

FOREWORD

Success in the promotion of new ideas in education is often a factor of timing. When the Commonwealth Ministers of Education met in 1977, 'non-formal' alternatives to formal schooling were already a subject of growing importance. There was also a need to understand those alternatives and to assess their place in the whole process of national development. Among other things, the Delhi Conference on 'Non-Formal Education for Development' (1979) was designed to enhance this understanding.

As it turned out, the Conference did much more than increase understanding. The 'non-formal' idea had reached a firm 'take-off' point; already there is evidence that the ideas generated by the Conference are beginning to affect policy and action in a number of Commonwealth countries. As Paul Fordham notes in chapter one, 'the non-formal idea has come of age'.

However, it was not merely the timing of the Conference which contributed to its success. There was general agreement that the quality of the Conference papers was very high and this crystallized into a demand that they be made more widely available than was possible at the Conference alone. In responding to that demand, it was agreed to produce a book based on them rather than simply reproduce the papers. This has meant that partly to avoid repetition, a few papers have had to be omitted which on grounds of quality alone would certainly have been included. Roby Kidd's thoughtful piece on 'A China Plant and an Indian Cane', perhaps the only comparative study so far of the non-formal education systems of these two countries, falls clearly into this category. Some papers have been included only in part while others have been used to develop linking commentary and analysis. Yet all were important and each has made its unique contribution to the book as a whole. They are listed in full on pages 212 and 213.

A word about the scope of the Conference and consequently this book: the proposition that non-formal education is for development and development is for people—all the people—would have presented an immeasurable scope of discussion. At the very outset, therefore, the Conference limited itself to the consideration of development as it relates to the improvement of the overall standard of living of the

(iv) FOREWORD

most needy sections of society—the deprived and the poor—and focused attention on the problems of rural areas, especially the unschooled and underschooled children of school age, adolescents and youth, adult illiterates and women—concerns which were reflected in the papers.

It has been no easy task to select, distil and weave into a coherent narrative, the material from 65 papers of this quality and hundreds of pages. We are grateful to Paul Fordham for undertaking so competently this task of highlighting the main issues put forward by the authors and linking them to the deliberations and findings of the Conference. The case studies add a most valuable dimension of experience to ideology.

In offering this book, it is our fervent hope that all who are engaged in education as a factor of development will find something new, something stimulating and something challenging in their various responsibilities and preoccupations.

Rex E. O. Akpofure
Director
Education Division
Commonwealth Secretariat
February 1980