

Part One
The History

Chapter 1

From Oxford to Halifax: Forty Years of Commonwealth Co-operation in Education

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1 From Halifax to Halifax

Halifax 2000 marked the fourteenth in the series of Commonwealth conferences in education, a series that began in the 1950s with the first Commonwealth Education Conference in Oxford in 1959. Although, from today's vantage point, it may seem as if that first conference took place in another age altogether, there are fascinating parallels between the fourteenth and the first conference in the series. Some of these parallels are curious oddities, others perhaps of greater potential significance.

Among the coincidences is, first, that the 1959 Conference in Oxford was presided over by the Earl of Halifax, a former British Foreign Secretary and at that time Chancellor of the University of Oxford. To natives of Nova Scotia or of Yorkshire, like the author, it gives special satisfaction to present the history of Commonwealth education co-operation in terms of 'The Road from Halifax to Halifax'!

Second, it is interesting to reflect that of the 14 conferences so far held, all but two have taken place in or just outside the host nation's capital city; the two exceptions are the first conference in Oxford and the fourteenth in Halifax. This contrasts with the Heads of Government Meetings where the last five have taken place in Limassol, Auckland, Edinburgh, Durban and Brisbane. Although the one about to occur (at the time of publication) will be in Abuja, in a Commonwealth where many of the larger countries (Australia, Canada, India, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa and even the United Kingdom) are multi-jurisdictional in their arrangements for administering education, it seems safe to bet that Oxford and Halifax will prove to be trend-setters rather than anomalies.

It is tempting to speculate whether there may be a sense in which the above two

coincidences betoken some turn of the circle of Commonwealth educational co-operation back to decentralisation and participation after many years of 'statist' dominance. For the first Oxford Conference was as much a conference of academics and professionals as one of governments, so that it was in a sense symbolic, as well as an act of politeness, that Lord Halifax as Chancellor of the University was chosen to preside. Over the ensuing period, for reasons to be touched on, the Conferences became ever more 'governmental' in character, a process formally recognised when the title-switch for the series from the (eighth) Commonwealth Education Conference (Sri Lanka, 1980) to the (ninth) Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers was made in Cyprus in 1984.

More recently, however, there has been an international change of mood in considering the relationship of government to society; new thinking that was reflected in the choice of 'The Changing Role of the State in Education' as the theme for 12CCEM in Islamabad in 1994. The role of players other than central government – of local and provincial governments, of the private sector, of voluntary and non-governmental organisations, of professional bodies – has had increasing recognition. This was given expression at 13CCEM in Gaborone, Botswana, in 1997 when a symposium parallel to the ministers' conference took place. That experience was deemed sufficiently useful to be repeated in 2000 in Halifax, enabling ministers to interact with partners and to infuse their conference deliberations with insights drawn from non-governmental colleagues meeting in the wings of their conference.

In another important sense the Halifax Conference marked a return to the beginnings of Commonwealth co-operation in education, beginnings that were to be found in Canada, rather than Britain. For in actuality it was not on the banks of the Thames in 1959 that the present era of Commonwealth education co-operation was first conceived: it was beside the St Laurence in 1958. The Oxford Conference was called in response to a decision of Commonwealth trade and economic ministers at their conference in Montreal in September 1958, convened by Canadian Prime Minister John Diefenbaker. It was in Montreal, not Oxford, that the idea of a scheme for Commonwealth scholarships and fellowships was conceived, with the United Kingdom agreeing to be responsible for half the total and Canada for a quarter.

This illustrates two important continuities running through from the 1950s to the present day. First is the pivotal leadership role that Canada has played in developing Commonwealth education co-operation. That is where it began. Canada hosted a further (the third) Commonwealth Education Conference in Ottawa in 1964. It has been a major supporter of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP), being after Britain the most generous provider of these awards; and it was the Canadian offer in Nicosia in 1984 to double its contribution to the plan that signalled a major enlargement of CSFP. Canada hosted the Heads of Government Meeting in 1987 when the creation of the Commonwealth of Learning was mooted, and the governments of Canada and of the Province of

British Columbia have throughout been financial mainstays of that organisation, itself based in Vancouver, whose remit is the promotion of Commonwealth co-operation in distance education. Canada also, incidentally, provided the Commonwealth with its first Secretary-General, Arnold Smith, and has been, with the UK, the principal funder of the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC).

Second is the continuity of concern with the relationship between education and the economy. Ministers in Montreal in 1958 saw education and training as key motors of development. The context of their Montreal decisions was the growing interest in the economics of education, and increasing recognition that educational expenditure was an investment in economic growth and that high-level manpower was one of the keys to economic and social development. Concern with this relationship between education and development has continued, but in the last decades of the twentieth century a new dimension was added to the debate about education and the economy. This is the awareness that in some senses educational services are commodities that can be bought and sold, which takes one into the debates about privatisation, tuition fees for domestic and international students, and the marketing of education goods and services.

2 Four Decades of Change

In spite of the many connections and continuities between Oxford and Halifax, the context of this account of educational co-operation in the Commonwealth is a world undergoing evolution and change. This is true of the international community, of the Commonwealth itself, of international co-operation, and of education systems.

a. The Changing World

Since the late 1950s, the international political and economic scene has changed dramatically. Scores of countries, including a number of very small and barely viable new states, that were still under colonial rule in 1960, have attained independence from Britain and other European powers. The break-up of federations, such as those of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, has helped to increase the number of independent countries. Within the world community there have been important shifts of power. While the United States has become if anything more dominant, there has also been a dramatic rise in wealth and power of Japan, Germany and China; the development of the European Union and the strengthened economies of Italy, Spain and several northern European countries; an enormous accretion of wealth to oil-producing countries, especially in the Middle East; and the economic 'miracle' achieved by the countries of south-east Asia. For Commonwealth developing countries their external relations and commercial links, once dominated by the former colonial powers, have been greatly diversified, and they now have a much wider choice of economic and trade partners. The big new players in the

world economic league have not in the main been Commonwealth countries, so that in terms of global economic and political power, the Commonwealth now pulls relatively less weight than in 1959.

While unprecedented prosperity has been experienced by many countries, where income per head has risen sharply as they have moved through the 'demographic transition', other countries have faced economic hardship. Growing indebtedness, adverse movement in their terms of trade and deterioration in the value of their currencies have left some developing countries in dire economic straits; in the face of rapid population growth they have endured periods of declining income per head. In a global perspective, income inequalities between countries have widened. It is as yet unclear whether the communications revolution, which has over the 40 years in question 'shrunk' the world by means of improved transport links and revolutionary developments of telecommunications by radio, television, telephone, fax, internet and e-mail, will narrow or further widen this gap.

Meanwhile the balance of national economies has shifted in significant ways. One trend has been from primary (agriculture) to secondary (manufacturing) production and, especially in the more developed economies, from manufacturing to the 'tertiary' service sector of communications and media, marketing and advertising, financial services, leisure and tourism. In consequence, the quality of human resources has become ever more important to profitable production. A second shift has been economic decentralisation, away from the state 'command and control' economy to a market economy where prices, incentives and privatisation are the watchwords. One set of complementary changes flowing from the changing role of the state has been the economic squeeze on the generally labour-intensive but non-revenue-producing public sector. Reluctance on the part of democratically elected politicians to increase the burden of taxation has meant that greater economic prosperity in society as a whole has been accompanied by severe financial constraints in the public sector. These in turn have been reflected in diminished resources put at the disposal of international organisations.

b. The Changing Commonwealth

These global trends have their reflection in individual Commonwealth countries and in the Commonwealth as a collective entity. Membership has grown from ten members in 1959 to 54 (ignoring temporary suspensions) today. Many of the newer members are very small countries; about half the Commonwealth countries have populations of one million or fewer. One consequence of increased membership is that Commonwealth meetings have lost some, though certainly not all, of the informality that used to be considered one of their main advantages compared with the United Nations and its agencies. To have 20 countries round the table is one thing; to have 54 is quite another.

Economically, the Commonwealth has certainly become more diversified. Britain is no longer the dominant player. The economies of Canada and Australia

have grown considerably, while India has developed a major scientific and technological capability despite its average income per head still being low. Some of the newer economies such as Brunei Darussalam, Singapore and Hong Kong (only part of the Commonwealth until 1997) have overtaken Britain in income per head. But these last are not very populous countries and a problem for the modern Commonwealth is imbalance in its composition; it is under-represented among the industrialised countries of Europe, the oil-producers of the Middle East, and the larger economies of east Asia: and over-represented among populous low-income countries.

In organisational terms the Commonwealth has changed greatly, having created and developed an institutional machinery of its own in the shape of a Secretariat, a Fund for Technical Co-operation, and the Commonwealth Foundation. Patterns of regular consultation in Heads of Government Meetings, ministerial conferences, expert groups and working parties have evolved and affect the education sector as much as others.

c. Changing Patterns of Co-operation

Over the 40-year period many changes have shaped the environment in which co-operation takes place, applying not just to the education sector. One may note:

- The emergence of major multilateral players like the World Bank, other development banks and EU/EDF, and of new bilateral donors like Germany, Japan, and the Nordic countries;
- The increasing significance of non-governmental and charitable organisations in co-operation activities, especially in emergency relief;
- The many intermediary commercial contractors specialising in management and delivery of assistance that have occupied the 'space' between donors and users of assistance. Some are located in the private commercial sector, some are consultancy arms of public institutions and others are not-for-profit NGOs;
- The increasing gap in prices and costs between industrialised and developing countries, making it less and less cost-effective to move developing country nationals for study and training in developed countries, or citizens of industrialised countries to serve as long-term teachers in developing countries. This has put a premium on: (a) using developing country resources and locations in co-operation programmes; (b) developing South-South co-operation; and (c) exploring the potential of short-term exchanges of personnel, of short- and split-site courses, and of interaction at a distance using modern communication technologies;
- There has been more interest in institutional development and emphasis on capacity-building and on long-term sustainability of assisted projects.

d. Changing Education

Finally, education systems have changed significantly. Most obviously, they have greatly expanded as a result of population growth (in some countries the population is three or four times as big as in 1959), of higher enrolment ratios, and of system-development and diversification to include more specialist and tertiary provision. Many Commonwealth countries have achieved universal basic education, even though achievement of Education for All is still far away in parts of sub-Saharan Africa and south Asia; and the number of new colleges and universities has multiplied manifold. Education systems which were once basically elitist have been democratised. In all but the smallest states they can no longer be centrally managed by small cadres of civil servants personally well known to one another. Systems and bureaucracies have taken over and education management has assumed much greater importance. The focus today is largely on pursuing organisational efficiency, on setting objectives and monitoring their achievement, and on keeping costs under control.

