

SPEECHES AT THE OPENING CEREMONY

ADDRESS OF WELCOME

Dr D. Wesumperuma

Assistant Director, Sri Lanka Foundation Institute

On behalf of the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute, I extend to you all a warm welcome for the inaugural session of the Commonwealth Regional In-Service Teacher Education Workshop for Asia.

We are indeed glad that Sri Lanka has been selected as venue for this Asian Regional Workshop.

This workshop is the outcome of a long-term programme launched last year by the Commonwealth Secretariat to have a series of annual regional workshops in the Commonwealth. The workshop is the second in this series. The first was held last year in Barbados for the Caribbean region. The third is scheduled to be held next year in Swaziland for the African region.

We are happy to have with us today, two representatives, one from the Caribbean region and another from the African region who will be with us during the period of the workshop as observers. We are also happy to have with us two representatives from the World Confederation of Organisations of the Teaching Profession. We have with us today delegates from India, Bangladesh, Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong, besides the delegates from our own country. To all observers, delegates and resource personnel from abroad, I take this opportunity to wish a pleasant and a fruitful stay in our country.

The fact that our countries are members of the Commonwealth means that we have been deeply influenced in the past, for better or for worse, by one major colonial power. All of us have had a common colonial experience. What is relevant to us today is that we are in a position to view the problems of our member states within a broad common framework, and therefore the experience of any one member state in our region could well offer lessons, perhaps very useful lessons, to the other member states in Asia.

What of the theme of the seminar itself? It is on In-Service Teacher Training. In the broad spectrum of the national education policies and programmes, in-service teacher training is an area which calls for careful study and top priority. I believe that in most of our member states, certainly so in Sri Lanka, pre-service education is a highly subject-oriented one, where a student acquires an intensive knowledge about the subjects he studies. The new recruit to the teaching profession, whether from the university or a high school, knows only the subjects he has studied and has only a haphazard knowledge of the methodology and the skills of teaching. The period of in-service teacher training is therefore the stage during which a new recruit to the teaching profession acquires the skill in teaching and learns teaching methods. In fact this is a stage during which a teacher is

really moulded. In a sense, the success of the teaching profession seems to depend on the quality and the kind of in-service teacher training offered to the teachers of our countries.

The particular objective of this workshop is to identify the problem areas in in-service teacher education in our region and seek solutions to these problems. In this process, an endeavour will be made to see how far the traditional methodology should be modified to suit modern conditions; to see how far the teacher could be put to better use in the fast changing socio-economic and educational environment in our country; to see how the teacher could be made use of not only in the schools but also as a community developer in the area where he works.

The holding of this regional workshop is most timely. The Ministry of Education in Sri Lanka is planning to introduce certain important changes into the in-service teacher training course in the near future. They plan to prepare for these changes by organizing in the early part of next year a national workshop. I therefore believe that the workshop we inaugurate today will be a useful prelude to the country seminar due next year. This regional workshop offers the educators and planners of the country an opportunity to share the experiences of our neighbouring countries, which I am sure, will provide food for thought at the national seminar next year.

It might be of interest to some of you to find out why the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute should offer our co-operation so readily to the Ministry of Education and other major educational organizations, here and abroad. The Sri Lanka Foundation Institute is the premier adult education centre in the island and in fact ours is the only residential adult education institute in the island. Therefore projects designed to improve the quality of the teaching profession are directly relevant to us. Themes such as those on the agenda in this regional workshop are so important to our educational activities, that I on behalf of the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute, am ready to make an offer to our partners - the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Ministry of Education - to undertake to translate the proceedings of this workshop into our national language and get the proceedings published so that the deliberations of this workshop may reach a wider audience. I presume that the English version of these proceedings will be published by the Commonwealth Secretariat as it has done with the proceedings of the workshop held last year for the Caribbean region.

In that hopeful note, may I conclude my welcome address wishing this workshop every success.

