Eighth Annual Groningen Declaration Network Meeting

24-26 April 2019

UPAEP – Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla
Puebla, Mexico

Executive Summary

PREFACE BY GDN PRESIDENT NEIL ROBINSON

Dear participants of the Groningen Declaration Network,

It is with pleasure that I present to you, on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Groningen Declaration Network, this Executive Report on the Eighth Annual Meeting of the Network, which was held this year at the Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla (UPAEP) in Puebla, Mexico. With this Eighth Annual Meeting, the GDN pledge to host our annual event on all continents has come to pass.

It is very satisfying to note that the network continues to attract new attendees, while at the same time retaining the majority of its earlier ones. To me, that confirms the ongoing relevance of the network, and it is all the more encouraging given the evolution of the GDN from a virtual network to an incorporated foundation. With some 140 delegates from 22 countries, the 2018 Annual Meeting was the most diverse yet, and the second event to provide simultaneous translation from English to Spanish, after the 2013 Annual Meeting in Beijing.

Some highlights for me were:

The call for the development of an ecosystem-based approach, with learner data depositories and service providers acting like credit card companies and banks – a vision first developed in 2013 by Guillermo Pablo López Andrade in his seminal article The Asia-Pacific Academic Credit and Qualifications Bank: A Proposal to Sustain and Enhance Human Capital Mobility.

Guillermo Pablo foresaw the possible emerging of a jungle of credentials, transparency and interoperability challenges and felt that learners' records should be made available in a coherent and easy way, so as to create a constantly evolving profile of a person's lifelong learning that can support transitions throughout that person's working life.

It is befitting that his main themes – sustainability, inclusiveness and human capital mobility – once again prominently figured in this year's meeting, in Puebla, Mexico, all the more so since he had been a driving force for Mexico hosting a future GDN event.

Sustainibility and human capital mobility are major goals for the GDN, as is inclusiveness.

As with previous meetings, calls for the adoption of digital credentialing in developing countries and providing arrangements for that were reiterated and will continue to be so. I hope that the GDN calls are heard, and that fruitful cooperative efforts will come as a result.

In his closing keynote, Venkataraman Balaji rightfully called the GDN a global alliance for data and credential sharing in lifelong learning, one that will help deliver on sustainibility by reducing our carbon foot prints, and on mobility by contributing to the change of student visa and work permit systems across the globe.

Let me express my satisfaction with the two firsts at this year's event: The Participants' Annual Business Meeting; and the Lightning Talks. As already highlighted before, participants constitute the core of our network. Given legal restrictions about membership for Dutch foundations, I take great pride in having found a way to involve you, our participants, in important strategy and business discussions. This year's first annual participants' business meeting worked well and you can rest assured that the GDN Board of Directors will keep acting towards ever more transparency and ever more inclusiveness.

Then, the Lightning Talks. This is the first time we used this format, a nerve-wrecking gamble to some, but it worked out very well. It is the second first that the programming committee for next year's annual meeting will take away and further develop.

As a companion to this Executive Report, please make sure to read the Evaluation Survey, which faithfully recaps the experience as reported by you, our participants.

Let me acknowledge our Premier Sponsor, Digitary, and our other valued Sponsorship partners: Parchment, eTítulo, AR-SEE, CDSL Ventures Limited, College Source, UPAEP and Vetasses, and our Charter Entities: AACRAO; CHESICC; DUO: National Student Clearing House; SAQA; Stanford University; University of Málaga; and University of Melbourne. Your involvement and commitment is of critical importance to the continuing sustainability of the Network. We all have a role to play in the network we have created and I urge you to become, renew or encourage others to join the Network as Participants in 2019 and beyond.

By way of conclusion, I would like to acknowledge outgoing Directors Mike Reilly (Treasurer); Valère Meus (Secretary); Victoriano Giralt (Immediate Past President); and Shelly Shi Lifang (Director), who have all contributed immensely to the further growth and sustainibility of the GDN network. We wish all of them the very best and we look forward to seeing them again at future GDN events!

Speaking for myself, I look forward to reconnecting with you in India at our 2020 Annual Meeting and until then, commend this report of the proceedings of the 2019 Annual Meeting to you.

Neil Robinson
President/Chair, Board of Directors of the Groningen Declaration Network

PREFACE BY FRANCISCO MALDONADO

Dear participants and GDN relations,

As the one that had the pleasure of providing the venue and preparing the programme for this year's GDN annual meeting in my university, I would like to extend my warmest thanks to the GDN Board of Directors and to you, our participants, for trusting UPAEP to host the 8th network's annual meeting, and for coming to Puebla to live this great experience. We worked very hard, with great enthusiasm and even greater commitment, to make this annual meeting memorable for the content of the sessions, for the networking possibilities, and for the history, beauty and gastronomy that Puebla has to offer.

I am confident that we were able to deliver what we promised.

I also want to thank to the wonderful organizing team of UPAEP, of which I was a proud and honored member. The UPAEP team made it possible to host and serve you, our visitors, as you expected and deserved. Once again, it was an honor and a great experience for us to host the GDN Annual Meeting; you will be always welcome in México, in Puebla, and in UPAEP.

On behalf of the Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla, with warmest regards,

Francisco Maldonado
Registrar, UPAEP and head of UPAEP's local organizing committee

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Key Themes

Overview

The theme of the eighth annual meeting of the Groningen Declaration, held in Puebla, Mexico, April 24-26, 2019, was "Creating the New World for Academic and Professional Mobility." Twenty-two countries participated in the gathering, including three new countries: El Salvador, Japan, and the United Arab Emirates. At this gathering, speakers shared optimism about the Groningen Declaration. They discussed advances that have been made in learner mobility, as well as challenges that still must be overcome.

The participants acknowledged that learner mobility is a priority for more than just traditional college-age demographic groups. Mobility is essential in the context of lifelong learning and transitions between jobs and labor markets. It is also vital for refugees and vulnerable migrants who are striving to integrate into new societies. Technology forms the foundation for many emerging systems for issuing and authenticating digital credentials. Partnerships among countries, institutions, and governmental agencies are critically important to learner mobility.

Key Takeaways

Demand for international learning is expected to increase, but traditional patterns are changing.

