



**Asia-Pacific
Economic Cooperation**

COMPARABILITY OF QUALIFICATIONS IN THE HEALTH SECTOR WITHIN THE APEC REGION

Summary Report

APEC Human Resource Development Working Group

November 2008

Note: Some of the terms used here do not conform to the APEC Style Manual and Nomenclature. Please visit http://www.apec.org/apec/about_apec/policies_and_procedures.html for the APEC style guide.

HRD 07/2006A

Produced by
HEALTH HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT BUREAU
Department of Health, Philippines

For
APEC Secretariat
35 Heng Mui Keng Terrace Singapore 119616
Tel: (65) 67756012 Fax: (65) 67756013
Email: info@apec.org Website: www.apec.org

© 2008 APEC Secretariat

APEC#208-HR-01.8

*A Workshop on the Comparability of Qualifications in the
Health Sector within the APEC Region*
APEC Project HRD 07-06A

SUMMARY REPORT

Background

This project was proposed by the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs and was approved by the member economies of the Human Resources Development Working Group (HRDWG) of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) last 2006. It aims to develop a database of competencies, qualifications and experience requirements of the dental profession among APEC economies and to develop a Mutual Recognition Framework for dentists.

A first survey was distributed to the 21 APEC economies through contacts in the Labor and Social Protection Network of the HRDWG to determine the specific health category to focus on and the results showed that dentistry was high on the list amongst the participating APEC economies. Since then, the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs has asked for the assistance of the Department of Health of the Philippines for the implementation of this project. A second survey was distributed again to the 21 member economies through contacts under the HRD Working Group of APEC which in turn was forwarded to dental experts and dental associations in each economy, this time to find out the qualification requirements of foreign dentists in each economy. The results of this survey were presented in the workshop.

Workshop Proper

This APEC project was a three (3)-day workshop, hosted by the Philippine Department of Health with the cooperation of the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs, held last October 20-22, 2008 at The Richmonde Hotel, Pasig City, Philippines. The guests were representatives from the different APEC economies namely: Australia, Chile, Hong Kong China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Chinese Taipei and Thailand. Likewise, other agencies from the Philippine government such as Professional Regulation Commission, Commission on Higher Education, Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, Philippine Dental Association, Department of Labor and Employment, Commission on Filipino Overseas, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority attended the said workshop. After the registration of the participants on the first day, the workshop commenced with the Welcome Remarks of Dr. Francisco T. Duque III, Secretary of the Department of Health Philippines. This was followed by the presentation of the delegates by Dr. Dorie Lynn O. Balanoba, Project Team member. The rest of the day was devoted to the presentations of the three (3) resource speakers on their experiences and knowledge in the development of a Mutual Recognition Arrangement/Agreement (MRA) for the participants to see some models or examples of existing MRAs and what parameters are used in comparing qualifications in these models.

The MRA for APEC Engineers was established in 1999. It has been in operation for the last 9 years. As this is the first MRA for professionals in the APEC region, the project team decided to use this as the prototype for the development of the framework of the MRA for APEC Dentists.

The first presentation should have covered the procedures undertaken in coming up with the MRA for Engineers in the APEC Region. The discussion, however, focused on the steps taken in becoming a part of the MRA since the MRA for Engineers already existed and the Philippines applied to be included in the MRA. The steps included: (1) identifying the purpose and the intention of the jurisdiction concerned as member of the economy; (2) making a formal letter to the Governing Board of Coordinating Committee through the International Engineering Alliance (IEA) Secretariat; (3) If the economy is considered, it becomes a Provisional Member. It is required to prepare an Assessment Statement that sets out its current procedures and criteria for domestic registration and also its proposed procedures and criteria for admitting individual applicants to its section of the International Register of Professional Engineers. The Assessment Statement must ensure that the criteria required by the Engineers Mobility Forum (EMF) International Register Coordinating Committee are met; (4) The Governing Board accepts the submittal of the Jurisdiction; (5) The jurisdiction becomes a signatory; (6) The economy should assign an organization responsible for developing registers of professionally qualified engineers. This organization should apply for full membership of the Engineers Mobility Forum. The register kept by this organization is the professionally qualified engineers who have been assessed as eligible for independent practice within their own economy. Each economy who are Full Members should agree to create and maintain a decentralized International Register of Professional Engineers and to grant entry to that Register only to those practitioners who can demonstrate that they have reached the following:

