

Commonwealth Consortium for Education

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2005

This was the Consortium's fourth year following its creation at the end of 2001. This Annual Report follows on previous reports for 2001-3 and 2004.

The Consortium had a successful year during which it completed a major report for the Commonwealth Secretariat on Implementing the Edinburgh Commonwealth Education Action Plan. This was presented to two Regional meetings of Commonwealth Education Ministers for the Caribbean and Canada, and for Africa and Europe. The Consortium had accredited status at the Commonwealth Heads of Government in Malta in December and held a well-attended meeting as part of the Commonwealth People's Forum there.

1. Organisation and governance

Membership

The Association of Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (ACLALS) joined the Consortium as a full member, bringing membership up to 23 of which 16 are full members and six associates. A number of pan-Commonwealth organisations in the sector are yet to join and the Consortium continues to extend an invitation to them to do so. As agreed by the Executive Committee, an approach was made to Commonwealth associations in sectors other than education, youth, sport and culture inviting them to consider becoming associate members, but none has as yet accepted this invitation. A complete membership list at December 31 2005 is shown at the end of the Report.

The Executive Committee met twice in London on September 29 and December 8. The first of these meetings was originally scheduled for July 8 but was postponed in view of the disruption in Central London following the London bombings. Prof. Timothy Shaw took the chair on each occasion, standing in for Professor Colin Power. After the December meeting, as in the previous year, the Consortium hosted a small reception at Marlborough House for those colleagues and associates in the Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth Foundation with whom the Consortium had worked closely during the year.

The officers in 2005 were unchanged from 2004, having been first elected in 2003 at the General Meeting in Edinburgh. They were Colin Power (CASTME, Chair), Timothy Shaw (ICS, Alternate Chair), Peter Williams (CEC, Secretary), Anna Tomlinson (LECT, Treasurer) Dennis Chisman (CASTME, Communications Secretary). At the end of the year Anna Tomlinson announced that she was tendering her resignation as Treasurer, owing to pressure of other responsibilities. John Rowett, Secretary-General of the Association of Commonwealth Universities, accepted an invitation to succeed her as Consortium Treasurer, and it was agreed that the handover would take place at a mutually agreed time in early 2006.

2. External relations

The Consortium is recognised in Commonwealth circles as a useful channel for communication with the education sector. Following formal accreditation to the Commonwealth in 2004, the Consortium was one of the Civil Society Organisations invited to be present at the Malta Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in November. It also attended the bi-annual consultations convened by the Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth Foundation in May and October at Marlborough House. At the first of these the Secretary, Peter Williams, made a short presentation on the project being undertaken with the Commonwealth Secretariat on the Edinburgh Action Plan. He also made a presentation to the Coolum Committee (chaired by the Commonwealth Secretary General and bringing

together the Secretariat, Foundation, Commonwealth of Learning and civil society organisations) in June.

Professor Shaw continued to serve on the Commonwealth Foundation's Civil Society Advisory Committee and was heavily involved with his colleagues in direction of the Commonwealth People's Forum in Malta. He also continued to serve as a member of the UK Commonwealth Scholarship Commission.

3. Programme and Policy

3.1 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and Commonwealth Peoples Forum in Malta

CHOGM. The Consortium was accredited to the CHOGM in Malta in November (25 to 28 2005) and was represented by the Secretary, Peter Williams. Several organisations in membership of the Consortium were also represented in their own right.

The theme of the CHOGM was 'Networking the Commonwealth for Development'. The Consortium submitted a memorandum through the Commonwealth Secretariat and this was circulated to Commonwealth Governments and to the media. The memorandum argued for

- developing pan-Commonwealth policies and capacity in the ICT area, taking advantage of experience and resources in the private and business sector, and in civil society as well as in Governments. It was argued that the Commonwealth should accord priority to longer-term investment in infrastructure, including human resource capacities, for ICT in its less developed member countries; use its influence in international forums to ensure that user-friendly international protocols are framed and adopted so that developing country access to hardware and software is not impeded by costly and restrictive licensing requirements; help resource-poor countries to make their voices better heard in international consultations and negotiations.
- recognising that the education sector has particular potential and responsibilities for helping to bridge 'the digital divide', and that the Commonwealth – through its universities and colleges and the work of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is making a major contribution. A major increase in COL's resources is called for.
- acknowledging that in education Commonwealth countries are the seat of many of the shortfalls from the MDG targets and that the energies of Commonwealth governments, inter-governmental organisations, and voluntary and professional associations need to be more purposefully co-ordinated to address the MDGs.

CPF. The Consortium co-ordinated a programme of meetings for the education sector as part of the Commonwealth Peoples Forum, in the programme 'stream' dealing with the Millennium Development Goals. In partnership with the Faculty of Education of the University of Malta, the Consortium sponsored a meeting under the rubric of *Networking to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals in Education* on Monday 21 November. It was addressed by Hon Louis Galea the Malta Minister of Education Youth and Employment, Ann Keeling of the Commonwealth Secretariat, and Professor Lalage Bown of the Council for Education in the Commonwealth. It was chaired by Professor Peter Mayo of the University of Malta and was attended by about 90 people from 10 different Commonwealth countries.

