

REFERENCE:

Glover Takahashi, S., Millette, D., and Eftekari T. (2003). Exploring Issues Related to the Qualification Recognition of Physical Therapists. World Confederation for Physical Therapy: London.

**Exploring Issues**

**Related to the Qualification Recognition of**

**Physical Therapists**

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*For the*

***WORLD CONFEDERATION FOR PHYSICAL THERAPY***

*Revised: JUNE 2003*





## Exploring Issues Related to the Qualification Recognition of Physical Therapists

### A: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT) has a role in facilitating the collaboration of member organisations in the movement of physical therapists<sup>1</sup> internationally. This paper offers information about the practical issues in assessing the qualifications of physical therapists educated in countries around the world.

The education of physical therapists for practice and the practice by physical therapists within a health system are integrated elements. These elements are designed to meet the needs of a specific country's citizens. Like many professionals, there are both similarities and variations in the qualifications of physical therapists around the world.

Variation among physical therapists is the result of many factors such as the nature of the country-specific education system and context of physical therapy practice, which vary with population need and a country's political environment. Similarities among physical therapists include a central approach to practice with a focus on understanding how and why movement occurs. Another similarity among physical therapists is their commitment to the development and maintenance of education and practice standards, and to the principles of lifelong learning.

This paper discusses five common features of a physical therapist's qualifications: 1) professional title, 2) intent of education (i.e. preparatory and professional/physical therapy education), 3) outcome of professional / physical therapy education, 4) educational systems and processes, and 5) context of physical therapy practice. The configuration of these features affects the *qualification recognition\** of physical therapists. *Qualification Recognition\** is a qualitative process of systematically evaluating the documentary evidence provided by a physical therapist to determine if their qualifications, such as education, are *sufficiently similar* or *substantially equivalent\** to the established and published standard of the receiving jurisdiction or country.

This paper also explores what ought to be considered when determining if a physical therapist educated in 'Country A' is substantially equivalent to a physical therapist educated in 'Country B'. Five important features of qualification recognition are discussed: 1) qualitative evaluation, 2) systematic approach, 3) use of documentary evidence, 4) established standards, and 5) published standards.

Definitions of key words have been developed. Words that are defined in the glossary (See Appendix 1) are noted with an asterisk (i.e. \*) and in *italics* the first time they are used in the body of the text.

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<sup>1</sup> The terms physiotherapy and physical therapist are considered synonyms for physical therapy and physical therapist respectively and will be used interchangeably in this document.

## **B: BACKGROUND**

Beginning in 1995, members of the World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT) expressed the opinion that the organisation's role should include facilitating the understanding of issues related to the movement of physical therapists internationally. Work done to date, has focused on describing the entry-level qualifications for physical therapists and developing an understanding of the profession internationally. This paper is a further step towards enhancing our collective understanding of education in the context of qualification recognition around the world and to consider what future roles and activities WCPT might undertake to facilitate the collaboration of member organisations with respect to the movement of physical therapists internationally.

Around the world there have been numerous initiatives aimed at understanding and documenting entry-level education programs for physical therapists. These initiatives include significant work in the European Region to describe physical therapist's education by country (WCPT, European Region, February 2001), articulating standards for education and practice (WCPT, July 1997), a 1997 report by the WCPT Task Force on Education, Recruitment and Credentialling and, the collection of profile information by region (WCPT, November 1997).

In the current climate of enhanced international *mobility\**, changes in international trade agreements and greater migration of knowledge workers, organisations such as WCPT need to have a clear understanding of issues related to education and qualification recognition. Many governments also have an interest in qualification recognition (**Lisbon** Convention, 1999; Government of Canada, 2002). In some countries, the governments view health professionals, such as physical therapists, as 'human capital', which is important to improving their economies or as a means to address present and future shortages in skilled workers.

WCPT has specific interests in exploring international issues related to the qualification recognition of physical therapists' education. Primarily, as physical therapists move from their *country of education\**, they want to be able to practice physical therapy in the *receiving country\**. As such, many WCPT member organisations – directly or indirectly – are involved in the qualification recognition of physical therapists. This involvement may include completing or interpreting the *academic credentialling assessment\**, also called *credentialling\**, or by assisting individual physical therapists seeking recognition of qualifications locally or internationally.

### ***About WCPT***

WCPT is an international confederation of national physical therapy associations founded in 1951. It has 83 Member Organisations organised in 5 Regions and through them represents over 250,000 physical therapists. WCPT works to improve global health by representing physical therapy and physical therapists internationally; collaborating with international and national organisations; encouraging high standards of physical therapy research, education and practice; supporting communication and exchange of information among Regions and Member Organisations of WCPT.

WCPT membership requires that organisations are open to all physical therapists in their country and where there are 2 associations that meet this criterion; the WCPT Member should be the larger. While WCPT is interested in education levels and requires submission of information on education for membership, there is not a consistent standard of education

among Member Organisations and WCPT membership does not bestow international recognition or acceptance of the education standard for purposes of practice in another country. There are education programmes for physical therapists in approximately 69 of the 83 countries with WCPT members.

WCPT's Member Organisations vary significantly in size, structure and scope of activity. WCPT's largest Member Organisation has over 46,000 members while the smallest has 12 members. Several Member Organisations represent close to 100% of the physical therapists in the country while in others there is a considerable discrepancy between membership and number of physical therapists in the country. Number of physical therapists may bear little relationship to the population of the country.

