service, collegial governance and academic freedom.

c) Develop, maintain or review current internal quality management systems so that they make full use of the competencies of stakeholders such as academic staff, administrators, students and graduates and take full responsibility for delivering higher education qualifications comparable in standard in their home country and across borders. Furthermore, when promoting their programmes to potential students through agents, they should take full responsibility to ensure that the information and guidance provided by their agents are accurate reliable and easily accessible.

d) Consult competent quality assurance and accreditation bodies and respect the quality assurance and accreditation systems of the receiving country when delivering higher education across borders, including distance education.

e) Share good practices by participating in sector organizations and inter-institutional networks at national and international levels.

f) Develop and maintain networks and partnerships to facilitate the process of recognition by acknowledging each other’s qualifications as equivalent or comparable.

8. Available at the following:
g) Where relevant, use codes of good practice such as the UNESCO/Council of Europe ‘Code of good practice in the provision of transnational education’ and other relevant codes such as the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications.

h) Provide accurate, reliable and easily accessible information on the criteria and procedures of external and internal quality assurance and the academic and professional recognition of qualifications they deliver and provide complete descriptions of programmes and qualifications, preferably with descriptions of the knowledge, understanding and skills that a successful student should acquire. Higher education institutions/providers should collaborate especially with quality assurance and accreditation bodies and with student bodies to facilitate the dissemination of this information.

i) Ensure the transparency of the financial status of the institution and/or educational programme offered.

Guidelines for Student Bodies

As representatives of the direct recipients of cross-border higher education and as part of the higher education community, student bodies bear the responsibility of helping students and potential students to carefully scrutinize the information available and giving sufficient consideration in their decision-making process.

In this context, it is recommended that the emergence of autonomous local, national and international student bodies be encouraged and that the student bodies:

a) Be involved as active partners at international, national and institutional levels in the development, monitoring and maintenance of the quality provision of cross-border higher education and take the necessary steps to achieve this objective.

b) Take active part in promoting quality provision, by increasing the awareness of the students of the potential risks such as misleading guidance and information, low-quality provision leading to qualifications of limited validity, and disreputable providers. They should also guide them to accurate and reliable


10. Available at the following: http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Cooperation/education/Higher_education/ENIC_Network/Recom_Criteria_Procedures.asp
information sources on cross-border higher education. This could be done by increasing the awareness of the existence of these guidelines as well as taking an active part in their implementation.

c) Encourage students and potential students to ask appropriate questions when enrolling in cross-border higher education programmes. A list of relevant questions could be established by student bodies, including foreign students where possible, in collaboration with bodies such as higher education institutions, quality assurance and accreditation bodies and academic recognition bodies. Such a list should include the following questions: whether the foreign institution/provider is recognized or accredited by a trustworthy body and whether the qualifications delivered by the foreign institution/provider are recognized in the students’ home country for academic and/or professional purposes.

**Guidelines for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Bodies**

In addition to internal quality management of institutions/providers, external quality assurance and accreditation systems have been adopted in more than 60 countries. Quality assurance and accreditation bodies are responsible for assessing the quality of higher education provision. The existing systems of quality assurance and accreditation often vary from country to country and sometimes within the countries themselves. Some have governmental bodies for quality assurance and accreditation, and others have non-governmental bodies. Furthermore, some differences exist in the terminologies used, the definition of “quality”, the purpose and function of the system including its link to the funding of students, institutions or programmes, the methodologies used in quality assurance and accreditation, the scope and function of the responsible body or unit, and the voluntary or compulsory nature of participation. While respecting this diversity, a co-ordinated effort among the bodies of both sending and receiving countries is needed at both the regional and global level, in order to tackle the challenges raised by the growth of cross-border provision of higher education, especially in its new forms.\(^{11}\)

20. In this context, it is recommended that quality assurance and accreditation bodies:

a) Ensure that their quality assurance and accreditation arrangements include cross-border education provision in its various modes. This can mean giving attention to assessment guidelines, ensuring that standards and processes are transparent, consistent and appropriate to take account of the shape and scope of the national higher education system, and adaptability to changes and developments in cross-border provision.

