

INTRODUCTION

Until recently, science as a school subject has been unknown at the primary school level in most countries of the Third World. Even at the secondary school level where science has been taught for a number of years in Commonwealth African countries, the subject has still not made much impact at the classroom level partly because of the non-availability, inadequacy and ineffective utilization of teaching aids and equipment. Commonwealth governments have therefore requested the Commonwealth Secretariat to promote and encourage co-operative activities specifically aimed at alleviating the problem of school science equipment. This task is being undertaken by the Education Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

One aspect of the Division's work has been to begin the production of publications on science equipment and science centres as a contribution to the exchange of information. Another has been to embark on a series of regional science teaching seminar-workshops aimed at assisting member countries to make science teaching more effective and less costly by the use of locally-made equipment.

The current seminar-workshop is the second in the series of such meetings on the theme of low-cost science teaching equipment. Detailed discussions were held on the broad topics treated at the first seminar, paying special attention to the strategies for production and use of low-cost equipment in the African context. Again, the seminar included practical laboratory sessions at which participants actively familiarized themselves with workshop techniques for the construction of some basic items of equipment which are at present generally imported into the various countries. Participants showed great enthusiasm and produced some equipment themselves.

Ways of identifying regional and pan-Commonwealth co-operation was, as usual, another objective of the meeting, and some proposals were made in this connection. It is hoped that these proposals will result in practical programmes and projects that will assist countries in Commonwealth Africa in making their science education programmes more effective.

The Commonwealth Secretariat wishes to acknowledge its gratitude to the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania for its hospitality in hosting this seminar-workshop and for the facilities it kindly provided through the Institute of Education and the University of Dar-es-Salaam. Special thanks are undoubtedly due to the hardworking Chairman, Ndugu W. S. M. Migembe who very ably steered the sessions and, who, with his cheerful, friendly team of local support staff, made us feel at home in every possible way. Our thanks are due also to the consultant, the resource personnel, the delegates and the observers who all contributed effectively to the work of the seminar.

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