In the afternoon of the same day the Commonwealth Countries League (CCL), the Commonwealth Association of Science, Technology and Mathematics Educators (CASTME), and the Council for Education in the Commonwealth (CEC) with the Federation of Commonwealth Open and Distance Learning Associations (FOCODLA) organised workshops in their areas of interest as follows:

Science, technology and mathematics education for development: promoting careers in science (CASTME)

Supporting education in difficult circumstances with specific reference to girls' secondary education (CCL)

School linking and ICT (CEC, FOCODLA and BUILD - Building Understanding through International Linking for Development).

3.2. Major Project: Implementing the Commonwealth Edinburgh Action Plan for Education
As recorded in last year's Annual Report, the Social Transformation Programmes Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat invited the Consortium to organise a series of workshops on the six Action Areas identified by Ministers at 15CCEM in Edinburgh as priorities for action, and to produce a report by the end of April 2005. A contract sum of £12,000 was agreed.

The Action Areas identified by Ministers were:

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.

Already by the end of 2004 the workshops on the first, second and fourth topics had been held. This left three workshops to be organised in January 2005 and they took place as follows:

3. *Improving the quality of education.* League for the Exchange of Commonwealth Teachers, Marlborough House, January 24.

5. *Supporting education in difficult circumstances.* Commonwealth Association of Science, Technology and Mathematics Educators. Held at the University of Leeds on January 8.

6. *Mitigating the effects of HIV/AIDS in education.* Commonwealth Association of Science, Technology and Mathematics Educators. Held at Marlborough House on January 18.

The Hon Secretary then produced the first draft of a synthesis report, and that and the reports of the six workshops were reviewed at two meetings specially convened for the purpose. One was a workshop convened in Brisbane on February 4 by Professor Colin Power, Chair of the Consortium, under the auspices of an education research organisation with which he is associated, Eidos, a newly formed consortium of Queensland universities and education authorities (formerly the Institute for Educational Research, Policy and Evaluation). The other was a review meeting in Cambridge hosted by Professor Christopher Colclough, Director of the newly created Centre for Commonwealth Education.

Reports on each of the six action-area workshops and the Brisbane workshop were prepared and posted on the Consortium's website.

In the light of discussion in the review meetings the Report was finalised and presented to the Commonwealth Secretariat at the end of April. The report responded to the terms of reference given by the Secretariat, identifying Commonwealth capacity in relation to the six action areas and some of the issues on which there was an opportunity for Commonwealth agencies to make a special contribution in the light of their comparative advantage. The Commonwealth Secretariat expressed its satisfaction with the report and invited the Hon Secretary, Peter Williams to present its conclusions to Commonwealth Regional Meetings of Education Ministers in The Bahamas (Caribbean and Canada) in July and Sierra Leone (Africa and Europe) in November. The Secretariat has agreed to print the report for wider distribution.

3.3. Commonwealth Education Briefing Notes

Five briefing notes were published in 2003 and were well received. They addressed:

1. Commonwealth Education Co-operation: a profile
2. Ministerial Conferences (CCEMs) and the Commonwealth Secretariat
3. Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan
4. Distance Learning and the Commonwealth of Learning
5. The Commonwealth and Education for All

At its December meeting the Executive Committee decided that, depending on the availability of funding, these should be updated and a further six briefing notes prepared in time for 16CCEM in Cape Town. At the end of the year a proposal with funding application had been prepared for the Commonwealth Foundation, asking for £9,000 to revise and update the first five issues in the series and to produce six more addressing the following subjects

6. Commonwealth CSOs in education
7. Education about the Commonwealth (and Commonwealth values)
8. Commonwealth student mobility.
9. Science, technology and mathematics education
10. Gender in education
11. Commonwealth teacher mobility and recruitment

It was agreed that the application to the Foundation would also include, within the £9,000 ceiling, a request for assistance in preparing a Directory of pan-Commonwealth organisations and programmes in education.

3.4. Commonwealth Education Calendar

The Calendar of future Commonwealth education events again appeared in each quarter of 2005, with issues in January, April, July and October. It is an e-publication and the circulation list includes not only Consortium members but about three dozen other addressees. It also appears on the Consortium web-site. The Calendar contains such details as are known of Commonwealth education events for up to two years ahead. The Hon. Secretary compiles it from information supplied by Consortium members and Commonwealth agencies in response to his requests.

4. Finance

The accounts showed a positive balance of £5,806 at the end of the year, compared with £9,747 at the start, a decrease in funds of £3,941. Income over the period was £3,240 which included the final payment for the Commonwealth Secretariat project of £2,000. Members' subscriptions totalled £970. Expenditure of £7,150 was mainly (£6,500) for activities under the Secretariat grant. Approximately £500 was spent on representation at CHOGM and the hire of equipment for meetings there (room hire was generously taken care of by the Commonwealth Foundation): but only £225 of this had been incurred by the end of the year. The overall financial position remains healthy with sufficient funds in hand to meet the projected costs and operating expenses for the organisation.

5. 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 (December 2005)

Association of Commonwealth Examination and Accreditation Bodies (ACEAB)
Association of Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (ACLALS)
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)