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**Quality Assurance in Cross-Border
Higher Education: UNESCO's Global
Initiatives and Regional Capacity-
Building Tools**

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Definition of CBHE

“ *cross-border higher education (that) includes higher education that takes place in situations where the **teacher, student, programme, institution/provider or course materials cross national jurisdictional borders**. Cross border higher education may include higher education by public/private and not-for profit/for profit providers. It encompasses a wide range of modalities, **in a continuum from face-to face (taking various forms such as students traveling abroad and campuses abroad) to distance learning (using a range of technologies and including e-learning).**”*

(UNESCO/OECD 2005 Guidelines on Quality Provision in CBHE)

Cross-border Higher Education: Issues

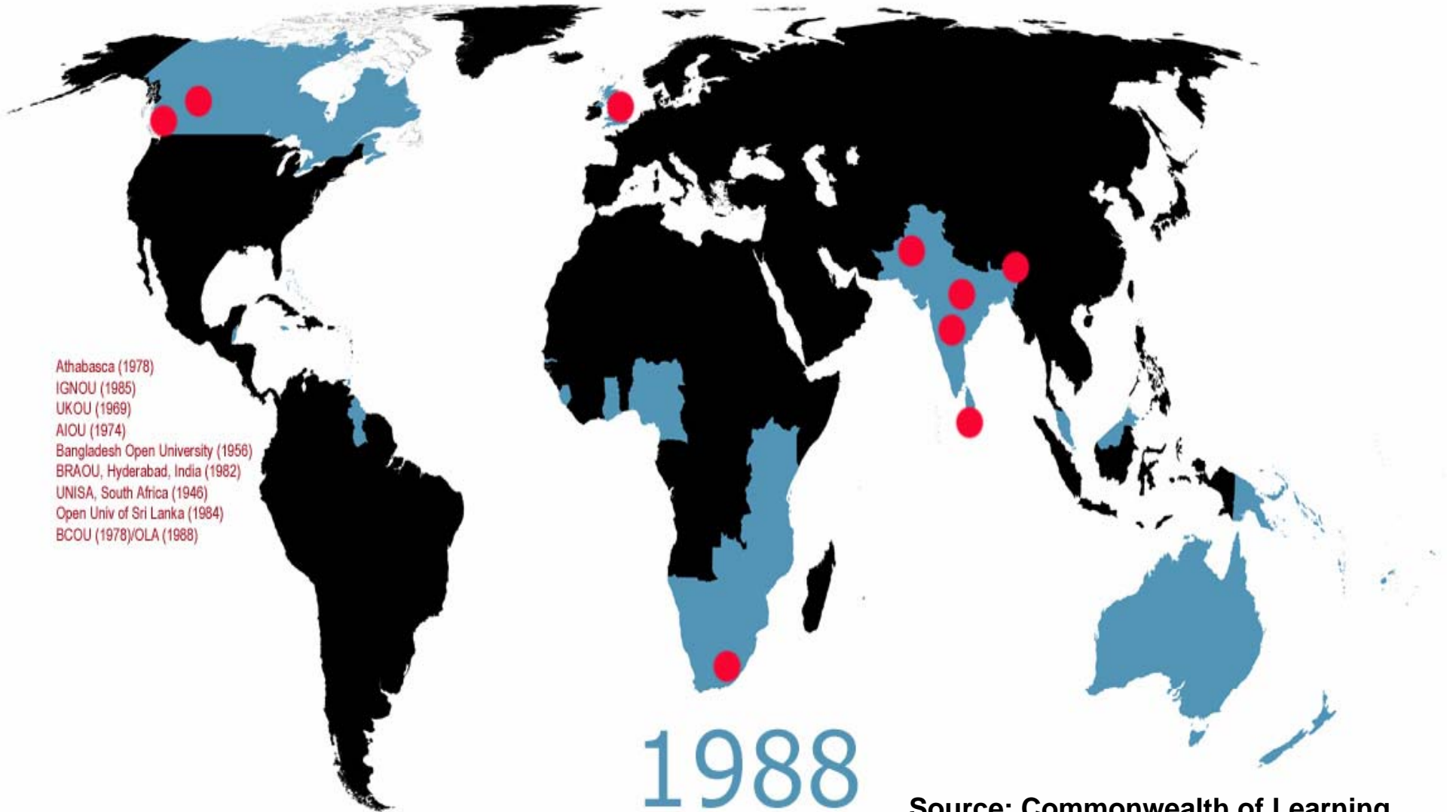
1. Is CBHE the answer to expanding access to HE in the developing world?
2. What are the necessary conditions for a useful and helpful contribution of CBHE?
3. How can governments and institutions encourage quality in CBHE?
4. How can the UNESCO contribute to this process?