As far as scope of activity is concerned some Member Organisations are professional associations only, while others have a regulatory and/or trade union role as well. Central to all Member Organisations is a role in national representation of the profession to governments and other bodies and support of members in professional development and recognition.

### ***About this paper***

The purpose of this paper is to consider:

- Features of education in the context of physical therapy,
- General issues and features in evaluating physical therapist's qualifications,
- One approach to describing physical therapist's qualifications,
- Possible next steps for the international physical therapy community; and,
- A glossary of common terms.

### ***Overview of Methodology***

This paper is based on the work of a multi-method study, which includes:

- A review of previous work by WCPT,
- WCPT regional representatives completed a survey, via written format. (see copy of survey tool in Appendix 3),
- A review of available resources on education and practice of physical therapists internationally, and
- A review of related WCPT documents.

The scope of this study did not allow for a complete inventory of the details of all education programs in all countries. Rather, a survey, which sampled information from WCPT regions, was undertaken. In addition, a review of the literature and resources was undertaken..

A meta-analysis of all available information was then completed. From the meta-analysis, common themes in the education, practice, and qualification recognition emerged. The WCPT President and Secretary General reviewed the initial drafts of this paper.

### C. EXPLORING A PHYSICAL THERAPIST'S QUALIFICATIONS

Variation exists across all professions around the world. Factors creating variation include the nature of country specific education and health system models as well as physical therapist education and practice. WCPT recognises that there is considerable diversity in the social, economic and political environments in which physical therapists are educated and practice.

There are similarities and variations in a physical therapist's qualifications both within and across WCPT regions.

WCPT in its position statement on *Education for Entry Level Physical Therapists* (WCPT, July 1997), recommends that education be based on university or university-level studies, of a minimum of 4 years duration, independently validated and accredited as being at a standard that accords graduates full status and professional recognition. WCPT recognises that not all countries in all regions have physical therapist education programs that meet this recommendation. For example, in some countries the variation in length of program alone ranges from 2.5 to 7 years and is offered in polytechnic institutions as well as higher education universities.

The education of physical therapists for practice and the practice of physical therapy for the health system are integrated elements and are designed to meet the needs of a country's citizens. In addition, the education of physical therapists aims to provide the broad knowledge, skills and abilities, or *competencies\**, that a physical therapist might need throughout their professional career.

Further, while a physical therapist's education might have been broad in nature, their current work role or practice context may not require, or perhaps even permit, the physical therapist to use the full range of their competencies. For example, physical therapists in some countries are educated as independent, autonomous practitioners however, the health system does not allow such practice. As such, the context in which practice occurs must be carefully considered. To look at the education without looking at the health system may lead to inappropriate assumptions about the competencies of the physical therapist.

The requirements for qualification to work in a physical therapists' home country also vary around the world. In some countries a physical therapist is permitted to work on the basis of receiving the educational credential. In others there are a variety of other standards such as: requirements related to the approval of educational programs, the completion of examinations prior to graduation, the completion of a research paper or thesis, the completion of a clinical internship post graduation, military or community service, language fluency, and completion of a licensure examination post graduation.

The organisational authority for administering qualification to work requirements is also variable. The mandate, roles and responsibilities of professional authorities are often different from country to country. For example, in some countries the professional association, responsible for member interests, may also be the licensing or regulatory body. In other countries the mandates, roles and responsibilities are clearly divided with an authority responsible for licensing or registering physical therapists and another for handling member issues or even union matters. Where there is more than one organisation, it is beneficial for organisations to co-operate on interrelated issues such as delivering education,

evaluation of educational programs, describing practice standards, and qualification recognition of internationally educated professionals. Well-described, agreed to and available documentation about the roles and responsibilities of different organisations in each country can assist and facilitate the integration of a physical therapist in the receiving country.

### ***Features Of Education and Practice***

In analysing the available information, five key features related to physical therapists' education and practice emerged including:

1. Professional Title
2. Intent of Education
3. Outcome of Education
4. Educational Systems and Processes
5. Context of Physical Therapy Practice

#### 1. Professional Title

- The titles used by physical therapists around the world are similar.
- While legal protection of the title 'physical therapist' is a desired outcome for many member organisations, there is generic usage of titles in many countries.
- It cannot be assumed, based on title alone, that the holder has a common education or practice nor can it be assumed that where title is different, the holder has a different education and practice.
- Membership in WCPT does not infer a common education or practice.

#### 2. Intent of Education (i.e. Preparatory and Professional/Physical Therapy Education)

- The intent of both preparatory and professional/physical therapy education systems are variable internationally.
- The intent of education in the country of education might differ widely from that of the receiving country.
- Assistant, technical and professional programs intend to educate physical therapists with different knowledge, skills and abilities.
- In some countries the student is required to complete an academic primary and/or secondary education prior to university level education.
- In many countries the secondary education has 2 or more streams of education (e.g. academic, arts-based, technical, vocational).
- *Does the preparatory education obtained in elementary and secondary school prepare the individual for the level of professional education that is required?* In some countries, at the secondary or high school level for example, there are programs that lead to vocational or technical training opportunities. There are also programs that lead to opportunities within educational institutions that do not confer degrees or diplomas. Preparatory education therefore is important to consider as it provides the general education and knowledge required for the next level of study.

3. Outcome of Professional Education (i.e. Physical Therapy)

- The outcomes of a physical therapist's education includes
  - the academic credential received (e.g., Diploma, Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree)
  - the individual's competencies (i.e. knowledge, skills and abilities) upon graduation.
- Both the credential and the competencies need to be considered when comparing the outcomes of the physical therapists education from country of education and that of the receiving country.

