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REPORTS

OF THE TWO CONFERENCE WORKING GROUPS

ON AGENDA ITEM II

RESOURCES FOR EDUCATION

AND THEIR COST-EFFECTIVE USE



Commonwealth Secretariat

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Appendix A: Reports of the Working Groups

REPORT OF WORKING GROUP A

Chairman: Hon. R. Wickremesinghe, Minister of Education, Sri Lanka.

The Cost-Effective Use of Resources

1. Introduction

1.1 The group agreed that the term "cost-effectiveness" is not easy to define to the satisfaction of all and should not be restricted solely to financial considerations, i.e. saving money. Achievement of objectives, educational quality, and maximum use of facilities are of paramount importance.

1.2 The group recognised that problems differ from country to country, in some cases very much so. Recognising that the most appropriate use of alternatives to improve cost-effectiveness in education depends on many factors unique to national situations, the group decided to concentrate its attention on two aims. The first was to draw to the attention of governments various policies, projects, and experiences which appear promising as successful cost-effective innovations and deserve further study. The second was to suggest areas in which Commonwealth educational co-operation can play a useful role, and in particular to suggest specific projects of study, consultation and training for action by the Secretariat's Education Programme in both 1984-85 (for which £25,000 is available through funds provided by the Secretariat's Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation) and subsequently. All suggestions below apply to all levels of education.

1.3 One of the observers in the group suggested that the discussion should be much more oriented to policy considerations and follow up the Secretary-General's comment that "the sad state of education budgets today can be traced rather directly ... to monetary and economic policies, and also to the resource-devouring defence policies of the world's wealthier and more powerful nations".

2. The Design and Use of Educational Facilities

Physical Facilities

2.1 Many examples were put forward, including some variations on proposals in the country papers and the working papers.

2.2 In the design of schools, appropriate consideration should be given to factors such as climate and the use of local materials. For example, in dry climates certain classes can use the shade of a tree. Only a large wall is needed for protection from the sun at certain times of day. Besides being economical this can encourage harmony with nature.

2.3 It was recognised that ideally a single classroom should be used solely by one class. This would enable pupils to leave their books in school at night; also make greater use of blackboards etc. In areas as diverse as Cyprus, Tanzania, and New Brunswick in Canada, there has been experience in the use of schools as community centres, in particular of facilities such as auditoriums and playgrounds being used by community groups.

2.4 An expensive item may in the long run be more cost-effective than an apparently cheaper alternative. For example, in Malawi low-cost furniture introduced several years ago did not last very long. Malawi is now producing furniture with stronger structures so that it will have a longer life.

2.5 Common facilities can often be built on a smaller scale. For example, to reduce the size of dining rooms there can be shifts in the meal times of students.

2.6 A straightforward operation and maintenance service should be available.

Shift Systems

2.7 Shift systems have both educational and social penalties, though their contribution to cost saving is self-evident. The shift system has come to stay in Malawi.

2.8 Some school buildings can be used at night for teacher training, or for a shift starting in the late afternoon as well as in the morning. However, the experience in some countries has revealed that parents of children in the later shifts are not enthusiastic about their children going to school other than in the traditional time period.

2.9 The following recommendations were adopted:

A.1 The Secretariat should assist member countries to develop more efficient and more appropriate building structures, which are neither expensive nor difficult to maintain and which emphasise greater use of local materials. In consultation with Unesco and other appropriate bodies, selective initiatives such as information dissemination or an experts meeting should be undertaken by the Secretariat.

A.2 The various experiences recorded in the country papers, and the suggestions put forward in the working papers and the discussions, should be developed into a comprehensive catalogue of essential information and references, and be published and distributed. (The format should be developed by the Secretariat.)

A.3 The Secretariat should undertake work in the area of the cost-effective use of educational resources on a long-term basis, including on the use of community resources, low-cost teaching equipment and ways by which the foreign exchange problems faced by member countries can be surmounted.

A.4 The Secretariat should assist member countries to strengthen their individual and collective planning and research capacities (including perhaps through regional bodies) in order to undertake the necessary development or greater use of improved physical facilities.

3. The Role of Teachers

3.1 In view of the burden of teachers' salaries there may be a need to spend more money on equipment, training etc. so that the costs of teachers' salaries can become more cost-effective.

3.2 The working group agreed that any change, especially in the short term, in the cost of teachers' salaries and its very high proportion of recurrent educational expenditure, was virtually impossible to achieve. Therefore it becomes all the more important that teachers and educational managers become better able and more motivated to carry out tasks and make decisions which involve choices in the use of alternative techniques, and that appropriate training should be provided.

