

## CHAPTER 1: THE THRUST TOWARDS LINKING EDUCATION IN COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES

When speaking of unemployment I mean the non-utilisation or gross under-utilisation of available labour...When considering productivity in any society it is not sufficient to take account only of those who are employed or self-employed and to leave out of the reckoning all those who are unemployed and whose productivity therefore is zero. E.F. Schumacher (1)

Work experience programmes are an outgrowth both of a thrust towards making schools' curricula more relevant to the needs, interests and aspirations of young people and of attempts to make schools' curricula respond more directly to the needs of national economies by giving young people skills which are readily usable in the labour market. It is not surprising that the era in which these programmes have blossomed, particularly in developing countries, is one in which these countries' economies have been on the decline. Ian Jamieson puts it in a nutshell when he states:

When the economy is in boom there is a tendency to allow education to fulfil the needs of individuals rather than the needs of the economy. In time of economic depression, there are pressures to force all parts of the social structure to conform to the needs of the economy. Education finds itself particularly vulnerable because it is a direct producer of a major and expensive commodity for industry-labour.(2)

Julius Nyerere is perhaps the foremost exponent of the need for education systems in developing countries which are modelled on the British system to reject subservient attitudes and aspirations for 'white collar' skills emphasised by the colonialists, since this thrust in education, he says, is 'not sufficiently related to the tasks which have to be done in our society.'(3) Nyerere, in making education more relevant, instituted reforms in the educational system which, in his words, were designed with a recognition that 'we in Tanzania have to work our way out of poverty.' All schools, but particularly those at the secondary level and other forms of higher education, were required to contribute to their own upkeep by having a farm or workshop which provided food for the school and the community and at the same time contributed to the national income. Thus, these institutions, said Nyerere, became 'economic communities as well as social and educational communities.'(4)

In Zimbabwe there is an emphasis on educating young people to enter agriculture. At the same time there is a recognition of the need to produce large numbers of people with industrial skills suited for various levels of the economy. 'It is therefore a matter of life and death,' said the Minister of Education, 'that our education system produces school leavers who have received the type of education that will enable them to initiate and participate in productive activities.' The integration of practical and theoretical work that this type of education demands, 'can be achieved either by giving students in-service exposure in an actual factory, by excursion to various factories, by setting up production workshops at the schools, or by a combination of all these methods.'(5) In Zambia where it is vital for the people to be self-reliant in terms of food production, and where few people benefit from vocational education, the case has been made for the inclusion of production in schools' curricula. Thus, 'pupils will be engaged in actually making useful products rather than token items in their productive activities, such as agriculture, carpentry, metalwork and supplying services... the curriculum of the new grades 8 and 9 should therefore cater for those who will enter the world of work...'(6)

Nyerere's call for an education system that fostered 'work by everyone and exploitation by none' was taken up in other parts of the developing world. In the Commonwealth Caribbean, for example, Michael Manley criticised the Jamaican education system for not reflecting 'a realistic balance between the needs of economic development and the actual training that is provided.'(7) He called for a radical restructuring of the training content of the system designed to provide young people with a wider range of subject options so that they could enter new careers in the skill areas indispensable to a modern economy. His government emphasised the development of a spirit of self-confidence individually and collectively, the training of young people to accept a spirit of social co-operation as the foundation of national success, and the acceptance of the work ethic. The work experience programme (8) implemented in 1975 in Jamaica's New Secondary schools was an outgrowth of this philosophy. It was in fact part of a general strategy to tackle the high rate of unemployment amongst the 14-18 age group which had reached a crisis proportion of a little over 40% in 1973.

