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Towards a Commonwealth of Scholars

Developing Foreign Student Flows into Universities of the South

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First principles: The nature of universities

Universities do not flourish in isolation. As Armstrong and Greene state in Chapter 5:

> Philosophically at least, institutions of higher learning, universities in particular, have tended to establish and maintain an environment which facilitates discovery and advancement in knowledge. Such an environment develops and thrives best by exchange and collaboration among scholars with experience and perspectives around the world.

It is possible to see universities as components of a trans-national system or as autonomous partner institutions in a complex of international exchanges and relationships; but it is impossible to imagine even the smallest and most fragile university existing for long as a university without a library of work by scholars from a variety of countries and without at least some teachers and researchers who are in some form of communication with counterparts elsewhere.

Our starting point, then, is that *universities by nature are disposed to international perspectives and linkages* – to various forms of sharing and exchange. Some sharing may be of curricula (through, for example, the Commonwealth of Learning), of resource materials (publications, reports, documentation, databases), of knowledge itself (through joint research). The most visible kind of sharing is, however, undoubtedly through the movement of people. Exchange between *staff,* both academic and administrative, has been, since the Second World War, a high priority in the Commonwealth and there has been a wide variety of international and inter-institutional arrangements to encourage the movement of university staff. Such arrangements include sabbaticals, study-leaves, attendance at international meetings and conferences, international visiting fellowships and, in the case of newly-established institutions, staff development programmes. Even in times of restricted finance and of foreign exchange problems, universities still try to ensure some opportunities for their staff to travel. The University of Nairobi Deans' Committee, for instance, has had an earmarked fund from the Kenya Treasury to support staff travel abroad and most Commonwealth universities retain the possibility of a sabbatical, even if not as a right.

What has emerged more recently has been an interest in the exchange of students. This has been partly because of the commoditisation of foreign students in those countries of the North whose universities use their fees to help balance ever more hard-pressed budgets. But there is a serious philosophical basis for encouraging students to travel to foreign institutions. If a university is seen as in any sense a community of scholars, the majority population in that community is the population of students, undergraduate, postgraduate and occasional. Sending students abroad and welcoming students from abroad is thus a necessary part of any strategy for maintaining the international character of universities. The Commonwealth (and common wealth) of scholars is made up of students as well as of academic researchers and teachers.

My starting points are, therefore, that it is in the nature of universities to have international connections and that those connections should be developed not only through staff mobility but also through the mobility of students, seen as major contributors to the culture and character of their university communities.

Underlying these two principles, there is, of course, the assumption that universities are sufficiently useful, both to their own societies and internationally, to be worth strengthening and developing. It is also a corollary of these principles that an element in strengthening and developing *all* universities (of the South and of the North) must be international exchange and collaboration, including the encouragement of student movement across national boundaries.

Using these principles, my focus will be on the strengthening and development of Commonwealth universities of the South. This is because of perceived imbalances both in the resources for international exchange available to universities of North and South (to the advantage of the North) and in the movement of students between South and

North, with much of the flow being to the North away from the South.

In following up this discussion, several difficulties must be recognised. The *first* is what Callan and Steele (see Chapter 8) have seen as:

> ... the inherent tension between the discourses of development and institution-building on the one hand and of transaction among equals on the other ...

The implicit view of inter-university relationships on which our initial principles are based is that of shared interests and mutual respect, and the explicit view is that *all* universities, as institutions, have to be subject to institutional change and development. It must, however, be acknowledged that much of the discourse about institution-and capacity-building has emanated from institutions in the North and reflects their concerns and preoccupations. It is for this, among other reasons, that many universities of the South have wished to turn Commonwealth interest to a diversification of student mobility, with a greater emphasis on North-South flows and South-South flows.

A *second* problematic issue arises from the concept, strong in the universities of the South, of universities as essentially tools for nation-building. If the prime task of a university is to contribute to cultural, economic and educational development within a country, a national government may not be particularly impressed by general arguments about the international character of knowledge. We have said that universities are valuable to their societies. The crucial reasons why they are valuable were thoroughly discussed in the 1988 congress of the Association of Commonwealth Universities, the report of which was published as: *What can we do for our Countries? The Contribution of Universities to National Development* (ACU, 1988). The kind of national preoccupations which a government may have are exemplified in Malaysia, where criteria for admission to universities combine academic achievement with ethnic origin. The '... policy is to ensure that university enrolment reflects the ethnic composition of the population, not only by the university as a whole but also by faculty ...' (see Chapter 10). Policy agendas of this kind will not predispose governments to an interest in the reception/admission of foreign students.

Further, where the national system does not have the capacity to meet the pressures of demand from home students, there will be political sensitivity about admitting foreigners, wherever they come from, as Ahmad and Basu have observed in Chapter 6; and there may be resentment if there is an imbalance between the number of students coming into the country and the number of national students obtaining opportunities to travel abroad, as Dzvimbo reports in Chapter 11 is the case in Zimbabwe. It will be necessary to demonstrate clear benefits from the presence of foreign students to catch the attention of governments with such preoccupations.

