



Commonwealth Collaborative Partnerships

To advance the 15CCEM Plan of Action and Edinburgh Communique

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Welcome to our newsletter!

This year we will be holding Mid-Term Reviews in three regional areas – Asia/Pacific in April, Caribbean and Canada in July and Africa/Europe in November. At each Review we look forward not only to speaking about our post-15CCEM activity, but also to hearing from ministers about the policies, strategies and projects which are being implemented in furtherance of the 15CCEM Action Plan.

Some of the reports in this Newsletter allude to the variety of work being undertaken throughout the Commonwealth. We read of the collaboration between the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Aga Khan University on Universal Primary Education (UPE); an outline of the discussion surrounding the Commonwealth Baccalaureate and an International Curriculum being developed by Scottish teachers; the scholarship and fellowship plan; the graduation from a College in Sierra Leone; libraries as a tool

to reach educational goals and a fascinating insight into the development of Commonwealth Clubs.

Through this Newsletter we are pleased to record some of the developments in education throughout the Commonwealth. As we come to meet our ministerial partners at the Regional Reviews, we hope that further good practice in policy, strategy and implementation can be communicated for future editions. We will also provide our Collaborative Partners with details of our Awards in Good and Promising Practices. We envisage that there will be great interest in these and know that their launch in July will be welcomed.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition of the Newsletter and that through these pages, when a model of good practice is found, it can be communicated to others in the Commonwealth.

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Aga Khan University Universal Primary Education Seminar for Senior Officials and Education Leaders

from Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Egypt, Mongolia, Syria and Nepal

7 – 25, February, 2005

by Dr Roli Degazon-Johnson, Education Section

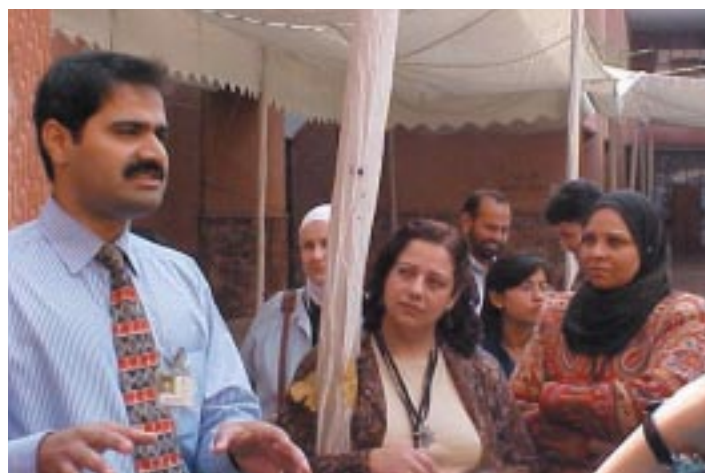
Early childhood learning interventions are increasingly being established as essential to optimising human development and having beneficial impact on high and timely school enrolment, less grade repetition, lower dropout and higher school completion rates in primary education. (UNICEF, 2001).

Consistent with the mandate of Ministers at 15CCEM to address “Achieving Universal Primary Education” as one of the six action areas, the education programme in its role as Advocate, Broker and Catalyst has been working with national and regional institutions in Commonwealth member countries to address Good and Promising Practices in UPE Achievement.

In February 2005, as an outcome of a collaboration between the Commonwealth Education programme and The Aga Khan University, a three-week intensive residential programme was presented,

addressing Human Development from the critical standpoint of the early years (0-6). Targeted at education leaders and senior officials from Pakistan as well as Commonwealth countries such as Bangladesh, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda and beyond the programme addressed the roles of Health, Nutrition, Neurobiology, Brain Development, Genetics and Child rearing practices from the perspective of determining their influence on the later development of the child. Field visits to rural schools and the pre-primary “Katchi” classes also complemented the programme.

The Commonwealth Education section carried a message which encouraged the participants to see the programme as vital in striving for UPE in their countries. Field visits to schools, parents meetings and even the home of a villager provided clear evidence of the innovative work in which the Aga Khan Educational Service is involved and reconfirmed the importance of early childhood/pre-primary interventions influencing primary school teaching/learning methodology and access and enrollment for all, but for girl children in particular in Pakistan.



Expanding the Commonwealth Scholarship & Fellowship Plan

Dr. John Kirkland, Executive Secretary, Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom

The Edinburgh Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers provided a welcome opportunity to demonstrate increased expansion and diversity in the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP). Equally important, it has provided a platform for further development.