Education, being labour-intensive, has been particularly vulnerable to economic crises. This has impacted on teacher salary levels, producing an adverse knock-on effect on teacher motivation and the quality of education. In many countries the maintenance of school buildings has been neglected, books and materials have been in short supply, and the supervision and advisory services have been run down. In several systems of public education, tuition fees have been introduced or reintroduced, increasing the disposition of those wealthy enough to patronise private schools or out-of-school private tutoring.

The development of new communication technologies for transmission of knowledge and information, and for use in interactive learning, has offered the potential for revolutionising the way education takes place. The possibility of more independent study, and for the transformation of the teacher's role to that of learning facilitator, implies major change for education systems in future. They promise both to make schools different kinds of institution, and in selected instances to obviate the need for institutional attendance in order to learn. They also open up possibilities for engaging in international study while remaining at a home base. As indicated below, the Commonwealth has been among the first to recognise this potential.

3 Official Co-operation: Milestones on the Road, 1959–2000

The focus of this chapter is on the co-operative programmes in education overseen by Commonwealth Education Ministers' Conferences. It largely omits description and analysis of direct assistance for education and training to individual member countries through the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation. For readers' convenience, the story of official co-operation within the education ministers' purview will first be presented chronologically, in four somewhat arbitrarily drawn periods, designated in terms of the education conferences they covered (a list of

conferences with dates is given at Appendix 1). The logic of the chosen demarcation boundaries will be explained, though their arbitrariness will be apparent. The four periods selected are

- 1959–1964, Oxford to Ottawa (1CEC to 3CEC)
- 1965–1980, Lagos to Colombo (4CEC to 8CEC)
- 1981–1994, Nicosia to Islamabad (9CCEM to 12CCEM)
- 1995–2000, Gaborone to Halifax (13CCEM and 14CCEM).

a. Oxford, New Delhi and Ottawa 1959–64

Notwithstanding the important antecedent conference in Montreal, the Oxford gathering laid the foundations for what followed and is the logical starting point. The first conference established the Commonwealth Education Liaison Unit (CELU) which organised, with host countries, the second and third conferences in New Delhi (1962) and Ottawa (1964). In 1965 the Commonwealth Secretariat was formed and a new phase began. It was in this first phase that many of the more populous dependencies in Africa attained their independence. By the time of Ottawa in 1964, some 20 countries were represented at the conference as Commonwealth members.

Reverting to the first conference, in the light of subsequent changes over the past 40 years, certain salient characteristics of Oxford seem noteworthy:

- Only ten independent Commonwealth countries were eligible to attend. These were the United Kingdom as host, Australia, Canada, Ceylon, Ghana, India, the Federation of Malaya, New Zealand, Pakistan and South Africa. As a self-governing dependency, the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland also sent a delegation in its own right. Most of Africa, the West Indies and South Pacific countries, Malta and Cyprus had not yet attained independence.
- This was a Commonwealth Education Conference at which delegations included a large number of educational professionals in addition to ministers and civil servants. Its professional character was underlined by the fact that, under the presidency of the Earl of Halifax, the conference was chaired by Sir Philip Morris, Vice-Chancellor of Bristol University.
- The meeting focused entirely on Commonwealth co-operation in education, most notably working out the details of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan. There was no other substantive theme, such as the ministerial conferences have today.
- The conference was serviced by the British Ministry of Education, as it then was. The Oxford Conference saw the need to establish ongoing consultative machin-

ery, the Commonwealth Education Liaison Committee; and a small secretariat, the Commonwealth Education Liaison Unit, precursor of the Education Department of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

The discussions in Oxford were focused largely on the forms and mechanics of co-operation in education between member countries. In particular, the conference put flesh on the proposals for the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan to which over a thousand awards were promised. Of four committees which met during the conference, one dealt with the CSFP and one with technical education; and two others dealt with teacher training and with the supply of teachers, underlining the concern at that time with staffing the expanding secondary and tertiary education systems of newly independent countries. Among the special concerns raised was the need for training staff to teach English as a second language, the subject of the first in a series of specialist conferences, held at Makerere, Uganda in 1962.

b. Lagos to Colombo 1965–1980

The second period begins in 1965 with the creation of the Commonwealth Secretariat and the incorporation within it, as the Education Division, of the Commonwealth Education Liaison Unit in 1966. The period ends with the eighth Commonwealth Education Conference in Colombo, the last of the 'old-style' conferences, but also the first at which Commonwealth student mobility was an issue of fierce controversy. With the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980, the decolonisation process was almost complete, and the Commonwealth now had approaching 40 full members (South Africa and Pakistan being temporarily out of membership), of whom 32 attended the Colombo Conference. The period was characterised by the holding of many specialist conferences, as well as the five CECs in Lagos (1968), Canberra (1971), Kingston, Jamaica (1974), Accra (1977) and Colombo (1980). In these years the Secretariat was active in the areas of technical and vocational education, teacher education, science and mathematics education, books and learning materials, and non-formal education (NFE).

The incorporation of the CELU into the Commonwealth Secretariat as its Education Division meant that Commonwealth educational co-operation formed part of a broader pattern of Commonwealth collaboration and had to fit into a wider set of priorities and administrative arrangements determined by the Commonwealth Secretary-General. In this period Arnold Smith of Canada was the first Secretary-General from 1965 to 1975, when he was succeeded by Shridath (Sonny) Ramphal of Guyana. Further major developments of the official machinery for Commonwealth co-operation took place with the creation of the Commonwealth Foundation in 1966 and of the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation in 1971.

c. Nicosia to Islamabad 1981–1994

The third period is inaugurated by the establishment of the Consultative Group, and later the Standing Committee, on Student Mobility. The latter met seven times between 1981 and 1992. It also marked certain radical changes in the form and length of the Conferences, now re-designated CCEMs, and in the organisation of the Commonwealth Secretariat, where a Human Resource Development Group was formed, incorporating education. Major developments in this period were the expansion of the CSFP, particularly from 1984 (the year of 9CCEM in Nicosia), the creation of the Commonwealth of Learning in 1987 (10CCEM in Nairobi) and 1988; and a marked strengthening of the infrastructure of Commonwealth higher education co-operation around the time of 11CCEM (Barbados, 1990). This was also the period in which programmes of support for education in small states, for teacher management and support in Africa, and for the advancement of women and girls took root. The Commonwealth report on human development strategies, *Foundation for the Future*, appeared in 1993. The period ended with the re-entry of South Africa to the Commonwealth in 1994, in time for 12CCEM in Islamabad in the same year. Emeka Anyaoku succeeded Sir Shridath Ramphal as Commonwealth Secretary-General in 1990.

d. Gaborone and Halifax 1995–2000

The period 1993–1995 marked something of a watershed, quite apart from South Africa's re-entry. In Islamabad, the Standing Committee on Student Mobility and Higher Education Co-operation was finally stood down. In the Secretariat, the Education Programme was merged with Health in a new Human Resource Development Division at the end of 1993, and there were major personnel changes in education in both the Secretariat and the Commonwealth of Learning. 13CCEM (Gaborone, 1997) saw a major innovation in the holding of parallel events to the ministerial conference in the form of a non-official 'civil society' Symposium and Trade Fair/ Exhibition. This was repeated in Halifax at 14CCEM in November 2000 and the idea is to be developed in Edinburgh (15CCEM), with a parallel symposium and a major exercise in youth exchange as well. A Commission on Commonwealth Studies reported in 1996 and its report was debated at Gaborone and in Heads of Government meetings. In April 2000, Don McKinnon of New Zealand became the fourth Secretary-General and a further reorganisation in the Secretariat has placed education in a new Social Transformation Programmes Department.

4 Evolution of the Ministerial Conferences

Direction is given to the business of official Commonwealth education co-operation by the ministerial conferences, held at intervals of roughly three years. As Section 3 has shown, these have been held at different venues throughout the Commonwealth, with two in Europe (Oxford and Nicosia), three in Asia (New

Delhi, Colombo and Islamabad), four in Africa (Lagos, Accra, Nairobi and Gaborone), two in the Caribbean (Kingston and Bridgetown), two in Canada (Ottawa and Halifax) and one in Australia (Canberra).

Country delegations have grown from ten at Oxford in 1959 to over 40 at the last three conferences, with over 80% of Commonwealth countries represented. In Barbados 40 countries were represented with 31 ministerial heads of delegation, in Islamabad 44 delegations and 35 ministers, and in Gaborone 42 and 30. Dependencies have attended as part of the delegation of the metropolitan country and the British delegation at the first few conferences was greatly inflated by inclusion of representatives from soon-to-be-independent African and Caribbean territories.

With a few exceptions, delegations have been headed by the Minister of Education except when, for example, general elections are being held at the time of the conference. Australia however, has only rarely sent the Minister of Education and has usually had a non-political head of delegation. Britain used to send her senior Minister/Secretary of State but more recently has sent a junior minister. Canada, a federation in which responsibility for education lies with the provinces, normally asks the current ministerial Chairperson of the Council of Education Ministers, Canada (CEMC) to lead its delegation. The delegations of these industrialised countries may also include ministerial or official representation from the development co-operation department of government, where budgetary responsibility for funding of Commonwealth co-operative programmes may lie. Some countries have divided the responsibility for education into two, with separate ministries dealing with higher education and with school education; such countries sometimes send both ministers, though only one can be designated 'head of delegation'.

In the initial stages of Commonwealth co-operation the national delegations included many members who were not ministers or civil servants, such as vice-chancellors, teachers' representatives or other education specialists. Over the course of time, however, the conferences and the delegations have taken on a more governmental character, a change that was formally signalled by the change of designation of the conferences in 1984.