### The Problem of Youth Employment

Widely expounded has been the theory that if academic curricula could be balanced by a practical component to give young people skills more directly related to the immediate skills needs of the economy, this would make the young more readily employable on leaving school. Asian countries, for example, have put in place measures to give 'a more practical orientation to their systems of education with emphasis on the development of productive skills relevant to economic development by relating learning with work.'(9) The 1969-70 statistics in Sri Lanka showed that some 82.6% of young people between the ages of 15-24 were unemployed - a problem attributed largely to the irrelevance of the education system. In fact, it has been said that the insurgency in 1977 in Sri Lanka was in large measure a manifestation of the discontent of unemployed youths who were ill-equipped for the demands of the working world. After the insurgency the government instituted measures to prepare early school leavers to engage in what Wijemanna has described as 'the productive occupations that the economy is capable of providing.'(10)

With the exception of such countries as Brunei, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, most Commonwealth countries have identified unemployment among young people as a major social problem. India, for example, foresaw a shortfall of over four million jobs by 1985. Malawi anticipates unemployment at 11.9% by 1994, while Zambia expects a shortfall of jobs for 100,000 young people each year.'<sup>(11)</sup>

But, as Table 1 shows, youth unemployment is not confined to the developing countries of the Commonwealth.

TABLE 1: Youth Unemployment 1980 (as a percentage of total unemployed) in selected countries in the Commonwealth

| COUNTRY        | % TOTAL UNEMPLOYED |
|----------------|--------------------|
| Australia      | 55.9               |
| Barbados       | 66.2               |
| Canada         | 47.1               |
| Ghana          | 60.4               |
| India          | 67.2               |
| Singapore      | 58.0               |
| United Kingdom | 42.2               |

Source: ILO: Bureau of Statistics (12)

In the wake of rapid technological advances, Schumacher's thesis becomes more and more real: 'The type of work which modern technology is most successful in reducing or even eliminating is skilful, productive work of human hands, in touch with real materials of one kind or another. In an advanced industrial society, such work has become exceedingly rare.'<sup>(13)</sup> There are some people who believe that youth unemployment may be a permanent feature of advanced industrial societies. Others blame the phenomenon on social welfare programmes which make the 'dole' a disincentive for young people to seek work.

The ILO has projected that the young (15-20) economically active population in more developed regions of the world will decrease from some 111 million in 1985 to 104 million by 2025, while in the less developed countries it will increase from some 469 million in 1968 to 608 million by 2025. Thus, whereas in developed countries there will be less pressure on the labour market to absorb new entrants, in developing countries, 'the already over-burdened capacity of the labour market to provide productive employment for youth will come under great stress.'<sup>(14)</sup> While acknowledging that youth employment in developing countries is part and parcel of the overall national problem of poverty, unemployment and under-employment, the ILO report attributes part of the problem to the mismatch that frequently exists between the skills taught in school systems and those actually needed for the world of work. 'Training systems,' it says, 'have not succeeded in adapting their teaching methodology or curricula to the requirements of the labour market.'<sup>(15)</sup>

## Tackling Youth Employment: Strategies Adopted

### Developing Countries

Many developing countries have tried to adapt their curricula to the requirements of the working world, largely through the introduction of work experience programmes. For example, Jamaica's Five Year Education Plan (1978-83) emphasised that each secondary school student was 'to pursue studies and work experience in at least one technical/vocational area,' so that by the time the student graduated, 'he should have acquired both skills and habits which will enable him to move smoothly into the world of work.'(16) Jamaica's experience is not untypical of many parts of the English-speaking Caribbean. Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados and smaller territories such as St. Kitts and St. Lucia have made use of work experience programmes. Similar moves are evident in various parts of Africa. The main objective of the Contribution Programme in the fourth year of the upper segment of Basic Education in Ghana, for example, is 'to predispose the learners to different types of vocations.'(17) In its 1977 educational reforms, Zambia introduced production units in a number of schools to provide opportunities for integrating theory and practice and to provide training skills appropriate for young people who did not wish to proceed to further education. Tai Solarin's 'Mayflower School' has done much to disseminate in Nigeria and other parts of Africa the value of hard work and discipline as well as the necessity of giving young people skills to enable them to leave school and take up occupations as 'bricklayers, carpenters, electricians, plumbers, farmers, clerks, horticulturists, livestock farmers, motor mechanics, home decorators, caterers...mathematicians, doctors and engineers...' (18) The Swaneng Hill Secondary School, when it was first started in 1963 by Patrick Van Rensburg, embodied a thrust towards in-school work experience. Much of the school itself was built by the students. Van Rensburg is perhaps best known for his work in establishing the Builders Brigade in Serowe, Botswana, described as 'a unique attempt to link education and training with the needs of society.'(19) In the early days he attempted to implement a model of secondary education which combined the Swaneng Hill Secondary School and Brigade Movement whereby, in return for their labour, the Brigades received food, technical instruction and two hours teaching per day in general subjects done by the students themselves. The experiment was short-lived.