Research conducted by StudyPortals projects that by 2030, there will be an increase of 120 million students in higher education and an increase of 2.3 million internationally mobile students compared to 2015. As much as one may like simple growth, the patterns associated with international mobility will undergo change. This is due to several factors:

◖ Increased fragmentation of the international education market. Historically, the U.S. and the U.K. have hosted the majority of international students, but these countries are losing market share. Canada, Australia, and China have become top destinations.

◖ Increased scrutiny into the economic value of international education. As government scholarship sources dry up, families must shoulder a greater share of education costs. Students and families are looking more closely at the economic value of international education. Value may be defined by tuition fees, quality, career outcomes, and immigration policies.

◖ New competition emerging from "innovators, "adapters," and "challengers." Innovator institutions are reframing programs to focus on lifelong learning. Adapters are moving existing student mobility programs to online models. Challengers are promoting regional mobility through initiatives like English-taught programs that are emerging in Asia and Europe.

Global mobility is essential for lifelong learning.

Personal development is a lifelong journey. Education doesn't stop after obtaining a diploma. Maintaining and enhancing one's skills, qualifications, and credentials will become increasingly important as new technologies change the nature of work in all industries. Regardless of one's age, every person should be able to design his/her own future and achieve his/her goals around the world.

The higher education sector must expand its view of global mobility to include transitions between jobs and labor markets. This requires data portability and data ownership. Unfortunately, inflexible systems and national barriers often create obstacles to realizing professional development goals.

Regional qualification networks can enhance mobility, but qualifications may not be comparable across frameworks. Other challenges include a lack of standardized nomenclature for qualifications and inadequate focus on learning outcomes. Some believe that digital credentials and MOOCs are a way to deliver quality lifelong learning, especially in developing countries. To effectively manage credentials, however, transparency and interoperability issues must be addressed.

Academic and professional mobility are significant obstacles for refugees and vulnerable migrants.

Refugees and vulnerable migrants cannot be overlooked in global mobility discussions. Skills recognition is the first step toward successful integration into a new society. Europe is currently implementing the Qualifications Passport for Refugees to help individuals enroll in higher education institutions and enter the labor market.

Among refugees, Australia has found it easier to recognize trade skills than professional university credentials. Australia determines a tradesperson's competence through technical interviews and practical assessment. The country has also developed curriculum standards for every trade.

Worldwide, different nations are exploring ways to facilitate interjurisdictional validation of qualifications, skills, and competencies. They are also working to match refugee and migrant skills to jobs and learning opportunities.

Credentials fraud is a major concern worldwide.

According to the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, the fraudulent credential market is estimated at $2 billion. In the U.K., over one third of employers (40%) report spending more than £10,000 rehiring in the last three years due to lies about credentials.

Digital credentials are one potential solution. They are more secure and mobile than traditional credentials. However, they are unlikely to deter fraudsters entirely. Experts believe that fraud perpetrators will leverage technology to create fake digital credentials.

To combat credentials fraud, an ecosystem-based approach is needed. Service providers must act like credit card companies, anticipating the next fraud and proactively designing solutions. In the U.K., HEDD is raising awareness among key stakeholders about the problem of credentials fraud.

Countries, regions, institutions, ministries, and intergovernmental organizations all must play a role in promoting data portability.

Worldwide, different initiatives are emerging which promote data portability for students and lifelong learners. For example:

- **UNESCO.** The Global Convention on Higher Education is focused on developing a global infrastructure and common language for recognizing skills and qualifications in a transparent way. The World Reference Levels tool is an international instrument for vocational qualification and skills that is in the pilot stage.

- **Africa.** The African Qualifications Verification Network (AQVN) is designed to make verifications faster and trusted. AQVN has 11 member countries and interest from several other African nations. Partnerships have been essential to its success.

- **Australia and New Zealand.** The Australian Qualifications Framework is currently under review and a report is due by the middle of 2019. This will help address concerns about the integrity of documentation. My eQuals is the digital credentials platform for Australia and New Zealand. The goal is for My eQuals to become the trusted and verified record of learning for life.

- **Canada.** The ARUCC Groningen and Student Mobility Project is working on a Canadian data exchange network. A project RFP will be released at the end of May or early June 2019.

- **China.** CHESICC offers free Chinese online and paper verification reports. English reports can be obtained for a small fee. CHESICC has built several secure e-transmission channels with international partners to deliver verified documents.

- **The Commonwealth of Learning (COL).** The COL is working on blockchain, credentials, and connected learning. It is deploying a phone wallet on a trial basis using open standards. In the last six months, these wallets have been used to issue several thousand certificates to learners in developing countries.

◖ **Germany.** The International Mobility and Cooperation Digital project offers support for student mobility.

◖ **India.** In 2010, the Federal Government of India initiated legislation that led to the creation of the National Academic Depository (NAD) project. Two organizations were given the task to build this, with the NAD providing lifetime storage for all student certificates in one single platform.

◖ **Latin America and the Caribbean.** The Declaration of Higher Education Principles in Latin America and the Caribbean is committed to strengthening educational systems in the region, including credentials recognition.

◖ **Mexico.** Mexico has adopted an electronic system for professional licenses. It now takes six to 12 days to receive an electronic license, compared to six to 12 months to receive a paper license under the old system. Tecnológico de Monterrey is providing graduates in May 2019 with digital degrees generated with blockchain. This guarantees degree portability and security, while reducing risk of forgery.

◖ **Netherlands.** When students in the Netherlands want to study abroad, they visit the foreign university's website. They are directed to a digital environment where their certificates are registered and the students have the option to send them to the foreign university. The students are immediately authenticated and they can begin the registration process since the certificates come from a reliable source.

◖ **Sweden.** The Ladok Consortium maintains the Ladok Student Information System which produces pdf certificates. Institutions can put e-signatures on these credentials. The system also includes grades, course information, programs, participation, and more.

◖ **The United Kingdom.** Higher Education Achievement Reports (HEARs) are standards-based digital transcripts with micro-credentials. They are the equivalent to the diploma supplement in Europe. The Jisc learning data hub captures a wide array of information about a student's university experience.

◖ **The United States.** The National Student Clearinghouse's SPEEDE Server has delivered over 72 million electronic education documents over the last 20 years. AACRAO has created the electronic comprehensive learner record.

Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean: Key Stage of a Commitment

Dr. Pedro Henríquez-Guajardo, Immediate past Director, UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC)

Session Overview

In several Latin America and Caribbean countries, higher education graduation rates are lower than OECD country averages. Those students that do pursue higher education often move to other parts of the world, resulting in brain drain. The Declaration of Higher Education Principles in Latin America and the Caribbean offers a framework for bolstering higher education in the region.

Key Takeaways

◖ Latin America and the Caribbean have over 13,000 tertiary education institutions that offer 60,000 higher education programs (both undergraduate and post-graduate), reaching nearly 22 million students. Around half of the enrollment (52%) is concentrated in eight countries. Virtual and distance learning reaches 22% of students. Over the last 30 years, enrollment increases have been driven by the private sector and technologies.

◖ Higher education graduation rates in the region are lower than in other areas. Licentiate graduation rates in Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Argentina are below the average in OECD countries. In addition, the percentage of Latin American academics with doctorate degrees is very low. There has been progress, however, in Brazil (27%) and Chile (26%).

◖ Brain drain from Latin America to OECD countries is problematic. The region ranks second place (7.4%) in terms of migration rates of populations with higher education (Africa holds first place position at 10.8%). The world average is 5.4%.

◖ The Declaration of Higher Education Principles in Latin America and the Caribbean includes eight points:

1. Higher education is a social and strategic public good which is a responsibility of the State.

2. Higher education is relevant and guarantees public quality assurance processes.

3. Higher education produces knowledge, which is a universal and collective human right of the people.

4. Higher education is defined by its social commitment embodied in the Social Responsibility of the University (USR), Territorial Social Responsibility (TSR), and Transformative Territorial Social Responsibility (TSR2).

5. Higher education is empowered by its cultural diversity and interculturality, favoring equality and mutual respect for groups.

6. Higher education is autonomous, which is essential for institutions to exercise a critical and proactive role in society.

7. Higher education responds to the objectives of sustainable development in an integrated manner.

8. Higher education is inclusive.

◖ Strategic areas of higher education in Latin America and the Caribbean include recognition, coverage and articulation, institutionalization and internationalization management, quality, teacher training, sustainable development, and the greater Caribbean.

"Ideas and new paradigms that emerge from regional conferences are appropriate for higher education actors in Latin America. They nourish the main current of thought in higher education. This reaffirms the role that IESALC plays as a laboratory of ideas and a political articulator of interests of diverse actors."

Pedro Henríquez-Guajardo

Action Items

- Regional higher education organizations need dialogue related to public policy and institutional policies. Network meetings, starting with the tenth edition, will include official representatives of the member states.

- There is an urgent need to educate governments and institutions about basic information systems, especially related to the field of recognition and quality assurance.

What Does Our Digital Future Have in Store for Education?

Amy Baker, Managing Director, The PIE News Professionals in International Education

Session Overview

In the years ahead, growth in global student mobility is expected to continue. However, disruption is the name of the game. The United States and the United Kingdom are losing market share, as international students look to study in countries like Canada, Australia, and China. In addition, investors are pouring money into new, innovative forms of learning. Technologies like AI and automation are reshaping the way students of all ages learn.

Key Takeaways

◖ Project Atlas estimates that the number of outbound students grew from 2.1 million in 2001 to 5 million in 2018. Based on demographic trends and academic infrastructure issues, experts believe that global student mobility will continue to grow. Many major world economies have declared clear strategic goals around international education. In Australia, for example, the value of international education outweighs the value of tourism.

◖ Historically, the United States and United Kingdom have hosted the majority of international students, but these countries are losing share as the international education market becomes more fragmented. Canada, Australia, and China are becoming top destinations for international students.

◖ All eyes are on China. China has been the single largest contributor to international students, with 608,000 studying outbound in 2017. Political tensions between the U.S. and China have made the U.S. less attractive to some Chinese students. China has also experienced huge growth as a destination for international students. China is the most popular destination for Anglophone African students. This is due in part to China's Belt and Road Initiative which has invested in Africa.

◖ Competition is rising and investment is flooding into the education sector. Private equity funding is promoting innovative types of learning. Examples of firms focused on international student recruitment or retention include Readygrad, the Access Platform, Unibuddy, and ApplyBoard.

◖ AI and automation may fundamentally disrupt education delivery. Personalized content could be created for different learning styles. In addition, these technologies could support just-in-time training and micro-credentials for re-skilling employees.

> "Many countries have developed international education strategies with a digital component. They are using technology to increase education exports and teach students remotely."
>
> *Amy Baker*

Action Items

• Refugees should not be overlooked in global student mobility discussions. The German higher education system, for instance, is estimated to be serving 18,000 to 20,000 refugees.

• The education sector must recognize that Generation Z learns differently from Millennials. These students are tech innate; using five screens simultaneously is routine for them, as is thinking in 4D.

"Evaluation of credentials is so important and such an integral part of international education. I am really impressed by how much global ambition there is to streamline, improve, and secure the process."

Amy Baker

Towards a Sustainable Future for International Student Mobility

Dr. Rahul Choudaha, Executive Vice President of Global Engagement & Research, Studyportals

Session Overview

Although demand for international learning experiences remains strong, many international students face an affordability crisis. This issue has been exacerbated by declines in government funding and institutional scholarships, devaluation of currencies, and restrictions on post-study work rights in high-income countries. A sustainable future for international student mobility requires recognizing the diversity of international students and leveraging technology in program design and delivery.

Key Takeaways

◖ Demand for international learning experiences and credentials is expected to increase. Research by Studyportals projects that by 2030, there will be an increase of 120 million students in higher education and an increase of 2.3 million internationally mobile students compared to 2015.

◖ However, there are huge differences in tertiary enrollment growth by income levels, especially on the international side. The biggest driver for international student mobility has been in upper-middle-income countries. An open question is how to make international learning experiences more affordable and accessible to a larger segment of the global population.

◖ Institutions must deliver international learning experiences that meet student expectations for "value for money." Value can be defined by tuition fees, quality, career outcomes, immigration policies, and the interactions among these factors. Canada, for example, has been a leader in attracting international students thanks to its very progressive immigration policy.

