

### SECTION THREE: MANAGEMENT ISSUES IN THE ORGANISATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF TEACHERS' RESOURCE CENTRES

#### A OBJECTIVES

Few, if any Teachers' Resource Centres will be able to undertake all the possible functions of a Centre enumerated in Section Two. The functions outlined are intended to give, a range of options open to those whose task it will be to decide on the scope of the activities of any one Centre. Similarly, the objectives described here are comprehensive and it is expected that very few Centres will attempt to achieve them in their entirety. However, it is essential that in every case those whose task it will be to make the decisions regarding the operation of a Centre set clear objectives for its work from the start as these will influence the decisions on management, organisational and administrative issues. Possible objectives are set out here under the same main headings as the functions of a Centre and should be cross-referenced with them.

#### General

1. To involve teachers in the decision making processes of the Teachers' Resource Centre, its programme and its functioning.

## **The Professional Development of Teachers**

1. To relate to teachers as professionals involving them as providers of their own in-service education as well as consumers of it.
2. To provide on-going support for trained and un-trained teachers working in the schools by all methods available.
3. To facilitate the induction into the profession of newly qualified teachers by offering them support in the early years of their work.
4. To ensure that the opportunity exists for teachers to be constantly up-dated on new developments in both theory and practice.
5. To involve teachers in curriculum development both by local innovations and by adapting national curricula to local needs.
6. To facilitate professional intercourse between teachers at different levels (eg. from infant school to tertiary education), college of education lecturers, advisers and inspectors, and educational administrators.
7. To enable teachers to up-grade their expertise in the individual subjects of the curriculum which they teach.
8. To provide the facilities for teachers to produce their own resource materials for use in the classroom and, where appropriate, to make these more widely available to other teachers in the area.

## **Support Services for Teachers**

1. To provide "the tools for the job" which may not be available in schools to enable teachers to make and repro-

duce print-materials for use in the classroom. These will include typewriters, photocopiers, duplicators etc.

2. To provide art and craft, photographic, audio-visual workshop facilities for the production of non-print materials.
3. To provide a repair and/or loan service for hardware (projection, recording and micro-electronic equipment, radio and television receivers, cameras, etc.) and software (slides, filmstrips, films, charts, posters, micro-computer etc.).

### **The Production and Distribution of Teaching Resources**

1. To provide a "resource bank" with print and non-print software (books, films, filmstrips, games, video cassettes etc.) including new curricula and curriculum materials on exhibition and for loan.
2. To involve teachers in the production and development of resources.
3. To encourage the production of local curriculum projects and the adaptation of national and regional materials to local needs.
4. To facilitate the distribution of new teaching materials among teachers and schools in the area and to ensure that classroom practitioners are kept up to date on new developments.

### **Social and Recreational Services for Teachers**

1. To break down the teachers' isolation in the classroom, in schools, etc.
2. To provide comfortable, non-institutional, adult accommodation for teacher activities.

3. To provide facilities such as catering and residential accommodation that enable short, medium range and longer activities to take place.
4. To offer a meeting point for all those concerned with education.
5. To facilitate teacher recreational and sporting activities, and team competition at local and regional level.

#### **A Centre for Community Involvement in Education**

1. To provide a forum for educationists and community-education groups to interchange ideas.
2. To provide an information service for parents and the community on the curriculum in local schools and new curricular developments.
3. To offer an advisory service to the community on all topics connected with the content and organisation of local education.
4. To enable the local adult population to undertake courses of various types, eg. literacy, folk customs, Open University, etc.

#### **B LOCATION**

When choosing a suitable location for a Teachers' Resource Centre, it is important to consider what will be the main functions of the Centre and who are intended to be its main users. Whenever possible, it will be the aim of the Centre to attract local teachers in person to visit the Centre, utilise its facilities and participate in the activities offered. This will necessitate locating the Centre in a place readily accessible by private and public transport. If the Centre is mainly for resource production

and distribution, a quite different set of criteria will influence the choice of site. Equally, where a Centre serves a widely spread population, different factors will operate in choosing its location. In cases where no choice is possible and only one site is available, it is nevertheless necessary to examine the location and how it matches up to the planned functions. It might be better in some cases to await the availability of a more suitable site rather than risk the success of the Centre by locating it in an inaccessible spot. However, it is most likely that, at best, the location of a Centre will be a compromise between the ideal and the possible.

Some of the considerations to be taken into account when considering a potential site are:-

### **1. Access**

Whatever the nature of the catchment area, the Centre needs to be so situated as to provide ease of access to the potential user. This will mean the Centre needs to be located close to walkways, roadways, public transport, bus-stops, railway stations etc. depending on the most common mode of transport for the area. Should private transport be popular, adequate parking facilities will be an obvious requirement.

Especially in cases where teachers have to travel some distance to reach the Centre, refreshments and possibly accommodation will need to be provided on site, or such facilities should be available near to the Centre and users should have access to them.

### **2. Services**

Of paramount importance is the availability to the Centre of essential services such as water and three-phase electrical power. Access will be needed to service routes so that deli-

veries of resources and equipment are possible. To enable the Centre to draw quickly on local expertise and keep in contact with local schools, good postal and telephone communication links are most important.

### **3. Links with Other Services**

It is also important for a Teachers' Resource Centre to have close links and, where possible, direct and easy access to other education personnel such as teachers' college lecturers, various advisory services, inspectors and other agents of educational change as well as to local facilities such as libraries, museums, botanical gardens and zoos.

### **4. Independent Siting**

There are a great many advantages to siting a Teachers' Resource Centre independently of other educational institutions. Centres are usually open at unconventional times - late evenings, holiday periods and possibly even weekends - and shared accommodation can often prevent the Centre's opening times from being as flexible as one would wish. Again, the Director needs to have the greatest control possible over the allocation of rooms which will not be so if the Centre is a "tenant" in another institution. The whole ethos and atmosphere of a Centre should, if possible, be informal, open and non-hierarchical. This is not always compatible when sharing accommodation with other institutions whose mode of operation may be quite different.

However, in some cases, it may nevertheless be decided to site a Centre close to other educational services so that best use may be made of limited numbers of qualified personnel in the area even to the extent of their being involved in part-time employment at the Centre. Sharing expensive equipment and

under-utilised facilities may also justify such a position. Certainly, locating a Teachers' Resource Centre in a centralised location which includes other agencies of education tends to avoid duplication of facilities and may create a more cohesive service for teachers.