- an overall level of academic achievement at the point of entry to the register in question which is substantially equivalent to that of a graduate holding an engineering degree accredited by an organization holding full memberships;
- been assessed within their own economy as eligible for independent practice;
- gained a minimum of seven years practical experience since graduation;
- spent at least two years in responsible charge of significant engineering work;
- maintained their continuing professional development at a satisfactory level;
- must agree to be bound by the codes of professional conduct established and enforced by each economy within which they are practicing;
- must further agree to be held individually accountable for their own actions, both through requirements imposed by the licensing or registering authorities in the economies in which they practice and through legal process.

The benefits of having an APEC Engineer were likewise mentioned in this presentation. The benefits are: (a) global nature of competition in engineering services; (b) world-wide acceptance of competence of Philippine engineers; (c) opportunity to establish an international standard of competence for professional engineering; (d) empowers each member organization to establish a section of the International Professional Engineers Register; (e) ensures that registered professional engineers have the opportunity to have their professional standing recognized within the APEC region thereby contributing to the globalization of professional engineering services; (f) higher compensation compared to what the applicant is receiving in the country of origin. The speaker emphasized that coming up with an MRA is a long process and it is important to agree on a Framework for mutual recognition as a first step.

The second presentation covered the steps taken by the different ASEAN members to develop the MRA for ASEAN Nursing. There are no MRA for professionals in the health sector in the APEC region. This presentation was thought to be significant for the insights and experience in the development of an MRA for health sector professionals. In the discussion, the speaker first described the experience of the Philippines with Japan under the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA). A draft agreement prepared by Japan was presented to the Philippine representatives and they were asked to review and comment on the draft. In the draft, it states that the professional nurses of the Philippines can only work as technical nurses in Japan. According to the Board of Nursing of the Professional Regulation Commission, the professional nurses are not comparable with the technical nurses of Japan. However, the Board of Nursing can not fully oppose to this agreement as it was a government to government arrangement.

In the ASEAN Nursing experience, it was a lot easier to establish the MRA for ASEAN Nurses because the ASEAN countries already have an agreement as to the competency standards of nurses. There was a working group who was responsible for looking into the competency standards that are acceptable to all the member countries. They have developed the International Council of Nurses Competency Standards that was used by any ASEAN country to assess any foreign applicant. The speaker recommends that before the APEC economies can come up with the MRA for APEC Dentists, the economies should develop a competency standard that includes the task and responsibilities expected of the professional dentist which is acceptable to all member economies.

The third presentation was on the concepts and methodologies towards the recognition of education, training and work experience for cross border practice. The concepts that were discussed for recognition were equivalence in competence (e.g. Skills, knowledge, and attitude), education/curriculum, position, tasks and requirements while the methodologies that were discussed were mapping, pre-service orientation and training and assisted adaptation. The recommendation to the group was to discuss and 'brain storm' a possible framework for the mutual recognition of qualifications for the dental profession. This included mapping the education, dental practice and regulation in the APEC economies; recognizing the need for a central body to establish equivalence for all APEC economies; and review each economy's provision for reciprocity in the practice of the profession.

The last presentation was the results of the second pre-workshop survey, which has a similar title as the APEC project. This was developed as a supporting document to the workshop. Specifically it aimed to establish a database of academic and professional qualifications, competencies and experience-based requirements in dental practice of APEC member economies and to compare the qualifications, competencies and experience requirements in dentistry across APEC member economies (Please refer to the attached research paper for the results and discussion). Malaysia has commented that some of the information was not accurate and using it as a basis for the development of a framework would lead to problems. Because of the inaccuracy of some data, the representatives of the economies who participated in the survey were asked to validate the answers of their colleagues who answered the questionnaire from their home economy.