◖ Sustainable strategies for attracting international students must include complementing traditional student mobility with technology-enabled mobility of programs. Over the past two years, there have been dramatic increases in online or blended learning programs. However, a "one-size-fits-all" approach to digital learning solutions doesn't exist. Undergraduate programs are much harder to put online than Master's and professional programs.

◖ A four-part framework can help institutions develop sustainable global engagement strategies:

1. *Defenders.* These schools are located in traditional international student destinations, like the U.S., U.K., Australia, and Canada. They will see competition from new entrants.

2. *Innovators.* These institutions are reframing their programs to focus on lifelong learning. They are focused on new learning models like micro-credentials and MOOCs.

3. *Adapters.* These institutions are moving existing campus-based programs to an online model.

4. *Challengers.* Examples include English-taught programs emerging in Asia and Europe. These promote regional mobility and challenge student mobility towards English-speaking countries.

> "International students are caught between two forces. On one side, universities keep increasing the tuition and on the other side, immigration policies don't allow them to gain experiences. This is a loss-loss for students who are investing a substantial amount of money."
>
> *Rahul Choudaha*

Action Items

- Acknowledge the needs and expectations of diverse segments of international students. Some are cost-conscious, while others are prestige and experience oriented.

- Recognize differences in student mobility by source and destination countries, level of education, and the cost of education.

- Decide whether to evolve to the Innovator, Adapter, or Challenger model to ensure long-term sustainability.

- Institutional strategies must complement student mobility with program mobility/innovation which in turn will demand digital transformation.

"We must ensure that the mobility of students and global talent is smooth. Digital platforms and technology are going to play a much bigger role. The GDN Conference is where conversations for shaping the future are happening and solutions are being discovered."

Rahul Choudaha

Recognizing Qualifications Across Borders: New Developments & Remaining Challenges

Borhene Chakroun, Director for Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems Division, UNESCO

Session Overview

The education sector must think about global mobility in the context of lifelong learning. Maintaining and enhancing one's skills, qualifications, and credentials will be more and more important as technologies change the nature of work in all industries. Key concerns include keeping credentials current and evaluating the life cycle of a credential. An ongoing challenge is transparent and fair recognition of skills and qualifications across borders. UNESCO's Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications and the World Reference Levels (WRL) tool are designed to address these issues through a common infrastructure and language.

Key Takeaways

◖ The higher education sector must view global mobility in terms of transitions between jobs and labor markets. The labor market is becoming polarized. Research shows that many jobs will be lost due to automation. New jobs will require higher cognitive, social, and emotional skills. An open question is how employers will recognize credentials and skills for people entering the workforce, as well as for existing workers. In terms of equity, people at the bottom of the labor market may have no way to move to the top.

◖ In addition, the informal labor market isn't shrinking. Digital credentials and micro-credentials could address skills development challenges for employees in this segment of the labor market.

◖ Regional qualification frameworks are emerging to improve recognition of qualifications and enhance mobility, but they face several challenges. Qualifications aren't comparable across frameworks; in some frameworks, qualifications are narrow, and in others they are broad. Other challenges include a lack of standardized nomenclature for qualifications and lack of focus on learning outcomes.

◖ There is no empirical evidence from employers that digital credentials result in better wages, career advancement, or labor market outcomes. Most claims about digital credentials originate in the education technology industry.

◖ As society tries to manage the emerging jungle of credentials, transparency and interoperability challenges are top of mind. A top priority is managing learners' records in a coherent and easy way. The goal is to create a constantly evolving profile of a person's lifelong learning that can support transitions throughout their working life. The profile must go beyond formal credentials and capture information in a common language.

◖ The UN Sustainable Development Agenda's education goal ensures inclusive, equitable, and quality education, as well as lifelong learning opportunities for all. Mobility can contribute to sustainable development by preventing "brain drain" in different countries. Mobility benefits go beyond the salary an individual can earn if his or her skills and qualifications are recognized.

◖ UNESCO's Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications is an effort to develop a global infrastructure and common language for recognizing skills and qualifications in a transparent way. Member states will value learning that occurs outside the university, as well as non-traditional modes of learning like MOOCs and online courses. Partial studies will also be recognized, including work done by refugees and displaced people without documents. The Convention is likely to be ratified by 20 countries by 2021 or 2022.

◖ A first batch of UNESCO's WRL (World Reference Level) tool — an international instrument for vocational qualification and skills — is entering the pilot stage. WRL will help credential evaluators to level and assess learning outcomes.

> "How will we manage the jungle of credentials that is emerging? How can we develop a common language to understand learners' records, as well as recognize the qualifications and skills that are required for life and work?"
>
> *Borhene Chakroun*

Action Items

- GDN can create a bridge between qualification frameworks (national, regional, transnational) and new types of credentialing such as badges and online certifications.

- The education sector must advance its understanding of learner records and expand to lifelong learning records.

Your Data, Your Future

Hans Schutte, Director-General, DUO

Session Overview

Education and personal development are a lifelong journey. Regardless of age, citizens should be able to design their own future and receive the best education possible to achieve their goals anywhere around the world. This requires data portability, but also data ownership. Together, the members of the Groningen Declaration Network can make this happen.

Key Takeaways

◖ In today's world, students are individuals with unique goals and aspirations. Education and personal development don't stop after earning a diploma. They are lifelong goals. Yet, inflexible systems and national barriers are often obstacles to achieving those goals. DUO's mission is to share educational data. This also forms the core of the Groningen Declaration Network's philosophy. Students are the owners of their data.

◖ DUO is the National Europass Center for the Netherlands and the founding member of the Groningen Declaration Network. DUO offers a range of international services to enhance international mobility, such as recognition and authentication (legalization) of diplomas and credentials. The organization's mission is to make education and development possible throughout people's lives.

◖ The Groningen Declaration Network has produced concrete results. Diploma data is shared worldwide through pilot projects and as part of regular enrollment processes for international students. A showcase of the most important pilot projects can be found on IDEA HUB. The Netherlands and China have a pilot project with CHESICC to support enrollment of Chinese students in the Netherlands. The learnings from this project are being applied to Germany and Belgium, where most Dutch students go to study. Collaboration is also

underway between the Netherlands and Belgium, with a project that exchanges diplomas using blockchain technology. In Belgium, this initiative has been nominated as one of the five best IT projects of the year.