4. Educational Systems and Processes

- Models of education vary within all countries around the world. The variation includes type and nature of available institutions, the educational focus and the quality measures that are inherent in the system,
- Variation in types of physical therapist education systems include university; polytechnic schools and postgraduate programs both publicly and privately funded,
- Variation in the types of models for physical therapy education include traditional classroom learning, case-based, problem-based, evidence-based,
- Variation in teaching approaches for physical therapy education include didactic, clinical and self directed studies, and
- Variation in the coursework topics and the numbers of coursework hours that are covered.

5. Context of Physical Therapist Practice

- The context of practice is determined by such factors as: laws, rules, regulations, standards, the availability of other health care providers, the consistency in the ability to provide care and the population health; and,
- The mandates, roles and responsibilities of professional authorities vary from country to country.

In summary, these 5 features function independently as well as collectively to provide a comprehensive overview of physical therapist's education and practice.

**D: FAIRLY EVALUATING QUALIFICATIONS -Is a Physical Therapist a Physical Therapist?**

***Is a Physical Therapist educated in 'Country A' substantially equivalent to a Physical Therapist educated in 'Country B'?***

In short, the answer to these questions is, sometimes yes, sometimes no. The differences can arise from variations in the physical therapist's education, practice or practice context. The differences can be based solely on the physical therapist's education or on the combination of the physical therapist's education and all subsequent practice experience and professional development.

This section focuses on how to fairly evaluate a physical therapist's qualifications. Fairly assessing qualifications requires that the evaluator have a thorough understanding of education systems, as well as the physical therapist education in the country of education, and the education of physical therapists internationally. It is also important that the evaluator understand changes to education systems and physical therapy education over time. For example, assumptions should not be made that a 'university' or its 'physical therapy program' or the graduates of the physical therapy program in country A are the same as 'university' or its 'physical therapy' program' or the graduates of the physical therapy program in country B.

It is important to have an accurate understanding of the education **in relation to the country in which it is obtained**. Comparisons must be done with a clear understanding of the nature of the educational system in the country of education.

Consistent approaches to the evaluation of qualifications are important to develop and implement in an effort to facilitate labour mobility and also to eliminate unintended barriers to practice. In part, this can be achieved by clearly understanding the features of physical therapy education and practice.

***Features of Qualification Recognition***

Five important features of evaluating qualifications are:

1. Qualitative Nature of the Evaluation

- Evaluation of qualifications is a qualitative process that considers if a specific Physical Therapists Qualifications from country 'A' are sufficiently similar to country 'B' [i.e. with respect to such features as: 1) professional title; 2) intent of education (i.e. preparatory and professional/physical therapy education); 3) outcome of professional education (i.e. physical therapy); 4) educational systems and processes; and 5) context of professional (physical therapy) practice]
- Sufficiently similar refers to the degree to which the qualifications are the same or similar to those deemed important.
- While non-physical therapists can do components of the qualification recognition evaluation, the expertise of a physical therapist is generally important to the overall accuracy of the evaluation.
- Ideally, the physical therapists involved in qualification recognition evaluation are knowledgeable in physical therapist education internationally and qualitative assessment procedures.

2. Systematic Approach To Evaluation

- Like other qualitative processes, well-described and documented processes for the qualification recognition evaluations are needed to support the consistency and accuracy of judgements of the experts conducting the evaluations.
  - A sample documentary process to guide evaluators includes: evaluation rubrics, grade conversion charts and quality assurance procedures.
3. Use of documentary evidence in the evaluation
- A well-defined description of the required documentary evidence is needed.
  - The requisite documentary evidence varies from ‘marks cards’, to ‘transcript of records’ to detailed course descriptions.
  - Sometimes copies of documents or notarised copies are sufficient / satisfactory, but more often, given the increasing frequency of fraudulent educational documents and the sophistication of imaging technology, original documentation is needed.
  - Often securing the needed documentation is a time consuming and costly enterprise. There appears to be a need for an approach to ensure that graduates of physical therapist educational programs have continued access to detailed documentation about their physical therapy education.
4. Established standards and criteria for qualification recognition
- Standards should be based upon criteria that are relevant to the practice of physical therapy in the country of application (i.e. the comparator for the education in the receiving country or jurisdiction should be based on the actual qualification features and not the curriculum guidelines or objectives).
  - The most common criterion for qualification recognition evaluations is the possession of an educational credential or the equivalent based upon criteria such as graduation from a named program, at a certain type of institution, over a specified number of years.
  - Academic credential assessment typically includes a paper review of documents such as degrees / diplomas, transcripts and course materials that help determine program content.
  - In addition to academic credentialing assessment, other methods can be used to evaluate qualifications. For example, in Canada, a Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is offered as another method to review an applicant’s learning and experience *since graduation from the physical therapist education*. PLA allows both the applicant and the reviewing agency an opportunity to consider how professional development, research and other learning opportunities contributes to current competencies necessary for physical therapist practice in the receiving country.
  - Additional criteria for qualification recognition evaluations include eligibility to practice in the country of education; completion of supervised clinical practice or clinical education, examinations and language proficiency.
  - Additional criteria might include such features as requiring evidence of: applicant’s eligibility to work as a physical therapist in the country of education; applicant’s fluency in verbal and/or written language skills (e.g. via specific or standardized language tests); applicant’s educational institution is ‘recognized’ (e.g. governmental recognition, accreditation).
  - One of the essential elements in fairly and consistently evaluating qualifications is a well-understood and documented comparator for the physical therapist’s education in the receiving country (e.g., education in country ‘B’).
  - Sufficiently similar is a standard that needs to be established and well described by the receiving country or jurisdiction. Sometimes the receiving country or jurisdiction

has an established requirement that the education is *substantially equivalent*\*. Other times the requirement is that the qualifications are *comparable*\*.

