

Commonwealth Consortium for Education

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2004

This third full year of existence, following its creation at the end of 2001, was one of achievement and growth for the Consortium. Membership grew substantially and accreditation to the Commonwealth was secured. The Consortium was able to contribute as a partner with the Commonwealth Secretariat to important policy-development initiatives.

A report on the triennial period 2001-2003 was completed as part of the process of preparing documentary support for the application for accreditation to the Commonwealth. It is intended that henceforward annual reports will be produced, starting with this report for 2004.

1. Organisation and governance

Membership

The number of members grew by a further eight members to 22, including 16 full members and six associates. The four new full members were the Association of Commonwealth Universities, the Commonwealth Association of Museums, Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa, Commonwealth Legal Education Association. The new Associate members were the Commonwealth Business Council, Commonwealth Relations Trust, Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council and the Royal Overseas League. The importance of this expansion is not so much financial - subscription income at present rates yields only £1,000 p.a. - as that it makes the Consortium more fully representative of the pan-Commonwealth constituency of organisations committed to education, knowledge management, culture, and youth development. There are still a few organisations in the sector that have not joined, and the Consortium will continue to extend an invitation to them to do so. A complete membership list for December 31 2004 is shown at the end of the Report.

At its meeting in December the Executive Committee decided that the next step in expanding membership, in 2005, would be invite Commonwealth associations in other sectors, to consider becoming associate members.

Constitution

In May constitutional amendments were agreed. The Constitution, to be ratified at the next General Business Meeting of the Consortium, incorporated certain changes. The main amendments to the draft constitution concerned associate membership and the management of the Consortium.

The Constitution as now agreed provides that Associate membership is open (a) to pan-Commonwealth voluntary and professional associations in sectors other than education knowledge management, youth or culture (b) international organisations, inter-governmental and non-governmental, that are active in education in the Commonwealth, while not being pan-Commonwealth in form nor restricted to Commonwealth countries in their operations and (c) academic institutions with an interest and commitment to the objective of promoting education in the Commonwealth and/or education about the Commonwealth. To be eligible such organisations should subscribe to the overall objectives of the Consortium, and to the values and principles for which the Commonwealth stands; and engage in activities that promote education and training, cultural development or the advancement of youth in Commonwealth member countries.

As regards management the revised Constitution provides that in place of the former 'Steering Committee' the Consortium should have an Executive Committee drawn from different member organisations, its size being agreed from time to time by Members collectively. The *de facto* arrangement for the time being, while Consortium membership remains relatively

small, is that every member and associate member is invited to participate in Executive meetings. It has been informally agreed that the Executive should normally meet twice a year, with the Officers convening from time to time between Executive Meetings to conduct Consortium business. The officers in 2004, having been elected in 2003 at the General Meeting in Edinburgh, were Colin Power (CASTME, Chair), Timothy Shaw (ICS, Alternate Chair), Peter Williams (CEC, Secretary), Anna Tomlinson (LECT, Treasurer) Dennis Chisman (CASTME, Communications Secretary).

Meetings of the Executive

The Executive Committee met three times in London on January 21, July 7 and December 6. Prof. Timothy Shaw took the chair on each occasion, standing in for Professor Colin Power. On the last of these occasions the Consortium hosted a small reception at Marlborough House for colleagues and associates in the Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth Foundation with whom the Consortium had worked closely during the year.

2. External relations

The Consortium is gaining increasing recognition in Commonwealth circles as the channel for communication with the education sector. Such recognition has been given expression in a number of ways.

Accreditation

Along with other Commonwealth civil-society organisations the Consortium was invited to apply for formal accreditation to the Commonwealth and learned in December 2004 that it had been successful in obtaining it. Most, but not yet all, of the constituent members of the Consortium have also obtained accreditation in their own right.

Accreditation brings with it the facility of using the facilities of Marlborough House, when available, for meetings; invitations to Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth Foundation consultations and briefings; and accredited status with access to certain events and facilities at the biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings.

Civil Society Consultations

The Consortium was represented by Dennis Chisman on March 17, and by the Secretary on November 24, at civil society consultations held at Marlborough House. The Secretary also made a presentation on behalf of the Consortium to the 'Coolum Committee' meeting held on May 15.

Professor Tim Shaw was appointed to the Commonwealth Foundation's Civil Society Advisory Committee (on which Jo Howse, until late 2004 President of the Commonwealth Council for Educational Planning and Management, also sits).

3. Policy work

The Consortium developed a close working relationship with the Education Section of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Social Transformation Programmes Division. Two practical outcomes of this were partnership activities in pursuance of the decisions of Commonwealth Education Ministers in Edinburgh.

Recruitment and retention of Commonwealth teachers

In their Communique at the conclusion of the 15th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (15CCEM) in Edinburgh in 2003, Ministers asked for work to be done on developing a protocol to regulate the international recruitment of teachers by Commonwealth countries from one another. The Consortium's Conference in Edinburgh on the recruitment, retention and mobility of teachers in the Commonwealth, and the statement issued from it had been seen as a helpful and constructive contribution to Conference exchanges on the subject, in consequence of which CCfE was invited to participate with observer status in the Working

Group charged with developing proposals for Ministers. Anna Tomlinson and Peter Williams joined the Working Group and actively participated in the discussions at its meeting in Lesotho in February. Peter Williams attended the second meeting of the working Group at Stoke Rochford in September, and the subsequent meeting of Commonwealth Ministers when they agreed the text of a Protocol. The Commonwealth Secretary-General and others have publicly acknowledged the Consortium's role in helping to take matters forward to a successful conclusion.