3.3 The proportion of their time that trained teachers devote to professional tasks should be maximised. Teacher auxiliaries/aides can often be used for certain roles which trained teachers have traditionally undertaken. Optimum cost-effective use of teacher aides involves their use in various levels of management and administrative tasks, including the management of resources at all levels.

3.4 It is important to assess teacher-pupil ratios in regard to the subjects being taught. Some subjects are easily communicated to large numbers of students at the same time. Others require group activities with teachers having a reduced role. Still others require individual teacher/student consultation.

3.5 Because many teachers, particularly those in primary schools, also teach in adult evening classes, they should be acquainted with adult education methodology.

3.6 The following recommendations were adopted:

A.5 The Commonwealth Secretariat should study the expanding role of teachers and the potential of teacher aides and disseminate comprehensive information to member countries.

A.6 Special grants should be provided for upgrading training.

A.7 The Secretariat should assess the feasibility of instituting a special award (similar to the present CASTME award) to recognise proposals of teachers which actually lead to greater cost-effectiveness in educational provision.

4. Alternative Learning Techniques

4.1 Distance learning should be viewed as an additional tool to assist in making teachers more effective, rather than as a substitute for teachers.

4.2 The group recognised the world-wide revolution in educational technology and its potential in developing member countries. For example,

in Jamaica more physics teachers can be trained through the use of video. However, it was recognised that although there is considerable potential in utilising new technologies, they are generally very expensive and have unforeseen consequences, and a backup service is necessary regarding operation and maintenance. Foreign exchange implications are substantial.

4.3 The educational outcomes of programmes directed at large sectors of the population through mass media should be reviewed, e.g. Botswana's extensive experience in the use of radio should be made available to other member countries.

4.4 An observer (from the Commonwealth Association of Science, Technology and Mathematics Educators - CASTME) referred to the information in the Jamaica country paper on the distance learning project being run in conjunction with the University of the West Indies and funded by a grant from the Commonwealth Foundation. He said that preliminary study by the UWI clearly indicated that the use of a satellite can reduce the cost of training teachers in the small island states of the Caribbean.

4.5 The following recommendations were adopted:

A.8 The Secretariat should develop a bank of information and analysis of major alternative learning techniques introduced in member countries and elsewhere. This information should be widely disseminated to enable member countries to use and adapt it for their own needs and circumstances.

A.9 The Secretariat should undertake a study analysing fundamental issues relating to the introduction of distance education. These include:

(a) Why is distance education successful with highly motivated adults?

(b) Why is it that the major introduction of distance education in the Ivory Coast in the 1970's failed?

(c) What kinds of infrastructure (e.g. electricity telephone) are necessary preconditions for the successful implementation of distance education?

(d) To what extent does this approach and others rest on the mistaken view that good teaching is a process of one-way communication to a passive audience?

A.10 The Secretariat should provide technical assistance to enable developing member countries better to assess questions related to a decision to introduce new educational technology, including the new and revolutionary use of micro-electronics in communication.

A.11 The Secretariat should consider undertaking a feasibility study of the relevance to other Commonwealth regions of the CASTME/UWI project, if it proves to be cost-effective.

5. Planning and Management Implications

5.1 Management skills are needed if existing resources are to be used in the most cost-effective way. This applies at all levels of education systems whether the administrative unit is a small school or a large

institution. Consideration needs to be given to the provision of additional opportunities for appropriate education and training for administrators in order that the most cost-effective use of resources, including human resources, is achieved.

5.2 The importance was stressed of analysis and appraisal of any suggested innovations or measures designed to improve cost-effectiveness. This is necessary in order to decide which is the most appropriate measure and under what kinds of circumstances.

5.3 The challenge is how to decide in a particular situation which measure is most cost-effective. Hence, there is a need for training in techniques necessary to acquire satisfactory judgement in the use of available and potential resources in the light of cost factors and the intended results.

5.4 Decision-making is very important in effective leadership, and is a necessary component in the training of educational managers to enable them to be able to make more cost-effective use of available educational resources.

5.5 In considering alternatives designed to improve cost-effectiveness in education, the group recognised the need for essential information in order to be certain that the promise of greater cost-effectiveness can be fulfilled. Ministers are always being asked if any particular innovation will be more efficient, and evidence is needed, including on alternatives. Ministries of Education must have a capacity to undertake the necessary analysis and research or be able to secure it.