- Academic equivalence is often measured by requiring individuals to have an academic credential that is similar (i.e. comparable to) to that obtained by applicants in the receiving country or jurisdiction. The comparability usually considers similarity in content as well as length of academic program and any other professional education. Academic credential assessment does not necessarily consider educational processes or outcomes.
- All qualification recognition programs should be reviewed from time to time to reflect changes in the profession and rules and regulations that govern them.

#### 5. Published standards

- Qualification recognition requirements and procedures should be clear, concise, understandable, in “plain language”, and as simple as possible for both applicants and the reviewers and reviewing organisation.
- Applicants who are denied entry to the profession in the receiving country should receive a detailed written explanation of the rationale for the decision, and whenever possible be provided with information on available opportunities to remedy identified deficiencies

In summary, when evaluating the qualifications of physical therapists’, one should systematically evaluate using an established qualitative and quantitative approach in developing an opinion on the similarity, comparability or equivalency to the education in the country of education.

## **F: CONCLUSIONS AND POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS**

Physical therapists are mobile health professionals. This results in the need to ensure that there are quality processes established whenever possible to facilitate the movement of physical therapists around the world. However, the qualification recognition of physical therapists' education is a complex enterprise and takes time to develop and implement effective systems of recognition.

This paper offers one approach to understanding the similarities, differences in physical therapists' education, practice and practice context. The approach includes looking at five features including: professional title, intent of education, outcome of education, process of education and, context of practice. In addition, features of qualification recognition systems are briefly described including the need for a systematic evaluation, using an established qualitative and quantitative approach when developing an opinion on the similarity, comparability or equivalency of the physical therapist's education.

To further enhance our collective understanding of physical therapists' education in the context of qualification recognition and facilitate the collaboration of member organisations with respect to the movement of physical therapists internationally, next steps could include:

1. Supporting the use of consistent terminology used in qualification recognition (e.g. reviewing, revising and adopting common use and definition of terms such as those outlined in the Glossary [see Appendix 1]).
2. Supporting the use of a common approach to understanding and describing the variation in the features of physical therapists' qualifications. (E.g., reviewing, revising and adopting an approach such as described in Section C; completing and maintaining tables of information such as found in Appendix 2).
3. Facilitating the collection and maintenance of information about the roles and responsibilities of different organisations in each country (e.g. completing and maintaining information on the name, contact information, roles and responsibilities of different organizations; facilitating links between WCPT, member organisations and other organisations involved in qualification recognition).
4. Supporting the development or maintenance of qualification evaluation processes, which are consistent with the identified key features (e.g. reviewing, revising and adopting an approach such as described in Section D).
5. Encouraging the development of systems that ensure that graduates of physical therapy education programs have continuing access to detailed documentation about their original education over time (e.g. member organisations to encourage educational programs to archive and maintain information needed in qualification recognition).

## APPENDIX 1: GLOSSARY

**Academic credential assessment**, also called credentialling, typically includes a paper review of documents such as degrees / diplomas, transcript of records and course materials that systematically evaluate their education to ensure that it is sufficiently similar to the established and published standard.

**Country** means the country or jurisdiction (e.g. state or province) that has the authority to govern the practice of physical therapists.

**Country of education** means the country or jurisdiction in which a physical therapist receives their physical therapist education.

**Comparable** means that there is confidence that the qualifications are generally similar.

**Competencies** are the knowledge, skills and abilities obtained through formal, non-formal, or informal learning; ability to perform occupation-specific tasks and duties.

**Credentialling**, see Academic Credential Assessment.

**Mobility** is the extent to which a worker is able to move from country or jurisdiction to another and to gain entry into a profession without undue obstacles or barriers.

**Portfolio assessment** is the systematic evaluation of formally presented documentation and other supporting evidence that demonstrates and provides validation of learning, and articulates the learning towards course or program requirements.

**Prior learning assessment and recognition** involves the identification and measurement of skills and knowledge acquired outside formal educational institutions. Assessments are most often used to grant academic credit or determine eligibility to practice a trade or profession. Recognition is based on an assessment of skills and knowledge obtained through work and other life experience. Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition may also include determination of future goals and individual education needs.

**Qualification recognition** is a qualitative process of systematically evaluating the documentary evidence provided by a physical therapist to determine if their qualifications are sufficiently similar to the established and published standard of the receiving country or jurisdiction. Qualification recognition can include academic credentialling assessment, prior learning assessment and portfolio assessment.

**Qualifications** are the possession of knowledge, skills, and experience for entry to an educational program or practice in an occupation.

**Receiving country or jurisdiction** means the country or jurisdiction to which a physical therapist is arriving/immigrating and is seeking recognition of their qualifications.

**Sufficiently similar** is the degree to which the qualifications need to be the same or similar which has been established by the receiving country or jurisdiction. Sometime the receiving country or jurisdiction has an established requirement that the education is *substantially equivalent*\*. Other times the requirement is that the qualifications are *comparable*\*.