Where a choice has to be made between opening a Centre in an urban area, where teachers may already be served to a limited extent by other educational institutions, albeit with a philosophy different from that recommended for a Resource Centre, and opening in another area, rural or urban, where no facilities exist to support teachers, it is recommended to fill the vacuum first wherever possible. The improvement of the service in the urban area can always be made at a later date.

## C ACCOMMODATION

The accommodation of a Teachers' Resource Centre could be either in an existing building no longer required for its original purpose or in purpose built premises. However, in every case care should be taken to ensure that the premises will be adequate for the agreed functions of the Centre and the potential growth of these services.

Reference has been made to the importance of credibility of the Centre in the eyes of its users. It is therefore considered preferable to begin small and expand as demands for the Centre's services grow rather than to open a large building with the danger that it will become a "white elephant". Teachers working in normal school buildings, perhaps with less than ideal facilities, can react unfavourably towards a "Super Centre" opened in their area, with facilities they can never hope to match in the classroom. Such a reaction may prevent them from even giving the Centre a chance to prove itself. A Centre that grows in response to need is much to be preferred.

Whether the Centre will be accommodated in a purpose built building or one that has been converted from use as a school, college, offices, etc., care should be taken to provide a non-institutional decor and atmosphere. Reference has already been made to the need for an inviting change of environment for teachers who arrive from a day's work in an institutional environment. It is, however, an important enough issue to emphasise yet again, especially in cases where old school buildings may be used as accommodation. Excessive luxury is not called for, but functional yet tasteful surroundings should, whenever possible, be the aim.

The full scale of rooms and work areas which any one Centre will require will clearly vary according to the services it decides to offer and the size of the teacher population it serves. A checklist of possible requirements might include:-

## **1. Education**

### **Meeting Rooms**

Teachers using the Centre for in-service education may be taking part in a variety of activities such as seminars, working parties, courses, workshops or lectures. They may be meeting with other teachers or members of the community. All these needs could be served by a variety of rooms of different size or a number of multi-purpose rooms with flexible spaces. Such rooms should be as attractive and non-institutionalised as possible, furnished comfortably and appropriately for adults. The furniture itself should be movable and adaptable so that users of the Centre can discuss in small or large groups, write at tables, use film projectors, video and audio equipment and overhead projectors, use chalkboards, or even have room for dramatic improvisation.

## **Workshops**

Almost inevitably, a Teachers' Resource Centre will have to provide at least a minimum of workshop space. Reprographic facilities, opportunities for making teaching materials for classroom use etc. will all require some flexible space to enable teachers to utilise them as far as possible whenever the Centre is open.

In addition, where courses to increase teaching skills in practical subject areas are to be run, workshop areas will need to be provided. Furnished with work benches, sinks and equipment, again as movable and flexible in arrangement as possible, these areas could provide for activities in practical subjects such as art and craft, music, science home economics, sewing and technical subjects.

## **Individual study**

Some teachers may wish to use the Centre for individual study for teaching qualifications or personal interest. Carrels provided in a quiet corner, possibly of the library area, could fulfill this need.

## **2. Resource Services**

The scope of the resources offered by a Centre will vary from place to place according to local needs and the availability of budgets to purchase the hard and software. However the resource area of the Centre should be planned as a multi-purpose space for best use of the accommodation. Such resources might include:-

### **Resources for Loan**

There should be suitable storage and display areas for print and non-print software. Books, kits, slides, films, etc. should be

easily and, whenever possible, constantly accessible to visitors to the Centre. Such visitors might come specially to use the loan material available or could, while at another activity, be drawn to examine the scope of the materials offered for loan by the Centre.

Where hardware such as cameras, projectors, recorders and micro-computers are available for loan, it is not necessary to have these on display. In fact, for security reasons, it may be better to have them stored out of sight in lockable cupboards.

### **Resource Production**

Where the Centre offers more than rudimentary workshop facilities for the production of resources, this will require considerable space. Recording and video filming studios, darkrooms, offset-printing, collating, binding, etc. are all operations needing storage space for equipment and materials as well as working space when in use. Audio and video tape-copying services also require space for their operation as do woodwork, metalwork and glasswork facilities if they are to be made available to teachers at the Centre.

Should the Centre itself be involved in the production of resources either just for the Centre library and files or for sale, areas will be required for their production, printing, display, warehousing, packaging and distribution.

### **Centre-used Resources and Equipment**

The equipment and resources required by the Centre for its own use require storage and easy access from the meeting rooms. Centres may decide to designate separate areas for equipment reserved for use in the Centre and equipment for loan to schools, if any.

### **3. Exhibition Areas**

Space within the Centre needs to be allocated for display purposes. Types of display apart from those already referred to under Resource Services, above, could include:

- equipment, resources, etc.
- display of children's work produced in schools
- displays of material produced by teachers at the Centre
- general information such as job vacancies, courses, accommodation wanted or vacant, circulars from the Education Office, etc.

### **4. Technical Support Services**

Should a Teachers' Resource Centre be involved in offering repair services for school equipment, an area will be required for storing it on receipt and pending its return to schools, as well as for the repair workshop.

If the Centre acts as a centralised agency with repair work contracted out, suitable public access to storage facilities for such equipment will still be required.

### **5. Social and Recreational**

That the interchange of ideas takes place just as much in informal gatherings over some refreshment as in more formal structured situations, has already been emphasised. It is therefore important that Centres provide an area where teachers are able to obtain or prepare for themselves some refreshments and a comfortably furnished and attractive lounge for relaxation and meeting socially. Such social facilities could extend to the provision of a games room, pool table, piano and bar, or perhaps,

the Centre could provide more sophisticated facilities such as tennis courts, gymnasias or a swimming pool. Attractive grounds, gardens, courtyard areas and outdoor seating where suitable could also well be a feature of recreational services offered by a Centre.

## **6. Staff**

Permanent and seconded staff including advisers, researchers, etc., where these are based at the Centre, and other personnel using the Centre as a permanent or temporary base, need some workspace and storage facilities within the Centre. This can be provided by offices or work-areas, shelves and lockers, etc. within a multi-purpose room. It is important, however, that these people also have access to quiet areas for work that requires it, including consultation and counselling.

## **7. Centre Administration and Staff etc.**

Office space will need to be provided for the Centre Director, and his clerical and administrative staff. While Directors will wish to have their fingers on the pulse of what is going on in the Centre and be personally accessible to all visitors, they will also require a place where they can be consulted and interviewed in privacy by visiting teachers and others.

The administration area could well be the hub of the Centre since it is here that requests are received, telephones answered, directions given, enquiries dealt with and information stored. This area should be accessible and welcoming. It should be person-orientated and staffed at all times by a member of the professional staff of the Centre though it will usually be the domain of the secretary/receptionist.