Bodies invited to send official observers include selected intergovernmental organisations (UNESCO, World Bank, etc.), relevant international NGOs such as Education International (formerly WCOTP), and pan-Commonwealth associations active in education, of which by far the most important is the Association of Commonwealth Universities. Observers are present throughout, but in the plenary ministerial sessions are only permitted to intervene in the debate by special invitation of the Chair.

The pattern of conference organisation that developed early on was to hold a pre-conference meeting of officials for up to a week, among other things to review the work of the Secretariat in carrying out the mandates of the previous conference and to preview the agenda of the upcoming conference before ministers met. The whole process of the successive gatherings could take ten days or two weeks and

was eventually found to be too cumbersome. 'Predigestion' of the agenda by officials, although facilitating well-informed professional discussion, tended to take the 'edge' off ministerial debates. For the 1984 conference in Cyprus, therefore, it was decided to cut down the preparatory official meeting to half a day and to limit the conference duration to three or four days. The meetings were henceforward known as Conferences of Commonwealth Education Ministers instead of Commonwealth Education Conferences.

The actual agendas of the conferences are agreed through a process of prior consultation between the Commonwealth Secretariat in London, the host government and other governments. The formal mechanism for approval of the proposed conference arrangements and for agreeing the agenda is the Commonwealth Education Liaison Committee (CELC) whose members are representatives of high commissions in London. A once-powerful body, the CELC's influence has diminished virtually to zero, for three reasons. The establishment of the Commonwealth Secretariat with its own system of accountability to Commonwealth governments meant that a separate governance structure for Commonwealth education co-operation became redundant. Second, the decision in the mid-1980s that the CELC should be chaired by a Commonwealth Secretariat official, instead of by an independent professional of stature, greatly reduced the autonomy of the CELC. Third, Commonwealth governments have often failed to appoint senior high-calibre personnel as their education attachés in London, so that the professional knowledge required to make the CELC more than a mere post-box has often been lacking in its membership.

In earlier times, before the Commonwealth Secretariat was formed, the CELC was a powerful body that oversaw the work of the Commonwealth Education Liaison Unit and was itself a decision-making body. It was chaired successively by Sir Philip Morris, Chairman of the Oxford Conference, Sir Allen Brown from Australia, and then by two long-serving chairmen, Professor Lionel Elvin, Director of the University of London Institute of Education from 1965 to 1974, followed by Sir Roy Marshall for a further ten years to 1984. Thereafter, the Chair has been taken by an Assistant/Deputy Secretary-General in the Commonwealth Secretariat.

The business of the conferences has generally been of two main kinds. From the beginning, there has been attention to Commonwealth co-operation, and in the early days delegations from the more developed countries often came to the conferences with new proposals for extending such co-operation. Thus the three aims of 3CEC in Ottawa in 1964 were: (1) to review progress in co-operation recommended by the two previous CECs; (2) to recommend improvements in existing forms of co-operation; and (3) to consider specific proposals for educational co-operation in other fields. Continuing up to the present day, a major part of the business therefore involves review of existing collaborative programmes like the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan, and more recently also the Commonwealth of Learning. Working Groups or sub-committees have been estab-

lished within the framework of the conference to receive reports and to review and refine procedures; and in ministers' plenary sessions there have sometimes been set occasions for the making of funding pledges.

As part of this process of review, the work of the education secretariat in Marlborough House was also scrutinised and mandates for future activity handed down.

The second main concern of the conferences, which became more prominent from the mid-1970s onwards, was to exchange views and experience on a selected issue of pressing concern to policy-makers. It was at the sixth CEC in Jamaica that a theme appeared for the first time – in that case 'management of education'. In retrospect one can see that the mid-1970s represented a substantive shift in the nature of the conferences. Ten or 15 years after many countries had achieved their independence from Britain, recruitment or replacement of expatriates was no longer developing countries' main interest or concern; rather it was the management and improvement of systems that were now led and staffed by nationals. The dialogue shifted away from donor-recipient relationships to exchange of professional experience. The change was expressed succinctly by Professor Lionel Elvin at Kingston in 1974:

I am very struck by the contrast between this Conference and, I think I might say, all five of the preceding Conferences, in that here in Jamaica I have felt for the first time that we have all been taking part equally. The First and Third World polarity is getting modulated; at least in the sense that the frequency of interventions of participants bears no relation to the size or wealth of the countries they represent. We are all really working together now. I notice the growth of interchange of experience, to say nothing of persons, between countries of the so-called Third World. I also note that the myth that First World countries have no educational problems has disappeared. But above all the donor-receiver concept ... is ceasing to be the dominant one and is giving way to the proper one, that of collaboration.

The conference themes often reflected international concerns at the time. Thus, themes of the last four conferences have been 'the vocational orientation of education' (1987), 'improving the quality of basic education' (1990), 'the changing role of the state in education' (1994) and 'education and technology' (1997). In the list of CECs/CEMs in Appendix 1, the keynote theme of each conference has been indicated. Normally one or more keynote speakers have been invited to introduce the conference theme. Actually the idea of inviting distinguished speakers goes back further than the adoption of conference themes. As early as 3CEC in Ottawa in 1964 two guest speakers were invited: Professor Mathai from India to talk about Commonwealth Scholarships and Sir Willis Jackson from the UK on priorities in technical education.

The conferences generally conclude with an agreed communiqué and eventually a report (the Gaborone Conference is alone in lacking a report to date). On

most issues it is not difficult for ministers to reach consensus, but the conferences have not been strangers to sharp controversy. The issue of full-cost fees for Commonwealth students stirred strong emotions and brought confrontation between Commonwealth sending countries and the principal hosts, particularly Britain; it dominated the conferences in Colombo and Nicosia. Tensions with Britain were exacerbated by the UK's decision to leave UNESCO, a decision from which Commonwealth countries strove to dissuade her. High Commissioners in London called on the British Foreign Secretary in an attempt to avert the decision. So fraught was the situation on these two questions in 1984/85, that Commonwealth ministers went so far as to hold a special meeting in Sofia, Bulgaria, at the UNESCO General Conference in 1985. Tensions with Britain over educational issues were of course part of a wider pattern of strained relations at Commonwealth summits, where differences continually surfaced over how to deal with apartheid South Africa.

Later in the 1980s there was a discernible divergence of views over the creation of new Commonwealth mechanisms for co-operation, especially the Commonwealth of Learning, but also higher education interchange more generally. Developing-country members tended to favour the creation of collective multi-lateral institutions and programmes for co-operation, in whose governance they would have a voice; whereas industrialised countries, liable to be asked to foot most of the bill for such initiatives, tended to prefer bilateral arrangements giving them more control over programmes.

5 Secretariat and Budgets

It was decided at an early stage to create machinery to promote co-operation in education and in Oxford it was agreed (as already noted in Section 3) to establish a small liaison unit. It seems to have been the New Zealand delegation, led by the renowned educator, Dr C.E. Beeby, which fought hardest for this. The unit was created with a handful of staff under the direction of V.S. Jha from India, who served until 1963, when he was succeeded by a Canadian, Freeman Stewart. The unit was housed in Marlborough House which the Queen had assigned to be a Commonwealth Centre, following the death in 1953 of her grandmother Queen Mary, who had lived there.

The CELU with its small staff helped to arrange the next two Conferences in 1962 and 1964. In 1965 Commonwealth leaders established a Commonwealth Secretariat to take over functions from the British Commonwealth Relations Office of organising Prime Ministers' Meetings, and it was decided in 1966 that the CELU should be merged into the new Secretariat as one of its divisions (the others being administration, conferences, economic affairs and international affairs). It was now accountable not to the CELC, which became more purely advisory, but to the Secretary-General and through him to Commonwealth governments.

Perhaps reflecting its historical primacy in ante-dating its new parent body, educa-

tion enjoyed a high status in the Secretariat and had its own Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) for Education, supervising the work of the divisional director and his staff. The Assistant Secretary-General's post was held by, among others, Hugh Springer, later the Secretary-General of the Association of Commonwealth Universities and Governor-General of Barbados; Y.K. Lule from Uganda, who later briefly became President of his country; and James Maraj, who went on to be Vice-Chancellor of the University of the South Pacific and first President of the Commonwealth of Learning. Later, Professor Murshid from Bangladesh held the post, which survived until the early 1980s when an Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resource Development was appointed. Below the ASG (Education) served a succession of Directors. There were four in the first eight years of the Secretariat's existence; but then two Nigerians, Sam Cookey and Rex Akpofure, each had a longer tenure. None of the directors was a woman, but the longest-ever serving member of the professional staff, Amu Krishnaswamy, was. Of the support staff, Leilani de Silva (Packer) served with three directors over 20 years to 1991, valuably providing much of the continuity and institutional memory of the division/programme.

The twin notions of co-operation and assistance were comfortably merged during these early years, no sharp distinction being made in Secretariat budgets between the consultative function and that of development aid. This changed with the creation in 1971 of the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation, which took over the provision of experts and funding of training. The Fellowships and Training Division of CFTC was the largest in programme terms and its remit was later to expand substantially with its special programmes of Commonwealth support for the countries of Southern Africa – Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, South-West Africa/Namibia, South Africa and Mozambique. It has been through CFTC that Commonwealth multilateral assistance to individual countries' education systems has flowed.

More problematic for the so-called functional divisions of the Secretariat was that they now ceased to have their own budgets for programme activity; instead they had to rely on funds from the CFTC, which had a special vote on which Secretariat divisions could draw for activities deemed 'developmental'. This became an increasingly tight straitjacket for the Education Division which had been accustomed to regard as one of its most valuable functions that of being a catalyst for exchange of experience and the co-operative development of new Commonwealth initiatives of a regional and pan-Commonwealth kind. Support to individual countries in response to requests for development assistance had not been its prime concern. As this new dispensation for the 1970s continued and intensified into the 1980s, education in the Secretariat found that the only programme money it received directly in its own right, rather than through CFTC, was for high-level meetings (ministers' conferences and the Standing Committee of Student Mobility and Higher Education Co-operation), together with a declining

travel budget. Given that the Commonwealth Secretariat did not have field offices in member countries, visits by headquarters staff for liaison purposes and to keep the Secretariat informed about issues and conditions in education were essential; but these generally could only take place in the context of seminars and training courses conducted by Secretariat staff under programmes approved by CFTC.

