

INTRODUCTION

People in the Western World often speak of the Third World as if it were homogeneous and readily understood, a simplified, less advanced world than their own. But in reality, it is a world of great diversity, and complexity. In the aftermath of the colonial period it is subjected to extreme social and political upheaval as new ideas come into conflict with traditional values.

Education in these circumstances becomes the focus of political action. For example, demands are made for universal primary education, for the elimination of adult illiteracy and for improved access to secondary and tertiary institutions. In responding to these challenges educational administrators find that they must of necessity compete with other national interests for resources, and from a pool that is always chronically inadequate. As schools and universities multiply faster than staff can be trained, responsibilities must often be assumed by the inexperienced.

Since there appears to be little chance of an increase in available resources it becomes of critical importance to look to the more efficient management of existing ones. To achieve this it would seem to be axiomatic that administrators be trained. Although this book is directed specifically towards the needs of educational administrators in the Third World it is hoped that those concerned with the training of administrators, wherever they may be located in the Commonwealth, will find it of interest and value.

There was a time when it was widely thought that education and its administrators held the key to development and growth, particularly for those nations struggling to emerge from a colonial past. We know now that the belief was misplaced and that change does not result from such simplified strategies¹. It remains true however that schools and universities continue to play a critical part in the reshaping of nations and that those who administer such institutions need help and training.

This is another way of saying that they must have readier access to administrative ideas of sound provenance and sensible practical application.

Case studies with their immediate blend of theory and practice and their close orientation to the real world would seem to offer special advantages. In the Western World this has long been recognised and catered for by a growing literature; yet in the Third World, while case studies have been used, there have been few serious attempts to record and collect examples. Indeed, apart from such exceptions as 'The Penang Case Book'², collections have rarely been published. One reason for this could well be the difficulty of compiling cases that would be relevant, for example, in both Kiribati and India.

In attempting to come to terms with this problem two assumptions have been made:

1. While certain situations might be unique to particular cultures, principles tend to be universal.
2. Ideas, unlike solutions, often travel well.