

INTRODUCTION

This study was requested by the Fifth Commonwealth Education Conference. In discussions between CEDO and the Commonwealth Secretariat it was established that there was a dual requirement: to provide a comprehensive factual survey of projects using the new media throughout the Commonwealth, and to carry out more detailed studies of selected projects. The approach was to be as wide as possible and was to include formal and informal education and also what is defined as 'training'. The new media were taken to mean (a) the use of television for educational purposes; (b) the use of radio for educational purposes; (c) the use of correspondence education; and (d) the use of any combination of audio-visual media designed for teaching or learning.

The first phase was a Commonwealth-wide survey of all relevant projects by questionnaire (Appendix III) and supported by country-based educational fact sheets (Appendix II) compiled by CEDO from existing published sources and then verified by each member country. A digest of this information is contained within Part One.

The second phase consisted of a series of nineteen case studies selected from the projects listed in Part One. These are reported in Part Two.

In the original planning it was agreed that a major contribution of the Commonwealth Secretariat would be 'to obtain the support of Commonwealth governments for the research study'. CEDO, in addition to its own resources, was able to call on the support of British Council personnel, both in London and overseas. Further assistance with the planning came from members of the CEDO Board of Governors who gave generously of their time and experience.

Prototype questionnaires were designed and copies were distributed for comment to a wide circle of people with experience of these problems throughout the world (March 1972). From an analysis of their criticism the final form of the enquiry documents emerged (June 1972).

The country fact sheets, which were originally compiled by CEDO in London contained the most up-to-date information from the most reliable sources. In the main these were UNESCO and UNO statistics. The ass-

istance of UNESCO's Statistical Office in Paris was greatly appreciated and ensured access to the most up-to-date data available. To a limited extent it was possible to use published annual reports, but there were relatively few up-to-date annual reports from government departments of many Commonwealth countries available for inspection and study in London.

In this form, country fact sheets were passed to the Commonwealth Secretariat in August and September 1972 for transmission to High Commissions in London for completion and verification. Many High Commissions were able to verify or correct the data and return the papers quickly. Others felt it necessary to refer the matter to their home base. This took time. Nevertheless it was possible to publish a useful amount of this data in an Interim Report for a Conference on Teacher Training held in Nairobi in May 1973. This, in turn, proved a useful method of encouraging more responses.

In compiling the project questionnaire it was felt that simple questions stood a better chance of being answered and would give an adequate first level appraisal of each project. It was realized that educational planners (in looking for models and sources of reference) would need to know much more than these answers would provide. It was to help meet their needs that the detailed studies were undertaken in the second phase.

The questionnaire design was agreed and copies distributed by the Commonwealth Secretariat in June 1972. Multiple copies were sent, with an explanatory personal letter, by the Director of the Commonwealth Secretariat Education Division to Ministries of Education with a request that a questionnaire should be completed for each separate project making a significant use of new media in the furtherance of educational objectives, and returned by 21st August 1972. To avoid long and explanatory notes, each questionnaire was accompanied by a brief note and a specimen completed for an imaginary but, hopefully, typical project.

In practice, the collection of this information proved difficult and whilst some countries were quick to respond (by early September 1972 we had reports on 23 pro-

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jects), a series of reminders, applied in many different ways, resulted in a slow, continuing trickle of responses. These totalled 56 from 24 countries for the Interim Report. The final report contains information on 134 projects from 42 countries.

All requests for assistance and information issued as from the Commonwealth Secretariat, through the usual formal channels. These included direct correspondence with the respondents, as well as with, and through, the London offices of each High Commission and through the members of the Commonwealth Education Liaison Committee.

Officers of the Education Division of the Secretariat on tour were asked to make suitable enquiries about the progress in answering questionnaires to appropriate officials. Similarly, all CEDO staff travelling overseas during the period of the study were briefed to make enquiries, and similar assistance was offered by the Educational Advisers to the Overseas Development Administration. Through their Educational Technology Office in London, all Representatives of the British Council in Commonwealth countries were kept informed of progress and in many cases they were able to offer assistance to local officials which speeded the flow of replies and has been greatly appreciated. Considerable assistance was also obtained from former trainees of CEDO and its predecessor organizations. Frequently direct appeal to personal friends succeeded in ensuring that a particular entry appeared in the Report.

The nineteen case studies, in the second phase of the survey, were chosen with a view to providing a valuable cross-section of ideas and experiences to the Ministers and their advisers. To be of real value it was felt that each example chosen had to be one of 'successful' operation - the difficulties encountered in defining this term are outlined in the introduction to Part Two. It was also clear that these case studies should, ideally, be from a variety of countries and continents and should illustrate the uses made of different media at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education as well as in adult/informal education situations. Advice was taken

from many sources (CEDO had the advantage of many overseas contacts and a succession of overseas visitors to its Centre in London, and was thus able to tap sources of advice on a world-wide scale) and the first list of case studies was drawn up and approved. The Commonwealth Secretariat also obtained the necessary permission and collaboration for the member states to be contacted. It was agreed that to obtain uniformity of reporting each case study should be conducted by one of two members of the CEDO staff. The individual responsible for each case study would be teamed with a nominee of the project being studied. Their joint report was, in each case, discussed with and approved by the authority responsible for the project. Restrictions caused by the rising cost of printing have meant that considerable editing has had to be done to reduce the material to an amount which could be collected within one volume.

The experience gained in this survey confirms that postal questionnaires as a means of gathering information are, generally, extremely disappointing, especially in collecting data from a wide range of situations. By and large the more developed countries are able to respond satisfactorily to this approach. But in many developing countries requests of this nature have given officials, who are already hard-pressed, additional problems. It is also clear that many of the original questionnaires went astray. No clearly identifiable cause is apparent, except that some were eventually discovered deep in a filing system and unseen by the individual who was in a position to supply the responses. Certainly personal mediation, in one form or another, greatly increases the overall efficiency of this type of exercise.

One other observation is perhaps relevant. Time and again the investigating officials were astonished to find that information just does not circulate. Hard-pressed officials and educators were unaware very often whether work being done by their colleagues both in their own country and outside was directly relevant to their own problems. As has been observed elsewhere 'there are too many people engaged in the process of rediscovering the wheel'.