A *third* point relates to the role of the Commonwealth as an international organism which cuts across geographical and cultural regions. The arguments for internationalisation may be accepted, but culture and geography would suggest that student mobility is easiest within a given region. Thus between 60 and 70 per cent of the foreign students coming to Nigeria are from the neighbouring country of Cameroon, while 41 per cent of Kenya's intake come from its four geographical neighbours, two Commonwealth and two not (Akinpelu in Chapter 7 and Walji in Chapter 11). It is also becoming apparent that the universities of the United Kingdom are increasingly involved with universities in the rest of Europe, as the European Community develops closer political and economic ties (Chapter 3). These realities must be accepted, but the Commonwealth relationship still has a certain comparative advantage. The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada points out that in many cases there is a shared language of higher education, English, and that the universities of the Commonwealth have some family likeness in organisation and institutional culture (Egron-Polak in Chapter 9). It may be that the Commonwealth relationship would be especially helpful in:

(a) developing intra-regional South-South connections and
(b) encouraging general North-South student traffic

The three issues raised above are collectively about policies of national governments. The policy context for our whole discussion is that decisions are largely not in the hands of universities themselves, but are taken by governments, whose prime concerns are not necessarily about scholarship (and who may occasionally even see foreign students as a threat). From our standpoint, the Commonwealth as a wider political arena becomes important as a policy forum beyond the national. *It should also be noted that international links and relationships may be valuable in preserving university autonomy.*

The present picture

The Commonwealth Heads of Government in November 1991 made the affirmation already quoted in Chapter 1, of 'the fundamental importance of enhanced student mobility for Commonwealth cohesion and for the future of the Commonwealth itself'. Jasbir Singh gives us a historical outline and an indication of recent developments in Chapter 3. Over the decade of the 1980s, member Governments' concern had been with impedance to mobility caused by the imposition by the post-industrial countries of full-cost fees on foreign students, including those from the Commonwealth. The new fee structures made it particularly difficult for students from poor countries to gain places in universities of the North. The problems which arose led to the setting up of the Commonwealth Standing Committee on Student Mobility and Higher Education Co-operation; but as the decade wore on, it appeared that attempts to reverse the differential fees policy were without effect. As Lynn Williams (1990) said:

> ... even the Commonwealth Standing Committee ... finally conceded the point, albeit reluctantly. The Committee had consistently argued against full-cost fees since its inception but is now pinning its hopes for Commonwealth education as much on the Commonwealth Higher Education Support Scheme (CHESS) as on increasing access to Britain and other developed countries. CHESS is intended to aid the expansion and improvement of universities in the developing countries in order to cater for students who are not now able to study overseas.

CHESS should not, however, be seen as a second best. Within its ambit, newer universities in the countries of the South could gain new strength and greater diversity. The debates of the 1980s have enabled us to see the one-way flow of students from South to North as a distortion, leading to unhealthy clientage relationships, whereas South-South and North-South student movement could redress the balance.

There is still a fair way to go before developing country universities become hosts to substantial numbers of students from elsewhere. In 1989–90, 45 per cent of all Commonwealth students who went abroad went to an industrial or post-industrial country of the Commonwealth, while intra-Commonwealth South-South movement accounted for only 12 per cent of Commonwealth student shift. Of the Commonwealth South, only India, which has a huge higher education system, is a major host country. As Ahmad and Basu indicate in Chapter 6, in 1989–90, India had 12,606 foreign students, of whom some 5,365 were from the Commonwealth – only 104 from industrial countries. This is an impressive overall total, and within it, the Commonwealth figure may actually be slightly more (since there is an undifferentiated category of students from Africa included in the tables).

Other parts of the developing Commonwealth seem only to receive very small numbers of foreign students and few from the Commonwealth. In 1989–90, there were only 466 non-Malaysian students out of a total student population in Malaysian universities of 55,844. Indicative figures for Commonwealth students were 64 out of 181 undergraduates in three universities and 15 out of 57 postgraduates in two universities – though once again there is a catchall Africa category (Leong in Chapter 10). Nigeria, with a policy of five per cent places reserved for students from abroad and thus a theoretical capacity to take in up to 10,000, in fact only took in 751 in 1988–89 (Akinpelu in Chapter 7), and Kenya in 1991 received 466 foreign students, of whom 191 were from the Commonwealth (Walji in Chapter 11).

In sum it appears that, except for India, countries of the Commonwealth South do not attract foreign students on any scale and there is under-utilisation of awards tenable in universities of the South, such as those made under the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Programme (CSFP). It should be noted, however, that the position is different in the English-speaking Caribbean. While only about three per cent of University of the West Indies students are non-Caribbean, the University is dedicated to a wide number of Caribbean nationalities. It serves a community of small states scattered over many hundreds of miles and is designated in perpetuity to serve as a regional institution (Greene and Armstrong in Chapter 5). Thus it already has a multi-national character and function, in principle, although there are signs of reluctance among students to travel to UWI campuses at a distance from their own island.

