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# WORKING TOGETHER IN EDUCATION: A COMMONWEALTH UPDATE

Prepared by the Commonwealth Consortium for Education, a grouping of voluntary and professional bodies committed to education development in the Commonwealth, and edited by Peter Williams.



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Outside Cover: School children attending 2005 Commonwealth Day celebrations in Guyana.  
 Inside Top: Makeshift classroom in Taita Taveta, Kenya  
 Inside Bottom right: Welcome Day for new Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows in UK, Westminster, November 2008  
 Inside Bottom Left: An illiterate village farmer in India receives primary lessons from his literate small daughter





# Foreword

This year, 2009, marks 50 years since the first Commonwealth Education Conference held in Oxford in 1959. It is also the sixtieth anniversary of the creation of the Modern Commonwealth, inaugurated by the London Declaration in 1949. When Ministers and other delegates assemble in Kuala Lumpur for the 17th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (17CCEM) in June they will take the opportunity to celebrate these anniversaries. They will also be looking ahead and making plans for the future.

Education lies at the heart both of Commonwealth relationships and of Commonwealth achievement. There has not, however, always been adequate recognition of the extent of collaboration and of what has been accomplished. In part this may reflect the difficulty of getting a holistic picture: reflecting the fact that co-operation in education takes such a wide variety of forms, and exchanges occur through so many different programmes and institutional channels. This lack of awareness can be dangerous, as when, at the start of this decade, the Commonwealth's High-Level Group on the future of the Commonwealth overlooked the role of education as one of the principal foundations on which the Commonwealth association rests and a key to its future development. For a time it even seemed as if promotion of educational co-operation might disappear from the functions undertaken by the Commonwealth Secretariat.

The Commonwealth Consortium for Education, a grouping of civil-society organisations dedicated to promotion of educational development in the Commonwealth, has tried to help fill the gaps in knowledge and understanding. It sees one of its main roles as the creation of greater awareness of the extent and potential of Commonwealth collaboration in education. Starting in 2003 it commissioned a series of five 'Commonwealth Education Briefing Notes' on different aspects of educational co-operation and interchange in the Commonwealth. In 2006, with the help of a grant from the Commonwealth Foundation the series was extended to cover twelve different themes and the Briefing Notes were complemented by preparation of a Commonwealth Education Directory. This year we have updated the materials, added a new contribution on literacy, and have brought the different briefs together in a single volume. We have also updated and reissued the Commonwealth Education Directory, listing over 40 institutions and programmes as a companion volume.

The timing of these efforts is no accident. The documentation is intended to assist participants in the Ministerial Conference and associated Forums in Kuala Lumpur to brief themselves about the range and depth of collective activity in the education sector.

A separate page of acknowledgments lists the many organisations and individuals to whom we are indebted for helping us bring this task to fruition. I single out for special mention here our gratitude to the Director and staff of the Commonwealth Foundation for their continuing encouragement and support of our work: and our profound thanks to both our Secretary, Peter Williams, for the countless hours and seemingly inexhaustible energy he has devoted to this project, and to Amy Russell who has so ably assisted him.

**Colin Power**  
**Chair, Commonwealth Consortium for Education**

**June 2009**



# Chapter 1. COMMONWEALTH CO-OPERATION IN EDUCATION: A PROFILE

## Introduction

The Commonwealth association is often said to rest upon three main pillars – language, law and learning. The third of these, education, is an area where much co-operative activity takes place, in part reflecting the importance of the first two. Commonalities in English-language use, and in legal/institutional frameworks derived from shared history and traditions, are sound bases for education interchange.

Commonwealth collaboration in education takes many different forms. It extends across the spectrum of multilateral co-operation, shared regional institutions in some parts of the world, bilateral co-operation between individual governments, activities of pan-Commonwealth associations and professional bodies in the non-government sector, commercial transactions in education goods and services, and a host of unregulated movements of individual students and teachers to learn and teach in a Commonwealth country abroad. This note aims to provide an overview, charting the main elements in education co-operation in the Commonwealth.

The modern Commonwealth is generally considered to date from 1949 when it was agreed that the republican status of newly independent India and Pakistan should not be barriers to membership. The majority of Commonwealth members joined the association on gaining independence, in most cases from Britain, in the second half of the 20th century (Appendix 1). The Commonwealth Secretariat was founded in 1965. The five Commonwealth Secretaries-General to date have been Arnold Smith (1965-75), Shridath Ramphal (1975-90), Emeka Anyaoku (1990-2000), Don McKinnon (2000-2008) and Kamallesh Sharma (2008- ).

Starting in 1966 meetings of Commonwealth prime ministers, and later Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGMs), have taken place regularly, normally every two years. These lay down Commonwealth policies and priorities. Landmark statements setting out fundamental principles came from Singapore in 1971, and Zimbabwe (the Harare Declaration) in 1991.

In education, the year 1959 is normally regarded as the start of the modern era of co-operation, even though some parts of today's infrastructure have earlier origins. The Commonwealth Institute and The League for Exchange of Commonwealth Teachers were both founded in the days of empire in the 19th and early 20th centuries. In 1911 the first Imperial Education Conference was held. The Association of Commonwealth Universities dates from 1913.

## The Multilateral Framework in Education

### The political level

Heads of Government lay down Commonwealth priorities and these at present highlight democracy and good governance, and pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs include two education goals – the achievement of universal primary education by 2015 and the attainment of gender parity in school education by 2005. Heads have recently made important statements in relation to education, affirming at Abuja in 2003 that:

*education, whether formal or informal, is central to development in any society and is of the highest priority to the Commonwealth. In an increasingly divided and insecure world, education must play a crucial role for people, both young and old, for them to optimise their opportunities and to bridge divides.*

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## In Malta in 2005 Heads

*“affirmed the centrality of education to development and democracy, as it provides the foundation for realising broader Commonwealth political, economic and social objectives. They ... encouraged all governments to allocate the resources necessary to meet the education MDGs ....”*

Again, in Kampala in 2007 Heads “reaffirmed the fundamental role played by education in facilitating social and economic transformation”

At CHOGMs, Heads of Government normally deal with education under the heading of ‘functional co-operation’. Important education topics with which they have been particularly concerned in the past few years have included the education MDGs; co-operation in distance education and the work of the Commonwealth of Learning; Commonwealth student mobility and the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan; Commonwealth studies and education about the Commonwealth; targeted recruitment by Commonwealth industrialised countries of health and education personnel from developing countries; and the changing status and role of the former Commonwealth Institute.

At the next level down, ‘functional’ ministers in the different sectors also meet regularly. Finance ministers convene annually, normally in September. Ministers of Education, Health, Women’s Affairs and Law have customarily held conferences every three years. These ministerial gatherings discuss international issues of concern to member states, review progress and institutional arrangements for co-operation in their sector, and set priorities and approve work plans for the Commonwealth Secretariat – subject always to confirmation by Heads of Government.

Commonwealth Ministers of Education will have met 17 times, following their scheduled meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in June 2009. The business of their conferences, normally lasting three days, is of three main kinds.

First, Ministers usually choose a main theme on which they exchange experience, and identify common issues and useful innovations. Conclusions and recommendations are distilled from discussion for report and follow-up. At recent conferences Ministers’ conclusions have been partially influenced by a ‘Parallel Symposium’ (Gaborone, Halifax, Edinburgh) or ‘Stakeholder Forum’ (Cape Town and Kuala Lumpur), providing for civil society involvement and discussion with Ministers of the issues before them. An additional parallel event in Edinburgh and Cape Town has been a Youth Forum; in Cape Town a Teacher Forum was added; and at 17CCEM in Kuala Lumpur vice-chancellors are having their own gathering.

Second, Ministers review the progress of the Commonwealth of Learning, the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan, the Teacher Recruitment Protocol, and the Education Section of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Third, they approve a Conference Communique, incorporating the conclusions of the Conference and Ministers’ decisions concerning future action. At 14CCEM in Halifax, Ministers agreed the Halifax Statement *Education: our Common Future*. At 15CCEM they approved the *Edinburgh Action Plan for Education*, focusing on six action areas: achieving universal primary education; eliminating gender disparities; improving quality; using distance learning to overcome barriers; supporting education in difficult circumstances; and mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS in education. At 16CCEM in Cape Town, they issued a Communique and a message to Heads

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of Governments. More information about the CCEMs will be found in Chapter 2.

### **The Commonwealth Secretariat**

The Secretariat, based in London, provides administrative support to Ministers, services their conferences and implements their decisions. A Social Transformation Programmes Division (STPD) contains sections for gender, health and education. The STPD Director reports to the Deputy Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs. The Education Section has six professional staff headed by a Deputy Director.

The Secretariat has very limited programme money. The annual budget of the Education Section, excluding staff salaries, is roughly £0.5m. p.a. drawn in the main from the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation; though additional funding comes from partnership with other agencies. The Secretariat's role is defined as that of advocate, broker and catalyst. The principal focus of the work of the Education section continues to be on the six Action Areas defined at 15CCEM. These involve (i) ensuring that all children will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling by 2015 (ii) eliminating gender disparities in education by 2015 (iii) using open and distance learning to overcome barriers in education (iv) improving quality in education particularly through development and support of teachers (v) supporting the assurance of education in difficult circumstances (vi) mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS on education systems.

### **Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation**

CFTC, founded in 1971, is the Commonwealth's main assistance instrument. It is financed by voluntary contributions from member countries and has an annual budget of about £29m. It works mainly on the basis of south-south co-operation, supplying experts, training and

advisory services. The education sector in member countries is prominent among sectoral beneficiaries.

### **Commonwealth of Learning**

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) was founded in 1988 and is based in Vancouver, Canada. Its focus is open and distance learning. It is the only official Commonwealth agency located outside Britain and is the world's only intergovernmental organisation solely concerned with promoting open and distance learning. Its role, as declared in its Mission Statement is to help...

*governments and institutions to expand the scope, scale and quality of learning by using new approaches and technologies, especially those subsumed under the general term of open and distance learning (ODL). COL promotes policies and systems to make innovation sustainable and works with international partners to build models, create materials, enhance organisational capacity and nurture networks that facilitate learning in support of development goals.*

COL's programme is geared to addressing the key learning and development challenges associated with the UN's MDG and EFA targets such as gender equity, sustainable development, environmental protection and civil rights; as well as the Commonwealth objectives of peace, democracy, equality and good governance.

A major project launched by COL in recent years has been the creation and activation of the Virtual University for the Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC), described in the section on Co-operation in Distance Learning.

COL has an international Board of Governors, including government representatives, and employs a staff of 40 in Vancouver and at the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for

# Chapter 1. COMMONWEALTH CO-OPERATION IN EDUCATION: A PROFILE

Asia in New Delhi. The CEO and President is currently Sir John Daniel. The budget is funded mainly by voluntary contributions from member countries. COL's work is more fully described in Chapter 4.

## Commonwealth Foundation

The Foundation, based in Marlborough House, was created in 1966 to promote co-operation between, and involvement in Commonwealth activities by, civil society. Within its Human Development programme area, the Foundation is focusing on universal primary education, with a particular emphasis on girls' enrolment and retention in primary and secondary education and successful strategies that have involved civil society. Other programmes address the importance of teaching and learning about Commonwealth values of democratic participation, respect for difference, and mutual understanding between faiths and cultures. In addition, the Foundation gives regular support to a number of Commonwealth professional associations working in the field of education.

## Commonwealth Institute

For most of its existence the Institute, which operated under a pan-Commonwealth governing board, concentrated its activity on education about the Commonwealth. In 2004, the Institute decided to change its focus to the development of primary and secondary education in Commonwealth countries, to be promoted through a Centre for Commonwealth Education in Cambridge; and to reconstitute itself as the Commonwealth Education Trust.

## Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan

Launched at Oxford in 1959 the CSFP operates bilaterally within a multilateral framework. Awards are principally for postgraduate study in another Commonwealth country, though recent

innovations have included awards for split-site and distance-learning programmes, as well as professional fellowships. Awards generally cover travel, living costs, and tuition expenses. Whilst the tenure of a fellowship is between three and six months, scholarships are tenable from one year (for full-time taught programmes) to three years for doctoral study or part-time master's courses by distance.

Scholars and Fellows have been drawn from all 53 Commonwealth countries, as well as dependent territories; but awarding countries currently number only a dozen. Britain has been particularly generous, providing around 70% of the total awards in some recent years at a current (2009/2010) cost of £18m p.a. Historically, Canada has also been a substantial contributor. Around 1,800 awards were held in 2008/09.

So far 27,000 individuals have benefited from awards. A Directory of Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows was published in 2003, listing names of 20,000 award holders for the period 1960-2002 and providing more detailed profiles of 1800 individual Scholars. A second edition in 2009 contains 26,000 names and 3,700 individual profiles.

Under the overall supervision of Ministers' Conferences, general responsibility for management of the Plan lies with the Secretariat, with whom the Association of Commonwealth Universities (which serves as the base for the UK Commonwealth Scholarship Commission) has produced reports on the working of the Plan for the most recent Education Ministers' Conferences. For more information on CSFP, see the separate section of this publication.

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### **Commonwealth Universities Study Abroad Consortium**

Since its formation in 1993, CUSAC has provided a framework for member universities throughout the Commonwealth to provide study-abroad opportunities on a reciprocal basis. There are currently about sixty members drawn from all areas of the Commonwealth. Meetings are held every two years, the most recent in Jamaica (2008). Most, but not all, CUSAC activities are based at undergraduate level.

### **Regional Co-operation in Education**

The Commonwealth's membership of 53 countries includes 30 'small states' with populations of two million or less, and several small dependencies. Given the presence of geographical clusters, the sharing of expensive facilities makes sound sense. The University of the West Indies and the University of the South Pacific are regional institutions which many states support.

At other levels of education there are shared examination arrangements among Commonwealth countries in the Caribbean, South Pacific and West Africa.

In addition, extensive Commonwealth consultation and co-operation in education takes place at regional level through the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Southern African Development Community (SADC), South Pacific Commission and South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC), in all of which Commonwealth states form the great majority.

### **Commonwealth Bilateral Aid for Education**

Important as the multilateral infrastructure is, it is dwarfed in scale by bilateral assistance through such bodies as the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), Canada's CIDA or Australia's AusAID. IN 2005 and 2006, for example, these three industrialised countries and New Zealand together made aid commitments of \$US2.5billion to education, two thirds of which (\$1.7b.) was for basic education.

As well as direct commitments to the education sector, additional funds went for overall budget support, some of which would be spent by the recipient country on education. As well as industrialised Commonwealth members, many others like India, Nigeria, Malaysia, Pakistan and South Africa have their own technical co-operation programmes.

### **Independent Voluntary and Professional Bodies**

A characteristic of Commonwealth infrastructure, particularly in education, is the proliferation of non-government bodies many of them specifically pan-Commonwealth in character. The Association of Commonwealth Universities with nearly 500 member institutions throughout the Commonwealth, is prominent among them. ACU helps members to orchestrate their views and to exchange experience of best practice and provides them with advisory, information and recruitment services.

A Commonwealth Teachers' Group, enabling representative teachers' bodies across the Commonwealth to participate more actively in Commonwealth education interchange, was launched at the Teachers Forum in Cape Town in 2006, and is taking responsibility for convening the Teachers' Forum at 17CCEM in Kuala Lumpur.

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In 2001 several Commonwealth voluntary and professional organisations created the Commonwealth Consortium for Education, the body that has commissioned and published this document. Through this grouping, its members, presently numbering 23 (see Appendix 2) concert their efforts on behalf of Commonwealth education development, co-ordinate their approach, and build a more effective constituency for partnering official Commonwealth multilateral and bilateral agencies.

Many of the civil-society organisations, both international and national, that contribute strongly to education development, are Commonwealth-based. They include well-known names like CODE, CUSO and CBIE in Canada; or OXFAM, ActionAid, Save the Children in the UK to name but a few of the larger ones. The last three named bodies jointly managed the Commonwealth Education Fund established by the British Government in 2002 to support civil-society coalitions to promote Education for All in 17 Commonwealth developing countries, over the period 2002-2008. Faith groups of a wide range of religions and denominations are also prominent among active international and national agencies supporting work in education and health in Commonwealth countries, and sponsoring international links between schools and other community organisations.

At national level countless voluntary bodies work for education development, and have fine records to share. Some, like Bangladesh's BRAC or Jamaica's JAMAL, have international fame and attract aid-agency support; while thousands of others work on a more local basis.

## Informal Individual and Institutional Exchanges

Much Commonwealth interchange in education is informal and unmanaged. Intra-Commonwealth flows of students are substantial, about 120,000 in 2006, despite the 'marketisation' of higher education and charging by richer countries of full-cost fees to international students, which can impede access for poor students and those from poor countries. This recorded intra-Commonwealth student mobility represents a little under 6% of the world total, compared with about 8% in the year 2000. Commonwealth student interchange with non-Commonwealth countries, notably the United States, accounts for a further 12% of total international student mobility.

There has traditionally been considerable movement of individual teachers between Commonwealth countries, to the benefit of both individual teachers and the institutions to which they have moved. A recent ministerial concern, however, has been targeted teacher recruitment by employing bodies and recruitment agencies based in some more affluent Commonwealth countries, threatening to deplete cadres of specialised teachers in some developing countries. At Stoke Rochford in 2004 Ministers agreed a Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol to introduce an element of voluntary regulation to such targeted recruitment, to limit its potentially harmful effects for vulnerable systems. The operation of the Protocol has recently (2009) been reviewed.

Another area where exchanges have rapidly multiplied is school linking and institutional partnerships across national boundaries. As well as promoting Commonwealth friendship and understanding, they can serve important educational and developmental objectives. The potential of school and college links in the

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Commonwealth was the theme of a major civil-society conference in Cape Town at the time of I6CCEM, when Ministers committed themselves to the promotion of such links.

### **Commercial activity**

Supply of education-related goods such as laboratory equipment and workshop machinery, computers for classroom and school-office use, or books and materials, is a growing component of international trade. Provision of education services like consultancy, examinations and qualifications, recruitment of teachers, or provision of study and training opportunities has been another growth area.

## Chapter 2: CONFERENCES OF COMMONWEALTH EDUCATION MINISTERS

The Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, June 16-18 2009 is the seventeenth in a series that began in Oxford in 1959. This briefing explains the function and format of the Conferences, and of the Secretariat that serves them, and raises issues that Ministers will need to address in making Commonwealth education co-operation more effective.

### Commonwealth co-operation in education

The Commonwealth family has grown to 53 members and spans every continent. The very growth of the association is one of the factors responsible for modifying the functioning of the Education Ministers' Conferences: 53 delegations are bound to interact in a different manner from what was possible when there were just 15 or 20 member states 45 years ago. The modern Commonwealth includes states that vary widely in physical and population size, and which are diverse in ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic make-up. Almost all (Mozambique is an exception) have had a historic connection with Britain as former dependencies or protectorates. Box 2.1 shows the present members by date of joining the Commonwealth and geographic region and as independent states.

Commonwealth Heads of Government themselves meet every two years, most recently in Kampala, Uganda (2007) and Valletta, Malta (2005). Their next meeting is due to take place in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago in November 2009. Below the level of the Heads, inter-governmental consultation and co-operation span many different areas of endeavour. It is orchestrated through the Commonwealth Secretariat and ranges across the political and economic fields to law, health, science, youth, gender and education. In many sectors there are annual or triennial ministerial meetings:

in education the tradition has been to hold Ministerial Conferences every three years. Education has always been at the centre of Commonwealth co-operation and interchange. This reflects the high priority that most members, with their young and rapidly growing populations, give to human development and welfare. Sharing of a common language in English, and similar institutional patterns in organisation of educational provision, have fostered links between member states and have led to the creation of common institutions both in the official inter-governmental sector and in the voluntary non-government sector.

Today this infrastructure includes the CCEMs (ministerial Conferences), the education activity of the Commonwealth secretariat, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), the Commonwealth Scholarship and fellowship Plan (CSFP), and civil society organizations – including the Association of Commonwealth Universities and Commonwealth education trust among the best known.

### Education Ministers' Conferences 1959-2009

The first Commonwealth Education Conference was held in Oxford in 1959. Subsequent conferences have moved round the Commonwealth: five in Africa, four in Asia, two in Canada, two in the Caribbean, two (post-Oxford) in Europe, one in Australia (Box 2.1). Britain and Canada have each hosted two in the series.

The principal thrust at the first, Oxford, Commonwealth Education Conference in 1959 was the launch of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP) and the creation of a small secretariat, the Commonwealth Education Liaison Unit, to implement the decisions of the Conference, based in Marlborough House. The second (New Delhi) and Third (Ottawa)

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Conferences were organised by the CELU, but by the time the fourth was held in Lagos the Commonwealth Secretariat had been created. The first decade of Commonwealth education co-operation saw strong enthusiasm to develop new schemes and programmes of collaboration, some multilateral and others bilaterally-based. They included, for example, a series of Commonwealth Specialist Education Conferences and a Commonwealth Bursaries Scheme to strengthen teacher education.

From 1974 onwards the Conferences adopted a principal theme for analysis and exchange of experience, the discussion often being introduced by invited keynote speakers. The theme was additional to the ongoing business of reviewing and improving the mechanisms of co-operation, or identifying new opportunities for working together. The principal themes of the eleven Conferences since 1974 are shown in Box 3. Conference themes tended to reflect the main global issues and debates in educational development – e.g. better resource management, economics and financing of education, the linkage between education the curriculum and the job market, quality and access, the role of the state.

Some of the sharpest exchanges of the 1980s did not concern these issues, but rather the mobility of students in the Commonwealth. The decision of some of the industrialised countries to withdraw subsidies at tertiary level from students from abroad, while retaining them for home students, meant that tuition fees for international students rose sharply. The seven successive reports of the Commonwealth Standing Committee on Student Mobility were vigorously, and at times acrimoniously, debated by Ministers.

A more substantial spin-off from the Standing Committee's deliberations was in the field of distance education. There was growing

**Box 2.1: Venues and Dates of the CECs/ CCEMs**

1.	CEC	Oxford, United Kingdom	15-28/07/1959
2.	CEC	New Delhi, India	11-25/01/1962
3.	CEC	Ottawa, Canada	21/08-04/09/1964
4.	CEC	Lagos, Nigeria	26/02-09/03/1968
5.	CEC	Canberra, Australia	3-17/02/1971
6.	CEC	Kingston, Jamaica	10-22/06/1974
7.	CEC	Accra, Ghana	9-18/03/1977
8.	CEC	Colombo, Sri Lanka	5-13/08/1980
9.	CCEM	Nicosia, Cyprus	23-26/07/1984
10.	CCEM	Nairobi, Kenya	20-24/07/1987
11.	CCEM	Bridgetown, Barbados	29/10-02/11/1990
12.	CCEM	Islamabad, Pakistan	27/11-01/12/1994
13.	CCEM	Gaborone, Botswana	28/07-01/08/1997
14.	CCEM	Halifax, Canada	26-30/11/2000
15.	CCEM	Edinburgh, United Kingdom	27-30/10/2003
16.	CCEM	Cape Town, South Africa	11-14/12/2006
17.	CCEM	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	16-18/06/2009

awareness of the potential of distance learning to contribute to education development. The Secretary-General in consultation with Governments was prompted to establish a Committee under Lord Briggs to examine the scope for co-operation in distance education. The Briggs Report led to the creation of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) in 1988, following endorsement at 10CCEM and CHOGM.

*Footnote*

## Chapter 2: CONFERENCES OF COMMONWEALTH EDUCATION MINISTERS

<b>Box 2.2: Themes of Education Ministers' Conferences 1974 to 2009</b>		
1974	6CEC	Management of education
1977	7CEC	Economics of education
1980	8CEC	Human resource development
1984	9CCEM	(a) Resources for education and their cost effective use (b) Education and Youth Unemployment
1987	10CCEM	Vocational orientation of education
1990	11CCEM	Improving the quality of basic education
1994	12CCEM	Changing role of the state in education
1997	13CCEM	Education and technology
2000	14CCEM	Education in a global era: challenges of equity, opportunities for diversity
2003	15CCEM	Access inclusion and achievement: closing the gap
2006	16CCEM	Access to quality education: for the good of all
2009	17CCEM	Education in the Commonwealth: Towards and Beyond Global Goals and Targets

### Planning and organisation of the Conferences

The venue of the next CCEM is often agreed at the preceding Conference in response to an invitation by one of the participating Ministers. Precise dates are then fixed by consultation, normally falling in a period 32 to 40 months (roughly three years) after the Conference before. Customarily the mechanism for securing approval of dates, agenda etc for CCEMs, and the list of invited observers has been the Commonwealth Education Liaison Committee (composed of representatives of every High Commission in London meeting with the Secretariat). Recently CELC has been used more sparingly and has had less influence.

Once a theme has been agreed by member countries through consultation, the Secretariat has normally taken main executive responsibility

*Footnote*

for the agenda and documentation, the degree of engagement by the host country depending on its wishes and capacity to be extensively involved. In the past member countries have been asked to submit a paper outlining their perspective on the main theme, and the Secretariat has then commissioned a pan-Commonwealth overview of these reports for Conference use; but since 15CCEM the expectation that every country will submit a paper has been waived.

The role of the host is to plan the Conference in conjunction with the Secretariat, to chair the Conference sessions, and to provide the venue and much of the logistical support. Heads of Delegation (usually a Minister) normally stay as the guest of the host country, which also provides other hospitality to delegates – lunches, dinners, receptions - from its own resources. Delegations' own financial responsibility includes travel to the Conference, and living costs for delegation members.

### The Conference in session

Typically 40 or more delegations attend, most led by Ministers. Some contain more than one member of ministerial rank, especially in countries with multi-jurisdictional responsibility for education, as in federal systems. UK dependencies are invited to be present as part of the British delegation. Delegations vary in size from one or two to a dozen, but the host-country delegation has often numbered 20 or 30. Commonly there will be 150-180 country delegates present, and a further 20 or 30 members of invited observer delegations, including international agencies and Commonwealth voluntary/ professional bodies with education functions (Figure 2.3).

Prior to the Conference opening, senior officials meet to review the agenda and make recommendations to Ministers on selected items

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of business. The ceremonial Conference opening is followed by three days of business sessions in plenary, with occasional break-out into committees. The Commonwealth's compact size means that ministers can sit round one table, enabling informal exchanges of a kind denied to UN bodies with 150 or more members.

Proceedings are presided over by the host Minister, formally elected to the Chair. Long prepared speeches are strongly discouraged. A record is taken by Commonwealth and host-country officials, jointly acting as the secretariat for the Conference.

The business of the conferences has traditionally been of three main kinds. First, a day or more early in the Conference is devoted to the main theme in plenary and working group sessions, with invited plenary speakers introducing the subject. The character of this part of proceedings is exchange of experience by countries, and identification of common issues and interesting innovations. Conclusions and recommendations are distilled from discussion for report and follow-up action.

A second major segment of business is concerned with Commonwealth co-operation in education and the common institutional infrastructure. The activities of the Commonwealth of Learning, the Commonwealth and Scholarship and Fellowship Plan, and of the Education Section of the Secretariat are all reviewed, sometimes with the help of Conference working parties. Progress is noted, mandates and new directions are agreed and new pledges may be invited or made for COL and CSFP. Accounts may be given of progress on new initiatives in train e.g. the Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol or the Virtual University for Small States.

