

REPORT OF WORKING GROUP C

Chairman: Hon. Darrell E. Rolle, Minister of Education, The Bahamas.

Policy and Organisational Links Between Education and Employment

1. Education and Employment

1.1 The relationship between education and employment was examined. It was not a simple relationship. Education had a number of outcomes of which preparation for employment was only one. Furthermore, while education might be a necessary condition for employment it was not a sufficient one: solutions to the problems of unemployment had to be sought in the economic and political sectors and not merely in the educational sector. But education was an essential factor in preparing for employment.

1.2 Education should thus be seen as something which enabled the individual to lead a rewarding and productive life, but did not necessarily lead to employment in the modern sector. It was possible to distinguish four kinds of economic activity which individuals might take up on completing their education: employment in the modern sector; employment in the traditional sector (e.g. agriculture or fishing; self-employment; and working in a co-operative enterprise). In planning education it was necessary to keep these various possibilities in mind.

2. Vocational Training and Work Experience at School

2.1 Work experience and vocational or prevocational training might be brought into schools in various ways which were conditioned by differences between educational systems. Some were highly pyramidal, with only a small proportion of the age group going from primary to secondary and tertiary education. Others had near or complete universal secondary education. Strategies in a particular country for relating education to work would depend on the nature of these education structures. Some secondary schools already had a strong vocational bias and curriculum arrangements provided that the vocational element should take up increasing proportions of the time in successive years of education.

2.2 Despite the differences in educational situation, there were strong arguments that schools should have a concern for the world of work. First, one of the functions of schools in any system was to prepare children for work. Second, it was a false dichotomy to separate learning from work, and it was necessary to counter the idea that the educated should not do manual work or that manual workers did not need education.

2.3 Nevertheless there were difficulties and dangers in seeking to make schools reflect too closely the demands of the labour market. The introduction of some pre-vocational and vocational elements and work experience into schools presented difficulties in terms of curriculum, organisation, and resources, as follows:

2.3.1 Too narrow a vocational education would not produce school graduates with the flexibility to enter a variety of different occupations.

2.3.2 If children were early divided into streams labelled "academic" and "vocational" the results would most probably be inequitable.

2.3.3 Children needed to learn basic skills at school in communication, in ordinary school subjects, in social skills, and in the sciences, which should take precedence over narrow vocational training.

2.3.4 Vocational training was likely to increase school costs.

2.4 In the light of these difficulties member governments should take note of the following principles:

2.4.1 A first priority was for children to receive a basic education, although the content of this would not necessarily follow completely traditional lines.

2.4.2 There were advantages in introducing some prevocational education into schools but vocational training was also the responsibility of post-school agencies, including employers, employers' associations, apprenticeship schemes, and tertiary institutions.

2.5 A number of different ways of relating schools more closely to the world of work and of introducing work experience to schools had been tried in various Commonwealth countries. These included, for example, arranging for interaction between trade union and employer representatives and schools; careers guidance for school children; attempts to influence attitudes of parents and children to the relation between education and work; the creation of production units within schools; and the integration of work experience with formal education. But while experience of this kind was important, and experiments had been carried out in a number of countries, it was a relatively uncharted area.

2.6 There were, in many countries, particular problems in offering vocational and prevocational education to girls, including in some countries problems over attitudes. There was even a danger that an increasing focus on prevocational education might increase the relative educational disadvantage of girls.

2.7 The following recommendations were made:

C.1 A study should be made, with reference to prevocational and vocational education, of different approaches to the provision of work experience in schools.

C.2 An enquiry should be made into the particular needs for vocational and prevocational education for girls which would open wider opportunities to them and for strategies to meet these needs.

3. Job Creation

3.1 Education would not, of itself, create jobs but it could provide conditions in which their creation was made easier. In many countries, job creation had to relate to the rural sector and not merely to the urban. The role of schools was one of facilitator rather than prime mover.