The picture remains one of low foreign intake into the universities of the South and of under half that intake originating in a Commonwealth country. The obverse of this is the continued pull to the North, with very few students from the North arriving in the developing countries. In Australia, applicants for CSFP awards show a preference for the UK, and of the 4,400 students who go abroad independently of any managed schemes, most are believed to go to Europe or the USA. (This and other information concerning Australia in this chapter is derived from an unpublished paper made available to the Singapore workshop by the International Development Programme of Australian Universities and Colleges). From Canada, in 1987 there were estimated to be 19,975 students overseas; only seven were studying in Africa, 177 in Oceania and 277 in Asia (AUCC). From the United Kingdom, according to the Commonwealth Secretariat, 1,351 students went to other Commonwealth countries; only 74 had a destination in the South, in this case India for all of them (statistics quoted by Callan and Steele in Chapter 8).

These general conclusions have been drawn from the work of contributors to this book, all of whom have produced extremely illuminating material. The data is not always comparable, but in combination provides more authoritative information than has hitherto been available. In moving towards a strategy for increased student mobility in the South, one of the constant problems has been lack of data and all the researchers complained of the difficulty of collecting it (one report mentioned a university which regarded information about foreign students as confidential). The Commonwealth Secretariat, perhaps in collaboration with Unesco, could very profitably build on past work to establish better data-gathering and monitoring in the future.

How then can developing countries be enabled to take in more foreign students, especially from the Commonwealth and how can students from Australia, Britain, Canada and New Zealand be encouraged to study in the less affluent countries of the Commonwealth? In both cases, the issue is one of costs and benefits. For *developing countries,* preoccupied with pressures from their own ever-growing constituencies of candidates qualified for university places, but who cannot get admission, would the benefits of receiving foreign students ever outweigh the political costs of disappointing home student demand? For the *post-industrial countries,* for whom, in the words of Callan and Steele (in Chapter 8), 'outward movement would always be a minority pursuit by comparison with the economic imperative to attract fee-paying students from abroad', can the cost of that minority pursuit be seen to be outweighed by any material and tangible benefit?

Facets of student mobility

Before attempting to answer the questions of benefit and of appropriate strategies and mechanisms, it is necessary to say what we see as the make-up of a foreign student population. The most obvious are full-time undergraduates and postgraduates. On the whole, observers view postgraduates as most likely to be attracted and to cope with differences of culture, etc, but in both India and Nigeria the majority of foreign students are undergraduates, so no assumptions in favour of one category can be sustained. The issue of part-time undergraduates or postgraduates was not raised in any of the relevant reports, presumably because it is either impossible in practice for foreign students to find work while studying or because it is illegal in the receiving countries, most of which have severe problems of modern sector unemployment.

Several reports do indicate that there are other shorter-term categories of student. Many spend a period on a foreign campus for research purposes. This may be institutionally-arranged as part of a split-site degree programme, or may be random, depending on student interest. Others are short-term visitors on an organised exchange, or for a work placement (often as part of a medical degree) or to learn the host country's language. Either of the latter may be part of a managed programme or may be independent, self-funded or individually sponsored.

There would be merit in looking at more varieties of short-term study. A short visit may whet the appetite of an individual, a student-group or a sending institution for further and longer programmes and may thus serve an information and 'taster' function. The University of the West Indies has a conscious strategy of attracting foreign students through an International Summer Programme in Caribbean Studies, offering both credit and non-credit courses (Greene and Armstrong in Chapter 5). Students in such programmes may not appear in the statistics at present, but I would suggest that they should. One report makes the point that there is a difference between serious study and plain tourism (Callan and Steele in Chapter 8), and the latter is obviously outside our purview or interest, but relatively short study visits must remain very much within our sights.

In addition, there is one other form of student mobility, which is neither a result of a study requirement nor just tourism. Students may belong to unions or to associations with a disciplinary base (Education, Economics). In the 1960s and 1970s, such organisations frequently held international gatherings and they provided a forum in which students from South and North could meet over a common interest. External funding disappeared in the 1980s, along with foreign exchange. Are there ways, appropriate to the 1990s, of encouraging more student discipline-based associations to meet in conference across national boundaries? The experience of Europe after the Second World War was that student meetings and conferences helped to rebuild the sense of an international university community and often led to practical aid from one student group to another (the purchase of dictionaries, the organisation of work-camps to put up temporary buildings) – a clear example of strengthening institutions.

Lessons for strategy: Factors favouring student mobility

Any Commonwealth strategy to expand foreign student numbers in the countries of the South must take account of favouring and inhibiting factors, in order to capitalise on the former and so far as possible to neutralise the latter.