Third, close attention is given to the Conference

Communique, incorporating the conclusions of the Conference and Ministers' decisions concerning future action. At 14CCEM in Halifax Ministers had the additional challenge of agreeing a Halifax Statement Education: our Common Future. Every Conference up to and including the Twelfth was followed by a Report prepared by the Secretariat. For 13CCEM and 14CCEM this useful practice, which helps to ensure proper accountability and follow-up, fell victim to Secretariat economies; but Conference Reports were produced from both 15CCEM and 16CCEM. Conference business has undergone elaboration through introduction of recent innovations. The press was admitted to the proceedings for the first time at 14CCEM, and from 13CCEM onwards the programme

### Box 2.3: Observer Delegations

The forty or fifty bodies typically invited to observe at the Conferences fall into four main groups:

- i) Commonwealth civil society organisations/associations
- ii) Intergovernmental organisation
- iii) Bilateral and other development agencies
- iv) Other relevant organisations, including host country ones

Quite commonly only half this number take up the invitation.

Official observers can participate in working groups and break-out sessions but not in Ministerial plenaries, and they are included in social events.

has included 'parallel events'. At Gaborone in 1997 a 'Parallel Symposium', providing for civil society involvement and discussion of the issues before Ministers, was introduced, a feature repeated in 2000 and 2003: in Cape Town 2006 and Kuala Lumpur 2009 the event is designated a 'Stakeholder Forum'. At 15CCEM a 'Youth Summit' was added, and in Cape Town both a Youth Forum and a Teacher Forum. A fourth Forum, for Vice-Chancellors, assembles in 2009 at Kuala Lumpur. Conference agendas take account of these parallel events, enabling Ministers to interact with the Forums and to

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hear their conclusions, before framing their own. In Gaborone and Halifax there were exhibitions: in Edinburgh a 'Showcase of Best Practice'. Dovetailing these various events, to allow interfacing of civil-society participants with Ministers and delegations, extends the range of interactions in a welcome way but also adds considerable complexity to Conference schedules.

### The Secretariat

From 1959 onwards the Commonwealth has had a small internationally-recruited group of professional officers to service the Education Ministers' Conferences and carry forward its decisions in co-operation with member countries. Initially this 'Commonwealth Education Liaison Unit' was self-standing. It was absorbed in the Commonwealth Secretariat, after that was formed in 1965. Designated successively as Education 'Division', 'Department', 'Programme', this part of the Secretariat is now a 'Section' of the Social Transformation Programmes Division, where it works with sister sections for health and gender. The Section has 5-6 professional staff and is headed by a Deputy Director (Education).

### Charting the future of CCEMs: some challenges

The efficacy of the Commonwealth as a forum to address issues affecting the global common interest is well recognised. Commonwealth Conferences have particular attractions for participants because of their informality, mutual respect and equality of members, a sense of common purpose, and direct exchange of views (contrast with the formality, set speeches, and the effect of listening to simultaneous translation at many world gatherings). Moreover the extensive intergovernmental infrastructure of institutions and activities in education requires guidance from political leaders representing

their countries and peoples, the beneficiaries of co-operative activity. It is also recognised that education represents one of the pillars on which the Commonwealth association rests, and that the Commonwealth's future depends on allegiance to its values by the young.

The Conferences therefore seem here to stay, but if they are to justify fully the expense of time and money needed to bring together up to 200 political leaders and professionals in education for a week, and the months of preparation required, they must ever adjust to new challenges so that they can operate more effectively.

Among suggestions made for reform, one is for somewhat less frequent CCEMs, perhaps on a four-year cycle. However, a four-year cycle of CCEMs would require careful dovetailing with the cycle of CHOGMs and UNESCO General Conferences. Its workability would also depend on ensuring greater continuity between CCEMs: already, with the current three-year interval, the democratic political process results in a comparatively small proportion of ministers surviving from one Conference to the next. The Commonwealth Consortium for Education suggested to 15CCEM that greater continuity might be provided by establishing a small representative group of four to six ministers to monitor implementation between conferences and to assist the Secretariat's Education Section in carrying out ministerial mandates. An informed, committed, group of Ministers could provide leadership and impart greater substance to CCEM deliberations. This would certainly seem to be a more effective and less expensive approach than the holding of mid-term Regional Conferences in different parts of the Commonwealth, as was done in 2005 between 15CCEM and 16CCEM.

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The Consortium's proposal would be one way to help ensure that Conferences confined their decisions and recommendations to what can be realistically be implemented. There has been a temptation at past CCEMs to go in for vague 'wish lists' without specifying the scale and provenance of resources and the locus of responsibility for implementation. The Consortium proposed in its Memorandum to Ministers before 15CCEM that there could be an agreed framework of Commonwealth co-operative activity in education, centrally co-ordinated but mobilising the efforts of both official and non-official agencies behind priorities established by Ministers. The scope for developing an agreed Commonwealth Plan of Action in Education was further explored in the Consortium's 2005 Report to the Secretariat on the way ahead for the Commonwealth in relation to the six education Action Areas identified in Edinburgh.

*Footnote*

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### Executive Summary

The Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP) has proved to be one of the most enduring and successful forms of Commonwealth collaboration. Some 25,000 individuals have benefited from awards. Scholars have come from every Commonwealth country, whilst awards have been held in twenty-three countries (Box 1). The fiftieth anniversary of the Plan falls in 2009. At their meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Ministers will mark this occasion by launching a new endowment fund which will enable more scholarships to be hosted by low- and middle-income countries, thus ensuring that CSFP is more truly Commonwealth-wide in scope. Ministers will also receive a report which will show that activity under the Plan has increased over the past decade, and consider proposals to strengthen its administration and profile still further over the next three years.

### What is the CSFP?

The Plan provides a framework through which governments in Commonwealth countries can offer educational awards to citizens of other member states. It is entirely up to each individual country how many awards it will contribute (if any), and to which countries they will be offered. There is no central administration. In practice the majority of awards are for conventional postgraduate study, but this is not a requirement. Other forms of award currently offered include undergraduate awards, split-site doctorates, short-term fellowships (typically for mid-career professionals) and scholarships by distance learning.

The Plan was established at the first Commonwealth Education Conference at Oxford in 1959. It aimed to provide a practical manifestation of Commonwealth collaboration, by enabling citizens to share the wide range

of educational resources and experiences throughout member countries. Five general principles were established to govern the Plan, as follows:

- the CSFP should be distinct and additional to any other schemes;
- the Plan should be based on mutual co-operation and the sharing of educational experience among all Commonwealth countries;
- the nature of awards should be flexible, to take account of changing needs over time;
- the Plan should be Commonwealth-wide, and based on a series of bilateral arrangements between sending and host countries;
- awards should recognise and promote the highest standards of intellectual achievement.

### Historical Context

Reports presented to successive Education Ministers' Conferences record trends in the development of the Plan. Numbers grew rapidly during the first few years of operation, and a revised target of 1,000 individual award holders at any one time was met in 1967. That year also saw the highest number of countries hosting awards at any one time – 14. Although some developing countries expressed frustration that their offers did not attract the numbers of applicants hoped for, this period saw the establishment of a tradition whereby students from developed Commonwealth countries undertook postgraduate work in developing-country institutions.

Growth slowed during the 1970s, as the number of individuals on award each year settled at around 1,000. However the early part of the next decade saw further expansion, partly as a

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way of alleviating the effects of the introduction of full-cost tuition fees for postgraduate study in some countries. More Commonwealth Scholarships were included in the 'Pym Package' of support for overseas students in the United Kingdom, whilst Canada also pledged increased support. A new and ambitious target level of 1,500 awards each year was set by Education Ministers at their Cyprus Conference in 1984 (9CCEM), and was achieved in 1986. In 1993 the Plan reached an all-time high in terms of numbers – with 1,704 Scholars and 105 Fellows holding awards.

The next six years, however, were a period of rapid decline. This partly reflected the withdrawal of several countries as donors, and partly a lack of confidence globally in the impact of scholarships and higher education as a tool for international development. By the time of 14CCEM in 2000, the numbers of new awards and students on award had slipped back to 450 and 1,021 respectively. Ministers agreed a set of proposals to reverse this trend. They included

- a revised target for the number of new awards, and a doubling of the number of countries offering them;
- much stronger analysis of past award-holders' achievements, through tracer studies;
- increased co-operation between participating countries, through e.g. the establishment of an international web site, bringing information about the full range of CSFP opportunities together for the first time.

Reports to Education Ministers at Edinburgh (2003) and Cape Town (2006) showed that these proposals were having some impact. The average number of new awards per year had increased from 412 to 460 by 2003, and again to 677 by 2006: there was an increase in the number of

countries offering awards and some evidence of increased diversity in the types of awards on offer.

### Current Situation

Results of the 2009 survey, to be presented at 17CCEM, will show continued growth and support for the Plan, although this has not been sufficient to reach the ambitious target set in 2006, and there still remains a need for more countries to host awards. Particular features include the following:

- The average number of new awards per year has increased to 886. This compares with 412, 460 and 677 in the 2000, 2003 and 2006 reports. The figure is somewhat inflated, however, by the decision of the United Kingdom to bring its Shared Scholarships Scheme under the auspices of Commonwealth Scholarships for the first time. Even without accounting for this, the figures would have been 737, still an increase of 9% on the 2006 report, and of 79% since 2000.
- The average number of Scholars and Fellows on award was not yet known at the time of producing this brief, but is likely to have increased on the average figure of 1420 reported in Cape Town. The figure is, however, unlikely to have reached the historic high of 1809, or the ambitious target of 2009 set by Ministers in 2006.
- A total of ten countries are known to have instigated new awards during the period of the report. These were Canada, Ghana, India, Jamaica, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago and the United Kingdom. This figure compares with fourteen in 2006, nine in 2003 and six in 2000.
- Whilst the strong emphasis on postgraduate training has continued, there has been an increasing trend within that towards Masters

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level. The proportion of new scholarship awards at this level has reached 65% - the highest-ever figure. Doctorates remain a significant proportion of new scholarships awarded, with full doctorates accounting for 16%, and split-site doctorates for 4%, compared with a combined total of 31% in 2006. There has been a small increase in undergraduate awards, to 4%. Even if Fellowships were included in this calculation, then the proportion of all new awards at taught Masters level would still be 55%.

- The proportion of new awards going to Africa has increased significantly. Having risen from 32% to 36% in the four years to 2003, the proportion accelerated rapidly in the three years covered by the last report, and now exceeds 50% for the first time ever. This does not appear to be at the expense of South Asia, whose proportion of awards has also risen slightly to 28%. Instead, it marks a decline in the relative proportion awarded to Australia, Britain, Canada and New Zealand, the Caribbean and East Asia. The changing percentage shares should, however, be seen in the context of the increasing number of awards overall.
- The trend towards older award holders reported in 2006 has reversed slightly, with a small decline in the proportion of award holders over the age of 35. There was also an increase from 14% to 17% in the proportion of award holders under the age of 24.
- Whilst all subjects of study remain eligible, some shift is evident towards topics that relate directly to development objectives, such as health (18%) and education (9%). About 20% of awards are in the field of science and 10% in engineering. Only 5% list their subject of study as being arts.
- The proportion of female Scholars taking

up awards remains stubbornly below 50% - averaging 44% in the years under report, the same figure reported in 2006. There has, however, been an encouraging increase in the proportion of female Fellows, from 36% to 40% - the highest ever figure in this category.

- The United Kingdom remains the largest contributor of awards, being responsible for 78% of all new awards in 2008-09, or 74% on a 'like for like' comparison with the 2006 report, where the figure was also 74%. The increases in proportion in recent years partly reflects the increasingly diverse portfolio of awards offered by the UK, many of which are shorter or cost less than conventional postgraduate study. In terms of absolute numbers, however, new awards offered by countries outside the UK have grown by 23% over the three year period of the report. The number of non-UK awards in 2008-09, at 195, was the highest for well over a decade.
- Overall, the survey of national agencies suggests that interest in the Plan remains high, with several respondents reporting strong impact in their own countries, and calling for the scheme to be expanded. Significantly, several also said that they would consider offering awards in the coming period.

### Relevance and Diversity

A significant outcome of the 2000 Education Ministers' Conference (14CCEM) was the proposal that donor countries review the type of award offered in future, with a view to increasing diversity and access. Early indications of this were the decision of Canada to offer scholarships by distance learning to Caribbean countries, and of the UK to support split-site doctorates. In 2002-03, the UK took this process further by introducing mid-career professional fellowships, and adopting the idea of distance-learning scholarships. Since 2006,

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Canada has increased the range of awards on offer by adding post-doctoral fellows and undergraduate exchanges, whilst the CSFP Endowment Fund, to be launched in Kuala Lumpur, aims to further diversify the range of destinations for awards.

By the time of the 2006 Report, these initiatives were beginning to have a significant impact. Over a third of current UK award-holders now study by distance learning, and the majority of these never visit their 'host' country as part of their study-course. The professional fellowships programme is smaller, but has doubled from the initial intake of thirty in 2003. Taken together, these innovations have been influential in the increased orientation of the scheme to Africa, and to the rising average age of award holders referred to above.

The CSFP authorities in the UK are currently reviewing the effectiveness of these initiatives, and it will be some years before final conclusions are reached. The initial indications, however, are positive. The distance-learning scholarships, which achieved their first graduates in 2005, now have almost 200 masters graduates, and report drop-out rates of less than 10%. This is only slightly higher than for 'conventional' masters degrees, although the figure may rise slightly in future. The time taken to obtain the award is longer, but this is partly compensated for by the ability to apply newly acquired skills even before graduation. Professional fellowships, which have involved a wide range of public, voluntary and private sector organisations as hosts, are thought to provide a direct and cost-effective way of transferring skills, and in some cases they act as a catalyst for new and long-term partnerships.

Footnote

### Alumni and Long-Term Impact

In common with many other international scholarship programmes, the CSFP made little attempt to assess the impact of its awards during the first decades of its operation. With the exception of one international survey in the late 1980s, little attempt was made to trace former award-holders; still less to evaluate their contribution or harness the expertise and goodwill generated.

Much has changed in recent years. The year 2009 has seen publication of the second *Directory of Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows*, jointly supported by the authorities in Canada and the United Kingdom. This gives career profiles of almost 4,000 alumni, and lists the names of some 26,000. The UK has also embarked on a long-term programme of evaluation of its contribution, which produced its first reports in 2008. Taken together, these initiatives provide a strong base from which both to measure impact and promote greater networking between alumni. The 15CCEM in Edinburgh set a target of establishing a database containing at least 5,000 former award holders; the number is now some 5,700, of whom 2,226 responded to a recent survey.

Analysis of this data needs to be developed further, but some trends are clear. The proportion of award-holders returning to work in their home countries is thought to be higher than for overseas students generally; with the recent UK survey finding that 85-90% of recipients were working in their own countries. These proportions may increase further as the introduction of distance-learning and short-term professional awards take effect. A high proportion works in the public sector, with higher education the largest single occupation. Out of the 2,226 respondents to the UK alumni survey, 90% reported maintaining some form of

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link with their former host country; 45% claimed in some way to have influenced government thinking in their country, between them citing 2,841 specific examples. Alumni had also gone on to reach very senior levels. Even though the total figure traced to date represents only a minority of the total number, and is heavily biased towards recent alumni who have not yet reached the peak of their career, examples have already been found of about fifty alumni who have served at cabinet level, twenty two as Permanent Secretaries, twenty federal or supreme court judges, eleven ambassadors and no less than seventy five university vice-chancellors. Utilisation of this resource presents a significant opportunity for the Commonwealth. In addition to a regular hard-copy magazine, electronic networks are being developed for alumni with common professional interests. The nine 'live' ones cover education, public health, governance, environment, agriculture, gender, science and technology, inter-faith understanding, law and human rights.

### Administration of the CSFP

There is no central management of the CSFP. Instead, each country appoints its own nominating agency. This is normally, but not always, an arm of government. The agency is responsible, where invited, for nominating candidates to other countries. It is also responsible for issuing the offers of any awards tenable in its own country.

The process described has several advantages. It represents a genuine partnership. The fact that candidates go through two selections helps ensure quality, and minimises the risk of corruption. The involvement of recipient-country governments should ensure that nominations reflect any national priorities. The country that offers the award does not have to bear the costs of advertising.

However the system also has drawbacks. The process can lack co-ordination, and be difficult for candidates to understand. The complexity of the two-stage selection system might put off states that were thinking of offering a small number of awards. In some countries, it could result in selection procedures that lack transparency, with candidates' applications all being filtered by the authorities. Overall Plan progress is also difficult to monitor – particularly in the absence of a central agency charged with this task on a regular basis.

Attempts to improve coordination in recent years have included the reintroduction of occasional meetings between host countries, to discuss both the general principles of the Plan and operational issues. The first such meeting was convened in London in July 2001, and a follow-up was scheduled for Stellenbosch in South Africa, immediately preceding 16CCEM. The final recommendation, for more collaboration over alumni activity, was partly met with the publication of the alumni directory, as a joint undertaking between Canada and the United Kingdom. However long standing calls for a small central unit – based at the Commonwealth Secretariat or elsewhere – to provide central facilitation, have not yet been implemented. It is likely that this possibility will be raised again at 17CCEM.

### Prospects and Recommendations

At the Kuala Lumpur CCEM, Ministers will consider a range of proposals aimed both at expanding the Plan and further increasing its accessibility and relevance. The proposals are contained in the report of a survey of national agencies, which confirms strong support for the Plan and its continuing impact.

The *CSFP Anniversary Endowment*, which was

Footnote

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initially proposed by Ministers in Cape Town and will be formally launched in Kuala Lumpur, represents a major initiative to address both of these issues. The fund will assist low and middle income countries to offer awards under the CSFP, thus providing a new channel of south-south collaboration, and unique opportunities for 'northern' students to experience higher education in countries that they had not previously considered. In addition to benefiting recipients, the Fund will act as a further spur in demonstrating the range of opportunities now available in developing countries.

The Fund aims to provide a permanent, one-off, legacy of the fiftieth anniversary, which will supplement the ongoing contributions of donors. All Commonwealth governments have been asked to contribute, and a major campaign will be conducted amongst alumni and other potential contributors during an official fund-raising period of June 2009 to October 2010, this later date marking the fiftieth anniversary of the first students taking up their award in the UK. HRH The Prince of Wales has agreed to act as Patron of the appeal, and initial commitments of £1.3 million have already been generated.

Other recommendations, based on a survey of national CSFP agencies conducted by the Association of Commonwealth Universities, suggest:

- that continued priority should be given by member governments to increasing the number of scholarships offered under the scheme, both by direct awards and through contributing to the endowment fund;
- that there could be further moves towards increased diversity in the organisations offering awards, recognising in particular the role that individual universities could play, whilst ensuring that national agencies continue to have a major strategic role;
- that further consideration should be given to the issue of better communication between agencies, in the short term through the convening of a meeting of agencies in late 2010;
- that there be further development of electronic application systems, as a means both of reducing the administrative burdens on agencies and of improving accessibility;
- that further consideration to be given to the definition of Commonwealth Scholarships, noting that several countries give awards to other Commonwealth countries outside the scope of the CSFP.

Overall, the evidence of recent years confirms that Commonwealth Scholarships remain one of the most valued and successful forms of collaboration. In setting the course of the Plan for the next half century, Ministers in Kuala Lumpur will be charged with matching the foresight of their predecessors who established the Plan fifty years ago.

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A precondition for human, social or economic development is an education and training system accessible to all—as recognised by the United Nations’ eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the six Education for All (EFA, Dakar) targets.

The basic development agenda of improving health and reducing poverty and hunger calls for learning on a massive scale, with the focus

on improving livelihoods and fostering a healthy population. Recruiting and training teachers is a major obstacle to the achievement of the vital “universal primary education” MDG; Africa alone still needs to raise its current stock of teachers by 68% – from 2.4 to 4 million – by 2015 to reach that goal (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2006).

Open and distance learning (ODL) helps enable people to learn or train at the location, time and pace of their choice, for less money and with improved results.

Over the past decades, governments and learning institutions have recognised that the financial resources available for conventional schooling cannot increase commensurately with population growth, or adequately cope with the need to train human capital through face-to-face education methods alone. Some three million Commonwealth citizens are already engaged in some form of distance learning today, undergoing education, training, retraining, learning and reskilling in a variety of disciplines through a multitude of providers, and these numbers are rapidly rising.

Historically, the Commonwealth is a pioneer in the development and growth of ODL. In the 1970s and 1980s, large and successful Commonwealth institutions such as the UK Open University, India’s Indira Gandhi National Open University, the Open Learning Institute of Hong Kong (now the Open University of Hong Kong), the University of South Africa (UNISA) and Canada’s Athabasca University transformed the old-style “correspondence course” into quality education and training systems, using a learner-centred and learner-supported approach to instructional design. These and other Commonwealth institutions utilised information and communications technology (ICT) such as radio, television and recorded media for

### Box 4.1: Defining open and distance learning

In recent years the definition and application of open and distance learning have been evolving in parallel with the arrival of newer and intelligent technologies. Today, and in the foreseeable future, open and distance education embraces any or all of the following:

- i) **Open learning** – policies and practices that permit entry to learning with no or minimum barriers with respect to age, gender, or time constraints and with recognition of prior learning. These policies need not be part of a distance education system but are complementary to it.
- ii) **Distance education** – the delivery of learning or training to those who are separated mostly by time and space from those who are teaching or training. The teaching is done with a variety of “mediating processes”<sup>\*</sup> used to transmit content, to provide tuition and to conduct assessment or measure outcomes.
- iii) **Flexible learning** – the provision of learning opportunities that can be accessed at any place and time. Flexible learning relates more to the scheduling of activities than to any particular delivery mode.<sup>\*</sup>
- iv) **Online learning and e-learning** – terms that have emerged to describe the application of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to enhance distance education, implement open learning policies, make learning activities more flexible and enable those learning activities to be distributed among many learning venues.<sup>\*</sup>
- v) **Virtual education** – includes aspects of both online and e-learning but goes somewhat further. While it is largely web-centric it does not necessarily limit itself to learners outside a conventional classroom. It uses multimedia and, besides delivering content, also enables a high level of interaction among learners, content, teachers, peers and administration both synchronously and asynchronously.

<sup>\*</sup>Farrell, Glen (ed.). 2003. *A Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth*. Vancouver: The Commonwealth of Learning.

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education and training, and today remain early adopters of the latest computer and Internet-mediated learning technologies.

Alongside such “single -mode” distance learning institutions, more and more traditional education institutions have been offering distance learning alternatives and technology-enhanced programming, converting to fully-fledged “dual-mode” facilities.

In 1987 Commonwealth Heads of Government received a report entitled, *Towards a Commonwealth of Learning* (Commonwealth Co-operation in Distance Education and Open Learning, a Report by a Commonwealth Group of Experts, chaired by Lord Briggs of Lewes). Based on the report’s findings, leaders agreed to establish a Commonwealth institution to encourage the development and sharing of open learning and distance education knowledge, resources and technologies—the Commonwealth of Learning (COL). Their vision was that this agency should be in the vanguard of using ODL and ICT developments to meet the Commonwealth’s education and training needs, helping member states optimise their potential and develop their human capital through extending quality education access to remote regions, and to people with limited or no face-to-face learning options.

COL became operational in 1989. From the beginning, COL has received a significant overall level of funding, co-operation and support from developing countries. More than a decade since COL’s inception, Commonwealth Heads of Government and Ministers of Education recognise that it is in part due to the efforts of COL and a wide international network of partners, that distance education is now part of the mainstream of education and training. Today there is at least one distance learning operation in each of the Commonwealth’s member states,

including middle and lower-income countries.

More recently, Commonwealth leaders pledged to strengthen their networks of co-operation to promote greater development for developing member countries at the 2005 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Malta. The *Malta Declaration on Networking the Commonwealth for Development* re-affirms using ICT to bridge the digital divide among the Commonwealth’s developed and developing countries, recognising that developing countries face challenges in using technology effectively. In a separate Communiqué issued at the end of CHOGM 2005, Commonwealth leaders expressed appreciation for the work of Commonwealth agencies such as COL, specifically noting COL’s efforts toward establishing a Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth.

As more governments have realised the importance of distance education and have begun to implement ODL strategies and systems, COL’s work has evolved to reflect their changing priorities:

- Whereas advocacy and policy development for ODL was a priority in COL’s first decade of operations, COL now helps governments implement and maintain ODL systems.
- An earlier focus on formal education has expanded to a broader concern for learning for development that includes attention to health and livelihoods.
- With distance learning relatively well established in higher education, COL now focuses particular attention on open schooling at the secondary and primary levels.

While much has been achieved, there is still tremendous need. As defined in the EFA and MDG declarations, education is one of the best development strategies to break the human cycle

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of poverty, misery and violence. ODL, coupled with the strategic application of ICT, can play a central role in delivering education at every level to all, and in providing them with the necessary tools for a more productive future.

### About COL

#### Box 4.2: COL Mission Statement

The Commonwealth of Learning helps governments and institutions expand the scope, scale and quality of learning by using new approaches and technologies, especially those subsumed under the general term of open and distance learning (ODL).

Headquartered in Vancouver, Canada, COL is the only official Commonwealth agency located outside the United Kingdom and is the world's only intergovernmental organisation solely concerned with the promotion and development of distance education and open learning. COL helps developing Commonwealth countries increase their access to learning using distance education and appropriate technologies, particularly in the areas of higher education; teacher training; schooling; and non-formal learning. COL's goals also include maximising the transfer of information, ideas, innovations and resources to support the ongoing, rapid evolution of ODL itself.

### Programming

All 53 Commonwealth member countries benefit from COL's work, which addresses the key learning and development challenges associated with the UN's MDG and EFA targets such as gender equity, sustainable development, environmental protection and civil rights; as well as the Commonwealth objectives of peace, democracy, equality and good governance.

COL's greatest impact is in giving the Commonwealth's citizens more access to quality education and training through open, distance and eLearning, thereby enabling them to benefit

from improved livelihoods, greater gender equity, and overall economic, social and cultural development.

Since becoming operational, COL has:

- helped introduce, or enhance, hundreds of teaching/training programmes;
- influenced the development of open schools and universities;
- conducted training seminars and studies on specific educational needs;
- established an extensive network of education and technology specialists around the world; and
- facilitated systemic changes in the delivery of education, including related government policy.

Going forward, COL will:

- work on behalf of giving developing countries greater input to international ICT networks and resources, currently dominated by the interests of more developed countries;
- prioritise promoting open, affordable access to education materials, including addressing issues of copyright related to distribution and availability of education resources;
- provide cost-effective, quality distance education options for developing countries dealing with a proliferation of for-profit distance education organisations, not all of them legitimate; and helping establish local, national and regional quality assurance standards;
- continue to champion the implementation of emerging ICT such as affordable, portable personal computers and alternative power sources such as solar power, in providing education access to remote or less developed regions;
- continue to focus on the global development agenda and South-South co-operation, intensifying COL's links with governments and strengthening partnerships with multilateral bodies;

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- maintain a balance between policy advice and implementation, pursuing fewer activities but for longer periods and improving the monitoring and evaluation of COL's work;
- foster the responsible autonomy of staff but strengthen teamwork, maintaining intellectual and technical leadership and sharpening COL's brand image.

While often drawing upon the experience and expertise of the Commonwealth's industrialised countries, COL strives to develop South-South co-operation. Its stream-lined core staff allows it to target resources and activities more efficiently to the needs of individual countries, using collaborative networking to foster regional co-operation and exchanges.

COL helps countries develop policies and systems that extend the benefits of education to

more of their citizens. It works with institutional and individual partners to give policy advice and to implement programme activities in consultation with governments, and provides best practice examples that demonstrate how ODL can help education opportunities expand more rapidly. COL is not itself a funding body.

In the area of knowledge provision, COL strives to "level the playing field" by developing and running systems that enable policy-makers, educators and learners in the world's poorest countries to access information and knowledge on par with that available to people in the wealthy G8 countries. COL produces research publications, start-up guides and online resources for governments, institutions and practitioners.

