

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.

1.6 Within each of the Commonwealth countries young people have their own and distinctive aspirations. They have views on whether they wish to work in their home community, obtain a salaried job, or seek activity outside either of these traditional employment arenas. Unemployment will have different meanings according to national and local circumstance. That it is a widespread Commonwealth concern is evident, but its manifestations and causes are various.

1.7 The Working Group makes the following recommendation:

*D.1 The Secretariat should assist with the collection and dissemination of information on young people's perceptions of employment and employment opportunities.*

## 2. Schools

2.1 What can schools do to help young people towards gainful employment or productive activity? What are their limitations? What should be expected of them and not expected of them?

2.2 In the industrialised world most young people leave school after eight or nine years of compulsory education. In the developing countries of the Commonwealth the majority leave at the end of primary education after perhaps five, six or seven years of schooling.

2.3 During these crucial years it is vitally important that schooling prepares young people for a varied adult life in which they are able to develop personally and contribute to the community in which they live. It is important that they acquire a broad range of basic skills and knowledge and develop attitudes and values conducive to their effective application. With this in mind, schools should seek to provide a broad and basic education leading to numeracy and literacy, a social and personal awareness, a capacity to accept and initiate change and a set of basic manual skills which will equip young people to work in the community and give them the capacity to develop additional skills in a wage earning job.

2.4 However, the formulation of an appropriate curriculum to match these aims is far from easy. Primary and junior secondary education are the first stages for those who aspire to well paid jobs. In the developing countries, this basic level of education is the one and only stage for the majority whose future lies in a rural, semi-subsistence society. In the industrialised world the same educational ladder applies but many more jobs are available.

2.5 It is extremely difficult for schools in the developing countries to offer a meaningful preparation for rural living and at the same time provide a first stepping stone for salaried employment. In the minds of most students, teachers and parents, the school points unmistakably down the second road.

2.6 Schools must equip young people with a sense of realism in what they may expect of the world of employment. They must counter some of the wilder aspirations which arise in a world of television and instant communication. Attitudes such as these develop early. In some countries this realisation leads to prevocational education - the first step to establish a balanced view of the possibilities which the social economy may realistically offer.

2.7 Schools should inform and orient young people towards opportunities for gainful activity. This may be an inbuilt part of the curriculum. More overtly it may require guidance and counselling of students and parents alike; guidance towards employment opportunities, and help towards the establishment of self-employment activities. The objectives must be attainable. They must reflect what is possible and realistic.

2.8 In imparting skills of a technical or prevocational nature, schools must assess whether they are the best institutions to carry out the task. There is increasing concern over the expense involved in establishing technical education facilities at all levels of the education system. Equipment is expensive and teachers are scarce. Realism must imbue all such initiatives. Are prevocational skills best learnt on the job or in special training institutions? Will the image of technical education, its value and its purpose, have much chance of success if it is assigned to children of lesser academic attainment? Should basic technical skills be something which all children should be expected to acquire during their schooling experience as part of a broad and balanced curriculum?

2.9 An essential component of formal schooling is science. Science teaching, itself often handicapped by a shortage of equipment and facilities in schools, would gain from increased integration with technical and mathematics education. The introduction and maintenance of technical and vocational education is expensive and it often carries with it the stigma of being second class. Science has a much more positive public image and yet it has much to offer of a practical, forward-looking nature. The revival and improvement of science teaching should have high priority in developing and developed countries alike.

2.10 If schools are to provide basic skills and develop a sense of initiative, the role and nature of examinations will need to be analysed closely. Initiatives in some countries to define standards and competencies against which all students can be assessed will be watched with interest as will new forms of student record which emphasise achievement whatever the level of academic ability.

2.11 Schools should draw upon their local resources; upon the skills of local tradesmen, upon parents, upon local materials for building and for the construction of school equipment.

2.12 The school should not be an isolated institution; nor should its professional staff become conservative in their ways. Whilst schools cannot be blamed for unemployment, equally they cannot stand aside from their close involvement in the problem. They should welcome scrutiny from outside agencies, from employers, unions and the local community, in efforts to redefine objectives, roles and activities. Equally such bodies and institutions have a responsibility towards education; for it is they which benefit from the products of the school system.

2.13 Schools should develop a sense of the dignity of all forms of work - manual and cerebral - and, where possible, should undertake productive activity which has meaning for the individual and is related to the working life of the community in which the school is located.