The second day was devoted to workshops. The first workshop was held in the

morning. The objectives were to determine the acceptability of the proposed parameters and to choose from these parameters the criteria for the mutual recognition of qualifications for dentists. The first workshop was designed for each representative of the participating economies to briefly present to the group the dental program and the regulation of dental practice in their respective economies. Based on a given list of parameters as a guide, they were asked to comment, suggest or agree whether each item in the list could be included in a criteria for the qualifications of an APEC Dentist. (See Table 1 in Annex 1).

The table below shows the parameters that the participants agreed could be considered in comparing qualifications. Malaysia has pointed out that if the group were to consider the recognized dental program as one of the parameters, then there would be no need to consider competencies if an economy has a good recognized dental program. Also, Philippines has mentioned that competencies are difficult to quantify and assess in applicants. Because of the differences in the number of years of education prior to the dental program, all the participating economies agreed to disregard the primary and secondary education. It was also discussed that during the application procedures, employers usually review the dental program and the curriculum attended by the applicant. Primary and secondary education were usually not considered. Specialization was likewise not included because it meant the group has to go through the whole process of discussing all the parameters because it is different from the general practice. Postgraduate courses will have to be considered if specialization will be included. Hence, to make the process simple, all economies agreed to consider general practice only.

Workshop I results.

Parameters	Yes	No	Remarks
1. Education (dental degree) (Completion of a dental program assessed as meeting required educational requirements determined by recognized professional dental body. Subject to equivalences agreed upon by the economies)	✓		Regardless of number of years of the dental education program
2. Clinical practice or internship	✓		Regardless of the length of internship
3. Examination (Applicants must pass an examination or examinations designed to assure that the applicants have satisfactory knowledge of relevant local and national legislation, standards and practices in the host country.)	✓		
4. Continuing Professional Education (The nature and extent of the required participation in Continuing Professional Education and the manner in which compliance is audited, will remain at the discretion of the regulatory authorities of the APEC participating economies but should reflect emerging norms for such participation by APEC dentists.)	✓		Number of CPE credits will be defined in future workshops if MRA is to be pursued by participating economies
5. Experience (The amount and nature of experience required must be equivalent to the experience requirement of the jurisdiction granting the reciprocal designation) *If either amount or nature of work in country of origin does not meet the requirements of desired host country, the applicant may complete the same in the host country before becoming eligible.	✓		Define number of years of experience

6. Registration and Licensing (Assessed and licensed as a professional dentist by a professional regulatory authority technically, morally and legally qualified to undertake professional practice)	✓		
--	---	--	--

The six remaining parameters were used to develop a framework in the second workshop, which was held in the afternoon of the second day. (See figure on the next page).

In the second workshop, discussions centered around a framework that could be designed from the APEC Engineer prototype. This was distributed to each participating economy for comments and suggestions. The guidelines for the criteria in the framework were also presented for comments.

The figure shows that in order for an applicant to qualify to be an APEC Dentist, he has to satisfy all the criteria stated on the right panel of the diagram. A description of each criterion is found in the Guidelines on Criteria for APEC Dentist. The number of years of experience required for an applicant to fulfill before applying to be an APEC Dentist was set at 5 years. This was necessary to control the out-migration of human resources for health in each economy. Five years' experience was thought to be sufficient to render service to one's economy before seeking a greener pasture. The boxes on the left panel of the diagram shows that once the MRA for APEC Dentist project has been approved by various stakeholders in the APEC Region, an Independent Authorized Body in each economy will be designated to be in charge of the APEC Dentist Register. And as explained in the first presentation, this Independent Authorized Body will have to assess the applicant basing on the set criteria. Note that three of the boxes on the left panel are set into broken lines. This was purposely done to denote future plans and actions. In the future, this Independent Authorized Body upon the agreement of all participating economies will be the one to assess all applicants before including them to the APEC Register for Dentists.

