

COURSE PLANNING

Background

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

In January 1977 the first regional training course, organised 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 officers, 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 recognised 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 utilised, associated with training materials which could be of use in the participants' home countries.

In the light of this experience and of the second course held in Fiji for the Commonwealth Pacific in 1978, the Commonwealth Secretariat organised the third regional course maintaining the principle that existing training institutions are the most effective mechanism through which courses of the type recommended by the Nairobi meeting may be provided.

Participants

Early in 1979 governments in the Commonwealth Caribbean region were invited by the Commonwealth Secretariat to nominate one or two participants for the course. It was made clear to ministries of education that the course was intended for inspectors, district education officers, advisers and curriculum specialists or potential appointees to these posts. It was further recommended that the participants should be in a position to initiate and undertake national and regional training exercises in their home countries.

In the event, 18 participants from 11 Commonwealth Caribbean countries were able to attend the nine week course. Anguilla, Antigua, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, and Turks and Caicos sent one participant and Barbados, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago each sent two administrators.

The group brought a wealth of expertise and experience from different levels in the education system. Five participants were school principals; the schools they administered including junior secondary, all age schools and community secondary schools. In addition, there was a principal of a

teacher training college, ten education officers or supervisors whose roles varied according to country and level but included supervision of teachers, in-service and curriculum development, one assistant secretary to a ministry and a chief education officer. A list of the participants is provided in Appendix 2.

The majority of the participants were experienced in a number of roles within the education service but with many years of professional service ahead of them. There was at the same time considerable variation in the training role or potential training role open to the participants in their home country and this element of the multiplier effect of the course was received with different degrees of significance and appreciation according to the scope perceived for this role in the individual participants job.

All the participants were awarded a CFTC bursary to cover travel, accommodation and other subsistence expenses.

Syllabus

A syllabus was prepared by the Commonwealth Secretariat in the light of the experience of the Africa and Pacific courses, and in consultation with the course director and the course consultant was modified to meet the specific needs of the participants and their home region.

During the course of the training programme discussion with the participants resulted in units of the syllabus being highlighted or strengthened according to the wishes of the group or sub-sections within it.

Materials for the course were prepared by the School of Education and by the consultants and guest contributors. Booklists were prepared in relation to titles available in the University Library and the Commonwealth Secretariat provided a small core collection of titles for the use of participants.

The outline syllabus appears in the section on course implementation.

Accommodation

Accommodation was provided for the participants at the Sandridge Hotel half an hours drive from the Centre of Multi-Racial Studies on the Cave Hill Campus which provided the base for the course. There were disadvantages in this arrangement, notably in circumscribing the opportunity for individual participants to easily pursue their own programmes. This had to be matched against the pressing need to keep accommodation costs to an acceptable minimum. Nevertheless, the hotel did itself become a centre for both formal and informal programme activity.

The Centre for Multi Racial Studies provided an excellent study centre. A self contained unit with a sufficiency of space and office facilities, it served the needs of the course ideally. Both in the Centre and elsewhere in the University every effort was made to make the participants feel at home and to provide, whenever possible, study and technical services to assist the successful pursuit of the course.