◖ Streamlined enrollment processes for international students are no longer the exception; they're the rule. There are more than 200,000 international students in higher education in the Netherlands and the total number of students in the country is 800,000. This year, for the first time, there are more international students enrolled at the University of Amsterdam than Dutch students.

◖ Global mobility is also growing in secondary vocational education. In the Netherlands, 6% of secondary vocational education students are international. The goal is to increase this to 10% by 2020. The Erasmus Plus program is the most important factor. Today, most international secondary vocational students in the Netherlands come from Turkey, Germany, and France.

◖ Data portability is becoming a reality. When students in the Netherlands want to study abroad, they visit the foreign university's website. They are directed to a digital environment where their certificates are registered and the students have the option to send them to the foreign university. The students are immediately authenticated and they can begin the registration process, since the certificates come from a reliable source.

"Although technology is an important precondition for data portability, cooperation may be the most important factor. The Groningen Declaration Network has shown that you can achieve a lot with cooperation. Over time, the Network has grown and trust has become stronger. GDN is about global thinking in a world that is more connected than ever."

Hans Schutte

Action Items

- To facilitate global mobility, the Groningen Declaration Network must consider other barriers, apart from paper flows. Online courses, for example, may be one way to give students more affordable options to diversify their studies and learn from the best.

- Countries, institutions, ministries, and agencies must cooperate to make education available to all.

Digital Dividend, Data Sovereignty, and New Opportunities for Student Data Interoperability

Dr. Venkataraman Balaji, Vice President, Commonwealth of Learning

Session Overview

The Commonwealth comprises 53 countries worldwide. It focuses on three dimensions: equitable growth, inclusion, and environmental conservation. In 1988, the Commonwealth founded a new intergovernmental agency—the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) —to increase access to affordable learning at all levels. The COL's work in recent years has revealed the potential of digital technologies for education, the need for data alliances in the face of emerging data sovereignty, and a shift to mobility based on global fair trade in services.

Key Takeaways

◖ Over the past two decades, the digital divide has started to close and digital dividends are now accruing. When the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) was established, the digital divide was a significant problem. In 2000, the digital divide as measured by mobile phone density in developed and developing nations seemed unbridgeable. Today, however, almost half the world's population has Internet access and global mobile 3G coverage is 84%. More than half the Internet traffic in countries like South Africa, Nigeria, and India is from mobile phones. Messaging apps have become much more popular than other social networking tools. This is important because messaging is closely linked with mobile payment systems.

◖ The Commonwealth of Learning believes that MOOCs are a major opportunity for developing countries. The COL has experimented using MOOCs via the messaging protocol, rather than with the web protocol alone. This addresses bandwidth limitations. The COL is also working in the area of blockchain, credentials, and connected learning. A phone wallet was recently deployed on a trial basis using open standards. In the last six months, these wallets have been used to issue several thousand certificates to learners in developing countries.

◖ Closing the digital divide has an impact on education for all stakeholders. For institutions, the computing costs of online educational services and delivery are decreasing. For learners, access costs are decreasing although quality is not increasing at the same rate. For service providers, the market for digital services has grown significantly.

◖ International mobility in learning patterns are changing. Government scholarship sources are suddenly drying up. As families support a greater share of education costs, the economic value of international education will grow in importance. This will drive shifts in education strategy.

◖ The explosion of data has raised concerns about the ethics of using learning analytics. The new mantra, "Data is the new oil," is leading political leaders to assert data sovereignty. A similar dynamic occurred during the 1990s in the environmental sector. The Rio Conference made the environment primarily a matter of territorial sovereignty. However, this didn't stop environmental action.

◖ A new perspective on international mobility is transparent global fair trade in services. Adequate data flow is at the core of all international trading service. One way to manage data is through alliances that are multi-lateral, multi-stakeholder, and rooted in diversity. Venkataraman Balaji calls this "Mobility 2.0."

◖ Digital credentialing is one way to deliver quality lifelong learning. This may be attractive for developing countries. Online learning aligns with increased interest in generating carbon credits by limiting transcontinental travel. It also offers a way to deal with changing student visa systems across the globe.

> "With digital dividends accruing and more opportunities to deploy the online education paradigm in lifelong learning, digital credentials may be attractive to developing countries. Just as developing countries leapfrogged the landline phone directly into mobile, it's entirely possible that developing countries will leapfrog into the era of the digital credential."
>
> *Dr. Venkataraman Balaji*

Action Items

- GDN is uniquely positioned to foster a new global alliance for data and credential sharing in lifelong learning, as well as in tertiary education and training.

- GDN may want to implement special arrangements to advance adoption of digital credentialing in developing countries.

Bytes Across the Pond: Digital Records in the U.K. and the U.S.

Tom Green, Associate Executive Director, Consulting and SEM, AACRAO (Moderator)

Mark McConahay, Associate Vice Provost and Registrar, Indiana University, and Vice President of Information Technology, AACRAO Board of Directors

Rodney Parks, University Registrar, Director of Summer College and Assistant to the Provost, Elon University

Jayne Rowley, Chief Executive, HECSU Prospects, Prospects/HEDD

Shelby Stanfield, Director, Service Innovation Networks, National Student Clearinghouse

Christopher Jackson, CEO, Paradigm, Inc

Session Overview

The United Kingdom and the United States are frequent partners in discussions around higher education trends, especially when it comes to student records. A reference group was formed this spring to identify trends in digital records use and exchange, and to learn from one another's innovations related to student record sharing.

Key Takeaways

◖ Credentials fraud is a widespread and costly problem. In the U.K., over half of people (57%) lie about higher education qualifications on their CVs. Yet, only 66% of employers ask to see documents and certificates and only 20% verify qualifications. Fraud is costly. Over one third of employers (40%) report spending more than £10,000 rehiring in the last three years due to lies about credentials.

◖ Fraudulent credentials are big business. According to the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, the fraudulent credential market is estimated at $2 billion. In the last five to six years, 243 bogus U.K. universities have been identified on HEDD. Digital credentials provide significant benefits, such as security, mobility, and the ability to socialize accomplishments through LinkedIn and other social platforms. However, digital credentials are unlikely to stop fraudsters. In fact, fraudsters will leverage current technologies to create fake digital credentials.