Ancillary staff such as cleaners, gardeners, and technicians, also require their own work and storage space. If it is

possible for the caretaker to live on the site this can alleviate security problems.

Toilet facilities and washrooms are obviously essential for use by visitors to the Centre and for all the staff. These need rarely be separate facilities.

#### **8. Garaging**

Should the Centre own a mobile van or a car for visits to schools or a minibus for loaning to schools or for transporting groups of teachers, garaging will be required on the Centre site or close to it.

#### **9. Security**

As the Centre will be open to teachers, visitors and members of the community for many hours of the day and night and as it may well house expensive equipment, fixtures and resources, some accommodation may have to be provided in the form of a strong room or lockable security room. Where sales of materials are extensive, and banking facilities not immediately available, a safe may also be required.

#### **10. Residential Accommodation**

Centres which provide courses lasting more than one day or are located in areas where participants have to travel from distant points to reach the Centre, may have to arrange residential accommodation for some or all of those taking part. In some cases, it may be decided that these facilities can best be offered by including buildings with residential accommodation as part of the Centre itself. Since, however, these buildings could well be empty for shorter or longer periods of the year and also require considerable allocations of staff to maintain them, it could be more economical to have an agreement with local

hotels, motels, hostels, etc. - where they exist - to accommodate participants as and when the need arises.

The list above ranges over most of the possible functions which it is anticipated a Centre could, at maximum, cover. It has already been stated that it is unlikely that many Centres will, in fact, be as broadly based as this. It is, however, important to stress that planners of new Centres should not be dismayed at the apparent need for a vast number of rooms to accommodate even part of the anticipated range of functions. Many of the rooms of a Centre can be multi-functional, being used for a range of activities. The lounge or library could at certain times be used for the meetings of small groups or working parties. Larger rooms used for lectures can be broken up by the use of movable partitions, or in the evenings used for some of the social and recreational activities listed. Thus, as stated at the outset of this section, while planning to allow for expansion in the future, a newly opened Centre would be advised to "start small" with a reasonable amount of accommodation rather than be out of keeping with the more modest accommodation which serves teachers in their schools.

## **D CENTRE MANAGEMENT**

If the Teachers' Resource Centre is to function successfully, a number of policy issues must be decided prior to its establishment and a decision making system established for the on-going management of the Centre.

### **1.(a) Management Committee**

Where a Centre is to be run on the democratic-teacher-participation lines referred to earlier in this handbook, it is suggested that the policy making could best be done by a Management Committee constituted as outlined below. Apart

from ensuring that the users have a say in the decision making processes at all levels, this system also recommends itself since it can strengthen the hands of Directors of Education when they are negotiating to obtain staff, accommodation, resources, finances and other matters connected with the Centre. It can lend credence to their fight for these resources or, in a shrinking budgetary situation, the fight against cuts, to be able to refer to the decisions of the Management Committee who are in touch with the day to day needs of the Centre and the teachers it serves.

### **1.(b) Advisory Committee**

Even where the Centre Director is legally and actually directly accountable to the Director of Education, or his representative, for the formulation of the policy of the Centre, it is recommended that an advisory committee be established. In this case, the task of the committee is not to formulate policy but to advise the Director of Education on its formulation. Its mode of operation and constitution would be similar to that outlined below. It would serve to strengthen the hand of the Director of Education in applying to local, regional and other financing bodies for resources for the Centre.

An alternative mandate for an advisory committee could be to advise the Director of the Teachers' Resource Centre on long and short term policy matters to ensure that an input of advice on policy for the running of the Centre is available to the Director.

### **Constitution**

In areas where provision of a Teachers' Resource Centre is a legally mandatory educational provision for the region, the law

will normally also call for a written constitution for the policy making bodies of the Centre. Even when a constitution is not mandatory, it will be found useful for one to be drawn up, though this should not be so rigid and structured as to prevent the committees from carrying out their allotted functions. In many cases it may be found sufficient simply to draw up some terms of reference which can be altered as the practical decision making needs manifest themselves from the on-going work and growth of the Centre. In all cases the points to be delineated would incorporate some or all of those outlined below.

### **Representation**

The management/advisory committee should have representation on it of all the groups which have an active role to play in the Centre whether as providers or as consumers. The number of people that would represent each section would normally be no more than one or two at maximum though, in the case of the teachers themselves, it might be found appropriate to slightly increase the representation. Those who would be represented are:

- The Education Authority - as the body responsible for education in the area, the provider of funds, buildings and equipment
- Teacher education institutions - colleges of education, universities, etc.
- Curriculum development bodies - local and/or national
- Advisers, inspectors and other teacher supervisors
- Teachers' professional associations (Unions)

- Practising teachers from kindergarten through to tertiary education
- The Community
- The Centre Director

### **Frequency of Meetings**

It is strongly recommended that meetings of the management/advisory committee be held at least once per school term, ie. a minimum total of three times per year.

In addition to formal committee meetings, it is recommended that the members of the committee be invited as often as circumstances permit to visit the Centre to see it in operation, chat with teacher-users and keep abreast of all the developments in the institution over which they have jurisdiction.

### **Location of Meetings**

All meetings should be sited at the Teachers' Resource Centre.

### **Chairman**

Depending on the local situation, the chairman of the management/advisory committee will be the Director of Education (or his representative), a Teachers' Association or Community member of the committee. Where a community or teachers' association member chairs the committee, this can also lend strength to the committee's requests for funding, staff, resources and accommodation, since the committee's spokesman will be seen to be in direct touch with teacher and community needs.

### **Secretary**

It is normally advisable that the secretary to the committee is the Centre Director or Deputy Director. Since the calling of

meetings is normally a function carried out by the secretary this can ensure that regular meetings are held. Equally important is the fact that the secretary prepares the minutes and agenda, the latter in co-operation with the chairman. The Director can therefore ensure that all relevant matters are included in the agenda of each meeting.

### **Term of Office**

The term of office of a member of the management/advisory committee need not be too rigidly delineated. One should, nevertheless, ensure that those members who do not represent the Education Authority change from time to time to allow for new ideas and new blood to come to the committee. A period of some 2-4 years service would seem to be an optimum.

In Centres where the Director is seconded for a fixed period to the post, care should be taken that changes in the membership of the committee do not coincide with changes in the Director lest the continuity of the work of the Centre be adversely affected.

### **Election or Nomination**

Since the bodies represented on the committee will be clearly delineated, it will be for each to decide whether to elect or nominate its representative. In the case of the teacher representatives, this could be done by a postal vote or by an annual general meeting of local teachers. Alternatively, the staff of the Centre could nominate teachers who are seen to be active at the Centre and thought to be useful potential members of the Committee. This would be much less cumbersome though not as democratic as the previous method.