First, what are the favouring factors? They relate to policies and the policy environment, to academic matters and to non-academic support of various kinds. The *policy context* is critical. Without some commitment from the host government it is impossible to see how there can be any substantial influx of students from abroad. Malaysia, for example, is reported as being 'keen to globalise and establish political, economic and educational links with developed as well as developing countries' (Leong in Chapter 10). India has implicit policy objectives of a more definite kind, seeing foreign students as potential 'goodwill ambassadors' for India in the future (Ahmad and Basu in Chapter 6, and Indiresan in Chapter 12). Nigeria has, as already noted, made a concrete explicit commitment to reserve five per cent of university places for foreign students and over the years has made special efforts to take in refugees, from Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa (Akinpelu in Chapter 7), while the very distinctive position of Singapore has led it to be ready to fill as many as 20 per cent of places with foreign students (Gopinathan in Chapter 13).

Beyond Government policies, *policy commitments by receiving institutions* are also essential. After all, they are at the sharp end, when it comes to making both academic and residential accommodation available and accepting pressure on libraries, laboratories and in particular on staff. Many institutions do have built-in policies, with the international aspect of universities' mission expressed in their charters or their statutes. For instance, one of the objectives of Jawaharlal Nehru University is to 'provide facilities for students and teachers from the other countries to participate in the academic programmes of the universities (*sic*)'.

Policies of sending countries and institutions can favour student mobility. Government help can range from exit visas to recognition of foreign qualified professionals. Sending institutions in Canada exemplify a basically favouring stance. Of 71 Canadian universities, 44 have an international role in their mission statements, while 48 provide opportunities for study abroad and 25 require knowledge of a second language – a useful incentive to study in a foreign country, at least for a period. Thirty-one out of 68 responding Canadian universities asserted that students undertaking international studies could integrate them into the home curriculum (Egron-Polak in Chapter 9). All these provisions are useful components of institutional policy in sending countries. They may converge in the policies of both hosts and senders where there is mutual recognition of qualifications, whole curricula or some modules of curricula and may be further crystallised by sharing teaching or exchange of teachers.

This leads us on from the policy base to prevalent *academic conditions* for successful foreign student placement. Reserved admission or, as in India, a waiver of local entry tests removes an initial academic hurdle. Within curricula, certain subject areas seem more attractive to foreign students and both receiving universities and senders' award schemes need to find which these are. Students from developing countries are interested in professional disciplines, such as Accountancy, Engineering or Medicine, particularly if they come from small countries whose universities cannot offer well-developed courses in those areas. In this context, India has an obvious magnet in its great Institutes of Technology (Indiresan in Chapter 12). Students from the post-industrial countries are likely to be interested in the host culture, religion, arts, history, anthropology and languages. Both Malaysia and India report an interest in Islamic Studies.

A sending country can foster such interests through specific award schemes. Examples are Australia's National Asian Languages Scholarship Scheme and its Awards for Research in Asia. Senders and receivers may come together as in the Indo-Australian Cultural Exchange Programme or the link between the University of Hull Centre for South-East Asian Studies and the counterpart departments in the Faculty of Arts and the Language Centre of the University of Malaya. In 1991, the scheme brought 18 British students to Malaysia as part of their Hull degree in South-East Asian Studies and Language.

A broader consideration of links will form part of the discussion of models of good practice later in this chapter (see page 25). An ingredient in the success of the Hull-Malaya programme is seen to be that students have some knowledge of the host's language and culture before arrival (Leong in Chapter 10). A factor for success in the hinterland between academic and non-academic provision is likely always to be some kind of preparation or briefing before students go abroad to another country. Both sending and receiving countries need to work out ways of doing this; perhaps intending students could be linked in to already organised training for volunteers from foreign NGOs in the receiving country (for example, the training given to the British Voluntary Service Overseas volunteers).

Non-academic support mechanisms necessary to help foreign students make the most of their academic experience are well-documented. They include:

- good publicity and information (this was often seen to be lacking in spite of institutions' best efforts and the excellent work of the Association of Commonwealth Universities)
- simplified visa processing
- reserved accommodation in reasonable hostel facilities, or perhaps with host families, as is the practice in Zimbabwe
- guidance and counselling in the receiving institution, both academic and personal
- a recognised and designated person to whom a foreign student can have recourse in case of difficulty (for example, the University of Nairobi has an International Liaison Officer for its US students)

It is in these non-academic provisions that difficulties most often appear and the absence of such facilities loom as the main obstacles to foreign student reception and welfare.

Lessons for strategy: Inhibitions on student mobility

'The single most serious inhibiting factor was, overwhelmingly, that of *cost*' (Callan and Steele in Chapter 8). Even where the receiving country's fees are low, there is the cost of travel and there are constant complaints of stipends being too low, or being affected by currency fluctuations or inflation. One angle on financial insecurity is provided by complaints over the absence of medical insurance. It was seen as a very positive aspect of the Malaysian Technical Co-operation Programme that it included medical costs.