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11. See footnote 2.
b) Sustain and strengthen the existing regional and international networks or establish regional networks in regions that do not already have one. These networks can serve as platforms to exchange information and good practice, disseminate knowledge, increase the understanding of international developments and challenges as well as to improve the professional expertise of their staff and quality assessors. These networks could also be used to improve awareness of disreputable providers and dubious quality assurance and accreditation bodies, and to develop monitoring and reporting systems that can lead to their identification.

c) Establish links to strengthen the collaboration between the bodies of the sending country and the receiving country and enhance the mutual understanding of different systems of quality assurance and accreditation. This may facilitate the process of assuring the quality of programmes delivered across borders and institutions operating across borders while respecting the quality assurance and accreditation systems of the receiving countries.

d) Provide accurate and easily accessible information on the assessment standards, procedures, and effects of the quality assurance mechanisms on the funding of students, institutions or programmes where applicable as well as the results of the assessment. Quality assurance and accreditation bodies should collaborate with other actors, especially higher education institutions/providers, academic staff, student bodies and academic recognition bodies to facilitate the dissemination of such information.

e) Apply the principles reflected in current international documents on cross-border higher education such as the UNESCO/Council of Europe ‘Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education.’

f) Reach mutual recognition agreements with other bodies on the basis of trust in and understanding of each other’s professional practice, develop systems of internal quality assurance and regularly undergo external evaluations, making full use of the competencies of stakeholders. Where feasible, consider undertaking experiments in international evaluation or peer reviews of quality assurance and accreditation bodies.

g) Consider adoption of procedures for the international composition of peer review panels, international benchmarking of standards, criteria and assessment procedures and undertake joint assessment projects to increase the comparability

12. Available at the following: http://www.cepes.ro/hed/recogn/groups/transnat/code.htm
Guidelines for Academic Recognition Bodies

The UNESCO regional conventions on recognition of qualifications are important instruments facilitating the fair recognition of higher education qualifications, including the assessment of foreign qualifications resulting from cross-border mobility of students, skilled professionals and cross-border provision of higher education.

There is a need to build on existing initiatives with additional international action to facilitate fair processes of recognition of academic qualifications by making systems more transparent and comparable.

In this context, it is recommended that academic recognition bodies:

a) Establish and maintain regional and international networks that can serve as platforms to exchange information and good practice, disseminate knowledge, increase the understanding of international developments and challenges and improve the professional expertise of their staff.

b) Strengthen their cooperation with quality assurance and accreditation bodies to facilitate the process of determining whether a qualification meets basic quality standards, as well as to engage in cross-border cooperation and networking with quality assurance and accreditation bodies. This cooperation should be pursued both at regional and cross-regional level.

c) Establish and maintain contacts with all stakeholders to share the information and improve the links between academic and professional qualification assessment methodologies.

d) Where appropriate, address the professional recognition of qualifications in the labour market and provide necessary information on professional recognition, both to those who have a foreign qualification and to employers. Given the increasing scope of the international labour markets and growing professional mobility, collaboration and co-ordination with professional associations are recommended for this purpose.

f) Use codes of practice such as the Council of Europe/UNESCO *Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications* and other relevant codes of practice to increase the public’s confidence in their recognition procedures, and to reassure stakeholders that the processing of requests is conducted in a fair and consistent manner.

13. Available at the following: http://www.cepes.ro/hed/recogn/groups/transnat/code.htm
g) Provide clear, accurate and accessible information on the criteria for the assessment of qualifications, including qualifications resulting from cross-border provision.

Guidelines for Professional Bodies

Systems of professional recognition differ from country to country and from profession to profession. For example, in some cases, a recognized academic qualification could be sufficient for entry into professional practice, whereas in other cases, additional requirements are imposed on holders of academic qualifications in order to enter the profession. Given the increasing scope of international labour markets and growing professional mobility, the holders of academic qualifications, as well as employers and professional associations are facing many challenges. Increasing transparency – i.e., improving the availability and the quality of the information – is critical for fair recognition processes.

In this context, it is recommended that professional bodies responsible for professional recognition:

a) Develop information channels that are accessible both to national and foreign holders of qualifications to assist them in gaining professional recognition of their qualifications, and to employers who need advice on the professional recognition of foreign qualifications. Information should also be easily accessible to current and potential students.

b) Establish and maintain contacts between the professional bodies of both sending and receiving countries, higher education institutions/providers, quality assurance and accreditation bodies, as well as academic recognition bodies to improve qualification assessment methodologies.

c) Establish, develop and implement assessment criteria and procedures for comparing programmes and qualifications to facilitate the recognition of qualifications and to accommodate learning outcomes and competencies that are culturally appropriate in addition to input and process requirements.

d) Improve the accessibility at the international level of up-to-date, accurate and comprehensive information on mutual recognition agreements for the professions and encourage the development of new agreements.

