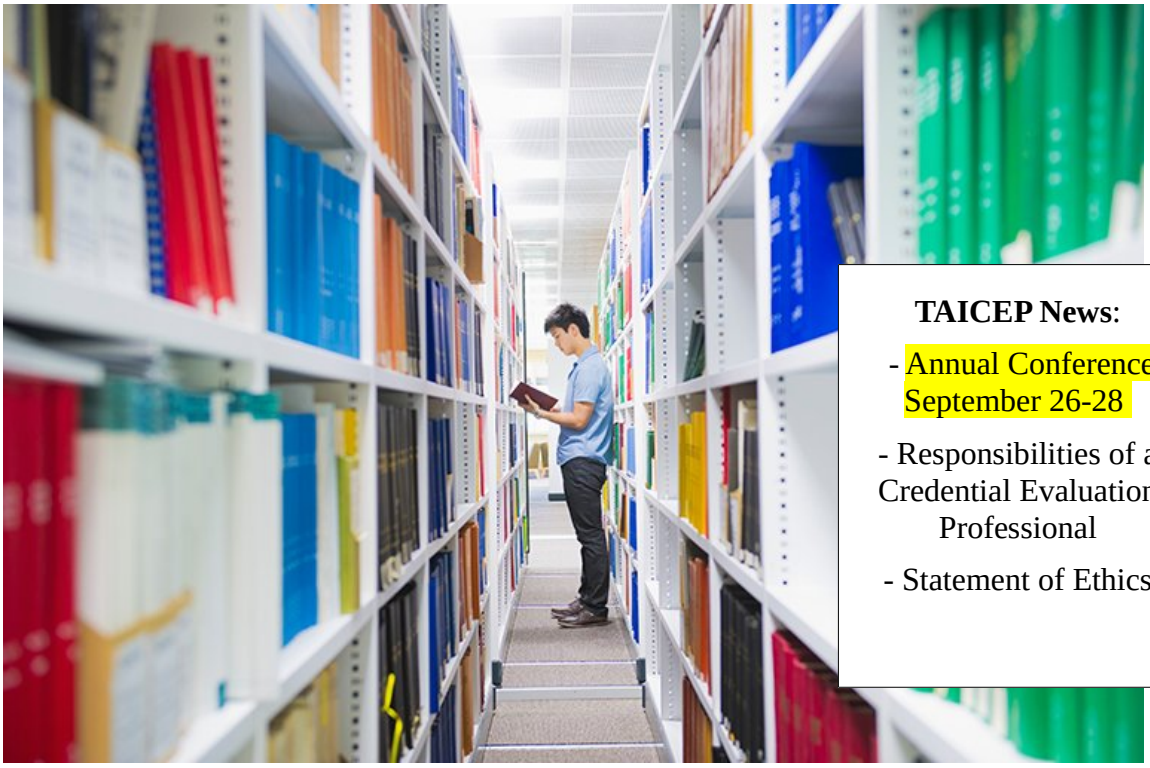
Nursing Education | STREAM Online Learning | East African Community | GDN Verification Task Force

TAICEP TALK

January 2016 Volume 2, Number 1



TAICEP News:

- Annual Conference September 26-28
- Responsibilities of a Credential Evaluation Professional
- Statement of Ethics

Table of Contents

President's Welcome.....2
2016-2017 TAICEP Election Results.....3
Committee Updates.....4
Nursing Education and Licensure in the U.S.....7
STREAM: Training and Good Practice Platform for Credential Evaluators.....8
Refugee Credential Recognition for U.S. Admissions Decisions.....9
Regional Education Harmonization Efforts in the East African Community.....11
Groningen Declaration Network Verification Task Force.....15
Upcoming TAICEP Events.....19
Add to Your Library.....19
From the TAICEP Website.....20
Press Releases.....22
Notes from the Field – Notes from the First General Meeting.....23

President's Welcome

Greetings TAICEP colleagues,

Welcome to the third edition of TAICEP's newsletter!

With the new year well underway and a new Executive Committee and Committee Chairs in place at the beginning of January, we have all been busy at work for an exciting year ahead for TAICEP. Last year's Executive Committee developed an overall plan for this year, which focuses on developing more resources for members, certification, advocating for the profession and of course strengthening the association. As your association's new president, I am excited to work with TAICEP's many volunteers to implement this plan.

In this edition of the newsletter, you will see updates from various committees and new resources to help you in your work. There are two news items, however, that I'd like to highlight:

> First, on behalf of Jeremy Mixell and the Conference Committee, and Jessica Stannard and the Professional Development Committee, we're delighted to announce that TAICEP's second annual conference will be held in at the University of Chicago's Gleacher Center, September 26-28. Given the success of the first general meeting, this will be an annual professional development event for international credential evaluators. We hope to hold our third conference in Europe in the fall of 2017.
>
> Second, on January 19, the Standards Committee released the TAICEP Definition of the Profession and TAICEP Statement of Ethics. You can view the documents and the press release on TAICEP's website.

I want to extend a special thank you to Margit Schatzman for her leadership of TAICEP since its inception. Her thoughtfulness, vision, hard work, and engaging spirit have brought together a wonderful and fun group of people towards a common vision, and TAICEP has flourished under her leadership and that of the many volunteers and committee chairs working on TAICEP.

I hope you will consider getting involved in shaping TAICEP and the services it provides to its members. Whether that be by joining a committee, attending the annual conference in September, encouraging a colleague to join TAICEP, or by taking a few moments to let me know your thoughts and suggestions for TAICEP (n.sawh@cmec.ca), there are many ways to be involved. I look forward to hearing from you!

On behalf of TAICEP's board and committees, we wish you a very happy and productive year in 2016. We look forward to supporting your work through the many resources we are building together for TAICEP's members, starting with this edition of TAICEP Talk!

Enjoy!
Natasha Sawh, Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials
TAICEP President

2016-2017 Election Results

TAICEP holds elections for officers and standing committee chairs every two years. The 2016-2017 slate was announced at the 2015 First General Meeting. In January 2016, the position of Past President was also added to the Executive Board.

- President: Natasha Shaw
- Past President: Margit Schatzman
- Vice President of Standards: Jenneke Lokoff
- Vice President of Member Outreach: Jeanie Bell
- Treasurer: Michelle Moraes
- Secretary: Kate Freeman
- Committee for Governance and Finance: Margit Schatzman
- Committee for Standards: Rolf Lofstad
- Committee for Membership Outreach: Marshall Houserman

2016 TAICEP Committees and Their Chairs

Governance and Finance Committee: Margit Schatzman, margit@ece.org

Standards Committee: Rolf Lofstad, rolf.lofstad@nokut.no

Professional Development and Training Committee: Jessica Stannard, stannard@epnuffic.nl

Resources for Members: Lou Nunes, drloununes@gmail.com

Membership Outreach: Marshall Houserman, mhouserman@edperspective.org

General Meeting Task Force: Jeremy Mixell, jmixell@indiana.edu

Committee Updates

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Greetings TAICEP members! As we start 2016, Membership and Outreach looks forward to another successful year building on TAICEP's strong successes in 2015. We are busy working to make this a truly international professional organization and are actively seeking out credential evaluation professionals from across the globe to join us as members! If you have a colleague that would benefit from TAICEP membership and the professional support TAICEP provides, please let Membership and Outreach know either by email to membership@taicep.org or through the TAICEP website's new "Tell a Colleague" feature. Simply enter your colleague's contact information, and we will be glad to discuss the benefits of a TAICEP membership with them.