Other *non-academic problems* identified were characterised as 'bureaucracy' or 'administrative difficulties'. These start from lack of information. Receiving countries' overseas missions are often not well-equipped to handle enquiries from prospective students, who may, for instance, be unaware that the host country's academic year does not match the academic calendar in their own country. Then there is often a good deal of red tape in obtaining a visa, student permit or research clearance, and one country's report noted that student clearance took between four and six months. Such slowness is discouraging and may turn prospective students away to alternative opportunities. After arrival, a student may be faced with overcrowded accommodation and may be demoralised by what the AUCC called 'the absence of welcoming structures'. The lack of such structures may mean that foreign students are more easily alienated by perceived political instability; women students may feel especially insecure and in some cases African students have complained of colour prejudice. We have seen the importance of counselling; one university is reported as having two counsellors for ten thousand students (with no special recourse for foreigners).

On the *academic side* the main concerns are about the recognition of qualifications and about assurance of quality in the host institutions. In a perhaps overly self-critical mood, Akenpelu lists reservations about quality in Nigerian universities resulting from lack of resources over the years. He worries about staff morale and commitment, about the state of libraries, laboratories and classrooms, and about the lack of teaching materials. This very frank appraisal underlines the need for schemes which bring in foreign students to benefit the receiving institution in some way. Visible financial and other rewards would help in raising staff morale as well as in challenging them to deliver quality teaching.

Minor academic issues included the occasional restrictions by a host country on the students' choice of field of study and, for research students, the possible incompatibility of equipment.

In relation to the worrying problem of lack of uptake of awards under the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Programme (CSFP) for study in countries of the South, Callan and Steele give a succinct list of reasons, which echoes much of what has just been said:

> Obstacles to takeup of CSFP may lie at many points in the sequence of information provision, decision, applications, nomination, offer and acceptance or otherwise of an award. Further, problems may arise at either end of the system in a geographical sense; in either the prospective sending or the receiving country or both. Resource availability in developing countries offering awards may, for example, force them to impose restrictive criteria of eligibility in the form of a single institution in which the award is tenable, or a narrow range of courses that can be followed. In the home country, again, there may be a lack of information provision at the point of decision that would encourage potential Commonwealth Scholars to consider a developing country award. In this connection the Tracer Study reveals that, of all former Scholars

responding, most heard about CSFP within institutions (24 per cent from staff and 16 per cent through notices).

Mechanisms for progress: Types of support structure

The discussion so far has been in general terms, to lay down broad principles. These principles, allied to the experience of successful models of practice, will now be used to suggest specific schemes. Mr Peter Williams, head of the Commonwealth Education Programme, asked the Singapore workshop participants:

> Will student flows between countries with different levels of income have to be managed flows through administered schemes protecting students from hardship and inconvenience, or shall we be able to find individual adventurous spirits ready to take the plunge if only we market our wares better and with vigour?

My own suspicion is that if the universities of the South are effective hosts to foreign students more would be drawn by random attraction than by managed schemes; but, in any case, if all students, particularly those who are not participants in organised exchange, are to make the best of their academic experience, some support structures will have to be in place to avoid the inhibitions mentioned in the last section. We will therefore look first at types of support structure, seen as necessary to facilitate any targeted strategy as well as to make the best of unmanaged flows. The five areas of concern are: information; immigration; accommodation; student liaison; and orientation.

There was constant emphasis on the need for *better information* to potential students, both before and after they have taken decisions about applying to a given host country or institution. Basic information includes both academic information, on, for instance, entry requirements, types of degree, international currency of qualifications, and non-academic, about climate, health, culture, food. Most of the necessary academic data is published regularly in its handbooks by the Association of Commonwealth Universities, but greater institutional detail and publicity about non-academic conditions are often hard to come by. The ACU might be encouraged to publish a series of leaflets about universities in selected countries, which would be cheaper and more user-friendly than the yearbooks; but the main responsibility can only be that of the potential host country. Diplomatic missions and cultural agencies representing such a country need to be better briefed and to have their awareness raised about the importance of encouraging potential students. The Republic of Singapore seems to have made a notable effort at publicising its institutions in this way (Gopinathan in Chapter 13).

The bureaucracy of *immigration* is often seen to be the fault of the diplomatic mission, but actually relates to policy back home in the host country. Receiving countries may have important political reasons for taking great care in the issue of visas, but the Commonwealth affiliation should allay concerns. A protocol on student visas, at first on a bilateral basis, but then extended multilaterally throughout the Commonwealth, would give a fillip to takeup of awards in given countries and also to other forms of student flow.