### Box 4.3: Examples of COL's work, 2003-2006

- Introducing ODL capacity in institutions previously delivering training and education through conventional modes, such as the Centre for Environment Education (CEE) in India and the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT).
- Improving and extending the capacity of the National Teachers Institute (NTI) in Nigeria and the National Institute for Open Schooling (NIOS) in India, and mobilising NIOS as a resource for the development of open schooling systems in other countries. Establishing a national Open School in Trinidad & Tobago.
- Establishing the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth, a collaborative network for creating open educational resources for work-related learning created at the request of Commonwealth Ministers of Education.
- Brokering proven distance learning programmes already offered around the Commonwealth, including COL's eLearning for International Organisations programme that is assisting a growing number of major international organisations to solve training challenges by employing the power and flexibility of distance and technology mediated learning.
- Developing and administering distance education scholarship programmes, as well as technical /vocational and business development scholarship programmes, with partners such as the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP) and the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU).
- Helping improve the rural economy with initiatives such as COL's Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3 Farmers) programme, which implements projects that combine the social mobilisation of villagers; use of commercial ICT kiosks; organisation of information providers into consortia; and integration of commercial banks.
- Working with World Health Organization (WHO) country offices in South Africa, Swaziland, The Gambia, Sierra Leone, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Sri Lanka to identify local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) committed to improving the health of disadvantaged groups. COL supplies ODL skills with cost-effective audio and video production technology to enable the NGOs to reach all levels of society with culturally and linguistically appropriate health information, through radio, television and village cinema events.
- Increasing capacity for distance learning in countries as diverse as The Gambia, India, Lesotho, Nigeria and Sri Lanka. In Zambia, COL worked to formulate a strategy for using ODL and ICT in both pre- and in-service teacher development.
  - Raising education standards, by developing Commonwealth quality assurance guidelines with partners in Asia and Africa.
  - Developing and implementing ODL policy development in several Commonwealth countries.
  - Advocating open educational resources and open courseware. Training in collaborative technologies.
  - Sponsoring a biennial pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning.

## Chapter 4: COMMONWEALTH CO-OPERATION IN DISTANCE LEARNING

### Partners

COL works in close association with Commonwealth governments in a spirit of equality and participation, and operates through a wide range of partnerships. It seeks to create mutually beneficial linkages, especially of a South-South character, between Commonwealth countries.

Key Commonwealth partners include the Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth Foundation partners are the organisations linked to the United Nations (e.g., UNESCO, WHO and the World Intellectual Property Organization) and the Commonwealth, including the Commonwealth Secretariat; as well as regional governmental organisations such as the Caribbean Community Secretariat (CARICOM), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Southern African Development Community (SADC).

COL and the Commonwealth Secretariat's Social Transformation Programmes Division work together closely to ensure that requests from governments for assistance are addressed in a prompt and effective manner. They also maintain effective links with Commonwealth associations (e.g., the Association of Commonwealth Universities) and non-governmental organisations (such as the Commonwealth Consortium for Education) for the same purpose. COL and ComSec are specifically harmonising their work in teacher education, health, respect and understanding (Civil Paths to Peace) and the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC), more fully described in Box 4.4. COL's expertise and experience in distance education and educational technologies is particularly useful. COL is also working with the Commonwealth Foundation in updating their knowledge management systems. COL also has strong networks of partners in

its various areas of activity. In education, these include the Commonwealth's distance-teaching universities, open schools, and regional centres for distance education such as the Regional Training and Research Institute for Distance and Open Learning (RETRIDOL) and SADC Distance Education Centre (SADC-CDE). For its work on rural livelihoods, COL has productive links with the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and its associated bodies. It sustains links with NGOs in many countries and has an important relationship with the Hewlett Foundation for developing open educational resources.

### Structure

COL is governed by an international Board of Governors chaired by H.E., the Hon. Burchell Whiteman, O.J., Jamaican High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, Retired Senator and former Minister of Information and former Minister of Education and Culture, Jamaica.

The current President and Chief Executive Officer is Sir John Daniel, formerly Assistant Director-General for Education at UNESCO and Vice Chancellor of the UK Open University from 1990 to 2001.

With some 40 employees distributed between its head-quarters in Vancouver, Canada and the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia in New Delhi, India, COL reflects the cultural diversity and breadth of the Commonwealth. Senior staff members, who serve on rotation, are recruited from around the Commonwealth in a wide range of distance education and administrative fields.

COL's core operations are financed by voluntary pledges of funds from Commonwealth governments. It is hosted in Canada by the Government of Canada. The six major voluntary

## Chapter 4: COMMONWEALTH CO-OPERATION IN DISTANCE LEARNING

contributors, currently Canada, India, New Zealand, Nigeria, South Africa and the United Kingdom, have representatives on COL's Board of Governors.

At approximately Cdn\$11 million per year, COL's annual budget remains modest for a Commonwealth institution tasked with its broad mandate. COL obtains resources for its work in various ways. Its core financing comes in the form of voluntary contributions from Commonwealth governments. COL augments this major part of its budget with income from other sources such as grants received from other intergovernmental organisations and foundations in support of programme initiatives, fees received for professional services, and interest. There is also significant "in kind" support from COL's partners.

### Three-year Plan, 2009–2012

The theme of COL's Three-year Plan for 2009-2012, Learning for Development, expresses a vision that reaches beyond formal education to embrace areas of learning that are vital for better health, greater prosperity and a safer environment. Understanding development as the process of increasing the freedoms that people can enjoy, COL pursues this vision operationally within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the campaign for Education for All (EFA) and Commonwealth values.

While building on the extensive pan-Commonwealth consultation conducted for the previous triennium, COL has refreshed its understanding of current development priorities through regional meetings with the country Focal Points appointed by Ministers of Education. A rigorous external evaluation of its work in 2006-2009 has enabled COL to play to its strengths in responding to these priorities.

COL's first response is to tighten the focus of its programming. COL's two programme sectors, Education and Livelihoods & Health, embrace just eight initiatives that will help governments pursue the twin goals of expanding access to learning and using public funds cost-effectively.

COL's second response is to scale up its impact. Working with its country partners COL has developed powerful models for applying technology to learning for development. These models must now be applied at scale and extended to new countries.

The 2009-2012 programme initiatives are:

#### Education:

- Open schooling
- Teacher education
- Higher education
- Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth

#### Livelihoods & Health

- Skills development
- Learning for farming
- Healthy communities
- Integrating eLearning

#### Key aims are:

- Increase the number of trained teachers
- Open up access to secondary school to larger numbers of pupils
- Assist in the development of tertiary education
- Support skills development to improve the livelihoods of communities

The cross-cutting themes of gender, quality and appropriate technology are pervasive throughout the programme.

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Each sector pursues its aims through five core strategies: partnerships, models, policies, capacity and materials. These strategies focus on co-creating value with COL's extensive network of partners and stimulating new developments.

### **Box 4.4: Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth**

On behalf of Commonwealth Ministers of Education, COL is coordinating the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). Ministers conceived this idea at I4CCEM and endorsed a proposal for it at I5CCEM. Thirty countries from all Commonwealth regions are now actively engaged in making the VUSSC a reality.

VUSSC countries have chosen to focus on creating postsecondary, skills-related courses in areas such as tourism, entrepreneurship, professional development, disaster management, the fisheries industry and a range of technical and vocational subjects. These non-proprietary, electronically-held course materials, which can readily be adapted to the specific context of each country, are used in the offering of credit-bearing qualifications in the countries' postsecondary institutions, strengthening their educational capacity and outreach. Small states thus become active contributors to global development and leaders in educational reform through the innovative use of information and communications technologies (ICTs). The VUSSC is throwing a wide bridge across the digital divide.

The first VUSSC course materials have been developed at a series of pan-Commonwealth workshops facilitated by COL. Over the past three years, the Governments of The Bahamas, Maldives, Mauritius, Samoa, Seychelles, Singapore, and Trinidad & Tobago have hosted VUSSC workshops to train educators in information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Participants at the workshops began to create course materials, continuing their collaboration after returning home. Newly developed VUSSC course materials are available through COL's website, which provides free access to these university-level courses, along with many other courses. More recently a Transnational Qualifications Framework for the VUSSC has been developed with the help of the South African Qualifications Authority. This will facilitate the transfer of courses and credits between countries and give students confidence in the legitimacy of these eLearning programmes.

## Chapter 5: THE COMMONWEALTH AND EDUCATION FOR ALL

### The Commonwealth Commitment

In modern times, Education for All (EFA) has its basis in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). This was articulated more extensively over 40 years later, when an expanded vision of basic education was defined at the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien (1990). In the year 2000, international commitments were made to six EFA goals at the World Education Forum in Dakar and to two education-related Millennium Development Goals and targets (MDGs) at the Millennium Summit in New York.

The Commonwealth has made its own political commitments to EFA. Following Jomtien, the 1991 Harare Declaration pledged '*provision of universal access to education for the population of our countries.*' Post-Dakar, in the Halifax Statement on Education in the Commonwealth (2000), Commonwealth Ministers of Education reiterated their belief in '*the right of everyone to education.*'

More recently, Commonwealth Heads of Government (Uganda, 2007) committed to '*redoubling their efforts to deliver education for all, with a particular focus on enrolling the 30 million primary school aged children out of school across the Commonwealth; eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education; and strengthening education systems in countries affected by conflict.*'

### Jomtien – Dakar – New York – FTI

At Jomtien, The World Declaration on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs was adopted along with its Framework for Action.

The Declaration contained 10 articles on:

- Enabling every person - child, youth and adult – to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs
- Promoting an “expanded vision” of basic learning needs
- Universalising access and promoting equity
- Focusing on learning
- Broadening the means and scope of basic education
- Enhancing the environment for learning
- Strengthening partnerships
- Developing a supportive policy context
- Mobilising resources
- Strengthening international solidarity.

It is largely accepted that Jomtien put basic education back on to national and international policy agendas. However, progress on access and quality was relatively modest during the 1990s as the 2000 EFA Assessment, a ten-year review prepared for the World Education Forum, demonstrated clearly<sup>1</sup>. Accordingly at Dakar, while re-affirming Jomtien’s objectives, it was agreed that more specific goals and targets should be set. Six EFA goals – both quantitative and qualitative - were elaborated in the *Dakar Framework for Action*<sup>2</sup>:

- Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;
- Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality;
- Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes;
- Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.unesco.org/education/efafa\\_2000\\_assess/index.shtml](http://www.unesco.org/education/efafa_2000_assess/index.shtml)

<sup>2</sup> <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001211/121147e.pdf>

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women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;

- Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality;
- Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

The Framework for Action also called for: a) a global initiative aimed at developing the strategies and mobilising the resources needed to provide effective support to national efforts; b) UNESCO to continue its mandated role in coordinating EFA partners and maintaining their collaborative momentum including through the creation of a high-level EFA group to be convened by UNESCO's Director-General and c) an international EFA monitoring report. It affirmed too that **'no countries seriously committed to education for all will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by a lack of resources'**.

At the Millennium Summit in New York later in 2000, the *Millennium Declaration* was agreed. It included eight goals designed to reduce significantly all major aspects of poverty by 2015<sup>3</sup>. In recognition of the importance of a good basic education for reducing poverty, the second goal is to 'ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling'. And the goal to promote gender equality and empower women includes the target 'to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015'.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.education-fast-track.org/>

<sup>5</sup> See reports at [http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/global\\_col/policy\\_group/index.shtml](http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/global_col/policy_group/index.shtml)

While the EFA goals and the MDG goals and targets are complementary in their intentions, the EFA agenda is a good deal broader than that encompassed by the education MDGs. In some countries and in some international agencies this difference has given rise to a certain tension and conflict of interest in education-sector and poverty-reduction planning.

In 2002, the EFA Fast Track Initiative (FTI) was launched. This is a global partnership designed to help low-income countries achieve the education MDGs. In committing US\$1.3 billion to education between 2003 and 2009, FTI is now by far the largest global initiative in support of EFA, and Universal Primary Completion in particular<sup>4</sup>.

### Co-ordination and Monitoring

In response to recommendations from Dakar, the UNESCO Director-General has convened the EFA High-Level Group on eight occasions (Paris, 2001; Abuja, 2002; Delhi 2003; Brasilia, 2004; Beijing 2005; Cairo 2006, Dakar, 2007; and Oslo 2008)<sup>5</sup>. The FTI holds regular partnership meetings, the most recent being in Copenhagen in April 2009.

An editorially independent Education for All Global Monitoring Report (GMR) was established in 2002, based at UNESCO in Paris. The GMR has published seven annual reports to date. It monitors and analyses progress towards the EFA goals and assesses the level and the quality of international aid for EFA. It has explored a number of major EFA themes since its inception: gender equality (2003/04); quality (2005); literacy (2006); early childhood development and education (2007); and governance (2009)<sup>6</sup>. It works closely with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) which has an international mandate to collect, quality-assure and analyse education data<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> See EFA GMR website at <http://www.unesco.org/en/efareport>

<sup>7</sup> See UIS website at [http://www.uis.unesco.org/ev.php?ID=2867\\_201&ID2=DO\\_TOPIC](http://www.uis.unesco.org/ev.php?ID=2867_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC)

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Progress towards the MDGs is monitored by the UN Statistics Division through the work of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group (IAEG) on MDG Indicators. The World Bank issues its own Global Monitoring Report each year to chart progress on the MDGs<sup>8</sup>.

### Progress and Prospects

The 52 full member countries of the Commonwealth are diverse in terms of population, size, income levels and their place on the ladder of progress towards EFA. Over 50% of the peoples of the Commonwealth live in just one country, India; while 20 countries have a population below 500,000. Eleven Commonwealth countries are classified as high-income by the World Bank, 25 are middle-income and 13 low-income. On UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI), 17 Commonwealth countries have a high HDI, 24 have a medium ranking and eight countries (all in Sub-Saharan Africa) have a low HDI.

A minimum of 27 million primary-age children, representing 36% of the global total, are out of school (primary or secondary) in Commonwealth countries (2006), of whom over 60% - about 17 million - are girls. In 2006, 82% of the Commonwealth total of out-of school children lived in three countries: India, Nigeria and Pakistan. These figures do not mean that none of these children has ever attended school nor that none will return to school in future.

Patterns of **enrolment of primary school age children** vary across the Commonwealth (Table 5.1). For 43 countries for which adjusted net enrolment data are available for 2007 (or the latest available year), 16 have NERs above 95%. Some have a long tradition of free and

**Table 5.1: Primary Net Enrolment in 2007\***

Country	Primary NER / GIR Last Grade of Primary	Country	Primary NER / GIR Last Grade of Primary
<b>SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA</b>		<b>EUROPE/ NORTH AMERICA</b>	
Botswana	84 / 95	Canada	n.a. / n.a.
Cameroon	n.a. / 55	Cyprus	100/101
The Gambia	76 / 72	Malta	91 / 98
Ghana	72 / 71	United Kingdom	100/n.a.
Kenya	76 / 93	<b>CARIBBEAN</b>	
Lesotho	73 / 78	Antigua & Barbuda	74 / 97
Malawi	88 / 55	Bahamas	91 / 97
Mauritius	95 / 94	Barbados	97 / 95
Mozambique	76 / 46	Belize	99 / 106
Namibia	87 / 77	Dominica	82 / 96
Nigeria	65/ n.a.	Grenada	79 / 81
Seychelles	99/ 114	Guyana	n.a. / 116
Sierra Leone	n.a./ 92 n.a./9	Jamaica	91 / 82
South Africa	91 / 92	St Kitts & Nevis	90 / 96
Swaziland	79 / 67	St Lucia	99 / 116
Tanzania	98/112	St Vincent and the Grenadines	94 / n.a.
Uganda	n.a./ 54	Trinidad & Tobago	89 / 88
Zambia	95 / 88		
<b>ASIA</b>		<b>PACIFIC</b>	
Bangladesh	89/70	Australia	97 / n.a.
		Kiribati	n.a./105
Brunei	97/107	Nauru	72 / n.a.
Darussalam			
India	94/86	New Zealand	100 / n.a.
Malaysia	100/98	Papua New Guinea	n.a./ n.a.
Maldives	97/114	Samoa	90 /98
Pakistan	66/62	Solomon Islands	62 /n.a.
Singapore	n.a./n.a.	Tonga	99 / 98
Sri Lanka	97/106	Tuvalu	n.a./105
		Vanuatu	87 / n.a.

<sup>8</sup> See <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTGLOBALMONITOR/EXTGLOMONREP2009/0,,menuPK:5924413~pagePK:64168427~piPK:64168435~theSitePK:5924405,00.html> for the 2009 report

<sup>9</sup> Adjusted net enrolment refers to the number of pupils in the primary education official age group enrolled in primary and secondary education expressed as a percentage of the corresponding population.

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compulsory primary education (e.g. Australia, Barbados, Tonga) while others have reached this target in the current decade (U.R of Tanzania). Only sustained high levels of NER over time indicate that all children complete a full cycle of primary schooling. But it says nothing in itself about learning outcomes.

Eight countries are within five points of 95% enrolment, with India achieving this level in recent years. This group also includes countries that appear to be challenged to reach the last 10% or so of their school-age populations (e.g. St Kitts and Nevis, and Samoa). A further 11 countries have NERs between 75% and 89.9%. Of these, five appear to have fallen from the second group in the past three years (Bangladesh, Grenada, Malawi, Trinidad and Tobago and Vanuatu), but The Gambia and Namibia have risen from a group where NER is below 75%. In this latter group, Antigua and Barbuda, Ghana, Lesotho, Nauru, Nigeria, Pakistan and Solomon Islands had more than 25% of their primary school aged population out of school at the time that data was collected<sup>10</sup>.

**Table I** also shows figures, where available, for the Gross Intake Rate for the last grade of primary school<sup>11</sup>. If these figures are compared with net enrolment rates it is possible to get some insight into the ability of school systems to retain children in the system. For example, in seven countries (Bangladesh, The Gambia, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Pakistan and Swaziland) GIR rates below 75% provide one indication of poor completion rates.

The MDG **gender parity** target date (2005) was passed with mixed success. Based on

2007 data (or the most recent year) for 51 Commonwealth countries, gender parity in access to primary education has been achieved in 36 Commonwealth countries and at the secondary level in 10 countries. At primary level disparities to the disadvantage of girls exist in seven countries; and to the disadvantage of boys in three. At secondary level, girls face a significant disparity (GPI < 0.97<sup>12</sup>) in 17 countries; but in as many as 20 countries the disadvantage is for boys. Disparities to the disadvantage of girls at both levels of schooling are recorded for Antigua and Barbuda, Cameroon, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sierra Leone and the Solomon Islands.

Enrolment in formal **pre-primary education** is just one measure of progress in expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education. Based on data for 44 Commonwealth countries, 23 have shown improvements in levels of gross enrolment since 1999, in some cases quite dramatically so with percentage points increases of 27 in Trinidad and Tobago, 21 in Ghana and 32 in Tanzania. But data in this sub-sector has to be treated with great caution.

Data on **adult literacy** is limited and often unreliable<sup>13</sup>. The global estimate for adults (15-64) who lack basic literacy skills is a minimum of 775 million. Between 55% and 60% of these men and women live in Commonwealth countries. Countries with major literacy deficits where more than 40% of the adult population has been classified as "illiterate" include Bangladesh, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Mozambique and Sierra Leone. One recent projection suggests that the Commonwealth countries that are

10 These data should be treated with caution. In small countries in particular minor changes in population estimates can give rise to significant changes in education indicators.

11 This indicates the total number of new entrants in the last grade of primary education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population at the theoretical entrance age to the last grade of primary.

12 The GPI – Gender Parity Index – is the ratio of female to male values of a given indicator. A GPI of 1 indicates parity between sexes; a GPI above or below 1 indicates a disparity in favour of one sex over the other.

13 This is even more true for global data on skills and lifelong learning programmes. No attempt is made here to include data for this important EFA goal.

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closest to achieving a rate commensurate with the rate needed to achieve the Dakar adult literacy target are - not surprisingly - those with already high rates of literacy; but some countries with not insignificant levels of “illiteracy” are making good progress, for example, Botswana and Vanuatu.

A number of Commonwealth countries have demonstrated that it is possible to move much faster towards the EFA goals and the education MDGs through major policy reforms. But balancing significant gains in access and equity have to be matched with an equally strong determination to improve efficiency and quality.

### Challenges and Opportunities

Virtually all low-income Commonwealth countries (and some others) have developed poverty reduction strategies and education sector plans that give weight to EFA and basic education. These usually address challenges which are common across most Commonwealth countries. Three are mentioned here.

**The Costs of Schooling** continue to provide a major barrier to regular school attendance for children from poor households. One estimate suggests that globally, 20% of all spending on primary education is in the form of direct household payments. Even in countries that constitutionally guarantee free primary education, charges and levies may have to be paid.

The abolition of school fees is one way of making education more accessible. Recent experience in East and Central Africa shows that a surge of new enrolments invariably follows fee abolition. Children who have never been to school join those who wish to return. This policy brings with it significant pressures on government budgets and the attendant problems of maintaining and improving quality.

But if the poorest households are to be given the possibility of enabling their children – and particularly their daughters – to benefit from schooling, the abolition of direct charges remains of fundamental importance.

Comparative data on **The Quality of Schooling** across the Commonwealth is thin. Twenty three Commonwealth countries engage in four different international assessment programmes (PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS and SACMEQ), while regional examination bodies (WAEC, CXC and the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment) facilitate regional overviews of standards<sup>14</sup>. One proxy guide to levels of performance in the schooling system is provided by youth literacy data for 15-24 year olds. Papua New Guinea records youth literacy figures of 64%, Sierra Leone 54% and Mozambique 52%.

In terms of the level and quality of inputs into primary schooling, public current expenditure on primary education as a percentage of GNP, varies considerably. For a sample of 28 Commonwealth countries (largely excluding the Pacific) levels of public expenditure range from 0.5% in Zambia to 3.8% in Lesotho. The percentage of trained primary teachers is another guide. For 28 Commonwealth countries for which recent data are available, 16 countries have primary systems with less than 80% trained primary school teachers. In the Caribbean - where there is a long tradition of UPE - eight countries fall into this category.

**The HIV/AIDS pandemic** has destroyed much of what education has tried to achieve in many Commonwealth countries in the last 20 years. In 2007 the number of HIV/AIDS orphans aged 17 years and below living in Commonwealth African countries was estimated to be a minimum of 7.2 million (excluding data for Kenya) – approximately half of the world’s AIDS orphans.

<sup>14</sup> PISA – The Programme for International Student Assessment; TIMSS – The Trends in Mathematics and Science Study; PIRLS – The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study; SACMEQ – The Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality; WAEC – West African Examinations Council; CXC – The Caribbean Examinations Council.

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The relationship of HIV/AIDS to education is multi-faceted. On the one hand there is the need to safeguard education: protect teachers suffering from HIV; prevent sexual harassment and abuse in schools; meet shortfalls in teacher supply resulting from death and illness; and to ensure that all children are able to go to school. On the other hand, education must play a lead role in limiting the spread of AIDS through formal and non-formal interventions. These may be enshrined in national AIDS and education strategies. One recent international survey found that only 70% of countries with high rates of prevalence have a dedicated AIDS budget.

Ministers of Education from Commonwealth Small States recognised their responsibilities in these regards in the Stoke Rochford Statement (2004). The commitment is made that *'we intend that all our future education sector plans and policies shall take full account of the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the necessity to mobilise education programmes to combat it. This includes preparing projections of learner enrolment and teacher supply that reflect the latest expectations of retention and loss due to HIV/AIDS'*.

### Aid for Education<sup>15</sup>

In 2006, bilateral aid to education from OECD-DAC countries plus that from multilateral organisations totalled US\$11.3 billions, of which US\$5.1 billions went to basic education. In 1999/2000 the figures were US\$6.9 billions and US\$2.8 billions respectively, so there has been a significant increase in each case. Of the 2006 totals, 44 Commonwealth countries for which data are available received approximately US\$2.75 billion (24.3% of the total) of all education aid and US\$1.32 billion (25.9%) of the basic education total. Five Commonwealth countries received over US\$ 100 millions for basic education in 2006: Tanzania (US\$231m); Pakistan (US\$185m);

Ghana (US\$181m); Mozambique (US\$113m); and Kenya (US\$111m). If unspecified aid and budgetary aid is added to sector specific support for education, aid for basic education as a share of total aid to education equalled or exceeded 50% in 20 Commonwealth countries. Aid for basic education is highly concentrated in Commonwealth Africa and Commonwealth South Asia.

The four main donors to education in the Commonwealth are Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. Together, in 2006, these countries committed US\$ 1.65 billions specifically for aid to education; of which US\$1.4 billions was for basic education.

Nine Commonwealth countries have had their sector plans endorsed by The Fast Track Initiative (Cameroon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guyana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Zambia). As of April 2009, US\$366 million had been allocated to these countries. Only in Kenya had full disbursement been completed.

Aid for education is likely to remain important for a significant number of Commonwealth countries, whether as recipients, as donors or as partners in regional endeavours. But the future of aid in a time of global recession is a concern, and OECD calculates that at least USD 10-15 billion must still be added to current forward spending plans if donors are to meet their current 2010 commitments to total aid. The need for aid to counter the development impact of the crisis, including in education will be a matter of concern to the Commonwealth.

### Commonwealth Response

Commonwealth organisations play a largely technical and/or advocacy role in support of EFA. There is no significant financing of education programmes.

<sup>15</sup> The source for this data is the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2009 using OECD-DAC data.

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The stated objectives of the **Commonwealth Secretariat**<sup>16</sup> in its current education work programme have a strong focus on EFA:

- Advocating for 2015 to be the year that children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.
- Affirming the importance of eliminating gender disparities in education by 2015.
- Utilising the technology, facilities and efficiencies afforded by open and distance learning to overcome barriers, and combating the digital divide in education.
- Improving quality in education through signalling the importance of the role played by teachers, addressing their status, retention and mobility whilst at the same time advancing the importance of the management, training and development of this critical resource in education.
- Supporting the assurance of education in difficult circumstances through addressing the challenges of education delivery during situations of crisis, conflict, post-conflict and natural disasters; and providing guidelines to improve preparedness for emergencies.
- Mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS on education systems by way of establishing the role and importance of education as a “social vaccine” against HIV/AIDS through professorial chairs for research, and advocacy and dissemination of good practices in countries which address head-on the challenge of the pandemic in their populations.

The **Commonwealth Foundation** supports the strengthening of civil society capacities in lobbying for policy change, and, in particular for ensuring sustainable inclusive strategies

to accelerate progress towards meeting the Millennium Development Goal of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2015<sup>17</sup>.

The **Commonwealth of Learning (COL)** bases its work on the premise that achieving the MDGs will require a massive expansion of education and training cannot address the scope and scale of the task<sup>18</sup>. Its work focuses on using technology to expand the scope and scale of human learning. On UPE, COL is concentrating on increasing the number of teachers and improving their quality by promoting distance learning for pre- and in-service teacher education. On the wider EFA goals it fosters the expansion of access to secondary education through open and alternative schooling and the use of technology for learning to improve livelihoods. In the health sector its media empowerment programme enables NGOs and communities to develop and disseminate health messages using radio and video.

The **Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF)** ran from 2003-2008<sup>19</sup>. It was an education partnership delivered by three leading international development organisations: ActionAid, Oxfam GB and Save the Children UK. It promoted free primary education for all children by giving advice and small-scale funding to education groups in 16 Commonwealth countries. These groups worked independently or collectively in a national coalition to identify and act on the problems that stop children from attending school.

<sup>16</sup> See <http://www.thecommonwealth.org/subhomepage/190663/>

<sup>17</sup> See <http://www.commonwealthfoundation.com/>

<sup>18</sup> See <http://www.col.org/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>19</sup> See <http://www.commonwealtheducationfund.org/>

# Chapter 6: GENDER AND EDUCATION IN THE COMMONWEALTH

## Introduction

Achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement of good quality education, is one of the goals of the Education for All (EFA) initiative. Eliminating gender disparities in education is also one of the six action areas set out in the Commonwealth's 2003 Edinburgh Action Plan for Education. The Commonwealth Secretariat has made elimination of gender disparities in primary and secondary schooling one of the key objectives of its activities in education. It is evident by now, however, that a significant number of member states, among them several Commonwealth countries in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, are not likely to achieve this particular MDG target by 2015.

