

PREFACE

Educational planners have long recognized that the curriculum is one of the key factors in the educational process and that changes in the curriculum constitute an essential step in the achievement of educational objectives. Periodic changes in such objectives have therefore emphasized the demand for curriculum renewal. In this context the current pressure on governments to make education relevant to national development represents such a change in education policy and has generated a new urgency in curriculum development. It is therefore not surprising that in an era characterized by rapid change in all sectors of national life, many member countries are obliged to devote more and more attention to new initiatives and innovations in their secondary school curriculum.

At the Seventh Commonwealth Educational Conference in Accra in 1977, although the need for curriculum reform was recognized, it was suggested that the curriculum situation had not basically altered in many member countries. In order to obtain an accurate picture, a recommendation was therefore adopted that a survey should be undertaken on recent curriculum reforms in secondary level institutions in Commonwealth member countries, and that the results of such a survey should be circulated to the Ministries of Education prior to the next Commonwealth Education Conference. The wealth of information that the Secretariat has received on current innovations and projects in curriculum development has, in the event, fully justified the survey presented in this publication.

For practical reasons the scope of the survey has been limited strictly to the general secondary level as defined by UNESCO. The survey was based on a detailed questionnaire circulated to all Commonwealth Ministries of Education, and has been presented as a factual overview of the information received and except where member countries have offered their own insights, no attempt has been made to assess or evaluate the projects and innovations described. We have however endeavoured to identify trends in curriculum development where these appear to be significant for the future.

The report is broadly in three sections. The first attempts to identify and describe the trends and changes which have emerged in the last decade or so in curriculum control, planning, design and content. The second section highlights particular initiatives, programmes and projects which member countries have reported and the many problems and issues which have emerged in their development. The projects which are not specifically cited in the text are shown in the appendix at the end of the report. The third section records specific areas in which co-operation between Commonwealth countries exists and potential areas for future co-operation. The survey has revealed two such areas. These are training and the exchange of information. Many member countries have requested assistance to enable their Senior Planners and Curriculum Developers either to go abroad for training in other Commonwealth countries or for visits to observe innovations and projects at the grass roots level. The area of information exchange envisages the exchange of curriculum materials between member countries and the provision of opportunities for Curriculum Planners to meet and discuss common problems.

This publication seeks to promote co-operation. We have therefore included in the appendix the names and addresses of Ministries of Education for purposes of contact if further information on the projects cited is required. We have also included the names and addresses of Commonwealth Desks in member countries where they have been designated, with special responsibilities for Commonwealth educational matters. We at the Secretariat will of course, continue to serve as a channel of communication on specific inquiries concerning projects and innovations in curriculum renewal.

Our thanks are due to Professor P R C Williams, Head of the Department of Education in Developing Countries at the Institute of Education of London University for his advice and assistance in launching the survey and for enabling members of his staff to undertake it. Our special appreciation is due to Dr Linda Ankrah-Dove who, as consultant, was responsible for the survey and the report, and to Mr Hugh Hawes of the same Department as well as Mrs Yin Ching Leong from Malaysia who also assisted her.

This survey would not have been possible without the excellent responses which we received from Ministries of Education. Our thanks are due to the many officers who devoted time and effort to completing the detailed questionnaire and providing us with official documents describing educational developments and curriculum renewal programmes.

This report is presented to Ministers and their officials at the Eighth Commonwealth Education Conference as mandated by the Seventh Education Conference in order to assist their discussions on curriculum developments and also to member countries of the Commonwealth in the hope that it will be a valuable link in the chain of Commonwealth educational efforts.

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