◖ To combat credentials fraud, an ecosystem-based approach is required. Service providers must be like credit card companies, anticipating the next fraud and proactively designing solutions. In the U.K., HEDD is raising awareness. This has captured the attention of the government and other key stakeholders. The HEDD system now covers around 83% of U.K. graduates, so it is possible to verify the credentials of substantial numbers of students.

◖ The National Student Clearinghouse's research on student mobility in the U.S. found that close to 50% of transfer students pursue their educational aspirations across as many as four institutions. Standards and technology investments to facilitate the electronic exchange of digital education records has been one response to this trend. The SPEEDE (Standardization of Postsecondary Electronic Education Data Exchange) Server has delivered over 72 million electronic education documents over the last 20 years. Delivery speed is critically important, as is data privacy and fraud detection. SPEEDE Server adoption in the U.S. has plateaued. Work is underway to reduce adoption costs.

◖ To expand the learner's narrative, Elon University created a new electronic student record which certifies more information. A visual transcript gives employers more information to make decisions and enables students to tell their story in new ways. The visual transcript's first page is a summary, while the second page has infographics about internships, research, leadership positions, study abroad programs, and community service.

◖ In 2008, the U.K. launched Higher Education Achievement Reports (HEARs) and 4 million have been issued. These standards-based digital transcripts with micro-credentials are the equivalent to the diploma supplement in Europe. HEARs include learning outcomes, extra and co-curricular activities, and university-specific programs. Unfortunately, not all universities include the same information in HEARs, so it's hard for employers to compare students from different institutions. Most students use HEARs for visa or immigration purposes, as well as personal reflection.

◖ Jisc is the U.K. sector agency responsible for digital infrastructure. Jisc has developed the learning data hub that captures library access, student engagement through class attendance, and more. The student app enables students to access information about their entire university experience. The learning data hub also enables institutions to do predictive modeling around student success.

◖ In 2009, the U.K. launched the Unique Learner Number (ULN). This unique, 10-digit number is assigned to every learner. The goal is to enable learners to track all their learning and guidance through secondary school into higher education. One weakness of the system is that it isn't used in higher education. Central admissions and public funding services won't use ULNs and the numbers aren't issued to international students.

◖ To support student sovereignty in an electronic credential world, AACRAO has created the comprehensive learner record. This alternative record of learning may include coursework, experiences outside the curricular domain, and high-impact practices like internships or study abroad. It is first and foremost a record for learners. It helps students validate what they learned and articulate their experiences better. The comprehensive learner record is based on three pillars: integrity, validity, and identity.

Action Items

- Traditional universities must recognize the power of outcomes and experiential information. If they don't, they risk losing out to non-traditional institutions that excel at distilling student experiences for employers.

- As student mobility increases, institutions must enable students to look at their educational achievements in aggregate and authenticate that information. The MyHub learner academic portal, for example, provides an aggregate educational record and empowers learners to share it.

Barriers to Global Mobility

Borhene Chakroun, Director for Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems Division, UNESCO (Moderator)
Miriam Chiyaba, President, African Qualifications Verification Network (AQVN)
Rob Thomason, Executive Director, VETASSESS
Rick Torres, President and CEO, National Student Clearinghouse
Marina Malgina, Head of Section for Interview-Based Recognition Procedures, NOKUT — Norwegian Agency for Quality
  Assurance in Education, Norwegian ENIC-NARIC

Session Overview

Refugees and migrants often face obstacles in the areas of skills evaluation and recognition, as well as access to labor markets and educational opportunities. Worldwide, different nations are exploring ways to facilitate interjurisdictional validation of qualifications, skills, and competencies. They are also working to match refugee and migrant skills to jobs and learning opportunities.

Key Takeaways

◖ Skills recognition is the first step toward successful integration into a new society. Ideally, recognition processes should be efficient and either free or economically accessible, so refugees and vulnerable migrants can quickly get on the right track. The Qualifications Passport for Refugees is one approach that was successfully tested in Norway in 2016. The solution is now being implemented in Europe by the Council of Europe. The Qualifications Passport for Refugees is delivering better labor market outcomes. One of the first recipients, for example, was accepted to an educational institution and it took only a month for her to be integrated into the Norwegian labor market.

◖ In the area of skilled migration, it is essential to have a common language worldwide for recognizing skills. Documentation is problematic, especially for refugees. Integrity of documentation is becoming a significant problem. In 2018, VETASSESS rejected 40% of skilled migration applications and 60% of those failed due to integrity concerns. VETASSESS is building relationships with governments worldwide so verifications can be completed more easily. Australian States also have

different verification requirements. Developing a national approach to the verification process is essential. The Australian Qualifications Framework is currently under review and a report is due by the middle of 2019.

◖ In Australia, the skilled migration cohort has significantly higher labor force participation than the general migration cohort and the domestic cohort. This may be expected since skilled migrants generally come with professional qualifications and work experience. Data show that the general migration cohort also has higher labor force participation than the domestic cohort.

◖ In many ways, trades recognition is easier than professional university verification, especially with refugees. Australia determines a tradesperson's capability and competence through technical interviews and practical assessment. Australia has also developed curriculum standards for every trade.

◖ Africa is home to a large number of developing nations, so most records are paper. A significant skills recognition challenge is providing paper documents so institutions can complete the verification process. Politics also play a role in verification of qualifications. Language barriers and information availability can also be challenging. The African Qualification Verification Network (AQVN) is currently being built by developing partnerships based on trust and credibility. With the South African Development Community (SADC), each year different countries share information on credible institutions, the number of fraudulent qualifications, and how their verification systems operate.

◖ As African nations consider the move to digital documents, financing is a challenge. However, many African nations are setting targets for themselves. The University of Ghana, for instance, is digitizing its credentials. GDN participants and other partners are key to progress because they bring new ideas.

◖ The European Commission recently formed an Expert Group on Graduate Tracking, with two representatives from the GDN serving on a task force that aims at piloting the exchange of data on migrant graduates. Its goal is to identify the aspects of the education systems in sending countries that potentially act as push factors, and for which education policy measures may counteract flows that are harming the local economy or regional development. The challenges are considerable. Government policies and political will often affect acceptance of migrants across borders.

