

CONSTRAINTS AND ALTERNATIVES

IN UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

Some problems in attaining UPE revealed by the questionnaire. In their efforts to achieve Universal Primary Education, countries are faced with complex and inter-related problems. The Commonwealth countries surveyed in mid 1978 were asked to select a priority problem from a list, check others of the listed items which applied to their own situation and add any specific problems hindering their achieving of Universal Primary Education (see Appendix - Questionnaire Item 23 (a)). Although fifteen countries responded to the questionnaire, only eleven actually completed it. The table below summarizes the responses of the eleven.

Problems which may be indentified from the table "Patterns of Progress" are parallel to those drawn from questionnaire responses. Eleven countries provided questionnaire responses and a further fourteen countries discussed the problems of universalization in development plans and similar documents. The table below lists the most frequently mentioned problems of all 25 countries.

The constraints outlined below are not necessarily a function of attempted universalization. They have always been with us and are merely made more acute as universalization proceeds. It is not sufficient to argue that fundamentally, all constraints are constraints of cost.

PROBLEMS AFFECTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UPE

i) Cost factors	<u>Ranked as highest priority by 9 of the 11</u>
ii) Organizational factors	Mentioned as important by 7 of the 11
iii) Teacher supply factors	<u>Ranked as highest priority by 1 of the 11;</u> mentioned as important by 7 of the 11
iv) Problems of physical resources	Mentioned as important by 8 of the 11
v) Curriculum problems	Mentioned as important by 7 of the 11
vi) Communication and transport problems	Mentioned as important by 5 of the 11
vii) Problems of language policy	Mentioned as important by 6 of the 11
viii) Other problems specified by particular countries included: Nomadism (Botswana) Phasing of expansion (Nigeria) Promoting local support (Nigeria and Fiji) Need for integration of non-formal (India) Provision for handicapped (Malaysia) School-leaver problems (Solomon Islands)	

THE MOST COMMON PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED IN IMPLEMENTING UPE

i) Costs of schooling	14 countries
ii) Problems of 'irrelevant' curricula	9 countries
iii) Problems of inadequate physical resources	8 countries
iv) Problems of teacher supply and retention	8 countries
v) Problems of teacher qualifications	7 countries
vi) Problems of drop-outs	6 countries
vii) Problems of inequality of access	6 countries
Individual countries mentioned the additional problems of: School leavers, Inadequate organization and administration, High pupil-teacher ratios, Nomadism and scattered populations.	

It might be true to say that such constraints as poor physical resources, problems of teacher supply and retention, and inequalities of access might be solved through the application of larger sums of money. However, problems of the curriculum, of teacher qualifications, problems of drop-outs and wastage and problems of the organizational aspects of schooling are very much issues of "quality". In summary, the constraints affecting primary schooling boil down to the two basic issues of quality and cost.

Phillips ('Basic Education: A World Challenge', op. cit) offers advice for achieving Universal Primary Education. His guidelines propose fifty-two measures for action which are well worth consideration.

(a) Planning and Finance/
Population Coverage

1. Map the population of under-18's who are growing up without a basic education; show the causes by type of area; calculate the time required to obtain minimum basic education for all;
2. Given that minimum basic education is a fundamental human right, decide on priorities within the total educational programme and as compared with other social and economic objectives;
3. Adopt 'delivery' rather than 'access' as a guiding concept; co-ordinate educational thinking with problems of health, nutrition and family planning;

4. Improve statistics so that chronic wastage and under-enrolment patterns are detected;

5. Decide on necessary reforms of structure, method and content for universalization, set up the necessary medium and long-term plans to provide schools and teachers; include 'crash' programmes for illiterate youth in towns and other areas of rapid development.

6. Consider additional financing of basic education by some or all of the following:

- increasing the educational budget,
- redistributing resources within the existing educational budget,
- using more local resources (taxes, levies, etc.) accompanied by district planning,
- improving cost efficiency.

