

COURSE PLANNING

Background

1. In November 1975 the Commonwealth Secretariat convened a meeting of educational administration specialists charged with a fourfold task:

(a) To examine the nature of the need for training educational administrators.

(b) To consider recommendations made for the training of supervisors and administrators.

(c) To formulate specific proposals regarding the content of training courses.

(d) To propose ways and means of arranging training courses.

2. The Report of the Planning Meeting on the Training of Personnel in Educational Administration and Supervision, Nairobi 1975, provided a rationale and framework for the development of Commonwealth regional training courses. That part of the Nairobi report which examines the contents of training courses is included in this report as appendix 1.

3. In January 1977 the first regional training course, organized by the Education Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat, took place in Nairobi for the Commonwealth Africa region. Seen, in part, as a pilot programme, the Nairobi course indicated strengths and weaknesses in the course structure, and in the practical arrangements, to which subsequent courses could respond. For example, the course highlighted the difficulties of meeting the needs of a heterogeneous group of principals, advisers, district education officer and inspectors in a consistently appropriate way both in the conceptual structure of the course and in its practical expression. At the same time the value of a professional interchange of views among officers occupying different positions in national administrative structures was readily apparent. It was recognized also that attachments to educational and administrative institutions could play a prominent training role, strengthening an appreciation of concepts and processes examined theoretically. Similarly, it became clear that a variety of training techniques should be utilized, associated with training materials which could be of use in the participants' home countries.

4. In the light of this experience, the Education Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat, embarked on the planning of the second regional course to be held for the Commonwealth Pacific region. The University of the South Pacific, which includes among its constituent members all the Commonwealth Pacific countries outside Australia, New Zealand, and Papua New Guinea, provided a most appropriate regional base for the course whilst the Fiji Government offered its every assistance as national host.

Course Participants

5. Early in 1978 governments in the Commonwealth Pacific region were invited by the Commonwealth Secretariat to nominate up to three participants for the course, with the exception of Fiji which, as host country, was allowed five places. It was made clear that the course was designed for those with experience of educational administration in schools, colleges, district education offices and ministries, serving as principals, inspectors, supervisors, advisers and education officers, and that participants should be in a position to initiate and undertake national and regional training exercises in their home countries.

6. In the event twenty-four participants from ten Commonwealth Pacific countries were able to attend the ten-week long course. A breakdown of national representation is tabulated below:

Cook Islands	3
Fiji	5
Gilbert Islands	3
New Hebrides	1
Niue	2
Papua New Guinea	2
Solomon Islands	3
Tonga	3
Tuvalu	1
Western Samoa	1

A participant from Tokelau attended the last four weeks of the course, whilst the representatives from the Solomon Islands had to leave two weeks before the end to celebrate the achievement of their country's independence on 7 July 1978.

7. A paper prepared by the Commonwealth Secretariat entitled "Report on the Survey of Inspectors and Supervisors in the Asia Pacific region", presented to a workshop in Kuala Lumpur in 1975, indicated, among other matters, the variety of job titles encountered in the region and the difficulty of relating administrative tasks to nameplates. A profile of the twenty-four participants on the Pacific training course emphasizes this difficulty so that a reading of Table 1 should not immediately equate similar titles with similar tasks. Indeed, one of the values of the course was the chance to compare job responsibilities within the Pacific region.

8. From the numerical information available it appears that the officers have served the educational system of their country for an average of sixteen years, with a three year average for the occupancy of their present post. A group then of considerable experience but with many years of professional service ahead; a group well placed to realize and recognize training needs and practicalities.

9. A full list of the participants is given as appendix 2.

TABLE 1

COURSE PARTICIPANTS

Job Title	No. of years in present post	No. of years in educational system
Head teacher (Primary school)	8	14
Head teacher (Primary school)	4	18
Deputy principal (Primary school)	2	9
Principal (Junior Secondary school)	3	11
Senior Tutor (Secondary college)	4 months	4
Deputy Principal (Secondary college)	7	23
Deputy Principal (Secondary college)	12	22
Principal (Teachers' college)	4 months	14
Senior Education Officer (District)	3	20
Senior Education Officer (District)	2½	7
Senior Inspector of Schools (Central)	n.a	n.a
Inspector of Primary Schools (Central)	4	38
Secondary Inspector (District)	2	8
Supervisor of Middle Schools	n.a	n.a
Executive Officer Staff (Development Unit)	8 months	12
Education Officer (Central)	3	15
Education Officer (Central)	3 months	13
Education Officer (Central)	1	22
Education Officer (Central)	6 months	5½
Education Officer (District)	4	20
Education Officer (District)	2½	19
Education Officer (District)	2	17
Education Officer (District)	2½	22
Education Officer (District)	1	23

10. All twenty-four participants were awarded bursaries by the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation to cover the necessary travel accommodation, and subsistence expenses.

Course Syllabus

11. The syllabus for the Nairobi course in 1977 was examined in the light of comments made by the African participants. A modified syllabus was prepared by the Education Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat and submitted to Mr John Weeks, Director of the Institute of Education, University of the South Pacific for his comments and those of his colleagues. In turn the syllabus was presented to the course consultants for their suggestions and modifications.

12. Provision was made during the course for selection, adaption and omission of elements detailed in the draft syllabus. This function was undertaken by a steering committee which met weekly to discuss the progress of the course and consisted of the course director, the assistant course director, the consultants, and members of the course on a rota basis. The Commonwealth Secretariat envisaged that the syllabus would provide a flexible backdrop to course proceedings.

13. Materials for use on the course were prepared by the Institute of Education and by the course consultants. The Commonwealth Secretariat provided a selection of background reading for each participant. The library at USP was open to the participants and prepared special booklists for the course.

14. The syllabus is discussed in the section on course implementation.

Course Staffing

15. Mr John Weeks, the Course Director, was assisted professionally and administratively by Mr Narottam Bhindi, USP's Assistant Registrar. The course consultants were Miss Olive Lyken, Principal of Cyril Potter College of Education in Guyana, who had attended two of the three Commonwealth workshops which preceded the training course programme and Mr Turoa Royal, Education Officer for Maori and Island Education in New Zealand, no stranger to Commonwealth meetings in the Pacific. The course was doubly fortunate in being able to draw on the services of Dr Prem Udagama from Sri Lanka whose arrival to take up a post as fellow at the Institute of Education coincided with the start of the course.

16. As well as the contribution of the full or part time staff attached to the course, a variety of academic and ministry personnel gave their time to provide the many faceted input considered so vital if participants were to gain an overview of the educational system and to appreciate the range of standpoints from which administrative processes may be viewed. The full list of contributors is recorded as appendix 3.

Course Accommodation and Facilities

17. Throughout the course accommodation was provided in the most hospitable surroundings of the Outrigger Motel, Suva. As is made clear in the evaluation reports, summarized in a later section, one of the most successful ingredients of the programme was the chance for participants and consultants to meet and talk with one another in such pleasant surroundings, a factor which compensated for the daily journey to and from the University some three miles away.

18. At the University itself every effort was made, within the limitations of the buildings available, to provide the requisite accommodation. To this end, the Institute of Social and Administrative Studies and the Centre for Applied Studies in Development were especially helpful.