

Commonwealth regional co-operation

PLENARY SESSION

In his paper Dr Haq highlighted the activities of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

The largest agency of the Secretariat is the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC) which is a funding agency for Commonwealth co-operation and operates in three areas: General Technical Assistance, Education and Training, and Export Market Development. Through the General Technical Assistance Division experts and advisers have been recruited in a wide range of educational and technical fields. Inter alia, the Education and Training Programme funds seminars, workshop and conferences organised by the Education Division. The programme is extending its operations to cover primary level education and this present seminar is the first of its kind.

Co-operation also takes place through the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Programme (CSFP) which provides for overseas post-graduate studies and is being expanded.

One function of the Education Division is the collection and dissemination of information through reports and publications distributed to the Commonwealth Desk officers in member countries.

In reply to a question about follow-up of Regional Seminars, Dr Haq said that each seminar made its own recommendations for follow-up. Studies and reports were distributed and sometimes short and long courses were organised. Also each delegate was expected to publicise this seminar and try to implement its recommendations in his own country.

GROUP SESSIONS

REPORT OF THE ASIA GROUP (Chaired by Mrs C Malwenne)

The regional international organisations operating in Asia which participants noted had offered programmes relevant to UPE include:

1. The Co-operative for American Relief Everywhere (CARE) which has engaged in school building and school meals programme.
2. The Commonwealth Secretariat which through CFTC and the Education Division has funded advisers and field personnel and also organised the seminar on UPE.
3. The Overseas Development Administration (ODA) which offers such things as training programmes in micro-teaching, scholarships, fellowships, consultations and the supply of periodicals and books.

4. The Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) which has supplied paper for non-formal education.

5. United Nations Organizations

- (a) UNESCO which has offered consultancy services, fellowship and attachment programmes.
- (b) UNFPA which has provided assistance with population education.
- (c) UNICEF which has been involved with programmes of teacher training, school building, educational software, remedial education, education in rural areas and sanitation and drinking water.

6. The Bernard Van Leer Foundation which has provided assistance for compensatory education.

The group went on to discuss what projects they will like to see introduced to the region and these included the following:

- (a) Setting up a "Recreation cum learning cum production centre for non-formal education".
- (b) Providing school uniforms for underprivileged children.
- (c) Research on the following:
 - (i) teacher effectiveness
 - (ii) use of media
 - (iii) evaluation techniques
 - (iv) attitudinal change
 - (v) retention of literacy
 - (vi) cognitive development
 - (vii) cost benefit analysis of the innovative projects
 - (viii) teacher training
 - (ix) linkage between formal and non formal approaches to education
 - (x) setting up a system of distance teaching for training teachers in the numbers required for UPE
- (d) Collecting and disseminating accurate information about UPE.

The group recommended that Commonwealth Secretariat should:

- (a) arrange exchange programmes and study visits for personnel working in different aspects of UPE
- (b) commission special studies on matters vital to the success of UPE
- (c) report regularly on progress towards UPE in member countries

REPORT OF THE PACIFIC GROUP (Chaired by Mrs.L. Vaai)

The regional organizations active in the region in relation to UPE include:

- 1. Asian Development Bank (ADB) which has given assistance to member countries in planning.
- 2. Australian Development Assistance Bureau (ADAB) which has organized a number of workshops for teachers, assisted in curriculum development and helped with the production of school programmes.
- 3. South East Asia Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) which launched through the INNOTECH centre in Manila the IMPACT project piloted in the Philippines and Indonesia.
- 4. South Pacific Commission (SPC) which has supported from its Headquarters in Noumea educational activities such as the production of teaching materials, in-service training for teachers in English, and the publication of educational texts such as readers and the Tate Oral English course.
- 5. University of the South Pacific (USP) which has sponsored administration courses for primary school inspectors.

Among the international bodies that have assisted in one way or another are:

- 1. Asia Pacific Educational Innovation Development (APEID) which has a number of programmes of some relevance to UPE.
- 2. The Commonwealth Secretariat which has organised meetings on the production of materials for learning and teaching, educational broadcasting, community education, and training courses in educational administration and supervision.
- 3. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) which has carried out relief work and supplied foodstuffs following hurricanes.

4. The International Labour Organization (ILO) which has helped in the running of schools for the handicapped.
5. Lions and Rotary Clubs which have provided help in the form of scholarships for pupils.
6. United Nations Organizations such as UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF which engage in a variety of programmes including the supply of milk for school children, health foods and educational projects.
7. Voluntary Agencies such as the World Council of Churches and national youth volunteer corps such as the Peace Corps and VSO, which provide staff and funds for educational work.
8. The World Health Organization (WHO) which has run health checks on children in primary schools and provided water supply and improved sanitation.

The group suggested additional projects that some of these organizations might undertake, and these include:

- (a) Research into the statistics needed for programmes of UPE.
- (b) Organization of crash courses of training for primary teachers by innovative methods and also the training of teachers for the handicapped.
- (c) Setting up of regional workshops for such things as the production of low cost teaching materials and physical aids for handicapped children.

COMMONWEALTH CO-OPERATION IN AFRICA

PLENARY SESSION

My Okoro read his paper and commented on certain parts of it in the light of discussions at the Seminar. He underlined the tendency for progress towards UPE to be reduced by rapid increases in population, especially children under the age of 15, due to high birth rates.

The importance of governments expanding work opportunities for those graduating from primary education was emphasised as a factor to be taken into account in the provision of UPE in rural areas.

He went on to explain the dilemma which results from implementation of large-scale primary education: as coverage expands depth and quality are reduced. He said that the requirements of teachers and conditions for their training and employment need to be considered well before the scheme is implemented.

Drop-outs were reported to have far exceeded the numbers forecast. Mr Okoro cited one study on part of Nigeria which suggested that the smaller the community, the higher was the dropout rate.

Analysing arguments on the issue of the relevance of the curriculum, Mr Okoro stressed the need to establish a balance in the total school programme if occupational skills were to be included in the curriculum.

Adding to the list of problems, Mr Okoro stressed the importance of adequate data collection. He said that not only do government planners assume wrongly that they know the position when they have incomplete data, but also that they leave out two important kinds of data. These are data on the quality of education as a service to people and as a resource, and data on inequalities between and within cities, rural areas and remote rural areas. He criticised the collection of data geared to the provision of misleading national averages.

Turning to possible solutions to the problems he had mentioned, he proposed that action along the following lines could be fruitful:

- (a) Inviting local contributions to educational costs.
- (b) Learning linked with productive activities.
- (c) Use of National Service personnel as teachers.
- (d) Use of auxiliary teachers.
- (e) Introduction of alternate year intake in sparsely settled areas.