The CSFP is one of the oldest and most successful forms of Commonwealth collaboration. Established at the first Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in 1959, it provides a framework through which governments and universities of member countries can offer academic and training opportunities to citizens of other member states. So far, almost 23,000 individuals have benefited, and awards have been held in over twenty countries.

Although the number of awards showed some decline in the early 1990's, a report presented in Edinburgh showed that this trend had significantly reversed, with the number of students on award in 2002-03 increasing by 28% from that of 1998-99. The number of countries offering awards showed an even more dramatic increase – from 6 to 13. During the conference itself Malta announced its intention to join this list, equalling the highest

number of countries ever to offer awards in a single year. Since that time, the University of Botswana has provided a further welcome addition.

Equally significant has been the increased diversity in the range of awards available. An experiment by Canada in offering distance learning awards has also been taken up by the United Kingdom, which also offers short-term professional fellowships and split-site doctoral scholarships. The majority of awards remain at postgraduate level.

The United Kingdom has led the way in this expansion, reflecting its long-standing commitment to be the largest contributor to the Plan. It has not, however, been the only contributor. United Kingdom students have benefited from new opportunities in countries such as Brunei and South Africa, both of which accepted their first ever British students this year. Of course, many awards do not involve

the UK at all. The first Commonwealth Scholar in Mauritius came from Tanzania, for example, whilst Malta's first award has been made to a student from the West Indies. Ultimately, it is the ability to transport students from Nigeria to Trinidad, Canada to Malaysia and Ghana to India that gives the Plan its exceptional potential as an agent for Commonwealth collaboration.

There is welcome evidence, too, of continuing impact. 2003 saw the publication of the first ever Directory of Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows, listing almost 20,000 previous award holders. With career profiles of some 1,900. The overwhelming majority have returned to their home country, in many cases reaching the very top of their profession. Alumni are now being organised into 'professional networks' to facilitate continuing contact between those with similar interests.

Of course, change will continue in future years. For further information about the latest position in contributing countries, please check the CSFP web site, at www.csfp-online.org.

The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission

The Commission was set up under the Commonwealth Scholarship Act 1959, as the body responsible for the United Kingdom's participation in the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan, itself established in 1959.

The Plan was designed as a system of awards to men and women from all Commonwealth countries chosen for their high intellectual promise and their capacity to return to make a significant contribution to life in their own countries. One of its guiding principles is that it be based upon mutual co-operation and the sharing of educational experience among all countries of the Commonwealth.

Funds for awards tenable in the United Kingdom come from two Government Sources: the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which provides an annual budget of around £2 million to support scholars from Canada, Australia and New Zealand; and the Department for International Development which provides an annual budget of some £10 million to support award holders from the remainder of the Commonwealth.

As well as General Scholarships, the Commission also administers Academic Staff Scholarships, Commonwealth

Academic Fellowships, Split-Site Doctoral Scholarships, Scholarships by Distance Learning, Professional Fellowships and the DFID Shared Scholarship Scheme. More information on all of these schemes, and also on the work of the Commission (including Annual Reports and Events information) can be found on the UK page of the recently launched international CSFP website.

Examples of website for scholarships include:

Awards available to Canadians for Graduate Study in other Commonwealth Countries or information about studying in Canada: www.scholarships-bourses-ca.org

Awards available to Australians for study in Commonwealth countries or information about studying in Australia: www.idp.com/scholarships

Awards for Commonwealth citizens to study at graduate level at the University of the West Indies: www.csfp.online.org

Hon Dr Alpha Wurie, Minister for Education, Science and Technology, Sierra Leone presides over Grand Graduation Ceremony

Mitlon Margai College of Education and Technology, Freetown, 26 February 2005

by Dr Henry Kaluba, Education Section

Hon Dr Alpha Wurie, Minister for Education, Science and Technology was Guest of Honour at Milton Margai College of Education and Technology in Freetown on 26 February 2005. Accompanying the Minister on this occasion were a number of local dignitaries, including the following: Prof John A. Kamara, Chairman Polytechnic Council; Prof A. Alghali, Vice Chancellor of University of Sierra Leone; Sheikh Abubakarr Conteh; Rev Canon Ajai Nicol.

Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates were awarded to graduands in the following fields- Education, Environmental Science, Hotel, Tourism and Nutritional Sciences; Business and Management Studies; and Engineering. In Education students had completed studies and training in the following disciplines: Education Administration, Guidance and Counselling; Measurement and Evaluation; Social Studies and Community Development; Physical Health Sciences; Performing Arts; and Practical Subjects. Among the highlights were students who had been awarded Diplomas and Certificated for programmes completed through distance education.



A Commonwealth Baccalaureate?

by W Bonney Rust, Council for Education in the Commonwealth

1 Improving Quality in Education

"Ministers stressed the importance of improving education outcomes for all learners. This will be achieved using a variety of mechanisms to enhance quality, including the strengthening of Commonwealth qualifications, accreditation frameworks and quality assurance mechanisms".

A major step towards these aims could be formation of a:

Commonwealth Baccalaureate

The Commonwealth Baccalaureate is designed to provide a common university entrance qualification for all the universities in the Commonwealth.

A review of the Universities' Yearbook provides lists for most universities of the standard qualifications for admission to an undergraduate course. These lists reveal the extreme variety of the university entrance qualifications facing any student applying for entry to a university.

New Trends in Education

Two major trends in upper secondary education over the past two decades have been:

- the move (especially in UK related education) towards a broader spread of subjects and
- an effort to incorporate vocational education with equal status to academic education, into the curriculum.

N.B. Wales introduced its own Welsh Baccalaureate in September 2003

Is the International Baccalaureate the Answer?

The International Baccalaureate (IB) carries wide international respect, but the IB is a chartered foundation under the Swiss Civil Code. It is thus self-financing through fees and charges. These charges could not be borne especially by schools in the developing countries of the Commonwealth.

The IB provides especially well for academically gifted young people. It is less suitable, and a very heavy course, for the less gifted student. Furthermore, the IB carries very little capacity for incorporating vocational studies.

The time is ripe therefore for a carefully researched study aimed at producing the best available common university entrance qualification for the Commonwealth.

2 Educational Principles

A new Commonwealth University entrance qualification might need to consider some educational principles to inform proposals e.g.

- A wide spread of subjects
- This could include Languages, the Arts, Science and Vocational subjects
- Maximise the numbers of subjects e.g. to six
- Adopt the IB structure of requiring candidates to study three subjects at Higher Level and three at Lower Level
- Include a study of the Commonwealth within the world community
- Require a commitment to undertake (and prove) a form of social service in the student's home locality

- Require a commitment to undertake at least one month of practical work experience spread over the duration of the course
- There would be a need to grade passes in the (?) six examined subjects, because of competitive entry to some universities; and especially for some faculties within the universities

A Model for Discussion

These principles might produce a simplified model such as:

- Group 1** The national language. If it is English – then a modern foreign language
- Group 2** The English language – including its use as a medium of communication in the Commonwealth
- Group 3** A science subject. In addition to the standard science subjects, this could include Agricultural Science; or the Physics of House Construction; or Information Technology
- Group 4** Geography, or History, or Economics of the Commonwealth
- Group 5** A number subject e.g. Mathematics (vocational or academic), Statistical Method, or Accountancy
- Group 6** A vocational option.

This could range from practical Electricity or Plumbing, to Water Supply, Agriculture, Business or Management Studies; from Computer Studies to Art and Design

A Possible Way Forward

The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) already acts as the representative for some 500 Commonwealth Universities. The Association is governed by its members.

Commonwealth Universities therefore already have their own organisation which could design and construct a Commonwealth Baccalaureate to a specification designed by themselves.

3 A suitable committee could oversee pilot projects designed to test these new Proposals.

All Commonwealth universities could be consulted. The ACU might well become the agency for any accepted new award. The Commonwealth of Learning could be the moving force behind studying for the Commonwealth Baccalaureate through distance learning and the provision of teaching materials.

Added Value from a Commonwealth Baccalaureate

- A common entrance qualification for all 600+ universities of the Commonwealth
- Much improved mobility available to students entering higher education courses
- An award open equally to vocationally or academically gifted students
- A possible benchmark for the important study by the Commonwealth Secretariat to form a framework of qualifications applicable across the Commonwealth
- An award open to Further Education and Community College systems
- A response to the Education Ministers' policy set out in the first paragraph
- A valuable component strengthening the educational network which already exists within the Commonwealth.