The Commonwealth Edinburgh Action Plan for Education

In the months following 15CCEM in October 2003, the Education Section of the Commonwealth Secretariat embarked on a series of consultations with civil society representatives on implementation of the Edinburgh Action Plan. These discussions led directly to an invitation to the Consortium to organise a series of workshops on the six Action Areas identified by Ministers as priorities for action, namely

1. Achievement of universal primary education
2. Eliminating gender disparities in education
3. Improving the quality of education
4. Using distance learning to overcome barriers
5. Supporting education in difficult circumstances
6. Mitigating the effects of HIV/AIDS on education.

The contract sum involved was £12,000.

The terms of reference for the project set out the following key objectives

- To identify the key players, institutional and individual, at the Pan-Commonwealth level active in the six Action Areas;
- To articulate the key dimensions of "Commonwealthness" or Commonwealth value added; defining any Commonwealth niche and how it can make a difference;
- To identify potential gaps, including short- and long-term research gaps, that could be the focus for future Commonwealth-driven components of collaborative action and ways of addressing these gaps that could be undertaken by a range of Commonwealth Partners
- To contribute ideas to the formulation of procedures for the Best Practice Awards, that Ministers have asked to be presented at 16CCEM.

The dateline for presentation of an end-of-project report was set at 31 January 2005 (but in the event by mutual agreement this date was put back to April).

The Consortium invited its members to submit proposals for organising workshops in the action areas and four of them (CASTME, CEC, FOCODLA (through the International Research Foundation for Open Learning, LECT) responded. The first three of the workshops took place in 2004 at Marlborough House as follows:

1. *Achieving universal primary education.* Council for Education in the Commonwealth, November 26.
2. *Eliminating gender disparities.* Council for Education in the Commonwealth, December 3.
4. *Using distance learning to overcome barriers.* International Research Foundation on Open Learning (for Federation of Commonwealth Open and Distance Learning Associations) December 13.

Reports on each workshop were prepared and posted on the Consortium's website.

This left the remaining three workshops to be organised in January 2005.

3. *Improving the quality of education.* League for the Exchange of Commonwealth Teachers.
5. *Supporting education in difficult circumstances.* Commonwealth Association of Science, Technology and Mathematics Educators.
6. *Mitigating the effects of HIV/AIDS in education.* Commonwealth Association of Science, Technology and Mathematics Educators.

(The Annual Report for 2005 will describe completion of the project and subsequent activity).

4. Finance

The accounts showed a positive balance of £9,747 at the end of the year, compared with £3,577 at the start, a net increase in funds of £6,170. Income over the period was £11,136, the bulk of this being represented by the £10,000 contract fee from the Commonwealth Secretariat. Members' subscriptions totalled £540 and other income derived from sums due in respect of the Conference in 2003. Expenditure of £4,959 was mainly (£3,600) for activities under the Secretariat grant: other major outlays were to support representation at the Working Group on Teacher recruitment in Lesotho and in respect of outstanding invoices for the 2003 Conference in Edinburgh. The overall financial position is healthy with sufficient funds in hand to meet all projected costs and operating expenses for the organisation.

5. Commonwealth Education Calendar

The Calendar became regularised as a quarterly e-publication, with issues in January, April, July and October. The circulation list includes about 50 addressees including Consortium members and is made more widely available by some members; for example, the Council for Education in the Commonwealth appends the Calendar to its own newsletters. The Calendar contains such details as are known of Commonwealth education events for up to two years ahead. The Hon. Secretary compiles it and is dependent on information supplied by members in response to his requests.

6. Website and publicity

As in previous years the Consortium submitted an entry for the Commonwealth Yearbook.

The Consortium website www.commonwealtheducation.org is now well-established. It gives details of the aims and objectives of the Consortium and a complete list of members and associate members with names and addresses of the representative from each organisation and with links to each respective website. It also lists the Officers. In addition, the main activities are listed and there is a link to the publications of the Consortium, including the Briefing Notes and the quarterly Calendar of Commonwealth activities in the field of education.

Consortium Members (May 2005)

Association of Commonwealth Examination and Accreditation Bodies (ACEAB)
 Association of Commonwealth Studies (ACS)
 Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU)
 British Empire and Commonwealth Museum (BECM)
 Commonwealth Association of Museums (CAM)
 Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa (CAPA)
 Commonwealth Association of Science Technology and Mathematics Educators (CASTME)
 Commonwealth Business Council (CBC) (Associate)
 Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management (CCEAM)
 Commonwealth Countries' League (CCL)
 Commonwealth Institute (CI) (Associate Member)
 Commonwealth Legal Education Association (CLEA)
 Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit (CPSU)
 Commonwealth Relations Trust (CRT) (Associate)
 Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council (CYEC) (Associate Member)
 Council for Education in the Commonwealth (CEC)
 English-Speaking Union of the Commonwealth (ESU)
 Federation of Commonwealth Open and Distance Learning Associations (FOCODLA)
 Institute of Commonwealth Studies (ICS)
 League for Exchange of Commonwealth Teachers (LECT)
 Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS) (Associate Member)
 Royal Over-Seas League (ROSL) (Associate Member)