Two other developments were severely constraining professional activity in education. The range of responsibilities undertaken by the Commonwealth Secretariat expanded to include law, health and later women and development. New specialised institutions in the form of a Commonwealth Science Council and Commonwealth Youth Programme occupied some of the 'territory' that might previously have been expected to fall under the Education Division's remit. This meant that there was more competition for the attention of ministers and governments, as well as for budgetary funds available to the Secretariat and CFTC. These resources themselves became more constrained in the years following the 1973 'oil-price shock' when governments adopted a more austere approach to international co-operation. The net result was that the Education Division was far more constrained for programme funds by the early 1980s than had been the case ten years before. The valuable series of specialist conferences (see below) was one casualty.

An internal reorganisation of the Secretariat in 1983 resulted from the proliferation of units dealing with aspects of human resources. In keeping with new international thinking about a more integrated approach to human resources, a Human Resource Development Group was created under an Assistant Secretary-General, Manmohan ('Moni') Malhoutra from India. The group included three Secretariat units now renamed 'programmes' which were education, health, and women and development. The semi-autonomous Commonwealth Youth Programme also became a member of the Group, as did the Management Development Programme and Fellowships and Training Programme of CFTC. The Commonwealth Science Council participated as an observer. The group submitted a combined development budget for CFTC support, including some joint projects involving two or more programmes. The secretariat for the group was provided by the Education Programme. The most outstanding joint product from the group was the Pitroda Report, *Foundation for the Future*, published in 1993. Throughout its existence the group had to struggle with the tensions of divided control over some of its constituent programmes between the ASG (Human Resource Development) and other authorities, and with the reluctance of programme directors to lose their autonomy. The group did not outlive the departure of Mr Malhoutra in early 1994; streamlining of the Secretariat's structure in 1993 led to the merging of the Education and Health Programmes as the Human Resource Development Division (with an Education Department and a Health Department as constituent units), and of the Women and Development Programme and the Commonwealth Youth Programme into a Gender and Youth Affairs Division.

After more than two decades in the east wing of Marlborough House, the Education Programme, along with its partners in the Human Resource Development Group (HRDG), was in 1982 relocated in the drearier office block opposite, Quadrant House, where it has occupied the bulk of the second floor for the past 18 years. Soon after the creation of HRDG, Peter Williams from Britain assumed the directorship of the Education Programme in 1984, becoming the first Director in 1993/94 of the Human Resource Development Division. On his departure, he was succeeded after a year's interregnum in 1995 by Stephen Matlin, also British, who served until 2001, being assisted as Head of the Education Department by Cream Wright from Sierra Leone.

The resource constraints intensified. Although the Education Programme took on a heavier work load and until the mid 1990s maintained a staff establishment of nine or ten professional posts, which was at times supplemented by three or four officers attached for particular projects, its programme budget contracted. In real resource terms the funding received from CFTC at the time of writing is equivalent to only about a quarter of what was available from that source in the early 1980s. For a long time the crisis has been held at bay by successfully seeking co-funding from other development co-operation agencies, in many instances bilateral agencies of non-Commonwealth aid donors, or international organisations. The marriage of their funding with the Secretariat's professional resources and access to Commonwealth developing-country networks has had productive results. Nevertheless, it has become progressively more difficult for the Secretariat to take on temporary staff and more ominously, the regular staff establishment of professional posts has been severely reduced.

6 Substantive Themes of Consultation and Co-operation

The review of conference business in Section 4 explained that two types of subject matter have engaged the attention of ministers. First, there have been the joint Commonwealth co-operative programmes and institutions in education, and second there have been themes on which they have wished to exchange experience and concert views.

a. Co-operative Institutions

Commonwealth co-operative programmes in education were launched with the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan already referred to and more fully described in Chapter 7, and this was supplemented in the 1980s by the creation of new institutions and programmes of co-operation at tertiary level. For good reasons, tertiary education is the level where collaboration has been most developed. The specialisation of branches of knowledge and technology means that national higher education systems cannot be self-sufficient. Higher education takes place in English in most member countries, making interchange easier. The exchange of relatively small numbers of academics and researchers can make a

significant contribution to institutional development. There are strong professional networks through the Association of Commonwealth Universities and professional bodies. Senior academics have played an influential role in developing Commonwealth education co-operation, and the Secretariat has invariably designated one or more staff members as responsible for tertiary education.

When the first steps in official Commonwealth education co-operation were taken, the staffing of emerging national education systems was a serious challenge. Particularly in Africa, there was a shortage of secondary-school teachers and of college and university staff, and a need to establish systems for staff training and development. Because of this, attention was given to elaborating frameworks for the recruitment of expatriate teachers, and on the training side Britain launched a major assistance programme in the form of Commonwealth bursaries to train tutors for teacher training colleges. Training places in Britain under the Bursaries Scheme were as numerous as Commonwealth Scholarships, reaching 500 at a time. This was bilateral assistance in a Commonwealth framework. The early CECs devoted considerable attention to teacher supply and teacher training, usually establishing a committee of the conference to discuss them. By the end of the 1970s, however, these topics had disappeared from the agenda of joint Commonwealth programmes of collaboration, reflecting the substantial progress made by developing countries in localising the teaching service; and the Commonwealth Bursaries were discontinued by Britain.

A third area in which co-operation has been institutionalised is distance education. Commonwealth countries were pioneers in correspondence education and external degree programmes, but it was only in the 1980s that their common interest crystallised as the Commonwealth of Learning. A number of factors, including rapid development of new information and communication technologies, combined to bring about the creation of this new organisation. The increasing cost of physical mobility of students directed the attention of the Commonwealth Standing Committee to new approaches to learning across national frontiers; one of its members was Anastasios Christodoulou, Secretary-General of the Association of Commonwealth Universities, who brought to the committee his experience as founding Secretary of the Open University in the UK. In 1984 for the first time the Secretariat appointed a specialist in distance education to its staff.

Canada's interest in distance education and the happy coincidence that, as host of the Heads of Government Meeting in Vancouver in 1987, it was glad to sponsor a concrete new initiative in Commonwealth co-operation, helped to bring the new institution to life. Imaginative proposals by a committee chaired by Asa Briggs (Lord Briggs), strong advocacy by the Commonwealth Secretary-General and generous pledges from Brunei Darussalam, India and Nigeria to supplement promises from the governments of Canada and British Columbia all combined to turn dream into reality. Chapter 6 gives a description of COL's work and development.

b. Themes of Consultation and Joint Activity

The institutions described above are independent of the Commonwealth Secretariat, even though generated through intergovernmental conferences and enjoying support from the Secretariat/CFTC. But the Secretariat has launched a wide array of other co-operative initiatives for exchange of experience and joint activity in education, using its own staff and modest budgetary resources to bring Commonwealth representatives together and to mobilise Commonwealth action. The range of mechanisms available to the education branch of the Secretariat for such purposes has been limited, consisting mainly of consultative meetings, training workshops and seminars, and working groups, very occasional study visits and attachments, and the publication of directories, studies, surveys and reports, frequently in the form of resource manuals for use by practitioners or of handbooks of good practice. Direct funding of follow-up operational activity has always been the responsibility of governments, with support where appropriate of consultancies and training provided by CFTC.

Secretariat activity, which is mandated by ministers and Heads of Government, at their periodic conferences and meetings has focused on a number of different issues. A good guide to the priorities in the first two decades, the 1960s and 1970s, is the list of themes chosen for the expert or specialist conferences which took place in between the Commonwealth Education Conferences (see Appendix 2). Secretariat staffing, activities and publications were to a large degree clustered round the issues about to be addressed, or recently addressed, in the specialist conferences. The nine conferences held between 1961 and 1979 discussed: teaching of English as a second language; teaching of science in schools; education and training of technicians; mathematics in schools; education in rural areas; teacher education in a changing society; educational broadcasting; materials for teaching and learning; and non-formal education for development. This series of conferences only ended in 1983, when financial difficulties meant that the Secretariat had to ask member countries to pay a higher share of the costs of attendance, which resulted in fewer countries notifying their intention to be present.

Among these themes, technical and vocational education was prominent from the very beginning and was the subject of one of the four main committees at the Oxford Conference (along with CSFP, teacher training and teacher supply). It has continued to figure largely in Secretariat concerns up to the present, but it was only in the mid-1970s to mid-1980s that there was a specialist officer in post. Science and mathematics education, teacher education and in-service training, materials and book development, including low-cost publishing and provision of library services, and non-formal education all received a good deal of emphasis in the 1970s and early 1980s. A wide range of practical resource books and reports was published on these themes, some of them going into repeat editions in response to demand. More detailed information about Secretariat work in these areas will be found in Chapters 4 and 5.

In the period from the mid-1970s to mid-1980s, covering the sixth to the ninth conferences, the themes chosen by the Commonwealth ministers for their conferences addressed political, social and economic issues in education, including questions of financing and management, rather than professional concerns over schools and schooling. The termination of the series of specialist conferences, and the onset of the student fees crisis, reinforced this trend, as did the formation in the Commonwealth Secretariat of the Human Resource Development Group already referred to. Considerable attention was given to higher education and distance education in those years, and a higher education unit was formed within the education programme. In 1990, higher education co-operation through the Commonwealth Higher Education Support Scheme (CHESS) programme was – with basic education – mandated by ministers as one of the two main thrusts of the Secretariat’s work programme in education. This was complemented by a strong new-found interest in education development of small states – a subject of obvious Commonwealth interest and comparative advantage, particularly after Commonwealth membership expanded in the 1970s and 1980s to include many newly independent small island countries. Following an influential seminal meeting in Mauritius in 1985, a series of training workshops, practical studies, professional networks and exchange visits was developed.