If you weren't already aware, TAICEP is very active on social media! Our Facebook and Twitter accounts share TAICEP specific information, relevant news to international credential evaluation and education, and professional resources and professional development opportunities. On LinkedIn, you can follow the TAICEP group for discussions or a place to share news and events while actively showing your support for TAICEP. Our YouTube account includes a taped version of the webinar on the Colombian educational system, and we hope to include future professional development projects here as well.

Be an active part of the discussion! We know many of you already are active social media participants, and we are happy to share, like, and re-tweet items relevant to TAICEP members. Tell your colleagues about TAICEP and the professional support we provide. Help make TAICEP an even stronger and more global international credential evaluation membership organization in 2016.

Marshall Houserman, Educational Perspectives

FROM THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

2016 promises to be a productive year for professional development and training within the TAICEP community. Thanks to interest generated at the Toronto conference, three new members have joined our team since October. The current members of the PDTC are:

- Denise Benz, Laureate Global Products & Services
- Robert Huang, Conestoga College Institute of Technology & Advanced Learning
- Timothy Kell, Educational Credential Evaluators, Inc.
- David Millar, Ontario College of Teachers
- Jaime Nolan, Foreign Credentialing Commission on Physical Therapy
- Jessica Stannard, Chair, EP-Nuffic

Collectively, our committee members represent years of experience in the design and provision of training courses and helping colleagues in the field of credential evaluation and recognition increase their expertise. In the coming months, we'll work together to develop a variety of professional development activities that can help TAICEP's membership take their own skills a step further.

We have identified three major activities to focus on in 2016:

Webinars

Because of the geographically widespread membership, several training opportunities will be provided via e-learning, such as webinars and similar on-line training modes. We are currently looking into topics for at least two webinars that will be given in the course of the year. We organized two very successful webinars in 2015, on the educational documents from a selection of countries in the Middle East and Africa and on the educational system of Colombia. As soon as the dates and topics of the 2016 webinars are known, we'll announce this to all TAICEP members.

2016 Conference

The PDTC will be responsible for putting together the sessions and workshops that will be offered during the 2nd annual conference. Now that the location and dates have been finalized, we are putting together a call for proposals that will be available soon. We encourage all TAICEP members to think about session topics and to fill in the proposal form! Our goal is to put a conference program together that is packed with sessions of excellent quality that are relevant to the professional needs of our constituency. Keep an eye out for the call for proposals, which will be posted soon.

Certification

An important service that TAICEP wants to offer its members is a certification program through which members can become professionally certified as credential evaluators. Certification is seen as something that will benefit individual evaluators, TAICEP itself, and the credibility of the profession as a whole. The desire for professional certification has been expressed at various times by TAICEP members. For this reason, the Executive Committee has designated this activity as a high priority for the organization. To get an idea of what is involved in developing a certification procedure, the PDTC began researching this topic several months ago. An important discovery: professional certification is a profession in itself. It is a challenging endeavor; there are many factors that need to be taken into consideration and many questions that need to be answered. To name just a few:

- Do we want a certificate program or a certification program, or both?
- What knowledge and skills are required for certification?
- How will it be determined if these requirements have been met?
- Who will carry out the procedure: someone from inside the organization or an external expert?
- How much will the procedure cost?

Our goal is to have answers to these questions and to have laid the foundation for a certification program by the end of 2016, if not sooner. There will undoubtedly be much to report on this topic at the 2nd annual conference.

In addition to these three activities, the PDTC will continue to update the *Compendium for Professional Development Activities* twice a year: (http://www.taicep.org/taiceporgwp/professional-development/resources/compendium/). If you know of any activities that are not on the list, please contact Jaime Nolan (JNolan@aon.fccpt.org).

The Professional Development and Training Committee is responsible for making sure that the activities mentioned in this article actually happen. We'll take care of the where and the how, but to fill in the what and the who is where TAICEP's members come in. You can develop yourself professionally not only by receiving, but also by providing training. We urge all members of TAICEP who are interested in giving a webinar or presenting during a session at the 2nd conference to come forward, submit a proposal, and participate in a very rewarding experience. If you have any questions and/or suggestions, please contact Jessica Stannard (stannard@epnuffic.nl).

Jessica Stannard, EP-Nuffic

FROM THE RESOURCES FOR MEMBERS COMMITTEE:

Many were the accomplishments of the Resources for Members Committee last year! We successfully updated our website, compiled a list of printed and online resources, launched our Newsletter, *TAICEP TALK*, and launched our social media accounts in collaboration with, and currently under the auspices of, the Outreach and Membership Committee. As we saw some Committee members leave, we were very fortunate that other members as enthusiastic and dedicated came on-board.

For the current year we have some very exciting prospects! As part of our 2016 Plan of Action, the committee will continue to work on the projects initiated in 2015. We invite potential contributors to submit Newsletter articles to Peggy Hendrickson (peggy@transcriptresearch.com) and entries to be added to our printed and online resources to LesLee Eicher (eicher.leslee@gmail.com). Your contributions are of the utmost importance for the benefit of our members!

The second part of our 2016 Plan of Action deals with some short-term and long-term goals. Creating a resource where the membership will be able to verify the authenticity of documents is currently under development. It includes online verification sites, e-mails, and physical addresses, and it should soon be uploaded to our website. The Committee is also working on the development of a TAICEP listserv (or the like) as a short-term project. It aims at giving the membership the freedom and the flexibility to informally consult with other members in response to inquiries that would help them to better perform their evaluation assignments.

As our long-term project, the Committee has been discussing the creation of a country database, which would allow TAICEP to be a one-stop shop for credential evaluation professionals. Once the foundation has been established, the Committee will be requesting authors to fully or partially contribute to the development of the project.

Lastly, I would like to thank the dedicated, tenacious, proactive, hard-working members of the Committee, namely, Erik Johansson, Swedish Council for Higher Education; Peggy Bell Hendrickson, Transcript Research; LesLee Clauson Eicher, AACRAO International Education Services; Annetta Stroud, AACRAO International Education Services; David Haynes; International Education Evaluations, Inc.; IEE Language Services, LLC.; Anu Soin, International Credential Assessment Service. Without their commitment and support, the work could not be done!

Lou Nunes, Academic Evaluation Services

Nursing Education and Licensure in the U.S.

There are two levels of nurses in the U.S: the registered nurse (RN) is a first-level nurse, and licensed practical nurse (LPN) is a second-level nurse. An LPN works under the supervision of an RN or a doctor. Unlike an RN, they are not permitted to assess a patient, interpret data, or make decisions for a patient.

The 3.1 million registered nurses in the United States represent the largest group of health care professionals in the country. The United States has a long history of professional training of nurses with the first nursing school opened in 1872 at the New England Hospital for Women in Boston, Massachusetts. It was a two-year, hospital-based program (later changed to three years), and students were awarded a Diploma in Nursing. The program became the model for nursing education around the country.

The first university program in nursing was opened in 1910 at the University of Minnesota, and the first degree was awarded in 1919. The program was three years of university study in basic sciences and liberal arts followed by two and one-half years in a hospital school of nursing. Students were awarded a Bachelor of Science.