2.14 In many member countries agricultural development is a major priority. The receptivity of rural populations to change is crucial if this aim is to be achieved. The majority of such people will have had at most a complete or partial primary education. For them their

experience in school, the skills they learnt, and the knowledge and the values they acquire, will be crucial in efforts to mobilise rural development activity. In the industrialised world the argument is equally valid. With a backdrop of job uncertainty it is all the more important that young people have the basic equipment to deal with uncertainty and change.

2.15 There is in this analysis thus far a measure of fatalism, a resignation to a world of limited job opportunities. For those who leave at the end of primary or junior secondary school in developing countries, are there other educational opportunities on which they could draw? What educational assistance might there be for those wishing to enhance their work and job opportunities? There is some evidence around the Commonwealth of projects with an educational component to help the primary school leaver. It is often the case that initiatives of this type are not the responsibility of Ministries of Education: rather they are the concern of Ministries of Youth, Labour Employment, or Industry. What evidence there is suggests the value of drawing together examples of projects - formal and non-formal in character - which cater in particular to the needs of unemployed young people. They may include youth service activity, brigades, the provision of extension education etc.

2.16 There may be merit in some countries in examining the labour laws in relation to youth unemployment especially in urban areas where many youngsters are school drop-outs. Equally there should be a consciousness of the dangers of exploitation.

2.17 If the previous paragraphs have dwelt on the problems of unemployment, so schooling must not ignore the opportunities afforded by new technologies in developed and developing countries alike. The computer and micro-chip open up new employment activities which it would be remiss to ignore. The effective utilisation of new technology will depend on the abilities of those with an education grounded in basic skills and receptive to ideas.

2.18 The Working Group makes the following recommendations:

*D.2 The Secretariat should continue its initiative of providing opportunities to discuss the integration of science, technical, vocational and mathematics education in schools.*

*D.3 The Secretariat should undertake studies which highlight the successes and failures of work experience schemes in Commonwealth countries.*

*D.4 The Secretariat should collect and disseminate information on formal and non-formal education programmes for the primary and secondary school leaver. A re-evaluation of national youth services in Commonwealth countries would also be useful in this connection.*

### 3. Post-Secondary Institutions

3.1 The post-secondary bracket includes a variety of institutions - technical colleges, vocational institutes, universities, polytechnics, community colleges etc.

3.2 A number of Commonwealth countries experience graduate unemployment which may take a variety of forms. Returnee graduates from overseas may have acquired skills and qualifications which they cannot use or are inappropriate to national need. Others may qualify in disciplines for which there is already an over-supply. Problems also arise from the differences which exist from country to country in the certification and validation of professional and technical qualifications.

3.3 There is bound to be a mismatch to some degree. Students have their own set of aspirations. Technological changes and fluctuations in the economy affect employment demand patterns. There is the inertia of education training institutions unable to react quickly to new manpower demands. There are changing political perceptions of where the tertiary sector should concentrate its activities. For these and other reasons, demand and supply are rarely in balance.

3.4 An example of one particular problem of imbalance is the teaching profession. Many countries report the unwillingness of graduates to enter teaching where there is a particular shortage in science. This reflects views of pay, conditions and alternative opportunities. If schools are to benefit from committed teachers so will the need for improved teacher training become even more crucial, especially for teachers capable of developing rural schools and for those with the ability to provide science, mathematics and technical education.

3.5 A process of continual review is one which some countries attempt but the statistical difficulties are daunting. Nevertheless tracer studies of the employed and the unemployed, of who changes job and for what reasons, would assist manpower planning.

3.6 The inability to find the job which matches a particular training course is not necessarily a loss to the individual or to the society in which he or she lives. The benefits of varied experience may be a positive contribution to personal and national development. This will be heightened if retraining opportunities exist but all too often it is difficult to provide retraining of the quick and flexible kind represented by short-term crash programmes.

3.7 Technical and vocational education and training responding to new industrial and technological needs is important in all countries. It is expensive. Systems cannot afford to change quickly and easily. There exists scope for determining common-core basic technical skills central to any technical and vocational programme.

3.8 Activities to link post-secondary institutions more directly with employment include sandwich programmes, work experience programmes and short crash courses. Where employment opportunities are absent, youth brigades, national service and extension courses may provide additional training and educational chances.