After the mid-1980s, however, a special effort was made to balance these new concerns by a return to issues concerning processes and content of education, the curriculum, teacher quality and morale at school level. The themes of 10CCEM and 11CCEM concerning the vocational orientation of education and the quality of basic education served to redress the balance somewhat. At 11CCEM in 1990, the year of the Jomtien World Conference on Education for All, it was decided that improvement of basic education should be a priority for Secretariat work and that a major focus of this should be teacher management and support activities. That programme started in Commonwealth Africa, originally an initiative confined to the Commonwealth, but later partially subsumed within the spectrum of activities orchestrated by the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) and complemented by a programme in francophone Africa. It included an important strand of headteacher training. The Commonwealth Secretariat became the lead agency for ADEA’s Working Group on the Teaching Profession, and more recently also of the Working Group on Non-formal Education. In the early 1990s, when the Education Programme had nine established posts, its activities spanned basic education, science and mathematics education, student mobility and higher education co-operation, the work on small states, distance education, entrepreneurship, community schools and human resource development. All of these to a greater or lesser extent received international recognition and attracted co-funding.

c. Commonwealth Student Mobility

A subject that dominated the last two of the four decades was Commonwealth

student mobility. This issue gave rise to a sharp conflict of views, but at the same time generated creative ideas about the potential for practical co-operation in education among Commonwealth countries. The vehicle for this thinking was the Commonwealth Standing Committee on Student Mobility, chaired by Sir Roy Marshall. The profile of student mobility has been so high in the last two decades that it is the subject of a later chapter. Here only highlights of the debate ensuing from the introduction of full-cost fees will be sketched.

The initial fateful shots in the battle over student mobility were fired at the time of the first Wilson government in Britain, in the aftermath of the 1963 *Robbins Report on Higher Education in the UK*. It was decided for the first time to charge differential tuition fees for students from abroad in British higher and further education. A high proportion of the students affected were from newly independent Commonwealth countries, which had been accustomed to sending students to Britain for courses not available at home. At one level of analysis the introduction of differential charges for students from abroad can be seen as a question of education finance, of reducing the public subsidy to higher education; but it was also part of an ongoing process of differentiating Commonwealth from British citizens and turning the former into part-aliens in what they had hitherto regarded as the 'mother country'. The level of the British differential charge rose over the next decade and was substantially increased by the Wilson-Callaghan governments from 1974 to 1979. In 1979 the Conservatives were returned to power under Margaret Thatcher and resolved on introducing full-cost fees for students from abroad (other than those from the European Community). Eventually, after concerted lobbying through the Overseas Students Trust and others, a series of partial relief measures (the so-called 'Pym Package') in the form of additional scholarship awards was introduced.

The Commonwealth response to the new fees was one of dismay and the Secretary-General set up a Consultative Group on Student Mobility under the chairmanship of Sir Hugh Springer, the retiring Secretary-General of the ACU. When this Group reported in 1981 it was decided to establish a Standing Committee on Student Mobility under the chairmanship of Sir Roy Marshall. The committee, with ten to twelve members drawn from different Commonwealth regions, met annually between 1982 and 1986, and again in 1989 and 1992. It produced a series of seven reports that monitored the level of fees and the volume of student interchange in the Commonwealth, and made recommendations for action on the part of the Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth governments and higher education institutions. In recognition of the wide scope of the Committee's concerns its title was broadened by adding 'and Higher Education Co-operation' in 1987.

On student mobility itself, the Standing Committee may have had some modest influence in relation to the reporting systems on mobility and in encouraging the greater supply of scholarships and awards – in particular the increase in size of the

CSFP in the years after 1984. But in general it failed to secure any significant changes in the fee policies of the principal Commonwealth host countries; on the contrary, it had to witness the introduction of full-cost fees in Australia, followed later by New Zealand, and the raising of fees in some Canadian provinces. In the lifetime of the Standing Committee, only India among the major Commonwealth host countries refrained from discrimination against students from abroad and from substantial rises in the level of tuition fees in its higher-education system. What the committee called the 'final frustration' was the rejection at its Seventh Meeting by the group of Commonwealth industrialised countries of a package of five modest measures proposed by the Secretary-General as constituting 'a favourable fee regime' which would give relief to developing-country students.

The effect of full-cost fee regimes on Commonwealth student mobility was initially dire, causing a sharp decline in Commonwealth students going to Britain. Later however, mainly in the period after the Standing Committee was disbanded in 1994, there was a surge in the number of international students in Australia and Britain, including a rise in Commonwealth students. It would seem that provision of strong financial incentives to cash-strapped higher education institutions to undertake international student recruitment caused them to market their courses vigorously and effectively.

Among the less desirable effects of making international study expensive have been difficulties experienced by countries that are low on the UN's human development index in participating fully in Commonwealth student mobility. Intra-Commonwealth flows have been heavily concentrated on a few countries as hosts (Australia, Britain, Canada and to a lesser extent India and New Zealand) and a few countries as senders (mainly four relatively wealthy countries from south-east Asia).

The Standing Committee never failed to emphasise the links between, and complementary nature of, student mobility and higher education development. This led it to explore alternative patterns and modes of student and knowledge mobility, and to focus on new possibilities of Commonwealth co-operation to promote the development of higher education in member countries. The Standing Committee adopted a consistently wide view of the linkages between different aspects of higher education co-operation and advocated the notion of a Commonwealth Higher Education Support Scheme to bring together the different elements of student and staff mobility and staff development awards programmes like CSFP, inter-university and inter-college links, and the nurturing of regional centres of excellence in Commonwealth developing countries. The committee's seven reports, and the papers commissioned by the Secretariat to support its work, are replete with useful analysis of these matters.

The committee's most substantial legacy consequently lies not so much in Commonwealth consensus on fees, which it failed to achieve, as in innovative programmes of higher education co-operation. It deserves its share of the credit for the

development of the Commonwealth of Learning, the Commonwealth Higher Education Management Service, and the Commonwealth Universities Study Abroad Consortium. It gave impetus to the Secretariat's work on gender and higher education development, availability of journals, and supply and maintenance of equipment in higher education.

7 Building Education Infrastructure

In the four decades reviewed by this paper, the Commonwealth succeeded in creating a number of successful, and in some senses pioneering, institutions for educational co-operation. They include the Education Department of the Commonwealth Secretariat whose work was described in Section 5. The Secretariat's programme in education, and the two major institutions of Commonwealth official co-operation in education – CSFP and COL – are reviewed periodically by ministers at their conferences. A further group of higher-education co-operation programmes, initiated by the public agencies of the Commonwealth, are now largely sustained and managed by the Association of Commonwealth Universities. COL is the subject of a separate chapter and is also discussed in Chapters 3 and 4; it is only mentioned briefly here.

a. Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan

The Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan was established at the first Commonwealth Education Conference at Oxford in 1959 and quickly grew in reputation and prestige to become the 'flagship' of educational co-operation. It expanded quite rapidly until 1993, but has since suffered a period of serious decline in awards held, from a peak of 1800 awards then to only just over 1000 now. The reasons for the decline are to be found partly in less enthusiastic policies of particular countries (for example Australia) and partly in a reassessment by donors of priorities in the education sector, with much greater support for basic education. Growing differences in living standards between industrialised and developing countries has made traffic in persons more expensive than hitherto. Within the plan, the number of individuals receiving new awards has declined less than the total of award-holders on course at any one time, reflecting new policies by the principal donors, Britain and Canada, of making a higher proportion of short-term awards under CSFP.

CSFP operates through bilateral agreements within a common multilateral frame. Countries control the offer of awards to each other, but follow agreed principles, criteria and procedures. The guiding principles for the plan laid down at Oxford were that it should represent distinctiveness and additionality in relation to other award schemes; mutuality and the sharing of experience; a Commonwealth-wide character but be based on bilateral arrangements; and commitment to the highest standards of intellectual achievement. Flexibility in terms of diverse and changing needs was a further defining principle, and one that has been actualised

by allowing countries lacking a tertiary education institution to request undergraduate places for their students, even though CSFP is essentially a programme for postgraduate awards.

Every member of the Commonwealth at Oxford pledged awards, but subsequently the Commonwealth perhaps 'missed a trick' by not making participation in the plan an unwritten condition of joining the association. In 1967 there were 14 awarding countries, but in the 1990s there have never been more than nine at any one time. Among developing countries, India and Brunei Darussalam have recently been the largest contributors. In 1999 Britain gave 685 out of 1021 awards and Canada gave 244. Virtually every one of the 60 or more Commonwealth countries and dependent territories has received awards. Awards to women have increased as a proportion of the total, now standing at 40%,

A constant concern of members has been the non take-up of some offers by developing countries. This would appear to have been due in some cases to unattractive terms and sometimes a lack of welfare and support for visiting scholars. Another continuing concern has been that scholars might not go back to their countries on completion of their studies. Preliminary data from an ACU survey of British award-holders shows that the vast majority do return home and many attain prominent positions in their own societies. Over the first 40 years of the plan there has been a subject shift among scholars going to the UK away from arts and science and towards social and business studies.

Among new possibilities now being considered are more short-term awards and the possibility that awards might be available for studies in a distance mode. There is also an observable tendency for assistance agencies to put more emphasis on the 'training for development' dimension of CSFP, involving a progressive – and to some, controversial – prioritisation of the instrumental purposes of CSFP over its academic-interchange aims.

b. Higher Education Co-operation: CHESS, CHEMS and CUSAC

The Commonwealth Higher Education Support Scheme was formally launched by ministers of education in Barbados in 1990, having been first conceived in the Standing Committee on Student Mobility and Higher Education Co-operation. The committee was aware of many different programmes and efforts through CSFP, CFTC and bilateral agencies and thought that more impact might be made through planned collective effort. An expert group chaired by Professor James Downey of Canada met before and after the Barbados conference to hammer out the details. Essentially CHESS was intended to be a framework for activity in which bilateral and multilateral agencies, national governments and higher education institutions, could all participate, mobilising wider co-operative effort for higher education development programmes than single agencies could generate independently. In practice, CHESS has always had to be more of an ideal than a reality because governments decided not to create any central higher education support fund, nor

any administrative body separate from the Higher Education Unit in the Education Programme of the Secretariat, to activate the Scheme. In the event, many of the activities under a 'CHESS' label have been managed by the ACU.