In the 1950s, community colleges began to offer two-year, associate's degree programs in nursing. In 1965, an American Nurses Association report suggested that hospital-based programs be eliminated, and that all nursing education take place in colleges and universities. Of 1,869 registered nursing programs in the U.S. today, just 67 are diploma programs with more programs closing every year. Nearly 40% of nurses hold a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) as their highest level of education. RN to BSN programs allow nurses who hold a Diploma in Nursing or Associate of Nursing to earn a BSN in 18 months to two years.
Nurses in the U.S. are trained to be generalists. Nurses who wish to specialize in advanced practice areas such as anesthesia, critical care, nurse practitioner, and midwifery complete graduate programs leading to a Master of Science in Nursing. Additionally, doctoral programs in nursing prepare nurses for advanced practice, clinical specialties, research, and teaching.

After completion of their nursing program, students must sit for and pass the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX-RN) in order to apply for RN licensure. The NCLEX-RN is the same no matter the educational preparation. Each state has a nurse licensure board that sets standards for the profession and as well as the scope of practice.

When nurse licensure boards in the U.S. look at applicants who have been educated outside of the U.S., they require the foreign nursing program to be comparable to nursing programs in the U.S., so they will look for the following:

- Was the nursing program at the post-secondary level? All nursing education programs in the U.S. are at the post-secondary level. In some countries, especially in the former U.S.S.R., first-level nurses are trained at the secondary school level or a combination of secondary and post-secondary school.
- Was the nursing program a first-level nursing program? Like the U.S., many countries nursing

train nurses at different levels. Applicants who have graduated from a second-level nursing program must apply for LPN licensure and are not eligible to apply for RN licensure.

- Was the nursing program a general nursing program? Because registered nurses in the U.S. are trained as generalists, nurses educated outside of the U.S. must have completed a general nursing program. Midwives, registered psychiatric nurses (RPN), rural health nurses, or other specialty nurses would not be eligible for RN licensure in the U.S.
- Was the nursing program accredited or recognized? Nurse licensure applicants in the U.S. must have graduated from an accredited nursing program, and, conversely, foreign nurse applicants must have graduated from a nursing program that was accredited by the appropriate government body and must be recognized by the appropriate nursing body in the country.
- Did the nursing curriculum have sufficient instructional hours in main areas of nursing? In order to be accredited and maintain accreditation, nursing programs in the U.S. must have a sufficient number of instructional hours in areas such as medical and surgical nursing, psychiatric/mental health nursing, pediatric nursing, and obstetrics. Foreign nurse licensure applicants must have graduated from nursing programs that meet or exceed the standards required by accreditation bodies and state nurse licensure boards.
- Is the applicant a nurse? Because it can be difficult for doctors educated outside the U.S. to earn medical licensure in the U.S., these doctors frequently apply for RN licensure in the U.S. Applicants who have not completed a first-level general nursing program are not eligible to apply for nurse licensure in the U.S.

Kate Freeman, SpanTran: The Evaluation Company

STREAM: Training and Good Practice Platform for Credential Evaluators

STREAM is a free training and good practice platform in credential evaluation for admissions officers. While geared towards an European audience, the platform has attracted more than 750 participants worldwide since its launch in September 2015.

Admissions Officers

STREAM is useful for anyone interested in learning how to recognize foreign qualifications following the internationally agreed upon principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC). The platform consists of training in the practical implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention as well as discussion of real cases.

Why create a free training and good practice platform for admissions officers? The STREAM project aims to assist in the removal of mobility obstacles for students through the streamlining of region-wide recognition processes. Admissions officers are targeted because most recognition decisions are made in higher education institutions, while it is not always clear how existing good practice should be interpreted.

Training

The training part of the platform consists of 4 modules: 1) Introduction to recognition, 2) Quality and Legitimacy, 3) Credential Evaluation and Assessing, and 4) Information Search.

The training is designed for those who do not have much time at hand and caters to self-paced learning. For each module and sub-module, learning outcomes are formulated. Summaries of key points, exercises, and quizzes are used to help participants to make the content their own.

Real Cases

In addition to the training, the platform allows participants to post questions and ask advice from peers on the 'Real cases' section. Recent cases that that have discussed include assistance on determining the level of a qualification and the handling of refugee qualifications.

STREAM team

The project is financed by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Commission and the STREAM consortium partners. The consortium is composed of the NARICs from France, Denmark, Lithuania, Netherlands (coordinator), Ireland, Italy and Latvia. In addition, other stakeholders are included: the European University Association (EUA), Tuning, the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), the European Student Union, a special advisor from the US Network for Education Information (USNEI), and the Vice-President of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee.

Interested? You can register to STREAM via: http://onlinecourse.ning.com/?xgi=1Tx9lKNyVnYvuC
The platform is open till 31 March 2016.

More information about the project can be found at: http://www.enic-naric.net/stream-the-online-training-platform-for-admissions-officers.aspx

Jenneke Lokhoff, EP-Nuffic
Katrien Bardoel, EP-Nuffic
Bas Wegewijs, EP-Nuffic

Refugee Credential Recognition for U.S. Admissions Decisions

According to the U.N. High Commission for Refugees, more than 40 million people across the globe have been forced to flee their homes as a result of war, famine, and political instability. Migrants to Europe have reached the 1 million mark (Denver Post, 12/23/2015). In September 2015, President Obama directed U.S. officials to prepare for at least 10,000 Syrian refugees over the next year. With this type of forced global migratory activity, the number of individuals seeking admission to U.S. universities without adequate educational documentation is bound to increase. And there is no national policy on how to address this situation.

U.S. higher education is decentralized. There is no one government entity that determines admission criteria. The U.S. Department of Education is mainly focused on federal issues dealing with funding, research, prohibiting discrimination, and focusing national attention on key educational issues. Education is primarily a State and local responsibility. Within each State, the source of university admission document requirements may come from various sources, including accreditation boards, the State government, Boards of Regents, and specific university departments, to name just a few. As a result, and with 4600+ degree-granting institutions in the U.S., the possibilities for variation in processes is almost endless.

There are a number of best practices that can help is this situation. For one thing, students seeking admission without complete documentation is not a new phenomenon, nor exclusively international. So the first step is to determine whether there is already a policy in place at your institution that addresses exceptions to standard admission requirements. It may reside in another office such as the Registrar's office, the Graduate School, or elsewhere. If such a policy exists, you are in luck and can follow that.

If there is not such a policy, you have an opportunity to create one that meets the needs of your university while helping a prospective student. Here are a few suggestions to help you work your way through this process.

Know your campus. This includes knowing the standard admission requirements and what documents are necessary. Requirements can run the gamut from open admission where documentation is unnecessary, to requiring tangible and official proof of graduation from high school or university. The source for such requirement can vary, ranging from State government, other governmental entities, accreditation boards, specific departments, and more. The type and origin of documents may vary as well. Ideally these are posted on school web pages, in manuals, or identified through training.
Know who to contact. This could be university administration, the representative of a graduate school or department, the Registrar, or other subject matter experts.

Determine what documents the student can submit. Discuss this with the student at length and in detail. Information should include dates attended (including length of time since completing the program), names of institutionsb and documents in native language and English. You may have them write it out if it's in a different language (e.g., Cyrillic, Greek). Have the individual look at your resources and point out what they are referencing. Have them describe the subjects they studied. Ask what a credential gave access to in their home country and what the next higher level of education is. Ask about terminal benchmark credentials leading into the workforce (to differentiate from academic credentials).

If documentation is less than complete, ask why they have what they have, why they don't have a complete set, and why they cannot get an official set. Ask them to describe situations affecting their ability to get necessary documents. Ask about any policy of the country regarding issuing duplicates.