ADDRESS OF WELCOME

Mr E. M. D. Wickremesinghe
Acting Secretary, Ministry of Education

I am happy to be associated with such an important event as the inauguration of the second regional in-service teacher education workshop organized by the Commonwealth Secretariat. We are thankful to the Commonwealth Secretariat for the initiative taken in organizing workshops for sharing experiences in this sphere.

In Sri Lanka, we attach great importance to in-service education of teachers for several reasons. We recognize that education is a life-long process. In spite of the accumulation of research findings over the years, it is not yet possible to lay down in specific detail what needs to be taught and how it should be taught. Although innovations have been introduced into school curricula, the instructional and assessment methodologies continue to perform mainly the functions of selecting able pupils and eliminating those who do not measure up to pre-determined standards. The quality of education has to be considered not only in relation to standards attained in various disciplines but also in relation to whether the kind of education offered is suited to the needs of the recipients who have to live in a changing world.

The whole complex of curriculum construction, teacher education, educational infrastructure, and management has to be designed to benefit the learner. In the teaching-learning situation the teacher has a unique role to play. Today, we are witnessing a technological revolution. This is all the more reason why we should get the teachers better prepared to face the changing situations in the present world.

In developing countries, the population explosion has been accompanied by an educational explosion. The sharp rise in school enrolments, particularly at the secondary level, is primarily due to the growth of the school-age population and increasing access. Sometimes, school systems are forced to recruit personnel who are not competent to teach the subjects included in the curricula. In this context, it is relevant to define the scope, and recognize the limitations of in-service education. Undoubtedly, in-service education can make a positive contribution towards the enhancement of teacher-competency. But to what extent can in-service education overcome the problems arising from subject-oriented incompetency and professional incompetency? As I ponder over in-service education more questions spring to my mind: What linkages should exist between teachers and parents in the task of helping the learner to learn? Should a slow-learner be required to repeat a grade? Or should there be automatic promotion? What should be the optimum class size for imparting instruction in a given subject-area? Is reduction of the pupil/teacher ratio an indication of improvement of the teaching-learning situation? How can teachers be motivated to assume the many roles and functions they are called upon to shoulder in developing countries outside their traditional role of teachers of young school children?

I understand that the workshop will focus its attention on in-service education for training teachers for changing roles to suit the educational needs in developing countries. I have no doubt that out of your deliberations will emerge new action-paths leading to improvements in the teaching-learning processes. I wish you success. And I wish the foreign participants a happy sojourn in Sri Lanka.

ADDRESS BY THE CHIEF GUEST

The Hon. Lionel Jayatilleke, M.P.,
Acting Minister of Education and Higher Education

I am pleased to say that Sri Lanka has been honoured by the Commonwealth Secretariat by inviting us to host this workshop.

We do not consider this a matter-of-fact request. The Commonwealth Secretariat is aware of the involvement of the Sri Lanka educational system in the extensive teacher in-service education programme and the experiences our system has gained thereby. It is this appreciation I believe that has prompted them to ask us to conduct the workshop here. We lay emphasis on the human potential and have made every effort to help the teacher in his professional growth. We are attempting to help him to keep pace with time and be in step with the changing conditions. Our efforts designed to help the teacher have resulted in a broad-based network of in-service education activities, reaching teachers in all parts of the country. Perhaps, we may be offering some aspects of the programme for study, discussion and improvement at the workshop. We look forward to learning from our colleagues from the neighbouring countries in the region who are participating in this workshop.

Our main concern at the workshop will be improving teaching. We recognize that teaching has extended its boundaries beyond the limits of a classroom and as a consequence of this, the role and function of the teacher have widened.