Commonwealth Governments are committed to achieving gender equality and parity in education through provision of entitlement, opportunity and capacity for **both girls and boys** belonging to diverse social, ethnic, linguistic or economic groups. This paper highlights issues of Gender and Education in the Commonwealth with particular emphasis on the importance of educating girls and women. It examines Commonwealth interventions to work towards attaining the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on gender equality in schools, and the various roles to that end played by the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and the Commonwealth Foundation; the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan; Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU); and the Commonwealth Countries League Education Fund.

## I. The importance of the education of girls and women

About 30 million Commonwealth children do not go to primary school and the majority of these are girls. Whereas progress has been made in closing the gender gap particularly in primary education, disparities still exist at secondary and higher education levels. Across the Commonwealth, barriers towards girl's access and retention in primary and secondary school are numerous and vary between countries and regions. There are also some commonalities across Commonwealth countries that face this problem. Combinations of cultural and socio-economic factors have been found to contribute to this disparity.

In the face of persistent discrimination, education equips girls and women with a basic confidence in their abilities and rights, an ability to acquire and process information, and increased earning power. Education is one of the key sectors for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. Its effects in improving the conditions of women's lives through enhancing their access to public participation and employment are well documented by the Commonwealth Secretariat (*New Gender Mainstreaming Series on Gender issues 2004*).

There is now empirical evidence that indicates that female education has a particularly important role to play in promoting economic development in a broad sense. It does so directly by allowing educated females to become part of the work force, to increase their productivity and contribute to economic growth. A number of studies have shown that countries with a large gender imbalance in their education have ended up growing more slowly than those that have better gender balance, basically because countries with a gender imbalance

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are not drawing on their best talents, but are neglecting one half of their population (Gender Achievements and Prospects in Education – UNICEF 2006).

It is important to note that education is not a silver bullet for eliminating gender disparity, however, and several studies suggest that the potential of education to transform can be overstated. Women, even those who do get an education, face embedded disadvantage in labour markets, property ownership and sexual and reproductive choices. Bolder action is needed on all of these fronts.

### 2. Commonwealth performance against the MDG on gender equality in schools

The Commonwealth Secretariat has contributed in developing a new instrument for measuring performance on gender equality through its 'Beyond Access' project undertaken by Unterhalter, Challender and Rajagopalan (2005). It should be noted that the complex processes that take place in education, especially with regard to gender dynamics, are not particularly amenable to analysis through 'simple' measures based on inputs and outputs to the system. Instead, various measuring instruments have been employed to construct the Gender Equality in Education Index (GEEI) which is a composite of:

- Girls' net attendance rate at primary school
- Girls' survival rate over five years in primary school
- Girls' secondary Net Enrolment Ratio.

These are the main areas of importance with regard to gender equity and girls' education. The table below shows the Gender Equality in Education Index (GEEI) for most Commonwealth countries in Africa in 2003.

**Table 6.1: Gender Equality in Education in Selected African Countries**

Country	GEEI %	Rank	GEEI %	Rank	% change GEEI
	1993	2003			
Mauritius	89	1	81	1	-9
Botswana	73	2	78	2	7
Swaziland	68	4	60	5	-11
South Africa	64	5	66	4	3
Namibia	62	6	72	3	16
Zambia	42	7	36	11	-14
Lesotho	37	8	42	7	14
Kenya	36	9	26	12	-28
Ghana	34	10	39	9	15
Tanzania	33	11=	39	9	18
Cameroon	33	11=	15	16	-55
Nigeria	26	13	20	14	-23
Uganda	24	14	54	6	125
Mozambique	20	15=	20	14	0
Malawi	20	15=	26	12	30

Note: Zimbabwe which is no longer a Commonwealth member appeared in the original table at 3rd rank in 1993 and 8th rank in 2003.

The changes in GEEI for African Commonwealth countries from the early 1990s to 2003 tell a devastating story. Of the top six countries in 1993, only Botswana, South Africa, and Namibia have made gains, relatively modest in many cases, and the highest-scoring countries in Africa rank well below countries like Sri Lanka in Asia. South Asian countries especially Pakistan have the lowest GPI. There have been similar large declines in countries lower down the ranking order. Cameroon's GEEI has declined by more than 50 per cent, Nigeria's by 23 per cent, and Kenya's by 28 per cent.

In no other region were there spectacular declines in GEEI like those observed in much of Africa. The combination of debt, decline in social-sector provision, war, and repressive governments has had devastating effects on gender equality in education. Only in Uganda was there huge government and civil-society

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mobilisation for gender equality in education, but a considerable task still remains for that country.

### 3. The Secretariat's work on Gender and Education

The Commonwealth Secretariat is currently working to implement the Commonwealth Plan for Gender Equality (2005-2015), endorsed by all Commonwealth Heads of Government at their biennial meeting in Kampala in 2007. In the area of education the Secretariat is focussing on impacting gender-related practices in classrooms and schools so that schools act as transformative institutions rather promoting the status quo.

#### Concerns about male under-performance in some education systems

The Secretariat is also becoming increasingly aware of the problem of boys' underachievement in some countries. This is focused primarily among the Commonwealth's high and middle-income countries.

The relative underachievement of boys in most middle- and high-income countries is limited largely to underperformance of boys in language and to under-participation attributable to economic reasons such as early labour-force participation in low-income countries. The trend, though not as sharp as still observed in disparities against girls, is becoming more evident and deserves greater attention and analysis. The Secretariat, in collaboration with the Commonwealth of Learning, has undertaken a cross-country study on boys' underachievement which is now available in published form.

#### Gender dimension of teacher recruitment and deployment

A comparative study of four Commonwealth countries – Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea and Tanzania revealed that quality

teacher deployment is a challenge for most countries particularly those undergoing expansion and re-structuring of the education systems. The study recommends a focussed approach to the education and recruitment of female teachers coupled with corresponding targeted teacher-education initiatives which encourage more young female teachers into the teaching profession. Teacher incentives must be articulated with an understanding of the desired effect they will have on female teachers. At the bureaucratic level, the recruitment of teachers also needs to be able to respond to gender needs at the district and school levels (Kelleher, Primary School Teacher Deployment 2008).

#### Gender and HIV/AIDS

Efforts to reach school-age children, especially girls, have been thwarted by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Education systems have been devastated by the loss of teachers and administrators to illness and death. Schools in rural areas are especially hard hit because teachers often relocate to urban areas where they or their family members can access medical care in hospitals and health clinics. Some schools have seen pupil-teacher ratios ballooning to 96 to 1 as a result of HIV-related illness. High absenteeism among teachers and students brought on by HIV/AIDS has contributed to the decimation of national education systems. The epidemic's direct toll on Africa's children is immeasurable. Because of HIV/AIDS, they may have never seen the inside of a classroom. Orphans and other children affected by HIV/AIDS are kept from school to care for sick relatives, or they join the labour market to bring extra income into the household. Girls are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS and represent the fastest growing segment of new infections.

HIV and AIDS affect women and girls in various ways. A woman is seven times more likely to

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catch the disease from a man than vice versa and 61% of all adults infected are women. In school, there are many impediments that girls face in accessing education. These range from insufficiency of school places and low levels of educational quality, to the costs that prevent girls from attending school. Education can reduce girls' vulnerability to HIV in a variety of ways principally by helping them to build their self-esteem and capacity to act on HIV-prevention messages, influencing the level of power within sexual relations and leading to better economic prospects (Gender, HIV/AIDS and the Status of Teachers – the Third Commonwealth Teachers' Research Symposium 2008).

### 4. Commonwealth of Learning and Gender in Education

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is committed to removing barriers to women's access to education through the delivery of gender-balanced projects and initiatives that are specifically targeted to benefit women and girls. COL is also committed to participating in the implementation of the 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development.

Open and distance education, because of its flexibility and accessibility, has the potential to reach the previously 'unreached' such as the disabled, rural poor and girls and women. Distance education overcomes many of the barriers faced by girls and women trying to access conventional education systems.

In its award of fellowships, COL has also paid special attention to achieve an equitable gender balance. The overall percentage awarded to females was 37.5%.

COL has also enabled the Women's International Network (WIN) to publish a book on how women can use technologies for open and

distance learning. COL carried out an environmental scan on the literature and barriers encountered by women in accessing the new information and communications technologies. In addition, COL designed and implemented an electronic database on gender-related training materials available within the UN system and Commonwealth Secretariat.

### 5. The Commonwealth Foundation

The Foundation supports the strengthening of civil society capacities, in particular, towards lobbying for policy change, and ensuring sustainable inclusive strategies to accelerate progress towards making the Millennium Development Goal of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2015 an achievable prospect.

The Foundation's civil society review of the MDGs in the publication *Breaking with Business as Usual* (2005) highlighted the fact that many countries will not meet the education MDG by 2015 if past trends continue. A conference report on *Islam and the Education of Women and Girls in the Commonwealth* (2007) illustrates the complexity and diversity of the role of Islam in women's education; the relationship of this issue to poverty and a variety of other causal factors such as men's education, dominance of particular ethnic groups, the language of instruction in secondary schools and government policy implementation.

There has been some headway with the enrolment and retention of girls in countries such as Bangladesh and Uganda, bringing improvement with regard to gender parity. The Foundation proposes to identify such successes in the Commonwealth and make them more widely known. It proposes further to analyse the factors behind the implementation of such

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sustainable initiatives, and those that have inhibited progress elsewhere.

Based on this work, the Foundation will support civil society in its efforts to become advocates, shapers of policy, and partners with governments in the work on the ground.

### 6. Gender balance in Commonwealth Scholarships

The Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP) was instituted in 1959 following recommendations of the first Commonwealth Education Conference and is the flagship scheme of Commonwealth higher education co-operation. The awards are for 'men and women of high intellectual promise who may be expected to make a significant contribution to life in their own countries on their return from study overseas'.

The United Kingdom has regularly accounted for a high proportion of the awards made under the Plan and it been UK policy to offer awards to all other Commonwealth states.

While not practising positive discrimination in selection, the UK Commission does seek to encourage the participation of women and has in recent years increasingly highlighted to nominating agencies the need to ensure a fair gender balance in their selections. In 2005 women made up 40% of those nominated for awards, and 41% of those were selected by the Commission. Female candidates in the Split-site and Professional Fellowships schemes did particularly well at the UK selection stage. The need for continuing action on gender, however, is also demonstrated by the figures, particularly from the Academic Staff Scholarships and Academic Fellowships schemes.

Nominations of women in both categories remain low, reflecting their under-representation

in academic life in developing-country universities. Unusually, in 2005-2006 the percentage of selections in the UK for the Academic Staff Scholarships was slightly lower than that of women nominated. As a result, the total number of awards given to women across all schemes remained stable at 41%.

### 7. The ACU programmes for staff development of women academics

The Association for Commonwealth Universities (ACU) began in 1985 to address the problem of enhancing the participation of women in higher education management. It works with many international partners, such as the Commonwealth Secretariat, UNESCO and the International Federation of Women. The ACU and the Commonwealth Secretariat have worked closely in developing the remit of the Women's Programme; and since 1991, have planned, and given financial support to a wide variety of projects.

This makes interventions on two fronts: changing the management structures of universities and enhancing the capacity of women in universities to break through 'the glass ceiling' into top management positions. They have also developed training modules in management, leadership, research, and mentoring skills.

The ACU has supported women from less developed countries on a one-year Women and Management in Higher Education MA degree course at the University of London. Several women from South Africa, Sri Lanka, Trinidad, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana and Namibia have completed it and returned home to be promoted to take up new policy-making roles.

The Policy Research Unit, one of the core services of the ACU, conducted a survey on

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international trends in the recruitment and retention of academic staff in 2005. The report indicates an increase in the number of female academics as a desirable demographic trend. The trend is much more prevalent in economically advantaged countries such as Australia, Canada and USA.

Future activities of the ACU are to move towards: mainstreaming gender concerns throughout higher education; extensive advocacy work with those in a position to effect change; instituting gender sensitisation training programmes for both men and women in higher education; extending the network of senior women managers; and developing more link and exchange programmes between women's study centres.

### **8. Work of Commonwealth Countries League's Education Fund**

Since 1925 the Commonwealth Countries League has promoted the development, education and empowerment of women. The challenge of providing free and universal education at secondary level in countries struggling with development, health and economic issues cannot always be met. Even when basic tuition is provided free, families may not be able to afford the associated costs - travel, uniform, books, and examination fees. Girls can be especially vulnerable if they are expected to remain at home to help care for the family or work in the fields or markets. Sadly in some cases education for girls is still viewed as a waste of time.

The CCL Education Fund, a charity formed in the 1960s, sponsors girls of high potential enabling them to complete their secondary school education in cases where, without such help, they would be unable to do so. Funds raised provide sponsorship to assist disadvantaged

girls of high academic ability to complete their secondary education in their own countries. Over 2,500 girls around the Commonwealth have benefited from the Education Fund, which is currently sponsoring nearly 400 girls in various Commonwealth countries.

A major CCL initiative is its Alumnae Association, launched in 2003 in Abuja, Nigeria. It is hoped that contact can be strengthened and maintained with girls previously sponsored by the Education Fund and that they, in turn, will be active in communicating with each other across the Commonwealth and in supporting the education of girls and women especially through secondary school.

## Chapter 7: COMMONWEALTH CO-OPERATION ON LITERACY

### Introduction

Achieving a 50 percent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults is the fourth goal of “Education for All” that Heads of Government have laid down as a Commonwealth priority. This briefing paper first surveys the state of adult – and especially female - literacy in the Commonwealth and then goes on to look at the status of Commonwealth co-operation in the area. Box 1 gives the statistics on literacy, as they appear in the 2009 Global Monitoring Report (GMR 2009) on progress towards Education for All<sup>20</sup>.

### Literacy and Illiteracy in the Commonwealth

According to the GMR 2009, pp.93-96, there are just under 776 million non-literate adults in the world, of whom nearly 500 million [64 per cent] are women. A full third of these men and women live in India, while a further fifth live elsewhere in the Commonwealth. That is to say, the Commonwealth accounts for about half the number of the world’s non-literate adults, although it accounts for only a third of the world’s total population: it is currently over-represented in the statistics of illiteracy.

Table 7.1 sets out the statistics for the rates of adult literacy in 33 of the 53 Commonwealth countries in 2006. No figures are available for the other 20 countries; however, as column 5 shows, most of these have high rates of female net primary enrolment and can therefore be expected to have relatively high rates of adult literacy – indeed, in eight of them the net enrolment ratio (NER), is close to or exceeds 90 per cent.

For males in the 33 countries, the range of rates lies between a low of 49 per cent and a high

of 99 per cent, while for females the range is between a low of 26 per cent and a high of 99 per cent. While this confirms the persistence of gender inequity in the Commonwealth, as in the rest of the world, it is worth noting not only that six members have already achieved parity between females and males, but also that in four countries rates for females are actually higher, ranging between 1 and 16 per cent more than males. This phenomenon has given rise to concerns about male perceptions of the importance of literacy and education.

The target and projected rates of literacy for 2015 shown in Table 2 suggest that all members will have made strong progress towards their targets, with several exceeding them and only three falling slightly short. Just six members are likely to remain below 75 per cent and only two, both emerging from severe civil conflict, are expected to have overall literacy rates below 50 per cent.

The GMR 2009 used statistics that were either self-reported –and not tested for accuracy- or based on a simple definition of the ability to read and write, with understanding, a short, simple statement relating to daily life. In contrast, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) undertook an ‘Adult Life Skills and Literacy Survey’ (IALS<sup>21</sup>) in the 1990s and followed it up with an ‘Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey’ (ALL<sup>22</sup>,) in 2003. Four Commonwealth members participated: Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the UK, while a fifth, Malaysia, used the approach to run its own feasibility study. Two points will illustrate the difference between the GMR statistics and those of IALS and ALL.

First, the IALS did not define literacy in terms of an arbitrary standard of reading performance, distinguishing those who completely fail the

20 UNESCO, 2008, *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009: Overcoming inequality: why governance matters*, Paris, UNESCO, Table 2, pp. 268-275 and Table 5, pp. 300-307

21 OECD, 2000, *Literacy in the Information Age: Final Report of the International Adult Literacy Survey*, Paris

22 ALL, 2005, *Learning a Living: First results of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey*, Paris, OECD

MEMBER STATE [1]	MALE LITERACY % [2]	FEMALE LITERACY % [3]	MALE ADVANTAGE % [4]	FEMALE PRIMARY NET ENROLMENT RATE % [5]
Antigua/ Barbuda	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Australia	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	97
Bahamas	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	89
Bangladesh	58	47	11	90
Barbados	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	96
Belize	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	97
Botswana	82	82	0	85
Brunei	92	82	10	94
Darussalam				
Cameroon	77	60	17	n.a.
Canada	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	99
Cyprus	99	96	3	99
Dominica	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	79
Fiji	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	75
Gambia	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	64
Ghana	71	57	14	71
Grenada	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	83
Guyana	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
India	76	53	23	87
Jamaica	80	91	- 11	90
Kenya	78	70	8	76
Kiribati	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	98
Lesotho	74	90	- 16	74
Malawi	79	63	16	94
Maldives	97	97	0	97
Malaysia	89	77	12	100
Malta	90	93	- 3	91
Mauritius	90	84	6	96
Mozambique	57	32	25	73
Namibia	88	87	1	79
Nauru	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
New Zealand	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	99
Nigeria	79	63	16	59
Pakistan	68	40	28	57
Papua New Guinea	62	53	9	n.a.
St. Kitts & Nevis	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	78
St. Lucia	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	97
St. Vincent	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	88
Samoa	98	97	1	91
Seychelles	91	92	-1	100
Sierra Leone	49	26	23	n.a.
Singapore	95	83	12	n.a.
Solomon Islands	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	61
South Africa	88	87	1	88
Sri Lanka	93	89	4	n.a.
Swaziland	81	78	3	79
Tanzania	79	65	14	97
Tonga	99	99	0	94
Trinidad & Tobago	99	98	1	85
Tuvalu	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Uganda	81	64	17	n.a.
United Kingdom	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	99
Vanuatu	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	86
Zambia	76	60	16	94

Note: The GMR was unable to show literacy statistics for 21 of 53 Commonwealth member countries. However, most of the countries concerned have high rates of female primary net enrolment and may be inferred to have or to be moving towards relatively high rates of adult literacy.

MEMBER STATE [1]	TARGET MALE LITERACY % 2015 [2]	PROJECTED MALE LITERACY % 2015 [3]	TARGET FEMALE LITERACY % 2015 [4]	PROJECTED FEMALE LITERACY % 2015 [5]
Antigua/ Barbuda	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Australia	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Bahamas	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Bangladesh	72	64	63	58
Barbados	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Belize	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Botswana	83	87	85	88
Brunei	96	98	91	93
Darussalam				
Cameroon	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Canada	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Cyprus	99	99	95	98
Dominica	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Fiji	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Gambia	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Ghana	n.a.	76	n.a.	66
Grenada	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Guyana	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
India	81	81	67	62
Jamaica	n.a.	85	n.a.	94
Kenya	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Kiribati	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Lesotho	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Malawi	82	83	67	74
Maldives	98	97	98	97
Malaysia	95	96	89	93
Malta	94	92	94	95
Mauritius	92	92	87	89
Mozambique	n.a.	58	n.a.	41
Namibia	89	90	87	91
Nauru	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
New Zealand	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Nigeria	84	85	72	74
Pakistan	n.a.	73	n.a.	49
Papua New Guinea	n.a.	63	n.a.	60
St. Kitts & Nevis	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
St. Lucia	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
St. Vincent	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Samoa	99	99	99	99
Seychelles	96	n.a.	94	n.a.
Sierra Leone	n.a.	58	n.a.	37
Singapore	98	98	92	94
Solomon Islands	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
South Africa	n.a.	92	n.a.	91
Sri Lanka	n.a.	94	n.a.	92
Swaziland	85	n.a.	80	n.a.
Tanzania	85	79	85	70
Tonga	99	99	99	99
Trinidad & Tobago	99	99	98	98
Tuvalu	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Uganda	84	86	73	75
United Kingdom	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Vanuatu	n.a.	85	n.a.	82
Zambia	86	n.a.	78	n.a.

Note: The GMR was unable to show target rates of adult literacy for 32 Commonwealth countries and projected rates for 26 Commonwealth countries.

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**Figure 7.3: Projected Youth (ages 15-24 years) Literacy Rates for 2015**

MEMBER STATE [1]	MALE YOUTH LITERACY % 2015 [2]	FEMALE YOUTH LITERACY % 2015 [3]	MALE ADVANTAGE % 2015 [4]
Antigua/Barbuda	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Australia	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Bahamas	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Bangladesh	72	64	63
Barbados	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Belize	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Botswana	83	87	85
Brunei	96	98	91
Darussalam			
Cameroon	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Canada	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Cyprus	99	99	95
Dominica	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Fiji	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Gambia	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Ghana	n.a.	76	n.a.
Grenada	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Guyana	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
India	81	81	67
Jamaica	n.a.	85	n.a.
Kenya	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Kiribati	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Lesotho	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Malawi	82	83	67
Maldives	98	97	98
Malaysia	95	96	89
Malta	94	92	94
Mauritius	92	92	87
Mozambique	n.a.	58	n.a.
Namibia	89	90	87
Nauru	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
New Zealand	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Nigeria	84	85	72
Pakistan	n.a.	73	n.a.
Papua New Guinea	n.a.	63	n.a.
St. Kitts & Nevis	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
St. Lucia	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
St. Vincent	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Samoa	99	99	99
Seychelles	96	n.a.	94
Sierra Leone	n.a.	58	n.a.
Singapore	98	98	92
Solomon Islands	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
South Africa	n.a.	92	n.a.
Sri Lanka	n.a.	94	n.a.
Swaziland	85	n.a.	80
Tanzania	85	79	85
Tonga	99	99	99
Trinidad & Tobago	99	99	98
Tuvalu	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Uganda	84	86	73
United Kingdom	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Vanuatu	n.a.	85	n.a.
Zambia	86	n.a.	78

Note: The GMR is unable to give projected rates of youth literacy for 26 Commonwealth countries. In 13 countries, females are expected to have higher rates of literacy than males.

test (the “illiterates”) from those who reach a minimum threshold (those who are “literate”). Rather, it took literacy and numeracy as continuums of proficiency levels at which adults use information to function in society and the economy. Second, within the continuum the OECD measured five levels of difficulty for prose literacy, document literacy and numeracy. It found that the two lower levels, 1 and 2, which signified basic abilities to read and write, were inadequate for everyday life in those societies: only achieving level 3 ensured a suitable minimum for the demands of everyday life and work, and that level was “roughly equal to successful secondary school completion and college entry.”(p.xi)

The study revealed that in all four participating Commonwealth countries more than 40 per cent of their peoples had attained only the first two levels of each type of literacy assessed. In terms of the study then, more than 40 per cent of their peoples were unable adequately to meet the demands of everyday life and work. Two conclusions relevant to the theme of 17 CCEM, ‘Towards and beyond global goals and targets’, suggest themselves.

One is the real importance of the second component of the literacy goal, “equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults”. Without continuing education, few adults who currently operate at Levels 1 and 2 will be able to raise their skills to a fully operational level. In other words, they – and most likely their families - will remain marginalised and at risk of falling into a disadvantaged underclass.

Second, any country that aspires to be successful participant in the globalised information age - not only the nine Commonwealth countries with annual per capita incomes above \$20,000<sup>23</sup> - will need to move well beyond universal literacy and universal primary completion. Universal

23 Per capita incomes measured as ‘purchasing power parity’ – GMR 2009, pp.261-267.

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secondary education needs to be a goal, too, along with post-secondary and lifelong education and training.

### Commonwealth Cooperation on Literacy

The facts shown in the boxes and by the OECD studies suggest that there should indeed be much co-operation between Commonwealth members, particularly as the majority in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia do have numbers of literacy programmes run both by the state, often as national programmes, and by non-governmental organisations on more localised bases.

#### Bilateral Cooperation

However, on the bilateral level, the Global Monitoring Report for 2006, "Literacy for Life", suggests that only three of the Commonwealth's nine higher-income members include literacy in their bilateral co-operation programmes<sup>24</sup>. This appears to be in line with the GMR observation, "From these limited data sets it is clear that literacy in the broad policy sense of literate societies is not widely embraced by donor agencies... Whatever the reason, the fact that no agency surveyed could quote with confidence a single figure to illustrate its level of funding indicates the low priority assigned to literacy in aid budgets." (p. 244). Somewhat offsetting that remark, the report does note that one reason for the difficulty in identifying specific work in adult literacy is that it is often just one component in programmes aiming to improve, for example, livelihood skills or health and hygiene practices.

As far as can be ascertained, at least Canada and the UK continue to include adult literacy as part of their bilateral co-operation. Canada has in the past financed several literacy projects in other Commonwealth countries, although it appears to have focused recently on the non-

Commonwealth countries of Egypt and Senegal, with only a small capacity building project in the Inhambane province of Mozambique that enrolled 501 adults, 430 of them women, in adult literacy classes. The U.K. also continues its long standing support for adult literacy in several countries, India, Kenya, Pakistan, South Africa, and Uganda among them.

A feature of bilateral co-operation in adult literacy is the widespread use by donors and their partner governments of non-governmental organisations, both local and international, to organise and deliver literacy instruction in particular localities. A notable example is ActionAid, which pioneered the pedagogical strategy known as REFLECT, in Bangladesh and Uganda among other countries, and now partners local organisations in several more.

#### Multilateral co-operation

On the multilateral level, the very restricted resources of the Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation have constrained them to focus on helping to achieve only the targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This necessitates a lower priority for those of the Dakar Declaration on Education for All (EFA). Targets 3 and 4 of the MDG envisage Universal Primary Completion and the elimination of gender disparity at all levels of education by 2015. They reflect only the second and fifth EFA goals and do not include the fourth EFA goal of achieving a 50 percent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015. (The further importance of the fourth goal is that it goes on to emphasise literacy for women and to include "equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults".)

<sup>24</sup> UNESCO, 2005, *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2006: Literacy for Life*, Paris, p.243

## Chapter 7: COMMONWEALTH CO-OPERATION ON LITERACY

### **South-South co-operation**

Co-operation between Commonwealth countries on what is commonly called a 'south-south' basis is frequent, for most countries, e.g. Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Jamaica, Kenya or Nigeria, have had decades of experience in organising adult literacy programmes and can certainly be of use to each other. However, such co-operation tends to be arranged through channels like the Asia South Pacific Bureau for Adult Education (ASPBAE), the German Adult Education Association through its Institute for International Co-operation or UNESCO, which is of course the lead institution for working towards the EFA goals.

## Chapter 8: SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND MATHEMATICS EDUCATION IN THE COMMONWEALTH

### Introduction

This note addresses the importance of science, technology and mathematics education (STME) and briefly examines the Commonwealth's role in promoting it.

Science and technology are universally important factors for sustainable development and economic growth. Mathematics, as well as being an important facet of human learning in itself, provides essential underpinning for science, technology and engineering at higher levels. Science technology and maths education is also universal - the underlying principles of science, technology and mathematics are the same throughout the world, even though the social context and local relevance may vary.

The serious challenges which we currently face require concerted efforts locally and globally for their solution. The tension between increasing energy needs and demands, and the continued use of finite resources and polluting technologies, contributing to accelerating climate change, are well recognised problems. They can only be addressed through scientific understanding on the part of populations who are thus impelled to act. Other problems include those of increasing food supply for increasing populations, and addressing health care and pandemics such as HIV-AIDS which affect low-income nations more severely than high-income nations.