Know the resources that are at your disposal to research the student's situation. Contact colleagues such as officers at other US universities or EducationUSA Advisors. Reach out to organizations such as NOKUT, EP-Nuffic, Fulbright, AMIDEAST, NAFSA, TAICEP, AACRAO, and independent credential evaluation agencies, to name a few. Check various communication media such as news

(print, electronic), the web, or social media. Use publications such as *NAFSA news*, *International Educator, TAICEP Talk, ACE Digest*, ECE's *The Connection*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *IIE Scholar Rescue Fund Beacon*, IIE blog, *The PIE News*, and others. It may be possible for the student to work with a faculty member to assess knowledge, take tests for credit, or to test into a higher course level and, if successful, receive retroactive credit. There may be potential flexibilities in the education sector that can allow for admission options that might initially seem out of reach to a student with non-existent or incomplete documentation.

Analyze the information and establish an assessment of the incomplete or missing academic credentials. In your report, include how the documents provided by the student fit into the education system of the home country, and what they would be comparable or equivalent to in the U.S. education system. Work with the individual on your campus who is authorized to make a decision about the acceptance of the incomplete or missing documents, or establish that you will make those decisions. Keep the final report as part of the student's record for future reference.

Ideally, you want a process that is formalized, transparent, and accessible. In doing all of this, you want to balance compassion with practicality in meeting the needs of your university and the student. As a representative of your institution, you are responsible for practicing due diligence in carrying out the mission of your university. As a fellow human being, it is worth remembering that behind each request is an individual who wishes to better her or his circumstances.

Jeanie Bell, University of Colorado Boulder

Regional Education Harmonization Efforts in the East African Community

Leaders in East Africa have developed a regional intergovernmental organization, the East African Community (EAC), to encourage economic, social, and political cooperation and integration within the area. The establishing treaty came into force in 2000, with Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda as founding members. Burundi and Rwanda joined in 2007, while South Sudan is currently awaiting admission. The integration process began with customs and tariffs and has shifted to the development of a shared currency more recently. These changes are ongoing and will impact the education sector, as it is understood to be a vital part of the regional economy.

East African regional integration is not a new idea; various cooperation mechanisms, like the shared railway system of the colonial era, have long been employed across the region. After independence, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania worked together on a range of common economic issues, including shared postal services and an airline. In fact, the East African Community existed from 1967 to 1977, with very similar goals to those being discussed today. That body collapsed due to disagreements over politics and economics, but promises were made to find ways to continue cooperating and to strengthen commonalities. People who remember the fruits of this early collaboration have never given up their dreams for reintegration, and those that remember the upheaval associated with the dissolution of the first EAC are dedicated to making its modern incarnation last.

Credential evaluators might remember the former EAC era as the time of the East African Examinations Council (EAEC) and the University of East Africa, with campuses in each member country. The stalwart Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA) was also formed during this period to support the growing higher education sector. The modern educational systems of these countries continue to reflect gains made during that time period, from the structure of their examinations to the organization of their public universities. This indicates that a renewed EAC will have a similarly lasting impact on the educational systems of the member states. Discussions about everything from curricular harmonization to increasing the role of Kiswahili indicate that the involved parties from the national ministries, examination boards, and university commissions have big ideas for its implementation.

One of the main goals of the EAC was to implement a common market with the open exchange of goods, services, and labor across the region. Mutual recognition of degrees is seen as critical to the mobility of labor across borders and has been given special attention. Article 12 of the Common Market Protocol calls for the development of a regional qualifications framework (QF). Due to pre-existing disparities among the nations in regards to QF development, it was not considered to be feasible to wait for a ground-up solution. The IUCEA, with a newly revitalized role under the EAC, was tasked with developing the higher education framework.

The resulting East African Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (EAQFHE) was approved last year and will begin operationalization soon. Some of the more relevant features are a shared credit accumulation and transfer system with a defined credit value and the development of national and regional qualification registers. Member states are tasked with developing their own national qualification frameworks which will be aligned to the regional QF. IUCEA also developed a regional quality assurance (QA) system for higher education that has been introduced over the past few years. A network of QA professionals in the region was established to support the intrepid university staff that implements these new programs. Their focus has been on training and documentation, since benchmarking and a culture of quality assurance are relatively new ideas in these countries.

Students have concerns that differ from those of university administrators. They want to know about mobility between schools, levels, and countries, how their credentials will be treated by schools and employers in neighboring countries, and what will happen if they transfer between institutions. Theoretically, the qualification frameworks should help students be treated fairly. Because their education can be pegged to national standards that correspond to the regional framework, they should be more employable and capable of continuing their education at the next level across the EAC countries. Another key provision of regional integration is the harmonization of fees at public universities. In combination with relaxed border and visa controls between the countries, the assurance of the standardized tuition rates across the region should encourage mobility, though it is unclear how this will impact private university tuition rates.

As private institutions have flourished over the past few years across East Africa, EAC integration will ultimately have to address the differences between public and private university accreditation across the region. Currently, those decisions are being left to the respective national accreditation structures and bodies, but the variability in quality among recognized programs will need further discussion if EAC stakeholders are to accurately capture information for qualification registers, or to educate students about their options. It remains to be seen whether the EAC will endorse a regional

accreditation solution.

In addition to their work on regional standards for qualifications, the EAC education agenda is primarily focused on curricular harmonization. At the time of the East African Examinations Council, the three founding nations of the EAC had a shared educational structure. Sharing a curriculum and examinations regime was fairly simple then, but now there are several different educational systems being used across the region, with different benchmarks and program lengths. It is clear that compromise will be needed to achieve harmonization goals, even after all programs attain compliance with the regional QF. Optimists note that most of the current EAC members have 16 total years of primary, secondary, and initial university education, though the allotment of time between the levels varies between nations. Realists note that the distinctions between three and four year university degrees are contentious, as they are in many other parts of the world. Consequently, the initial curricular harmonization programs are wisely focused on early childhood and primary education programs, with some vocational education also having potential for shared curricula. Over the next few years, we will see more activity in this area, as the role of the national examinations bodies are clarified and consensus forms around the extent of curricular harmonization. If the EAC nations agree to a regional educational system and structure, there will be major reforms that affect the secondary and university levels as well.

Since the EAC is an intergovernmental organization, decisions that it makes must also be enacted by its member nations. Educational reforms intended to make an individual country compliant with EAC standards are dependent upon national education stakeholders. Budgets and funding, staffing, and institutional and governmental support are all major concerns, particularly considering that these were issues that examining boards, accreditation bodies, ministries, universities, and other constituents contended with before their governments made assurances to the EAC. The following is a brief summary of the current state of education and educational harmonization efforts in each EAC country.

Burundi

The educational system of Burundi was in shambles following their civil war, and the Burundian government recognizes that rebuilding the educational sector is critical to revitalizing the country. Their educational system is currently 6+4+3+4, with compulsory education only through primary school. Reforms have enacted the LMD structure used in other part of the Francophone world for university level education. Burundi has seen significant growth in private education, and the National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE), which is responsible for overseeing the higher education sector, will be critical to enacting any new education policies. The 2011 Burundi Higher Education Law was intended to bring QA to the system and to help regulate growth in the sector. This legislation was written with EAC integration in mind. Burundi has yet to develop a national QF.

Rwanda

Rwanda has been systematically upgrading their educational sector for years. They have a 6+3+3+4 system, organized around a national QF with a shared credit and QA system since 2007. They also have 9 years of compulsory education through lower secondary school. Their national QF has a section specifically for higher education institutions, which are currently overseen by the Higher Education Council (HEC). Rwanda is the first member state to attempt to implement EAC provisions for the QF,

so all of the member nations are watching to see if they achieve improvement in desired outcomes regarding lifelong learning opportunities, improved outcome measures, increased international credibility, and more. Rwanda was also the first member nation to harmonize public university fees for students from other EAC partner states. They are setting a high standard for their fellow member states to follow.