### Developed Countries

What, then, of work experience in the developed countries? In Britain, Bloomer traces the origins of present-day concern to 1963 when the Newsom Report Half Our Future recommended that the final year of the school programme should seek to initiate the young into the adult world of work and leisure. The DES Green Paper on Education in Schools (1977) advocated among the aims of education 'to help children appreciate how the nation earns and maintains its standard of living and properly to esteem the essential role of industry and commerce in this process.'(20) In Europe generally, initiatives have been taken to make the world of work more open and accessible to young people. The Second Transition Programme is an example of this European commitment. It is based on a resolution adopted in July 1982 'concerning measures to be taken to improve the preparation of young people for work, and to facilitate their transition from

education to working life.' One of the initiatives is the development of co-operation between schools and employers 'in order to provide direct work experience, simulated work experience, and work experience in the local community.'(21) Two main reasons have been put forward to explain the trend towards strengthening links between education and work. In their 1985 New Year speeches, nearly all European Prime Ministers emphasised both the necessity for the development of new attitudes and the need for Europe to play a more important role in the economically competitive world situation. This new enterprising spirit demands initiative and flexibility in the young and it is seen as the task of the school system to develop these traits. Meijer sums up the reasons for the trend towards education and work linkages thus:

...due to the rapid and radical changes in the European economies, the labour market has become inaccessible, invisible and incomprehensible to young people. To be able to make an informed decision about their own future, they need to have a good understanding of the world 'outside the school'...(and)...specific skills like self-confidence, initiative and flexibility to cope with the problems they will meet in the future...Simulated and real productive work could play a role in developing those personal and social life skills.(22)

#### Work Experience and Social Transformation

Whereas in many developed countries, work experience programmes are seen mainly as fostering the development of personal and social skills, in developing countries of the Commonwealth, work experience programmes are largely geared to achieving wider objectives. These include providing balance to a theoretical curriculum, developing positive attitudes towards manual work, lowering the unit costs of schooling through the sale of pupils' products or services, and equalising educational opportunities. Indeed in countries which subscribe to a democratic socialist ideology, work experience programmes are part of a general philosophy of linking education with production so as to transform not only education but ultimately society itself. Some analysis of school-to-work transition have pointed out the seeds of conflict and contradiction inherent in school systems in democratic societies which have the dual task of preparing the young as workers and as citizens. Martin Carnoy for example, argues: 'The preparation required for citizenship in a democratic society based on equal opportunity and human rights is often incompatible with the preparation needed for job performance in a corporate system of work. On the one hand, schools must train citizens to know their rights under the law as well as their obligations to exercise these rights through political participation. On the other, schools must train workers with the skills and personality characteristics that enable them to function in an authoritarian work regime. This requires a negation of the very political rights that make for good citizens.'(23)

Particularly in schools where 'work' is experienced in production units on the school premises, there is serious danger that production for economic ends can undermine educational goals.

## Aims of the Study

A study undertaken ten years ago by Margaret Sinclair on work experience programmes in Third World countries concluded that programme objectives were far too ambitious, often leading to their collapse on account of serious problems including lack of teacher skills and motivation, lack of material resources, and negative responses from students and their parents. 'For most Third World countries,' she wrote, 'the best policy would seemingly be to leave work experience programmes severely alone!' Sinclair nevertheless admitted that many schools had managed to introduce 'respectable work experience programmes no better or worse in quality than the rest of the school's offerings.'(24)

To what extent has the situation changed since Sinclair conducted her study? This forms part of the concern of the present study which, however, is limited to the secondary school system in Commonwealth countries.