Learning about the relevance of STM for sustainable human activity is important for all children, and should be considered basic to their education from the earliest stages of schooling. The local environment provides a starting point and a stimulus for such teaching. Sophisticated equipment and apparatus is not required, but teachers need adequate initial training, and access to in-service training throughout their working lives.

### History

The Commonwealth Secretariat has initiated many programmes over the years to assist the development of STME, mainly in the field of training and supply of science teachers. It also organised significant conferences on science and mathematics education, starting in the 1960s. Curriculum development projects, including integrated science for junior secondary schools, and establishment of indigenous science and mathematics teachers' associations were part of the Secretariat's activities in the last decades of the 20th century, often in collaboration with other international agencies or organisations, including UNESCO.

As a result of these initiatives, several Commonwealth countries have introduced new approaches to STME, but many still require help. Students all over the world respond well to the teaching of socially-relevant STM, but teachers need assistance with specifically-focused and culturally relevant courses. Ministries of Education throughout the Commonwealth can provide support through a network for sharing of best practices in curricula and assessment.

2010 will be the Commonwealth Year of Science and Technology, and will involve many Commonwealth organisations in thinking about how best to promote STM and STM education throughout the Commonwealth.

### Success stories

In order to gain the maximum benefits for development that science and technology can offer, a key principle is that all children should have access to schooling and to the STME curriculum. Being a low-income country is not in itself a barrier to educational development. Botswana was one of the first non-industrialised countries to adopt a problem-based technology education curriculum, tailored

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to indigenous technologies. Bangladesh has adopted imaginative and successful strategies for encouraging participation and attendance in primary education (for example the Food for Education programme). Expanded options for schooling, such as the institution of community schools, pioneered in India over 20 years ago and adopted in other countries including Ghana, and distance learning developments that support students in remote locations, have been helpful in extending school inclusion. The institution of educational scholarships for girls in Kenya and India, among other countries, increases the likelihood that young women will continue to attend school, and thus have access to the science technology and mathematics curricula. Developments in computer technology and the Internet increase the opportunities for computer assisted learning and for educational communication across the world.

Locally, too, there can be considerable success. CASTME (see below) annually makes awards to individual teachers who develop local projects that demonstrate engagement with locally relevant Science Technology and Mathematics programmes, and publicises their achievements through the CASTME Journal and the CASTME web site. Recent awardees have included a team from Malaysia producing primary education textbooks dealing with sustainability issues, and printed in a range of local languages; an innovative project in the Caribbean, in which young women themselves researched and reported to each other about the risks of HIV-AIDS; a fish-farming project for students with special educational needs in Kenya; and a project to introduce junior secondary students to the science of agriculture through the development of a school farm, in Ghana. Celebrating the creativity and skill of these teachers underpins the importance of developing the teaching workforce as a whole, and inspires other teachers to emulate their achievements.

### Continuing challenges

Although the majority of low-income countries recognise the need for science education, the challenge of achieving universal basic education for their populations may outweigh consideration of the wider curriculum at primary level. UNESCO emphasises the importance of developing broadly-based, activity-centred curricula which foster the key dispositions for learning science – curiosity, willingness to experiment and to take risks with thinking. Dispositions for learning are developed in the early years of schooling, and the scientific imagination needs to be fostered in primary as well as in secondary school programmes.

Science education is well understood, but science in itself does not solve problems. A problem-solving approach to technology education, which is focused on working out ways in which to address human needs through the development of products and systems fosters dispositions of inventiveness and ingenuity, and often leads to scientific breakthroughs in ways that science alone cannot.

The income gap between rich and poorer nations contributes to a 'brain drain' with many countries losing their trained and skilled professionals to developed nations. This is most noticeable in health care, but it also has serious implications for countries' capacity to recruit science and mathematics teachers.

The declining quality of STME at the basic education level is a cause for concern in several regions of the Commonwealth. In many countries, STM teachers have received little or no training. An estimated 80% of science teachers in some countries are either unqualified or under-qualified. This requires intervention that acknowledges the developmental needs of existing teacher education programmes. It must

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be recognised that many STM teachers at this level find it very difficult to translate the STM content into suitable learning experiences for the students. Moreover, given a fixed curriculum in many countries, teachers find it difficult to make STM teaching relevant and interesting, especially to girls, since little is drawn in terms of learning experiences from the everyday lives of the students. So, poor quality of STM teaching at the basic level is a major barrier to the popularisation of STM and to the recognition of STM as part of local culture and indigenous technologies.

### Gender and Science Technology and Mathematics Education

Various studies have indicated poor enrolment and achievement of girls in STM courses in many Commonwealth countries. (Table 8.1 gives some general figures for girls' enrolment in Africa: the proportion taking STM courses is much lower).

*While educational progress has been enjoyed by both sexes, these advances have failed to eradicate the gender gap. [...] The social benefits from women's education range from fostering economic growth to extending the average life expectancy in the population, to improving the functioning of political processes (Hill & King: 1995:21).*

This issue was raised at the 13th Conference of Commonwealth Ministers of Education Conference in 1997 in Botswana and recommendations were made. Since then, many countries have integrated gender issues into their STM curricula.

More effort is still needed to draw content from the lives of girls or relate it to their lives. Women in developing countries are a repository of indigenous technologies because of the nature of the activities in which they are

traditionally involved. This knowledge possessed by women should be used to relate local learning experiences to science and technology in the school curricula.

There are, however, some encouraging signs. In Ghana, for example, the Government has adopted the Science and Technology Clinic for Girls programme aimed at giving girls more access to science and technology education and targeted at girls in secondary schools. In Botswana, there is a Science and Technology Roadshow for Girls.

**Table 8.1: Females as percentage of males in primary and secondary schools in selected African countries 2004**

Country	Primary	Secondary
Cameroon	85	70
Kenya	94	93
Lesotho	100	127
Malawi	102	81
Mozambique	83	70
Nigeria	85	81
Tanzania	96	n/a
Uganda	100	79
Zambia	96	79

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics. *Global Education Digest 2006*, Tables 3 and 5.

Both these initiatives were launched in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat and non-government organisations such as GASAT (Gender and Science and Technology).

### STM education and global awareness

Globalisation impacts upon people of all ages and backgrounds but it can be interpreted in many different ways. It may just refer to the economics of the market place and to international communications. But it may be about something more fundamental linked to social and political changes in the world. If STM education is to be relevant to all, then global perspectives

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need to be at the heart of STM teaching. This is increasingly being recognised by governments and a range of initiatives and projects have been developed by non-government organisations (NGOs) and professional bodies demonstrating how to integrate the global dimension into STM lesson plans.

Technology education has particular scope for extending young people's understanding of development, as they plan and implement changes in the made world. Learning to develop products and systems should be associated with consideration of the use of renewable rather than finite materials, and of a product's whole life cycle, from extraction or harvesting of materials to disposal at the end of the product's useful life. Once again, this is an aspect of thinking that can beneficially be introduced in the primary curriculum, and continue and extend in the secondary school. Inspiration can be drawn from the ingenuity and entrepreneurship of individuals and communities in the developing world, who readily find opportunities to recycle discarded products and turn them to new uses.

STM education without a global perspective will prevent young people from seeing the full social relevance of STM and give a very narrow and parochial view of the subjects.

### Partnerships and links across the Commonwealth

Because science, technology and mathematics are universal subjects with curriculum content that is similar in many countries, one potentially valuable way of using STME for development and for meeting the Millennium Development Goals is to establish links and partnerships among individual schools throughout the Commonwealth. Several such links have been established on a north-south, as well as south-south and north-north, basis.

One such project is *Science across the World*, an international education programme which aims to link individual schools worldwide with each other directly. Students work in small groups on one of a range of topics such as drinking water, climate change, migration, domestic waste. Topics involve enquiry and analysis – but with a minimum of specialist equipment. There is always discussion and debate after the activities have been completed. The website and topics are in various languages, and this aspect has been shown to be of considerable value in language teaching especially in those schools working in a bilingual context. Foreign language teachers are working with colleagues teaching science: [www.scienceacross.org](http://www.scienceacross.org)

Education at tertiary and university levels is expanding rapidly in the developing world. At the same time, many scholars and students from developing countries choose to study at universities abroad, where they have access to the latest technologies for investigation, and can work in teams involved in cutting-edge research (see Chapter 10 on Commonwealth student mobility).

### Commonwealth Association of Science, Technology and Mathematics Educators

The Commonwealth Association of Science, Technology and Mathematics Educators (CASTME) was established in 1974 as an NGO recognised by the Commonwealth Secretariat. It now has members throughout the Commonwealth and has regional branches in Africa, Asia and Europe.

Its aims are to share best practices in STME and to demonstrate the relevance of STM to local environments and to promote the relationship between science, technology and mathematics especially at school level.

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CASTME's mission in the Commonwealth is to promote the teaching of STM in a social and locally relevant context and to ensure that access to such teaching is universally available.

CASTME offers annual awards for STM teachers who submit an account of a project or activity carried out in their own local environment related to local social or environmental issues. These awards are now well established and prestigious. The awards are supported by grants from the Commonwealth Foundation, as indeed is most of CASTME's work.

Papers which address the key aspects of CASTME's aims, and the winning CASTME Awards entries, are published in the CASTME Journal, which is sent three times a year to all individual members of CASTME and to libraries in many parts of the Commonwealth. Information about CASTME, including its current activities and projects, some of which are described above, may be found at the CASTME website: [www.castme.org](http://www.castme.org).

### Conclusion

Although there are major problems facing STME in the Commonwealth, there are many signs of optimism especially in developing a Commonwealth perspective in STME. Challenges faced by the STME community can be addressed with support from the Secretariat, the Foundation and the Commonwealth of Learning.

## Chapter 9: TEACHER DEVELOPMENT AND MOBILITY IN THE COMMONWEALTH

### Introduction

The teacher's role in education is central. After the learners, teachers are the most important actors in the education process. Excellent teachers do more than teach curriculum content: they inspire and enthuse their pupils and serve as role models in terms of attitudes and social relationships. If schools, colleges and universities - and non-formal learning programmes - are to achieve their educational aims, there must be effective systems to select, prepare, deploy, manage and support teachers, and to help them develop their professional skills over a working lifetime.

The Education for All targets adopted at Dakar in 2000 recognise that enrolment in school does not itself ensure good education. There must be adequate quality of provision, for effective learning to occur. This requires measures to increase teacher supply and improve the quality and status of the teaching force. The Commonwealth Secretariat, with the endorsement of Ministers at I6CCEM, has made the teaching profession a central focus of its work on the Millennium Development Goals in education.

Teachers have a high profile in Commonwealth activity. Recent highlights are the adoption of the *Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol* in 2004, the inclusion of a Teachers' Forum at I6CCEM and again at I7CCEM, and the formal launch of the *Commonwealth Teachers' Group* in Cape Town in 2006.

The Commonwealth's focus on teachers reflects a conscious decision to make teacher development and the mobility of teachers the centrepiece of its work on improving education quality. There are two main thrusts:

- support for strengthening the teacher profession at national level, addressed in the

next three sections of this chapter. Here the Commonwealth Secretariat, especially as convenor of the ADEA Working Group on the Teaching Profession in Africa, and the Commonwealth of Learning have focused on measures for development and support of teachers. At tertiary level the Association of Commonwealth Universities is particularly active.

- international mobility of teachers and the opportunities and challenges that this presents, the subject matter of later sections of the chapter. The Secretariat's work on the Teacher Recruitment Protocol and international recognition of teacher qualifications, and the activities of civil society bodies, have been prominent in this regard.

The Commonwealth has a long record of activity in this area. Teacher exchanges among Commonwealth countries through the League for Exchange of Commonwealth Teachers have been taking place for a century. Staff development for universities was one of the main components of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP), launched in 1959. For twenty years after the first Commonwealth Education Conference in Oxford in 1959, there was a Commonwealth Bursary Scheme, funded by Britain, for education of teachers: and the number of awards under this peaked at 500 annually. One of the first of the Commonwealth specialist education conferences held in the 1960s and 1970s was on the theme of Teacher Education in a Changing Society (Nairobi, 1968).

The Commonwealth has certain natural advantages in serving as a forum to address international issues affecting teachers, to facilitate productive exchanges of experience, and to launch co-operative activity. The shared use of English and the many commonalities in member countries' education systems make dialogue

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especially easy, and provide a strong basis for fruitful exchange of experience and sharing of good practice. Common features include, for example, similarities in school organisation and curriculum, structures of teacher employment, qualifications and examination systems, boards of governors and school committees, and the role of inspectorates.

### Teacher development, support and management

The last half-century has seen impressive growth in education enrolment in Commonwealth countries and the teacher force has had to expand to keep pace. In some member states class sizes have fallen, made possible by prospering economies. Elsewhere, however, the teacher-pupil ratio has worsened considerably: output from the training colleges has lagged behind growing requirements and there has been heavy wastage of serving teachers, reflecting a response to poor working conditions and the incidence of life-threatening diseases like HIV/AIDS.

The educational qualifications of teachers have markedly improved in this 50-year period, reflecting the expanded provision of secondary and tertiary education. Yet the average quality of teachers has not always risen commensurately. The prescribed length of professional preparation has been reduced in some countries in response to budget cuts. It has become more difficult to recruit 'the brightest and best' to teaching careers, reflecting a fall in the status and remuneration of teachers relative to that of other professionals. Another factor is that the teacher's job has become more complex and stressful in the face of new expectations of schools and of social change.

The Secretariat responded to these critical circumstances by embarking nearly 25 years ago, in partnership with Southern African countries,

on a pioneering programme to address issues of teacher management and support, starting with the reform of teacher record systems operated by ministries of education and their staffing sections, their regional and district offices, teaching service commissions, and the payroll authorities. A series of country-led workshops, study visits and collaborative activity to produce training materials took place and the range of countries participating gradually expanded.

In the light of this it was natural that when the Association for the Development of Education in Africa was formed, it should fall to the Secretariat to take on in 1993 the role of convenor of the ADEA Working Group on the Teaching Profession, a responsibility it has continued to perform for the past 16 years. The range of issues tackled by the Working Group has grown to include for example questions of gender, coping with HIV/AIDS, and questions of teacher supply and training. The geographical coverage has also broadened out to include many more Sub-Saharan African countries, in the East and West as well as the South; and the Secretariat has on its own initiative been able to share the fruits of this work with ministries in Commonwealth regions such as Asia and the Caribbean.

The essence of the ADEA Working Group activities is that they are country-led and highly participatory. This involves convening working groups, normally at sub-regional level, for the exchange of experience about the policies and procedures of member countries in key areas affecting teachers, and for consideration of practical measures of improvement and reform. Topics addressed include management of the teaching profession, staffing of schools and teacher deployment, teachers working conditions, teacher training and opportunities for continuing professional development, support services for teachers. In addition to seminars, training workshops and observation visits,

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there have been writing workshops to produce practically-oriented resource materials.

Outcomes of this ADEA work have been a heightened awareness of the central role of teachers in education development and of the need to nurture and support teachers, and an increase in the capacity and confidence of ministry professionals dealing with them. Specific outputs have included a series of well-regarded published resource books and manuals on training of head teachers, inspection and, more recently, training for multi-grade teaching.

Separately from its ADEA work, the Commonwealth Secretariat commissioned, in time for I6CCEM, a study of teacher deployment practices and policies in Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea and Tanzania.

### New approaches in teacher training and CPD

Meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) targets in education will require a massive expansion of enrolments, both to keep up with population growth and to raise enrolment rates to 100% of the primary school-age population. It has been calculated that Africa alone will require 1.6 million more teachers by 2015. The prospects of conventional training colleges being able to meet this requirement for newly trained teachers, as well as the continuing professional development (CPD) needs of those in service, seem remote.

One approach to solving this crisis is to increase the use of distance learning in training teachers. If programmes operated wholly or partially through the learning-at-a-distance mode, this could contribute to alleviating shortages in two ways: first by eliminating or reducing the time and expense invested in attendance on conventional college-based courses, and second by making

trainee teachers available earlier for service in school classrooms. Where distance learning uses high-quality self-instructional materials and incorporates well-designed systems of learner support it can potentially make an important contribution to reducing the deficit. Its learner-friendliness is one of its most attractive features. Trainees can complete most of the programme at a time, place and pace chosen by themselves to suit their personal circumstances and to fit in with their particular responsibilities, characteristics that are especially helpful to female aspirants to the teaching profession. The systematic approach to teacher and learning so necessary in distance education, provides teachers with an example of good practice.

#### Box 9.1

Teacher education is now a vibrant activity. The numbers being trained are impressive: hundreds of thousands in Africa and over 1 million in India. COL has contributed substantially to this trend.

Learning for Development  
COL Three-year Plan 2006-2009, page 13

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL), the Commonwealth agency for distance education co-operation, has been active in assisting development of such approaches. Capacity-building in distance learning has been undertaken in The Gambia, Ghana, Sierra Leone, India, Lesotho, Nigeria and Sri Lanka. Working with experts and practitioners from Commonwealth countries in Africa and Asia, COL has produced a package of Commonwealth quality indicators and quality-assurance materials for teacher education. It also engages with Commonwealth member states in devising strategies and policies for using distance education in teacher training systems, and helping them to incorporate the use of ICTs in their programmes. Each year it sponsors a workshop in Singapore for teacher education administrators from Sub-Saharan African countries.

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### Staff development at tertiary level

The *Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP)*, launched in 1959, has provided opportunities to younger men and women to pursue advance-level studies, normally leading to a higher degree. It was always expected that some of the main beneficiaries would be the newly developing universities and tertiary colleges in Commonwealth developing countries that were in urgent need of academic staff. A relatively high proportion of those award holders who have pursued research degrees have gone on to take up academic careers. CSFP is treated more fully in Chapter 3.

As well as hosting the UK Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, and administering other awards programmes, the *Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU)* runs a number of staff development programmes. These include leadership workshops for university vice-chancellors and gender capacity-building training workshops to assist women academics to advance their careers (see Chapter 6 on Gender). The ACU also runs a staff recruitment service for its 500 member institutions. In 2006 it published a research report, based on a 2005 survey of nearly 130 Commonwealth universities, on trends in academic recruitment and retention.

The *Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa (CAPA)*, based in Nairobi has its own staff development programme. Workshop themes have included Prevention of HIV/AIDS, and Increasing Women's Participation in TVET Activities.

### Teacher mobility in the Commonwealth

International teacher mobility has great value. It can benefit individual teachers and the

education systems to which mobile teachers bring international experience. Teacher interchange helps to strengthen the bonds between Commonwealth countries. There is the potential to plan such exchange in a better and more purposeful way, as a form of professional development for teachers and as a means of strengthening and enriching education systems. It is also important to ensure that teachers who take assignments in another country are treated fairly. This applies to all teachers but especially those who have been induced to serve abroad through active recruitment campaigns.

Teachers seek work abroad for a variety of reasons. These include a desire to travel, a quest for professional experience, and the search for higher salaries or better conditions of service. However 'push' and 'pull' factors are also at work between different education systems. Large-scale out-migration of teachers often reflects poor morale in the teaching force. Teachers may perceive terms and conditions of service as unfavourable, both absolutely and relatively to what exists abroad. Countries that are concerned about large-scale teacher emigration have a responsibility to review their own domestic arrangements for recruiting, retaining and remunerating teachers and offering them a satisfying professional life.

The strong family and other ties between Commonwealth countries, and long traditions of professional migration, tend to encourage mobility. Information on teacher mobility within the Commonwealth is however deficient and most Commonwealth countries have poor data on the composition of their teaching force by nationality and on international inflow and outflow. They should consider taking steps to collect, analyse and disseminate such data.

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Commonwealth teacher mobility is of course multi-directional

- between developing countries, say from India to Eastern and Southern Africa, or Guyana to Trinidad and Tobago. Sometimes these flows are parts of technical and cultural co-operation arrangements, e.g. from Nigeria to Namibia at the time of the latter's Independence.
- between industrialised countries, e.g. Australia to Britain.
- from industrialised to developing countries via voluntary organisations and technical co-operation arrangements, e.g. from Canada to West Africa.
- and from developing countries to industrialised ones, e.g. Tongans to New Zealand or Jamaicans to UK.

National circumstances differ. In a few countries, Fiji for example, there is a surplus of teachers and the authorities may look benignly on efforts to offer them employment abroad, especially if emigrant teachers remit part of their salaries back home. Even here pockets of specific shortage may exist within an overall situation of surplus. Elsewhere, however, teacher emigration may exacerbate an already existing shortage and so intensify the threat of missing national and international targets like the MDGs. It was such situations that prompted the drawing up of the Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol.

### **Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol (CTRP)**

The Protocol was signed in 2004, following a lengthy process of discussion and negotiation. It was triggered by a dual set of concerns. First, some developing countries were being

deliberately targeted by industrialised countries, to make good their own teacher shortages. This caused 'brain drain' of teachers, often in specialised science and mathematics subjects, who had been expensively trained at local taxpayers' expense. Small island states in particular found it hard to make good the loss suffered. Second, there was real concern that some of those employed abroad through specialised recruitment agencies experienced unfair or discriminatory treatment.

The Protocol is a voluntary agreement, but has a certain moral force. It addresses 'organised' recruitment by countries and agencies, not the 'informal' flows of teachers who make individual arrangements to work abroad. It provides that recruiting and source countries should consult together about intentions to recruit and agree on mutually acceptable measure to avoid harmful impact on the source country. Principles for an acceptable recruitment process are laid down (full consultation, avoiding recruitment in the middle of the school year etc.) and those recruiting countries using the services of recruiting agencies are enjoined to maintain a list of approved agencies and a formal recognition system to ensure they conform with good practice.

The Protocol also sets out the responsibilities and rights of source countries. It is their duty to devise strategies that will make teaching attractive in their country and to ensure an adequate supply of teachers in areas of strategic importance. They should make known the categories of teachers whose recruitment they will not support. The Protocol recognises that in the last resort, when avenues of discussion and negotiation have been exhausted, source countries can withhold permission for organised teacher recruitment by international recruiters to take place in its country.

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Early indications are that the Protocol has been successful in drawing international attention to the issue and in mitigating the problem for small Commonwealth states somewhat. It has been widely welcomed in the international community as a model instrument, which could usefully be adapted and adopted for use elsewhere.

### Recognition for Migrant Teachers

A problem faced by migrant teachers, and by education systems wishing to employ them, is the difficulty of establishing the 'value' of the qualification they hold in comparative terms. In a globalising world this issue is encountered in almost every sphere of the international employment market for professionals. It has to be recognised that to the extent the problem can be solved for Commonwealth teachers, the easier migration becomes and the greater is the danger of 'brain drain' of qualified teachers. This would make the Protocol described above even more important - even accepting that its provisions are confined to the 'managed' element of Commonwealth teacher mobility.

The Commonwealth Secretariat has been addressing this issue with the help of the South African Qualifications Authority which commissioned a report for consideration by Ministers in Cape Town '*The recognition of teacher qualifications and professional registration status across Commonwealth member states*'. The report makes a key distinction between the comparability of qualifications and their formal equivalence, and recommends that the Commonwealth should focus initially on trying to improve the recognition and transferability of teacher qualifications through establishing international comparability. It also distinguishes between academic recognition of qualifications for entry into university courses etc., and professional recognition giving legal employment status.

The SAQA report suggests that mechanisms in the form of 'competent recognition authorities' are needed at national level in each of these domains. It recommends that an Association of Commonwealth Qualifications Authorities, and a Commonwealth Forum of Professional Teacher Councils could usefully be established. It 'argues strongly for a Commonwealth-wide approach to the recognition and transferability of teacher professional registration' and recommends that a Commonwealth standard for professional registration status be developed.

More recently, in 2009, at the request of the Commonwealth Steering Group on Teacher Qualifications, SAQA has completed a further report on the *Recognition of Teacher Qualifications in the Commonwealth*.

### Commonwealth associations of teachers

The staff development activities of the *Association of Commonwealth Universities* and *Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa* at tertiary level have been mentioned. Prominent among Commonwealth civil-society teacher organisations at school level are:

- The *Commonwealth Teachers' Group (CTG)*, operating under the auspices of Education International and formally launched in Cape Town in December 2006 at the Teachers' Forum, of which it was the convenor. The CTG played a major role in bringing the Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol to fruition and one of its member associations, the National Union of Teachers in the UK, hosted the Commonwealth meeting that adopted the Protocol.
- CTG works with other bodies to promote greater contact between Commonwealth teachers, and to develop links supporting

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professional development activities. It also aims to promote the interests of teachers and education with the Commonwealth Secretariat and other Commonwealth bodies.

- The *League for the Exchange of Commonwealth Teachers*, founded in 1901 and since 2007 merged with the CfBT Education Trust, offers a number of opportunities for teacher professional development with an international dimension:
  - The Commonwealth Exchange Programme supports post-to-post exchange between UK teachers and Commonwealth colleagues – mainly from Australia, Canada and New Zealand - for a period of one year.
  - Under the Teachers International Professional Development Programme (TIPD), through a contract from the UK's Department for Children, Schools and Families, LECT provides 300 places for teachers from England to participate in a local authority-based programme of themed study visits abroad. Recent themes have included citizenship education, social inclusion, involving and supporting parents, and raising achievement.
  - Group Study Visits. Short week-long themed international group visits for UK teachers to overseas destinations are offered.
  - LECT has co-ordinated the Leadership in Education Programme under the Commonwealth Professional Fellowships Programme within the UK's Commonwealth Scholarships provision. Annually in recent years a few mid-career professionals from Commonwealth developing countries have been enabled to spend two months on professional development attachments in the UK.
- The *Commonwealth Association of Science, Mathematics and Technology Teachers (CASTME)*, founded in 1974, has members throughout the Commonwealth. It works to advance the social relevance of science, technology and mathematics teaching by networking educators in these subjects. It organises workshops to promote good practice and the development of curricula and learning materials. CASTME runs an annual award scheme in which teachers and teacher educators are invited to submit completed innovative projects. Professionals from 35 Commonwealth countries have received awards.

## Chapter 10: COMMONWEALTH STUDENT MOBILITY

**Introduction**

The ancient tradition of the “wandering scholar” was echoed by the first Commonwealth Education Conference in Oxford in 1959 when it stated that the exchange of students would “enrich each country of the Commonwealth by enabling an increasing number of its abler citizens to share the wide range of educational resources available throughout the Commonwealth and thus promote equality of education opportunity at the highest level.”

Behind this statement of ideals lies a history of the foundation of higher educational institutions in those parts of the world affected by the European colonial expansion of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The most important legacy of this history is the use of the English language in the former British colonies (French in the former French colonies, etc.). In the initial stages of the development of most of the universities in the Commonwealth, the majority of the staff were from Britain or had been to British universities or those in the white “Dominions”. As tertiary education was developed in Africa and in other parts of the British Empire, the University of London gave accreditation to many of these new institutions by granting its own degrees. Though this phase is long past, this has had the very important long-term effect of providing a vision of an international standard for the degrees awarded by these comparatively new universities.

The international movement of students reflects two rather distinct patterns: study in neighbouring countries – just over the border or within the same region, or study in faraway countries able to provide more advanced courses or a wider range of fields of study.

A milestone in the history of internationalism within higher education in the Commonwealth

was the founding of the Universities Bureau of the British Empire, now the Association of Commonwealth Universities, in 1913. the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan was established in 1959 and there have been well over 25,000 recipients over the last 50 years (see Chapter 3), and the Commonwealth Universities Study Abroad Consortium (CUSAC), providing direct links between institutions in 20 different Commonwealth countries for the exchange of undergraduate students, in 1993.

