Key trends and recommendations for quality provision and trust among higher education stakeholders

Higher education beyond borders:
Recognition of transnational education qualifications

TPG-LRC Plus project

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Overview

1) Key trends
2) Persistent gaps in quality and trust
3) Ways forward for transnational education

UNESCO: one big family

unesco

FULL NAME:

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

MAIN GOAL:

Lasting peace through global cooperation in education, science, culture, and communication and information

CURRENT DIRECTOR-GENERAL:

Khaled El-Enany,
12th Director-General of the Organization



FOUNDED:

November 4, 1946

HEADQUARTERS:

Paris, France

1) Key trends

Growing demands and unmet needs

How can transnational education support equity and access?

273 million children and youth are out of school, of which 130 million are of upper secondary school age.

269 million higher education students – **44%** enrollment ratio (more than double 2000 levels).

7.3 million mobile students – more than triple 2000 levels yet represent just 3%.

739 million adults lack basic literacy skills, two thirds are women.

9% of refugees access higher education up from 1% in 2019.

Sources:
UNESCO GEM Report, 2026
UNESCO IESALC, 2026

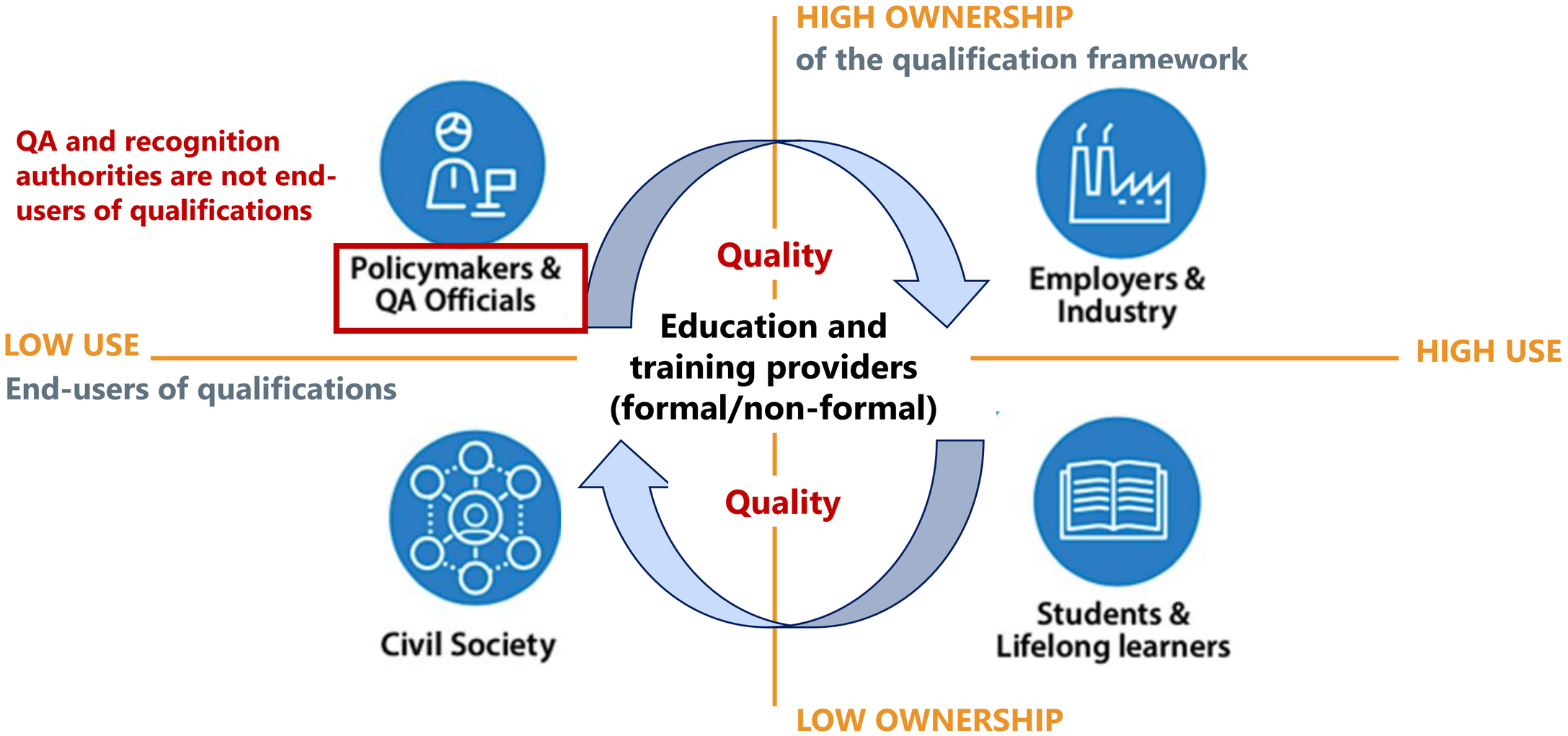
2) Persistent gaps in quality and trust

Persistent gaps in quality and trust



Need to strengthen understanding of how quality assurance mechanisms that are **reliable, consistent and complementary** can support fair, timely and transparent recognition decisions, including for cross-border education.