Uganda

Uganda still operates under the "advanced level" British model of education that was used during the colonial and early- independence period throughout the East African region, with 7-4-2-3 years of combined primary, secondary, and university education. Uganda has universal primary education, but its enactment has been problematic, and it is unclear how compulsory or free education actually is for Ugandan students and families. The Business, Technical and Vocational Training (BTEVT) Act of 2008 introduced a QF for vocational credentials only. Vocational education in Uganda received special attention because of its importance in the labor market, and there is currently no national QF which encompasses all levels of education. This implementation will be essential for post-secondary mobility. In 2015, the Ugandan government called for fee harmonization for students from EAC member states at their public institutions, but this has yet to be enacted. The IUCEA continues to operate out of the Ugandan capital of Kampala.

Kenya

Kenya has an 8+4+4 educational structure with free and compulsory primary education, and free secondary education, promised to every student. Despite these governmental assurances, access remains a problem throughout the system. This is being exacerbated as the first recipients of free primary education have begun reaching university age. Kenya is currently developing a 10 stage national QF, the Kenya Qualifications Framework (KQF), which aligns with the 10 stages proposed by the EAC. The ministry has already noted increased ease of international credential evaluation in comparison to the KQF. It is, however, intended to have separate sections for the vocational and academic sectors, which may cause utilization and standardization problems in the future. Kenya has made efforts to harmonize tuition for other EAC students at their public universities and has included South Sudanese students in their proposals.

Tanzania

Tanzania has the same educational structure that was found in Uganda. The government eliminated tuition at public primary schools in 2002, and this level of education is compulsory. Tanzania has volunteered to host the newly formed East African Kiswahili Commission and will be heavily involved in the language initiatives that will be part of shared regional education curricula. The Tanzanian Qualifications Framework (TzQF) was proposed in 2009 and was built upon the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) framework already developed by the National Council for Technical Education (NACTE). The TzQF has 10 levels, similar to the EAC standard, and is the only comprehensive national QF in the region besides the Rwandan QF. Tanzania has not introduced a formal fee harmonization plan, but the IUCEA is encouraging its member universities, including those in Tanzania, to make this an institutional policy, even if it has yet to become a national policy.

Resources

African Union. 2014. AU Outlook on Education Report: East African Community. http://www.adeanet.org/portalv2/sites/default/files/au_outlook_report_eac_english_version_2014_web.pdf
East African Community. *Education Sector Overview.* http://www.eac.int/education/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=62&Itemid=117
East African Community. *Regional Report: Harmonisation of the East African Education Systems & Training Curricula*. http://www.eac.int/education/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=73&Itemid=145
Inter-University Council for East Africa. *Developing a Regional Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in East Africa*. http://www.iucea.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=317&Itemid=279
Inter-University Council for East Africa. *East African Quality Assurance Initiative*. http://iucea1.org/qawp/
Inter-University Council for East Africa and East African Business Council. 2014. *Situation Composite EAC Report*. http://www.percpaceinternational.com/uploads/1/6/0/2/1602844/composite_situation_report_2014_2.doc
UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. *Kenya*. http://uil.unesco.org/fileadmin/keydocuments/LifelongLearning/en/Kenya.pdf
UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. *Rwanda*. http://uil.unesco.org/fileadmin/keydocuments/LifelongLearning/en/Rwanda.pdf

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. *Tanzania*. http://uil.unesco.org/fileadmin/keydocuments/LifelongLearning/en/Tanzania.pdf
UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. *Uganda*. http://uil.unesco.org/fileadmin/keydocuments/LifelongLearning/en/Uganda.pdf

Martha Van Devender, Educational Credential Evaluators

Groningen Declaration Network Verification Task Force

Introduction: Origins of the Groningen Declaration Network

The Groningen Declaration sprang from the realization that digital student data, as stored by (national) digital student data depositories, may function as mobility boosters for students, HEIs, employers, recognition authorities and funding authorities. From 2007 onwards, the annual European Association for International Education (EAIE) conferences were used as the first sounding board to discuss, debate, and test this fledgling idea, out of the conviction that digital student data should become the norm for the admissions process in higher education (and in other sectors), rather than paper documents that are still in use even today.

By 2010, EAIE's Board decided to establish a new Task Force, Digital Student Data Portability (DSDP). This Task Force was initiated by Herman de Leeuw and Simone Ravaioli.

While DSDP has been moderately successful within EAIE itself, it was instantly very successful across the Atlantic. Right from its inception, DSDP succeeded in getting the attention from a number of big US stakeholders that subsequently became the founding fathers of the Groningen Declaration Network: The National Student Clearinghouse (NSC); the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO); and Stanford University. Stanford was already involved in a full day workshop at the 2009 EAIE conference (in Madrid); in 2010, the NSC president, Rick Torres, co-presented on DSDP, for which he hopped onto a plane to Nantes on Wednesday afternoon, flying back again already the next evening.

The origins of the Groningen Declaration Network (GDN) can be traced to the Dutch *Diplomaregister*, an online portal that is used by graduates of the Dutch education system who can access their educational attainments and share them in a secure way with other stakeholders. The Diplomaregister is hosted by DUO – the Education Executive Agency, which is part of the Netherlands Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. DUO used the Groningen Declaration to mark the opening of the *Diplomaregister.*

The moment the *Diplomaregister* was made available to graduates, the purpose for the Groningen Declaration was also made. For citizens who want to access their digital educational data and share them with others, acceptance on the receiving end is a prerequisite. And this is what the Groningen Declaration seeks to achieve. Right from the start, the initiative proved to be the right idea at the right time. Without much prior personal contact, all the parties invited instantly accepted the invitation to come together and discuss the usefulness of digital student data for the purpose of global human capital cross border mobility. First timers already included in 2012 were: the Russian Ministry of Education; the China Higher Education Student Information and Career Center (CHESICC); the Indian Central Depository Service (CDSL), developers of the Indian National Academic Database; the South African National Learners Records Database; the Norwegian FS system; and many others.

The GDN has been growing ever since, with a second annual network meeting in Beijing in 2013 (hosted by the CHESICC and the main conveners: AACRAO, DUO and NSC), a third one in 2014 in Washington, D.C. (hosted by the main conveners and Georgetown University), last year's event in Málaga, Spain (hosted by the main conveners and the University of Málaga) and with this year's event to take place in Cape Town, to be hosted by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the main conveners as part of SAQA's 20 year anniversary.

Promoting Verification Policy and Best Practices

As hinted above, acceptance of digital student data as proof of educational attainment is crucial to both the students and the intended recipients. And one way to further this is to provide access to digital verification of educational attainment. As soon as stakeholders begin processing applications by utilizing digital student data rather than paper documents, the probative value of digital data will prevail over current prejudice that favors paper documents over digital data sets. If that happens, digital data would be viewed as (dematerialized) "legal tender", to digitally certify educational attainment.