**Why promote the study abroad?**

At their Oxford conference, the Commonwealth educators saw the following reasons to support student mobility in higher education:

- Serving as a tool for professional development in fields not available in a student’s own country (or region);
- providing access to education and knowledge in newly developing subject areas, as yet only available in technologically more advanced countries;
- providing an underpinning for studies and disciplines that are comparative and international;
- extending the range of subjects and choice for students in small countries;
- broadening the outlook of domestic students through studying alongside international students.

**Recent history of student mobility**

Initially, tuition fees charged to students from other countries, Commonwealth or not, were set in most host countries at the same nominal level as fees (if any) charged to domestic students. In the UK, fee differentiation was introduced in the late 1960s, culminating in 1980 with the decision

that universities should charge overseas students the full cost of a course of study. This decision (which legally could not apply to students from the European Community) caused consternation to many members of the Commonwealth. However, before long other Commonwealth countries hosting international students - Australia, New Zealand and some parts of Canada – also introduced differential fees for students from abroad.

In response, the Commonwealth set up a Standing Committee on Student Mobility under the Chairmanship of Sir Roy Marshall, the distinguished Barbadian scholar. This Committee monitored the changes in the numbers of Commonwealth students studying abroad, and the considerable drop in the number of such students coming to the UK, and made proposals for sustaining mobility in the face of fee increases. However on the central issue of the level of student fees, it obtained no concessions for Commonwealth students.

The monitoring of student mobility has more recently been taken up by the Council for Education in the Commonwealth (CEC) in partnership with UKCISA, the UK Council for International Students. Their joint report in 2000 was followed by two updates by CEC in 2003 and 2006, both timed to coincide with Conferences of Commonwealth Education Ministers.

In recent years, the financial benefit to universities of hosting international students has come to the fore. The British Council has estimated that international higher education students contributed nearly £6 billion to the British economy in 2003/04, and in the United States, the Institute of International Education estimated US \$15.5 billion for 2007/08. IDP Education Australia suggested international students at all levels contributed \$A15.5 billion to the Australian economy in 2007.

International students also provide the clientele for a wide range of courses which would otherwise be unviable. This is particularly so at postgraduate taught level where a minimum number of students is needed for a course to run. In the UK, one third of postgraduate students come from abroad – and the proportion of research students is even higher.

### **Recent trends in the flow of Commonwealth and other international students**

Countries sending students for study abroad have been divided into a number of categories using the basis of analysis in the CEC/UKCISA report. Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth (identified as 'Other') countries are each subdivided into high, medium high, medium low and low Human-Development-Index (HDI) countries. This index has been developed by the UN Development Programme as a composite of indices of health, education and average personal income. A ninth country-category consists of European Union (EU) countries, all of which are high-HDI countries. Students from EU countries have special access to UK higher education. In this note, membership of both the Commonwealth and the European Union is defined in terms of countries' status in 2004; while the HDI data is for 2006 with the boundary between medium-high and medium-low countries being set at 0.700 on the Human Development Index.

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the total number of international students going to the 50 plus host countries for which data was available for the year 2006 was just over 2 million – of whom 17.8% originated in Commonwealth countries (just under the 18.1% in 2000). Of the internationally mobile Commonwealth students 32% studied in other Commonwealth countries, 49% went to the USA,

# Chapter 10: COMMONWEALTH STUDENT MOBILITY

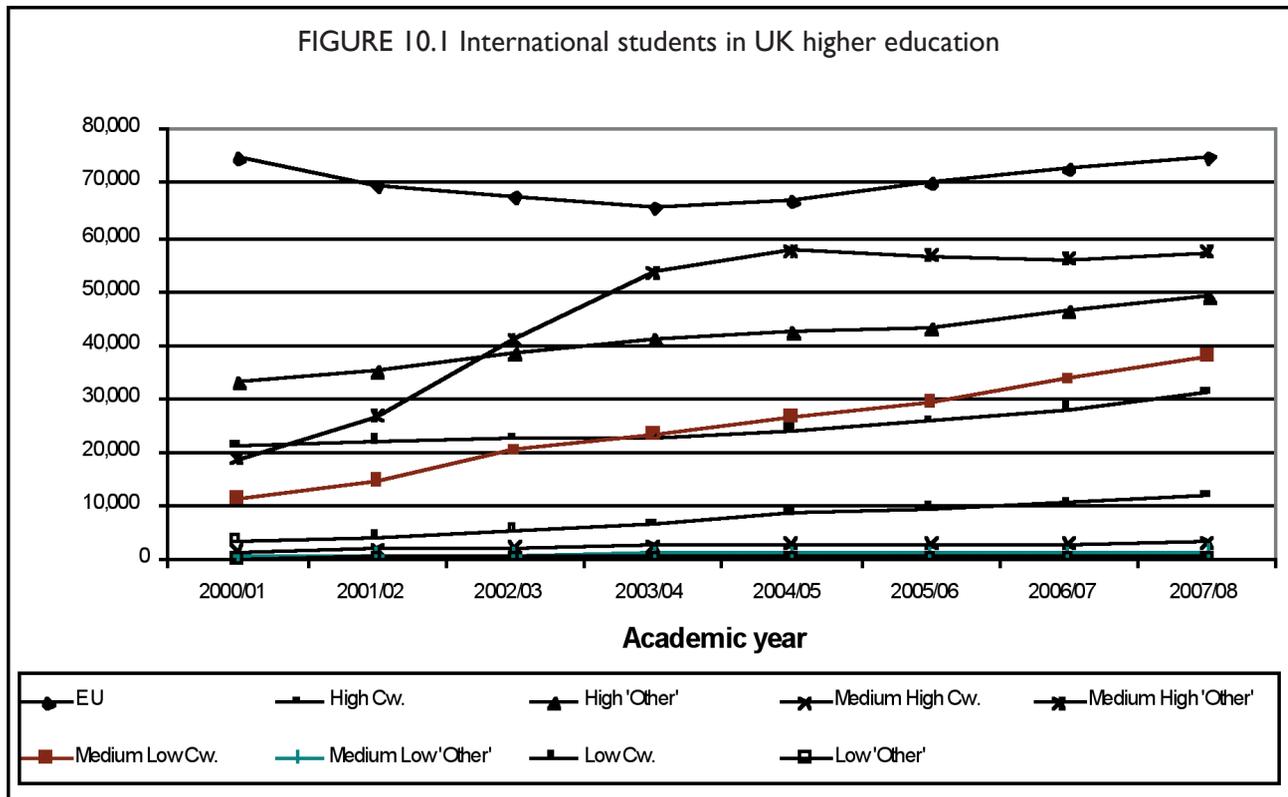
and 9% studied in a non-Commonwealth country other than the USA.

The total number of international students in the **United States of America** has increased from 547,873 in 2000/01 to 623,805 in 2007/08. There are slightly fewer undergraduate than graduate (both taught and research) students – though the proportions vary considerably among country-groups and from one sending country to another. The numbers from medium low-HDI Commonwealth countries at the graduate level (most importantly India) have continued to increase. The numbers from high-HDI Commonwealth countries have been fairly constant over the period. There was an 18% increase from 162,780 to 191,496 in the total of Commonwealth students between 2000/01 and 2007/08 compared to an increase of 12% from 385,093 to 432,309 in non-Commonwealth students. After a fall in numbers in the first half of the decade, the numbers of mobile students going to the USA has continued its upward

trend. (These figures reflect the more up-to-date figures than found in Table 10.2 below.) This data comes from “Open Doors” published on their website by the Institute of International Education.

The six top sending countries to the US in 2007/08 remained the same as three years previously. They were India (94,563), China (81,127), South Korea (69,124), Japan (33,974), Canada (29,051) and Taiwan (29,001). A large majority of students from India, China and Taiwan were studying at the graduate level. Students from Japan, and increasingly from South Korea, were at the undergraduate level. Canadians were about equally divided between the two levels.

The **United Kingdom** is the next main host for international students, both Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth. The number of students and their origins by country HDI-group is summarised in Figure 10.1, with the data coming from the UK Higher Education Statistics



Agency. (It should be noted that the figures are for full time students – and are provided on a different basis to those reported in 2006.)

The number of Commonwealth students has increased from 39,435 in 2000/01 to 85,700 in 2007/08 and 'Other' international students (excluding European Union students) from 60,270 to 117,705 over the same period. The previously rapid rate of increase in the number of students from the medium-HDI 'Other' countries slowed down in the last few years. The recent increase in EU students is probably due mainly to the accession of new members to the European Union.

Proportionately, fewer Commonwealth students study at the postgraduate research and more at the taught levels than non-Commonwealth 'Other' students. Equal proportions were doing first degree courses.

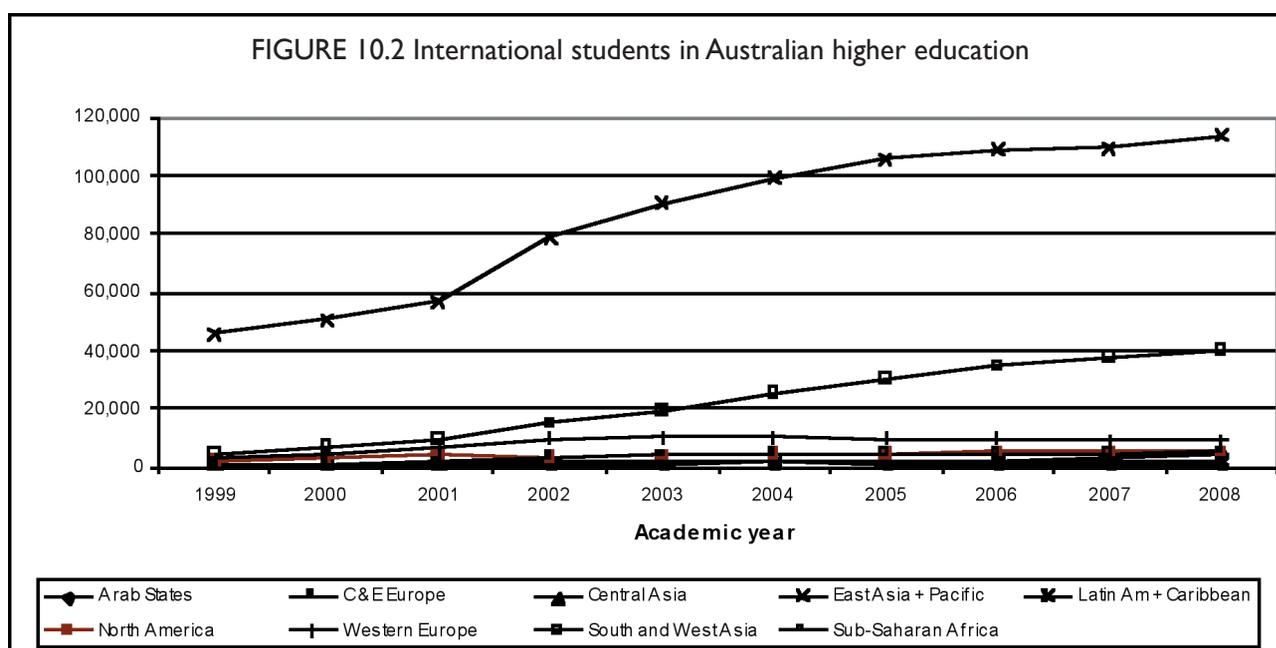
Table 10.1 indicates the different levels of study of international students, excluding EU students) in the UK in 2007-08. (EU students were omitted from this table.)

**Table 10.1: Level of study of non-EU international students in the UK 2007-2008**

Level	Commonwealth students		'Other' students	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
Postgraduate research	7,970	9%	16,230	14%
Postgraduate taught	37,625	44%	44,975	38%
First degree	37,550	44%	50,810	43%
Other undergraduate	2,555	3%	5,6920	5%
Total	85,700	100%	117,705	100%

The six top sending countries to the UK in 2007-08 were China (41,530), India (22,115) Greece (EU) (10,060), Germany (EU) (10,360), US (10,280) and Malaysia (10,060). India and Malaysia are both Commonwealth countries – as was the country in seventh place (Nigeria, with 9,950).

**Australia** is the Commonwealth country with the next largest intake of international and Commonwealth students, after the UK. The number of international students in Australia has increased rapidly with the total number rising



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from 72,717 in 2000 to 182,770 in 2008. The proportion of Commonwealth students dropped slightly from 41% to 38%. The main increases have come from 'Other' medium high-HDI countries and medium low-HDI Commonwealth countries. Figure 10.2 shows the regions of origin of the students – with most coming from East Asia and the Pacific followed, by South and West Asia. This data comes from the Australian government's Australian Education International website.

The top four sending countries are China (51,600), India (27,701), Malaysia (15,552) and Hong Kong (8,552). There have been major increases from the first two while numbers from the other two have remained fairly constant.

**Canada** also has a tradition of hosting international students. Between 2000 and 2005 (the latest year for which statistics are available), the number increased from 36,456 to 69,129 (90%). In 2000, 21% of the students were from the Commonwealth – but this proportion had dropped to 18% by 2005. The four main sending countries in 2005 were China (18,402), USA (7,689), France (3,702) and India (2,829). The data comes from Statistics Canada.

The number of international students going to **New Zealand** rose from 16,586 in 2000 to 50,441 in 2004, then dropped to 39,960 by 2007. The proportion of Commonwealth students fell from 27% in 2000 to 14% in 2004 but had, by 2007, risen to 23%. The reason for this switchback phenomenon was a surge in the number of Chinese students to a peak of 30,439 in 2004 (60% of the total in New Zealand) followed by a near- halving in their number by 2007. India sent the next largest group (3,027 in 2007), which represents a slow increase. Data comes from the New Zealand Ministry of Education website.

**South Africa** is another host country with a rapidly increasing number of international students. In 2000, it had 36,156 students which had risen to 64,663 by 2007. Of these 65% came from the countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) of which the largest group (27%) came from Zimbabwe – a former member of the Commonwealth, A further 13% from other African countries. Altogether, 57% came from the Commonwealth. The data was supplied directly by the South African Department of Education.

In the 1990s, **Malaysia** was a significant source of students to the US, the UK and Australia. This has continued, but at a lower and slowly decreasing level. Malaysia is now a significant Commonwealth host for international students. In 2003, it hosted 30,396 students – and by 2007 this had risen to 47,918. At the beginning of the period, 23% were from Commonwealth countries – which rose to 31% by 2007. Geographically, the great majority come from the surrounding region. Indonesia sent the largest number in 2007 (8,454) followed by China (6,468). In the latter case, the number had dropped from a peak of 9,317 in 2005. Iran was the next major sending country, followed by Nigeria. In the top ten, five were Commonwealth countries. It is worth noting that 70% of international students go to government-regulated private universities. The data came from the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education website.

**India** has been a traditional host country, but in recent years the numbers have stabilised at 6,000 to 7,000 – with 7,029 in 2005/06. The United Arab Emirates is the largest source of international students going to India. This data came from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics website.

There may be other Commonwealth countries that are important as hosts but do not provide

such data internationally. For example, the printed Uganda Educational Statistics Abstract Volume I 2006 reported that a total of 11,929 non-Uganda students enrolled in both public and private universities there.

Outside the Commonwealth, in addition to the United States significant hosts include many European countries and China and Japan. The proportion of Commonwealth students in these countries is quite low – comprising less than 10% of their international intake. At the same time, they comprise over a quarter of all Commonwealth students studying abroad.

The overall picture for 2006 (for a few countries 2005) is presented in Table 10.2, the source of which is the UNESCO Institute for Statistics data base available at [www.stats.uis.unesco.org](http://www.stats.uis.unesco.org).

In global terms, taking the Commonwealth as a whole,

- the number of international students ‘imported’ and ‘exported’ is in close balance, representing in each case about 18% of the world total: this contrasts with the Commonwealth’s share of global population of roughly a third.
- As noted earlier, 32% of internationally mobile Commonwealth students go to another Commonwealth country; 49% go to the United States; and 19% go elsewhere.

- As hosts, Commonwealth countries as a group take 32% of their students from other Commonwealth countries, just 4% from the United States and 64% from elsewhere.
- Whereas Commonwealth countries take 32% of students from the Commonwealth and the United States takes 31%, other non-Commonwealth countries (excluding US) as a group take only 6% of their international students from Commonwealth countries.
- This appears to emphasise (i) a high degree of preference among Commonwealth countries for studying in an English-speaking country and (ii) that there are complementary clusters of exchange among e.g. Arabic-speaking, Chinese-speaking, French-speaking, Russian-speaking Spanish-speaking countries and in certain regions of the world from which Commonwealth countries are largely excluded.

### Gender distribution of international students

“Gender awareness, rather than gender neutrality, should be integrated into all organisation processes” – and this requires gender disaggregated data. (Pg. 113, 114 “Gender Equity in Commonwealth Higher Education” DFID 2006). Unfortunately only a few countries provide data giving the gender of all of the students they host.

**Table 10.2: Summary of international students worldwide (2006)**

Senders of students	Commonwealth		Non Commonwealth		USA*		Total
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
From Commonwealth	117,937	32%	249,270	68%	181,020	49%	367,207
	%	32%	15%		31%		18%
From Non Commonwealth	246,458	15%	1,447,045	85%	402,568	24%	1,693,503
	%	68%	85%		69%		82%
Total	364,395	18%	1,696,315	82%	583,588	28%	2,060,710

\*The USA as host is also within the “Non Commonwealth as host” numbers.

# Chapter 10: COMMONWEALTH STUDENT MOBILITY

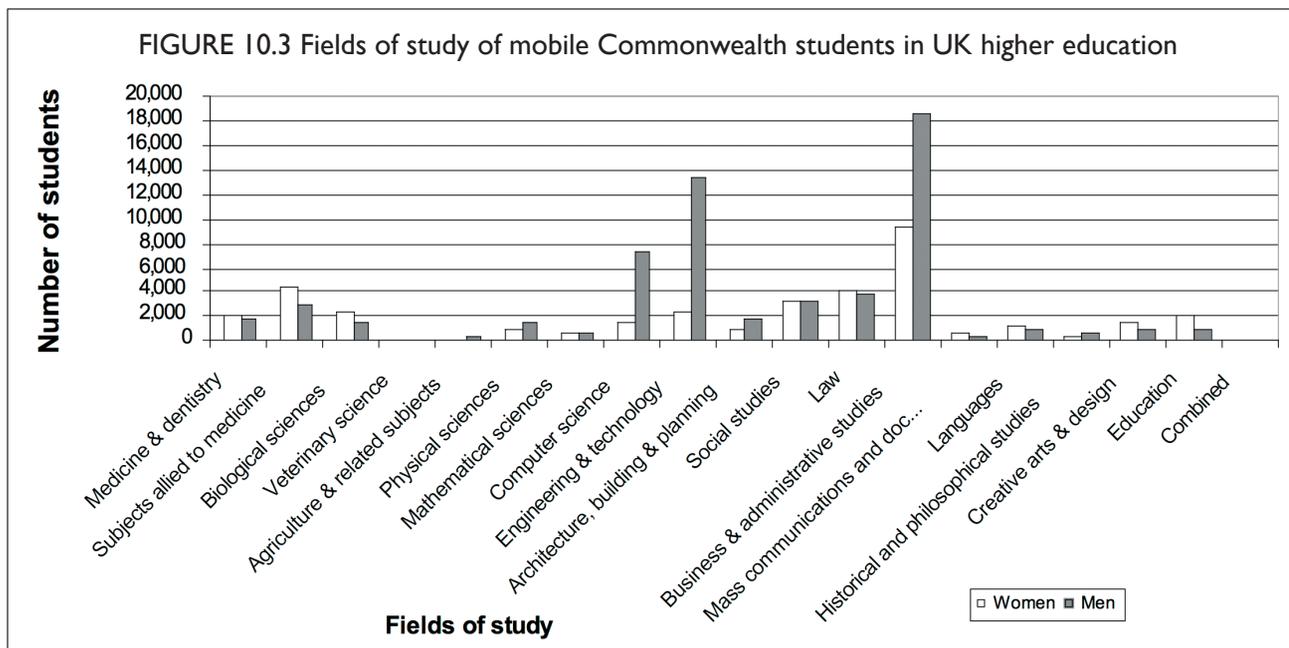
From what data is available, it is clear that there has been a slow increase over time in the proportion of mobile students accounted for by women. However there is an imbalance between the levels of study – with proportionately fewer women at the research level and increasing proportions at the postgraduate taught, the first degree and the non degree undergraduate courses. In addition, countries with low Human Development Indices tend to have lower proportions of women, along with certain geographic regions – such as the Arab States and South and West Asia, and to a lesser extent, Sub-Saharan Africa. Finally, the fields of study show some big differences between the sexes. This can be seen in the section below.

## What fields of study and at what level do mobile students study?

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics data demonstrate that a much greater proportion of international students study at the postgraduate taught (40%) and research (7%) levels that is the case among domestic students, among whom only 11% and 3% respectively study at these

levels. Among mobile students, country-level analysis shows distinctive patterns. Thus in the UK, nearly 70 to 80% of Pakistani and Indian students are enrolled on postgraduate courses compared with only 37% of Malaysians. In terms of courses of study, overall the most popular courses are in applied fields such as business and related study, engineering and computer fields at all levels.

Figure 10.3 demonstrates the range of subjects studied in the UK by both full-time and part-time Commonwealth students in 2007/08. The very large difference in the proportions (as well as numbers) of men and women in engineering and computing can be seen. The popularity of business studies is clear – again with twice as many men as women. Analysis of non-Commonwealth students shows a similar pattern – except that there is a slight majority of women doing business studies courses. This pattern is in general the same for those host countries for which data is available.



### How students pay for their study

Data on the source of tuition fees paid by international students is available in detail for the UK. Although they represent only part of the total cost, fees do constitute a very significant proportion, particularly in countries charging full-cost fees. European Union students in the UK are an exception as they only pay the home rate of fees at all levels and are able to get UK local education authority awards for first degrees.

By far the largest group – in the case of both women and men – is the category reported by the universities as having “no award or financial backing”. Thus they are self-funding.

There are no real differences between the sources of funds for men and those for women and no large changes are apparent over the past few years. There are differences in funding patterns between the different levels of study: at the research level, there is a significant proportion of Commonwealth students with British government scholarships of one kind or another – more than for other international students – and the lowest proportion of self-funding students (about one third). At the postgraduate taught and the first degree level, the proportion of self-funding students is overwhelming – well over two thirds. For “other undergraduates” data are not clear. It appears that in the United States the same general pattern applies with regard to the funding of internationally mobile students.

### Conclusion

A brief summary of the international student mobility scene has been presented. It is based on information made available mainly through the data collection agencies (international and national) as well as through some national education departments – e.g. in the UK,

South Africa and Malaysia. However there are important gaps. Thus the data collection agencies do not ask hosts for the gender of students from individual sending countries, only for the gender of all international students hosted in aggregate. In addition, there are many countries which rarely or never provide information to international agencies on the number of international students they host. In sub-Saharan Africa, only South Africa does this – so it is likely that the level of mobility of students within regions is greater than the present statistics suggest.

It has also been demonstrated (but on a small base of evidence) that the majority of mobile students are privately funded from their own or their families’ resources. This suggests that the majority of them must come from relatively wealthy families – and in many cases with a tradition of higher education and probably including studying abroad. There are, of course, a number of scholarship schemes – Commonwealth-wide, by local charities, from governments and employers and from the host universities themselves – which provide some help and are of considerable importance to individuals as well as widening the range of students who are able to study abroad. However in overall terms they are very small.

The main host countries in the Commonwealth all have traditions of charging fees. Over the last 50 years universities have experienced increased financial pressure. One response has been to charge international students high fees. In the case of Britain, universities are allowed to (and almost all do) charge the full cost of the relevant course. A number of other countries also charge high fees (such as Australia) – but not all. South Africa, for example, charges approximately 25% extra to international students. Some other, non-Commonwealth, countries (such as the Nordic countries) do not charge fees

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at all – to either domestic or international students. With those institutions that do charge high fees, this has resulted in a degree of commercialisation in attracting students. Of course in all cases, unless they are in receipt of scholarships or bursaries students additionally have to pay for their living costs.

Since the demise of the Standing Committee, the Commonwealth Secretariat has appeared to lose interest in the promotion of student mobility. The main host countries remain the developed countries. It is important that a wider range of countries should host students. The Commonwealth Secretariat should again be given the responsibility and resources to monitor the flows of students within the Commonwealth. It should also be advising (possibly through the Association of Commonwealth Universities) Commonwealth countries that at present do not have significant numbers of inter-national students on ways of attracting, recruiting and hosting them. These countries and their universities can then benefit from receiving as well as sending students.

There is no doubt that the future of the Commonwealth depends on contact between individuals – and preferably at some depth. The movement of students between the member countries of the Commonwealth is a particularly important and potentially very fruitful way of developing these interconnections. This is especially so as many of these students are tomorrow's political, commercial and industrial, and intellectual leaders in their own countries. This study shows that there is a great deal of really worthwhile exchange taking place. What is now needed is a recognition by host governments that the Commonwealth element of this exchange needs support and encouragement.

# Chapter 11: COMMONWEALTH EDUCATION CO-OPERATION: ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

## **A Commonwealth of peoples**

The Commonwealth is often seen as primarily an international organisation. Yet its real essence is that of a community. It is an association of peoples as much as of states or governments.

The Commonwealth's institutional structures are in fact comparatively light. The staffs and budgets of the Secretariat, the Foundation and the Commonwealth of Learning, are small in comparison with those of the larger UN agencies or, say, the European Union. But behind the façade of the inter-governmental machinery is a wide network of semi-formal and informal relationships and linkages which represent the strength of the Commonwealth and are the channels through which co-operation finds its best expression.

The ties that bind the Commonwealth are partly personal ones of kinship, resulting from earlier migration of fathers, daughters, cousins and later intermarriage between migrants and the local population. Consequently many Commonwealth countries now have a multi-ethnic population with links to many different Commonwealth countries of origin.

Partly the ties consist of shared values of respect for human rights, commitment to democratic forms of government, toleration and mutual respect for differences of background and belief. And in part they are based on a common heritage of institutional forms and practices, elements of a common culture. It has been said that the Commonwealth is bound together by the three golden threads of Language, Law and Learning.

From its very beginnings the Commonwealth was clear-sighted enough to recognise where its centre of gravity lay. Alongside the official Secretariat that was established in 1965, the

Commonwealth Foundation was created in the same year to encourage and support civil-society links - a radical innovation for its time.

## **Civil society in the Commonwealth**

Civil society consists of all those groups in society that are situated beyond the bounds of the state, the armed forces and the corporate sector. It embraces a whole spectrum of self-regulating institutions including faith organisations, trade unions and co-operatives, professional associations, community organisations, welfare bodies, women's and youth groups, political and protest movements, recreational and sporting institutions, clubs and societies, and the media. Semi-autonomous bodies like universities, despite their heavy reliance on government funding, are normally considered part of civil society.

Commonwealth countries are generally moving along the road to becoming pluralistic societies where many different groups in society play a part in socio-economic development. They have a long tradition of encouraging voluntary action, and where appropriate forming partnerships between government and non-official bodies to provide public services. Of course the degree of state centralisation in any particular country has ebbed and flowed reflecting the changing political climate. But the general direction of political change in Commonwealth countries has been towards democratic participation and away from military and one-party rule.

Even where civil society's role as a valuable partner in pluralistic democratic states is recognised, its position in society may not go unchallenged. Precisely because civil-society organisations represent countervailing sources of influence, balancing to some extent the power of the state, they may attract scrutiny and criticism.

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On the one hand they engage increasingly in advocacy, attempting to influence public policy and the disposition of state resources in directions they find desirable. This is never particularly comfortable for the authorities. It can arouse particular resentment if it is apparent that civil-society bodies are not representative of their members' views and interests and do not themselves practise the democratic accountability they preach to governments. In other cases local NGOs may attract criticism through undue reliance on funding support from outside the country.