In regard to qualitative improvement of teaching in school we ought to ask ourselves many questions. Some of the crucial questions are whether children learn as much as we teach, and whether they enjoy learning, and whether they find it meaningful. In respect of the child from the rural village home this question is much more pertinent. We should be mindful of the possibility of too much emphasis on the refinement levels of teaching without proper reference to the child. Society expects each of its children to grow up in his own culture. In this sense we should critically examine whether our schools have integrated naturally into our own culture. Perhaps, we may want to do something new to invest cultural values into our schools. If we examine what we want to do in this country, I would like to speak of the hopes for change as a revival rather than a radically different innovation. I do not intend dealing very much with the past but let me give a thumb nail sketch of our traditional kind of school. The physical location was the Guru Gedera - the teacher's home - an open school with children in a multi-graded system following a flexible timetable, a place where discipline was born of respect and admiration; a learning community within which knowledge, skills and attitudes were handled in a process of smooth transfer from person to person. Since the cultural milieu of the countries of the region has the basic commonness over-riding geographical boundaries it may be surmized that similar structures would have been existent in all countries of this region for ensuring the fostering of cultural values. What I would emphasize is that this past can inspire us to bring back its living spirit to schools today. This spirit should live in new environments, new structures and in new procedures.

This reference is to the valuable 'inside' of our village school. There was its 'outside' which too had its own influencing styles. The school's environment brought within its reach the whole ebb and flow of village life. Its sensitivity was sharp to the sorrows and pleasures of the village. The oft-repeated reference to it as the beacon of light is not a matter of poetry. Education, as understood today in the context of community and as a life-long activity, found its simple but perfect meaning in the village school.

I make these references because I consider them relevant to our task here at this workshop. At this workshop an effort will be made to understand the new roles of the teacher and consequently ways and means of communicating to others what we identify as these roles. The teaching profession as a whole is seeking to broaden its capacities and extend its repertoire of skills. We in Asia should know the proportions to which already the capacities have broadened and skills have extended.

I believe that all countries are making efforts to map-out new and achievable capacities. Some of them have made valuable discoveries. In Sri Lanka we have explored the fields of community education, the experiences of which will receive attention at this workshop. We have also attempted to bring back the out-of-school youth to school - they do come back for new types of experiences. We have some experience in extending the reach of the school to the adults. The more recent attempts have different orientations and are reputed to be popular with the adults. In the course of these experiences, we have found that the enlightened role of the teacher has a significant positive relationship to the success of each exercise.

I will not attempt a recounting of all our experiences in these innovative fields of work. I mention them here in the hope that these and many others from the participating countries will be discussed fruitfully at this workshop. Such discussions will inevitably lead to a meaningful sharing of the experiences by all members. We should feel happy that the pool of experience is rich.

The Commonwealth Secretariat, in organizing this workshop, the second in a series of regional workshops, is making manifest the broad philosophy of co-operation on which it has been built.

ADDRESS BY THE DIRECTOR OF THE WORKSHOP

Dr M. N. Haq
Assistant Director, Education Division,
Commonwealth Secretariat

It is my pleasant duty, at the very outset, to convey the warmest greetings of the Commonwealth Secretary-General as well as to express on his behalf, our profound sense of gratitude and appreciation to the Government and the people of Sri Lanka for their kind co-operation and generosity in hosting the present workshop. We are deeply obliged to the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute, its Director and his colleagues for providing such excellent facilities and wonderful hospitality for the workshop in idyllic surroundings. Our gratitude is particularly due to the Honourable Lionel Jayatilleke for kindly gracing the occasion by his presence and inaugurating the workshop as the Chief Guest despite his pressing duties. His kind words about the Commonwealth Secretariat will be fondly treasured and his erudite and illuminating speech will be a source of great inspiration to all of us. I extend a very hearty welcome to consultants, observers and delegates and wish their deliberations every success. In this connection it is worth mentioning that the participation of a delegate from the Caribbean and one from Africa lends an inter-regional character to this regional workshop. I must thank the various Commonwealth Governments in this region for their enthusiastic support for the workshop. I also thank all our distinguished guests for their kind and inspiring presence in our midst.