The sixth box in broken lines on the left panel denotes that if a certain economy has several regulations that can not be taken for granted once the MRA is established, then if a dentist from another economy is interested in working in that certain economy, then a bilateral arrangement of equivalence of education and experience will be established between the two economies concerned. The last box in broken lines only shows that once you have been accepted in the APEC Register, you automatically become an APEC dentist. Again this will depend on the provisions that will be set once the MRA project is set into motion.

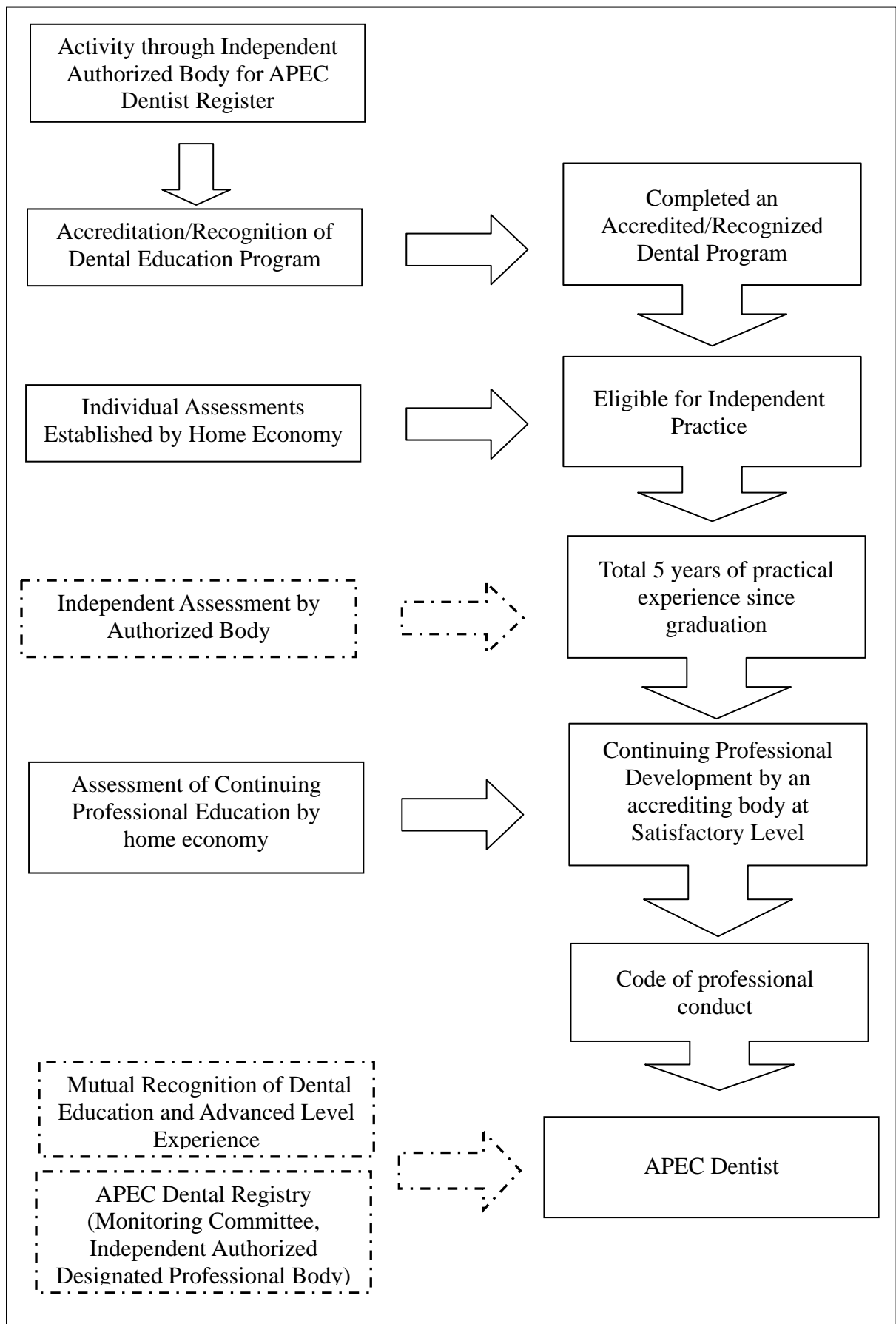


Figure 1. Results of Workshop II

GUIDELINES ON CRITERIA FOR APEC DENTISTS

1. Completed a dental program and certified within their own jurisdiction as eligible for independent practice

The practitioner must prove that he has completed a dental program and is eligible for independent practice in his country of origin. [The certification may be issued by a Committee, by a competent professional association, or by an authority with responsibility for registration or licensing of professional dentists within the relevant economy].

2. Gained a minimum of 5 years of service in the country of origin after graduation

During the initial period, the candidate should have participated in a range of roles and activities appropriate to these fields of dentistry.

3. Maintained their continuing professional development at a satisfactory level

The nature and extent of the required participation in continuing professional development from an accrediting body, and the manner in which compliance is audited, will remain at the discretion of the committee concerned, but should reflect emerging norms for such participation by professional dentist within the APEC economies.

4. Registered APEC Dentist must agree to the following.

- ***Laws and Codes of professional conduct.*** All practitioners seeking registration as APEC Dentists must also agree to be bound by the legislation and codes of professional conduct established and enforced by their home jurisdiction and by any other jurisdiction within which they are practicing.

Before the activity was concluded, the issue regarding the benefits of having an MRA was raised when some of the economies have voiced their concerns regarding the change in their laws and regulations of the dental practice. Below is the list of the benefits of having a MRA for APEC Dentist as mentioned by all the participants in the workshop.

Benefits of Having an MRA for APEC Dentist

1. Opportunity to establish an international standard of competence for professional dentist.