## **Size**

The management/advisory committee should under no circumstances be allowed to grow so large that free discussion and real involvement by all its members becomes impossible. An optimum number would be between ten and fifteen members.

## **2. Sub-Committees**

Further involvement in the decision making processes of the Centre will be through a number of sub-committees, which take responsibility for different facets of the Centre's work. These sub-committees will usually be responsible to the management/advisory committee and report to it. The number of sub-committees will be dependent on the size and scope of the Centre.

These committees will, on the one hand, assist and advise the Director as well as monitoring the work of the Centre and the Director. On the other hand, they will provide ideas and feedback on Centre activities from its consumers, the classroom teachers, and ensure the fact that the Centre is relevant to the current needs of teachers at any particular time.

### **Aspects of the Work of Sub-Committees**

Not every Centre will require all of the sub-committees listed below. Their applicability will depend on the range of work covered by a particular Centre. On the other hand, some Centres might require additional or alternative sub-committees to ensure the smooth functioning of the Centre.

**In-service Education Programme** - to decide on a programme to meet the needs of teachers for in-service courses, working parties, workshops, etc.

**Adult and Distance Learning Programme** - where a Centre serves the community and in particular a far-flung community, its range of work could include this type of activity and a sub-committee will be needed to plan and monitor the activities.

**Publication and Editing of Print and Non-Print Material** - this covers the whole spectrum of materials for teachers, for classroom use, for the community, etc. in which the Centre is involved.

**Resources Production** - this committee would deal more with the form rather than the content of print and non-print materials and their efficient and cost-effective production.

**Newsletter Editorial** - where the Centre decides to publish a newsletter, a separate editorial committee is recommended. This newsletter could be of the simplest form or, more ambitiously, contain articles on educational topics relevant to teachers.

**Library** - to decide on the policy of the print and non-print library's policy with regard to purchases, cataloguing, reference and lending services, etc.

**Social Programme** - to plan and operate the social programme of the Centre.

**Community Programme** - to decide on ways of community involvement in the Centre and to plan the programme accordingly.

**Finance and Budgeting** - to negotiate with the authorities to obtain the necessary finance for the Centre and then to allocate these resources to the various activities comprising its work.

## **Representation**

Each sub-committee would comprise at least one member of the management/advisory committee to ensure communication between them; the Director of the Centre or Deputy; practising teachers, including head teachers, who would represent the needs of the classroom teacher and who have a special interest and/or expertise in the subject; and 'experts' in the particular field of the sub-committee. For example, on the In-service Education Programme Committee, college lecturers, advisers, inspectors, etc. would be included.

The sub-committees would have the right to call in further 'experts' for one or more meetings to assist in formulating policy on any particular item under discussion at that meeting.

## **Frequency of Meetings**

It is anticipated that sub-committees would need to meet some two or three times per school term at least. They would be free to call additional meetings as required but it is recommended that, so that they keep abreast of day to day and week to week developments, they should meet regularly and reasonably frequently.

## **Location of Meetings**

As with the management/advisory committee, it is recommended that meetings should normally take place at the Teachers' Resource Centre. However, some meetings may need to be held elsewhere to assist with the topics under discussion eg. the library committee might meet at a local or regional library in order to learn about the techniques employed there.

## **Chairman**

While the chairman can be any member of the committee selected for the job, it would be beneficial if it were one of those in closest touch with conditions and needs in the schools.

## **Secretary**

It should be the job of the Centre staff to 'service' the committee by producing minutes and agendas etc. Thus whoever is on the Committee from the Centre might be the most appropriate person to be the secretary of the committee.

## **Term of Office**

The term of office of a member of a sub-committee can be quite flexible though it is recommended that a two to four year period is the optimum to ensure an in-put of new ideas. As with the management/advisory committee, care should be taken that, where the Director is on secondment, members of sub-committees do not change at the same point in time as the Director to ensure continuity.

### **3. Essential Matters for Management/Advisory or Sub-Committee Purview**

Allocation of basic matters of Centre policy to specific committees will mostly be implied in the name of the committee and, of course, the management/advisory committee holds overall responsibility for all aspects of Centre policy. The checklist below may be of assistance in ensuring that all items are covered.

#### **(a) The Policy with respect to:**

Staff appointments including secondment or permanency.

Policy concerning who may use the Centre.

Hours of opening.

Services to be offered.

Charges, if any, to be made for the use of the Centre.

Charges, if any, to be made for materials at the Centre.

Degree of community involvement.

Use of the Centre by other teacher bodies or other organisations.

- (b) The programme of meetings, courses and lectures initiated by the Centre.
- (c) The resources of the Centre.
- (d) A network linking the Centre with users and other Centres and educational institutions.
- (e) Finance and Budget.
- (f) Newsletter.
- (g) Social Programme.
- (h) Community Programme.
- (i) Centre Publications.
- (j) Library.
- (k) Evaluation of the Centre's work.

## E PROGRAMME

Three different modes of initiating activities in the programme of a Teacher's Resource Centre exist and must be weighed for their inclusion in the structure of any one Centre.

Firstly, there are activities entirely initiated by the Centre, its programme sub-committee and its Director. The subject of such an activity will usually come from requests by

teachers and/or schools in the area and from new developments in education which it is important for teachers to hear about.

Secondly, semi-autonomous teacher groups such as associations of infant, mathematics, science remedial teachers may exist in the locality receiving Centre support in their work but deciding on their own programme content.

Thirdly, there are activities for which the Centre may provide no more than the venue and publicity, but are run by outside agencies -inspectors, advisers, unions, colleges etc. - who are responsible for their format and content.

A decision, as part of local policy, will have to be made whether all three types of activity should take place in the Centre and if so roughly in what proportions. It would seem likely that Centre initiated activities will be the largest proportion of the programme in most Centres and the following relates to these activities.

In planning the Centre's programme every effort should be made to co-ordinate it with other providers of support services for teachers eg. colleges, universities, etc. - to avoid duplication and/or gaps in the range of work offered to the teachers of the area.