Three priorities were chosen for CHESS: books and materials; higher education management; and staff development. The main thrust of the work undertaken on books and materials in the period 1991 to 1994 was a series of reports and meetings aimed at making academic journals more accessible to developing countries, trying to give developing-country higher education institutions the benefit of the marginal costs of larger print runs. Unfortunately, resource constraints at the Secretariat prevented progress with some of the promising possibilities explored. Useful work was undertaken in staff development, much of it in conjunction with ACU and UNESCO, focused particularly on staff development for women in higher education which was part of wider concern in the Commonwealth with advancing the role and status of women (see Chapter 3).

Management was accorded perhaps the highest priority of all, and protracted staff-work and negotiations with the CFTC eventually brought about agreement to establish the Commonwealth Higher Education Management Service (CHEMS) in 1994 with funding support from the Commonwealth Fund, and facilities made available by the Association of Commonwealth Universities where the service was based. It was directed by John Fielden for the six years of its operations, but has now been subsumed under other ACU programmes. CHEMS has delivered consultancy services to several countries and has published a wide range of guidelines and briefing notes, as well as more substantial publications on education management. A major obstacle was the requirement that as far as possible it 'breaks even' financially. This compelled it to offer its services more to reliable payers, and less to needy developing countries and institutions, than had been intended by the original advocates of the service.

Another new programme developed at the same time as CHEMS, and also seen as a component of CHESS was the Commonwealth Universities' Study Abroad Consortium, launched in 1993. Like CHEMS, this was developed within the ambit of Secretariat work on higher education, in which the Association of Commonwealth Universities participated: it was later (1999) taken over and managed by ACU, which also provides some financial support. It is an international consortium of Commonwealth universities which, within the framework of a common agreement, exchanges students and staff for short stays, agreeing to give credit for study abroad and wherever possible waiving fees. There are now about 70 participating universities, and 200 students were involved in the programmes in the year 2000. The emphasis is on low cost (insofar as fees are waived), an agreed framework of quality control and the benefits to students and staff from spending a period abroad. An executive committee is drawn from member universities.

c. Commonwealth of Learning

The Commonwealth of Learning, based in Vancouver, was the first intergovernmental organisation devoted to distance education. It is unique in Commonwealth terms as the only major Commonwealth agency to have its headquarters away from London. It is an agency responsible to governments but run by a board of governors, which gives it a certain independence and continuity. It has a small staff headed by a president (chief executive). COL reports to education ministers at CCEMs and to Heads of Government at their biennial meetings.

The original report in 1987 of an expert group chaired by Lord Briggs envisaged that COL might have many of the functions of a university institution, including the ability to validate degree programmes offered by other institutions and perhaps even to offer its own degree courses. But Commonwealth governments working through a committee chaired by (now Sir) John Daniel, which met in the first half of 1988, later decided to depart from this model and to create COL as an agency for co-operation in distance education. The Memorandum of Understanding to establish COL was approved on 1 September 1988 and the institution began work by the end of that year. Following the required evaluation and review in 1993, certain changes were made to streamline the constitution.

The budget is funded by voluntary contributions from governments. Canada initially pledged £6m, and there were additional promises of £3m from Brunei Darussalam, £1.5m from Nigeria and £1m from India. Britain originally insisted on making its contribution mainly in kind by offering services at the International Centre for Distance Learning of the Open University, but later agreed to give more flexible financial support and has become, after the governments of Canada and British Columbia, the host province, the largest contributor. India is the next largest contributor and altogether 19 developing countries provided funding in 2000. Currently the organisation has a budget of \$C6m. (about £2.8m) per annum, of which \$4.4m is in contributions from member governments. Three quarters of the expenditure is on projects.

In its promotion of distance education, and distance education co-operation, in Commonwealth member countries, the ten substantive areas in which COL works are:

- creating and developing institutional capacity
- programmes in distance education
- information and consultancy
- staff training and management
- communication links
- evaluation and applied research

- access to teaching materials
- adapting and developing teaching materials
- recognition of academic credit
- support services to students.

In pursuing these tasks, COL has to date delivered more than 600 projects valued at \$C45 million, and has trained 1200 individuals and employed 400 short-term consultants from 39 countries. Most of its work is through working with and energising the capacities of its partners

8 Bilateral and Non-governmental Co-operation

This survey has focused on intergovernmental Commonwealth relationships in education. These were what were inaugurated at Oxford and they form the part of Commonwealth education co-operation that is best articulated and recorded, and so most amenable to a synoptic view. But the official programmes bearing a 'Commonwealth' label account for only a small part of the totality of Commonwealth educational interchange. Official bilateral co-operation between individual member countries of the Commonwealth far exceeds in scale anything that is done through Commonwealth channels. Moreover, there is an extensive range of voluntary, professional and private commercial activities and linkages, including spontaneous and unplanned movement of individual students and teachers. Regional co-operation amongst Commonwealth countries constitutes a further element worthy of note.

a. Bilateral Co-operation in Education

A significant tranche of Commonwealth educational co-operation takes the form of bilateral flows within a multilateral framework. This has always been the status of Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships under the CSFP. Much British assistance for Commonwealth education in the early days followed a similar pattern. Thus the Commonwealth bursaries for teacher education were conceived within the framework of the CECs and progress was regularly reported to ministers even though their administration was solely in the hands of Britain and her partners. Britain's Aid to Commonwealth English (ACE) programme and her Aid to Commonwealth Technology and Science (ACTS) were of the same kind.

About £4-5 million annually is spent on multilaterally-administered Commonwealth education co-operation, half through the Commonwealth Secretariat in London (where a large part of the expenditure consists of staff posts at headquarters) and half through the Commonwealth of Learning in Vancouver. This is only a fraction of what some individual donor countries spend bilaterally each year in support of education in Commonwealth developing countries. One might calculate, for example, that Britain's budgetary share of Commonwealth multilateral co-operation in education is about £1.5 million; its annual contribution to the CSFP

is eight or nine times as great at around £13 million; but it probably spends in the region of £100 million per year in support of education in Commonwealth developing countries under the bilateral programme. Indeed, annual spending on some of the huge individual basic education projects assisted by the UK Department for International Development (DfID) in India or Commonwealth Africa dwarfs the total annual budgets for all multilateral Commonwealth education co-operation put together.

Other Commonwealth 'industrialised' countries, such as Australia, Canada and New Zealand, are also active in bilateral co-operation with developing Commonwealth countries, Canada having especially close links with the Caribbean and certain African countries, while Australia and New Zealand pay particular, but not exclusive, attention to south-east and south Asia and to the Pacific. The list does not by any means end there. Ghana, India, Nigeria, Malaysia, Pakistan and South Africa have all had their own programmes for technical co-operation, involving provision of teachers or of study and training awards.

b. Private and Voluntary Resource Flows for Education

Government-orchestrated exchange in education is complemented by a significant amount of interchange through private and voluntary channels. This includes:

- Commercial for-profit activity by suppliers of educational goods and services to other countries. This may take the form of supplying education-related goods such as laboratory equipment and workshop machinery, computers for classroom and school-office use, or of publishing and selling books and materials for use in the classroom. It can include the supply of services like consultancy, examinations and qualifications, recruitment of teachers, or provision of study and training opportunities. In recent times many universities and colleges in the more developed countries of the Commonwealth have become hardly distinguishable from private profit-making companies, at least in terms of the commercial motivations and behaviour driving their revenue-earning overseas operations.
- Activities of numerous voluntary and religious non-profit NGOs which sponsor schools and education programmes abroad, supplying teachers, giving scholarships, and operating co-operation and exchange schemes. They include churches, missionary societies and religious charities; philanthropic foundations like the Nuffield Foundation and Leverhulme Trust; bodies like Oxfam, Action Aid, Save the Children; or professional organisations.
- Mobility through privately made arrangements, involving international service abroad as teachers or study abroad for education and training. Intra-Commonwealth student mobility at the higher education level was estimated at around 100,000 in 1995/96, since when it has undoubtedly grown.
- Linkage and exchange agencies operating programmes to support and facilitate

twinning of education authorities and schools; or (as for example the League for the Exchange of Commonwealth Teachers), to support interchange of teachers and other educators.

- Professional and other associations/organisations which link education institutions and individual education professionals across the Commonwealth. They include the Association of Commonwealth Universities, the Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa (CAPA), the Commonwealth Institute, the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management (CCEAM), the Commonwealth Association of Science, Technology and Mathematics Educators (CASTME), and the Commonwealth Association for the Education and Training of Adults (CAETA). The most prominent of these is the ACU with its mainstream programmes of scholar exchange, recruitment services and information networking. Membership stands at over 460 universities, almost four times as many as the 121 members at the time of the first Commonwealth Education Conference.
- Finally, there is the phenomenon of distance learning, through print and correspondence, audio and video links, and more recently through on-line computer-based programmes. Increasingly in future co-operation may take the form of mobility of knowledge and virtual education programmes, teacher and teacher, learner and learner, learner and teacher across the Commonwealth's great physical distances.

c. Co-operation among Commonwealth Countries at Regional Level

To complete the picture, there is extensive multilateral co-operation involving Commonwealth countries at the regional level. In the Caribbean and South Pacific there are regional universities, the University of the West Indies and University of the South Pacific, subscribed to in each case by several Commonwealth governments. Regional examination bodies, most notably the Caribbean Examinations Council and the West African Examinations Council, have long records of service to member countries. Regional groupings of countries, in the Caribbean (Caricom), south Asia (South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation), South Pacific and Southern Africa, bring together Commonwealth members in various kinds of co-operative endeavour, including education programmes. These regional institutions also include a small minority of non-Commonwealth members. Although economies of scale and geographical contiguity are a major part of their *raison d'être*, the shared language and common institutional heritage derived from a colonial past and Commonwealth membership are important underpinnings of effective activity.