14. This section refers to institutions with legal competence in the field of regulated professions and professional recognition. In some countries, these institutions are professional bodies, in other countries, this role is being performed by other competent authorities, such as governmental ministries.
Executive Summary

Approaches to Quality Assurance and Mutual Recognition of Qualifications (Based on Selected Case Studies of the GUNI-AP Membership)

Dr. Antony Stella

The largest of the UNESCO regions in terms of both area and population, the Asia-Pacific region is characterised by cultural, linguistic, social, political and economic diversities. Amidst the diversity in terms of development stage, geographic coverage, the nature of the societies encompassed, prosperity levels, population sizes, and political frameworks, the higher education systems of the region do display certain commonalities in responding to the impact of globalization. In 2003, the Follow-up Report to the World Conference on Higher Education of Asia and the Pacific noted that the Asia-Pacific region was going through a period of rapid and far-reaching economic and social change, driven particularly by the impact of accelerating globalization, increased international economic competition and the transition from traditional to knowledge-based economies and often market-oriented systems. These changes continue to date and they provide higher education with many challenges, the major one being the move towards “knowledge societies”.

Access to information and knowledge increasingly determines opportunities for development. Indeed, knowledge has become the principal force of social transformation and that is one of the reasons why the concept of “knowledge societies” is gaining much attention. To build knowledge societies and benefit from them, the higher education institutions (HEIs) have to respond in a variety of ways - this paper tries to capture the commonalities and diversities that are found among these responses in quality related issues, based on select cases of the Asia-Pacific region. These cases were discussed under the auspices of the Global University Network for Innovation - Asia and the Pacific (GUNI-AP) in September 2004.
Responses to Quality Assurance and Mutual Recognition

For a better understanding of the case studies, we need to look at the institutional responses in the background of the national context.

Changes in the National Context

In all the eight countries of the founding group, in the last two decades there have been major changes at the national level. The following are the significant ones.

a) **Higher education as a priority:** The Task Force on Higher Education and Society which was co-convened by the UNESCO and the World Bank in 1997 and whose report was issued in 2000, states that higher education “is to a knowledge economy as primary education is to an agrarian economy and secondary education is to an industrial economy”. Many countries of Asia and the Pacific have responded positively to this trend. Especially the period after nineties indicates rapid and impressive growth in student enrolments and expansion in higher education provisions. In addition to specific strategies by the governments to increase student enrolment in higher education, many other factors such as higher output from secondary schools, greater participation of women in higher education, and a growing private sector demand for graduates seem to contribute to this trend.

b) **Changes in pattern of governance:** The emergence of a new paradigm in higher education management with emphasis on decentralization, allowing each unit to function more independently within an overall central authority, could be noted. Its implementation is found in the form of freedom for HEIs to plan and develop their educational programmes and to be responsible for them. It is a combination of autonomy and accountability that influences the mechanisms of quality assurance – internal and external – in various ways.

c) **Changing pattern of finance:** While there has been a significant increase in enrolment in HEIs, it has not been matched by a proportionate increase in public funding. The hesitation of governments to fund higher education institutions was at one time influenced by the policy stand that higher education was a private good. Today, although this perception stands corrected in many countries, the economic situation in some countries is such that the governments are unable to provide additional funding for expanding higher education.

d) **Private participation in expansion of higher education:** In many countries of the GUNI-AP, expansion in higher education has been facilitated by private participation. While private participation in expanding higher education has been well recognized, the issue of quality and relevance of educational offerings of the private institutions has come under severe scrutiny in some countries.
The national policy frameworks and quality assurance mechanisms have started to address this issue.

e) **Emphasis on quality and relevance:** In addition to national initiatives and policy formulations for expansion of higher education, some national mechanisms and policies for quality assurance in higher education could be found in most countries of the region. The region has realized the need for a separate quality assurance mechanism other than the traditional governmental control. The quality assurance frameworks of the Asia-Pacific region, with respect to traditional operations of the traditional providers, are reasonably well developed. But the issue of quality assuring cross-border education warrants serious attention in most of the countries.

f) **International dimension of higher education:** With many transition economies, the region has seen contradictory arguments about the international dimensions of higher education, in particular, about the trade in education services. Between enthusiastic views of the trade promoters at one end and the skeptical reflections of the academics of traditional outlook at the other, there are many different viewpoints in Asia and the Pacific and at least three major views deserve a mention. Firstly, there are those who support public policies that foster internationalization in higher education and they defend cross-border education in all forms on academic, cultural, social and political grounds. Secondly, there are the academics, supporting the view that education should not be treated as a tradable commodity, who argue that cross-border education would always have a revenue generation approach that would be to the disadvantage of the developing countries. Thirdly, there are the trade enthusiasts who are convinced that commercialization of higher education at the global level is unavoidable in the near future and it is up to the countries to prepare themselves to benefit from the new opportunities of the global market.