Library networks: Helping to reach Education Goals

by Nicola Cadbury

A new research paper, commissioned by Book Aid International, highlights the many ways in which libraries in Africa are supporting literacy and learning. It also exposes gaps in service provision and argues for better policy recognition and enhanced funding so that all people can have access to learning resources.

The ability to read is at the heart of self-education and lifelong learning. But millions of people currently don't have access to books and other learning resources. The scarcity of books severely limits the opportunities people have to learn and to transform their circumstances.

Education is pivotal in helping to reduce poverty by equipping people with the necessary skills to earn their livelihoods and increase productivity. A vital part of education is access to appropriate information – in print or electronic form – to help ensure that people's skills are frequently updated to keep abreast of new demands.

With adequate support and a coherent policy framework, libraries can provide practical solutions to the scarcity of resources. They offer a unique and cost effective means of providing access to information for all, because resources are shared. In the context of scarcity that exists in sub-Saharan Africa, libraries have

a more important role than in the North – they are the universities of the people.

Librarians, as community information workers, can also be at the heart of personal and community development: encouraging and sustaining literacy, and supporting education for all. Librarians in many commonwealth countries are already working hard to attract reluctant readers, especially women and girls. To help establish a reading culture, library services and book development councils have introduced children's reading tents in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The reading tents introduce young children to reading in a non formal environment, as an activity to be enjoyed, with games, competitions and story telling. The aim is to inculcate an enduring love of reading, which will underpin learning in the classroom.

The recent adoption of Universal Primary Education has put an enormous strain on resources in many African countries. But here again libraries can help: a cost effective strategy for equipping schools with books is to link them with the public library network. In Kenya, for example, the community library in Karatina has introduced school book boxes of supplementary reading materials, transported by motor bike, each box rotating among a number of schools. Through this initiative, teachers from the benefiting schools are trained in basic library skills. Reading materials for the schools are regularly replenished, using book stocks from the library as a sustainable source of supply.

Unfortunately, the infrastructure of public libraries that exists in sub-Saharan Africa has been largely neglected by governments and the international development community. Dwindling availability of public funds has made it hard for library services to extend their networks. For instance in Uganda the government's development budget for



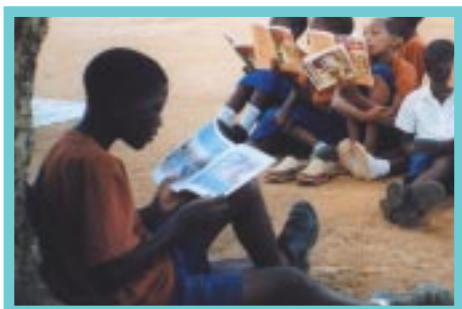
libraries amounted to just \$75,000 (US) over the last five years, to cater for both capital expenditure and book buying.

Another problem impacting on African readers is that the minimal purchasing power of consumers means that publishing and bookselling are small and struggling industries and local book production is still low. For libraries to function effectively, the whole book sector needs to be strengthened, creating a supportive environment in which local authors, publishers, and booksellers can work together to produce more books, including those in local languages. Currently Africa has 12% of the world's population but produces only 2% of the world's books. More investment is needed to help build strong book sectors, to create long lasting solutions to book shortages, to help build a reading culture.

For long term development public library networks need to be properly resourced, and recognised as mainstream for education and development. Investing in books and libraries as part of strengthening the book sector as a whole is central to educational reform, literacy enhancement and subsequently poverty reduction in sub-Saharan Africa.

'Sharing resources – how library networks can help reach education goals' by Ruth Makotsi is available to download from the Book Aid International website: www.bookaid.org or telephone 020 7733 3577 to receive a copy through the post. If you would like more information about Book Aid International do contact us. Our twice-yearly networking newsletter for libraries and the book trade, BookLinks, is available free of charge.

Nicola.cadbury@bookaid.org



National Conference on HIV/AIDS Curriculum Development Presented for Leaders of Teachers Associations and Unions of India

by the All-India Federation of Teachers Organizations (aifto) Mumbai, India

Indian professionals and officials are among the first to admit that the figure of just under 4 Million as HIV/AIDS-infected persons (2001) in the population greatly under-represents the true picture of the prevalence of the scourge in that country which at that time was estimated as closer to 10 million. Education programmes to educate and inform about the virus hitherto have had limited effect and have not reached primary school children.