Action Items

• The Qualifications Passport for Refugees could be implemented as a global tool under the UNESCO umbrella to evaluate credentials of refugees and vulnerable migrants.

• The movement of migrants across European countries is poorly understood. Entities like UNESCO must help countries develop sounder policies around migrants and refugees.

Country and Regional Updates

Development and project highlights in Africa, Australia & New Zealand, Canada, China, India, Germany, and Mexico.

Africa

Miriam Chiyaba, President, African Qualifications Verification Network (AQVN)

Navin Vasudev, Deputy Director, South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)

Key Takeaways

◖ The African Qualifications Verification Network (AQVN) was formed to make verifications smoother, faster, and as genuine as possible. Work on AQVN began in 2014 and today the network has 11 member countries and interest from several other nations. Language has been a barrier, since most people in Africa are not bilingual. Milestone dates include:

— *2014:* A workshop was held in Pretoria at which 14 government agencies pledged to develop a network. That was the beginning of AQVN.

— *2015 and 2016:* Considerable time was spent setting up systems, process, and a constitution.

— *2016:* At the GDN Cape Town meeting, AQVN was launched.

— *2017:* The first AGM was held in Pretoria.

— *2018:* The second AGM was held in Accra; AQVN signs Groningen Declaration at the 7th annual meeting in Paris.

— *2019:* The third AGM will be held in October in Angola.

◖ Partnerships are an essential part of AQVN's success. Linkages have been made with countries like Nigeria that have a large application base in verification of qualifications. Linkages have also been established with other global networks like GDN, TAICEP, and AAU.

◖ AQVN's work focuses in several areas including digitization of learner records, sharing of verification best practices, addressing issues of qualification misrepresentation and fraud, and building network membership and popularity.

> "We were one of the founding members of the GDN and we've seen how the learning around mobility has been improving every year. The networking and partnerships are so important."
> *Navin Vasudev*

Australia & New Zealand

Jay Segeth, My eQuals Program Director, Higher Ed Services

Key Takeaways

◖ My eQuals is Australia's and New Zealand's digital credentials platform. Universities provision data and pdf documents onto the platform, then notify learners that records are available. Students and learners log onto the platform and can share information freely with whomever they like.

◖ My eQuals is used by 47 universities and over 100 receiving countries. Over 1.5 million learners are registered and adoption is growing rapidly. The platform stores over 500,000 documents.

◖ Implementation was completed in November 2018. Contributors to the on-time, on-budget implementation included a shared commitment to make it happen, incentives for universities to complete their work, reliance on innovation, embracing of the 80/20 rule, and empowerment of the project management office.

◖ My eQuals' strategic goal is to become the trusted and verified record of learning for life. It will include macro and micro credentials, prior learning, professional credentials, and more. Looking ahead, the hope is to make My eQuals financially self-sustainable through verification and employability services. The first phase of expansion will focus on revenue capabilities and subsequent phases will focus on expanding the platform capabilities.

◖ The current My eQuals managing organization's (MeMO's) role is to manage the vendor contract on behalf of universities. Looking ahead, the MeMO will drive the My eQuals vision on behalf of the universities and as custodian of university data. Longer term, the MeMO will serve learner, education, and workforce communities with access to trusted data, relevant services, and insights.

Canada

Rob Fleming, Executive Director and Co-Chair, British Columbia Council on Admissions & Transfer

Charmaine Hack, Chair, ARUCC Groningen and Student Mobility Steering Committee; Past President, ARUCC (2016-2012); Registrar, Ryerson University

Romesh Vadivel, President, ARUCC

Key Takeaways

Canada is a large geographic country with a population of around 35 million. Canada has some very large higher education institutions located primarily in urban areas, as well as rural schools with limited capacity and resources. Canada's federated model introduces governance complexity. Post-secondary education is largely governed by the 10 provinces and three territories as there is no central ministry of education with scope of authority across all of Canada.

The ARUCC Groningen and Student Mobility Project is working on a Canadian data exchange network to enhance trusted transfer of academic documents as a way to deepen learner mobility into, between, and beyond Canadian post-secondary institutions. Key project drivers include the need to enhance social mobility across all its dimensions including access, learner mobility, labor mobility, indigenization, and internationalization. Canada has seen tremendous growth in international students and is intent on growing student participation in study abroad

as developing global citizenry fits with the country's strong and enduring commitment to multiculturalism and diversity.

The Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada (ARUCC) group represents most of the recognized post-secondary institutions in Canada. ARUCC is leading the national project in partnership with three other national organizations in Canada:

◖ The Pan-Canadian Consortium on Admissions and Transfer (PCCAT). PCCAT's mandate focuses on collaboratively improving transfer and mobility into, between, and beyond Canadian post-secondary institutions.

◖ The Canadian University Council of Chief Information Officers (CUCCIO). This group provides leadership expertise and guidance for IT professionals involved in post-secondary education.

◖ The Canadian Post-Secondary Electronic Standards Council User Group (CanPESC). This group is promoting PESC standards in Canada and has led the adoption of PESC XML standards by post-secondary institutions and supporting organizations across the country.

The ARUCC Groningen and Student Mobility Project will employ a national network model that complements existing strengths with data exchange and develops capacities where there are gaps. A project RFP will be released at the end of June or early July 2019. The project has received endorsements from approximately 80 post-secondary institutions and other organizations, including the Canadian Federation of Students, Universities Canada, Colleges and Institutes Canada, AACRAO, and other organizations across Canada.

China

Shi Pengjian, Director-General, China Higher Education Student Information and Career Center (CHESICC)

Key Takeaways

◖ Starting on January 1, 2018, China began offering Chinese online verification reports of higher education qualification certificates for free. Free Chinese paper verification reports began to be offered starting July 1, 2018. CHESICC still charges for English versions, but the price hasn't increased.