**Substantial equivalency** means that there is reasonable confidence that the qualifications are highly similar. Substantial equivalency also implies reasonable confidence that individuals possess the competencies or comparator being evaluated.

## Appendix 2: EXAMPLES OF VARIATION IN PHYSICAL THERAPISTS' EDUCATION AND PRACTICE

**Note to readers:**

- All of the information contained herein should be considered “DRAFT” and readers are advised to verify its accuracy on their own.
- The information below does not infer or imply that the education or practice of physical therapists from these countries is equal, similar or different.
- These tables were developed based on applicant requests for qualification recognition by the Canadian Alliance of *Physiotherapy* Regulators during the period from 1997-2002 and the general research undertaken by the paper’s authors.
- The information selected for these tables was chosen to illustrate the variation in features in the education and practice among physical therapists internationally.
- As previously noted, variations in physical therapist education and practice exist because of variation in education and health systems that are designed to meet the needs of a specific country’s citizens.

**A. Professional Title**

NOTE: - This table reflects examples of titles used by working/licensed/registered physical therapists (i.e. titles for physical therapists educated over the past 30+ years; may not reflect present requirements)

Region	Country	Title
Africa	Nigeria	Rehabilitation Therapist
	Zimbabwe	Physiotherapist
Asia Western Pacific	Sri Lanka	Physiotherapist
	Japan	Physical Therapist
Europe	Belgium	Kinesithérapeute, Graduee en Kinesithérapie, Masseur-Kinesithérapeute
	Bulgaria	Rehabilitation Therapist
	Finland	Fizioterapeut
	Israel	Physical Therapist
	Turkey	Fizik Tedavici, Physiatrist
	Yugoslavia	Physiatrist, Technician of Physiotherapy
North America Caribbean	Jamaica	Physiotherapist
	United States of America	Physical Therapist
South America	Argentina	Licentiate in Kinesiology and Physiotherapy
	Chile	Kinesiologist
	Colombia	Fisioterapeuta
	Peru	Licentiate in Medical Technology Specializing in Physical Therapy

## B. Licensure, registration, permission to work

NOTE: - This table reflects examples of the information available about licensure, registration, permission to work

Region	Country	Professional Association	Examination(s)	License or registration issuing organization(s)
Africa	Egypt	The General Physical Therapy Syndicate of Egypt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No</li> </ul>	<i>Unknown</i>
	South Africa	The South African Society of Physiotherapy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No</li> </ul>	South African Medical & Dental Council
Asia Western Pacific	Australia	Australian Physiotherapy Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No exam for PTs educated in Australia</li> <li>Exams for PTs educated outside of Australia administered by the Australian Council of Physiotherapy Regulating Authorities</li> </ul>	Authorization rests with each of the states (e.g., Physiotherapists Board of Queensland, Physiotherapy Board of South Australia)
	Iran	Iranian Physiotherapy Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No</li> </ul>	<i>Not applicable</i>
	Philippines	Philippines Physical Therapy Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes for those educated in Philippines</li> </ul>	Professional Regulation Commission, Manila
Europe	Denmark	The Association of Danish Physiotherapists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Unknown</i></li> </ul>	National Board of Health
	Romania	Roumanian Federation for Physiotherapy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Unknown</i></li> </ul>	Ministry of Health – Department of Public Health
North America Caribbean	United States of America	American Physical Therapy Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Common exam (i.e., National Physical Therapy Examination) for all P.T.s (i.e., educated in and out of USA) administered by Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy</li> </ul>	Authorization rests with each of the 53 jurisdictions (i.e., states and territories)
South America	Brazil	Associacao Brasileira de Fisioterapia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Unknown</i></li> </ul>	Regional Board of Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy
	Peru	Association Peruana de Terapistas Fisicos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Unknown</i></li> </ul>	<i>Unknown</i>

**C. Educational credential and approved/accredited curriculum**

NOTE: - This table reflects examples of the educational credential and approved/accredited curriculum of current working/licensed/registered physical therapists (i.e. reflects educational credentials of physical therapists educated over the past 30+ years; may not reflect present educational credentials & curriculum standards)