3.9 The Working Group makes the following recommendations on post-secondary institutions:

*D.5 The Commonwealth Secretariat should undertake comparative studies on graduate unemployment.*

*D.6 The Secretariat should provide assistance to help in the preparation of tracer studies of employed and unemployed youth to aid national manpower and educational planning.*

*D.7 An exchange, aided by the Secretariat, of Commonwealth experience on the provision of common-core basic technical skills curriculum would be valuable.*

#### 4. Non-Formal Education

4.1 Non-formal education is not amenable to a commonly acceptable definition. It is sufficient to recognise that there are individuals, institutions, churches, voluntary groups and other agencies - including those operating internationally - which offer educational opportunities for young people in the developing countries. This is often done on a local scale.

4.2 Some of the programmes provide young people with the chance to return to the mainstream of the educational system. There are dangers in this process in creating an alternative certificated route; it may merely provide a new dimension to the diploma disease. However there are also projects which concentrate on the provision of "life-skills" closely adapted to the requirements of young people and their home environments or which enhance skills learnt in the informal sector of the economy.

4.3 Such is the diversity and small-scale nature of many of these projects that little is known about them. Cross-national studies of the way in which they work, their objectives, their successes and their failures would be useful in guiding governments as to the ways by which they might learn from and build on this unco-ordinated sector.

4.4 The Working Group recommends that:

*D.8 Collaborative case studies should be undertaken which highlight the work of non-government organisations to assist young people for self employment.*

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#### **REPORT OF A WORKING GROUP ON THE COMMONWEALTH SCHOLARSHIP AND FELLOWSHIP PLAN**

1. As agreed by the meeting of Senior Officials and Professional Officers held on 22 July, a Working Group was convened of delegates with a special interest in the working of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan. Those present were: Mr. E.E. Temple (Britain) in the Chair; Prof. Don Stranks (Australia); Mr. James Jackson (Australia); Mr. Ralph Boyce (Barbados); Mrs. Gail Larose (Canada); Mr. Symeon Matsis (Cyprus); Mr. Allan Munroe (Guyana); Mr. S.K. Khanna (India); Mr. J. Zammit-Mangion (Malta); Mrs. M.O.A. Olorunfunmi (Nigeria); and Mrs. Oredola C. Fewry (Sierra Leone).

2. It was noted that seven of the ten countries represented were awarding countries under the Plan.

3. The Working Group considered the replies from Commonwealth Scholarship agencies to a letter of 18 May 1984 circulated by the Association of Commonwealth Universities concerning possible amendments to the Administrative Handbook on the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan.

4. Of the 17 replies received, ten had "no comment" to make and three others stressed the importance of observing the provisions of the Handbook. With regard to the replies from the remaining agencies there was close discussion of the several points raised on which conclusions were reached as follows:

*Application Form (page 18)\**

The necessity had been questioned (Fiji) of the section at the end of the form "for Official Use Only". It was agreed however that there was a positive advantage in the nominating agency completing this section on the "top copy" of each nominee's application form. The Working Group therefore wished to retain unchanged this section of the form.

*Nomination Dates (page 17)*

It had been proposed (Mauritius) that, to fit the dates of the local announcement of examination results, the nomination dates should be set at a date later (by five months and three months respectively) than the two dates of 31 July and 31 December now in force. The Working Group stressed the value of not deviating from the agreed dates, and pointed out that it was normal practice in any event to allow nominations to be made subject to the subsequent announcement of satisfactory examination results.

*Selection (Timing) (page 10)*

It has been suggested (Mauritius) that three months would suffice rather than six months as the minimum period between final selection of scholars and the date of taking up awards. The Working Group nonetheless agreed that, though difficult in all cases to achieve in practice, it remained highly desirable to retain the rule that final selection of scholars should be made at least six months before the date of the beginning of the programmes to which their awards relate.

*Priority among Nominations (page 17)*

A plea had been made (Mauritius) that, in making selections, an awarding country should follow strictly the order of priority indicated by the nominating country. In discussion the Working Group recognised this was a matter of policy rather than routine administration. The meeting of Senior Officials and Professional Officers moreover had just recommended bringing into use a form of covering letter which would allow nominating agencies inter alia to state their priorities against the background of any national development objectives. It appeared to the Working Group reasonable to await evidence of the effectiveness of this covering letter before deciding on further action.

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\* Page references are to the Third Edition of the Administrative Handbook.

*Notification of Award (page 20)*

Mauritius had urged that a nominating agency should be notified of the offer of an award at the same time as the successful candidate. Guyana had expressed a preference for the offers of awards to be transmitted through the nominating agency. It was seen in discussion that the request of Mauritius was for the better observance of the rule to this effect which already existed, a proposal supported by a majority of those present. It was accepted that the particular needs of Guyana in this matter should be further discussed between the parties concerned.