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## COMMONWEALTH CO-OPERATION AND UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

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Forty-two countries, representing one quarter of the world's population form the modern Commonwealth of Nations. They do so in voluntary association, retaining their sovereignty, yet working for the common good of all member-governments.

The Commonwealth is significant because of its diversity and size. Its members, drawn from all the continents, represent both the developed and developing world, and embrace many races, religions and languages.

Member countries in the Commonwealth also belong to a variety of international and regional bodies with political, economic and professional interests, but the Commonwealth acts as a link between them and complements their various forms of co-operation, in the search for international peace stability and a juster economic order.

The Commonwealth Secretariat is the central agency serving the Commonwealth. It organises inter-governmental consultations, is responsible for several programmes of co-operation and acts as a clearing house for information in many fields. It is headed by a Secretary-General elected by Heads of Government and its staff are drawn from the nationals of member countries.

The work of the Secretariat is organised in a number of Divisions each with its own Director. These Divisions include International Affairs, Economic Affairs, Food Production and Rural Development, Export Market Development, Information, Youth Affairs, Health, Law, Science and Education. In addition, the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation, which consists of contributions from member governments on a voluntary basis, is part of the Secretariat.

### THE EDUCATION DIVISION OF THE COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT

The Education Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat actively promotes consultation and co-operation among governments on educational matters. It holds conferences, seminars, workshops and training courses, carries out studies on issues of common concern and provides a variety of educational information. Assistance for education and training is also provided by the Secretariat through the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation.

The Commonwealth Foundation, set up by member governments to develop professional standards in the Commonwealth, supports educational activities. Links among institutions of higher learning are maintained through the Association of Commonwealth Universities.

The work programme of the Education Division is largely determined by Commonwealth Ministers of Education who meet every three years at Commonwealth

Education Conferences. The seventh was held in Accra, Ghana, in 1977 and the eighth was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in August 1980. It is at these triennial conferences that the priority areas for inter-governmental co-operation are identified and agreed upon between ministerial meetings. The Education Division, sometimes in collaboration with other professional bodies, arranges specialist conferences at which senior educators focus on aspects of educational developments. Over the last ten years, they have dealt with the teaching of mathematics, education in rural areas, the role of teachers in national development, public examinations, the production of material for learning and teaching and the role of non-formal education for development.

As a result of various ministerial and specialist conference recommendations, the Education Division has been and is currently engaged in a variety of programmes and publications which include:

1. Teacher Training

- (a) Regional in-service teacher education workshops (Barbados 1977, Sri Lanka 1978, and Swaziland 1979).
- (b) Handbook on in-service training for teachers (published 1977).
- (c) In-service Teacher Education in the Commonwealth (in preparation).
- (d) Regional workshop in 1980-81 in collaboration with WCOTP on support services for teachers.

2. Universal Primary Education

- (a) Progress towards Universal Primary Education: A Commonwealth Survey (published 1979).
- (b) Regional seminars on UPE (Bangladesh 1979, and Lesotho 1980).

3. Science Education

- (a) Regional workshops on the production of low-cost science equipment (Bahamas 1976, Tanzania 1977, Papua New Guinea 1979).
- (b) Low-cost science teaching equipment: 2 (published 1978).
- (c) Development and Production of school Science Equipment (published 1979).
- (d) Improving science teaching in developing countries (in preparation).

4. Technical Education

- (a) Educating and Training Technicians (published 1975).
- (b) Survey of Technician Training in Commonwealth countries of Asia (published 1976).
- (c) Regional seminars on technical education and training (Hong Kong 1976, Ibadan 1978).
- (d) Commonwealth industrial training experience of programme (still under development).

(e) Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa (inaugurated in Nairobi in December 1978).

5. Higher Education

(a) Improving University Teaching: A Commonwealth Survey (published 1978).

(b) Research Strengths of Universities in the Developing Countries of the Commonwealth (published 1978).

(c) Reports of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan.

6. Non-formal Education and the Education of Women

(a) Specialist conference on non-formal education (New Delhi 1979) convened to examine ways of improving non-formal education, especially for school dropouts, adult illiterates and women in developing countries.

