

BACKGROUND AND ARRANGEMENTS

Objectives

Like the earlier meetings, this workshop was organized by the Education Division and funded by the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation, as part of the Commonwealth Secretariat's efforts to assist member countries to make school science teaching more effective but less costly through the use of locally-made equipment. More specifically, the workshop was held to: consider methods by which school science equipment is most effectively developed and the implications for teacher education of effective teacher participation in innovative strategies of teaching through the use of low-cost science equipment; provide workshop experience in designing, developing and evaluating locally-constructed low-cost science equipment; examine ways of improving Commonwealth co-operation, especially in the field of production and use of school science equipment.

Venue

At the Seventh Commonwealth Education Conference held in Accra in March 1977, ministers recommended that a third workshop on low-cost science teaching equipment be held in either the Pacific or Asia. The first two workshops on the theme were held in the Bahamas (November 1976) and Tanzania (September 1977) respectively.

The Government of Papua New Guinea kindly offered excellent hosting facilities at the University of Technology, Lae, thus enabling this third workshop to be held for the Commonwealth Pacific countries.

Delegates and Observers

All Commonwealth Pacific independent countries and the associated states of the region were invited to be represented. Eventually, delegates attended from Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Northern Territories (Australia). Inter-Regional representatives came from Guyana (Caribbean) and Malaysia (Asia). Also in attendance were observers from Papua New Guinea, the British Council, UNESCO/UNDP and the South Pacific Appropriate Technology Development Unit. Participants included school teachers, lecturers from teachers' colleges and universities, curriculum development experts and ministry of education officials in charge of production units and/or responsible for the supply of school science equipment.

Consultants

The workshop was privileged to have Mr Norman Lowe of Britain and Dr Sam T. Bajah of Nigeria, as workshop consultants.

Mr Lowe, a freelance consultant on production of science teaching equipment, is a co-author of the Commonwealth Secretariat publication, The Production of School Science Equipment; he was formerly UNESCO expert at the Science Equipment Centre in Nigeria and at the National Science Centre at Afghanistan as well as consultant to UNESCO.

Dr Bajah is a senior lecturer at the International Centre for Educational Evaluation at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria and a member of the Nigeria's UNESCO National Commission. He has published a number of books and papers on science education and has served as consultant to the Science Education Programme for Africa (SEPA) and UNESCO on several occasions.

Workshop Secretariat

Mr K. Pitzz, First Assistant Secretary and Mr G. Ilagi, Assistant Secretary (both from the Department of Education, Ministry of Education, Science and Culture) served as Workshop Chairman and Alternate Chairman respectively. Mr Rex E. O. Akpofure, Director of Education, Commonwealth Secretariat, was the Director of the Workshop. Mr E. Apea, a Chief Project Officer (Education), Commonwealth Secretariat, was the Workshop Secretary. Other staff included Mr Brian Deutrom, Senior Curriculum Officer (Science), Department of Education, Papua New Guinea, Mr Bruce Cahill, Co-ordinator, Materials Development and Evaluation, Department of Education, Papua New Guinea, Prof. E. Balasubramaniam, Dr P. Logan, Mr Ian Brazier, Mrs Margaret van Der Werff and Mr B. Isom - all of the University of Technology, Lae.

Opening Ceremony

The Opening Ceremony was held at the Duncanson Hall, University of Technology, Lae, at 11.00 a.m. on Tuesday 20 March 1979. The ceremony which was preceded by refreshments served at the Applied Physics Department began with a welcome address by Mr M. Tigilai, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Technology, Lae. In his address, Mr Tigilai provided information on the development of the University and invited participants to move freely around the campus to meet the staff and see the resources and facilities of the various departments.

His Excellency Mr Donald Middleton, British High Commissioner to Papua New Guinea, then formally opened the workshop on behalf of the Government of Papua New Guinea. He warned participants not to spend too much time attempting to define the term "low-cost"; but instead to show that it is possible for developing countries to produce suitable, appropriate equipment. He pointed out that the international nature of the workshop indicated that there were many solutions to the equipment problem.

Mr Rex E. O. Akpofure, the Director of the Workshop, responded to the opening address on behalf of the Commonwealth Secretariat. He indicated that the workshop was the third and last in a series organized by the Commonwealth Secretariat as part of its efforts to help make practical science teaching less costly but more effective through local production of low-cost equipment. He noted that the workshop represented a belief in the value of interaction and mutual co-operation by Commonwealth countries, pointing out how suitable Papua New Guinea was as a venue.

Mr Pitzz, First Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Education and Culture, gave the closing remarks. He apologized for the absence of the Honourable Minister of Education, Science and Culture and the Secretary for Education. He welcomed participants to Papua New Guinea and wished the workshop a successful period of exchange of ideas.

At the end of the ceremony a group photograph was taken. This was then followed by a press conference at which Messrs Pitzz and Akpofure, the principal speakers, explained the purpose of the meeting, outlined the ten-day workshop programme, and gave an insight to possible post-workshop Commonwealth Secretariat follow-up efforts.

Distinguished guests in attendance were Mr M. Tigilai and Mr Davidson, the University of Technology's Vice-Chancellor and Pro Vice-Chancellor respectively, Mr R. Lohia, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Papua New Guinea, Port Moresby, and H.E. Mr D. Middleton, British High Commissioner to Papua New Guinea. The press included the Post-Courier, Lae Nius, the National Broadcasting Commission, and the University Reporter, Lae.

Workshop Sessions

There were altogether 34 sessions of which eight were devoted to country reports and six to lead papers at plenary and group discussions. Also, 15 sessions were devoted to practical laboratory work at which participants not only familiarized themselves with laboratory techniques but actually produced items of science equipment.

Participants made visits to a cross-section of educational institutions in Lae. Also worthy of special mention was the excursion to Wau (about 100km. from Lae) which acquainted participants with the scientific work being carried out at the Wau Ecology Institute.

Hospitality

In honour of participants to the workshop, receptions were hosted by the Government of Papua New Guinea on 20 March, the Papua New Guinea University of Technology on 22 March and the Commonwealth Secretariat on 29 March.