It could also be noted that discussions of international trade in higher education in the region have become polarized according to whether a country is an exporter or an importer. Mechanisms for quality assuring cross-border operations are still in the initial stages of development. There is a realization that the national quality assurance mechanisms that are oriented to the national context may not be able to deal with these issues effectively as they exist today. In many countries it is the ministries that have a regulatory role in cross-border educational services. Discussions are going on among the quality assurance agencies about cooperation for quality assurance of cross-border education.

Within these changing national frameworks, the HEIs vary a lot in the way they address quality-related issues at the institutional level.
Institutional Context and Responses

As all the case studies indicate, there is a high level of awareness in the higher education sector that societies are now organized around knowledge. The impact this has on HEIs is momentous and it could be observed in a number of ways in which the HEIs respond. The following merit a mention.

a) **Internal quality assurance and institutionalization of quality assurance strategies:** Freedom to HEIs to plan their development and to be responsible for their planning and implementation could be observed as a common trend. In other words, a balance between autonomy and accountability is emerging. More freedom coupled with accountability concerns has made many HEIs initiate internal quality assurance mechanisms and institutionalize them.

b) **Quality consciousness in teaching as well as research:** In general, one could observe that quality assurance measures have been introduced in the fields of teaching as well as research. There is awareness that top research universities have to be characterized by not only high quality research but also by high quality teaching.

c) **Internationalization and networking:** Emphasis on internationalizing the curriculum and enhancing staff participation in international events could be seen. Formation of strategic alliances with universities outside the country, greater network of partnerships in academic activities such as joint research projects, joint publications, joint supervision, exchange of students (undergraduate and postgraduate), staff exchange, joint seminars and others could be observed.

d) **Research capacity development:** A variety of new steps have been taken for strengthening research capacity. Excellence in research is seen as a necessary step to ensure a university’s central role in a knowledge-based society. “Publish or perish” policy, leaning towards applied research, tendency to assess research performance by indicators, pooling of resources, a greater interdisciplinary approach to research and attention to efficient management of research have been observed, some of them causing concerns.

e) **Revamping programme offerings:** The introduction of new areas of studies and the revision of programme offerings could be noted. The concern that the “let the market decide” approach would adversely affect some specialties has been expressed. There is potential danger that this might lead to the so-called vocationalization of HEIs which could jeopardize the quality and promotion of traditional general education components in the system of higher education. The necessity to safeguard general education that emphasizes the development of the whole individual, and not just occupational training, has been expressed in the case studies.
f) **Policies on faculty quality:** In general, the fact that quality teaching and research is made possible by the quality of faculty has been recognized well. Accordingly, qualification requirements for recruitment of staff, encouragement to faculty to update their qualifications, making higher qualifications essential for positions such as professorship, performance assessment and linking performance to incentives are seen. Some of the exemplar practices deserve a more in-depth study for their impact.

g) **Institutional incentive policies:** Incentive for good performance of staff and checks for non-performers have been highlighted in the case studies.

h) **Resource mobilization:** As the HEIs are asked to look for their own funds, resource mobilization from alternate sources comes to the forefront of institutional strategies. Revenue generation approach by offering courses that are in demand is seen as a very promising alternative. Initiatives to increase the enrolment of foreign students, especially in the international programmes, establishing partnerships between the commercial sector and university research, and generating income through patenting and copyright in commercially viable research are some of the efforts taken by HEIs.

i) **Closer to industry?** The case studies indicate that as HEIs move towards the self-sustaining mode, they lean towards partnering with industries. They are also aware of the dilemma that comes with this alliance. Will this change the relationship of the university with society and its public good perception? Can universities enter into closer relationships with market-oriented industries and still maintain their status as independent, autonomous institutions dedicated to the public good?

j) **Future strategies on mutual recognition of qualifications:** The HEIs have developed action plans and frameworks for future development. But they are all about overall strategies to enhance their academic reputation and mutual recognition of qualifications related issues do not find a place there. The desire to increase the mobility of students and their credentials is evident among the GUNI-AP members. But concrete practices to translate the desire into action could not be identified from the case studies. International accreditation is seen as a way of ensuring the acceptability of students and their qualifications across borders. Building on the potentials of the regional convention for recognition of qualifications and awareness about the mutual recognition issues seem to be low.
Seminar for Cross-border Assessment

Recommendations for Next Steps

In all, the case studies have made a good beginning to present the challenges they face in their transition towards knowledge-based society. The case studies have also been useful to look at the good practices they follow, especially with reference to issues related to quality. But there are two issues that need attention – “differentiating value added practices from routines” and “translating the dialogue on cooperation into concrete implementation plans and pilot projects”.