Region	Country	Name(s) of Physical Therapy Educational Credential(s)	Who approves / accredits educational curriculum?
Africa	Nigeria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bachelor of Medical Rehabilitation Physiotherapy (BMRPT)</li> <li>Bachelor of Science in Physiotherapy</li> </ul>	Federal Republic of Nigeria National Universities Commission (NUC)+ Ministry of Education + Medical Rehab Therapist Board of Nigeria
	Zambia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diploma in Physical Therapy</li> </ul>	Department of Technical Education and Vocational Training + Examination Council of Zambia + Medical Council of Zambia
Asia Western Pacific	Hong Kong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bachelor of Science in Physiotherapy</li> <li>Professional Diploma in Physiotherapy</li> </ul>	The Council for National Academic Awards UK
	Korea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>B.S. (Baccalaureate Science)</li> <li>Diploma in Physical Therapy</li> </ul>	Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Welfare
	New Zealand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bachelor of Health Science (Physiotherapy)</li> <li>Diploma in Physiotherapy</li> </ul>	New Zealand Physiotherapy Board + Government/Ministry of Education
	Thailand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>B.S. (Physical Therapy)</li> </ul>	Ministry of Education
Europe	Austria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diplomierten Assistentin für Physikalische Medizin (Physical Medicine Assistant Diploma)</li> <li>Diplomierten Physiotherapeutin</li> </ul>	Ministry of Health, Environment Protection
	Croatia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diploma O Stecenjoj Strucnoj Spremi Sestog (VI/I)</li> </ul>	Croatian Ministry of Science and Technology + Croatian Ministry of Health
	Latvia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diploma ARSTS</li> </ul>	Former USSR Ministry of Health Care
	Netherlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baccalaureaat Fysiotherapie,</li> <li>Diploma of Higher Vocational Studies - Physiotherapy (Getuigschrift Hoger Onderwijs)</li> <li>Diploma Van Akademie vooe Fysiotherapie</li> </ul>	Dutch Ministry of Education
	Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physiotherapy Diploma (Diploma de Fisioterapia)</li> </ul>	Unknown
	Sweden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>University Certificate in Physiotherapy (Sjukgymnastexamen)</li> </ul>	The National Board of Health and Welfare
	Switzerland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diplome de Physiotherapie</li> <li>Physiotherapeutin</li> </ul>	Red Cross
North America Caribbean	Panama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Licenciada en Fisioterapia</li> </ul>	<i>Unknown</i>
	Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diploma (B.Sc. (PT))</li> <li>Bachelors of Health Science in Physical Therapy</li> <li>Bachelors in Physical Therapy</li> </ul>	Accreditation Council for Canadian Physiotherapy Academic Programs
South America	Argentina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Licentate in Kinesiology and Physiotherapy (Licenciature en kinesiología Fisiatras)</li> </ul>	National Ministry of Culture & Education
	Colombia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Title of Physical Therapist (Fisioterapeuta)</li> </ul>	Colombian Institute for the Development of Higher Education (ICFES)

### D. Educational processes

NOTE: - This table reflects examples of the educational processes for physical therapists (i.e. reflects educational processes for physical therapists educated over the past 30+ years; may not reflect present requirements).

Region	Country	Admission requirements to the Physical Therapy (PT) program (i.e., one of the following)	Type of institution that PT program occurs at	Length of PT program (years)	PT education allows access to what type of studies
Africa	Egypt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16 years</li> </ul>	University level	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>M.Sc. programs</li> </ul>
	Nigeria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>West African Examination Council+GCE OLevel+GCE A Level</li> <li>GCE O Level credit passes in 5 science subjects</li> </ul>	University level	3 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Master's level programs</li> </ul>
Asia Western Pacific	Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New South Wales Higher School Certificate or Equivalent</li> <li>Senior level English and 1 subject from Biological Sc., Chemistry or Physics with score that places the student in the top 2% of the state</li> <li>TER of at least 95 over 100, A levels score of 12</li> <li>Year 12 Victorian Certificate of Education</li> </ul>	University level	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Master's and then Ph.D level programs</li> </ul>
	India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 + 2 - Secondary Science</li> <li>Senior Secondary School (Science)</li> <li>10 + 2 with science subjects (50%)</li> <li>Min 50% marks on Higher Secondary Exams</li> </ul>	University level	2.4 3 3 3.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Master's Level Program</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-Degree with Physics, Chemistry &amp; Biology</li> <li>Min 50% marks on Higher Secondary Exam</li> <li>10 + 2</li> <li>7 Std. of Secondary School Exam</li> </ul>	University level	3.5 4 4.5 4.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to Master of Physiotherapy (MPHT) programs in India</li> </ul>
	Japan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completion of Senior High School program</li> </ul>	University level	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4-year degree courses (B.S. degree can be obtained in 2 years)</li> </ul>
	Korea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General or Vocational High School Diploma</li> <li>12 Years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vocational Junior College</li> </ul>	2 or 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unknown</li> </ul>	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Master's / Doctoral level programs</li> </ul>
Philippines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High School Diploma</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 years (first and second year) at secondary level, 3 years at university level</li> </ul>	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Postgraduate level programs</li> </ul>	

Region	Country	Admission requirements to the Physical Therapy (PT) program (i.e., one of the following)	Type of institution that PT program occurs at	Length of PT program (years)	PT education allows access to what type of studies
	Sri Lanka	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Certificate of Education 'O' level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Postsecondary level supervised by Ministry of Health</li> </ul>	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post Basic programs organized by Disability Studies unit, University of Sri Lanka</li> </ul>
Europe	Belgium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High School Diploma (Baccalaureat General francais)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post-secondary level</li> </ul>	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bachelor's level programs</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Successful completion of general or technical higher secondary education (12 years)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post-secondary level</li> </ul>	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Third year of the licence PT program after completing one year of qualifying studies. Also university level programs</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secondary School Final Examination (Matriculation Certificate)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>University level</li> </ul>	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post-Baccalaureate level studies</li> </ul>
	Denmark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13 years of school and practical experience of 9 months</li> <li>High School certificate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>University level</li> </ul>	3.5 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Graduate Studies (M.Sc.)</li> </ul>
		Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Min of 10 years of secondary schooling - Abschlusszeugnis or Mittlere Reife</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secondary, Vocational level</li> </ul>	3
	Italy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diploma di Scuola Secondaria di II Grado (Anni 5) Secondary School Diploma (13 years)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>University level</li> </ul>	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unknown</li> </ul>
	Poland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High School Diploma</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post-secondary level</li> </ul>	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unknown</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High School Graduation and Diploma of Technicians of Physiotherapy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>University level</li> </ul>	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Postgraduate Studies in PT in Poland</li> </ul>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>University level</li> </ul>	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ph.D level programs</li> </ul>
	UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Certificate of Secondary Education, plus 3 A levels (England)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>University level</li> </ul>	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Master level programs</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12 Years Secondary Education (Northern Ireland)</li> <li>12 Years Secondary Education (Republic of Ireland)</li> <li>School Diploma (Scotland)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>University level</li> </ul>	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Master level programs</li> </ul>	