Teachers "vote with their feet" i.e. they attend activities which they consider will repay them for their investment in time and energy by attending in-service education courses with immediate and long term rewards in the classroom. Topics should, therefore, mostly be ones which are immediately relevant to the teacher, or those seen as important for teachers working in the local educational system. Thus, if the Centre's programme is to attract teachers it must answer three criteria:

## 1. Relevance

The programme must offer topics that are relevant and of compelling interest to teachers. The activities should be organised in as participatory a manner as the subject allows ie. workshops and working parties, discussion or study groups, longer courses and lectures. The last of these being the least participatory, can nevertheless be used on occasions as an introduction or as follow-up from the considerations of a working party. However, even here, the lecturers should be briefed to allow adequate time for questions and discussion after their contribution. Some subjects which have been found to be relevant to teachers almost universally and might therefore be considered, from time to time, for inclusion in a programme are:

- Primary Mathematics
- The Changing Role of the Learner
- Art and Craft for the Non-expert
- Classroom Organisation
- Teaching Gifted or Less Able Children
- First Aid
- The Teaching of Reading
- Mixed Ability Teaching

In addition to the in-service education parts of the programme, the following will usually be found to be relevant and have already been discussed in greater detail in Section Two of the Handbook under Possible Functions of the Centre:

**Support Services for Teachers** (see Section Two, Part B) with workshop and resource facilities for such purposes as

reprographics, photography, art and craft, audio and video recording and the making of classroom aids.

**Social and Recreational Services** (see Section Two, Part D) for teachers where they and others involved with education locally can meet informally and interchange ideas.

**Opportunities for Community Involvement in Education** (see Section Two, Part D) where parents and others involved in education orientated local groups in the community can hold activities.

## 2. **Good Leadership**

The activities, whatever they may be, should always be led by people with first class practical experience in their subject. Preference should be given to those with relevant experience in the classroom rather than those who might hold high qualifications or prestigious posts but have little to offer that is relevant to the teacher in the classroom. This criterion should ensure that it is serving teachers who also have group leadership skills, for the most part, lead activities and share their current and relevant on-the-job knowledge with their colleagues.

## 3. **Publicity**

The Centre must ensure that its programmes are given the widest publicity in the schools it serves, for the aim of this publicity is to ensure that every teacher in these schools is fully aware of what the Centre has to offer in terms of programme and resources.

While it is true that nothing succeeds like success and there is no better publicity for the work of a Centre than satisfied teachers speaking with their colleagues, there are nevertheless

a number of concrete steps which it is possible consciously to consider for implementation in order to publicise the work of the Centre. These include:-

#### **A Termly Programme ( What's On )**

- To provide details of speakers, dates and times of all activities
- To be circulated to all schools and available on the first day of each term
- With the entire programme for the whole term laid out together with application forms for each activity to enable teachers to plan their termly in-service education involvement
- With supplements sent out during the term which will include additional activities and courses, including those arising out of the need to follow up an earlier meeting, etc.

#### **A Teachers' Resource Centre Correspondent**

- A teacher in each school to act as the liaison between the staff and the Centre.
- To bring Centre publicity material and activities to the attention of teachers likely to be interested in the topic.
- To feed-back to the Centre the reactions of individual teachers and the staff as a whole to the Centre's programme and individual activities.
- To inform the Centre of subjects requested by colleagues for inclusion in the Programme.

### **Centre Staff Visits to Schools**

- Regular visits by the Director and staff in areas where distances permit this.
- Meetings with Headteachers and/or staff in break-time.
- Informal chats with individual staff members.
- Liaison with Headteachers regarding the in-service education needs of teachers in the schools.
- Consultations with Heads of Department and/or Headteachers on best ways to ensure the implementation of the outcomes of in-service education.

### **A Termly Newsletter**

- Containing articles on current developments in education locally and nationally.
- Reports of courses and meetings which have taken place at the Centre for the benefit of those who were unable to attend.
- Reviews of books and equipment.
- To provide a means for teachers to communicate with each other regarding ideas, methods, approaches, etc. Giving information where cheap materials may be obtained, such as factories with scrap materials, etc.

### **Local Radio and/or Television Advertising**

- Especially where teachers are more isolated eg. in scattered islands, it could be difficult for printed communication to reach them speedily. It may, therefore, be particularly useful to advertise the

Centre's activities through the local radio and/or television in these areas as well as in all other areas.

- Reminders about forthcoming activities and notice of last minute cancellations can also usually be put out over local broadcasting stations.

### Exhibitions

- Where exhibitions are organised , from time to time, to display work of particular interest produced by pupils in a school, or work resulting from a workshop course at the Centre, these can serve to draw the attention of a wide cross-section of teachers and the public to the Teacher's Resource Centre and enhance the process of cross-fertilisation of ideas between schools and teachers.

### Sampling Teachers' Needs

When the annual policy for the content of the Centre's programme is being formulated, the opinions and requirements of teachers will need to be ascertained. This can be done in a number of ways.

- A questionnaire to every teacher in the area with multi-choice and open-ended questions concerning subjects for courses, workshops, working parties and lectures.
- Through the Resource Centre School Representative referred to above.
- A "Suggestions Box" located at the Centre for visitors to drop in their ideas.

- Subject associations could be encouraged to feed back to the Centre suggestions for activities in their special field and for follow-up courses, etc.

## **F. STAFF**

### **1. Characteristics, status, etc.**

Just as the status and character of a school is very much dependent on the charisma exhibited by the headteacher and staff, so it is also true to say that the image of a Teachers' Resource Centre is equally, if not more, related to the persons appointed to be in charge and those working on the staff. On the staff's approach to their task will depend the effectiveness and development of the Centre.

The task of running a Teachers' Resource Centre calls in the first instance for "openness" - a willingness to listen to and take into serious consideration opinions and views which may not be the same as, or even run counter to, those held by the Director. It requires the openness which enables one to give the other view a sympathetic hearing and a background in education which enables the Director to discuss class-teaching related topics from a fund of personal experience. Thus the Director, and other professional staff, should have been active teachers for a number of years, and experience in both primary and secondary schools is desirable.

Since much of the work of running a Centre will also involve administration and organisation, ideally those entrusted with the task should have shown these abilities in their past career. A knowledge of educational technology in its broadcast sense - a systems approach to education as well as know-how with various types of hard and software - is another prerequisite for a post which will require the holder to act as a

catalyst or change agent in the educational system of the locality. Though the work of a Centre will encompass the whole breadth of curriculum subjects, it is not expected that the Director should be "an expert" in all or even most of these. The Director will rather need to act as an entrepreneur, knowing where to direct clients to receive the best possible advice and assistance. A good knowledge of the area and those involved in education within it are also important for the post.

