PART ONE
INTRODUCTION

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Active not Passive

A Commonwealth Agenda for Redirecting Student Flows

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Scholarship in the North and South

Scholarship is common wealth, in several senses. The knowledge and understanding which derives from scholarship both helps in the conservation of values held in common and is the basis of economic change or development. It is therefore quite literally the wealth of any community, small or large.

It is common also in the sense that it can be shared across frontiers. It is a fundamental tenet of academia that it should be so shared. Hence the imperative to publish research results and disseminate them. Hence also the physical movement of academics, and often of their students, from one institution to another, from one country to another.

The fact that much academic behaviour is about sharing, and the fact that the scholarly tradition is premised on sharing does not, however, mean that the division of the world's wealth of knowledge is equal. Paradoxically, modern improvements in information technology have heightened inequality in access to knowledge, since the poorer countries do not command the skills, the equipment or the resources to benefit from them. A recent Human Development Report (UNDP, 1992) points out:

> Some of the current gaps between North and South in technical education, informatics and technological research are particularly disturbing:
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> - The tertiary enrolment ratio is only eight per cent in the South compared with 37 per cent in the North. In the least developed countries it is two per cent.

- Scientific and technical personnel number only nine per 1,000 people, compared with 81 in the North.
- Communications – the informatics and communications revolution seems to have bypassed most developing countries. Per capita, they have only one-eighteenth as many telephone connections, one-eighth as many newspapers and one-sixth as many radios.
- Computerisation – only a twentieth of the world's computers are in the South.
- Research and development (R & D) – despite having 80 per cent of the world's population, developing countries are responsible for only four per cent of global R & D expenditure.

Such drastic inequalities are of major concern to the Commonwealth, since it is a partnership of rich and poor countries, a coalition of North and South which will experience increasing tension if these gaps are not bridged.

Within the Commonwealth, much of its partnership activity is higher education-related. Almost all of the Commonwealth Professional Associations (CPAs) bring together professional people trained in higher education institutions and whose capacity to understand each other stems from a comparability in their training. Within universities themselves, there has been a sense of common heritage in system, standards and, generally, language. It is therefore a matter of great sensitivity that higher education across the Commonwealth is seen to be genuinely open to exchange and interchange. In the eyes of many of the countries of the South, the association might stand or fall by its success in keeping up a fairer flow of knowledge physically symbolised by a flow of people, both students and academics.

The movement of students has a very high priority for the many small Commonwealth nations in any case, since they may have no university within their borders, as is the case with The Gambia, or their higher education institution may not have the resources to cater for more than a few disciplines or for any postgraduate work.

It is not, therefore, surprising that higher education exchange, linked to student flows, has loomed large in recent Commonwealth discussions. The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Harare in November 1991 'affirmed the fundamental importance of enhanced student mobility for Commonwealth cohesion and for the future of the Commonwealth itself'.

The tensions were heightened in the 1980s by the action of the countries of the Commonwealth North in charging full-cost fees, which was seen as tantamount to slamming the doors on students from the poorer

countries. This was not passively accepted, and there was a protracted attempt to palliate, if not reverse, the various rich countries' decisions. That struggle is referred to elsewhere in this book, but here we are concerned with the drive for alternative action to continue student mobility without being hobbled by the high fee regimes in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

The move to alternative action has included such initiatives as the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and the Commonwealth Higher Education Support Scheme (CHESS). But recently it has focused on a redirection of some student flows. Two questions have been posed. The first is: can there be more exchanges between institutions of the South? This might seem problematic if we were simply seeing the spectacle of the poor sharing their poverty, but in the Commonwealth South there are countries with very highly reputed institutions, such as India with its great Institutes of Technology, and countries with extensive and complex higher education systems, such as Nigeria. In addition, there are federal institutions such as the University of the West Indies and the University of the South Pacific, which have a rich and sophisticated experience of catering to students from diverse backgrounds within their own far-flung regions. All these would make credible hosts for students from other parts of the South. The advantages of South-South student migration will emerge in several chapters: the environment in another developing country should not be so alienating as that of urbanised post-industrial societies; the problems posed in curricula should be more directly relevant to students' own backgrounds, and they may form friendships and make contacts which will make the Commonwealth more multi-dimensional and less magnetised towards the metropoles.

The second question is: can more students from the North be encouraged to pursue part of their higher education in the South? While their numbers would always be comparatively few, an increasing Northern presence in Southern campuses is seen as likely to contribute to building the capacity of those campuses and also as a logical development of the globalisation of business and markets, with trans-nationals needing employees who understand the languages, cultures and environments of the countries where they operate.

The Singapore Workshop on Academic Interchange and Institution Building

It was as a result of the new thinking and the urge to new action that the Commonwealth Secretariat decided to commission research from a group of consultants from ten different member countries on the feasibility of redirecting student flows. Each consultant worked to a common brief so that substantial parallel information was collected on: student flows; major exchange schemes; national and institutional attitudes towards enhanced student intake from abroad; factors affecting student mobility. Additionally, assessments were given of national and institutional policies and opinions on what, if any, institutional support structures and academic resources needed strengthening.

The purpose was to stimulate creative thinking on patterns of student flow and the consultants were brought together in a workshop in Singapore to discuss the implications of their research and make some recommendations to promote activity designed to enhance student flows into the South. The workshop took place in April 1992 in Singapore, which was regarded as a particularly appropriate venue, since Singapore has always taken a positive view of the value of welcoming foreign students. Its policy and experience of being 'open to talent' are described in the final chapter of this book.