Once foreign students have arrived, *housing* is part of a welcoming arrangement. Most countries offer it, but often the reality is one of overcrowding and of insecurity if a campus is closed and all students are forced to leave. Delhi University already has an international students' hostel, but is unable to expand because of lack of resources. The University of the West Indies does expect to have finance, through the Lomé arrangements, for additional student hostels. There is very strong advocacy from contributors to this book for dedicated Commonwealth or international halls of residence, which would house a mix of international and host-country students, provide some recreational facilities and perhaps offer international-type menus. Their purpose would be to provide a welcoming and comfortable environment, enable incoming students to meet national students in a community atmosphere and also to ensure security in the event (however unlikely) of crisis on the campus. Top priority would be given to holders of CSFP and other Commonwealth awards.

A project for a Commonwealth students' hall in selected countries of the South might well be suitable for promotion by Commonwealth Ministers of Education. Finance would have to be sought from a major multilateral donor, such as the European Community, under the Lomé Conventions. Such a project would not simply be about bricks and mortar. The wardens of such halls would have to be helpful and committed people, perhaps paid an extra salary to undertake the task of foreign students' welfare.

Counselling and liaison are needed on a university-wide basis. Selected universities might be offered a budget by their governments to develop an effective service, as both a model and a possible help to students in other institutions as well. Pilot schemes of counselling and liaison might also be appropriate mechanisms for Commonwealth support.

A form of encouragement to foreign students which spans both preliminary information and acclimatisation after arrival comprises *orientation courses*. It has already been suggested that NGOs in both sending and receiving countries might be approached to take students on to their orientation courses for foreign volunteers. Some host countries, notably Sri Lanka, have organised such programmes directly in the past, and several institutions in, for example, India and the Caribbean, organise cultural events for foreign students. The University of Malaya plans trips into the countryside for the students in the link programme with the University of Hull. The offerings appear, however, to be sporadic or limited to a select few. The Vice-Chancellors' organisations in relevant countries might take it on themselves to systematise and develop in-country orientation for foreign students, preferably with the involvement of some home students as well.

The implication of these suggested measures and mechanisms – better information and orientation services, quicker visa processing on a reciprocal basis, dedicated international residences and a campus liaison service – is that a will is needed by national governments. The Commonwealth Secretariat could raise awareness among them. A first step might be a seminar for selected countries' representatives on foreign student support and welfare. In advance of the seminar, research would be needed on student experience in the various countries. The post-industrial countries might be asked to participate, since they have amassed material on the foreign student experience in their universities, but the emphasis would be on the South. A lead might be taken by India, since it has the largest foreign student population in the Commonwealth South. Incidentally, one of the issues which a country faces as the number of students from abroad increases is that of co-ordination: in India ideas are being canvassed about a 'nodal agency' for handling foreign student affairs (Ahmad and Basu in Chapter 6). Such a seminar would fit in well with the CHESS management initiatives.

Another implication of the measures suggested is that certain institutions must be selected as foci for the development of support structures. This is in line with general thinking on the promotion of centres of excellence, perhaps on a regional basis, in the countries of the South. Foreign students would be steered to these centres, since qualifications would be more acceptable. There is, however, an issue of discrimination against smaller and weaker institutions.

These relatively mundane questions of non-academic welcome and support have been dealt with first, since they provide a necessary framework for academic interchange and a basis for the encouragement of unorganised (and self-financing) student movement. With this groundwork, we can now move to the core issue of *academic provision, and accompanying non-academic issues of finance.*

The way forward: Some models of good practice

With a supportive environment, organised initiatives for positive enhancement of student flows can be worked out. There are already a variety of established models of good practice as well as newly developing ones. Not all are intra-Commonwealth, but all could be adopted within the Commonwealth. Established models fall into the following categories:

- award schemes
- link schemes
- direct student exchange
- targeted courses
- curriculum consortia

A defunct, but acclaimed model was the 'Study and Serve' scheme operated by the British-based Inter-University Council for Higher Education Overseas.

Award schemes have been the most long-standing ways of encouraging students to travel abroad. The most notable in the Commonwealth is the CSFP. The awards are made available within designated countries, and in spite of problems noted in terms of limited uptake, are still a basic mechanism for providing opportunities in universities elsewhere. The advantages of the CSFP are that it is comprehensive, has the support of Commonwealth Governments and could be developed further if the general support mechanisms outlined above are put in place. Other successful award schemes have been organised and funded by an individual Commonwealth Government, either unilaterally or bilaterally. Some exemplary programmes have been designed in Australia (IDPAUC). The unilateral scheme, Australian Awards for Research in Asia, known as AARA, has worked exceptionally well and is popular because it is extremely flexible. There is no restriction on fields of study, length of stay abroad or timing. Among well-reputed bilateral schemes is the Indo-Australian scholarship programme. Limited to only five scholarships a year, it has the advantage of commitment on both sides. All such national schemes tend to be small-scale, but they work, perhaps for that very reason.