Following the Ministerial Meeting on HIV/AIDS and Education held at Stoke Rochford in September 2004 which was attended by representatives of the Commonwealth Teachers Grouping, Mr Ramesh Joshi, deputy secretary general of the All India Federation of Teachers and head of the Greater

Mumbai Teachers Union submitted a proposal to the Secretariat requesting support for a programme to review, revise and develop the present curriculum on HIV/AIDS in school in India. The proposal involved a national seminar for the leadership of the All India Federation to be followed by four regional seminars – in Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Imphal Manipur and Simla-Himachal Pradesh – for educators and teachers at local levels.

In February 2005, In collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat Education section a three-day programme saw 87 educators and leaders of professional associations from all but 2 states of India convening for presentations and group discussions on a wide range of HIV/AIDS related issues including the curative and preventive aspects of HIV/AIDS and the

myths and “taboos” associated within Indian society to the scourge. The conference was also addressed by leading officials from state government level in education, and it was recognised that the policy to prevent HIV/AIDS education being taught in Primary Schools in India has emanated from ministry-level. Non-governmental organizations, including representatives of the transvestites association in Mumbai, and representatives of the municipal authority were also present. The conference was therefore used as medium for educating the AIFTO leadership about HIV/AIDS and for lobbying government officials to review the curriculum to enable primary school children to be educated about HIV/AIDS given the evidence of children of primary school age being infected by, and dying of HIV/AIDS.



**Gender, education and development:
Beyond Access seminar, Dhaka,
31st January – 1st February 2005**

By Stella Manda, Education Section

This was the fifth of a series of seminars by the Beyond Access: Gender, Education and Development project. The Beyond Access project is jointly co-ordinated by the Institute of Education, London and Oxfam GB, and is funded by the UK Department for International Development. It is linked to work for the Millennium Development Goal for gender equity in education by 2005 and aims to raise awareness and circulate new knowledge on gender equality in education amongst policymakers, academics and practitioners. The theme of the seminar was ‘Partnerships for Gender Equality and Quality Education: An examination of planning, training and evaluation’.

The seminar brought together key partners in girls' education, and built on themes developed in previous seminars to explore forms of partnerships to sustain the momentum for gender equality in education. It further provided an opportunity to examine the results of recent research work in this area and to hear about initiatives of governments and non-governmental organisations in building and sustaining partnerships for gender equality in basic education.

The Bangladesh Education Minister, Dr Osman Farruk, launched the seminar by emphasising Bangladesh's commitment to the 2005 and 2015 Millennium Development targets of achieving quality education for every boy and girl. At least 70 key policymakers in IGOs, governments, NGOs, practitioners, academics and campaigners participated in the seminar.

The following were noted as key in promoting gender equality in education: Good policies and resources can contribute to success in girls' education if complemented with responsive implementation processes. There is need for a significant shift from gender parity to gender equality in education in order to respond to, monitor and report on indicators for quality. Alliances for girls' education need to have gender mainstreamed across their structures, partnerships should go beyond rhetoric.

The seminar ended by pledging to create a common understanding of gender equality in education; develop champions for gender equality in education; and use existing networks to broaden more collaboration.

An International Curriculum for Excellence

by Claire Soper, International Manager Edinburgh Education Department and Margaret Alcorn, National Continuing Professional Development Coordinator

In October 2003, the 15th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers took place in Edinburgh. Since then, the Scottish education system has continued to develop and promote a very wide range of exciting, and in many cases innovative, international education initiatives. You will get just a flavour of those from the examples which follow.

Scottish teachers have become used to the concept of using self-evaluation as the key to improvement, and welcomed the publication of the latest in the How good is our school? series on international education. You can find this at: www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/HMIEInternationalEducation.doc

This useful publication allows teachers to consider how they are doing, and what evidence they have to support their view. It also supports forward planning of next steps to improvement. The publication also serves to maintain a high profile for international education in our schools, and helps teachers to focus on what matters.

Within Edinburgh, the twinning link with Kenya continues to grow and develop. There has been an increase in the number of school – school partnerships, some of which have attracted grants from DfiD Global Schools partnerships. The city has also hosted a visit by a

district Director of Education and two headteachers from Kenya who came to explore ways in which we could ensure meaningful linking and better exchange of practice. Currently, Edinburgh is home to two of the six Commonwealth Professional Fellows who are on a twelve week placement to study leadership. They have travelled from Kenya, Anguila, Mauritius, South Africa, Lesotho and Jamaica.