Region	Country	Admission requirements to the Physical Therapy (PT) program (i.e., one of the following)	Type of institution that PT program occurs at	Length of PT program (years)	PT education allows access to what type of studies
	Yugoslavia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High School Diploma</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post-Secondary level</li> </ul>	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any Medical Schools</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>M.D. degree</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>University level</li> </ul>	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sub-Specialization and M.Sc. Course</li> </ul>
North America Caribbean	United States of America	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>68 Semester hours</li> <li>90 hours of coursework, one chemistry course, one physics, one mat, psychology &amp; English</li> <li>Bachelor's degree with a minimum GPA of 3.0</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>University level</li> </ul>	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Graduate level</li> <li>Any university</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bachelor's Degree/equivalent</li> <li>3.0 GPA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>University level</li> </ul>	2.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Graduate level</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baccalaureate Degree</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>University level</li> </ul>	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Postgraduate level</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High School Diploma</li> <li>Min 2 years of undergraduate level program with GPA of 3.00 and GRE of 1500</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>University level</li> </ul>	4 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Doctoral level Studies</li> <li>Graduate level</li> <li>PhD programs</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High School Diploma</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>University level</li> </ul>	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Doctorate Degree programs</li> </ul>
South America	Argentina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secondary education diploma (Titulo de Bachiller-Bachillerato)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>University level</li> </ul>	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ph.D. level education (Doctor of kinesiology and Physiotherapy)</li> </ul>
	Colombia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High School Diploma, Statal Exam (ICFES) and Interview</li> <li>Secondary School Certificate (ICFES test)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>University level</li> </ul>	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Masters level programs (Especializacion – Maestria)</li> </ul>

### E. Outcome of Education

NOTE: - This table reflects examples of the outcomes for physical therapists (i.e. reflects outcomes for physical therapists educated over the past 30+ years; may not reflect present requirements).

Region	Country	Education intended to prepare graduates to work under doctors prescription?	Education intended to prepare graduates to work autonomously and/or in primary care?
Africa	South Africa	No	Yes
	Zambia	Yes	No
Asia Western Pacific	Australia	No	Yes
Europe	Czech Republic	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Unknown</i>
	France	Yes	No
	Hungary	Yes	No
	Lebanon	Yes	No
	Norway	No	Yes
	Spain	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Unknown</i>
North America Caribbean	Jamaica	No	Yes
	Canada	No	Yes
South America	Brazil	No	Yes
	Peru	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Unknown</i>

## Appendix 2: EUROPEAN DOCUMENT

The European Region of WCPT published a document in February 2001 entitled *Post Basic Physiotherapy Education*. While the purpose of the document is to provide information on the principles and concepts related to lifelong learning and the availability of post basic education, the comprehensive collection of information on basic education identifies features of education already under consideration when qualification review is considered.

Chapter 2 of the document provides information on basic physiotherapy education as supplied by national physiotherapy organisations. The features of basic physiotherapy education include the following:

- Status of entry qualifications
  - Age of entry to professional education-18 years in the majority of countries
  - Entry level equivalent to university entry level
  - Minimum schooling requirement-12 to 13 years
- Length of physiotherapy education
  - A physiotherapy program of at least 3 years duration
  - Most countries have programs have programs of 3.5-4 years duration
- Status of physiotherapy education
  - Integrated into the system of higher education in the majority of countries
  - some countries have parallel systems of education with few or no possibilities of access to university or postgraduate courses after qualifying in physiotherapy
  - Movement from a professional diploma status to an academic degree with theoretical components of the course being provided in universities or other higher education institutions

These features are commonly noted in traditional qualification programs as criteria for qualification recognition. The features described as options for members of WCPT to consider as part of a future qualification recognition approach include the above mentioned features although they are framed differently. The key differences follow:

- Status of entry qualifications:

The proposed approach considers the intent of education rather than years of education or age at entry. This approach allow for flexibility in educational systems and processes while ensuring that the focus is on graduation from a pre-physiotherapy program that prepares applicants for entry into a university or equivalent level program.
- Length of Physiotherapy Program:

The proposed approach includes the length of any program as a component within the outcome of education. The length of the program should be such that the competencies required can be acquired.
- Status of the Physiotherapy Program:

The proposed approach considers the status of the program under educational systems and processes. There is considerable variation in the type of educational institutions offering physiotherapy programs, institutional funding sources and the authority of the institution to grant academic awards.

The European Region is an important resource describing basic and post basic physiotherapy education. This resource and consideration of the approach with respect to the features for describing the physical therapist's education and practice (i.e. as described in Section C of the paper) may help to inform further dialogue among the regions.

### **Appendix 3: REPORT ON SURVEY**

A survey was developed and distributed to key contacts and informants nominated by the Project Advisory Committee. A total of 14 surveys were distributed with all regions represented. Six surveys were returned from informants representing 4 regions.

The purpose of the survey was to gather information related to these key areas:

- Education within each region;
- Physical Therapy practice within each region; and,
- Health system structure within each region.

The survey was not intended to collect detailed information with respect to any specific region nor country but rather to provide a general overview.