Some awards offered to a national government are not for their own students, but to other nationals for training in a third country. These awards have been a feature of technical assistance schemes, generally regional. There are signs that third country training awards may become more popular among donor-country governments, since awards to foreign students to be received in the North have become so expensive owing to the introduction of full-cost fees - a curious paradox, resulting from the absence of a coherent overseas student policy in, for example, the UK (Williams, 1990).

Probably the most widespread phenomenon favouring student flow is the development of *inter-university links*. Such links may be organised under a national agency, such as the Australian Targeted International Links Programme (TIL), the UK Committee for International Co-operation in Higher Education (CICHE) or the Indian Cultural Exchange Programme, or they may be between two institutions, such as those developed between US universities and individual Commonwealth institutions (California-Nairobi). The conditions may be fairly loose or may be based on a formal protocol, such as the University of the West Indies' Memoranda of Agreement or the Indian Memoranda of Understanding (for instance, the memorandum governing the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute).

The activities covered by links are diverse. Leong lists the following activities (see Chapter 10), as foci for inter-university co-operation under link arrangements:

- Split-site study by foreign students spending a period in Malaysia as part of a degree requirement in their own country
- Split-site study for foreign students taking a Ph.D. from their own base, but with a supervisor from the receiving institution
- Direct student exchanges
- Staff exchange
- Joint research and publication
- Exchange study tours by staff and students of the institutions
- Exchange of other resources

A similar list appears in UWI's Memoranda of Agreement. These cover:

- Staff exchange
- Research collaboration
- Materials exchange
- Student exchange
- Joint publications

- Provision of specialists
- Curriculum development

Not all links highlight the movement of students. Of over 40 TIL agreements between Australian and foreign institutions, only 16 emphasise exchange of persons – staff or students. Moreover, there is generally more emphasis on links in staff movement than on opportunities for students.

The value of links lies in their very diversity and their relative cheapness – constantly referred to by the British CICHE. It is worth asking here whether there is a Commonwealth role, through CHESS, in the encouragement of links.

Bilateral university relationships have led to some most successful models of *direct student exchange.* The most notable is perhaps the 'California model', between California and Nairobi (Walji in Chapter 11). It is based on general principles of equitability and mutual benefit. There is a written agreement between institutions on numbers to be exchanged and length of stay (one year). Selection is by the sending institution, meeting criteria agreed with the receiving institution. There are many merits in this: financial savings, a genuine equality in the exchange, mutual recognition of courses for credit. It should be easily adaptable for South-South university relations, particularly between institutions in the same region. This is because the main visible expenditure is on travel and this would be reduced between neighbours. The development of CUSAC should enable the negotiation of such South-South exchanges, on at least a pilot basis under Commonwealth auspices.

Outside the ambit of link (or any bilateral) relationships, there is the possibility of a university in the South, after a reasonable assessment of the market, offering *courses targeted to students from elsewhere.* The International Summer Programme in Caribbean Studies already mentioned is a good exemplar. The advantages of such programmes, well-known in the campuses of the North, include such benefits as the usage of plant during vacations, profit for the institution and some additional payment to staff. Again, it would require only a little push from the Commonwealth Secretariat to enable universities in other regions to get such vacation programmes off the ground.

A variant on the theme of targeted courses, but devised for long-term students, is the *collaborative curriculum.* The two English-speaking Caribbean universities, UWI and the University of Guyana, have built up a Consortium Graduate School in Social Sciences, to capitalise on joint strength and make courses both more appealing and more prestigious. At the moment, the students all come from within the region, but this precedent could be used elsewhere to create an inducement for foreign students to participate.

All these models could be copied or adapted and would be useful equally for South-South and North-South interchange. A former model was used to build up North-South partnerships. This was the 'Study and Serve' scheme. Essentially, students go to another country for a professional (generally postgraduate) course and in return they work, once qualified, for a set period in the country where they have trained. The key condition for success is that the qualification is portable – it has recognition in the student's home country as well. New versions of this scheme, with the Commonwealth acting as broker, would make good sense in the 1990s. It would certainly fulfil the expressed desire of Commonwealth Heads of Government for greater Commonwealth cohesion.

We have so far looked at well-tried models. There are some new directions emerging from multilateral organisations. There might be new possibilities of developing student exchange through the EC/ACP under the Lomé Convention. Callan and Steele (1991) point out that a resolution of the EC/ACP Joint Assembly in September 1991 proposes scholarship programmes and exchange schemes for teachers and students. Further off the drawing board is Unesco's UNITWIN – another plan dependent on locating the strengthening centres of excellence in the countries of the South. The plan seems to be to involve the linking up of several institutions in a sort of multiple twinning. One example is foreshadowed by a letter of intent agreed between four universities, Zimbabwe, Eduardo Mondlane, Western Cape and Utrecht under the auspices of SADCC and Unesco. It includes the establishment of special chairs to provide leadership in the centres of excellence and thus build up centres for postgraduate study and research to be used 'across national frontiers'. Nothing is, however, said about finance. Commonwealth Ministers of Education will obviously need to observe the development of UNITWIN and to learn from the immediate experience of the University of Zimbabwe.

