

A FOUNDATION BUILT ON EDUCATION

Education is one of the main foundations for successful and sustainable development. The Commonwealth has a long tradition of recognising its worth, and the need to broaden access to education and to support the improvement of education management and structures. As part of wider strategies to improve human resource development, Secretariat activities in this area have concentrated on improving both access to and quality of basic education, enhancing the quality of higher education and raising the quality of science, technology and mathematics education.

Basic Education

As part of global efforts to make high quality basic education accessible for all, the Secretariat focuses on strengthening the teaching profession, principally in teacher management and support, and initial teacher training. In 1993/94, the Secretariat, in co-operation with the Swedish and German development agencies, SIDA and GTZ, continued work on raising the managerial and professional skills of headteachers in Africa. Seven headteacher training modules on school management and leadership, and related training materials, have been produced, translated where necessary and distributed widely across the continent. Following their successful introduction, work has now started on the adaptation and transfer of these modules to other regions of the Commonwealth.

The Secretariat is also the lead agency for the Development of African Education (DAE) Working Group on the Teaching Profession in Africa. In October 1993 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, the Working Group launched a Teacher Management Support (TMS) Country Action Plan Programme to help African education ministries improve basic education and the conditions under which teachers serve, and hence their classroom performance.

Following this meeting, 10 African Commonwealth countries established Country Working Groups

and others have undertaken related studies or action. The Secretariat is co-operating with the Centre for British Teachers in Seychelles and Zambia in TMS activities and the Forum for African Women Educationalists is supporting Secretariat efforts to address teacher management and gender issues in the Country Action Programmes.

After a technical review meeting in Harare in July 1994, two commissioned studies were undertaken on the legal framework of teacher management and teacher management structures in Africa.

In May 1995, an assessment workshop for senior African educators was held in South Africa to promote new methods for assessing the suitability of staff for promotion to posts at managerial level. The workshop also identified shortcomings in management capacity and designed remedial staff development programmes.

Secretariat work in basic education also focuses on improving the delivery of education and is targeted to teacher educators. In its continuing work in South-East Asia, consultations took place to foster regional co-operation in certain aspects of teacher education, such as in the training of teachers for non-formal education. The Secretariat facilitated study visits of five educators from three countries to District Institutes of Education and Training in India and also expanded its work in teacher education to the Caribbean and South Pacific.

Much of the Secretariat's work in basic education focuses on the formal school system, since in most Commonwealth countries between 85 and 100 per cent of children go to primary school. However, it is recognised that in parts of South Asia and West Africa, difficulty of access, poverty, high costs and social customs are among the reasons why many children do not go to school. Several innovative activities are therefore being implemented by NGOs, and through partnerships between government and NGOs, to address the needs of these out-

of-school children. The Secretariat has prepared three case studies in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan and has circulated these widely.

Higher Education

At their meeting in Islamabad, Pakistan, in November 1994, Commonwealth Education Ministers re-emphasised the importance of higher education co-operation in contributing to human resource development. Secretariat activities focused on three main areas: developing the Commonwealth Higher Education Support Scheme (CHESS), monitoring and diversifying Commonwealth student mobility, and implementing the recommendations of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP) Third Ten-Year Review.



Concern over student flows continues

The purpose of CHESS is to strengthen institutions of higher education in developing countries. It focuses on staff development and management training, as well as helping improve access to academic texts and journals. The scheme is jointly sponsored and funded by Commonwealth multilateral agencies, NGOs, national governments and bilateral aid agencies.

Recognising that many universities in developing countries do not have enough funds to purchase essential academic and reference journals, representatives of leading journal publishers, distributors and donor agencies met in Britain in April 1994, to identify ways in which journals could be distributed to these institutions. An updated version of an inventory of programmes, agencies and foundations involved in the provision of books, journals

and library assistance has also been prepared for the Secretariat by the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications. In addition, the Secretariat, together with the Commonwealth of Learning, is exploring the possibility of using communications technology to deliver academic materials.

To support efforts to strengthen higher education management, the CFTC has allocated £150,000 annually to the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) to maintain the Commonwealth Higher Education Management Service (CHEMS) which was established in November 1993. Since then, CHEMS has undertaken consultancy activities for a number of Commonwealth universities and prepared a register of consultants whose expertise can be called on in 80 specialist areas. In addition, three projects are being run with financial support from Unesco, including the development of training materials and case studies on strategic planning, a survey of the training needs of middle-level administrators and managers in Commonwealth universities, and a review of administrative computing applications being used in African universities.

Work on staff development focused largely on enhancing management skills for senior women administrators in higher education. Activities in the two years since mid-1993 included a training workshop in the South Pacific in 1994, joint publication with Unesco of a book analysing the career paths of women in higher education, and commissioning modules addressing key themes with a view to producing user-friendly resource books for trainers.

While striving to help member countries develop their own capacities in higher education, the Commonwealth recognises that there is a continuing need for students from developing countries to study abroad in order to acquire the knowledge they need to contribute to socio-economic growth in their own countries. When the traditional flow of students from developing to Commonwealth developed countries was disrupted in recent years, primarily because fees were raised in many devel-

oped countries, Heads of Government set up a Commonwealth Standing Committee on Student Mobility and Higher Education Co-operation to study the problem and recommend solutions.

The report of the seventh meeting of this Committee, entitled *Favourable Fees for Commonwealth Students: The Final Frustration*, noted in 1993 that no consensus was reached on the Secretary-General's proposals for a more favourable fee regime for Commonwealth students. The Heads accepted the report but reiterated that the promotion of intra-Commonwealth student mobility was vital to human resource development efforts and to future Commonwealth relationships, and that it should be a continuing concern of Commonwealth governments.

As an alternative mechanism, work has begun on advancing the Commonwealth Universities Study Abroad Consortium (CUSAC) which was officially launched by the Secretary-General in August 1993. A pilot group of 28 universities have committed themselves to providing opportunities for their students to study in other member universities as part of their course, and to initiate joint programmes for this purpose. After an Africa Roundtable in Swaziland in April 1994, a number of bilateral agreements were initiated and the first CUSAC students participated in the scheme during the 1994/95 academic year.



*Education in science and technology
for better development*

Meanwhile, the CSFP remains the flagship of Commonwealth higher education co-operation. Over the years, it has enabled about 20,000 scholars from 56 independent countries and dependent territories to study in other Commonwealth countries. In the past two years, the Secretariat has taken steps to implement the recommendation of the Third Ten-Year Review of the CSFP to expand the Plan. In response to the Secretary-General's call for a target of 2,000 awards annually by the year 2000, offers of places have been received from a number of new countries and major contributors have said they will maintain or increase current levels of support.

Science, Technology and Mathematics Education

Developing countries need workforces proficient in science, technology and mathematics if their industrial, engineering and research sectors are to be enhanced and able to contribute to general economic growth. Supporting governments in this quest, Secretariat activities centre around training of trainers, promoting scientific and technological literacy, training of laboratory technicians and encouraging more students, including girls, to take up these subjects.

To assist in upgrading the skills of teachers in these subjects, six monographs have now been developed for the training of trainers for use in Africa. These monographs have further been adapted for use in Commonwealth Caribbean countries and in South and South-East Asia.

The Secretariat has also participated in Project 2000+ initiated by the International Council of Associations of Science Education/Unesco to contribute to scientific and technological literacy. It is developing a booklet on teacher education for scientific and technological literacy and recently supported a workshop in Vanuatu aimed at raising the awareness of the goals of Project 2000+ among government officials and training key educators and teachers to create exemplar scientific and technological literacy materials relevant to local needs and contexts.