The choosing of the Director and staff of a Centre will be critical to its future success and, therefore, should be approached most carefully. Neither the need to remove someone from another place to ease friction nor the desire to "reward good service" should ever influence such an important appointment. Careful consideration should be given whether the appointment will be made on secondment for a limited period, as has been successfully done in some countries, or whether it should be a permanent appointment, which has also proved successful in practice. In many, if not most cases, the person appointed will have served in a post of responsibility or even as a headteacher in a school and shown abilities of leadership etc. in this position. In some areas it might also be thought possible to consider headteachers who have retired but have much still to offer in terms of experience and "openness".

The salary structure for the staff of a Centre and its Director will have to take into account the unusual hours they will be required to work - much of the Centre's work will be in the afternoon and evening, during school holidays, and even at weekends when teachers are free to attend - and take into account the need to compensate for the considerable travelling to schools and other establishments which will be necessary. A possible approach would be to base the salary of the Director

on that of a headteacher with the point of entry onto the scale based on the number of educational establishments and/or teachers in the Centre's catchment area.

Clearly, the status the employing authority attributes to the work of the Centre will be reflected in the salaries, professional status, etc. it awards the Centre's staff. Teachers will understand when an authority is only paying lip service to the idea of a Teachers' Resource Centre, or conversely, when it gives it high priority in the system, and they will react to it accordingly.

## 2. Complement

The role of a Teachers' Resource Centre will differ greatly from country to country and even within any one country. The number of people on the staff of the Centre will depend on the role the Centre fulfils, the number of teachers in its catchment area, how many of the possible functions of a Centre it undertakes (see Section Two of this Handbook), its size and the amount it is used. In some circumstances it is possible that the full complement might even include a number of volunteers within it. The advisers, inspectors, and other specialists serving the area could also be sited at the Resource Centre and operate from it while contributing to the service it provides, so long as they accept the non-hierarchical nature of any work they do while at the Centre.

As the work of the Centre expands in volume and variety, it should be possible to recruit more staff. In every Centre, however large or small, the following tasks will have to be carried out, though in many cases not by separate individuals:

- Leadership**
- Planning and direction of the Centre's educational and organisational policy
  - Publicity and public relations
  - Contacts with schools, colleges, administrators, etc.
  - Budgeting and planning future developments
  - Involvement in Centre activities
  - Counselling and advice
  - Evaluation and assessment
- Secretarial**
- Correspondence
  - Photocopying
  - Duplicating and distributing notices sent out to schools
  - Typing of masters for reproduction
  - Reception and enquiries
- Accounting**
- Centre accounts
  - Receipt of cash for materials sold, hire of rooms etc.
  - Payment of bills and/or salaries, if not carried out centrally by education department
- Technical**
- Printing
  - Graphics
  - Recording, audio and video
  - Library, print and non-print materials
  - Repair and maintenance of Centre equipment
  - Repair and maintenance service for school equipment, where applicable
- Catering**
- Light refreshments for visitors
  - Snacks or meals for all-day and longer activities
  - For residents, where accommodation is provided

- Maintenance**
- Cleaning
  - Gardening
  - Repair of building
  - Security of building
- Transport**
- Mobile Centre and/or workshop for equipment repairs
  - Centre transport for staff, lecturers, course participants, etc. where these are provided

The diagram on page 101 indicates the four broad categories into which these tasks can be divided and may help in planning staff appointments, a balance being struck between the number of staff appointed in each category. It would be advisable if, as a minimum, a new Centre would appoint one person in each category though they need not be full time appointments in each case.

The Centre would not usually have a resident team of lecturers or workshop leaders but would "buy-in" the most appropriate people for those tasks according to the programme requirements. In the first instance, one would usually look to local educationists with relevant knowledge and competence in the topic required but those from other areas with innovations, experience and ideas to share and transmit would also be invited.

Employment as a member of staff of a Teachers' Resource Centre should be seen as an opportunity for enriching work experience and broadening horizons. It should, as far as possible, be planned as part of the individuals' career development, enabling them easily to return to their previous post or another suitable position without loss of status. Indeed, the experience of work in a Teachers' Resource Centre would normally be expected to lead to promotion.

PROFESSIONAL
Director
Deputy
Librarian
Other educationist

SECRETARIAL
Secretary
Receptionist
Copy typist
Accountant

TECHNICAL
Media Resource Officer
Graphic Artist
Printer - for printing duplicating, collating etc.
Audio, video and/or micro- computer technician

ANCILLARY
Catering assistant
Caretaker - Janitor
Transport officer
Warden for residential services

## **G. EQUIPMENT**

The choice of equipment for a Teachers' Resource Centre should be made after careful consideration of a number of factors and after consultations with the potential staff, where a new Centre is being planned, and with technical experts in each field. As has been suggested earlier, it is often better to "start small" and expand a Centre as need for its services grows. This is also true where equipment is concerned, and it is advisable not to overstock a Centre with sophisticated equipment in the hope that a use for it will be found, but rather to build up gradually. Such a consideration is frequently, in any case, theoretical as funds will limit the purchases which can be made.

### **1. Considerations Influencing Equipment Selection**

#### **Centre Policy and Priorities**

The decisions regarding the equipping of a Teachers' Resource Centre will reflect the priorities and policy of the Centre. The equipment of a Centre emphasising the material and resource side of its work, will be distinct from that of a Centre emphasising the in-service education aspect.

#### **Available Funds**

Restrictions on funds available will create a need for critical decision making. Ideally, a Centre should be an example to the teachers it serves in the style and standard of its equipment and its general furnishing. But, the expenditure that this will absorb will have to be carefully judged against the wish to provide greater quantities of equipment for its users. However, it is recommended that it is preferable to purchase less equipment and maintain quality than vice versa.

## **Availability of Equipment**

When there are a number of similar products on the market, the pros and cons of purchasing locally produced or locally marketed equipment against imported but possibly superior equipment will have to be weighed up. The availability of spares and/or servicing facilities are critical factors in selection. On-going availability on the local market and any discount available on products must also be taken into account.

## **Appropriateness in Local Terms**

Centres will usually be local "trend setters". Educational establishments will turn to the Centre for advice on the best equipment to purchase.

- Centres' equipment should be compatible with that in use in schools and other establishments in order that software produced at the Centre can be used on their equipment eg. television and micro-computer programmes.
- The level of "sophistication" of Centre equipment should be carefully considered. Unless training courses are planned to teach new skills, equipment should not be beyond the operating skills of local teachers.
- The Centre should not, however, duplicate equipment already available in all schools except where it is required to service activities (workshop etc.) taking place at the Centre.