Feedback from key contacts and informants included that the survey was difficult to complete because of the variation within regions and also because of the complexity of international education and evaluation. In some cases respondents were not able to report of their region, however, were able to report on their specific country.

Many of the findings from the survey are included in the discussion paper and are not repeated in this summary. However, the key messages from the survey include:

- Variation in physical therapy education is significant in level and type of education.
- Physical Therapy education is delivered in hospitals, polytechnic institutions, colleges and universities.
- The level of education includes diploma, degree and post-graduate levels.
- The outcome of education varies significantly around the world and physician referral is often required as part of practice.
- There is a move towards master's entry-level education within university programs around the world. There are programs in place within the North American, Asia Pacific and, European Regions.
- Some countries have experienced an increase in the number of physical therapy programs with associated challenges in providing adequate clinical placements.
- The migration of physical therapists varies significantly within regions and countries. Some countries, for example Australia, see a migration of a large number of newer graduates for periods of time (often 2-3 years). Some countries attract larger numbers of international students who return home after graduation with a resultant impact on the country of education.
- The process of education evaluation is complex and needs to be user friendly.
- There is a need for a better understanding of education and evaluation internationally.
- Educational evaluation should be done before an applicant leaves their home country.
- Common processes should be developed and implemented wherever possible.
- Facilitating labor mobility should be a priority in an effort to promote access to physical therapy services in under-served areas.
- Shifts in delivery systems from private to publicly funded physical therapy services create a demand for a different level of accountability and quality monitoring in practice.

*Survey questions are attached.*

**WORLD CONFEDERATION FOR PHYSICAL THERAPY (WCPT)  
Project To Explore International Issues Related to the  
Education and Credentialling of Physical Therapists**

**Sample: PROJECT QUESTIONNAIRE – sent OCTOBER 2002**

**Overview:** WCPT has an interest in exploring and documenting issues related to the education and credentialling of physical therapists around the world with a view to increasing understanding and providing consistent and useful information to Member Organizations and external bodies. This questionnaire is part of gathering background information that will help inform the development of a background paper to be presented at the WCPT 2003 Meeting.

The intent of the questionnaire is to develop a better understanding of education, practice and health systems around the world, as individual and integrated systems.

The questionnaire is divided into four sections.

- Section 1 asks about Education within your region.
- Section 2 asks about Physiotherapy practice within your region.
- Section 3 asks about the Health System within your region.
- Section 4 includes general questions.

*We recognize that you may not be able to answer some of the questions in detail. You may only be able to answer for your specific country and not the entire region. Please simply answer to the best of your ability. Once we collate the information we will make every effort to ensure that the information provided is accurate and reflects your region correctly.*

**Background Information**

Name of contact person completing questionnaire: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Region of WCPT: \_\_\_\_\_

**Section 1 Education**

How many countries exist within your region that offers Physical Therapy (PT) education programs?

Please name the countries if possible.

Please describe the education system(s) in your region using the following questions as a guide;

- Admission requirements to enter a PT program:
- # or years of high school or level of education required
- what certificate/diploma are secondary school graduates awarded
- school examinations /university entrance exams
- college/ degree qualifications
- pre requisite knowledge/ courses
- language requirements
- Other

Nature or type of educational institution offering PT education

- College, University, Hospital, Other

Length of PT program(s) Length of academic year in weeks -

- How the academic year is divided i.e. semesters/quarters/terms/blocks
- Minimum number of years of study
- How are the hours credited for each subject calculated
- Is the course able to be taken Full/time/Part/time or either –

Type of credential/qualification granted upon graduation

- Certificate, diploma, degree, masters, PhD, other

Are the educational institutions Government or Privately funded?

Is the program recognized and by whom?

- Accreditation or approval by \_\_\_\_\_
- other

After completion of the program, is there any other requirement before entering practice?

- Supervised clinical practice

- Examination
- Professional licensure or registration
- other

Are there any cultural issues that impact significantly on education within your region?

Are there any trends in education within your region that should be noted? (E.g. movement towards a different level of education)

### **Section 2 Health System**

Describe the organization or type of the health care system(s) within your region?

Are physical therapists required to practice under the authority of another health care professional e.g. physician?

Are there any trends in the health system within your region that should be noted?

### **Section 3 Physical Therapy Practice**

Describe the educational, professional and regulatory system(s) within your region using the following as a guide:

- who is responsible for each segment e.g. educators responsible for providing entry level education, professional association responsible for ongoing professional development etc.
- what is the relationship between the segments where applicable

Who has the authority to set standards including?

Educational requirements

Entry to practice requirements

Clinical Practice requirements

Other

In the event of an entry to practice examination or assessment process who is responsible for the administration of the examination or assessment?

Are there any cultural issues that impact significantly on physical therapy practice within your region (e.g. age, gender, race, socio-demographic issues)?

### **Section 4 Other**

Is there significant migration/relocation of physical therapists from your region (please quantify if possible)?

What countries are PT's most likely to relocate to?

Are you aware of any "ability to practice" challenges that PT's educated within your region face when attempting to relocate? If yes, please describe?

Does your region experience a significant number of PT's migrating/relocating to the region? (Please quantify if possible)

What countries are PT's most likely to relocate from?

What challenges does your region face in evaluating the education (or allowing the practice of physical therapy) of PT's entering the region?

### **Definitions**

Please provide any common definitions within your region for the following terms: Entry to Practice, Credentialing, Registration, Licensure, Competence.

*Thank you for providing this information*

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