7. Eliminate penalizing poorer parents through imposition of fees, uniforms, book and building charges.

(b) Educational Organization

8. Reduce drop-out by providing or organizing school meals, school transport and home visits to parents;

9. In areas where development is active or imminent, set up non-formal programmes for adolescents;

10. Use radio, co-operatives and other means of community co-operation as links with school programmes;
11. Create or adapt district nuclear schools to be outlets for pupils from incomplete rural schools; set up district production centres for simple teaching aids;
12. Make arrangements 'through subsidies if necessary) for pupils of deficient schools to find places at better schools, utilize boarding facilities, religious, tribal and other group affiliations as well as public services to affect movement and transfer;
13. Devise methods of selection which do not penalize pupils from deficient schools; base selection on pupils' community involvement as well as intellectual abilities; give success under new types of selection the necessary prestige for recruitment to the public service with the provision of follow up and bridging courses during employment;
14. Provide compensatory/bridging courses to ease transition of children from poorer schools to higher levels or from non-formal to formal schooling;
15. Use self-help schemes for school improvement;
16. Vary school hours, terms and years of attendance to suit local conditions;

17. Create links with employment by school-to-work programmes, day release, etc.
18. Experiment with community schools for all age-groups;
19. Create intermittent movement between formal and available non-formal education in later years of primary schooling;
20. Experiment with and create locally controlled and planned "nuclear networks" with a local agent to stimulate community co-operation;
21. Where feasible, extend such networks;
22. Adapt traditional education (Koranic schools, peer group-oriented co-operative learning, etc.) to developmental as well as cultural needs by advice and subsidies.

(c) Teachers

23. Review salaries and status; undertake necessary initial and in-service teacher education, bearing in mind the economic value of primary schooling;
24. Consider offering teachers delayed benefits to be received when initial backlogs and 'bulges' have been overcome;
25. Recruit rural teachers from rural population; localize training at district level; include part-timers for practical and vocational teaching;

26. Apply the principle of minimum basic training, replacing untrained teachers by the output of local district-level institutions.

27. Link such institutions to the national system by opportunity ladders, bridging courses, etc.

28. Apprize the colleges of educational change, reward the best teacher educators, pay successful heads to visit and advise the less fortunate schools;

29. Revise teacher training curricula in the light of rural as well as national needs, arrange selection of teachers in conjunction with rural district leaders;

30. Ensure greater teacher participation in primary education policy and execution as well as local community;

31. Where cost benefits are favourable use new media and mechanical aids to assist teachers;

32. Use micro-teaching and clinical methods in colleges to help teachers see and correct their own weaknesses.

(d) Content, Curricula, Methods, Research and Development, Administration

33. Work out the optimum package of minimum learning needs for different districts and regions;

blend them with national requirements;

34. Evaluate these learning needs as compared to the present curricula and prescribe the necessary changes.

35. Integrate curriculum reform with research and evaluation, the retraining of teachers, the examination system, the need for new materials, etc.

36. Arrange the administrative co-ordination necessary for such integration and establish curriculum development centres.

37. Train curriculum developers and other specialists to give more attention to the first level of education.

38. Increase the link between school and agriculture scientifically and practically without emphasizing premature training for agricultural work.

39. Consider establishing certificates for completion of basic education.

40. Retrain and recycle teacher-educators and inspectors as well as teachers for the reformed curricula.

41. Increase the frequency and quality of inspection whilst encouraging local classroom innovations which fit the agreed reform.

42. Consider new educational methods which may be applicable

(e.g. use of monitors and team-teaching, self-instructional materials, etc.)

43. Apply new methods and simple equipment for science teaching adapted to basic education;

44. Consider automatic promotion (in the light of repetition rates) combined with compensatory courses particularly where there are difficulties with the medium of instruction.

45. Stimulate locally designed and staffed research, development and experimental activities using external aid.

46. Set up these activities to:

- define types of minimum learning needs as in 33 and 34;
- define alternative methods of instruction as in 42;
- define the minimum qualifications and types of training for teachers to carry out the reforms;
- define examination, selection and certification procedures;
- define action to be taken to recruit active support for reform from parents, employers and community leaders.

47. Use applied research rather than theoretical; consult all levels of authority to improve diagnosis of needs, establish date and recommend action.