As a result of the Singapore meeting, the Secretariat was able to build up a new agenda and in particular to move to the launching of CUSAC, the Commonwealth Universities Study Abroad Consortium.

Purpose and structure of this book

Events have moved so fast since the Singapore meeting that some of the papers and discussions there may seem to have become dated already. To the Secretariat and to some academics, the value of the papers will continue to lie in their rich seam of comparative data and in statistical material which is likely to continue to be indicative. For a more general audience, it is hoped that certain dominant themes in relation to student mobility will be of abiding interest and that there will also be a welcome for insights, deriving from first-hand specialist knowledge, into certain specific cases of successful schemes and policies.

Material from the Singapore papers has been used in this book with the purpose of providing in readable form:

1 A historical background to the new initiatives in student exchange

2 A thorough analysis of the major policy issues and preoccupations from the point of view of South and North
3 A set of case studies from which lessons may be learned from other institutions and governments

The papers have been edited to provide continuity between chapters and although in most cases the major part of each author's text has been used, only a few of the statistics have been included and in each case the extracts are focused on a given theme. Inevitably, there was some repetition in the originals since, for instance, the barriers to mobility are very similar in most countries. These have been cut out to make a developing story, but I should emphasise to the reader that every paper was a substantial piece of social research done according to the proper canons. As with all social research, all the authors were aware of their responsibility in providing evidence and information which could be used to shape policy.

What follows provides evidence and information and also has a deliberate pattern or 'story-line'.

Part One is explanatory, with this chapter introducing the book and the second one providing a digest (with some personal opinions) of knowledge and ideas on student mobility as at April 1992 when the original papers were compiled.

Part Two gives a perspective by Jasbir Singh from the Commonwealth Secretariat on recent thinking and developments. She gives a context to the whole project which evolved from the Singapore workshop. One of the main preoccupations at Singapore was the question of a rationale for new forms of student exchange and after the meeting Elizabeth Dines went away and wrote a paper aiming to produce a rationale for her Australian colleagues. It is placed next to Dr Singh's paper, since Dr Dines' attempt to articulate the advantages of student mobility to an Australian audience contains much of the argument which would need to be presented to a Commonwealth-wide audience.

Part Three moves to three general papers giving perspectives from the South, in which the general issues are clearly presented, but from different angles. *Chapter 5* represents a description of the issues from the angle of a single university institution rather than a government. Ancilla Armstrong and J E Greene give a very clear and comprehensive study from the standpoint of the University of the West Indies. *Chapters 6 and 7* cover both national perspectives and those of university systems. Karuna Ahmad and Aparna Basu show the way in which the Indian government and institutions act as hosts to significant numbers

of foreign students – India being the only country of the South which is a major host to foreign students. The two authors, however, explain that India has no overt explicit policy, although there are obvious foreign policy interests and other policy pressures which affect student mobility in India. By contrast, the Federal Government of Nigeria has an expressed policy on the reception of foreign students and Jones Akinpelu calls attention to the shortfall between policy and practice. Throughout, it was found that in most countries of the South, not all opportunities offered, even through the Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships Programme, were taken up by foreign students, so that Nigeria was not peculiar in this. The barriers seemed to be the same as elsewhere, in spite of a favouring policy – and, as elsewhere, have to do with institutional constraints as well as lack of finance and lack of communication.

Lack of communication seems to be a serious inhibitor to increased North-South flows, and after the three perspectives from the South, **Part Four** goes on to look at why it is that students from the North do not present themselves in the South. Hilary Callan and Kate Steele in *Chapter 8* look at what happens when British students go to the South and Eva Egron-Polak in *Chapter 9* looks at Canadian students going South. Both chapters include information on institutional attitudes and on schemes in place to encourage North-South student interchange.

Part Five moves on to case studies. Malaysia is known for its very successful schemes to bring in foreign students and even though they are on a very small scale, they provide useful pointers to the ingredients of success. Leong Yin Ching describes them in *Chapter 10*. Some similar small-scale successful programmes have been mounted in Kenya and *Chapter 11* by Parvin Walji and Peter Dzvimbo provides a powerful contrast in approaches by two African countries – Kenya anxious to welcome foreign students from North and South, Zimbabwe much more cautious. Perhaps the difference is explained in part by the fact that Zimbabwe has come to independence very recently and is still very conscious of the role of its higher education institutions in nation-building, whereas in Kenya that role is taken for granted and not seen as threatened by the presence of foreign students.

Chapter 12 takes us back to India. Besides being notable as the only country of the Commonwealth South to be a major host, India is also a major player because of its small group of world class institutions. Jayalakshmi Indiresan explains the interest of these institutions in attracting appropriately able foreign candidates, but explains that they have not always been able to do so.

Finally, in *Chapter 13* Dr Gopinathan depicts the special national case of Singapore, which is consciously and actively 'open to talent'.

Through all these chapters, there are certain common themes: about the internationalisation of universities; about the stresses placed on politicians and university heads by the application of an internationalisation policy when university places are short; about the great difficulty in obtaining adequate data on which policies could be based; about other factors favouring and inhibiting student mobility; and about the gap between opportunities for student mobility and actual take-up. In the next chapter, an overview is attempted of the various authors' insights into all these themes.