## **2. Equipment Requirements of a Centre**

The exact requirements of any Centre will depend on the scope of the functions planned for its programme. The following checklist covers the needs of even the most ambitious Centre:

### **Equipment for the Administration Areas**

- Office equipment for administrative offices viz. Director and Deputy, Secretary, Receptionist, Typist, etc.
- Ample notice-board and filing facilities.
- At least one external telephone line.
- Safe or other security arrangements.
- Vehicle/s for equipment and/or personnel (and for Mobile Centre where this applies).
- Comfortable furniture for Waiting Room.

### **Equipment for Educational Activities**

- Stackable and other types of tables
  - Stackable and other types of chairs
  - Moveable screens
- (all these to be aesthetic and adult to create a welcoming atmosphere)
- Overhead projector/s
  - Filmstrip and slide projector/s
  - Video cassette and/or reel to reel recorders and monitors
  - Screens
  - Tape recorders
  - Micro-computers
- (these for use by visiting speakers etc.)

### **Resource Equipment**

- Workshop furniture
- Machinery for workshops
- Tools
- Materials viz. art and craft, wood and/or metal
- Exhibition furniture
- Machines for reprographics

- Studio equipment viz. photographic, sound and television recording
- Darkroom equipment
- Micro-computing hard and software

#### **Equipment for Leisure and Recreation Areas**

- Catering equipment viz. crockery, cutlery, cooking utensils, cooker (stove), table cloths, etc.
- Pictures and/or photographs for wall display
- Table tennis, billiard and/or snooker tables (easily storable types when not in use)
- Chess, scrabble and other board games, playing cards
- Sports equipment for those sports to be offered.
- Beds and bedding, tables, washing and bathing facilities where sleeping accommodation is to be available

#### **Other Equipment**

- Floor covering
- Light fittings
- Sign posts - both leading to the Centre and for reaching rooms within it
- Room name-plates
- Cleaning equipment
- Gardening tools for staff
- Disposable materials for toilets and washrooms
- Waste paper baskets and larger containers to cope with considerable demand for waste disposal

Clearly it is not possible to provide an exhaustive shopping list for all the equipment required in Teachers' Resource Centres, but the above should raise some of the main issues to be considered.

## H FINANCE

Although the financial resources available to establish and maintain a Teachers' Resource Centre will vary considerably from country to country, from region to region, and from time to time, the principal areas of expenditure remain remarkably constant. The two major items are the capital costs incurred in establishing the Centre and the running costs involved in the day-to-day operation and maintenance of the Centre.

### 1. Establishment Costs

- Site**
  - purchase or lease
  - groundworks
  - drainage.
  
- Building**
  - purchase of existing premises
  - modification of the existing building or
  - redecoration of the building
  - design and erection of a new building.
  
- Access**
  - driveways
  - parking area.
  
- Grounds**
  - lawns, gardens, trees and shrubs.
  - fences, hedges, entrance ways
  
- Furniture and Fittings**
  - floor covering
  - curtains and blinds
  - light fittings
  - office furniture and fittings
  - education areas furniture and fittings
  - kitchen furniture and fittings
  - display panels
  - direction signs and room name-plates

- security fittings

#### **Equipment\*- office**

- kitchen
  - photocopying or duplicating
  - audio-visual (recorders, projectors, micro-computers)
  - plants, plant holders, pictures etc.
  - specialist (workshops, printing, library, photographic darkroom)
  - equipment for loan
  - cleaning and grounds maintenance
  - Centre vehicles
- (\* Including installation charges)

#### **Materials and Resources**

- office requisites including stationery, letterhead paper, etc.
- materials for courses and other Centre activities
- film, audiotapes, videotapes, computer discs
- reference books
- resources for loan

#### **Storage Facilities**

- filing cabinets
- storage cupboards
- shelving units
- safe

## **2. Running Costs**

#### **Staff Salaries**

- full time/part-time
- professional/ancillary
- caretaking, cleaning and grounds

- Office** - stationery  
- postage  
- telephone rental and tolls
- Publicity** - printing  
- advertising
- Resources** - new media software viz. library books, tapes, slides, films, computer programmes  
- art and craft materials  
- other consumable materials
- Equipment** - up-dating of equipment as demands increase and new equipment comes on the market.
- Furniture** - as Centre usage and premises grow.
- Building & Grounds**  
- repairs and maintenance  
- security  
- cleaning  
- heating, lighting and water  
- insurance
- Transport**  
- vehicle/s running cost  
- travel allowances for staff and/or teachers

### **Capital Depreciation and Obsolescence**

### **Funding**

In many cases, the establishment of a Teachers' Resource Centre will be through funds allocated by the Department (Ministry) of Education. In some cases, particularly where community education is seen as a major function of the Centre, other government departments may be involved. In other situations, local authorities may bear part or all of the costs

or, through a co-operative society, those using the Centre may pay a proportion of the running expenses.

Whatever the source of the funds, however, the management committee of the Centre must have the right to decide on their allocation. A budget should be submitted by the Centre Director to the Management/Advisory Committee and, once agreed, the Director should have the responsibility for expenditure within its guidelines.

A record of income and expenditure - moneys received, invoices paid, receipts written, etc. - should be kept by the Centre and be available each year for audit and as the basis for an annual financial statement to the funding agency/ies. Most countries will have established financial procedures for co-operative or incorporated societies, for high school boards of governors and other bodies similar in composition and function to a Teachers' Resource Centre management committee, and these procedures or other similar ones should be examined and followed. Such procedures will include recommendations (or regulations) regarding such matters as insurance, investment, purchase of capital items, replacement of capital items, trading functions, accumulation of funds, etc.

### 3. Cash Sales

Some Teachers' Resource Centre are able to have a trading account. This might be built up as a result of sale of goods and/or services at the Centre (teaching aids, photocopying, laminating classroom materials, stationery, audio-visual items), through 'bulk-buy schemes' to schools initiated by the Teachers' Resource Centre, or by the sale of teaching resources produced by the Centre. The profits of such trading can usually be used in the purchase of further stock or to employ staff for this part of the Centre's work but are sometimes also

available for the improvement of resources, facilities and equipment at the Centre. In any case, funds obtained in this way must be subject to independent audit - just as with the main account - and usually the controlling authority will require an annual statement of all financial assets of the Centre.

A system of payment for these items will also have to be decided upon. In some cases this might be "cash on delivery" with teachers and/or schools making actual cash payments. In other cases it may be possible to set up a system whereby the purchaser simply signs a form which enables the Centre funds to be credited with the amount involved while the school's funds are debited a similar sum; alternatively, the school can be invoiced by the Centre. This system has much to recommend it as it avoids the need to have sums of cash floating around and obviates the need for teachers to lay out sums from their personal money. Possibly a combination of the two systems might be the ideal solution allowing small sums to be paid in cash (photocopying etc.) by individuals and larger amounts to be directly transferred.