48. Adopt measures to increase the commitment of local population to viewing education as a means of rural development.

49. Exchange information on innovation both within the country and internationally.

50. Undertake information work with rural parents to reduce the drop-out/child employment problem, reduce 'white collar job' expectations resulting from schooling offered and ensure parental support for educational reform.

51. Diminish obstacles to girls' education.

52. Set up 'watchdog' and co-ordinating machinery at the various administrative levels.

As Phillips admits, this list is by no means exhaustive nor is it a prescription. Rather it represents a set of pointers. Out of the set may be drawn guidance relevant to a specific situation. Certainly the first seven points should be undertaken by all countries. (Phillips). The major constraints reported by the countries surveyed are subsumed in these 52 points for action and consideration. The main obstacles in most countries would probably be:

(i) the time required to plan and apply necessary changes;

- (ii) deficiencies in the financial inputs needed to generate change;
- (iii) shortages of the planning, administrative and pedagogic skills required;
- (iv) difficulties of a political or traditional nature in developing the social as distinct from the pedagogic role of education.

It might be argued that the constraints operating to hinder universalization are well documented. Experts like Phillips offer well thought out guidance for overcoming the constraints - yet the problems remain with us. There is no lack of the will to overcome the constraints but governments have more than the education constituency to satisfy. Transport and communications, industrialization, agriculture, rural development, health care and increasing pressure for 'defence' spending all have their impact on cabinet decisions. The problems of educational expansion are well known, strategies for their solution are no secret; the task of the educators is to persuade and convince others, from parents to presidents, of the over-riding importance for national development and human development of at least basic education for all.

Alternatives in UPE

Phillips' programme for reviewing the planning, organization, teacher aspects and content and curricula aspects of Universal Primary Education suggests a strong commitment to the view that primary school systems are worth salvaging and that, given the right response to the challenge, they can be made to achieve their aims. Inherent in his 52 points is the notion of 'alternatives' (e.g. items, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 etc) - alternatives in the sense of supplementary strategies which will render

existing systems more effective. Phillips records a "strong impression" that schools, at least at the first and basic levels, are potentially the most viable means of universalization. Innovations which would have the greatest impact on primary schooling would be:

(a) those which by structural and organizational changes increase the coverage of at least minimum basic education;

(b) those which improve the quality of the programme and its relevance to national needs;

(c) those whose new methods of teaching and learning increase coverage and quality.

Phillips' 52 points contain numerous innovative measures based on knowledge of experiments in many countries. Specific innovations which might interest countries seeking ways of universalizing primary schooling include:

(a) the fundamental re-organization of objectives and methods of primary schooling (Tanzania, Peru).

(b) the recycling of primary education (Iran, Sri Lanka).

(c) the curriculum, reducing school duration (Nepal).

(d) complexes of schools of different cycle-length with ladders and bridges between them (Peru, Madras, Mexico).

(e) sharing of facilities amongst schools (Punjab).

(f) community schools in urban centres attended by adults and

children (Phillippines); use of community and social services for education (Senegal);

(g) re-arrangement of school schedules (Rajasthan);

(h) use of T.V. on a large scale or for non-formal education (Ivory Coast; San Salvador);

(i) self-help schools, rural co-operatives, 4 K and 4 B clubs, young farmer' clubs (Kenya; Zaire; Botswana; Uganda);

(j) National Youth Service Corps for education (Iran).

As with Project IMPACT, many of these ideas are still experimental. In assessing their value, interested countries must consider:

(a) How will such innovation affect the aims of our educational system?

(b) What innovation is most likely to affect our cost constraints? (Underlying this question is the need for research on how costs are made up; teachers' salaries, physical resources, curriculum materials, text-books, and rather less measurable variables such as the costs of wastage, the length of the cycle and administrative costs. All have their effect on the educational budget).

(c) What innovations are likely to improve the quality of our provision?