A third new development is the reported establishment of branch campuses by foreign institutions in a country of the South. British and Japanese universities are both said to have such campuses in Malaysia. This could be seen as certainly a vehicle for bringing foreign students to the country but may vitiate much of the benefit to them and the receiving country if they are segregated and follow separate courses.

The way forward: A Commonwealth strategy

The models discussed are useful mechanisms, but to be fully effective they would have to be placed within a coherent strategy. No individual country can build one up, but *the Commonwealth as an institution* would logically do so, working through the Education Ministers, the Secretariat, the Standing Committee and programmes such as CHESS. In addition it would need to develop and monitor projects and activities in very close collaboration with the Association of Commonwealth Universities.

The Commonwealth alone can give the necessary political lead. It would from the start ensure that agendas were set by the developing countries, through, for example, the CHESS higher education management initiative. Further, the Commonwealth alone can make the appropriate financial dispositions, arranging agreements, mobilising multilateral funding. Its role would be: to catalyse; to organise multilateral programmes; to foster pilot projects; to monitor progress; and to gather the relevant information.

Multilateral programmes could be based on existing ones or developed from scratch. The CSFP is obviously susceptible to improvement through better publicity and perhaps through more flexible and short-term awards. New ones could include the Commonwealth 'Study and Serve' scheme suggested above. The Commonwealth Secretariat could also look into ways of encouraging more 'California-type' exchanges within the Commonwealth by mobilising finance for travel costs. It might ask the Commonwealth Standing Committee on Student Mobility and Higher Education Co-operation to study the options for a coherent package within the CHESS framework. Ideas worth picking up include:

- a pool of places on a barter basis administered through ACU
- an inter-Commonwealth academic credit programme in selected subjects
- a set of policy guidelines for member countries on, for example, foreign student quotas for admission

It would encourage changes in national policy if some pilot projects could be set up. As already suggested, direct inter-institutional student exchange would obviously be susceptible to this treatment. Pilot student liaison offices would be another possibility.

The monitoring and information role would be very important.

Current knowledge about foreign students has been greatly enhanced by research commissioned by the Secretariat. The next stage would be a database and some moves towards monitoring what is happening and diffusing the information. This could have a motivational and incentive effect on Member Governments and on universities within member countries.

Above all, the Commonwealth's action would be critical in dealing with financial arrangements – negotiating with EC/ACP for example and perhaps with Unesco for UNITWIN deals. There is a need for more creative thinking about cost-free or inexpensive measures to support student mobility. A major possibility is through debt purchase as suggested by Greene and Armstrong in Chapter 5.

The Singapore workshop participants, including those who have contributed to this book, produced some ingenious and interesting ideas to improve the current situation and to increase flows of Commonwealth students to the universities of the South, such as a new look at possible differential fees in the South, more awards for post-graduate field study, further development of work placement schemes in partnership with NGOs. All of them need to be set in a broader framework of policy.

It was said earlier that a political lead from the Commonwealth would motivate Member Governments and encourage them to expand and maintain student flows to the South. *We return to the key point. The Commonwealth as an organism can only successfully promote policies which can be seen to benefit members more than they cost them.* A final word therefore follows on the perceived benefits of such strategic action.

Afterword: The benefits of greater student mobility in the South

What are the benefits of foreign student movement into the South? There are general academic rationales beyond what was said at the beginning about global human understanding. Such movements can bring international perspectives into teaching and research and they can expose home students to a variety of cultural influences. Non-academics, however, may need to be convinced by other types of argument.

From the point of view of a receiving government, foreign students can bring economic benefits to the academic system if they come as part of a package which includes support for an indigenous institution to become a centre of excellence. They may also appear attractive if they come with payment in foreign exchange. From the point of view of institutions, these arguments are not irrelevant. We have already noted that academic staff morale may be improved if there are extra rewards for teaching foreign students.

What about the sending countries? Elizabeth Dines in Chapter 4 has made a very careful attempt to build up a rationale for Australian universities, which is also more broadly applicable. Here I would emphasise that in a world increasingly trans-national in its economic organisation, students who go abroad gain languages and other skills which widen their own career options and may place them in international arenas where they can represent their own country's interests. At the least, they come home with knowledge, ideas and qualifications which fit them to be valuable in the professional or managerial workforce.

There *are* ample and demonstrable practical benefits which make student mobility an end worth pursuing. Since the Commonwealth is founded in ideals, let us not, at the last, shirk from expressing the ideals within which these practical benefits are set. They are ideals of internationalism, the sharing of knowledge to ensure solutions to international problems and the sharing of scholarship with new generations across national boundaries, to ensure a true Commonwealth of scholars.