5.6 The following recommendations were adopted:

A.12 The Secretariat, in consultation with the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration (CCEA), should survey the range of training possibilities on cost analysis for educational administration. (In order to assist member countries to improve their overall planning and management capacities, the survey should also include leadership skills, supervision, and decision-making abilities.) Theoretical studies leading to qualifications and "on the job" training should both be investigated, including the possibility of assigning a designated number of awards in the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan for administrators and managers at all levels of education systems.

A.13 The Secretariat should consider the possibility of assisting and facilitating initiatives for the exchange of administrators (including school principals, deputy principals and ministry personnel) between Commonwealth member countries, in order to exchange ideas, solve common problems and improve management skills.

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REPORT OF WORKING GROUP B

Chairman: Hon. T.R.B. Donahoe, Minister of Education, Nova Scotia, Canada.

Additional Resources for Education

1. Additional Government Resources

1.1 Recent economic recession has presented countries almost everywhere with problems of finance. For some the position has been aggravated by rising costs of goods and services, debt crises and disasters such as war, drought, famine, floods and hurricanes.

1.2 The cost of responding to such disasters and dealing with the human problems they bring has made unexpected calls on limited national resources and reduced what is available for education. In a number of cases this has led to repeated reductions in allocations to education. For many countries, rising birth rates and their consequences for education expenditure have made further demands and pointed to a future of economic stringency. Only in countries blessed with natural wealth and in those newly independent countries where educational expansion has received political priority have educational budgets increased significantly.

1.3 Since the need for increased educational resources is felt by most countries, but especially by those which currently have relatively low primary school enrolments, it is important to consider where these increased resources may be found.

1.4 One possibility is the raising of an educational tax. For example, Jamaica has instituted such a tax whereby everybody in employment pays 1.0 per cent of wages to an education fund. Another possibility lies in loans which governments may take out to establish educational projects which are income generating.

1.5 While it is possible to reduce the cost to education budgets by transferring some educational responsibilities to other ministries such as labour, agriculture, transport and works, health, social services, or even defence, such devices add no new money for government services; they simply transfer costs from one department to another. Similarly, any attempt to attract funds to education by undertaking responsibilities normally performed by other ministries can only achieve a book transfer of resources with no real gain to the government. That is not to say that rationalising what ministries of education do brings no benefits. Considerable savings are possible through processes of rationalisation of human and fiscal resources and it is true to say that 'a pound saved is a pound found'. In this regard, governments which do not already possess established systems for monitoring expenditure, should do so because of the effect they have on increased efficiency.

2. Non-Government Resources

2.1 Many countries have found help with financing education from non-government sources as the following examples show.

2.2 *Lotteries.* Sri Lanka has national lotteries, proceeds from which contribute to scholarships for higher education.

2.3 *Loans.* An example of a different kind of non-government source of finance is to be found in Papua New Guinea where a Schools Board of Governors took out a private loan to purchase a coffee plantation which now generates a significant income from the cultivation and marketing of coffee and provides a work entrance facility for early school leavers. Private loans taken out by institutions and repayable student loans for higher education are increasingly common, but the latter only increase revenue to the government if they replace previous government grants or are not part of a government revolving loan fund. Clearly, revenue from such limited schemes is not likely to reduce greatly the heavy total cost of education to governments.

2.4 *Fee Payments.* A more significant contribution now comes from community sources. The reluctance of many governments, for reasons of equity, to charge fees for education has brought its own dilemmas. Increasing costs of education and static or reducing resources have forced on many countries the introduction of fees. Sometimes their introduction has come in the form of payments to the "education development fund" or as physical education or music charges. Elsewhere, the need for parents to share in the cost of their children's education has been recognised and there has been an acceptance of such requirements as the provision of pupils' textbooks and school stationery.

2.5 *Material and Financial Contributions by Communities.* Many countries have self-help programmes or arrangements by which local communities release resources not normally available to governments. The contribution that communities make varies enormously, including fund raising, the provision of labour and skills to build and maintain schools, and help in schools with administrative tasks and with teaching and non-teaching supervisory duties. While such co-operation is voluntary it must be admitted that the pressures on individuals to participate can sometimes be quite compelling.

2.6 *Community-Owned Schools.* While some communities have resented the introduction of fees for what once was enjoyed free, others have shown remarkable enthusiasm for contributing towards the cost of institutions with which they can identify. In several developing countries more than half the schools are funded privately. Outstanding in community-owned schools in Commonwealth countries has been the harambee movement in Kenya whereby local communities have voluntarily built and staffed hundreds of primary and secondary schools, village polytechnics and institutes of technology. It is difficult to quantify the contribution from local communities to the cost of education, but one estimate in Kenya puts the harambee element without teachers' salaries as high as 60 per cent.