I would like to take the opportunity at this auspicious occasion to say a few words about the Commonwealth itself. The Commonwealth symbolizes an intimate comradeship of humanity in all its variety. It demonstrates to the world a special modus operandi for communication across the barriers of race, geography and wealth - a rare facility by which a quarter of the world's states may augment understanding and promote co-operation. It represents unity in diversity and offers the potential of shared experience and co-operative efforts. Truly speaking, the Commonwealth is a microcosm of the international community and while serving itself, it serves the world at large. The granting of observer status to the Commonwealth Secretariat by the General Assembly of the United Nations bespeaks this commitment to service.

The Commonwealth Secretariat, established in 1965, is responsible to all member governments. Its principal role is to serve as a focal point of co-operation in direct and flexible response to the priorities set for it by the consensus of Member Nations. Its main areas of operation are education, economic affairs, international affairs, legal matters, medical and scientific affairs, youth activities, food production and rural development.

The Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation, commonly known as CFTC, was established in April 1971. It is an inter-governmental multilateral development fund administered by the Commonwealth Secretariat. The CFTC represents a practical application of the concept of mutual self-help in which the recipients are also donors and full partners. It endeavours to mobilize for development the expertise and facilities available in the Commonwealth as a whole. Its operations are conducted through three programmes: the General Technical Assistance Programme, the Export Market Development Programme and the Education and Training Programme. Needless to say, the present workshop enjoys the financial support of the Education and Training Programme.

I may now refer briefly to the activities of the Education Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat. This Division was established in 1966 in order to assume responsibility for functions previously undertaken by the Commonwealth Education Liaison Unit. It assists the Secretariat in the following ways: promoting co-operation among Commonwealth countries in appropriate areas of education, identifying educational problems and investigating possible solutions and providing information on educational innovations and developments to Commonwealth countries. The main functions of the Division include organizing and servicing Commonwealth meetings, seminars, workshops, conferences and training courses; acting as a clearing-house for information on selected areas of education and publishing reports and research studies. Obviously, a report will be published comprising the final proceedings of this workshop as well.

The Education Division also maintains liaison with other divisions of the Secretariat and with national, regional and international organizations such as WCOTP, UNESCO, CARICOM, L'Agence de Cooperation Culturelle et Technique etc. The triennial ministerial conferences set broad guidelines for the programme of this Division. The Commonwealth Education Liaison Committee abbreviated CELC, on which are represented all the Commonwealth High Commissions in London, the British Government and the Associated States advises the Education Division and acts as a link between Commonwealth governments and the Secretariat. While the Commonwealth Education Conferences serve as a forum for ministers to hold deliberations on broad educational policies, specialist conferences bring together senior educationists from all over the Commonwealth to discuss crucial aspects of educational development. These meetings are convened every two years on recommendations from ministerial conferences. The specialist conferences in the past dealt with such selected subjects as the teaching of mathematics, education in rural areas, the role of teachers in national development, public examinations, materials for learning and teaching etc. The next specialist conference is scheduled to be held in India from 22 January to 3 February 1979, its theme being Non-Formal Education for National Development.

The main areas of operation of the Education Division as identified at Commonwealth Education Conferences and other meetings include educational administration and supervision, book development, science and mathematics education, technical education, universal primary education, non-formal education, curriculum, educational media, teaching about the Commonwealth, higher education and teacher education. In these areas, the Secretariat sponsors training oriented regional seminars, meetings, workshops and training courses in order to assist member governments to improve the specialist expertise of their staff. The present workshop is in pursuit of this objective.

Successive Commonwealth Education Conferences have emphasized the pivotal role of teachers in improving education. Rapid educational expansion and significant curriculum development have led to a crisis in teacher education in many countries, pointing to the need to consider new approaches to teacher training. It is being increasingly realized that teacher education is a continuous process and pre-service education is only the initial phase. It is further felt that there is a need for integrating pre-service and in-service education of the teacher in order to promote the concept of lifelong learning aiming at both professional up-dating and professional mobility. Furthermore, it is said that if teacher education were to serve the present as well as future needs of society, it should also encompass the pre-service as well as in-service training of educational personnel of other categories - inspectors, supervisors and administrators - with implications for changes

in status and conditions of work. Above all, it is firmly held that all statutory and desirable changes in teacher education will not take place unless there is a happy marriage between political will and professional commitment.