Before focusing on recommendations, three notable innovations which have contributed to the wider spread of educational opportunities are worthy of attention:

(a) Iran and the 'Army of Knowledge'

Begun in 1962, this innovation uses National Service to bring schooling within the reach of rural communities. Commentators suggest that any country with a National Service provision could introduce a similar scheme which stimulates rural schooling, is cost-effective, does not create long-term financial burdens for rural communities and poor families. Particular pay-offs have been the number of Education Corps teachers continuing as teachers, better representation of girls in schools where women Education Corps teachers operated and the development of a deeper concern for rural welfare amongst young people. Less positive results have included inherently high turnover of Education Corps teachers, poor follow-up and lapses into illiteracy and possible slowing of "proper" schemes for UPE. However, experiments modelled on the spirit and methods of Education Corps are worth trying.

(b) Radio Santa Maria; Dominican Republic

Within four years, Radio Santa Maria has made a full primary course available to virtually every rural community in the Dominican Republic. Its six-fold approach involves:

- printed instructional materials.
- radio broadcasts
- field teachers as tutors;
- weekly group discussions;
- broader educational and cultural material;
- participation by students in community organizations.

This format has not been perfected but its crucial elements of field tutors and student participation in community development make the impact of Radio Santa Maria most effective. Like Project IMPACT it is a "delivery system" rather than a means of access to schooling.

(c) The "Nuclear Schools" of Peru

A major reform has divided the system into three cycles, each unitary, permitting the child to acquire "a minimal knowledge of fundamental attitudes and abilities to orient himself to his environment". The system is paralleled by another for the special needs of youth and adults who dropped out in earlier years. For both groups, a new curriculum is tied to community and cultural education. The aims of the reform are to eradicate illiteracy, to contribute to the development of the country's most depressed areas, to make the new system more related to the needs of the people, to universalize the basic cycle (and eventually as far as Grade 9) and to foster a new awareness of creative potential and national identity. Communal Education Units ('Nucleos educativos comunales') provide the nuclear basis of educational administration. The result is a "self-governing communal entity" where parents, local community, State authorities and teachers co-operate. By devolving control, finance and administration to the community level, real reform is possible (see Hawes and Williams' recommendations for devolution: West Africa Magazine, Sept/Oct. 1974).

This brief survey of three innovations which tackle the challenge of alternatives through the application of manpower, through technology and through the local community presents examples, aspects of which may be applicable elsewhere. Commonwealth governments surveyed would seem to be most interested in those alternatives which alleviate -

(a) Costs by:

- making more economical uses of time, teachers and resources (particularly buildings)
- spreading the burden to local communities
- reducing wastage
- using compensatory programmes
- using self-help schemes
- adapting traditional schooling

(b) Teacher supply by:

- adopting minimal basic training
- using auxiliary school personnel
- involving parents with skills
- using national service personnel
- localizing training

(c) Curriculum problems by:

- developing minimum learning needs
- developing links between curriculum and environment
- retraining and recycling teacher educators for new curricula
- developing suitable new methods such as modules, self instruction, etc.

Formal school systems are too expensive and too valuable to dismantle. Further, no catch-all panacea is available for the transformation of weak formal systems into high-quality, cost-effective and "relevant" universal provision. The attractive alternative of non-formal

education must be seen as a complementary strategy rather than a substitute. The weight of evidence and expert opinion seems to suggest that a three-fold attack on the problem of universalization is indicated:

- i) Improve the formal school system; system;
- ii) Develop the school/community relationship;
- iii) Develop non-formal and compensatory resources.

- Further Reading
(see also
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at the end of
this section)
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Findings of
the survey

The majority of Commonwealth countries surveyed (20 of 31) appear to be well on the way to universal primary

enrolments (see note (d) under "Further Problems" below concerning attendance);

Formal school systems with similar patterns of duration, entry age and completion age are the main vehicles for basic primary education;

Major problems encountered by Commonwealth and other countries as they work towards Universal Primary Education include:

- (a) High costs
- (b) Providing good quality schooling
- (c) Problems of teacher supply, retention and qualifications
- (d) Pupil wastage (drop-out and repetition)
- (e) Inappropriate curricula
- (f) Poor buildings, resources and equipment
- (g) Weaknesses of administration
- (h) School leaver problems
- (i) Problems of disorientation from the environment.