2.7 *Matching Contributions.* On a national scale there are sound reasons for supporting pump priming practices such as Papua New Guinea's "kina for kina" scheme whereby the government adds one kina for every kina raised locally for particular educational projects.

2.8 *Supporting Associations.* Community action in support of education can take many forms and operate at different levels. At the level of groups of interested individuals, such as parents' or old students' associations, substantial funds have been raised to pay for new buildings, libraries, transport, equipment, supplies and amenities for schools. Community action can operate at institutional level where co-operation amongst institutions enables a spectrum of courses to be offered that would demand additional resources if offered by each institution. It can also operate at inter-governmental level enabling one country to

benefit from expenditure made by another. The principle of sharing amongst interested parties is an important one for enabling limited resources to go further.

2.9 *Churches and other Religious Bodies.* These have a long record as providers of education and are still a major component of private education in the Commonwealth. In a number of countries the proportion of non-government to government schools is increasing and would seem to reflect a growing willingness by governments to pass on, where possible, some of the financial burden of education.

2.10 *Firms.* Educational funding from private firms occurs in some member countries, taking the form of scholarship awards, prizes and the donation of equipment and teaching materials to schools. There would appear to be scope for more support of this kind by industrial and commercial firms, especially at secondary and post-secondary levels. It should also be noted that in many countries industrial and commercial firms have their own in-house training facilities to prepare technicians for their firms, thus making a substantial contribution to their countries' technical education provision. Some firms also identify future employees and prepare them for senior or specialist roles by scholarship awards in their own and other countries.

3. Generating Institutional Income

3.1 The most common cost-reducing step taken by residential institutions is to grow all or part of the food consumed by their students. The sale of crops also brings income to the institution as, for example, schools in Guyana have earned substantial amounts through the sale of farm products. But in this context it is important to note the possible conflict of competition with local producers. Cleaning, maintenance, and even building by students is also widely practised. It is important where considerable sums of income are handled by institutions that their accounts are audited so that students and other interested parties have full confidence in the accountability of the institutions.

3.2 The provision of manufactured products and other services by institutions as part of the educational process is a further development of the generation of institutional income. The Brigades of Botswana have been an outstanding example of this principle, some claiming to support themselves entirely from the proceeds of contracts. The Foundation for Education with Production (FEP) is an organisation now seeking to establish the principle in a number of countries in Africa and Europe. Critical to the success of enterprises of this kind is the quality of management and it should be no surprise to learn that most of those institutions that have succeeded have had people in charge who had fine leadership qualities and outstanding entrepreneurial talents.

4. Development Assistance

4.1 In many countries the educational sector experiences difficulty in attracting development assistance. In consequence the aid that comes is too little or too late.

4.2 In the past, development assistance has too often placed recurrent cost burdens on recipients. Both donors and recipients need to scrutinise very carefully the budgetary implications of any proposed project.

4.3 The problems that some countries face in getting the aid they need stems from a number of causes. In some cases, especially in small states with limited resources, the process of attracting aid could be improved if assistance was available with identifying appropriate aid agencies, in making their requirements known and in formulating project proposals.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Working Group B makes the following recommendations:

General

B.1 A study should be conducted on a cross-country basis of the experience within the Commonwealth of raising additional and alternative funds for education.

B.2 The Commonwealth Secretariat, at the invitation of and with the support of selected governments, should arrange for a study to be carried out which would identify and analyse the educational resource gaps that exist and suggest appropriate measures for bridging those gaps in specific situations.

Development Assistance

B.3 In view of the continuing difficulties in the educational situation in many Commonwealth countries, development agencies should be urged to increase their contribution to member countries.

B.4 Associated with this, it is proposed that the Secretariat develop a register of particular kinds of assistance that member countries are prepared to offer, and identify, where appropriate, national and regional institutions that can contribute this assistance.

B.5 The Commonwealth Secretariat should investigate the needs of member countries for an aid brokerage service that would assist them in the successful attraction of the aid they need.

B.6 The Commonwealth Secretariat should devise means for assisting developing member countries in obtaining school equipment and materials which present import and currency exchange problems.

B.7 In some small countries used to centralised government educational funding, the need may be felt for updating administrations, including school administrations, in new management techniques concerning educational finance. The Commonwealth Secretariat should explore the possibility of arranging the assistance necessary for this, using Commonwealth funds.

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