Teachers in Scotland are looking forward to the G8 Summit 2005 which will take place in July. As part of our preparations for this, Edinburgh will host the J8 Youth Summit. The delegates are prizewinners in a competition organised by the DfES and sponsored by Morgan Stanley, and include young people from each of the G8 nations. All 130 of them will meet for three days prior to the G8 to produce a communiqué, which will be taken by our First Minister Jack McConnell and the Prime Minister Tony Blair to the summit. Citizens of Edinburgh will also be invited to take part in Active Citizenship Forums, which will discuss the themes of the conference – climate change and Africa. Our schools will also be involved in many art- and drama based activities to support these themes. A Commonwealth Day competition will result in an exhibition on the 14th March in the Royal Society in Edinburgh celebrating the work of Scotland's primary pupils.

Secondary aged pupils will be invited to take part in a competition to win a place on a visit with the First Minister to Malawi in May. This competition has resulted from a visit in February by 13 Members of the Scottish Parliament, and costs will be met by the Scottish Executive and by a philanthropic body, the Hunter Foundation. The winning team will set up formal links with a school in Malawi, and later this year a return visit will be arranged for the African young people.

Within Scotland, our aspiration is that every child and young person will become a successful learner, a confident individual, a responsible citizen and an effective contributor. We hope to use the range of initiatives and events described above, and many others such as "Make Poverty History", "Send a Friend to School", the UK Presidency of the European Union in the second half of this year, etc, to develop a coherent and impactful international education curriculum. We are also committed to offering every teacher high quality CPD, and International Education has been shown to be one of the most effective ways to deliver this. We look forward to ever richer and more productive partnerships with other nations in the years ahead.

Strengthening Civil Society in Scotland

The Secretary-General, Mr Don McKinnon, attending the re-launch of the Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS) in Scotland, praised Scotland's thriving civil society for its Commonwealth activity. He urged RCS Scotland to continue to play a role in promoting the Commonwealth such as the RCS has done for Commonwealth Day. He commended the RCS for disseminating information on the Commonwealth to schools. It helped people to learn both about the Commonwealth's work, and its shared values.

Mr McKinnon welcomed the ideas, enthusiasm and dedication of civil society organisations, saying these groups will help broaden the influence of the Commonwealth. He recognised the good work of the Centre for Commonwealth Education and the Council for Education in the Commonwealth in co-hosting

a lecture and lunch during Commonwealth week on the theme of education.

In addition, when addressing the Scottish Parliament's International Development Group he noted that the Commonwealth aims to ensure that it remains relevant to the needs of all its 53 members. He said the Commonwealth promotes development and democracy and consensus-building among a diverse group of nations, and is involved in preventing and resolving conflicts.

"We help to prevent conflicts, and in areas of conflict resolution, we work to build trust between the disputing parties. We try to find a common ground of understanding between the parties involved."

Review of Summer Lightning by Olive Senior

Review by Diana Bailey

One of the key Action Areas is 'Supporting Quality in Education'. What can be more important for achieving quality than encouraging reading? The Commonwealth has a huge reservoir of fantastic authors and a wide range of titles. We start a new section in our Newsletter with a review of one such author – Olive Senior and her book of short stories, *Summer Lightning*. Olive won the Commonwealth Writer's Prize in 1987 for this work. Future editions will focus on other Commonwealth writers. Do you have a special book or author you would like to review? Please send any ideas to this newsletter.

When Olive Senior won the inaugural Commonwealth Writers' Prize in 1987 for her first collection of short stories, *Summer Lightning*, hers was hailed as a shimmering talent. She was certainly an appropriate recipient of this innovative literary award established to 'reward and encourage new fiction in the Commonwealth'.

In this anthology Olive Senior draws on her own childhood experience of rural Jamaica, which becomes the setting for these ten entertaining and beautifully crafted stories. She portrays with colourful detail a rich array of intensely individualistic characters and highlights the dramatic quality inherent in their lives. As the stories unfold, so do the complex family relations of a society born out of slavery and circumscribed by poverty. The colonial heritage is also revealed in the dominance of an oppressive religion, symbolised by a terrifying God riding on the clouds, and in the rigid divisions of class. A dichotomy exists between the vibrant

indigenous culture of the villages and the inhibited, pseudo-European culture of the middle classes.