Further problems include:

- (a) Lack of basic data on who goes to school, who stays away and the reasons governing both conditions
- (b) Timing and duration of schooling out of sequence with other aspects of life (e.g. harvest)
- (c) Social/religious constraints keeping attendance down

(d) Gaps between attendance and enrolments

(e) Teacher absenteeism

(f) Lack of clear aims in school programmes

(g) Demands for fees penalizing poorer pupils

(h) Low rates of enrolment for girls

(i) Low priority for the first cycle of schooling

(j) Geographical and communication problems.

Innovations and alternatives in operation in the Commonwealth include:

(a) Community schools (Papua New Guinea; Tanzania)

(b) Recycling of primary education (Sri Lanka)

(c) Self-help schools (Kenya)

(d) Young Farmers' and other clubs (Uganda)

(e) In-service teacher education by short course and distance teaching (Botswana; Swaziland)

(f) School improvement schemes (Maharashtra)

(g) Teacher Innovation and Distribution Centres (Swaziland)

(h) Teacher education integrated with community development (Sierra Leone)

(i) "Godfather" schools - grouping smaller schools under a full-cycle school (Madras)

(j) Non-formal provision (Jamaica, Tamil Nadu).

Some notable innovations in the rest of the world include:

(a) Project IMPACT (Philippines/Indonesia)

(b) Radio Santa Maria (Dominican Republic)

(c) Nuclear School System (Peru)

(d) Army of Knowledge (Iran)

(e) Reduction of duration of school programme (Nepal)

(f) School and community experiments (Sudan; Senegal)

(g) Use of television (Ivory Coast; El Salvador)

(h) Unesco's experimental programmed instruction project (Asia).

Recommendations

(a) Information gathering:

Commonwealth countries urgently need to gather information on:

- Who goes to school and why?
- Who stays away and why?
- How many children of the target group exist?
- How do enrolments and attendance compare?
- Who repeats and why?
- How many schools are there and what facilities do they have?
- How many teachers are there and what are their qualifications?

- Where does the money for schooling go - salaries, administration, transport, etc?
- Where are the strengths and weaknesses of school provision (e.g. if local communities are enthusiastic, is this strength being used?)

(b) Information sharing:

Commonwealth countries urgently need to share their experience of:

- Varying age of entry and duration of schooling
- Using multiple entry points
- Using shift systems and other time savings
- Varying timing to suit other pressures (e.g. harvest)
- Using emergency trained teachers/ auxiliaries/monitors/senior pupils
- Using local craftsmen as expert instructors
- Using low cost short-life buildings
- Sharing community buildings such as churches, mosques, etc.
- Using new media (T.V. etc.)
- Using new pupil groupings
- Adopting learning techniques as used in traditional forms of education
- Using team-teaching
- Developing a curriculum to cater for minimum learning needs
- Evaluating the curriculum
- Devising self-instructional materials
- Using community resources
- Using national service manpower
- Using employers to finance schooling and bridge the school-to-work gap
- Developing open access to schools
- Developing compensatory programmes for drop-outs

- Using non-formal organizations for schooling.

The over-riding impression gained as the problem of universalization is studied is that a great deal of valuable and worthwhile experiment is going on. The need is for experience to be shared so that pragmatic and realistic policies may be imitated. The dominant problem of cost may well be tackled as groups of countries meet to share their experiences concerning better use of time, teachers and buildings. The relevance of the curriculum, high wastage and low attendance also demand urgent attention if the "inalienable right to education" is to be more than rhetoric and is not to lead to disillusionment and relapse to illiteracy as unrealistic expectations of school leavers are disappointed. As important as the "internal efficiency" matters mentioned above are, those efforts which take the problem of universalization out of the school teacher's hands and into the domain of the community, the employer and the family. The most rapid gains are likely to be experienced wherever in-school and out - of-school are integrated.

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* Comprehensive bibliographies are a
feature of Phillips' book which is
probably the best treatment of the
basic education/universalization
debate available.