

INTRODUCTION

In many Commonwealth countries the shortage of educated and trained technical manpower continues to be an impediment to national development programmes based on the use of technological processes. Successive Commonwealth Education Conferences have emphasised the importance of technical education as an essential element in manpower development strategies and the main thrust of the technical education programme carried out by the Commonwealth Secretariat in recent years has been directed towards the education and training of technicians.

In response to recommendations from recent Commonwealth Education Conferences, the Education Division has concentrated its efforts in technical education on the promotion of Commonwealth co-operation in four main areas; (a) technical teacher training; (b) liaison between industry and technical education; (c) industrial experience for technical students; and (d) technical examinations.

Technical examinations are an important and integral part of technical education systems and the Seventh Education Conference, Accra 1977, expressed its concern over the difficult educational and administrative problems facing member governments in establishing and maintaining efficient and cost-effective technical examination systems. The Conference therefore recommended that a study be made of the problems encountered in technical examinations.

This study carried out by the Guildford Educational Services under a commission from the Commonwealth Secretariat is in four parts; (a) methodology used; (b) background factors; (c) the present position; and (d) possible solutions.

Although the study is intended as a preliminary investigation of technical and commercial examinations in developing countries of the Commonwealth, it contains a great deal of evidence on technical examinations not previously assembled in a single publication. This has been made possible by the excellent response which we have received from Ministries, technical institutions, regional examination councils and international examining bodies. Our thanks are due to all these organisations for the assistance so readily given.

The present study was commended by the Eighth Commonwealth Education Conference which met in Colombo in August 1980 as a valuable contribution to Commonwealth co-operation in technical and vocational education. The Conference recommended that the Secretariat should pursue follow-up action on two fronts to assist member countries in dealing with the problems in technical and vocational examination: (a) the convening of a working group to formulate proposals on the problems encountered in technical and vocational examinations and (b) the provision of assistance to member states for the purpose of strengthening their examination systems. We are beginning action on these recommendations and hope to disseminate the results in a further publication in the coming year.

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