CONTEXT

Massification/Growing Demand/Declining budgets

- 1975-2000: growth from 22% - 41% adults with HE (OECD); threshold of 100 million students soon to be crossed. China/India doubled enrollments in past 10 years;
- demand for HE has continued to grow and that the estimate of 40-50% enrolment rates were needed with a view to development. In some countries, e.g. in sub-Saharan Africa 5% (UNESCO, 2003);
- Growth of cross-border higher education: corporate universities, franchises, branch campuses, ICT enhanced CBHE (ODL, virtual universities, eLearning, Open Educational Resources)

Open Universities

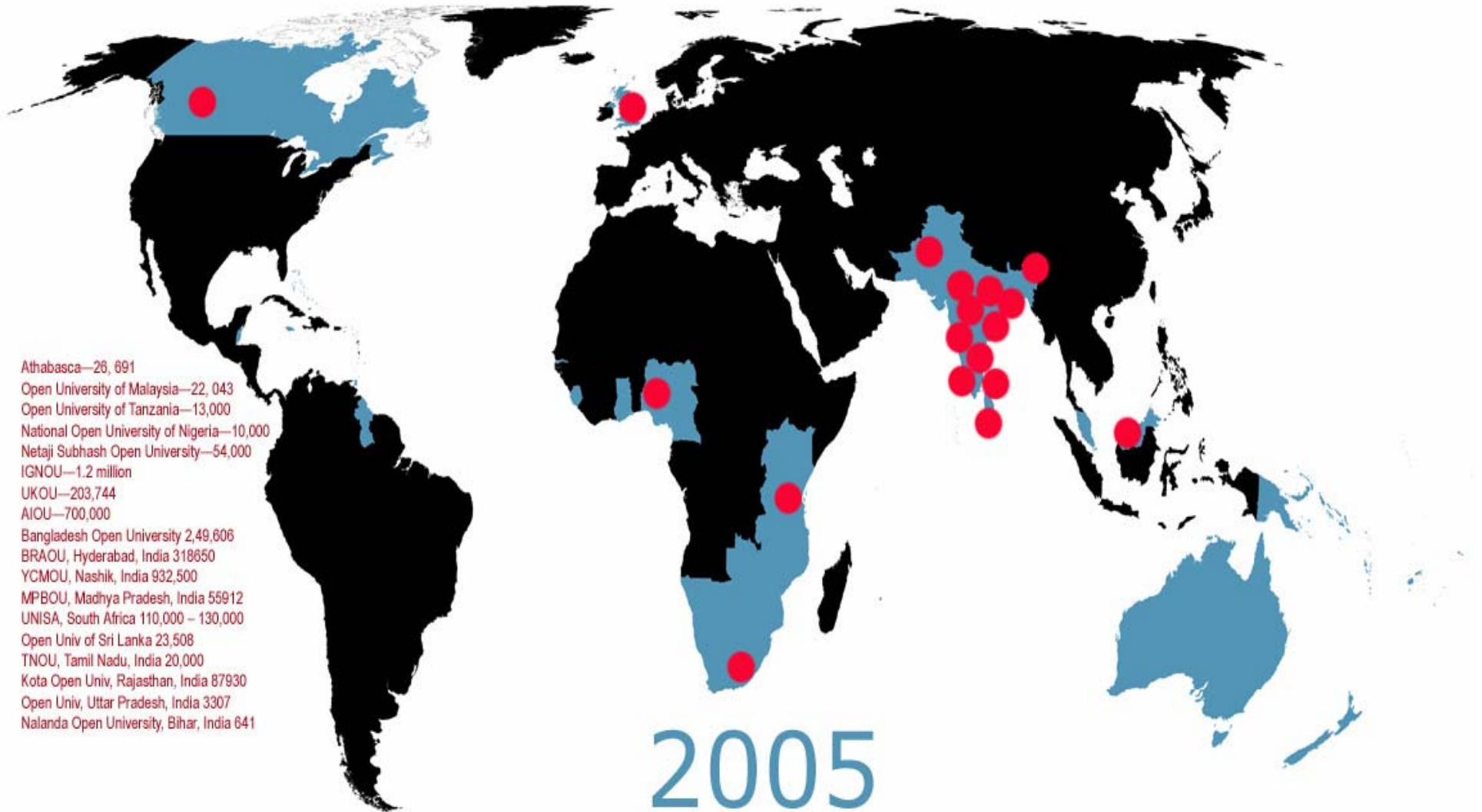


Athabasca (1978)
IGNOU (1985)
UKOU (1969)
AIOU (1974)
Bangladesh Open University (1956)
BRAOU, Hyderabad, India (1982)
UNISA, South Africa (1946)
Open Univ of Sri Lanka (1984)
BCOU (1978)/OLA (1988)