Many of the stories are told from a child's perspective, but few of these children are brought up by both their parents – stepmothers, aunts, uncles and grandparents abound. In the fluidity of the family groups depicted, the children are often lonely, compensating for their isolation by creating powerful imaginative worlds. Such is the boy in the title story of the collection, who feels a spiritual affinity with a local Rastafarian but is later inexorably drawn to the sinister figure of a visiting old man. The children are frequently at odds with the adults on whom they depend and the stories contain painful moments of misunderstanding, disappointment and danger. But despite their experience of frustration and fear, in the end these children usually triumph through their resilience or even humour.

Olive Senior is an exceptionally accomplished story teller. Although this is

a short anthology, she invokes a remarkable variety of tone, from the sombre and menacing *Country of the One Eye God*, to the more absurd and light-hearted *Real Ole Time T'ing*. The stories are not only exquisitely constructed, with each one rounded off to a memorable conclusion, but they are also narrated throughout with sensitivity and wit. The human voice is crucial, and even when the stories are not related in the first person, the characters are brought vividly alive through an uncompromising use of the local dialect, known as Jamaican 'Patwa'. Although some of the vocabulary and syntax will be unfamiliar to those outside the Caribbean, the narrative pace carries the reader along.

As a poet, Olive Senior brings to her fiction an economy of language, with no word out of place, and a sharpness of metaphorical allusion. Each of these most enjoyable stories sparkles like a piece of cut glass.

Schools Under Siege: Barbados Union of Teachers President Speaks Out

The level of indiscipline which is exhibited in society is at an all time high, with some schools operating under a siege mentality and teachers fearing for their safety, said Mrs Karen Best, the President of the BUT.

She was speaking at the Annual Conference of BUT which was held in Barbados in March. She called on all parents, teachers and students to work together to reduce the levels of student-on-student violence and student-on-teacher assaults. She suggested that parents' associations must work with teachers to find ways to produce a climate which is characterised more by harmony than violence.

She noted that there are a number of measures which could help to develop this climate. These include trained security personnel being at schools, adequate fencing of school buildings, adequate furniture, good parental support and full community involvement in the everyday workings of the school.

If your community has any suggestions for BUT please contact the organisation direct at but4@hotmail.com

Commonwealth Clubs Project, February 2005, Commonwealth Day

by Deryn Holland, Commonwealth Clubs Project, University of London

As you will be aware, 14 March was Commonwealth Day. This year's theme was 'Education – Creating Opportunity, Realising Potential'.

On the second Monday of March each year, the 53 member countries celebrate the unique association and the links they have with one another. At the Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit, Commonwealth Clubs Project, we helped schools to celebrate Commonwealth Day.

Here are a few ideas of what students and teachers did to mark the occasion.

Some students sent 'happy Commonwealth Day' cards to other students and schools in the Commonwealth. This was a great way for students to find out how education and school days differ in other countries around the world. Do contact us if we can help to facilitate any such exchanges.

Find out the Commonwealth countries with which students have connections.

Screenings were held of the winning entries in the 2004 Commonwealth Vision awards. These 13 films (each lasting about 1 minute) addressed this year's theme for Commonwealth Day.

Students chose another Commonwealth country and found out more about its culture, history, politics, environment, food and music.

Students performed a traditional song or dance from another Commonwealth country.

We would be more than happy to provide information, support and ideas for future Commonwealth Day activities in schools and in Commonwealth Clubs. For an information pack through www.rcsint.org

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Teaching – the career of a teacher, Richard Morris

Following a very successful teaching career in his own country of New Zealand, and at a time when he might well be contemplating retirement, Richard Morris was persuaded by the Bishop of Central Tanganyika to revive a very decrepit secondary school, at Mvumi, in the wilds of Tanzania.

Nearly ten years on he is still at it, and what he has achieved is quite astonishing. He has several hundred pupils, some excellent buildings, and a fine teaching staff... and more plans for the future. In addition to managing all this Richard has had to raise all the money required. Due to a brief spell teaching in the UK in his early days he

had quite a lot of contacts there, so most of the money has come from the UK and New Zealand.

Richard very quickly realised that he must build dormitories for the girls, for many of them would otherwise need to walk several miles every day. Not only would they be exhausted, but hungry, and too often a prey to men who would offer them food in exchange for favours. Furthermore, apart from the existing five schoolrooms and the church, all in a very poor state, he has had to build everything necessary for a successful school. This includes more classrooms and dormitories, an assembly hall, staff houses, an administrative block. Plans are now well advanced to

open a senior school which will be closely attached to a commercial course at Cambridge University.