Higher education stakeholders:
The challenge of co-creating value across all modes of delivery



Source: Wang & Teter (UNESCO Bangkok, 2018). Guidelines on Developing and Strengthening Qualifications Frameworks.

3) Ways forward for transnational education



Drazen Zigic/Shutterstock.com

Review the functions and status of academic staff

Forthcoming UNESCO recommendation (Nov 2027)

First revised draft

Webpage

First draft recommendation concerning the Status of Academic Staff in Higher Education (2027)

What is the role and status of academic staff involved in transnational education?

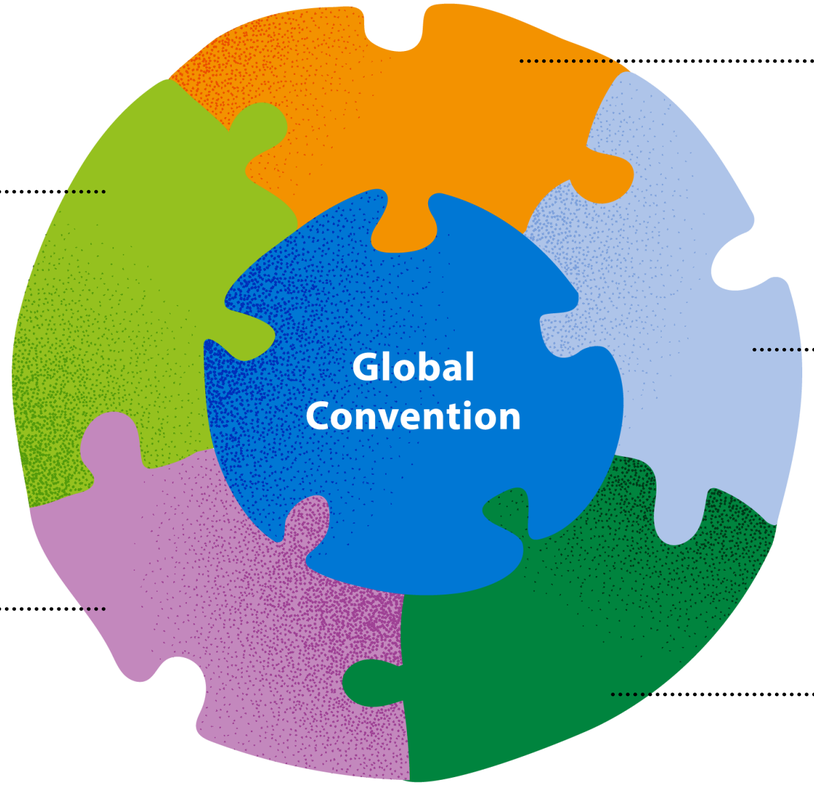
Draft preamble:

- Reaffirms the right to education is a fundamental human right, and that higher education is a public good and a public responsibility.

Draft definitions:

- **"higher education"** means all types of programmes of study, training, or sets of courses of study at the post-secondary level which are **recognized by the competent State authorities** as belonging to its higher-education system.
- **"teaching"** in the context of higher education signifies an intentional, purposeful, relational and collaborative endeavour that goes well beyond classroom instruction, the facilitation of learning and assessment, **whether the mode of educational delivery is in-person, workplace, cross-border, online or hybrid**, to also include the development of learning materials, including open educational resources; academic programme and course design; advising; tutoring; mentoring; and the supervision of student researchand creative activities, practical and work-based learning experiences, and other forms of engaged learning.

Ensure fair recognition of cross-border education: The role of the Global and regional conventions



Addis Convention

Arab States Convention

Buenos Aires Convention

Lisbon Recognition Convention

Tokyo Convention

The Global Convention on Higher Education supports international cooperation to build trust

Draft guidance on quality assurance including cross-border education

The guidelines provide:

1) Guidance on the relationship between quality assurance and qualifications recognition to support fair, timely and transparent recognition decisions.

2) Recommendations on strengthening cooperation and information exchange between quality assurance authorities, higher education institutions and qualifications recognition authorities.

To be finalized during the Third Intergovernmental Conference of States Parties to the Global Convention on Higher Education (July 2027)

The Global Convention calls for the implementation of context-sensitive approaches to advancing **quality standards and processes** while respecting the autonomy and diversity of higher education institutions and systems.



Thank you

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