Setting up a GDN Verification Task Force

At the Annual Groningen Declaration Network (GDN) meeting in Málaga, Spain in May 2015, the Executive Committee decided to set up a Task Force (TF) that would engage with issues on verification policy and practice. In addition, they would use their expertise to identify, consolidate, and share best practices in qualifications verification worldwide. The Task Force would report to the Executive Committee and would also contribute to the next annual GDN Meeting that will be hosted by the South African Qualifications Authority in Cape Town from 17th – 19th May 2016. As an ongoing issue in student mobility and credential evaluation, verification was deemed significant and therefore the executive committee added Verification Policies and Best Practices to the other active TFs (Business Case, Dissemination, Empowering Cross Border Enrolment and Student Loan Portability, Mid-Term Vision, and Pilots).

Areas of Focus

The Task Force will undertake the following activities in six areas of focus:

- Deliberate upon current thinking in verification processes
- Determine and share best practices in verification
- Identify challenges and explore solutions
- Update the wider audience on the TF activities via a periodic newsletter
- Assist the GDN program committee in planning for the 2016 GDN Annual Meeting in Cape Town
- Develop paper(s) to be presented at the GDN meeting in 2016

The Task Force's program, which includes its goals and outcomes, currently consists of the following efforts:

1. Explore the importance and current status of verifications globally.
   This task will address issues including investigating the global concern about verifications, and examine gaps in current recognition practices, especially weaknesses in paper-based practices. The task force will also look at whether verification offers a better alternative to current practices in recognition, and why.
2. Identify and consolidate a list of global, national, and central student data depositories that authorities can turn to for verification of student data, and map those depositories in as much detail as possible.
   The depositories will be categorized based on their levels of accessibility, security, and whether they are a paid service or open source.
3. Identify current verification approaches, systems, methodologies, and steps.
   In this item, the task force will determine what verification-related information is required, what challenges are presented by the information provided, and what gaps exist in verification-related information.
4. Create a platform and link with the recently established African Qualifications Verification Network (AQVN), engaging with members on this effort.
5. Assist verification partners to develop verification related user manuals and standard operating procedures.

6. Assist the GDN Conference Program Committee for the 2016 GDN Annual Meeting, influencing the program committee members to adopt verification as one of the themes of the meeting, collaborating with other stakeholders in developing a focused session during the GDN, and presenting papers at the meeting.
7. Take up other issues, such as qualification fraud, bogus institutions, and degree mills. Identify best practices in signing service level agreements (SLAs) with national bodies and institutions on verification, as well as the possibility of continuing professional development and exchanges between task force members.

The TAICEP representative on the task force, Margaret Wenger, encourages input and feedback from TAICEP members regarding our work.

GDN Verification Task Force Chair
Navin Vasudev, Deputy Director Foreign Qualifications Evaluation and Advisory Services, South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) - South Africa

Members
- Amee Shroff, Head, International Relations and New Projects, CDSL/NAD (National Academic Database) - India
- Baiba Ramina, Chair of the Board, AIC (Academic Information Center) - Latvia
- Margaret Wenger, Director of Evaluation, ECE (Educational Credential Evaluators, Inc.), representing TAICEP (The Association for International Credential Evaluation Professionals) - USA
- Neil Robinson, Executive Director, Academic Services and Registrar, University of Melbourne and Chair, Digital Student Data Project - Australia
- Ning Xiao Hua, Deputy Director-General, CHESICC (China Higher Education Student Information and Career Center) - China
- Ricardo Torres, CEO and President, National Student Clearinghouse - USA
- Vera Skorobogatova, Head, Glavexpertcentr (Russian ENIC) - Russian Federation

Observers
- Andy Dowling, CEO, Digitary – Ireland
- Patrick Corcoran, Senior Specialist, Department of Migration Management, IOM (International Organization for Migration) - Switzerland

Further Reading

Groningen Declaration Network: http://www.groningendeclaration.org/
Groningen Declaration Network Newsletter: http://gdn.uma.es/

Margaret Wenger, Educational Credential Evaluators and TAICEP
Herman de Leeuw, Secretary, Groningen Declaration Network
Navin Vasudev, South African Qualifications Authority

Upcoming TAICEP Events

2016 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

TAICEP has been hard at work on making arrangements for the 2016 Annual Conference!

Conference dates:
9/26/16 – 9/28/16

The University of Chicago Gleacher Center
450 North Cityfront Plaza Drive
Chicago, IL 60611

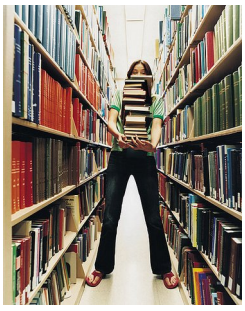
Brief conference details:

<u>September 26, 2016</u>
TAICEP will host preconference workshops from 12p-5p at the Gleacher Center
TAICEP will host a reception from 6:30p-8:30p.

<u>September 27 and 28, 2016</u>
TAICEP will provide breakfast and lunch at the Gleacher Center.
TAICEP will host all breakouts/workshops at the Gleacher Center.

More details, including the hotel and pricing, will be made available soon so follow us on Twitter and Facebook, or look for updates on the website and in the next newsletter!

Add to Your Library



Very soon, TAICEP will be unveiling our brand new Verification component of the Resources for Members section of the TAICEP website. In the meantime, here are some additional resources to add to your library or verification tool chest.

- Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools. Sino-Foreign Cooperative Education Institutions and Projects. http://www.crs.jsj.edu.cn/index.php/default/news/index/59 and http://www.crs.jsj.edu.cn/index.php/default/approval/orglists/2 and http://www.crs.jsj.edu.cn/index.php/default/approval/orglists/1
- *Groningen Declaration Network Newsletter.* http://gdn.uma.es/
- INFORESURS, new online verification service in Ukraine, replacing the OSVITA verification site. Inforesurs is only able to verify new academic degrees issues since 2015, which are issued by individual institutions rather than national diplomas issued by the Ministry. http://www.inforesurs.gov.ua/info-per/inforesurs-per-doc.php

- *Learn about Provincial and Territorial Education Systems in Canada*. The Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials. http://www.cicic.ca/851/Education/index.canada
- *Qualifications Recognition for Refugees*. Webinar and handout. European Association for International Education. http://www.eaie.org/training/webinars/webinar-detail/qualifications-recognition-refugees.html
- *Universidad Andres Bello* online verification. http://certificados.unab.cl/
- University of Nairobi graduation lists dating from 1967 to 2014. http://www.uonbi.ac.ke/node/4307

From the TAICEP Website

ONLINE RESOURCES

Online Resources - Now Available to Members!

Have you been on TAICEP's new website? There you'll find a wealth of information, including an updated section on online and print resources. These resources -- compiled by your colleagues as they conduct their daily work in the field of international credential evaluation – represent a one-stop shop for the reference materials you need to do your job. Print resources, online resources, and professional resources that will aid not only in your work but in your professional development as well. They're all in one easy-to-access place. For members only!

Do yourself a favor, and explore http://www.taicep.org/taiceporgwp/professional-development/resources/reference-materials/available-online-resources/.

LesLee Clauson Eicher, AACRAO International Education Services

NEW WEBSITE

TAICEP recently launched a new and improved website. The new design is modern and user friendly, making information easy for members and soon-to-be members to locate. In case you haven't yet had a chance to check it out, here are some of the improvements and features now available.

The home page highlights recent posts, upcoming events, and our most recent newsletter. For more information on any of the topics, simply click on the icon. On the right side of the home page we have a "Tell a Colleague" feature that allows you to share information about TAICEP. A detailed, tailored email will be sent to the address provided. This tool makes it easier for our members to educate others about what TAICEP is and does and ensures a consistent message is shared across the world.