3.2 In some countries the scale of the problem of creating jobs and providing educational and training services related to them was such that national initiatives were seen as being the prime way of solving the problems. But the role of non-government organisations in these areas was important and in a number of countries there was experience of successful schemes by non-government organisations. Such experience could more readily be multiplied if it were better documented.

3.3 The following recommendation was made on job creation:

C.3 A study should be made, based on both case studies and analysis, and taking account of the country papers submitted to the Conference, of successful schemes by non-government organisations to create jobs and provide associated training. This or a related study should also examine the role of schools in job creation.

4. Continuing Education and Education for Adults

4.1 Changing demands on schools put new responsibilities on teachers, who had to undertake new roles, come to terms with changes in information technology, and play a part in adult education. In some countries it was necessary for teachers to change their attitudes to both industrial and agricultural work. All these changes made continuing education for teachers a necessity.

4.2 Education out of school was important more generally for those who needed to acquire new skills, those who had left school early, those who had not obtained the kind of employment which they had been seeking and for which they had been trained. The shortage of resources for education meant that conventional forms of education could not be expanded to meet all these needs. Non-traditional methods including the use of mass media, distance teaching and informal study groups might be relevant here. Experiments in the use of such methods in both the urban and the rural sector should be encouraged.

4.3 It was recommended that:

C.4 The Secretariat should carry out studies of the use of non-traditional methods of education, considering their methodology, effects, costs and relationship with conventional education.

5. Co-ordination

5.1 Bringing schools and work closer together created problems of co-ordination both nationally and at the level of the individual school or college. At the national level co-ordination was necessary between ministries where a ministry other than education had a training function, and with organisations of employers, trade unions, professionals and others. Various structures for such co-operation could be identified: their common feature was that to be effective they needed strong political backing. At local level there was a need for parallel structures which would include employers, trade unions and voluntary associations.

5.2 At the level of individual schools, it was in many countries necessary to achieve closer liaison with employers, trade unions, and non-government organisations, extension services and in some cases voluntary associations. It was recognised that it was sometimes difficult

to persuade employers to accept a responsibility for training. Persuasion, the writing of requirements to accept such responsibility into government contracts, and in some cases legislation had been used as strategies to ensure co-operation between the education and employment sectors. There was a need to recognise that some of the costs of training should rest with employers rather than with governments.

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REPORT OF WORKING GROUP D

Chairman: Hon. Barry Blyth Holloway, KBE, Minister for Education,
Papua New Guinea.

The Contribution of Education Systems (Formal and Non-Formal) in Improving Young People's Access to Work

1. Introduction

1.1 It is not easy to reach a common understanding as to the meaning of employment. Such is the economic, social and political diversity of the Commonwealth that terms such as employment, work and jobs require clarification if cross-national comparisons are to lead to useful conclusions.

1.2 The developing countries of the Commonwealth are predominantly rural. Up to 80 per cent of the population lead agricultural, semi-subsistence lives. For them life is work; work which encompasses many facets of life including food production, cash crop farming, home-care, house-building, road-mending etc. Salaried jobs are few. Those that are available are predominantly in towns and are usually restricted to people with paper qualifications.

1.3 In the industrialised countries of the Commonwealth, whilst there are those who work in the home or in an unpaid capacity, paid work is generally available. This may be through self-employment, through employment by public or private agency or, in some countries, in co-operative sharing activities.

1.4 These distinctions are not clear cut. In the developed countries there is growing evidence of alternative lifestyles which reject the world of regular salaries. In the developing Commonwealth the informal economy, urban and rural, gives rise to occasional, seasonal and irregular sources of monetary income. It is within this complex of contexts that the unemployment of young people in Commonwealth countries must be viewed.

1.5 To this backdrop must be added distinctive demographic contrasts. In the developing Commonwealth young people predominate, forming the broad base of a population pyramid. In some of the industrialised countries of the Commonwealth populations are ageing.