In addition to all this school clubs are thriving in such things as art, drama, and the humanities, and sport is, of course, very popular. Following a recent inspection the school was classed as one of the very best in Tanzania. Do you know of a teacher of similar stature? Please let us know!

From the very start Richard Morris and his chairman, Bishop Mdimi Mhogolo have had a vision of providing the leaders of the future, and it has been a story of astonishing achievement between these two men.

DCT Mvumi Secondary School, Dodoma, Tanzania

Since 1996 Inherited church and several old classrooms...

- 1 Restored church; also to be used as a classroom during the week.
- 2 Renovated existing classrooms.
- 3 Converted old classroom to library.
- 4 Converted old classroom to science block.
- 5 Built boarding house for 48 girls. (now for boys)
- 6 Built boarding house for 128. (now for girls) All with matrons' flats; common room; toilet blocks, water storage facilities... all in secure compounds.

- 7 Built two staff houses.
- 8 Built administrative block.
- 9 Still under construction...
 - a) Dining room and kitchen for 400.
 - b) Science Block.
 - c) Classroom block.
 - d) 48 bed senior pupil's boarding house.
 - e) 2 staff houses.

The school now has its own deep borehole with a water tower

Support for Effective Implementation of Multi-grade Teaching

by Virgilio Juvane, Education Section

In response to the high demand imposed by needs of learners in a changing society, Uganda hosted a technical workshop “Support for Effective Implementation of Multi-grade Teaching” from November 29 – December 3, 2004. The workshop was organised in partnership by the World Bank, the Development Cooperation Ireland, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the ADEA Working Group on the Teaching Profession and was attended by participants from Ethiopia, Gambia, Kenya, Lesotho, Nigeria, Uganda and Zambia.



Multi-grade teaching has been recognised as an alternate instructional strategy to support teachers teaching large classes. Many Sub-Saharan African countries are confronted with crowded classrooms due to the shortage of teachers. Most teachers working in rural and remote schools have no appropriate pedagogic support to adequately instruct pupils of different grades in a single classroom. Multi-grade teaching could be a pedagogic solution to improve teaching and learning under such circumstances.

The technical workshop held in Uganda addressed the following objectives:

- Understand basic requirements for implementing effective multi-grade teaching programs and learn lessons from international experiences;
- Incorporate good practices and principles in developing teaching and learning support materials, curriculum adaptation strategy, and teacher development programs for effective multi-grade teaching and learning;

- Share knowledge, innovative ideas and practice in these three areas among participating countries; and
- Assist participants develop country-specific sample materials in each of these three areas and hands-on country-team exercises.

The participant's countries identified issues and similar problems in different levels, e.g. the lack of national policies on multi-grade teaching and, subsequently no clear guidelines for schools; the lack of appropriate resource materials; pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes do not include multi-grade teaching; and the need to adapt the curriculum for multi-grade teaching or identify ways to adapt this approach to existing programmes.

In general, the workshop has pointed out that there is ignorance and negative attitude about multi-grade teaching which is considered to be too demanding in terms of preparation and delivery.

All countries shared the feeling that to a large extent the modules address specific

concerns in the areas of training, the development of training package and support of teachers and:

- Provide information that will sensitise stakeholders to multi-grade issues;
- Address important curriculum and timetabling issues, as well as information and guidance for teachers on multi-grade strategies;
- Give guidance on classroom management and control.

Multi-grade Teaching is at the centre of the ADEA Working Group on the Teaching Profession work plan. In this regards, the Working Group's approach is twofold: in collaboration with involved partners the training programme will continue as to cover more African countries, while ensuring the distribution and dissemination of modules.

As Gjadharsingh (1991) states, multi-grade classrooms are here to stay. They should not be a matter of short-term administrative necessity, an expedient stop-gap; nor are they an archaic throw back to the one-room rural school. The message is clear: educators need to take multi-grades as seriously as they do single-grades. This means giving priority to a pedagogical approach, to the structure and organisation of such classrooms, to the creation of different curricula and support material.



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Commonwealth Day Education

- develops knowledge and awareness
- equips individuals with skills and experience
- enhances potential and builds informed societies

creating opportunity realising potential

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