Sometimes what the universities claim as good practices and quality assurance strategies border on the basic responsibilities they ought to discharge. “What is it that they do differently and with what results” has to be at the focus of discussions and case studies in future.

The objectives of the network are laudable and the effort to conduct trace studies contributes to the realization of the objectives. However, to relate more directly to the objectives of the network such as to advice the policy makers on innovative practices, in-depth studies on select practices that have been proven to add commendable value to the quality of the HEIs, may be essential.

The intention for cooperation among the membership of the network is yet to be implemented into action. The regional convention for recognition of qualifications can find practical implementations, building on the strengths of this small network of top universities.

It is true that for realizing the objective of laboratory of ideas, this small, manageable and beautiful network is ideal. That should be exploited to the fullest to identify innovations that merit implementation. It should be noted that GUNI-AP is not just a platform for sharing ideas but it also has the potential to initiate concrete action plans. Viewed from this point of view, expanding the membership by bringing in a few more top universities of the member countries may be useful, especially to ensure critical mass for pilots on mutual recognition of qualifications.
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is really my pleasure to meet colleagues and friends from prospective Asia-Pacific countries. Today, the topic of my presentation is **Foreign Degree Accreditation and Verification of Foreign Education Information.** These are some of the unique services of Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange authorized by Ministry of Education of P. R. China.

**Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange (CSCSE)**

CSCSE was founded in 1989 on the initiative of Mr. Deng Xiaoping, as he thought at that time thousands of scholars would be sent abroad and return each year. It was considered very necessary to establish a special organization providing one-stop service for the going-abroad and returning-back scholars.

CSCSE is a legally registered corporate body affiliated to the Ministry of Education (MOE) of China, specializing in offering a full range of authorized services for international scholarly exchanges, including both Chinese students and scholars going abroad, returning from abroad and international students and scholars coming to study in China.

**Foreign Degree Accreditation**

As one of the important supplementary services for returned student placement services, CSCSE started the accreditation service for foreign academic degree in 1991. In the year of 2000, the Ministry of Education and the Academic Degree Commission of the State Council formally credited CSCSE to provide foreign degree accreditation service nationally. Currently, CSCSE is the only authorized organization for the accreditation of foreign academic degree and qualifications.
Why Accreditation

The accreditation service is not compulsory requirement for foreign academic degree holders by the government. However, it has been generally recognized as one of important references for employment and further studies by prospective government departments and employers. For the protection of their personal interesting, the majority returned students chose to apply the accreditation of their qualifications obtained from overseas.

Content

The accreditation certificate covers three aspects:

- Verification of overseas educational institutions and their qualifications – verify the accreditation status of foreign educational institutions
- Authenticity of foreign academic degrees
- Equivalency recommendation-level of the qualifications

Clients

Most of our clients are students from overseas and China-foreign jointly-run programs. Some are overseas students who want to apply to study in China; some are holders of foreign academic degrees.

Accreditation

There are three steps for accreditation: the first step is the student application. While applying, students should provide some documents on demand, such as the foreign degree certificate, transcripts, passports and visas, a certificate from Chinese Embassies overseas, a domestic degree certificate and the thesis abstract for graduate students. The second step is evaluation by our professional staff which includes our employed internal evaluators and external specialists who have many study experiences overseas and are excellent in certain specialized fields. The third step is to award an authorized accreditation certificate upon the successful evaluation. In case of failure, client are informed about the reasons. In 2004, we processed 25,352 applications in total.

Verification of Overseas Educational Information

To accompany foreign degree accreditation, we provide verification of overseas educational information as well. That business mainly involved in assisting relevant government departments to recommend some foreign educational institutions, releasing information about 9,094 foreign institutions of 21 countries on www.jsj.edu.cn and www.cscse.edu.cn.
Annex 8

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EIGHTH SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE
In conjunction with the
SEMINAR ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CROSS-BORDER HIGHER EDUCATION ASSESSMENT MECHANISM

Kunming, People’s Republic of China
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