1988

Source: Commonwealth of Learning

Open Universities



Source: Commonwealth of Learning

UNESCO Frameworks

Existing frameworks

- 1998 WCHE and 2003+5 FU: access, equity, relevance; HE element of SD in the Knowledge Society
- The 6 regional conventions on the recognition of qualifications as the only legal instrument in HE ratified by over 100 Member States;
- Recommendations on the Recognition of Qualifications 1993 and the Status of HE Teaching Personnel 1997;
- The Global Forum on International Quality Assurance, Accreditation and the Recognition of Qualifications: new dimensions in quality assurance and qualifications recognition (2002;2004)

Guidelines/Codes of Good Practice on TNE/ CBHE

- 1978 Guidelines for Developing Countries on Correspondence Education (UNESCO)
- 1999 Recommendation on International Access Qualifications (UNESCO/CoE)
- 2001 Code of Good Practice on TNE (UNESCO/CoE)
- 2005 Guidelines on Quality in Cross-Border HE (UNESCO/OECD)

Global responses to CBHE

The Global Forum on International Quality Assurance, Accreditation and the Recognition of Qualifications

- Platform for dialogue & policy debate:
“Higher Education and Globalisation” (2002)
- Promoter of capacity-building:
“Widening Access to Quality Higher Education” (2004)
- Developing information tools for student protection:
“Empowering Learners” (2006)

UNESCO/OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education

- 33rd session of the UNESCO General Conference, 16 October 2005 supported the Guidelines as a secretariat document
- The OECD Council – Prague, 2 December 2005 adopted the guidelines as a recommendation
- Joint launch of the Guidelines – UNESCO/OECD, Paris, 5 December 2005
- **Implementation:** UNESCO & OECD with stakeholders and partners

WHY THE GUIDELINES?

Knowledge Economy/Globalisation

- Universities as drivers of economic growth;
- The growing market - Trade in Higher Education and GATS;
- Need to provide an EDUCATIONAL response to maximize opportunities, minimize risks
- Hence, the UNESCO/OECD Guidelines: focus on quality and learners' protection

Objectives of the Guidelines

- support and encourage international cooperation and understanding of the importance of quality provision in cross-border higher education
- protect students and other stakeholders from low-quality provision and disreputable providers
- encourage the development of quality cross-border higher education that meets human, social, economic and cultural needs

The scope of the Guidelines

- Voluntary and non-binding BUT
- Stamp of two IGOs: UNESCO and the OECD
- Addressing Governments but recognizing the role of NGOs and Student Organizations
- **Stakeholders:** Governments; Higher Education Institutions/academic staff; Students bodies; Quality Assurance and accreditation bodies; Academic Recognition Bodies; Professional Bodies;

Principles of the Guidelines

- Responsibility for partnerships, sharing, dialogue, mutual trust and respect between sending and receiving countries
- Recognition of national authority and of the diversity of systems
- Recognition of importance of international collaboration and exchange, internally, externally
- Access to transparent and reliable information

Recommendations to 6 stakeholders in Higher Education

Governments

- Establish a comprehensive, fair and transparent system of registration or licensing for cross-border higher education (CBHE)
- Coordinate among the various competent bodies for quality assurance and accreditation both nationally and internationally

Higher Education Institutions:

- Comparable quality of programme delivered
- Respect the QAA systems of the receiving countries
- Financial status

QA and Recognition Bodies

Quality Assurance Bodies:

- Ensure arrangements include cross-border education provision
- Strengthen the collaboration between bodies of the sending country and the receiving country

Recognition Bodies

- Fair recognition of academic qualifications,
- Clear accurate and accessible information on the criteria for assessment of qualifications
- Information on professional recognition to those with a foreign qualification and to employers

Professional and student bodies

Student bodies

- Active partners in developing and monitoring quality
- Awareness raising – potential risks – questions

Professional Bodies

- Contacts, accessible information, mutual recognition agreements for the professions

Capacity Building – Some Existing Tools

The UNESCO Tool-kit on the setting up of regulatory frameworks for Cross Border Education in cooperation with the APQN

- Produced in support of the UNESCO/OECD Guidelines
- Common Quality issues in CBHE
- Problem areas in CBHE
- Questions to consider in setting up a regulatory framework

Capacity building tools

Distance education course: Methodological and organisational options in external QA systems (UNESCO-IIEP)

Target Africa 2006: officials in MoEs and EQA agencies

Five modules:

1. Making basic choices,
2. Developing process of EQA,
3. Setting up and developing agency,
4. Developing the quality model and measuring quality
5. Regulating and quality-assuring cross-border providers

Capacity Building Tools

- Knowledge Base for QA in ODL – Africa, Asia and the Pacific, CIS (to be extended to LAC and Arab States)
- On-Line Course for Credential Evaluation – Mediterranean Convention
- Glossary of Terms on Transnational Education (UNESCO-CEPES)

In prospect

- Training materials on-line
- Roster of tutors and trainers
- Pilot project for creating a Portal of Accredited HEIs worldwide
- Electronic discussion Forum
- Survey of QA in eLearning....

Thank you!

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<http://www.unesco.org/education/amq/guidelines>