The "About Us" page includes the definition of our profession, our principles, organizational structure, current and past leadership and FAQs. This is helpful for current members that don't yet fully understand what TAICEP is all about and for anyone interested in becoming a member.

The “Become a Member” page (in addition to having information for those interested in joining TAICEP) houses our current member directory. You must be a current member and log into your account to access this information. All current members are listed in the directory however, anyone that has requested not to have their contact information shared will not have their email address or phone number shared. Using the search fields above the list you can search members based on certain criteria. The area of expertise field allows you to select one area and anyone who has indicated they have at least some experience in that area will appear in the list. To see the specific level of expertise one has, you can simply click on their hyperlinked name to see their full profile.

Another exciting addition to the member profile section is that you can add a profile picture. Having a profile photo allows for a more personal connection when contacting people and at this year’s conference, you’ll have no trouble recognizing those with whom you’ve been communicating all year! Whether or not you chose to add a photo, please take this time to review your profile details and ensure everything is up to date. Once you login at the top of the website page, you will see a “My Profile” option where you can review and update your profile as necessary.

On the “Meetings” page, we have information about all past and future meetings/conferences. Programs and general information of past meetings is available to all and certain items, such as presentation materials are restricted for current members only.

The “Professional Development” section is the result of efforts of both the Professional Development Committee and the Resources for Members Committee. It includes all newsletters, all prior free webinars, information on certification (still in its early stages), and a thorough section of resources for members. Within the resources for members subsection we have available online resources (which is further broken down into subcategories), recommended publications for international credential evaluators listed by country or region, and finally a compendium for professional development opportunities across the world.

The “Sponsorship” page explains benefits of sponsorship, the various levels offered and it highlights current year sponsors. If your organization is interested in sponsoring TAICEP, have them check out this page!

TAICEP offers free job postings on our website. Please be sure to check out this page if you are considering a change.

The final section of our website is for more administrative use by members only. It has talking points to be used when letting others know about TAICEP, it includes our logo for use in email signatures and promotional items, and supporting information for our recent elections. New subsections will be added here as necessary.

Now that we’ve covered the meat of the website make sure you check out TAICEP’s social side! On the top left of the site we have links to our Facebook, flickr, YouTube, Twitter, and LinkedIn pages. Follow us wherever you socialize!

Michelle Moraes, Academic Evaluation Services

Press Releases

In January 2016, TAICEP released the Definition of a Credential Evaluation Professional and the Statement of Ethics.

Definition of a Credential Evaluation Professional

A credential evaluation professional is an individual who is involved with the assessment and/or recognition of international educational credentials. The evaluations provided by credential evaluation professionals assist educational institutions, regulatory bodies, assessment agencies, employers, government authorities and others to appropriately recognize international education.

Responsibilities of a Credential Evaluation Professional:

- promote fair, credible, standardized methods for evaluation
- collaborate to encourage consistency and to facilitate the portability of evaluations at the regional, national and global levels
- ascribe to the Statement of Ethics
- encourage equitable access to services and transparency of the process

Statement of Ethics for a Credential Evaluation Professional:

Academic documents may confer on the holder certain rights, or confirm the acquisition of skills and knowledge. The documents can afford benefits of both a status and monetary nature. For that reason, the professionals in the field of credential evaluation must adhere to a strict code of ethics.

A credential evaluation professional will:

1. Provide the highest level of service and not discriminate on any grounds such as the applicant's gender, race, color, disability, language, religion, sexual orientation, political or other opinion; national, ethnic or social origin; association with a national minority, property, birth or other status; or on the grounds of any other circumstance not related to the merits of the qualification for which recognition is sought.
2. Distinguish between personal convictions and professional duties, and not allow personal beliefs to interfere with the fair and accurate evaluation of credentials.
3. Ensure fairness and transparency in all aspects of the assessment process.
4. Ensure that evaluation decisions are consistent and are based on appropriate information (taking into consideration institution, organizational or governmental regulations and/or policies, as applicable).
5. Strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing knowledge and skills, by encouraging the professional development of colleagues, and by fostering the aspirations of potential members of the profession.

Read the full Press Release at http://www.taicep.org/taiceporgwp/press-releases/

Notes from the Field – Notes from the First General Meeting

Thoughts on the First General Meeting

At the beginning of October 2015, TAICEP held its very first general meeting. Over the course of the meeting, I've heard numerous times that the subject of credential assessment is not always on the agenda at conferences covering topics in international education. Here at the TAICEP conference, one of the primary goals was to inform and to collaborate with the professionals specifically in the area of international credential assessment. Despite this being the first general meeting, TAICEP functions on a large scale, bringing together not just credential evaluation professionals in the US but also professionals from other countries. Seven different countries were represented at the conference, and hundreds of people from AACRAO, ENIC-NARICs in Europe, universities in Quebec, universities on the East Coast, and other institutions attended.

The first general meeting of TAICEP included sessions that were comprehensive and interesting to both newcomers and experienced professionals alike. The meeting addressed different aspects of the evaluation process, such as verification or authentication of documents. It also brought to light some of the possible concerns and challenges that the evaluator faces, such as unavailability of documents due to a political situation in the country of study or raised ethical questions and questions of privacy. For example, would it be ethical to use login information, provided by the student, to a student's university account? The conference members brought up questions about rare situations in which the usual formula does not necessarily work. The discussion gave some clues about where to look and what criteria to use in determining educational level and institutional recognition. Although there is no ready answer to these questions, the sessions served as a kick-starter for further conversation and analysis.

Although TAICEP attendees work within the same field and deal with international credentials on a daily basis, we have differing perspectives on the credential evaluation process. As an evaluator working within the US, I was unaware of some of the differing perspectives, evaluation methodologies, and ways in which credentials are treated in other parts of the world. I came to know a few evaluation agencies and associations' methodologies through their published guides. Prime examples would be AACRAO publications and the guides provided by NUFFIC (currently EP-Nuffic), which include equivalency recommendations, as well as resources available through the CICIC website, offering information about recognition, professional mobility, etc. Yet, I didn't know about the existence of the Australian Qualifications Framework and the way it affects equivalency in Australia, the Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework, and the Lisbon Recognition Convention Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications.

As a first impression, there is more legitimacy to the assessment provided by evaluation institutions whose assessment policies and procedures adhere to a qualifications framework and are regulated by a government body. As mentioned in one of the conference sessions, another way to make sure that the assessment is fair and to improve the quality of the assessment is to conduct peer review. This is what the network of ENICs-NARICs does with its System of Quality Assurance for the Recognition Networks (SQUARE) project (see http://www.enic-naric.net/fileusers/SQUARE%20Protocol.pdf). Members of ENIC-NARIC conduct visits to other ENIC-NARIC offices and follow a specific protocol to evaluate the procedures done at those offices, they share information, etc. Such measures are meant to provide a kind of transparency in the evaluation process and, thus, guarantee its fairness.

The international education field and the profession of an evaluator developed separately from the governmental branches in the United States. Within the US system of credential evaluation, evaluation agencies have very little or no support from the government and get financial support through their client base. In this scenario, it may be an issue to achieve free sharing of information and transparency of the evaluation process, as credential evaluation agencies compete with each other. Considering this situation, the establishment of TAICEP is a step forward. TAICEP's work in organizing conferences and workshops and other events will hopefully encourage credential evaluation professionals to share and build mutually beneficial relations.