More specifically, the aims of this study are:

1. To identify the aims and objectives of work experience programmes in secondary schools in the Commonwealth.
2. To determine who chooses involvement by whom in work experience programmes and with what ends in view.
3. To present case studies of work experience programmes conducted in school and out-of-school premises in the various regions of the Commonwealth.
4. To point out contrasts in approaches between the more developed countries with well developed modern sectors and less developed countries where such opportunities are few. Where possible, comparisons will also be drawn between urban and rural schools.
5. To discuss how work and the curriculum are linked with special reference to: (a) the subjects in the curriculum which lend themselves best to work experience; (b) the effect of the examination system on work experience programmes; and (c) advantages and disadvantages of different phasings of work experience.
6. To throw light on the cost-benefits of work experience with a view to identifying those who benefit most from work experience programmes.
7. To discuss the problems most commonly experienced in work experience programmes.

It is hoped that what emerges from this study will be of value not only to teachers and students involved in work experience programmes, but also to educators generally, to researchers and to those involved in planning these programmes in Ministries of Education, Youth and Community Development and elsewhere.

## Methodology

The data on which this study is based were derived from the following:

### Published Studies, Reports, etc.

Most of these were consulted at the Institute of Education Library in London University and the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex in July 1986. Unpublished studies, reports and other information were obtained directly from Ministries of Education, other government agencies, and researchers from universities in various parts of the Commonwealth with an interest in the area - all of whom responded to the writer's request for information.

### Unpublished Studies

These were done by the writer:

(a) Education and Productive Work in Jamaica: Report to Caribbean Network of Educational Innovation for Development (CARNEID/UNESCO, 1983) 231p.

(b) Education and Productive Work Lingages in the Commonwealth Caribbean (Report to the Commonwealth Secretariat, London, October 1985, revised February 1986). 167p.

Other unpublished studies on work experience programmes done at the University of the West Indies, Mona, Kingston, Jamaica, under the supervision of the writer.

### Questionnaire on Work Experience Programmes in Commonwealth Schools

The questionnaire (Appendix A) was designed to obtain information on the approach to work experience in different countries in the Commonwealth, the patterns of work experience applicable, the organisation of work experience programmes, and the advantages and disadvantages of the different ways in which work experience programmes could be phased. Other sorts of information sought included the cost-benefits of work experience, the problems commonly experienced with work experience programmes, and the criteria used to assess these programmes. Suggestions as to how work experience programmes could be improved were also solicited.

The questionnaires were sent to Ministries of Education in the following countries: Australia, Bangladash, Botswana, Canada, Cyprus Fiji, Ghana, Guyana, India, Kenya, Kiribati, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Tonga, Trinidad & Tobago, Western Samoa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

A total of 13 responses (representing 46% of the sample) were received over a four-month period. These are identified below:

Director (Class II) Participation & Equity Branch, Department of Education, Canberra, Australia.

Principal, Automotive Trades Training School, Botswana.

Director, International Relations Council of Ministries of Education, Canada.

Work Study Supervisor/Deputy Planning Officer, Guyana.

Reader, Department of Vocationalisation of Education, National Council of Educational Research and Training, India.

Senior Inspector of Schools, Kenya.

Chief Education Officer, Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, Mauritius.

Director of Schools, Wellington, New Zealand.

Director, Education Research Unit, University of Papua New Guinea.

Director, Polytechnic, Seychelles.

Technical Education Co-ordinator, Ministry of Education, Tanzania.

Curriculum Organiser, Government of Western Samoa.

#### Summary of Main Points

1. In capitalist countries of the Commonwealth, work experience tends to be seen as a means of preparing young people for the world of work so as to avoid the problem of unemployment. Work experience is also viewed as a means for reinforcing social values.

2. In socialist countries of the Commonwealth, devotion to the ethic of work emerges as a much stronger ideology and work experience programmes (WEP) tend to be viewed as a means of solving the problem of social inequality in society. WEP especially in schools is also seen as a way of linking education with production - an ideology which itself is geared ultimately to a process of transforming education within a wider strategy for social change.

3. The burdensome demand on developing countries to provide productive employment for increasing numbers of young people has been underscored in a recent ILO study which has projected an increase in the economically active population in developing countries to some 608 million by the year 2025. A decrease in the same population category is forecast in developed countries over this period.

4. In so far as they seek to train young people with the skills and personality characteristics to fit them into the workplace, work experience programmes, some say, may prove incompatible with the preparation of these same young people as citizens in societies where rights to equal opportunities and political participation are valued.