◖ Starting May 1, 2019, CHESICC will modify its background verification service for students studying abroad. CHESICC will only accept secondary diploma verification from regular senior high school diploma holders. It will no longer accept senior high school transcript verification requests or international summer program transcript verification requests. There are several reasons for these changes. The data isn't stored in CHESICC's database, the cost is relatively high, and the turnaround time for contacting secondary schools is much longer. In addition, users have other options. Career centers and education departments in different provinces can issue relevant certifications.

◖ CHESICC provides free information queries for domestic governance at all levels via an API. The data sharing interface has been opened for the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, as well as dozens of provincial units. Students can now upload their parents' basic information so the state taxation administration can check what is declared by taxpayers. Last year, CHESICC also started offering electronic transcript verification. The system is recipient friendly and saves times for learners and recipients.

◖ In 2018, CHESICC issued 24.78 million online verification reports and 1.13 million paper verification reports. These are used primarily for further study or study abroad. To promote global learner mobility and paperless services, CHESICC built several secure e-transmission channels with international partners to deliver verified documents. E-transmission volume grew from 231 in 2014 to more than 8,000 in 2018.

India

Chakravarthy Katta, Manager, CDSL Ventures Limited

Key Takeaways

◖ The Indian education sector is expected to grow to US$101.1 billion in 2019. India ranks first worldwide in terms of the number of universities. Factors driving growth in the number of colleges and universities include huge demand, the size of the population, and government initiatives. Many new institutions are springing up in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities. Private sector involvement in the Indian education sector is growing.

◖ CDSL Ventures Limited also initiated its National Academic Depository (NAD) project in India. NAD provides lifetime storage for all student certificates in one single platform. The project is facilitated by the Ministry of Human Resource Development and the University Grants Commission (UGC). UGC is responsible for implementing the project across India. All students are given an NAD ID and all certificates are linked to students using this ID. NAD offers the following stakeholder benefits:

— *Academic institutions.* The online management system for awards is available 24/7. It reduces costs related to security and printing.

— *Students.* Students benefit from permanent, online, secure storage of award information. Loss, damage, and re-issuance risks are eliminated.

— *Verifiers.* Verifiers have 24/7 immediate online access to authentic awards. This reduces postage, time, and costs.

CVL NAD Statistics:

Description	April2017	April 2018	March 2019
Academic Institution Registration	10+	270+	520+
Student Registration	500+	23,000+	270,000+
Verifier Registration	10+	100+	110+
Academic Awards Uploaded	150,000+	3 million+	10.50 million+

Germany

Peter Hassenbach, Head of Division, International Exchanges in Higher Education, Internationalization, Federal Ministry of Education and Research

Key Takeaways

◖ International Mobility and Cooperation Digital is a new DAAD program funded by Germany's Federal Ministry of Education and Research. It has four program goals:

1. **Curricula.** This focuses on embedding digitally supported, transnationally entangled curricula and study programs. Synchronous and asynchronous collaborations must be organized.

2. **Technology.** This focuses on coordination, adaptation, and implementation of service-oriented, digital infrastructures for transnational teaching. Digital support for student mobility and teaching and learning processes is delivered through networked IT infrastructures and cross-process quality assurance.

3. **Skills and competencies.** This focuses on building methodological knowledge and digital competencies through the development of digital teaching and learning scenarios. Qualification of teachers includes train-the-trainer, expert exchanges, media didactic concept workshops, and peer-to-peer processes.

4. **Administration.** This focuses on establishment of a student administration according to the student journey. The journey ranges from the introductory phase through blended mobility, study abroad, internships, assessment/degree, and transfer.

◖ International student mobility has three steps of recognition:

1. **Submission:** Submission of study achievements by students for recognition by the target university.

2. **Validation (digitally supported):** Examination, validation, and digitally supported processes of recognition of study achievements by the university.

3. **Provision of information:** Provision and maintenance of information relevant to the recognition of academic achievements.

> "Student exchange means networking. The more efficient this exchange is for each individual participant, the more students will go abroad and gain experience worldwide. The cultural experience, not only the academic performance, also makes international studies worthwhile."
>
> *Peter Hassenbach*

Mexico

Beatriz Meléndez, Tecnológico de Monterrey

Key Takeaways

◖ Before October 2018, it took six to 12 months for students to receive paper copies of their professional licenses after graduation. During this time, people could not work or start PhD programs. Other problems with paper documents included forged licenses and misplaced documents at the Ministry of Public Education.

◖ In April 2018, seven universities were invited to participate in a pilot project to issue electronic professional licenses. Tecnológico de Monterrey was the first university to implement the model. Electronic licenses were implemented nationwide at 2,000 public and private higher education institutions in October 2018.

◖ It now takes between six and 12 days for students to receive an electronic version of their professional licenses. People can also get paper versions, since those have symbolic meaning for graduates and families.

◖ Tecnológico de Monterrey provides electronic professional diplomas in XML and graphic representations. The Ministry of Public Education provides professional licenses in XML and pdf formats. XML certifications are valid only in Mexico.

◖ In May 2019, students graduating from Tecnológico de Monterrey will receive digital degrees generated with blockchain. This guarantees degree portability and security, while reducing the risk of forgery. Digital degrees with blockchain can be verified anywhere in the world, without relying on the Ministry of Public Education. The goal is to provide graduates with a digital portfolio that supports mobility everywhere.

Action Items
- It would be helpful to understand the nuances of the different qualification networks worldwide. Key information includes how they work, as well as their management and governance arrangements.

Sweden

Mauritz Danielsson, CEO, The Ladok Consortium

Key Takeaways

◖ Sweden has 40 higher education institutions. The Ladok Consortium is owned by 37 of these institutions and the Swedish National Board of Student Aid. The Consortium develops, maintains, and operates the Ladok Student Information System.

◖ Ladok was originally launched in the 1980s and at that time, all institutions had their own database. In 2007, planning for a new system began. In Spring 2012, work started on a paperless certificate system that had one database for all institutions and online services for students.

◖ Challenges of the project included vague requirements, system integrations, external dependencies, and more. Rather than creating an initial system that would serve all 37 institutions, the project scope was scaled back to serve Malmö University and Lund University first.

◖ By the end of 2018, all 37 institutions were using the new version of Ladok. Ladok produces pdf certificates and institutions can put e-signatures on them. Ladok also includes grades, as well as information on courses, programs, participation, and more.

Groningen Declaration

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