In aggregate, these different facets of Commonwealth interaction through education constitute an impressive array of co-operative endeavours. They build on a heritage of shared language in English, similar structures and practices in educa-

tional organisation, and many shared understandings about appropriate professional roles for administrators, inspectors, heads and teachers, or about the relative autonomy to be enjoyed by higher education institutions. They provide a strong foundation for co-operation and exchange and for the fruitful sharing of experience.

9 Assessing the Impact of Official Co-operation

What conclusions might one draw about the overall effect of the official programmes of Commonwealth educational co-operation described in this chapter, and about the extent to which they have had a beneficial impact on education in member countries?

Any assessment has to take account of the broad context of international activity and resource flows. External influences and resources are small in relation to the complete range of influences and expenditures on education by Commonwealth member countries. Moreover, the Commonwealth's own contribution, within the total international flow of resources for development, is tiny. The combined budgets of Commonwealth official institutions, for all sectors and purposes, amount to the equivalent of about \$50 million p.a., compared with annual World Bank resource commitments 100 times as large, and a British government aid budget 80 times as big. The United Kingdom is the largest aid donor among the 54 Commonwealth countries but only channels 1% of its multilateral contributions to and through Commonwealth institutions. For these reasons, the separate and specific impacts of Commonwealth initiatives are likely to be difficult to disentangle from other influences, and are likely to be small in relation to the problems targeted.

In this regard, one should distinguish between influence and resources. As explained above, the Commonwealth has not been a major channel for resource flows compared with other agencies. The only real exceptions to this are the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan and, while it lasted, the Commonwealth Bursaries Scheme. Each of these activities, it should be noted, was bilaterally funded within a multilateral Commonwealth framework. Both programmes were conceived at a time when staffing deficits in newly independent Commonwealth countries were a real constraint on development. The opportunities provided by CSFP for advanced study, particularly in the period when modern university development was in its initial stages in Africa and other developing areas, and when postgraduate study provision was limited, were exceedingly valuable and a significant proportion of senior staff in the new universities of former British colonies was able to benefit. As university systems have developed and grown, the relative significance of CSFP in quantitative terms has naturally diminished, though it remains as one of the larger scholarship programmes benefiting the developing world. In the same way the education bursaries were, while they lasted, of real significance in building up the cadres of education professionals, particularly in teacher education but also in curriculum development and management and administration of Commonwealth developing countries at a critical period. Any

survey of senior professional staff in the education systems of Commonwealth Africa, the Caribbean, Malaysia and the South Pacific would show that large numbers of them acquired professional qualifications and experience through the Bursaries Scheme.

In the 1990s, the Commonwealth of Learning has occupied a 'niche' position as a source of technical assistance and advice in distance education. Its resources are not substantial, but COL is visible, specialised and today relatively well-known. In its own field it has had considerable impact in helping countries to take the early steps in familiarising themselves with, and exploiting, the potential of distance education.

In much of the rest of its work, the Commonwealth's influence on educational development has been less in terms of resources than in providing a forum for creating awareness about international issues and in giving leadership in developing new thinking. This is indeed the proper role for any secretariat which is potentially well-endowed with professional expertise but short of programme funds.

At the policy-making level of ministers and ministries of education, the Commonwealth contribution has probably been most important in making developing countries aware of common problems and shared interests, and in helping them to articulate their views on international issues in education. In that regard, the work of specialist groups on student mobility and higher education co-operation, on distance education and human resource development were especially useful. The Secretariat analyses on major conference themes like education financing and resource use, vocational orientation of education, quality of education and the changing role of the state in education were highly regarded by policy-makers, as have been the syntheses of country experiences.

In a number of areas of professional work, Commonwealth activity has been influential. In the 1970s and early 1980s well-valued resource books were produced on, for example, low-cost publishing, teachers' centres, in-service teacher education, community libraries and non-formal education. Unfortunately, the impact of some of these was limited because of the ineptitude of the Secretariat in marketing its publications. A later series of publications on community contributions to education and shift schooling, and particularly the resource materials on teacher management and support and headteacher training, were far better disseminated. In some cases this resulted from the use of commercial publishers and in others from a partnership with international bodies like UNESCO who co-published with the Secretariat.

Generally the Secretariat's work over much of its existence has suffered from the disease, which also besets much of UNESCO activity, of 'tokenism'. A topic becomes fashionable in international dialogue and an agency is open to criticism if it fails to include a mention in its programme. A small activity such as a consultative meeting or a commissioned study is then included in the programme but without sufficient resources for proper impact, dissemination or follow-up. There is no discernible trace of the activity five years later. This fate befell many Commonwealth initiatives.

Where the Secretariat has achieved critical mass of resources, selecting a key theme and creating a more substantial sub-programme of activities around it, there has been considerably more impact and the Commonwealth has become a leader in the field. At the end of the 1980s, in response to resource shortage, a conscious effort was made to cluster activity around fewer main themes with generally beneficial results. This same resource shortage had the effect of driving the Secretariat to seek co-funding partners for its work and this had the paradoxical effect of making Secretariat work known more widely.

It is possible to give a few examples of Commonwealth Secretariat work in education which benefited from concentration of resources and/or partnership with others, consequently achieving deeper impact. The work of the Standing Committee over more than a decade in addressing both Commonwealth student mobility and capacity-building in Commonwealth universities and the follow-up work leading to the creation of CUSAC, was one; and the work on distance education, leading to the creation of COL was another. Others included higher education co-operation activity involving collaboration with the ACU and UNESCO on staff development for women; the extensive series of activities on education development in small states of the Commonwealth; and the substantial work, mainly in Commonwealth Africa, on teacher management and support. The pioneering work of the Commonwealth on these last two themes, where the Secretariat had an international leadership role for many years, has been taken up by other agencies like UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), which have since made them major planks in their own programmes.

10 Challenge and Constraint

After attempting to assess impact, it is logical to move on to an analysis of strengths and weaknesses of Commonwealth co-operation in education, and the opportunities and threats it now faces. The analysis will be tackled mainly in terms of official pan-Commonwealth programmes.

a. Strengths

From many points of view, Commonwealth education co-operation gives the appearance of being in good health. Commonwealth Heads of Government regularly affirm their commitment to education and its importance to the Commonwealth. Education ministers' conferences are well attended and produce a warm glow of approval for the principle of education collaboration among Commonwealth countries, enunciated more formally through the Halifax Statement on Education in the Commonwealth, *Education for our Common Future*, in November 2000.

There is an array of institutions and programmes bearing a Commonwealth education label, both intergovernmental and non-governmental. The creation of the Commonwealth of Learning just 12 years ago, followed by CHEMS and CUSAC, represents further development of the co-operation infrastructure. New

initiatives are being taken in the area of school networking via electronic links. A Commission on Commonwealth Studies reported three years ago. The number of students moving between Commonwealth countries appears to be at record levels.

The Commonwealth has significant comparative advantage in educational co-operation. Common possession of English as the major world language and a heritage of shared institutions make the interchange of experience and personnel both fruitful and relatively easy. Many of the Commonwealth's institutions like the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan, the Commonwealth of Learning, the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation and the Association of Commonwealth Universities are envied in other parts of the world and provide a platform for building future developments. There is also a strong Commonwealth infrastructure for educational collaboration at regional level, in the shape of shared university institutions and examination bodies in Africa, the Caribbean and the South Pacific.

The comparative intimacy and friendly informality of ministerial conferences, with round-table dialogues and working groups, may have been diluted somewhat by the growth of Commonwealth membership, but still stand in sharp and welcome contrast to the rostrum-cum-assembly-hall model that has to prevail in larger international gatherings. Over the years, the Secretariat has developed procedures for backing debate with good documentation and for ensuring that discussion is purposeful and productive.

The fact that Commonwealth membership spans the industrialised-developing country divide, yet contains a great majority of developing-country members, makes its deliberations both relevant to developing countries and reflective of their concerns on co-operation issues. It is natural that the Commonwealth should have focused so much of its activity on South-South co-operation, third country training, capacity-building and regional and sub-regional dialogue. Smaller countries, too, can feel confident that their particular problems and constraints are in the minds of discussants. All of this gives a greater sense of ownership to developing countries. And while nearly all members enjoy good relations with the United States, many find it refreshing to meet in a truly international forum where the business is not built around, or unduly influenced by, American agendas and interests.

The official multilateral Commonwealth picture is reinforced by strong traditions of co-operation through bilateral relationships and by the activities of NGOs. The United Kingdom, particularly, has sharply increased bilateral educational assistance, mainly at basic education level, to individual Commonwealth recipients like India, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia and South Africa, and has recently announced its intention to establish a fund which will ensure access to basic education for every child in the Commonwealth. Canada and Australia are also important sources of assistance. Of particular significance for the future are the smaller but growing assistance programmes of countries like India, Malaysia, Nigeria and South Africa, which are simultaneously recipients and donors. Non-government agencies like Oxfam have

also become much more heavily involved with education in recent years. There are active pan-Commonwealth NGOs in the education sector which provide professional networks with a potential to serve as partners with official agencies in international co-operation. In both Gaborone and Halifax the ministers' conference deliberations have been enhanced by dialogue with other parts of civil society through 'parallel events' in the form of a symposium and trade fair.

b. Weaknesses

Commonwealth educational co-operation clearly has much going for it, but at the same time operates considerably below need and potential. Need is everywhere apparent, and in the years immediately following the EFA Conference in Dakar, Commonwealth members are chastened by the realisation that Commonwealth Africa and south Asia contain a large proportion of the world's out-of-school children. Response must mainly be the responsibility of national governments; beyond the reference in the Halifax Statement there is little sign that the Commonwealth collectively sees the situation as a spur to common action.

In terms of potential, the Commonwealth has a formidable educational infrastructure, but one that is starved of resources. As we have seen, the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan had only seven donors among 54 Commonwealth member countries in 1999, and the number of awards, which stood at over 1800 in 1993, has declined to a little over 1000 today – a far cry from the 2000 awards that Chief Anyaoku set in 1993 as the target for the millennium. The Commonwealth of Learning, which has pioneered Commonwealth co-operation in distance education, has been forced to work with a budget considerably smaller than in the years immediately after its foundation. The Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation and Commonwealth Foundation both operate well below capacity and the same is true of the Commonwealth Secretariat's education team, where experienced professional staff lack the resources to implement the good ideas and intentions of member countries. Failure to use existing proven capacity is in some ways more tragic than failure to build new capacity.