(b) A further meeting of non-formal education specialists will be held in London in February 1980.

7. New Media

(a) Correspondence Institutions in the Commonwealth (published 1976). Revised edition in preparation.

(b) A Commonwealth survey on the effectiveness of schools broadcasting is currently being conducted.

(c) A study of how to design and produce instructional materials from scrap and low-cost local materials is planned during 1980-81 which may lead to a number of national workshops.

8. Book Development

(a) Regional seminars for educators and publishers to consider priorities for book industries, training, the production of textbooks, design, copyright, etc. (India 1973, Trinidad 1974, Nigeria 1975).

(b) Training workshops on writing and publishing Guyana 1977).

(c) Paper Production: Prospects for Commonwealth Developing Countries (published 1978).

9. Education Administration

(a) Regional workshops on supervision and administration (Sierra Leone 1973, Guyana 1974 and Malaysia 1975).

(b) Regional training courses for headteachers and inspectors (University of Nairobi 1977, University of the Pacific 1978 and University of the West Indies 1979).

(c) Preparation of a Handbook for educational administrators and supervisors.

## THE COMMONWEALTH SCHOLARSHIP AND FELLOWSHIP PLAN (CSFP)

The CSFP was launched in 1960 and now offers 1000 places for undergraduate and postgraduate students in any one year. The plan works through bilateral arrangements under which governments provide scholarships to men and women from other Commonwealth countries. Fellowships and other awards enable senior university teachers and administrators to embark on research, to teach or to familiarise themselves with new developments.

## CO-OPERATION TOWARDS UPE

Nigeria was the first member country to address a specific request to the Commonwealth Secretariat for assistance with UPE. The then Commissioner for Education in the Federal Military Government of 1974, requested the Secretariat to send an expert to assess the preparations being made and make recommendations. Prof. A Taylor of the University of Cardiff was selected for this assignment and was accompanied by a member of staff from the Secretariat's Education Division. The report of this mission and a number of its recommendations assisted the national preparations for UPE.

Since then, the Secretariat has sought to assist member countries with some of the problems associated with implementing UPE. For example, the series of workshops on in-service teacher education was aimed at helping member countries to develop their in-service teacher education programmes. In addition, a study was made of alternative methods of training teachers, with a view to helping countries to increase the speed of training and hence the supply of trained teachers at lower costs than conventional residential training. Future plans include help with the training of tutors for teacher training colleges.

The proposed workshops on low-cost teaching materials have both a professional and economic aim, namely to help teachers to enrich their teaching without costly increases in the educational budget.

Other projects may examine alternatives to the conventional system of schooling to help member countries who have still some way to go before achieving UPE to view its implementation without the daunting prospect of huge financial commitments.

The Commonwealth Secretariat, through funds provided by the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation, offers a variety of types of assistance which can be utilised by countries in their implementation of UPE. These include recruiting experts on short term engagements to carry out assignments such as the writing of correspondence courses, training personnel, advisory work or the investigation of specific problems. Training can also be offered in the form of staff exchanges or attachments to institutions in developing countries which are members of the Commonwealth.

In these and other ways the Commonwealth encourages co-operation between member governments with a view to stimulating and supporting educational development amongst all its members. Such co-operation is the key to all our futures.

Finally this seminar has been designed inter alia to identify practical ways and means by which Commonwealth co-operation in education can assist

progress towards the achievement of UPE by all member states and particularly in the Africa region. In this search, the importance of the multiplier training methodology is to be stressed. Regional conferences, seminars, workshops and study-visits will confer wider benefits in the national context only if member countries include in each post seminar plan, a training or multiplier component which will require or enable national participants to pass on the information and experience which they have gained at regional or pan-commonwealth meetings or courses, on their return home. This can be done either through widely disseminated reports local seminars or other training activity.

Exchange of staff within the region as well as exchanges of information, either directly or through the Commonwealth Secretariat offer great possibilities of which member states can take advantage at little or no cost to themselves. It is our hope that through the various avenues described in this paper, Commonwealth co-operation for the strengthening of UPE in member states will benefit through this seminar and the attendance of yourselves as participants.