#### **4. Internal Funds**

Most Teachers' Resource Centres have a small social fund or 'Tea Account' which covers day-to-day catering receipts and payments and which builds up to cover incidental expenses on a 'petty cash' basis. The flowers, farewell gift, get-well card, pot plants, piece of pottery, taking a visitor to lunch ... these, and other small expenses which contribute so much to the friendliness and welcome of a Centre, should be independent of the main accounts.

#### **I DAY TO DAY RUNNING**

Any institution, however relevant its philosophy to the needs of

its target population and however accurately this philosophy is interpreted into its aims and objectives, will stand or fall by the style and atmosphere it creates in its daily contacts with its clientele. The ability of students speedily to ascertain the "hidden curriculum" of a school or college has been well documented by Benson R Snyder (1971)\*. It is clearly even more relevant to the needs of a Teachers' Resource Centre to ensure co-incident between its stated aims and the way it seeks to implement these in its day to day contacts with teachers. Only in a welcoming, caring, receptive and open atmosphere can the principles outlined in previous sections be sincerely implemented. To prescribe how it should be done is not easy but there are certain basic assumptions that can be made:<sup>1</sup>

- The Centre will be open at times convenient to and agreed by teachers and other local users. When the Director is not present, other staff members will greet visitors and talk to them giving whatever help the Centre can command.
- The atmosphere in and the component parts of the Centre - the staff, programme, work areas, the decor, etc. - will indicate the high standards it sets, and the standards it hopes will be found acceptable by teachers. Adherence to these standards will draw people into the Centre. Failure to maintain them may turn people away. A Teachers' Centre should therefore be an interesting, lively working place or it will risk being empty.

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\* Benson R Snyder : The Hidden Curriculum, M I T Press London and Massachusetts.

- Apparatus will be in its appointed place, and available for use.
- Outstanding work done by children and teachers will be prominently displayed. Such displays will be changed frequently.
- There are less obvious qualities which will ensure the development of the Centre viz. the thoughtful reception of visitors, the use of available time, and the sensitive use of informed people to help teachers with their enquiries and problems. These will promote a clear awareness of the Centre's priorities. With this awareness, the contribution of the Centre and its Director will become manifest and establish their position as catalysts for progress.
- The daily inter-change of thinking among the staff of the Centre working as a team will sharpen their appreciation of needs and enthusiasms and help to shape the Centre's policy.
- Systematic visits to schools by the Director and Centre Staff and expeditious correspondence with teachers will promote the Centre's credibility in their eyes.
- Workshops, whose emphasis is clearly chosen, will render to teachers the professional assistance which they need. Such workshops will identify with schools which have special needs and utilise the expertise of those which have made outstanding progress.
- Working parties will be established to enable teachers to examine relevant topics of the curriculum, class organisation, examinations, evaluation, etc. which

need re-examination at a particular point in time. These working parties will enable teachers to make a maximum contribution from their practical experience while, in exchange, recovering additional input from other experts in the field.

- The Centre will enlist and welcome all possible available help from educational counsellors and institutions locally, regionally and nationally viz. advisers, inspectors, college of education lecturers, university personnel, industry and ancilliary services of the local authority.
- The advisory staff, the inspectorate and the educational administrators, will contribute to the Centre their own ideas and their expertise. They will also participate in the decision making processes of the Centre.
- The Teachers' Resource Centre will weave the various educational agencies and the almost untapped expertise of the teaching force into its own democratic patterns through its committees, its co-operative style of work, and its empathy with its clients so that its work will win the confidence of the administration and the trust of the teachers and community. In this way the Centre will establish for itself an influential place in the evolution of educational advance.

## J. NETWORKING

The Teachers' Resource Centre will be part of two distinct networks. Firstly, it will be part of the local, regional and national pattern of educational provision. Secondly, it will,

ideally, from a part of a regional, national and even international network of Teachers' Resource Centres and their Directors.

### **1. Educational Provision Network**

While each centre will bear its own imprint it will also be conscious that it has a place in a national education pattern. In its own area it is the hub of a wheel but it inter-locks with other wheels which bind the various geographical districts into a coherent educational pattern. Each Centre will fulfill its responsibilities in response to the needs of teachers and the community in its own immediate area, but its value in the delivery system demands that it is aware of the regional and national educational policy of the country as a whole.

The overall responsibility for the provision of education rests with the Ministry of Education. This responsibility is often delegated to local authorities and, in its implementation, the Teachers' Resource Centre will have an important role to play.

The advice of advisers and inspectors, the counsel of counsellors, the hopes and aspirations of parents will all add relevance and depth to the support which the Centre is able to give to various links in the educational network. Difficulties which are common to many schools will be channelled to the Centre, while the initiatives which other schools launch should be reinforced there, so that the work of a successful Teachers' Resource Centre is a subtle exercise in co-operation and networking to improve educational provision.

The Centre acts as a reservoir into which various streams of thinking flow and mingle and are then directed into the schools for the benefit of all members of the community.

## 2. Teachers' Resource Centre Network

In the last two decades Teachers' Resource Centres under various names have been established in many countries of the world and the number in countries of the Commonwealth is still growing.

In the early days, the new phenomenon represented by these Centres found some difficulty in finding its place and becoming recognised among the agencies providing teacher education and in-service education. However, the gradual growth of networks of leaders of these Centres on a regional and then a national basis, has seen increased recognition in many countries, albeit on a very limited scale. The first International Conference on Teachers' Centres was held in Israel in 1981. Since, in most areas, Centres represent a trend towards more teacher participation as providers and decision makers in their own in-service education, their development was in line with the move towards greater grassroot involvement in the community as a whole which marks the second half of the twentieth century. Hence, through the newly established networks of their leaders, they have developed into an additional agency which the Ministry must recognise when it consults with those involved in teacher in-service education.

This places two responsibilities on networks of Teachers' Resource Centre Directors. The first is to act as a forum for the interchange of ideas as between different Centres and their Directors, and a vehicle for their own in-service education as Directors in this field. The second is to act as a representative voice in all the decision making bodies, regionally and nationally, on the future of the organisation and content of teacher in-service education.

Thus it is deemed advisable in countries where a system of Teachers' Resource Centres already exists, or is gradually growing, for these Centres to initiate contacts between their staffs. Even if this is at first on an informal basis, occasional meetings could be held in each other's Centres to discuss common problems and evolve common ideas. In this way, one can gradually build up regional and national networks of Teachers' Resource Centres and their leadership. This will establish the Centres as part of the recognised system for teachers' in-service education of the country.