
CONFERENCE ARRANGEMENTS AND AGENDA

Background

Since 1960, when the need for the examination by specialists of the problems of teaching English as a second language was voiced by the majority of Commonwealth countries and the first specialist conference was organized by the Commonwealth Education Liaison Committee, member governments have agreed that such conferences represent a very valuable form of Commonwealth co-operation in education. Successive conferences of Commonwealth Education Ministers have identified areas of concern in which this method of studying a subject could assist member states in clarifying concepts and identifying practical programmes of co-operation. The reports containing the proposals of Commonwealth Specialist Conferences are given detailed consideration by the subsequent Ministerial conference at which programmes for action by the Commonwealth Secretariat are adopted.

To date seven Commonwealth Specialist Conferences have been organized. They dealt with Teaching of English as a Second Language (Makerere, Uganda, 1961); School Science Teaching (Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, 1963); Education and Training of Technicians (Huddersfield, Britain, 1966); Mathematics in Commonwealth Schools (Port of Spain, Trinidad, 1968); Education in Rural Areas (Legon, Ghana, 1970); Teacher Education in a Changing Society (Nairobi, Kenya, 1972); and Materials for Learning and Teaching (Wellington, New Zealand, 1975).

Origins

At the Seventh Commonwealth Education Conference, held in Accra, Ghana, in March 1977, three subjects were identified as being suitable for the present Conference. These were (a) the integration of science and mathematics education with technical and vocational education; (b) curriculum planning and educational assessment; and (c) non-formal education. The Ministers agreed that the Commonwealth Education Liaison Committee (CELC) should, after due consultation with member governments, select the topic for the next specialist conference. Responses from governments announced at the meeting of the CELC in October 1977 indicated a consensus in favour of non-formal education.

A Working Party was set up by the CELC comprising the representatives of Australia, Fiji, India, Jamaica and Tanzania to make preliminary recommendations on the theme, aims, venue and other matters. Four meetings of the Working Party were held.

The first meeting of the Working Party, in April 1978, included, in addition to the aforementioned representatives of member countries, those Divisions in the Commonwealth Secretariat that are concerned with non-formal education, namely Food Production and Rural Development, Health, Youth Information, and Education. At this meeting, it was felt that experts in non-formal education should be involved in planning the conference. For this purpose a two-day meeting of a Working Group was held in London in June 1978. Dr. Malcolm Adiseshiah (India), Dr. B.L. Hall (Canada), Dr. Beryl Steele (Ministry of Overseas Development, Britain), Mr. Paul Fordham (University of Southampton) and Mr. John Bowers (University of Reading) participated in this meeting. Its report setting out proposals for the aims, objectives and agenda of the conference was adopted by the Working Party and approved by the CELC on 28 June 1978.

The main organizational features recommended by the CELC to member governments involved multi-disciplinary representation in national delegations, documentation comprising lead papers on the areas identified for examination supported by case study accounts, and a two-week structure. The first, which was to be diagnostic in character, would lead into the second, which would recommend a policy framework as well as projects and programmes for action. Preparations were therefore made on this basis.

The day before the Conference began, a Steering Committee, composed of heads of delegation, met at the Conference venue and approved the agenda and timetable of the Conference for the opening day. The Steering Committee also elected unanimously Dr. Malcolm Adiseshiah as Chairman of the Conference. A second meeting of the Steering Committee, held on 22 January, approved the agenda and timetable for the rest of the Conference.

- Agenda The approved agenda established the definition, scope and aims of the Conference in the following terms:
- Definition of Non-Formal Education Any organized learning activity outside the structure of the formal education system that is consciously aimed at meeting specific learning needs of particular sub-groups in the community - be they children, youth or adults.
- Development The improvement in the overall standard of living of the most needy sections of society - the deprived and the poor.
- Scope The Conference will concentrate on the problem of rural areas, in particular the "drop-outs", "push-outs", and "left-outs" of society, i.e. the unschooled and under-schooled children of school age, adolescents and youth, and the adult illiterates. Special attention will be paid throughout to the problem of non-formal education for women and the issue of co-ordination and co-operation at local, national and Commonwealth levels.
- Aims To assist member states to examine the contribution of non-formal education to development in the last five years and to identify the problems which at present impede it.
- To assist in the development and improvement of existing programmes and in the planning and implementation of new programmes taking advantage of regional and Commonwealth co-operation.
- Participants One hundred and nine delegates from 27 Commonwealth countries participated. In addition there were observers from the host country, UNESCO, UNICEF, the IPPF, the University of Southampton, and the British Council. The deliberations of the Conference were assisted by 19 resource persons who had been invited to prepare lead and support papers for the Conference. A list of the conference documents and a list of the participants appear at the end of this report.
- The participation of a number of delegates and resource persons was made possible by generous assistance from the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation, The International Planned Parenthood Federation, The Commonwealth Foundation and the Bernard van Leer Foundation. The Commonwealth Secretariat places on record its grateful appreciation of the co-operation received from these organizations.
- Inauguration The Conference, which was hosted by the Government of India and held in the Taj Mahal Hotel, New Delhi, was inaugurated on 22 January 1979 by Mr. Morarji Desai, Prime Minister of

