



## **UNESCO Global Convention - March 2019**

In December 2018, a report was submitted to The Association for International Credential Evaluation Professionals (TAICEP) membership on the first UNESCO Higher Education Section Meeting on the Future Global Convention on Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications. In March 2019, a second meeting was held. This report briefly describes that meeting and poses questions and ideas for consideration by the international credential evaluation community.

### **Goals of the Meeting Conveners**

The Goals of the UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education, Education Sector (ADG/ED) for the Global Convention are to:

- Increase access
- Secure recognition
- Improve university-to-university interactions
- Increase sharing and peace building
- Facilitate recognition of people on the move, including refugees and others

### **Observations on the Proceedings**

These personal observations provide an impression of the meeting and a sense of the human dimension of how the delegates approached their assignments.

- The group discussions of the Preamble and definitions were exacting in detail, often focusing on very specific country needs. Occasionally the topics highlighted were enlightening as they provided insight into the interests and priorities of specific countries.
- Even during the final review, a few delegates tried to make substantial changes, not just matters of clarity, grammar and consistency.
- Comments made by a small number of delegates demonstrated a lack of understanding of the function and work of international credential evaluators. Luckily, there were not too many such comments. But they emphasized the importance of TAICEP in articulating the role of international credential evaluators, the need for advocacy and the role professionals in the field can play in this environment.
- At one point there was a concern that one definition appeared to conflict with terms of the Bologna Declaration. It was highlighted that this is a Global Convention. There are many countries that are not a party to European agreements and conventions and they may not be supportive of the Eurocentric position. This exchange was a reminder of the truly international scale of this effort.
- The professionalism and concern with which delegates and experts approached their work was impressive. They carefully followed the changes to the text and its potential impact on the convention and, hence, its impact on learners.
- The chair did a great job of managing the process.
- Although at times, it seemed that the task might never be completed, the delegates and experts were successful in reviewing the entire document, including the Preamble and definitions.

## **The process continues...**

Now that the text of the Convention has been completed, it will be examined by the UNESCO General Conference with the goal of adoption in November 2019. If adopted by the General Conference, it will then be open for adoption by the member states.

## **Questions and thoughts**

*Why is this important?*

The Global Convention on Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications represents a new stage in the recognition of educational credentials across borders. We need to understand the implications of this development and how professionals in the field of international education can leverage global actions to the benefit of learners everywhere.

The regional recognition conventions are already playing a role in recognition across borders. The Global Convention builds on the previous regional initiatives.

*How do we, as professionals, think about this?*

Those in the profession of international credential evaluation need to consider how regional and global conventions impact their work. If a convention has been adopted, are credential evaluators from a signatory country obliged to follow its directives? How do national laws based on conventions impact the profession? Even if an international credential evaluator resides in a country that has not adopted a convention, will the transnational nature of the work be impacted?

*What is the impact on learners and others moving across borders?*

Will a global convention make life better for immigrants, refugees and workers? What has been the impact on world citizens of regional conventions?

*Who is not at the table?*

When a major player, such as the United States of America, is not officially represented at the UNESCO meeting, what are the results? The US is a major international education destination. It attracts immigrants from all parts of the world. How does its silence on matters of recognition of educational qualifications impact those inside and outside of the country?

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