The issue of resources is particularly troublesome. The reach of the market is steadily extending into spheres of life that have until now been 'ring-fenced', enabling civil-society organisations to rely on personal commitment and voluntarism, and to avail themselves of the services of staff paid at rates that would be uncompetitive in the market place. But the growth of consumerism, and the increasing tendency to equate time with money, make it more challenging to attract people to undertake poorly remunerated work and responsibility. Recourse to the state for support tends to undermine civil-society's independence; reliance on external sources can undermine an NGO's legitimacy; and philanthropists are in short supply.

On the international scene these trends have tended to widen the capacity gap between large international NGOs that raise millions of pounds annually from the public in industrialised countries for humanitarian relief and development activities on the one hand; and locally based organisations, often small and operating at 'grassroots' level on the other. A complication is that generous (in local terms) salaries offered by the 'internationals' make it more difficult for indigenous bodies to attract good staff.

### Box 11.1

#### The Commonwealth Foundation

The Foundation was established in 1965 as an intergovernmental organisation resourced by, and reporting to, Commonwealth governments. Its mandate is to strengthen civil society, thereby advancing Commonwealth values and programme priorities related to democracy and good governance, respect for human rights and gender equality, poverty reduction, and sustainable, people-centres development. Its Headquarters is at Marlborough House in London. Its budget is approximately £3m p.a.

### The Commonwealth Foundation

The Foundation's programme is based on working with civil society organisations and professional associations in the Commonwealth. It supports civil society activities that contribute to the achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals. It funds inter-country networking (particularly among developing countries), training, capacity-building and information exchange. In particular, it targets activities that strengthen the capacity of civil-society organisations in their work on poverty eradication, good governance and sustainable development. The principal vehicle for the Foundation's support of education is its new Human Development Programme.

Every two years, at the time of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings, the Foundation organises civil society events to promote the People's Commonwealth. These include seminars, workshops, exhibitions and cultural performances.

### Civil society engagement with education

Civil-society organisations get involved in education delivery in several ways. Even where education is entirely state-run, governing boards and school committees generally have civil-society representatives drawn from among the leaders of the local community or representing

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teachers' and parents' groups. Teachers' organisations (trades unions and professional associations) play an important role in education improvement and advocacy. In many countries governments look to local people to mobilise community effort for construction of facilities or to supplement state provision of books and equipment.

At the other end of the spectrum from the state school are independent schools. These may in some cases be businesses belonging to individual proprietors and effectively being part of the private sector of the economy. But in many countries there is civil-society involvement in school provision alongside the state. Not-for-profit faith-based organisations, charitable trusts, or local communities may operate education institutions as a recognised part of the national system.

In many more instances arrangements for partnership between the state and civil society bodies are in place, and the functions of ownership of site and buildings, management, and financing being treated as separate functions and the subject of agreed assignment of responsibility. Thus, church or mosque schools may be funded by government, or state schools may be managed by civil society bodies.

Partnerships with civil society bring certain obvious advantages for Government

- civil-society bodies are often closer to the people and the consumers of education, and are an important source of feedback on education requirements and the impact of state provision;
- participation of civil society bodies in the conduct of education can mobilise a wider popular identification with, and support for, public policies;
- additional resources in money or labour may be tapped that would not be available

to government through the tax system. This particularly applies to the commitment of voluntary effort;

- civil society is less trammelled by bureaucratic requirements and can respond more quickly and flexibly than government to emerging needs;
- civil society can inject variety, experimentation and innovation into state systems that inevitably tend towards standardisation of procedures and provision.

In moving on to consider Commonwealth co-operation in education one can, at the risk of gross oversimplification, identify four principal categories of civil-society organisations engaged in such collaborative activity:

1. Locally-based organisations in developing countries. Some of these, like BRAC in Bangladesh or the education secretariat of denominational churches in many African countries, are large-scale operations: but there is a myriad of much smaller NGOs based in single communities and doing local grassroots work. This category includes organisations engaging in advocacy with the support of the Commonwealth Education Fund (see below).
2. Voluntary and charitable bodies in industrialised countries that target their help on particular countries or projects or that engage in school and college linking with schools in Commonwealth developing countries.
3. Large international charities supporting education development, and increasingly engaging in advocacy. Many of them are members of the Global Campaign for Education. Three of them were responsible for managing the Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF) on behalf of the UK Government.
4. Commonwealth associations in the education sector.

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The remainder of this chapter focuses first on the CEF (see 3 above); then on Commonwealth associations in education (4 above) and finally considers some of the ways in which civil-society engages with the official Commonwealth.

### The Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF)

CEF was set up in 2002 by the British Government, and funded by it, to mark the Golden Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II, Head of the Commonwealth. It is a unique education advocacy project, collaboratively managed by ActionAid, Oxfam and Save the Children and it operated until 2008. CEF worked strategically with civil society in low-income Commonwealth countries likely to miss the education and gender “Millennium Development Goals” (MDGs), in order to make education a sustained domestic priority and to make public schools work effectively for all children.

#### Activities:

CEF promoted the right to education by ensuring that governments fulfil their commitments through good quality education policies, transparent and accountable financial procedures, and quality education provision that reaches the most marginalised girls and boys. The programme operated in 16 countries: Bangladesh, Cameroon, The Gambia, Ghana, India, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. CEF focused on three main workstreams:

- Strengthening broad-based and democratically-run national education coalitions that have active membership across the country and can effectively channel grassroots voices and experiences into influencing national level policy and practice.
- Ensuring the sufficiency of education finance to make public schools work for all girls

and boys, and that government budgets are effectively targeted and reach where they are most needed.

- Supporting evidence-based influencing of policy rooted in innovative work that has succeeded in getting excluded children, particularly girls, into public schools.

### Commonwealth associations in education

Among about 80 Commonwealth civil-society bodies registered with the Commonwealth about a third are active in education, and of these 23 are members of the Commonwealth Consortium for Education. More information on the individual Commonwealth civil society bodies in the education sector can be found in the Commonwealth Education Directory published for the first time by the Consortium for the 16CCEM in Cape Town in 2006, and now updated in time for 17CCEM.

These associations vary considerably in form and function. Some, like the Association of Commonwealth Universities and Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa, have institutional members only; while others are open to individual members. And they vary greatly in size of payroll and budget, ranging from those that have 40 or 50 employees to others that work entirely through volunteers. A number of professional associations receive a core budget for overheads from the Commonwealth Foundation, but the Foundation is moving away from this as its preferred form of support.

As their Directory entries make clear, the functions of the Associations vary. All have some kind of representative function engaging in networking among their members and in advocacy with governments and the Commonwealth inter-governmental organisations. Most have information functions

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for their members and the outside world. A number of them engage in training and capacity-building operations and run seminars and workshops. Research and publications are a major part of their work.

The creation of the Commonwealth Teachers' Group (CTG) in December 2006 represents a major reinforcement for this constituency, representing millions of Commonwealth teachers through its own member organisations.

## Commonwealth Consortium for Education

The Consortium was founded in 2001 and formally constituted in 2002 as a group of civil-society organisations committed to education in the Commonwealth. It is a voluntary organisation with no paid staff employees. Membership has doubled from the original 12 members in late 2001 to 23 now. The Consortium received formal accreditation to the Commonwealth in December 2004 and was invited to send Observer delegations to the Conferences of Commonwealth Education Ministers in Edinburgh (15CCEM), Cape Town (16CCEM) and Kuala Lumpur (17CCEM).

### Box 11.2

#### Aims of the Consortium

- To promote the development of education throughout the Commonwealth
- To contribute views and insights to the formulation of policies on Commonwealth educational cooperation
- To assist Commonwealth intergovernmental agencies to draw on NGO resources and expertise
- To develop and disseminate models of good practice in education
- To constitute a forum which will promote cooperation by members.

## Consortium activities

### Advocacy

The Consortium has made submissions to CHOGMs and CCEMs arguing that education development and co-operation in the Commonwealth should be declared a priority. This was achieved through the Aso Rock Declaration in December 2003 and the Valletta CHOGM Communique in 2005.

### Project work

In April 2005 the Consortium completed a major project for the Education Section of the Commonwealth Secretariat on ways to make operational the Edinburgh Action Plan for Education with its six priority action areas (achieving universal primary education, eliminating gender disparity in education, improving quality in education, using open and distance education to overcome barriers, supporting education in difficult circumstances, mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS on education). A series of seven workshops was convened by different Consortium members. The final report *Implementing the Edinburgh Action Plan for Education: ways forward* charts the extensive capacity of the Commonwealth in education, explores its comparative advantage, and identifies themes and issues for future collaboration.

### Advice

The Consortium was invited to be an Observer on the Commonwealth Working Group on Teacher Recruitment leading to active participation in the Group's meetings in Lesotho (February 2004) and Britain (August/ September 2004 and April 2009). It was also represented at two of the Commonwealth's mid-term Reviews in 2005.

### Conferences and meetings on issues of key importance to the Commonwealth.

- The inaugural conference in October 2003,

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organised in close co-operation with the Commonwealth Teachers Group, addressed *Retention and Mobility of Teachers in the Commonwealth*. Its recommendations to Ministers helped to pave the way for eventual adoption of the Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol.

- 2nd Conference in 2006 in Cape Town on *The power of partnerships: strength in friends: exploration of the potential of school and college linking in the Commonwealth*.
- 3rd Conference in Bangi near Kuala Lumpur in June 2009 *Learning to live together: education for social cohesion*.
- *Networking Commonwealth people for implementing the MDGs in Education*. At the Commonwealth People's Forum in Valletta, November 2005.
- *Building institutional partnerships in education*. At the Stakeholder Forum in Cape Town December 2006.
- *Education for transformation*. At the Commonwealth People's Forum in Kampala, November 2007.
- *Commonwealth connections in education*. At the Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning in London 2008.

### Publications

These have included:

- *A Commonwealth Education Calendar* listing forthcoming meetings and other events planned by members and associated organisations is produced every three months and appears on the website.
- *Commonwealth Education Briefing Notes*. A series of 12 Notes in 2006.
- *A Commonwealth Education Directory* of which the first edition appeared in 2006, and the second in 2009.
- *Implementing the Commonwealth Edinburgh Action Plan: Ways Forward*. 2005

### Engaging Commonwealth associations in the Commonwealth's education work

As described in this and other Chapters, the Commonwealth's infrastructure in education is extensive – more so than in any other sector – and this is true of both the 'official' and the 'unofficial' Commonwealth. The potential for fruitful co-operation is becoming increasingly recognised, and a number of useful steps have been taken to develop and extend the opportunities for civil society to make its contribution to collective Commonwealth endeavours.

The Commonwealth Secretariat and Foundation organise a series of bi-annual consultation meetings for an exchange with civil-society bodies, mainly Commonwealth associations, and the education group within the wider constituency plays an active part.

The Commonwealth's education sector pioneered the opening up of Ministerial Conferences to dialogue and participation with civil society. From the outset Commonwealth associations could apply for Observer status at Education Ministers' Conferences and this has given them the right to observe proceedings, speak in committees (though not plenaries), receive papers, make written submissions, and attend social events. The Commonwealth Education Liaison Committee, a meeting of High Commission representatives in London, was the mechanism traditionally used to approve the grant of observer status.

From 13CCEM in Botswana the Conferences have been made much more accessible to civil society by adding a 'parallel symposium' (or in Cape Town and Kuala Lumpur a 'stakeholder

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forum') alongside the Ministerial Conference and addressing the same issues. Joint sessions with Ministers have been held and the conclusions and recommendations of the Stakeholder Forum have been passed to Ministers for consideration when drafting their own communiqués. The exchange of ideas has been facilitated by holding of the two events in the same building and the many opportunities for social intermingling that this affords. At more recent Conferences a Youth Forum has been added and in Cape Town for the first time there will be a Teachers' Forum as well. On several occasions there has been an exhibition where NGOs have been able to display the education projects they have developed with partners.

Through different institutional arrangements, made necessary by considerations of security, civil society can also engage with Heads of Governments at their biennial meetings (CHOGMs). The Commonwealth Foundation convenes 'Commonwealth People's Forums' to coincide with the CHOGMs and these make it possible to draw civil society concerns to the attention of Heads.

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### Summary

The Trinidad and Tobago CHOGM in November 2009 has chosen as its theme “Partnering for an Equitable and Sustainable Future”. Educational partnerships can be regarded as an example of good practice within the CHOGM theme.

International community-based partnerships (CBPs) are becoming increasingly popular. There are many impressive examples of joint work across the Commonwealth between towns, schools, hospitals, churches, black and ethnic minority (diaspora) groups, local authorities and others. There is a growing understanding that these international partnerships can be important in advocacy, in supporting social cohesion and promoting international peace, and in helping to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Partnerships between schools and higher education institutions have a particularly important role to play. By bringing a global dimension into the curriculum, they can help to develop the skills and attitudes of the young and encourage them to become active global citizens. The Commonwealth with its historical, cultural, political and infrastructural commonality has a special potential for fostering and supporting the development of educational partnerships within its boundaries.

### Historical context of North-South partnerships

Following the 1939-45 war, a deliberate attempt was made in Europe to ensure that conflict never broke out again. The ‘twinning’ movement between town and district councils in Germany, France and UK was one result of that initiative. In 1971 the CBP concept was recognised by the UN when the General Assembly passed resolution 2861 in support of city-to-city partnerships (C2C).

In the 1980s there was a growing concern over the imbalance between the “rich” North and the “poor” South, as described in the Brandt Report “North South – A Programme for Survival”. This and televised images of natural disasters and social deprivation in the South, plus the work of international agencies and the World Development Movement, contributed to exploration by community-based NGOs in Europe, Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean of the potential of international partnerships for solidarity and mutual learning and to bring international development to a more personal level. Further impetus was given by the growing mobility of populations and the presence, particularly in many Northern countries, of people from all over the world. There was a need to understand the cultures, faiths and social structures of the communities from which migrants came. International CBPs could help to provide that understanding and to build social cohesion.

Many different groups formed partnerships with counterpart organisations abroad that embraced technical co-operation, mutual learning and professional development. They included:

- Faith-based organisations, particularly the Christian churches in the Commonwealth;
- Local authorities, forming partnerships for decentralised co-operation;
- Hospitals and other health care institutions;
- Schools and higher education institutions.

Many of these CBPs were, and to some extent still are, based on providing educational and technical assistance from ‘rich’ northern communities to ‘poor’ communities in the South. But as Southern partners have found platforms to voice their concerns about this paternalistic approach and their status as the “recipients of charity”, the mutuality of benefits has become better understood and more explicitly reflected in partnership frameworks.

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**If you wish to accompany us in the long term on our journey of development as equal partners, recognising that we have a role to play in your journey of development, you will be most welcome!**

*Sithembiso Nyoni, Zimbabwe. UKOWLA conference 2001*

Recently there has been more interest in educational partnerships between schools and communities across the Commonwealth and beyond. The analysis that follows tends to focus on what is happening between one member state, the UK, and other Commonwealth countries. This is because the UK has developed a variety of programmes and organisations for school linking in the past few years, and information is relatively plentiful.

Initiatives in other parts of the Commonwealth are generally less well mapped, with some exceptions.

- **The UNESCO Associated Schools Project (ASP)**<sup>25</sup> encourages schools across the globe to become part of a network that focuses on learning around human rights, intercultural and environmental issues and the bringing of these into the curriculum. School partnerships (twinning) for the exchange of materials, teachers and pupils is central to the programme. UNESCO is also active in promotion of higher education partnerships, particularly through its UNITWIN programme.
- **Canada's e-PALS Global Network**<sup>26</sup> connects students in 191 countries via pen-pals and cross-curricular work.
- **Link Community Development**<sup>27</sup> is based in South Africa but has offices in Ghana, Uganda, Malawi, Ethiopia, Scotland and England. Its school partnership programmes have mostly involved a UK partner, but LCD now plans to expand its programmes within

and between developing countries as a part of its support for education in the South.

In the UK the vocabulary is expanding and 'Development education' and 'the global dimension to the curriculum' have become established terms in the language of education. One of the criticisms of the UK programmes is that they have been funded from the Department for International Development's Development Awareness Fund as part of DFID's programme of Building Support for Development (in the UK) and are therefore often interpreted as being "for the benefit of schools in the UK, rather than for the schools in the South" and thus to fly in the face of the underlying ethic of mutuality. There is a need for other Governments across the Commonwealth to recognise the importance of school and higher education partnerships and to provide appropriate resources to enable them to flourish.

### What is happening within the schools?

School partnerships are about relationships between school communities (pupils and teachers). Communication is key and may take the form of postal exchanges e.g. "pen-pals"; or where schools have telephones and access to IT, exchange of information and curriculum work is possible. If reciprocal visits can be arranged, this dramatically reinforces understanding between pupils and teachers in different countries.

The personal nature of the relationship and empathy/understanding between the partners is crucial. Beyond the value of personal friendships, and the sense of solidarity that develops, there are valuable educational benefits in broadening horizons of learners and teachers and collaborative curriculum work. In addition the partnership may include efforts to mobilise resources for infrastructural and professional

<sup>25</sup> [www.unesco.org/education](http://www.unesco.org/education)

<sup>26</sup> [www.e-pals.com](http://www.e-pals.com)

<sup>27</sup> [www.lcd.org.uk](http://www.lcd.org.uk)

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development in the partner schools. Examples of all these abound. At primary and secondary level, joint curriculum work tends to be a major element in link activity. It can cover every curriculum area whether language, technology, drama, music, RE, geography, or art and design. Working together on these areas brings a vital dimension to children's learning and adds to their understanding of the global context in which they are living.

At primary level such work has included a comparison of "my journey to school" or "my diary for the day". Secondary school pupils in six different Commonwealth countries have done a project on the Road Map to Peace in the Middle East led by **Gemin-i**<sup>26</sup>. Where schools have access to IT, this has made such joint curriculum work much more accessible to all. **SoundAffects** links children across the globe through the medium of high quality recorded audio, enabling children to tell their stories and contribute to cross-curriculum projects.

The best school partnership programmes are based on:

- equality of opportunity
- joint and shared planning
- teacher and pupil reciprocal visits
- joint curriculum work
- mutual learning.

**"Despite the huge difference in resources available to our partner school in England as compared to what we have here in the Transkei, academic standards here are rising through the solidarity and the exchange of people and ideas and the process of reflection we have gone through."**

*Headteacher in Transkei Secondary school*

**"We have brought 'the global dimension' into every aspect of the school curriculum whether Music, Drama, RE, Science, Geography, Art and Design or Modern Languages through the partnerships we have with schools in Ghana, India and China."**

*Link officer, Polesworth International School, UK*

They may also be characterised by the availability of opportunities for teachers to gain accreditation for the work they do through their partnerships.

### Issues and Challenges

#### I. Why do it in the first place?

An education system/policy perspective on this question would emphasise issues of global interdependence, and the need for international understanding. The challenges of climate change, collapse of financial systems, international trade agreements or genetically modified organisms, and diseases such as bird and swine 'flu, and HIV infection, are recognised as global issues. Global education helps young people to put their lives in the context of the world in which they live and enables them to become active global citizens.

Educational partnerships, and school linking specifically, have been seen as an important means to "bring the world into the classroom". The IT revolution, enabling easier access to all kinds of communication and distance learning, as well as the increased mobility of people across the globe, has greatly enhanced the scope of such partnerships. In addition there are considerable opportunities that international partnerships can offer in addressing the social cohesion agenda, in the diverse communities in which many of them operate, particularly in the North

But what about the individual school's perspective? Schools and colleges and their heads are already often over-stretched, having to meet targets, prepare for examinations and/or inspections. Resource-starved schools struggle simply to "keep going" with inadequate resources, poor infrastructure and lack of time. For them, international partnerships, while appealing in theory, may seem to be too much of an extra burden in practice.

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The challenge is to gain recognition within schools of the importance for children of understanding the global context in which they live, so that the school partnership becomes deeply embedded in the life of the schools. If this challenge can be met, the rewards in terms of adding an exciting extra dimension to the life of the school, and to the pupils and teachers, can be immensely rewarding. There are examples in which the whole ethos of the school has changed as a result of its international partnerships. Teachers have been able to use their partnerships for their personal and professional development, and in school inspections schools have earned credit for their partnerships. Teachers will often remain in a school rather than moving on because of opportunities that international partnerships offer. This creates greater stability in the school.

## 2. With whom should a school link?

Good sense suggests that schools should form partnerships with institutions abroad that are working at a similar level to themselves. It is useful to build on existing relationships and contacts that families and organisations/businesses in the local community already have. An obvious first move is to explore whether there are other community-based partnerships through the local diocese, church or mosque, the local authority, neighbouring businesses, parents, immigrant families that could help the school to form a link.

If there is no obvious direction in which to look, a school may wish to use a linking agency or resort to a school partner-finding website such as the Global Gateway. Some schools have developed “triangular partnerships” with partners in more than one country, say, between a school in India and schools in UK and Ghana.

## 3. Resources

Partnerships between schools with very different

resources, facilities, teaching methods, e.g. in UK and Africa, can add to the learning at both ends of the relationship. But disparity in resources has its pitfalls. The expectations of the two schools may be very different. For a ‘Northern’ school the focus of interest in the link maybe that it offers a real opportunity for raising awareness of global issues and “bringing the world into the classroom”. The partner school in the ‘South’ on the other hand may see the partnership more in the context of Education for All and the MDGs, and more specifically as an opportunity for obtaining much needed resources in terms of books and computers.

If the link is simply based on the transfer of resources from resource rich to resource poor, this can stand in the way of schools working together on the basis of equality and may limit the opportunities for them to learn from the rich differences in culture, arts, history, economics, language and sociology.

It is essential that these differing perceptions of the link at both ends are recognised. Discussion between teachers in both schools is needed. This may benefit from having an outside facilitator, and should lead on to the writing of a partnership agreement to be signed by both Heads. The agreement will cover the basic tenets of what the relationship is about, and may also develop into a strategy for what the schools want to achieve over the next few years, what resources will be required to carry out that strategy, where responsibility for action lies, how achievements are going to be measured and what should happen if the relationship unravels.

## 4. Sustainability

The commitment of the head teacher, the senior management team and the governors, and writing the link into a school development plan, are important for a link’s success and its sustainability. School partnerships have

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sometimes failed because they have been dependent on the enthusiasm of an individual teacher who may later move on to another post, so precipitating the link's collapse and disappointment in the partner school. Involving the local education authority may release resources and bring in other international networks in the area. Securing the participation of the wider community through the PTA or the governors can attract additional human, in-kind and financial resources to the partnerships; and reciprocally can extend the educational benefits gained by the school to others in the wider community, so contributing to greater social cohesion in that community. All this will add to the sustainability of the link.

Clusters of schools, e.g. several feeder primary schools and a secondary school, may develop a counterpart relationship with schools in another part of the Commonwealth. This arrangement broadens the 'stakeholder' base so adding to the likelihood of sustainability and potentially enabling children to maintain a relationship with particular individual children abroad over the whole period of their education.

### 5. Impact Assessment

Teachers and pupils in schools with international partnerships will talk passionately about the impact that the link has had both on their own professional and personal development and on the school and the wider community. But the evidence for this is largely anecdotal rather than based on evidence. Over the past two years the Department for International Development (DFID) in the UK has funded a study of impact on teachers and learners in all four countries of the UK, in nine African countries, and in Sri Lanka, India and Pakistan. It has been led by Cambridge Education Foundation and the UK One World Linking Association (UKOWLA see below), the research being carried out by the Institute of Education at the University

of London and Makerere University, Kampala. This study will be published in 2009 and will be of great value in the forward development of these school partnerships. All the above issues are addressed in a 'Toolkit for Linking' on the UKOWLA website<sup>29</sup>.

### School partnerships: the UK case

The UK has a long history of engagement in CBPs, not just in education. As long ago as 1984 the **UK One World Linking Association (UKOWLA)** was formed in response to the growing interest in partnerships particularly across the Commonwealth. UKOWLA provides a platform through newsletters, publications and conferences to discuss the underlying principles, opportunities and challenges that CBPs can provide. It is also part of a recently formed coalition of some 50 international NGOs, BUILD<sup>30</sup> (Building Understanding through International Links for Development) devoted to bringing North-South partnerships into the mainstream.

Britain exhibits a blend of voluntary activity backed up by government through political encouragement and provision of financial support. The government departments responsible for education and for international co-operation have both been active in this respect.

The former **UK Department for Education and Skills (DfES)** published its International Education Strategy, "Putting the World into World Class Education" in 2004, stating that international partnerships between schools and higher education institutions are crucial to its strategy. Its later implementation plan for the Strategy set an ambitious but unrealistic target that every UK school should have an international partnership by 2010. The Global Gateway website was set up by DfES and

<sup>29</sup> [www.ukowla.org.uk](http://www.ukowla.org.uk)

<sup>30</sup> [www.build.org.uk](http://www.build.org.uk)

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provides a partner-finding resource for schools across the world.

The **UK Department for International Development (DFID)**<sup>31</sup> has recognised the importance of raising awareness of development issues and has set aside funding as part of its strategy of Building Support for Development. In July 2006 a DFID white paper stated that:-

- “The UK will double our investment in development education, as we seek to give every child ...the chance to learn about issues that shape their world.
- (and will)Set up a scheme to help..... build partnerships with developing countries”.

DFID’s Global School Partnerships (DGSP) programme<sup>32</sup> led by the British Council, is managed by a consortium of four agencies, also including Cambridge Education Foundation<sup>33</sup>, UKOWLA and VSO. DGSP provides schools with support to enable children and young people to:

- engage with global development issues in a real and practical way
- develop as knowledgeable and responsible global citizens

through partnerships working together on shared learning projects which embed in their curricula the global citizenship concepts of diversity, globalisation and interdependence, peace and conflict, social justice and equity, sustainable development. It involves over 1,800 schools in the UK, partnered with schools in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, more than 1,600 of which are with 27 Commonwealth countries. Grants are awarded for reciprocal visits by teachers and learners and for curriculum development. Teachers at both ends of the partnership can get support to acquire accreditation for their international work. The programme has recently been renewed by DFID for a further three years, and

will run from April 2009 to March 2012 with the aim of supporting 4,600 partnerships and reaching a further 400 UK schools.

DFID also funds DelPHE (Development Partnerships in Higher Education)<sup>34</sup> a worldwide programme designed to develop the capacity and resources of higher education institutions through joint research programmes, exchanges of ideas and professional development. It is designed to contribute to attainment of the MDGs. This new programme was launched in 2006.

The **British Council** has played a leading role in managing UK Government programmes and the Global Gateway Website<sup>35</sup>. It has a number of international programmes, supported by its offices throughout the Commonwealth, focussing on schools and young people. The Council has recently introduced the Connecting Classrooms<sup>36</sup> programme, that supports partnerships between clusters of schools in two sub-Saharan African countries and the UK on the basis of equity, providing opportunities for young people to explore each other’s cultures through the curriculum.

**VSO**<sup>37</sup>, which now recruits volunteers from several countries in the world, and not just the UK - has recognised the role that volunteers can play in bringing ‘global education’ to a wider audience, both during their service abroad and afterwards, on their return home.

**BBC World Class**<sup>38</sup> has created the media climate to encourage partnerships for many schools across the Commonwealth since 2005.

31 [www.dfid.gov.uk](http://www.dfid.gov.uk)

32 [www.britishcouncil/globalschools](http://www.britishcouncil/globalschools)

33 [www.camb-ed.com/cef.asp](http://www.camb-ed.com/cef.asp)

34 [www.dfid.gov.uk/funding/delphe.asp](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/funding/delphe.asp)

35 [www.globalgateway.org.uk](http://www.globalgateway.org.uk)

36 [www.britishcouncil.org/connecting-classrooms](http://www.britishcouncil.org/connecting-classrooms)

37 [www.vso.org.uk](http://www.vso.org.uk)

38 [www.bbc.co.uk/worldclass](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldclass)

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### The key role of the Commonwealth

The Commonwealth encourages learning in a global context. It has much to offer in the drive for international collaboration in education.

