

COMMONWEALTH CO-OPERATION IN EDUCATION

THE COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT

Introduction

This paper is provided as an information document covering areas and avenues in and through which the Commonwealth Secretariat operates and serves all member governments.

The Commonwealth Secretariat is the central agency of 46 Commonwealth Governments and consists of a number of departments each charged with responsibility for a special area of Commonwealth Co-operation. These departments, known as Divisions, include Education, Economic Affairs (including Industrial Affairs), Medical and Legal, International Affairs, Administration, Youth, Information, Science and Division of Applied Studies in Government. There are also three Divisions under the C.F.T.C. (Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation) i.e. Education and Training and General Technical Assistance and Field Personnel and Service Divisions, as well as new divisions supported by C.F.T.C. funds such as Food Production and Rural Development, Export Marketing Division and the recently established Industrial Development Unit.

It will be seen from the foregoing that the Commonwealth Secretariat embraces a wide range of inter-governmental activities of which Education is one. Each Division is headed by a Director and a small team of professional staff, ranging from three or four to about twenty in the bigger Divisions. Cost-benefit considerations are basic to the Secretariat's operations in all fields.

The Education Division consists of the Director, an Assistant Director and seven other professional staff. These cover the whole range of educational co-operation mandated by Commonwealth Governments through the mechanism of the triennial Pan-Commonwealth Conference of Ministers of Education. At present our areas of activity include Technical and Vocational Education, Teacher Education, Science and Mathematics, Primary and Secondary Education, Educational Administration and Supervision, Higher Education, Book Development, Education Media and Materials, Distance Education, Curriculum and Examinations. We are also working in the relatively new area of Non-Formal Education, including Adult Education. We have recently begun a programme of education about the Commonwealth mandated by the 1977 meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government in London. In addition to these pre-occupations, staff are also assigned to cover geographical regions of the Commonwealth, partly through a systematic programme of personal liaison visits periodically during the three year period between Ministerial Conferences. They are also required to be well informed on educational matters in their geographical areas.

Our strategies take the form of Workshops such as this, seminars, commissioned studies or research into specific education subjects and the publication of reports on such studies, workshops or seminars; training courses of varying duration, specialist conferences and the collection and dissemination of educational information among member governments. These activities in terms of both content and strategy, are reviewed every three years at the conference of Commonwealth Ministers of Education where priorities in areas of educational concern in member states are identified for Secretariat action. One important area of activity which the Education Division shares with the Association of Commonwealth Universities (A.C.U.) is the administrative co-ordination of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (C.S.F.P.). This programme is probably well known to participants here as a scholarship programme primarily designed for the University system, and generally for post-graduate - but also where essential, for under-graduate programmes.

International Co-operation in Technical Education

Over the last few years, Commonwealth Co-operation in the area of Technical Education has been largely geared towards surveys and studies commissioned in various aspects of this field. We have organised workshops in Technical Education in Hong Kong (1976), in Ibadan, Nigeria (1978) and convened meetings in connection with the establishment of CAPA in Nairobi (1977) and Freetown, Sierra Leone (1978). The present Workshop is the first specifically intended to deal with Teacher Training in Technical Education, in the Africa region.

In this field of technical education, we have co-operated with International Organisations from time to time, particularly with E.C.A. (Addis Ababa) and UNESCO. One activity of common interest in this connection, has been the joint planning for the establishment of an African Institute for the Training of Higher Technical Teacher Trainers under the auspices of the U.N.D.P./E.C.A. This Institute, the establishment of which is in its final planning stages, was expected to become operational in 1980. Through the establishment of CAPA, the Secretariat hopes to have initiated a mechanism for another avenue of co-operation not only within Commonwealth Africa, but ultimately with other countries of the region. It is hoped that in co-operation with UNESCO's Regional Office in East Africa and its Science Office in Nairobi, the link with non-Commonwealth Africa can be rapidly developed.

Other Strategies for Commonwealth Co-operation

Perhaps one of the most important aims of the Secretariat is the well-known Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (C.F.T.C.). Its Finance and Field Personnel Services Division has responsibility for the appointment, processing and servicing of Commonwealth Technical Assistance Experts in the field. The two other divisions of the C.F.T.C. which are of interest

and relevance to this Workshop are Education and Training and the General Technical Assistance Divisions.

The Education and Training Division responds to training requests from member countries by providing funds for national and regional training programmes submitted by governments and approved as valuable by C.F.T.C. The General Technical Assistance Division responds to requests from governments to provide general technical assistance in a wide range of fields. The fundamental criterion for C.F.T.C.'s financial support of programme requests from member states is that such projects shall be clearly development-oriented, i.e. contributing directly to development within the economies of member states. There is generally a national government body which is the contact agency for C.F.T.C. within each member state. It is usually a Ministry or Department of Economic Development or Planning, Finance or often the Prime Minister's or President's Office. Fuller information on the mechanics of application for project support can be obtained from the national office, or direct from the Secretariat in London.

The Commonwealth Foundation

Another body located in Marlborough House, called "the Commonwealth Foundation" is an inter-governmental body established to further the advancement of professional bodies and associations in the Commonwealth. The Foundation gives support to such activities as professional visits of university, legal, medical staff; to short-term attachments, specific research activities, etc. Applications for such assistance are addressed to the Director of the Commonwealth Foundation, Marlborough House, London.

The Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan

The Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan consists of a series of bilateral awards provided by member countries of the Commonwealth. Details of the scheme are available from the Association of Commonwealth Universities or the Commonwealth Secretariat's Education Division. The plan consists of some 40 odd national award schemes based in each country and simply co-ordinated at Marlborough House. In practice an award under the Plan is offered by a member country to nationals of all Commonwealth countries and applications are addressed directly to the awarding country which makes the selection from Commonwealth nominations and announces the final names of awarded fellows to the applicants' countries. Once again the agency through which applications are forwarded is located in each applicant's country, usually in the Ministry or Department of Education, or External Aid Bureau. The Administrative point of reference in London for the C.S.F.P. is the Secretary-General of the Association of Commonwealth Universities. Our main role at present is to provide member countries with an overall picture

of the operation of the scheme which, in 1977, totalled one thousand (1000) fellowships throughout the Commonwealth. The 7th Ministerial Conference indicated a target of one thousand five hundred (1500) awards by 1980 following a favourable review of the scheme so far. This target however, is still far from being achieved.

The Commonwealth Desk

One of our latest efforts to improve and develop communication between Commonwealth member states and the Commonwealth Secretariat is the establishment of a Commonwealth Desk within each national Ministry of Education - (generally located in the International or Foreign Aid or External Education Division or Section). It acts as an avenue for expediting action requested by the Secretariat or vice versa, particularly in the collection or dissemination of educational information. Such dissemination generally takes the form of circulating Secretariat publications, reports, surveys, and collecting educational information through questionnaires, enquiries or national experiments and innovative developments in education. The establishment of the Commonwealth Desk is only a recent development and we look forward to its growth and increasing effectiveness as the system takes firmer shape.

This paper has attempted to draw a very bare outline of Secretariat activities for the purpose of information of delegates. It is hoped that participants will be stimulated through it not only to seek fuller information on their return home, but also to assist in disseminating the information provided here, in pursuit of staff training and development activities arising out of this Workshop - whether of a short - or of a long duration, in-country or overseas. The chances of support for such programmes will of course be greater if they derive from National Development Plans already established by their Governments.