The separation within the Commonwealth of responsibility for strategic and policy work undertaken by the Education Department, and the allocation of assistance resources to education by CFTC, represents another awkwardness in current arrangements. Education ministers are not asked to advise CFTC on use of its resources to support the education sector, nor do they receive a report on past use for education of CFTC funds.

The very structure of the Commonwealth is part of the problem, containing as it does only a small proportion of industrialised countries and few sizeable middle-income ones. As a result, the 'ABC' countries (Australia, Britain, Canada) are asked to carry a high proportion of the burden of Commonwealth educational and other co-operation. Britain and Canada, just two out of 54 Commonwealth members, provide 90% of the CSFP awards, 60% of the funding of CFTC and two-

thirds of the resources available to COL. In such circumstances it is tempting to argue for 'no representation without taxation', particularly in relation to CSFP with its seven donors in the latest year; and perhaps even in the case of COL, despite its success in attracting 23 donors in 2000.

Present Commonwealth structures do not assist continuity and leadership in the field of education. Because of domestic political processes, only a few Commonwealth ministers of education survive from one triennial conference to the next: those that do – like K. P. Morake of Botswana, Ranil Wickremesinghe of Sri Lanka, Dzingai Mutumbuka of Zimbabwe, Nahas Angula of Namibia, Burchell Whiteman of Jamaica or John Horne of St Vincent – can bring previous experience to the ongoing debate but they are too few in number to provide the necessary continuity and to develop a collective will. So each CCEM is as much a learning process for the inexperienced as an occasion for the exercise of leadership and the formulation of policy and new initiatives.

Civil servants and professionals have a longer 'life' than their ministers, but existing Commonwealth structures may largely marginalise them, given that their ministers are properly the spokespersons for their countries in the triennial Conferences. The Board of Governors of the Commonwealth of Learning is a useful model, blending ministerial, public service and academic representation and thus giving responsibility and providing continuity. The Secretariat's two valuable mechanisms for applying commitment and expertise on a continuing basis to educational co-operation have both been 'de-commissioned'. One was the Commonwealth Education Liaison Committee in its heyday in the 1960s: the other was the Standing Committee on Student Mobility. It can be argued that the most creative periods of Commonwealth education activity coincided with active work of these bodies. The experience suggests that for Commonwealth co-operation to flourish it requires its 'champions'; and thought needs to be given to the kinds of structures which will provide roles and opportunities for such people to make a creative contribution. What seems to be needed is a new 'education think tank' of distinguished sympathetic educators from around the Commonwealth, constituting a semi-permanent senior group to assist ministers and the Secretariat in education and advise on the direction of Commonwealth activity in education between the ministerial conferences.

This is all the more desirable in that in recent decades the highest echelons of the Secretariat have been staffed by diplomatic-service officials. Nurturing the professional and cultural foundations on which the strengths of the Commonwealth rest may not be their 'forte'. This is a very different situation from that in the 1960s and 1970s when education had its own representative in the highest councils of the Secretariat. Given that politics and economics understandably dominate in CHOGMs, it becomes all the more important to ensure that education co-operation does not languish by default.

A closely related issue is the difficulty of orchestrating constructive professional

dialogue at senior level on a Commonwealth-wide basis. The former structures with their pre-conference meetings of civil servants and professionals, and the specialist conferences in between the CECs, provided more occasions for senior professionals to interact than exist now. University vice-chancellors meet under the auspices of ACU, but there are fewer opportunities for other university staff, for members of the school-teaching profession, and local and central government education administrators, other than in regional and sub-regional workshops. A few Commonwealth NGOs exist in education, but they mostly have restricted reach and lack the resources to develop effective programmes; the paltry sums (in relation to need) made available to the Commonwealth Foundation preclude it from assisting such NGOs on any substantial scale. There has been no Commonwealth association mobilising the largest group of professionals, the teachers. In this respect education is in a weak position compared with professions like law and medicine which have more private and independent practitioners, and many more 'well-heeled' members able to pay their own way when necessary.

c. Threats

The biggest threat to co-operation in education is lack of interest in the Commonwealth and in educational co-operation. In part this results from historical processes of closer regional integration in Europe, in Asia and the Pacific and in Africa, diverting attention and interest from the kind of association that the Commonwealth represents. The low level of representation of some industrialised countries at CCEMs may reflect a sense that their peers in education are other OECD countries, rather than their Commonwealth partners. In part, lack of interest reflects a failure to engage young people with the Commonwealth and its values, a neglect of Commonwealth studies and of teaching and learning about the Commonwealth in schools. Some have observed that CHOGMs give less attention than global political fora like the G8, UN Assembly or World Bank/IMF to education issues. It seems anomalous that education should be near the top of national agendas and yet apparently so low in the list of the Commonwealth's collective priorities.

This anomaly was apparent in the recent high-level review of the Commonwealth undertaken by Heads of Government which failed to accord education a place as one of the priorities for the coming period. In the Halifax conference communiqué it was affirmed that 'Ministers intend to make a formal representation to the High-Level Review Group and in so doing emphasise that the promotion of Commonwealth education co-operation should remain a key and discrete function of the Commonwealth Secretariat'. This case, that education is at the heart of Commonwealth concerns and of crucial importance to Commonwealth survival, will need to be made strongly by the wider education community in member countries, by youth and business leaders. The erosion of so many institutions concerned with education co-operation, and with education about the Commonwealth, shows how real is the danger.

It is clear that Commonwealth co-operative institutions cannot survive on the basis that they will be funded voluntarily by a handful of wealthier countries. Developing countries must carry a greater share of responsibility for the budgets of Commonwealth programmes and must do their bit in the CSFP. It is a case of 'casting one's bread upon the waters'. The effect of substantial developing-country donations to a cause found to be important was shown in Vancouver in 1987, when the readiness of Brunei Darussalam, India and Nigeria to promise substantial financial support to the establishment of COL gave a significant boost to Canadian and other efforts to get that organisation off the ground.

Ministers and others need to confront and debate the issue of whether Commonwealth co-operation in education is essentially a form of development aid or is based on interchange between equals and the concept of sharing. Current financial structures make far more resources available for direct assistance to individual member countries and not enough for consultation, analysis and the development of common positions through working groups and studies as the basis for action. Lying behind this is an uncertainty as to whether the Secretariat exists mainly to facilitate bilateral exchange between its members, or to promote collective Commonwealth action and institutions.

The same tension exists between those who distrust secretariats as inefficient bureaucracies intent on keeping themselves in business, and those who see secretariats as necessary instruments for balancing the interests of different parties on any issue and for promoting common endeavour. There is certainly a danger that staffing of the Education Department in the Secretariat will fall below the critical mass of six to ten professionals that are necessary to service the mandates handed down by ministers. The cry for greater efficiency and effectiveness is in danger of going too far, with creative professionals hamstrung for lack of funds and expected to spend too much time in meeting reporting and evaluation demands and in seeking to raise money from non-Commonwealth partners that ought to be provided by Commonwealth governments.

The commercialisation of education and of other public services represents both a threat and an opportunity. The recent CEC/UKCOSA report on Commonwealth student mobility shows how, on the one hand, commercial incentives have been important in expanding mobility, but that they have, on the other, also given rise to growing inequality. In the important area of information technology, too, there will be a need to safeguard the common public interest in the face of commercially-driven developments. On such issues, Commonwealth institutions are well-placed to orchestrate consultation and identification of acceptable common ground.

d. Opportunities

The opportunities for the Commonwealth in educational co-operation stem from its comparative advantages of shared language and institutional forms and its potentially strong institutional framework for advancing its common interests. Its

inclusiveness in terms of countries of different sizes, cultures and levels of income mean that it is well placed to exploit the dynamics of diversity. In seeking to advance and protect the public interest of a wide international community, these are valuable assets.

The Commonwealth has special experience in regional co-operation in education, bringing about economies of scale and a sharing of costs and benefits. This has been most apparent in regional universities and examination arrangements and in the shared consultations on regional education issues. This experience should be analysed and more widely shared with a view to exploring its applicability elsewhere. It has a particular value in the context of small states, of which the Commonwealth has an abundance, making it especially well placed to explore the particular challenges that small-country education systems face. But successful experiences of regional co-operation have lessons for relationships among larger states too. Exchange of experiences between large multi-jurisdictional member countries about interrelating and co-ordinating the work of different authorities would be valuable as well.

The possibilities of further developing co-operation in the application of distance education and new communication technologies are immense, and a field where the Commonwealth has special strengths, both at national level and in the Commonwealth of Learning. The new information and communication technology are prominent among the areas where the Halifax themes of 'expanding access' and ensuring 'opportunities for diversity' need urgently to be put into practice.

The obverse of the coin of commercialism in education is that private sector companies involved in manufacturing and publishing, providing services to public education, or running parallel independent systems of non-government schools, have expertise and resources to share with public systems. Commonwealth countries have much experience of private sector involvement in education and the Commonwealth would be well placed to develop protocols and guidelines on beneficial partnerships between public and private sectors, and to generate case studies of best practice.

Focused attention needs to be given to achieving greater synergy within the Secretariat between the professionals in education and the resources of CFTC; between London-based institutions and the Commonwealth of Learning in Vancouver; between Commonwealth multilateral institutions and bilateral assistance; and between the world of official activity and the private sector on the one hand, and professional associations and NGOs on the other. Some have suggested that there might be a useful role for a Commonwealth Education Council or Forum, in some sense analogous to the Commonwealth Business Council.

What is clear is that there is great latent energy and potential among the various public and civil-society agencies engaged in promoting Commonwealth co-operation in education. As the fifth decade of such co-operation rolls in, an attempt to chart a new course seems timely and the Halifax Conference and Statement con-

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stitute a useful starting point since the high-level review proved to be unable, in the time available to it, to map out roles and productive relationships between the different agencies and programmes in the education sector, ministers of education might themselves usefully take the initiative in doing so.