

PART 3

THE PRESENT POSITION

THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

The General Position

123. The general position appears to be as follows:

- (a) Before independence most Commonwealth states used examinations and qualifications set by UK external examining bodies.
- (b) Since independence most of the larger states have replaced these with national or regional qualifications or examinations.
- (c) Some of the smaller states have replaced them with college qualifications and examinations.
- (d) Most of the smaller states, and at least one larger state, still use UK external qualifications and examinations instead of national or college ones, although a number of such states are now planning to make a change.
- (e) In many states, especially those where the nationals expect to go overseas for employment or advanced education, UK external qualifications and examinations are used in parallel to local ones.
- (f) In some states private colleges in the commercial sector also use UK external qualifications and examinations.
- (g) The qualifications of City and Guilds, Royal Society of Arts, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Pitmans are held in high esteem as setting a known international standard.

124. The implication from the replies is that sooner or later any independent country will wish to award its own qualifications. Up to now this has also involved setting the examinations on which the qualification is based. In Part 2 we have shown that there are in fact separate activities of awarding qualifications and of examining, and that these activities require different levels of resources. Later in the report we suggest that there are a number of different options which enable this natural desire to award a national qualification to be met.

125. There is some evidence - anecdotal and in no way conclusive - which suggests that the pattern of qualifications and examinations adopted by a country may be influenced by the background of the technical assistance it has received in establishing its post-independence vocational education system. It seems natural that those involved in technical assistance programmes will make recommendations based on their own experience and expectations, and that as a result there is a diversity of approach in

Commonwealth countries which cannot be explained solely as being due to the size of the country, its stage of development, the length of time it has been independent or its own cultural traditions. Such influence, however, if it has existed, could lead to decisions on qualifications and examinations being made for the wrong reasons.

Outside Examinations

126. Comparison of the questionnaires with the statistics from the UK examining bodies indicates that in quite a few countries outside examinations were being taken in many subjects in which college or national examinations were also being sat. There are several explanations for this:

(a) As indicated by some of the comments in Appendix II students in some institutions who take college or national examinations are also encouraged to take outside examinations if there is a possibility that they may go overseas to study or find employment.

(b) In commercial subjects in particular, in some countries there are a number of private colleges outside the state system and these often make use of outside examinations.

(c) Many of the outside examinations accept entries from 'external candidates', that is those who have not attended a college but who have studied on their own or by correspondence.

127. It is noticeable that the outside examinations which are most frequently used are telecommunications technicians and those in mathematics, accounting and similar subjects, and secretarial and typing. Although there are probably a number of reasons for the continuing popularity of UK examinations in these subjects, it may be significant that they are all modular - that is a candidate can take a single subject examination when it suits him and does not have to take several 'grouped' papers.

128. An analysis of the questionnaire shows that where there is a mixture of local and UK examinations, it is more likely in technical education that the craft level examinations will be local and the technician and higher technician will be outside. This may be due to one or more of the following reasons:

(a) Technicians are more likely to go overseas to continue their studies.

(b) There may be more candidates at craft level, making it more economic to set them for each country.

(c) Craft examinations are more likely to be tied to local needs and practices. Technician examinations, being more theoretical, are more universally applicable.

(d) Craft examinations usually require practical tests or assessment and are therefore difficult to set outside the UK. Technician examinations are usually written papers only, with a few projects.

(e) Because of the practical requirements, UK craft examinations are often barred to overseas external candidates - and this includes not only the genuine externals, but also those at a college whose course has not been approved.

(f) Craft skills may be tested by an industrial training/trade testing organisation local to the country.

(g) At craft level the local language may be used for tuition in preference to English.

129. The questionnaire asked users of 'outside' qualifications to rate them on a scale 5 - 1 according to the extent to which these qualifications matched the requirements of local employment. In virtually all cases commercial qualifications were rated high (5 or 4), and in most cases City and Guilds technical qualifications were also rated 5 or 4. In a number of cases, however, City and Guilds qualifications were rated 3 ('Syllabus partly matches employment requirements'). The main reason appeared to be a correlation between a fairly low rating for a set of qualifications and a poor result in the examinations, but because of the grouping of subjects in the questionnaire it was impossible to be sure about this. Curiously enough the very much worse results in commercial examinations did not lead (except in one case) to low ratings or any adverse comments.

130. The main reasons given for using outside examinations and qualifications (see Appendix II), apart from where they were being used pending the development of local examinations, stressed

(a) their recognition as denoting an acceptable standard of employment by indigenous employers and those in other countries;

(b) their use as entry or exempting qualifications for further study overseas;

(c) their international reputation.

These points were made so frequently and so strongly from so many different parts of the Commonwealth that they must be given considerable weight.

Regional Qualifications and Examinations

131. There was little or no evidence from the questionnaires of the efficiency or appropriateness of regional examinations. The information obtained from the two existing regional councils which conduct vocational examinations is contained in paragraphs 174-190.

National and College Qualifications and Examinations

132. Equally there was little or no evidence on the quality of national and college qualifications and examinations. The Department of Education of one country voluntarily provided ratings for its national examinations as 3 ('Syllabus partly meets employment requirements'), and commented that the syllabuses were to be revised in a modular format to meet the needs of local industry. There were also hints in some of the comments (quoted in Appendix II) of difficulties in establishing the reputation of local qualifications.

133. Nevertheless, the wording of the Report of the Accra Conference, quoted in paragraph 2, suggests that problems are being met and it seems likely that these are due to the inherent problems of examining exacerbated by some of the particular problems of developing countries.