India. His address and those of two other speakers at the ceremony - the Conference Chairman and the Commonwealth Assistant Secretary-General are printed elsewhere in this report. The Conference also heard an address given by Mrs. Renuka Barkataki, the Minister of State for Education, and a message sent by the Commonwealth Secretary-General and read on his behalf by the Conference Chairman. Later that day the Keynote Address was delivered by Dr. Robert Gardiner, formerly Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa.

The First Week

For the remainder of the first week, the work of the Conference was undertaken by eight committees. The topic for Committee 1, chaired by Dr. N. Haines (Australia) was "Motivation in Non-Formal Education". That for Committee 2, chaired by Mr. D.R.B. Grant (Jamaica) was "Content, Teaching and Learning for Children Outside School". That for Committee 3, chaired by Prof. E.A. Tugbiyele (Nigeria) was "Content, Teaching and Learning for Adult Illiterates". That for Committee 4, chaired by Dr. Beryl Steele (Britain) was "Evaluation and Research Components of Non-Formal Education". That for Committee 5, chaired by Professor N.O.H. Setidisho (Botswana) was "Multi-Media Communication in Non-Formal Education". That for Committee 6, chaired by Mr. T. Mulusa (Kenya) was "Interaction of Formal and Non-Formal Education". That for Committee 7, chaired by Mr. A. Wahiduddin (Malaysia) was "Continuing Education for New Literates". That for Committee 8, chaired by Dr. Chitra Naik (India) was "The Non-Formal Component of Other Development Services".

A Conference Bureau consisting of the Chairman, Secretary and Co-Secretary of the Conference, the Chairmen of the eight committees, and some of the resource persons and Secretariat staff, held daily meetings to review progress and exchange views. Advance planning for the second week of the Conference was undertaken by a small task force headed by the Conference Chairman. The Steering Committee also met on two further occasions to consider and approve the procedures for the second week of the Conference.

The Second Week

The first day of the second week of the Conference was taken up by plenary sessions at which the Chairmen of Committees 2 to 8 and the Secretary of Committee 1 summarized their Committees' deliberations, and consideration and approval was given to a draft report on the first week's proceedings.

For the next three days, the participants met in four newly constituted committees. Committee 9, chaired by Mrs. A. Dayanand (India) dealt with "Programmes of Non-Formal Education for School Drop-Outs". Committee 10, chaired by Dr. M. Selim (Bangladesh) dealt with "Programmes of Non-Formal Education for Adult Illiterates." Committee 11, chaired by Mrs. Joyce Robinson (Jamaica) dealt with "Programmes of Non-Formal Education for Women". Committee 12, chaired by Alhaji Kasimu Idris (Nigeria) dealt with "Co-ordination and Co-operation at Local, National and Commonwealth Levels". Meetings of the Conference Bureau were held as in the first week of the Conference.

The Conference ended with two plenary sessions which were held on the afternoon of Friday 2 February. During the first of them the chairmen of committees 9-12 reviewed their committees' deliberations, and the Conference considered the Second Draft Report containing the record of the proceedings of the four committees and 61 recommendations assimilated from all those proposed during the Conference. It was agreed (a) that minor additions and modifications should be made to recommendations 40,52 and 59;

(b) that the major recommendations directed to the Commonwealth Secretariat should be submitted through the usual mechanism to the next Commonwealth Education Ministers' Conference so that their priority could be determined; and (c) that in preparing the final report the Secretariat should abridge and rearrange the material contained in the two draft reports so as to eliminate repetition and overlapping, and indicate, where appropriate, significant differences of view. The Second Draft Report was then accepted unanimously.

The final plenary session began with a resolution of appreciation to the host country which was proposed by the delegation from Malawi, supported by the delegations from Australia, Cyprus, Dominica and Malaysia, and adopted unanimously. After the host country had responded, a resolution of appreciation to the Commonwealth Secretariat was moved by Sri Lanka and supported by Britain, Ghana, and Papua New Guinea. It, also, was adopted, and the Conference Secretary responded on behalf of the Secretariat. This was followed by a valedictory address given by the Commonwealth Assistant Secretary General and by a closing address given by the Conference Chairmen. The text of both addresses is given in this report.

The programme of the Conference included visits to non-formal education projects and a full complement of social events. The Commonwealth Secretariat is deeply indebted to the Government of India for the excellent contingent of staff seconded to the Conference and for the hospitality - both official and private - extended to the participants, and for the numerous courtesies which contributed to the success of the Conference.