

INTRODUCTION

Commonwealth Ministers of Education meeting in Accra for the Seventh Commonwealth Education Conference recommended that 'the Commonwealth Secretariat, in consultation with governments concerned, should assemble information on the steps being taken to implement programmes of universal primary education in member countries, and make this information available to other countries'.

In response to this recommendation, the Secretariat commissioned Mr. R.L. Smith to conduct a survey of progress towards universal primary education in developing countries of the Commonwealth. This report is a summary of the findings of that survey.

The survey reveals that a number of countries, even among those which gained independence in recent times, have enjoyed universal primary education for some considerable time. It also reveals that some countries have adopted an evolutionary approach to UPE rather than try to set fixed target dates for it.

The high cost of formal schooling has been a major factor in delaying the implementation of UPE in most countries and so a particularly valuable feature of this report is that which describes the alternative and compensatory efforts being made by a number of countries to achieve UPE.

The material presented in this publication is derived from a variety of official and unofficial sources and does not commit Commonwealth Governments or the Commonwealth Secretariat to any particular viewpoint. There are obvious difficulties in preparing for publication a wide-ranging survey such as this compiled as it was from a variety of sources. Details have had to be omitted for the sake of compressing the collected information into readable form; some details are missing because the questionnaires returned were themselves incomplete or not returned at all. Material supplied from different sources is difficult to shape harmoniously or to present with unified emphasis. Nevertheless it is hoped that the information which this study has collected and the discussion of issues which it raises will help countries to move towards UPE more quickly and avoid some of the difficulties that others have experienced in their efforts to achieve it.

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