The first Commonwealth regional in-service teacher education workshop was held in Barbados in 1977. The theme of the workshop was "Towards an Overall Strategy for Teacher Education" and the pressing issues discussed were needs and priorities in in-service teacher education in the Caribbean; educational support services and in-service teacher education; patterns and methods in in-service teacher education and regional co-operation in in-service education in the Commonwealth. The Seventh Commonwealth Conference held in Ghana in 1977 reiterated the need for regional workshops that aim to assist member governments in tackling problems and sharing ideas about teacher education. It is in response to this mandate that we have assembled here to consider the theme, 'Educating Teachers for Changing Roles'. We have already been told about the objectives of the workshop and the issues to be discussed. It is heartening to learn about the existence of various innovative practices and programmes related to in-service teacher education in Commonwealth Asia purported to meet the national needs. Against this backdrop of innovative experiences of the delegates and the rich expertise of the learned consultants, we can confidently look forward to finding this workshop an enriching and worthwhile exercise and likely to have far-reaching consequences.

To my mind the four cardinal virtues of Buddhism might serve as the motto of the workshop to guide and inspire its deliberations - 'Karuna, Metta, Upekkha and Mudita' - 'Compassion, loving kindness, equanimity and tranquillity'.

VOTE OF THANKS

Mr George Mendis
Deputy Director-General of Education,
Ministry of Education

It is my privilege to move a vote of thanks to all those present here today and others responsible for today's proceedings.

This workshop will be a memorable one as the outcome of the deliberations will be of immediate and lasting value in the international field and especially to the developing nations in the Asian regions.

We in Sri Lanka have given a very important place to education, which is considered the main agent for national development. We are happy to note that in the agenda that has been prepared for the workshop, very important matters relating to teacher pupil relationships are included: the teacher as a community link, and the teacher as an agent for the development of the child and of the community. In appreciation of the fact that education is indispensable, the Government of Sri Lanka invests a big portion of its national budget on education. A substantial portion of the expenditure is diverted towards the development of the teacher in matters relating to his work. In point of fact Programme II of our education budget utilizes 90% of the expenditure on teachers. There is also a reasonable amount of money spent on teacher education which is a separate programme in the education budget. What I am emphasizing is the fact that the teacher in the education system in Sri Lanka is considered second only to the child. Hence all our efforts have to be channelled to improve the work of the teacher. As such we need new training schemes, new pedagogical methods and innovative technologies and also adaption of our traditional systems. I anticipate that this workshop will give us very solid directions and foundations for future programmes affecting the teacher.

We are thankful to the Acting Minister of Education who has graced this occasion and also inspired us with his enlightening address. This is the first official function he has attended since he took his oaths as Acting Minister of Education this morning.

The Acting Secretary of Education, Mr Wickremesinghe has given us a lot of advice and guidance in the working of this workshop. We are thankful to him.

We have with us today Dr Haq, Assistant Director, Education Division, Commonwealth Secretariat, Dr Perera, A Sri Lankan working as Chief Project Officer, Mr S. Farrant, Education Officer, who is really the live wire of this whole workshop. We are privileged to have Mr James Porter, Head of the Commonwealth Institute, who is a highly recognized personality in the education field. We have also Dr Rosetta Mante from the Phillipines to explain the IMPACT Programme. Mr Uvais Ahamed who has come to us as a consultant was until recently one of our distinguished Directors. It is a privilege to have them with us. I am not in a position to mention names but we have with us representatives from the Commonwealth regions of Africa and the Caribbean and from WCOTP.

We are thankful to Bangladesh, India, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore for sending us learned persons in the field of education. Sri Lanka is also represented by experienced educationists.

A word of thanks to the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute for hosting this workshop. The Sri Lanka Foundation Institute has taken a very important place in matters relating to development in the country.