

Introduction

In 1975 the Commonwealth Secretariat, acting on the recommendations of member states, initiated a programme of investigation and assistance in the field of low-cost production of school science equipment. The programme started with the publication in 1975 of The Production of School Science Equipment - a review of developments (1), and plans were then made to hold three regional seminars to consider the provision of relevant science teaching equipment from local and other sources.

To provide background material for the first of those meetings it was felt that studies of some of the existing centres, would be useful resource material. Four centres, each concerned in one way or another with getting science teaching apparatus into the classroom, were selected for the study. These studies were used at the first regional seminar held in Nassau, Bahamas in November 1976(2), and again at the second, held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in September 1977(3).

Subsequent feedback and requests have indicated that it would be useful to have the studies published as a separate publication, even though they were summarized and printed in the report of the first regional meeting.

The studies were originally carried out early in 1976 through funds provided by the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation. A further section has now been added to draw attention to some of the similarities and differences in the modes of operation and organization of the centres. It is not intended that any of the centres should be considered as models to be faithfully copied since they have to reflect the national goals and environmental realities they have been established to serve. Instead, each study focuses attention on problems and considerations which have to be accounted for when the establishment of some form of local production of school science teaching equipment is being considered.

Because the two regional seminars have deliberated on these factors, it is recommended that the seminar reports should be read in conjunction with this publication. The final seminar in the current programme will be held in Papua New Guinea in March 1979. It is expected that this meeting will draw together the work of the previous seminars and provide strong guidelines which can be used by a country wishing to start producing some of its own teaching materials.

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1. The Production of School Science Equipment - a review of developments. Commonwealth Secretariat publication, 1975.
 2. Low-Cost Science Teaching Equipment
Report of a Commonwealth Regional Seminar/Workshop
Nassau, Bahamas, 16-26 November 1976.
 3. Low-Cost Science Teaching Equipment:2
Report of a Commonwealth Regional Seminar/Workshop
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 20-30 September 1977.