Unlike many other countries, there is no government regulatory body for credential evaluation services in the US, and credentials evaluation is handled by educational institutions, private credentials evaluation agencies (some of which belong to national member associations such as the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services / NACES), recruiters, professional licensing boards, and any number of other organizations, with varying degrees of training, resources, and consistency. One way to regulate the profession in the US is to have a credentialing process for evaluators. There was a good amount of excitement at the TAICEP conference over making this idea a reality.

I also want to point out that private evaluation agencies in the US often refer to their evaluations advisory and non-binding. While it may be common practice in the United States, my impression was that it is less so in other countries. It could be for such reasons as government support and adherence to a set number of rules and procedures used for foreign credential evaluations. The advisory nature of the evaluation protects the US agency from potential disagreement over the outcome of the evaluation, as it may express opinions which are different from the opinions held by other US evaluation institutions. These evaluations work as a form of guidance for the admitting institutions and leave it up to those institutions to make the final decision.

Just as with other US services, it is also up to the clients with which private evaluation agency they would rather work. This is where the advisory and non-binding nature of US evaluations, the agency's membership with NACES, and/or the favorable reputation of that private evaluation agency help navigate within the sea of possible evaluation outcomes and countless evaluation agencies that exist in the United States. I would expect this system to be in contrast with the system existing in Canada and the European countries, where evaluation services must be offered only by government regulated institutions.

Putting aside the discussion about the ways the evaluating institutions function in the US and in other parts of the world, members of the conference also asked the following question: what guides the credential evaluation professional in determining an educational equivalency? Some TAICEP conference members described the evaluation process as an art. It often comes down to personal preference. Precedent may also play an important role in the decision-making process. One of the concerns voiced over the course of the conference was the usage of "this is how we have always done it" explanation in recommending an equivalency.

On the other hand, evaluation agencies try to maintain a certain level of consistency and establish policies on how to approach various foreign credentials. As an example, the General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (GCE A-Level) examinations provide a great source of debate. GCE A-Levels are considered to be a secondary (benchmark) credential by some evaluation institutions but are

considered post-secondary/pre-university education by others. Some institutions recommend advanced credit, as the qualification constitutes a total of thirteen years of secondary studies, and others are reluctant to do so, since this qualification is still considered "secondary". For agencies that would recommend advanced credit, there may be cases where a student completed GCE examinations in their twelfth year of secondary studies. In these instances, for the sake of consistency, the agency may choose to still recommend advanced credit.

In other aspects, the educational equivalency can also be affected by the purpose of the evaluation. Receiving institutions, for example US nursing, cosmetology or massage therapy boards, may have their own criteria. They may require the applicant to provide evidence of completion of a number of training hours in a specific field or to have evidence that an overseas program covered the same type of content as the US program. (The name and purpose of the degree may not be enough to say that it is equivalent to a US degree with the same name and purpose. For instance, a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree from another country, although it may fulfill the requirements of the licensing authority in the country of study, may not necessarily translate into a US Bachelor of Science in Nursing, if it does not fulfill all the US board requirements.) In such cases, the evaluations are adjusted to fit the specifications set by the admitting institutions. When applying to graduate school, to a licensing board, enlisting with the military, etc., clients would want the evaluation to cater to their specific needs.

In addition to reasons already mentioned, evaluation methodologies and reports aren't the same across the board, because they depend on the educational system of the country producing the evaluation. The fact that there are many different educational systems in existence guarantees a continued discussion - comparison and contrast - in the evaluation methodologies and evaluation outcomes.

The TAICEP conference both began and ended on a positive note. A great number of ideas about how to make this association the most effective and worthwhile were put forward. I hope for TAICEP to succeed and grow, and continue to organize information-packed conferences, such as this first meeting, workshops, and maybe even podcasts.

Alina Trofimova, International Education Research Foundation, Inc.

Editor's Note: Presentation Materials from the First General Meeting are available to TAICEP members at http://www.taicep.org/taiceporgwp/meetings/2015-first-general-meeting/presentations/

First TAICEP General Meeting – Moving Our Profession Forward

The First TAICEP General Meeting, held in conjunction with the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC), was held in Toronto, Canada on October 2-3. 100 people attending made history by coming together for the first professional meeting of an association dedicated solely to the international credential evaluation profession. Feedback from attendees indicates that the majority felt the conference was relevant to their professional needs and goals. Highlights included praise for the quality and variety of sessions, the focus on the profession and the opportunity to network with people who share the interest in and passion for the field.

Here is what some of the attendees said:

“This First General Meeting was a well-organized summit of international credentials professionals with excellent speakers.” Andreas Arslan, Swedish Council for Higher Education

“During our two days together, it was so satisfying to be among professionals who understand international credential evaluation and how important our work is for students world- wide. The meeting had a warmth I’ve not experienced at other conference gatherings and that warmth came from all attendees – including the ‘dinosaurs’ and those who are new to the field of international credential evaluation.” Laurie Cook, University of Denver

“Being able to reach out, network and exchange ideas with others in the field of credential evaluation was uplifting, inspiring and validating. It was more, much more, than I hoped for.” Laurens Verkade, McGill University

TAICEP leaders, members and meeting attendees are grateful to the many people who made this gathering a success. Leading the way was the conference organizer, Susan Lindeblad and her team of volunteers. The conference would not have been possible without the contributions of the session presenters and the First General Meeting donors.

At the beginning of the meeting, the TAICEP Executive Committee members were not sure if or when we would hold another general meeting. As I announced at our closing lunch, the overwhelmingly positive response to this meeting helped us to decide to announce a second meeting in 2016. We are also planning a third meeting in 2017, and we will now call our meetings conferences.

Consistent with one of the Association's primary objectives to meet member needs, the leadership has carefully reviewed the meeting evaluations. We are a new association and despite the incredible success of our first meeting, we want to make the second one even better. Along with the praise for all facets of the meeting planning and execution, attendees voiced a few themes for improvement. Those included: a request for more time for networking, broadening session perspectives to include more voices from outside of North America, and lengthening the conference to two full days. Finally, for all of the people who suffered through the business meeting during lunch, we promise to schedule a dedicated business meeting and not impinge on valuable lunch networking time!

I am delighted to announce that Jeremy Mixell will be the Chair of the 2016 TAICEP Conference Planning Committee. He is already working with other TAICEP leaders on finalizing a conference site and dates. We will be integrating your many good suggestions into the next conference's planning.
I look forward to seeing 2015 attendees and even more TAICEP members and guests at the 2016 conference!

Margit Schatzman, Educational Credential Evaluators
TAICEP Past President

Thank You

As always, thank you to our wonderful and dedicated contributing authors. We are very appreciative of your expertise and time in helping to craft this useful publication.

- Kate Freeman, SpanTran: The Evaluation Company
- Jenneke Lokhoff, EP-Nuffic
- Katrien Bardoel, EP-Nuffic
- Bas Wegewijs, EP-Nuffic
- Jeanie Bell, University of Colorado Boulder
- Martha Van Devender, Educational Credential Evaluators
- Margaret Wenger, Educational Credential Evaluators
- Herman de Leeuw, Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs (DUO), Netherlands
- Navin Vasudev, South African Qualifications Authority
- LesLee Clauson Eicher, AACRAO International Education Services
- Michelle Moraes, Academic Evaluation Services
- Alina Trofimova, International Education Research Foundation, Inc.
- Margit Schatzman, Educational Credential Evaluators

In addition to our gracious contributors, we greatly appreciate our TAICEP Sponsors.

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International Academic Credential Evaluators

Friends of TAICEP:
A2Z Evaluations

Are you interested in joining the TAICEP Newsletter Team?
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