The Commonwealth came about through international mobility and migration of peoples and constitutes a natural arena for the formation of school partnerships. Its shared language, history, traditions, democratic institutions, and educational structures, offer rich opportunities for creating networks and partnerships. Indeed the majority of school partnerships are between schools in Commonwealth countries, very frequently including schools in UK.

School and colleges partnerships chime well with the theme that Commonwealth Heads of Government has chosen for their next meeting in Trinidad and Tobago – *Partnering for an Equitable and Sustainable Future* – in 2009. In Kampala the Commonwealth Peoples Forum, representing civil society groups stressed in their communication to Heads:-

*“the importance of exchanges, partnerships and links across the Commonwealth between civil society bodies, communities and institutions for the purpose of sharing experiences and learning from one another, thereby strengthening governance and contributing to the Millennium Development Goals and building peace, prosperity and well-being.”*

The Commonwealth Consortium for Education, in association with Link Community Development and other partners, devoted its second Conference in Cape Town in December 2006 prior to the I6CCEM, to school and college partnerships in the Commonwealth. It explored ways in which partnerships can contribute to member countries' efforts to reach the MDGs in education, to broadening the education experience of learners and

teachers in Commonwealth schools and colleges and to strengthening Commonwealth bonds. In particular, the Conference examined opportunities for school exchanges in the South, within and between countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Pacific.

Reflecting this, amongst the commitments in the communiqué from the Education Ministers the following week was their agreement “...to encourage and promote school to school links and at other levels of the system as a means of fostering mutual understanding and to improve the quality of learning outcomes”.

# Chapter 13: EDUCATION ABOUT THE COMMONWEALTH AND ITS VALUES

## Introduction

The earlier chapters in this book have mainly addressed education development in the Commonwealth and its member states, and co-operative programmes to that end. This chapter has a different orientation, focusing on the theme of education for Commonwealth citizenship – learning about the Commonwealth and its member countries, imbibing Commonwealth values and particularly respect for other cultures and societies, and learning to live together harmoniously in a diverse international community.

Education about the Commonwealth, broadly understood, is important for the future of the Commonwealth, for the causes of international peace and development and for the development of democratic societies across the globe. It also helps learners of all ages to find their compass in a rapidly changing and increasingly interdependent world.

A very wide spectrum of activities, programmes and organisations have a role in projecting knowledge about the Commonwealth and its place in the modern world. Commonwealth awareness is nurtured by, for example:

- major public events such as the annual Christmas Day broadcast by the Queen; and Commonwealth Day, observed on the second Monday in March;
- biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (the CHOGMs) and associated events such as the Commonwealth People's Forum and Commonwealth Youth Forum, and the quadrennial Commonwealth Games;
- visible expressions of Commonwealth co-operation in the shape of Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation projects, the programmes of the Commonwealth of

Learning, or the presence in a local university of Commonwealth Scholars;

- press releases and information materials published by the Commonwealth Secretariat and Foundation;
- education and information activities of the Royal Commonwealth Society and other civil-society Commonwealth voluntary and professional bodies;
- cultural activities, such as the annual Commonwealth Writers' Prize presentation;
- libraries and museums specialising in Commonwealth materials;
- explicit learning, teaching and research that focuses on the Commonwealth in the schools and colleges of member states.

All this adds up to a substantial volume of activity, but the many pieces of the jigsaw have yet to be assembled so as to form an intelligible picture. For although Commonwealth Heads of Government and Ministers of Education have frequently identified Education about the Commonwealth as a major concern, they have yet to devise collective overall strategies and to assign responsibilities and resources for carrying them out.

Education about the Commonwealth thus currently represents a hole in the association's education infrastructure that a number of other organisations strive with only partial success to fill. At one time it might have been thought that the Commonwealth Institute in London might, if properly resourced, assume this mantle. Until 2002 UK Government funding supported the Institute's activities, which focused on teaching about the Commonwealth, mainly however in the UK. After UK financial support and oversight came to an end, the Trustees of the property decided to realise their capital assets and to use the proceeds to support a Centre for Commonwealth Education at the University of Cambridge focusing on primary and secondary

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education and the training of teachers within the Trust's remit to advance education in the Commonwealth.

In the mid-1990s useful exercises were conducted, attempting to draw together the strands of Commonwealth information and education activity in two limited areas. In 1997, Derek Ingram's Review of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Information Programme was published. It followed the 1996 the Report of the Commission on Commonwealth Studies chaired by Professor Tom Symons. The 'Symons Report' *Learning from Each Other: Commonwealth studies for the 21st Century* had a focus on research and teaching about the Commonwealth at the tertiary-education level.

### Commonwealth awareness

Knowledge of the Commonwealth seems to be diminishing. It may well be that only a small minority could name more than a handful of Commonwealth countries other than their own, know what values the Commonwealth stands for, or are familiar with the practical development activities that Commonwealth agencies undertake. For many of its citizens, the Commonwealth connection that has shaped their present situation and status seems to be a matter of history. They are conscious of it as a contemporary phenomenon only when a CHOGM or conference of Commonwealth Ministers meets in their country, the Commonwealth Games are on TV, or a Commonwealth programme benefits them individually.

Insofar as the modern Commonwealth is equated in the popular mind with the former British Empire, it is understandable that in newly independent countries people want to move on. It has to be recognised, too, that unlike the UN, the Commonwealth does not have visible offices

in Commonwealth capitals, and the resources it commands for collective development programmes are comparatively modest in scale.

Such perceptions, understandable as they may be, do scant justice to the reality of the Commonwealth in terms either of its significant role in shaping the societies in which Commonwealth citizens live, or of its potential relevance to building a better and safer world.

The Commonwealth was born from the movement of peoples. Originally the drivers of this mobility were conquest, settlement and labour migration - including the slave trade - during the period of the British Empire. But since 1945 and the era of Independence, migration has continued on an even greater scale as people have sought better livelihoods and education in other Commonwealth countries; or have taken up residence either temporarily under contract with an international employer, or more permanently through marriage or refugee status. Consequently many Commonwealth countries have large minorities, born in another Commonwealth country and whose presence in their midst owes much to historical ties, and is facilitated by shared language, professional practice and institutions. Many Commonwealth countries have become vibrant multi-cultural societies, microcosms of an increasingly globalised world. Some insight into the Commonwealth's past and present is necessary for a person's understanding of his/her own place in the world.

The Commonwealth is highly relevant to the building of a better international community. Composed as it is of societies from every continent that embody diverse races, cultures and faiths, and at very different levels of economic development, the Commonwealth is representative of the wider world to which it belongs. The readiness for compromise and

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to seek accommodation of differences that has characterised Commonwealth relations is a useful asset on the global stage. The Commonwealth's own make-up of rich and poor countries enables it to identify solutions to difficult issues, respecting the common interest and serving the common good. It has been a pathfinder in pursuit of agendas of democracy, good governance, tolerance and mutual respect that reflect the principles set out in its 1991 Harare Statement and subsequent documents.

The Commonwealth could pursue a number of strategies to keep its profile before the public and to ensure that the rising generations grow up to be well informed about the Commonwealth association, and the benefits and obligations involved in membership, through for example

- striving to ensure that Commonwealth institutions and activities are more widely spread throughout member countries than at present, and making strenuous efforts to reduce the over-concentration of activity in the UK;
- full attention to public relations and to media-related work of all kinds, and better co-ordination of the media work and messages put out by the Secretariat, Foundation and civil society organisations;
- using Commonwealth programmes and resources to spread the Commonwealth message. Outreach activity aimed at the general public, and at young people in particular, should be part of every Commonwealth conference and workshop. Commonwealth experts under CFTC, and Commonwealth Scholars and Bursars, might be encouraged and assisted to become informants about, and ambassadors for, the Commonwealth;
- support from the Commonwealth Foundation and other bodies, including the private sector, for civil-society bodies that engage in Commonwealth outreach-education work, arranging conferences, Youth CHOGMs, prize competitions, displays and exhibitions. A few of these organisations and their activities are described in this chapter;
- a focus on young people who form a key constituency within the audience for messages and information about the Commonwealth. In recent years a more conscious effort has been made to include youth activities in Commonwealth Foundation programmes; Youth Forums have been held to coincide with CHOGM, and in conjunction with Conferences of Commonwealth Education Ministers;
- promoting education about the Commonwealth and Commonwealth studies in schools, colleges and universities throughout the Commonwealth. This is addressed more fully below.

**Commonwealth Day**, held on the second Monday of March each year, provides a special opportunity for engaging the interest of the public in the Commonwealth. Each year a theme (education 2005, health 2006, 'respecting difference: promoting understanding' 2007, 'the environment: our future' 2008, 'serving a new generation' 2009) is chosen and this provides the focus for activities, for the Queen's Commonwealth Day message, and for a display poster that is sent to schools in every Commonwealth country. In many countries there is a special Commonwealth Day observance ceremony: in the UK this takes the form of a multi-faith religious service in Westminster Abbey in the presence of the Queen, the Commonwealth Secretary-General and the British Prime Minister. Many schools and

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colleges in Commonwealth countries also mark the Day with a parade or other ceremony, and children are encouraged to undertake projects on Commonwealth topics. Commonwealth West African countries have been prominent in marking the Day by special events.

Each year the Royal Commonwealth Society on behalf of the Council of Commonwealth Societies (CCS) prepares a comprehensive Commonwealth Day Information Pack, which receives wide distribution. The Commonwealth Secretariat used to publish an attractive Commonwealth Day Handbook for Schools to serve as a resource book with suggestions and guidance for schools, and sharing ideas and experiences. This last appeared in 1992.

### Education about the Commonwealth: what is involved?

The evolution of the Commonwealth and its contemporary membership, structures and organisation are a worthy subject of study in their own right. They may form a discrete topic within a syllabus addressing international organisations or contemporary international current affairs. In what tends to be a very crowded curriculum, however, the Commonwealth will often be studied obliquely - via, for example, history, geography, literature, politics or citizenship - rather than directly.

The study of citizenship provides a natural bridge to consideration of the Commonwealth with its emphasis on inter-cultural appreciation and tolerance, and mutual respect among people of diverse faiths and cultures. Education about the Commonwealth naturally overlaps with education for international understanding and global citizenship, with development education, and at tertiary level with area studies, development studies and comparative studies more generally.

### Learning about the Commonwealth at school

As indicated above, there is a place for specific attention to the Commonwealth and its institutions in the school curriculum. In 1997 in conjunction with I3CCEM in Botswana the Commonwealth Secretariat conducted a survey on education about the Commonwealth in member countries.

As was to be expected, in the countries that responded more work was reported in the area of citizenship and values education than of any explicit study of Commonwealth membership and institutional arrangements. Nevertheless some countries did (and do) make specific reference to the Commonwealth in their school syllabus.

Whether the focus is on formal Commonwealth organisation and membership, or more loosely on values and citizenship, specialised resources and appropriate in-service training are clearly needed to enable teachers and students to cope well with this part of the curriculum.

Formal classroom study of curriculum content is only one way in which student awareness of the Commonwealth can be inculcated at school. Student clubs and societies and school international partnerships can significantly influence student perceptions and experience.

One major development under way is the growth of voluntary Commonwealth clubs, democratically run by students in schools. Inspired by Nigeria, where more than 120 such clubs have been established, the Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit obtained a grant for over two years to stimulate clubs in secondary schools in England; but it proved difficult to raise further funds for continuation of this work after March 2007. At the time of I6CCEM there were

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40 clubs in Cameroon, 20 being set up by the Commonwealth Society of Ghana, and others in Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya.

The Commonwealth clubs programme has worked closely with those promoting international partnerships and linking for schools. In the UK particularly there are many school-linking organisations and initiatives, as described in Chapter 12. The various Commonwealth gatherings in Cape Town in December 2006 provided an opportunity to undertake a stocktaking of school and college linking in the Commonwealth and to review its potential for creating solidarity among young people in member countries, for instilling an awareness of the rights and responsibilities of global citizenship, and finding new ways of working together for education development. The Commonwealth Consortium for Education in partnership with Link Community Development, a South Africa-based NGO, and others, devoted its own Conference to the theme, and Ministers subsequently agreed “to encourage and promote school-to-school links and at other levels of the system as a means of fostering mutual understanding and to improve the quality of learning outcomes”.

In looking to engage with people from different cultures across the world, schools are often oblivious of the make-up of their own local communities. Migrant professionals and other workers, international students and refugees may be present in considerable numbers. In many locations learning about the Commonwealth can thus start at home through contact with individuals and ‘diaspora’ communities. The student and teacher population of the school, and the community in its immediate neighbourhood, provide a rich resource for learning about the peoples, societies and cultures that make up the modern Commonwealth.

### Commonwealth studies at tertiary level

There is a wide range of relevant teaching and research in universities and other institutions of post-secondary education and this was partially mapped by the Commission on Commonwealth Studies in its 1996 report, *Learning from each other: Commonwealth studies for the 21st century*. The Commission found there were no complete undergraduate degree courses in Commonwealth Studies but at postgraduate level there were a small number of programmes leading to higher degrees in Commonwealth Studies, Commonwealth History and Commonwealth Literature. In addition a number of programmes carried the designation ‘post-colonial’ rather than ‘Commonwealth’.

Not all of the programmes bearing the ‘Commonwealth’ or ‘post-colonial’ label take place in Commonwealth countries, for there is wide interest in Commonwealth literature and history elsewhere. Within the Commonwealth, the Institute of Commonwealth Studies of the University of London, with its concentration of research and teaching and a fine library collection, has always held a pre-eminent place. Although the Institute formerly tended to focus on Commonwealth history, its present offerings are much more contemporary, dealing with human rights and social and economic development. The Institute houses the semi-autonomous Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit (CPSU), a think-tank whose main concern is with current issues facing Commonwealth decision-makers.

The Commission on Commonwealth Studies took a wide view of the nature of ‘Commonwealth Studies’ and stressed that comparative study of national experience in a Commonwealth context was an important component. It emphasised the value of ‘Learning

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from Each Other'. The Commission made a number of important recommendations but although these were welcomed by CHOGM in 1997 there has been no co-ordinated follow up.

### Main actors and sources of support

Many different bodies play some role in promoting teaching and learning about the Commonwealth. Until six years ago there was an information centre and exhibitions at the *Commonwealth Institute's* Kensington premises where programmes were organised for school pupils and teachers. While the main thrust of these education activities was located in and directed to the United Kingdom, there was also some pan-Commonwealth activity including exhibitions and performances in the Arts.

The *Association for Commonwealth Studies* was formed in the aftermath of the Symons Report, and has held conferences on different aspects of Commonwealth development and culture including health, architecture, governance, and literature. The 2007 theme addressed the theme of this chapter - Educating the Commonwealth about the Commonwealth.

The *British Empire and Commonwealth Museum* is a privately funded charitable body that has until recently maintained permanent displays and temporary exhibitions about Empire and its transition to Commonwealth. It describes its mission as being "to provide a national forum for preserving, exploring and studying the UK's cultural heritage associated with its former empire and with the Commonwealth, to promote an understanding of their integral role in Britain's cultural, historical and social heritage." The Museum is currently in process of moving from Bristol, where the galleries remained open until late in 2008, to London from which base it hopes to develop as a major centre of research

and learning and of work with teachers in its areas of interest.

The *Royal Commonwealth Society* has promoted learning about the Commonwealth for young people in a variety of ways. It has been active in advocacy, arranging conferences and meetings to examine how the Commonwealth should address the challenge. It runs an annual Commonwealth Essay competition for school students throughout the Commonwealth, and for secondary-school pupils organises a programme of Youth CHOGMs involving young people in assuming the role of different member states in international gatherings.

The *Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit* referred to above has maintained a close interest in education about the Commonwealth and was the recipient of UK Departmental funding to promote Commonwealth clubs and to engage young people with the Commonwealth and its values.

### Looking ahead

The concern by Commonwealth Heads of Government with promoting Understanding and Respect, which led to the issue of a special mandate in 2005 from the Malta CHOGM to the Secretariat, seems likely to push Education about the Commonwealth and its Values higher up the association's collective agendas. In 2007 Heads in Kampala received the report of the Commonwealth Commission on Respect and Understanding, chaired by Professor Amartya Sen the distinguished Nobel Prize economist. The Government leaders' Munyonyo Statement welcomed the findings of the report Civil paths to peace and endorsed its recommendations.

The Commonwealth's attention to these issues will be partly informed by the Commonwealth Foundation's linked activities on promoting inter-faith co-operation and dialogue on respect

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for diversity, focusing on work that builds on and enhances shared values and with a strong youth dimension.

Commonwealth leaders will surely look to their countries' education systems to play a major role in efforts to address the Understanding and Respect agenda. Indeed, their Munyonyo Statement singled out "activities in relation to young people, women, education and the media, as the priority fields of action". This will require a stocktaking of education policies and analysis of what current programmes are in place in schools, college and universities – as well as in non-formal education programmes - to promote the Commonwealth values of mutual understanding, respect for human rights and democratic accountability, and to strengthen the bonds of Commonwealth identity. It would seem to be an appropriate moment for Commonwealth Education Ministers to commission, through the Secretariat and interested civil-society organisations, their own review of what the education systems of the Commonwealth are doing and might do in future to promote core Commonwealth values and how they could best assist with future Commonwealth action programmes to reduce conflict and tension in the world.

With these thoughts in mind the Commonwealth Consortium for Education is planning to devote its own Conference, in association with the National University of Malaysia to exploration of these issues and to report to the Ministerial Conference and associated Forums on their findings.

Commonwealth membership and key indicators on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)												
Country	Year Joined Commonwealth	Total population ('000)	GNI per capita (US\$) 2007	GDP per capita growth % p.a. 1990-2006	Net primary enrolment rate % 2006	Adult literacy rate % 2006	Life expectancy (years) 2006	Infant mortality (per '000) 2006	HIV/AIDS prevalence among adults aged 15+ years per 100,000 population 2005	Personal computers per 1,000 people 2004		
Antigua & Barbuda	1981	84†	11,520	1.8		85.8	72	10				
Australia	1931 (Statute Westminster*)	20,951	35,960	2.4	96.4		81	5	<0.10††	689		
The Bahamas	1973	335			87.9		73	13	2.81			
Bangladesh	1972	161,318	470	3.0		53.5	64	52	<0.10	12		
Barbados	1966	295			96.2		77	11	1.24	125		
Belize	1981	294	3,800	2.4	97.0	75.1	72	14	2.11	135		
Botswana	1966	1,906	5,840	4.6		82.9	50	90	23.62	47		
Brunei Darussalam	1984	398		-0.6	93.8	94.9	77	8	<0.10	85		
Cameroon	1995 (independent 1960)	18,920	1,050	0.6		67.9	50	87	4.90	10		
Canada	1931 (Statute Westminster*)	33,170	39,420	2.2			80	5	0.22	698		
Cyprus	1961 (independent 1960)	864	24,940	2.3	99.2	97.7	79	3		309		
Dominica	1978	72†	4,250	1.4	77.3	88.0		13		182		
Fiji Islands	1970 (left 1987, rejoined 1997**)	844	3,800	1.5	91.2		69	16	<0.10	52		
The Gambia	1965	1,754	320	0.3	61.8		59	84	2.09	16		
Ghana	1957	23,947	590	2.1	63.6	65.0	60	76	2.23	5		
Grenada	1974	106	4,670	2.3		96.0		17		155		
Guyana	1966	736	1,300	3.3			66	46	2.07	35		
India	1947	1,186,186	950	4.4	88.7	66.0	64	57	0.75	12		
Jamaica	1962	2,728	3,710	0.8		86.0	71	26	1.37	62		
Kenya	1963	38,550	680	0.1	75.5	73.6	53	79	6.13	14		
Kiribati	1979	100†	1,170				62	47		12		
Lesotho	1966	2,020	1,000	2.5	72.4	82.2	43	102	22.68			
Malawi	1964	14,288	250	1.2	91.1	71.8	48	76	12.53	2		
Malaysia	1957	27,027	6,540	3.3		91.9	74	10	0.39	192		
Maldives	1982 (independent 1965)	311	3,200	4.8	97.4	97.0	68	26		110		

\* The Statute of Westminster of 1931 gave effective independence to the dominions of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa.

\*\* Suspended from the councils of the Commonwealth in December 2006.

† Population figure for 2006

Malta	1964	408		2.7		91.6	79	5	<0.10	315
Mauritius	1968	1,272	5,450	3.7	95.0	87.4	73	12	0.44	162
Mozambique	1995 (independent 1975)	21,813	320	4.4	76.0	44.4	42	96	14.43	6
Namibia	1990	2,102	3,360	1.4	76.4	88.0	52	45	17.68	109
Nauru	1968	10†					63	25		
New Zealand	1931 (Statute Westminster*)	4,215	28,780	2.0	99.3		80	5	<0.10	493
Nigeria	1960 (suspended 1995-99)	151,478	930	1.0		72.0	47	99	3.55	7
Pakistan	1947 (left 1972, rejoined 1989)	166,961	870	1.5	65.6	54.9	65	78	0.09	4
Papua New Guinea	1975	6,458	850	0.2		57.8	57	54	1.62	63
St Kitts & Nevis	1983	48†	9,630	2.9		97.8	72	17		220
St Lucia	1979	167	5,530	1.1	97.9	94.8	74	12		173
St Vincent & Grenadines	1979	121	4,210	1.9		88.1	71	17		132
Samoa	1970 (independent 1962)	189	2,430	2.4		98.7	71	23		
Seychelles	1976	85†	8,960	1.6		91.8	72	12		185
Sierra Leone	1961	5,969	260	-1.1		38.1	42	159	1.36	
Singapore	1965	4,490	32,470	3.7		94.4	80	3	0.16	620
Solomon Islands	1978	507	730	-2.1		76.6	63	55		41
South Africa	1931 (Statute Westminster*, left 1961, rejoined 1994)	48,832	5,760	0.8		88.0	51	56	16.58	83
Sri Lanka	1948	19,394	1,540	3.9		91.5	75	11	<0.10	27
Swaziland	1968	1,148	2,580	0.3		79.6	41	112	34.46	33
Tonga	1970	101	2,320	1.8		99.2	73	20		50
Trinidad & Tobago	1962	1,338	14,100	4.7		98.7	70	33	2.54	79
Tuvalu	1978	10†						31		
Uganda	1962	31,903	340	3.1		73.6	51	78	6.30	5
United Kingdom		61,019	42,740	2.5	98.4		79	5	0.14	600
United Republic of Tanzania	1961	41,464	400	1.8	97.8	72.3	52	74	5.91	7
Vanuatu	1980	232	1,840		87.8	78.1	70	30		14
Zambia	1964	12,154	800	0.0	92.0	68.0	42	102	15.82	10

† < denotes 'less than'

Source: The Commonwealth Yearbook 2009 courtesy of the publishers, Nexus Strategic Partnerships.

## Appendix 2: THE COMMONWEALTH CONSORTIUM FOR EDUCATION (CCfE):

The objectives of the Consortium, founded in 2001, are to promote the development of education throughout the Commonwealth by mobilising the contribution of education-based civil-society organisations, and to constitute a forum to promote co-operation among member organisations. When mandated by its members, it acts as a body representing their views to outsiders and in turn it serves as a channel for consultation with its members.

Membership is open to any pan-Commonwealth organisation in the fields of education, youth and culture, with associate membership available to other international or national Commonwealth organisations sharing the Consortium's objectives. In 2009 there are 18 full Members, five Associate Members and three Special Members as shown on these pages. There is no individual membership.

Officers serve on a voluntary basis. The Chair is elected, and the other posts are filled by members of the Consortium who designate one of their members to serve. An Executive Committee meets, presently in London, two or three times a year. Members pay a small annual subscription to meet office expenses.

The Consortium has accredited status with the Commonwealth, being represented 'in the wings' at CHOGMs and sending an Observer Delegation to Conferences of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEMs).

The activities of the Consortium include:

- Holding of conferences, seminars and workshops from time to time, particularly in the context of Conferences Commonwealth of Education Ministers, and of the Commonwealth People's Forums held in conjunction with Heads of Government Meetings
- Publishing reports on information materials including the Directory of Commonwealth Education and Commonwealth Education Briefing Notes
- Producing a Quarterly Commonwealth Education Calendar listing forthcoming events in the education sector
- Making submissions and representations to Commonwealth bodies as occasion arises
- When invited serving as an observer on Commonwealth Groups
- Serving as a channel of communication between members and the Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth Foundation and Commonwealth of Learning.

### Membership of the Commonwealth Consortium for Education 2009

#### Full Members

Association of Commonwealth Examination and Accreditation Bodies (ACEAB)  
Email: [colinrobinson@tinyworld.co.uk](mailto:colinrobinson@tinyworld.co.uk)

Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (ACLALS)  
[www.aclals.ulg.ac.be/](http://www.aclals.ulg.ac.be/)

Association for Commonwealth Studies (ACS)

Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU)  
[www.acu.ac.uk](http://www.acu.ac.uk)

British Empire and Commonwealth Museum (BECM)  
[www.empiremuseum.co.uk/](http://www.empiremuseum.co.uk/)

Commonwealth Association of Museums (CAM)  
[www.maltwood.uvic.ca/cam/](http://www.maltwood.uvic.ca/cam/)

## Appendix 2: THE COMMONWEALTH CONSORTIUM FOR EDUCATION (CCfE):

Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa (CAPA)  
[capa@kenpoly.ac.ke](mailto:capa@kenpoly.ac.ke)

Commonwealth Association of Science Technology and Mathematics Educators (CASTME)  
[www.castme.org/](http://www.castme.org/)

Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management (CCEAM)  
[www.cceam.org](http://www.cceam.org)

Commonwealth Countries' League Education Fund (CCLEF)  
[www.ccl-int.org.uk](http://www.ccl-int.org.uk)

Commonwealth Human Ecology Council (CHEC)  
[www.chec-hq.org](http://www.chec-hq.org)

Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit (CPSU)  
[www.cpsu.org.uk/](http://www.cpsu.org.uk/)

Commonwealth Teachers' Group (CTG)

Council for Education in the Commonwealth (CEC)  
[www.cecomm.org.uk](http://www.cecomm.org.uk)

The English-Speaking Union of the Commonwealth (ESU)  
[www.esu.org](http://www.esu.org)

Institute of Commonwealth Studies (University of London) (ICS)  
[www.commonwealth.sas.ac.uk](http://www.commonwealth.sas.ac.uk)

League for the Exchange of Commonwealth Teachers (LECT)  
[www.lect.org.uk](http://www.lect.org.uk)

Link Community Development (LCD)  
[www.lcd.org.uk](http://www.lcd.org.uk)

### **Associate members**

Commonwealth Business Council (CBC)  
[www.cboglobelink.org](http://www.cboglobelink.org)

Commonwealth Relations Trust (of the Nuffield Foundation) (CRT)  
[www.nuffieldfoundation.org](http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org)

Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council (CYEC)  
[www.cyec.org.uk](http://www.cyec.org.uk)

Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS)  
[www.rcsint.org](http://www.rcsint.org)

Royal Over-Seas League (ROSL)  
[www.rosl.org.uk](http://www.rosl.org.uk)

### **Special Members:**

Commonwealth Secretariat  
[www.thecommonwealth.org](http://www.thecommonwealth.org)

Commonwealth Foundation  
[www.commonwealthfoundation.com](http://www.commonwealthfoundation.com)

Commonwealth of Learning (COL)  
[www.col.org](http://www.col.org)

## Appendix 3: FURTHER READING ON COMMONWEALTH EDUCATIONAL CO-OPERATION

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