2. Working towards Mutual Recognition of APEC Dentist across all economies.
3. Alleviate shortage of dentists in other economies.
4. Sharing of professional dental skills and technology between APEC economies.
5. Consideration of immigration requirements to facilitate mobility of the APEC dentist across APEC economies.

Proposed Next Steps for the Workshop

1. Include a brief background on the project as an APEC project.
2. Send results of workshop to participating economies through email before posting in the website. (2 weeks after the workshop)
3. Wait for the response and report feedback to APEC secretariat (Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs).
4. If results are acceptable by economies, propose another workshop series for the development of MRA for dentist (by any economy).

Annex 1

Table 1. Workshop I working document

Parameters	Yes	No
<p>1. Education (primary + secondary + dental degree) (Completion of a dental program assessed as meeting required educational requirements determined by recognized professional dental body. Subject to equivalences agreed upon by the economies)</p>		
<p>2. Clinical practice or internship If yes, number of years of internship required: _____</p>		
<p>3. Competencies (core competency acceptable to the dental body and the career episodes to justify competency)</p>		
<p>4. Examination (Applicants must pass an examination or examinations designed to assure that the applicants have satisfactory knowledge of relevant local and national legislation, standards and practices in the host country.</p>		
<p>5. Continuing Professional Education (The nature and extent of the required participation in Continuing Professional Education and the manner in which compliance is audited, will remain at the discretion of the regulatory authorities of the APEC participating economies but should reflect emerging norms for such participation by APEC dentists. If yes, number of credit units required: _____</p>		
<p>6. Experience (The amount and nature of experience required must be equivalent to the experience requirement of the jurisdiction granting the reciprocal designation) *If either amount or nature of work in country of origin does not meet the requirements of desired host country, the applicant may complete the same in the host country before becoming eligible.</p>		
<p>7. Registration and Licensing (Assessed and licensed as a professional dentist by a professional regulatory authority technically, morally and legally qualified to undertake professional practice)</p>		
<p>8. Specialization (Applicant should be a specialist prior to application in the host country to be able to practice.)</p>		