

MULTINATIONAL COOPERATION, DISTANCE EDUCATION AND
COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES FOR HUMAN RESOURCE
DEVELOPMENT IN POOR COUNTRIES: A STUDY OF THE
COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING

by

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TECHNOLOGIES FOR HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IN POOR COUNTRIES: A
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Abstract

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) in Vancouver was established in 1988 to aid the educational efforts of developing Commonwealth countries through multinational sharing of educational material, distance-education techniques and communication technologies. This study of COL is the first detailed scholarly examination of the new agency ever undertaken. Its major objectives were :- (a) to research the evolution, history and development of the agency; (b) to examine and assess the range of projects attempted in its first five years in pursuit of its overall mandate; (c) to provide a detailed analysis of its successes and problems in that period; and (d) to discuss the varying conditions under which COL could continue to grow or decline in its effectiveness and influence.

Through detailed examination of Commonwealth conference and commission reports, planning and project documents, on-site evaluations and case studies of projects in Canada and Guyana, formal inter-governmental reviews, and extended interviews with experts attached to COL, this study traces the history and development of COL, and points to both its successes and problems over its first five years. It underlines the difficulties inherent in "cooperation" among unequal partners - a handful of rich countries among a preponderance of economically struggling nations - each with its own set of expectations. It also illustrates the precarious existence of multilateral agencies which depend on a very small number of their membership to provide the bulk of their funding.

It concludes that the most well-meaning and urgently needed types of international functional cooperation is dictated by those countries with the most economic and political power in the grouping, not by those for whom it is ostensibly aimed; that distance education and communication technologies must be matched to numerous social, economic and cultural factors in a developing country before it can work; and that the multinational sharing of educational material is very difficult given the complexity of copyright laws in individual countries. But, in general, it finds that COL has demonstrated, through projects undertaken in over forty countries, the great potential of multilateral collaboration, distance education and communication technologies for poor countries.

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First I thank my three immediate supervisors Prof. Bob Anderson of SFU, Prof. Rowland Lorimer of SFU and Dr. Tony Bates of the Open Learning Agency. Bob was both mentor and friend, Rowly was always there with a helpful word of advice and a smile and Tony, although not on site at SFU, inspired through his intelligent and lucid writings. The office staff of the School of Communication, Lucie, Neena, Denyse, Dale and Sharon, always provided a rich oasis when all other sources dried up.

I also owe much gratitude to the Chair of the Board and a number of Board Members of COL, and particularly the President, Directors, Senior and Junior staff at COL Headquarters in Vancouver for putting up with my constant physical and telephone intrusions for three years. Never once was I turned away or slighted. Were I to single out individuals I would have to cover at least three-quarters of COL's staff list.

There are many individuals in Canada, the Caribbean and Guyana who provided me with interviews and information which immensely aided my work and to them all I say thanks.

Finally I thank my wife and children for giving me their strength through five years of mental and physical dislocation and helped a worn-out scholar find new life.

Dedication

For Barbara

and

Randy, Rovina and Janeen

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	2
Acknowledgments	4
Dedication	5
Chapter 1 : INTRODUCTION	9
Background to this Study	
Major Objectives	
Methodology	
Chapter Outline	
Chapter 2 : DEFINITIONS, CONCEPTS AND THEORIES	22
International Organizations	
Distance Education and	
Communication Technologies	
Chapter 3 : THE COMMONWEALTH	64
Its Development	
Its Experiences in the Field of Distance Education	
Chapter 4 : BACKGROUND CONDITIONS FOR COL	94
Differential Fees for International Students	
Standing Committee on Student Mobility	

Chapter 5: BIRTH OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING	119
The Briggs Commission	
The Daniel Working Group	
The Establishment of COL	
Chapter 6 : THE COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING AT WORK	154
Regional Programs	
Functional Programs	
Communication and Technologies	
Chapter 7 : TWO CASE STUDIES	189
The Guyana Project	
COL/BC Visiting Fellowship Program	
Chapter 8 : AN ASSESSMENT OF WORK OF COL	223
An Internal Assessment	
Chapter 9 : AN ASSESSMENT OF THE WORK OF COL	241
An External Assessment	
Chapter10: INITIAL QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES REVISITED	259
History and Evolution	
Functions and Operations	
Major Problems	
Conclusion	
Further Studies	

Appendices	311
1. Appendix A: The Memorandum of Understanding on The Commonwealth of Learning	312
2. Appendix B: A Sample Lesson of the University of Guyana's English Distance Education English Course	321
3. Appendix C: A Sample Questionnaire given to the participants of the COL-BC Fellowship Program	337
4. Appendix D: A Sample of the Questionnaire sent out by the Inter-Governmental Progress Review Committee	341
5. Appendix E: List of Persons Interviewed by the Progress Review Committee	347
Selected Bibliography:	359

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Commonwealth of Learning

The Commonwealth of Learning in Vancouver is the newest Commonwealth Agency and the only one which exists outside of Britain. It is meant to serve fifty countries (fifty-one with the entry of South Africa in 1994) which are members of the Commonwealth. The mission of the Commonwealth of Learning is "to create and widen access to opportunities of learning...making use of the potential offered by distance education and by the application of communication technologies in education...to strengthen member-countries' capacities to develop the human resources required for their economic and social development."¹ Those most in need of assistance in developing their human resources are the nearly forty poorer member-states of the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth of Learning is the first agency to attempt to promote co-operation in the field of distance-education for developmental purposes on this global scale. Its commitment is four-fold :-

- to the individual Commonwealth student - expanding personal opportunities and choices;

- to the educational institutions in Commonwealth member states - sharing information, materials, experts and technology;
- to each member country - creating opportunities for increased human resource development; and
- to the Commonwealth as a whole - providing links and networks among universities and other educational institutions in the Commonwealth.

In short, it is an attempt to use international cooperation, distance education and communication technologies in a unique collaborative effort.

The background to my interest in this agency

I was sitting in my office at the University of Guyana (UG) in May of 1985 despairing over an almost impossible assignment. As a result of my appointment two months earlier in a cross-faculty position as a lecturer in Communication within the Sociology Department, and the program planner for a proposed Distance Education Unit in the Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (IACE), I was asked to prepare a "green" paper for discussion at a seminar to launch the Distance Education Unit.

In the Division of Communication I was lecturing in **Broadcasting**. There, I felt adequately qualified having worked, read and thought in this field for over 15 years; on the other hand, my only qualification for being sought after by IACE to initiate their Distance Education Unit was a history of producing radio and TV programs and writing feature articles for the major

Sunday newspaper on "educational" topics. To complicate matters even further, I held a Masters degree in **English** from a Canadian University.

But how does a broadcaster and journalist suddenly acquire the background and knowledge needed as a planner of a distance education program at the university level in a developing country? The question baffled me. That I was considered the best qualified candidate for this task is some indication of the human resources problem countries like mine face.

The University of Guyana library was no great help, since it carried very few books on distance education. I vaguely knew that Britain, Australia, Canada, India and a few African countries had used radio in special ways to supplement correspondence education courses in the 1950's and 60's, but literature on these efforts was generally not available in Guyana. So, while I enjoyed lecturing in Broadcasting and actually had to turn away students from that course, I became frustrated in my second task - developing an initial plan for the introduction of distance education at UG.

My eventual paper to the seminar mentioned above rehashed obvious reasons for a distance education unit at UG - to respond to the many needs of our society etc. - and offered vague proposals on how to proceed. They were clearly not detailed or practical enough for action. By the start of 1986, after national elections, the Prime Minister asked me to join his staff as Communication Adviser. I reluctantly left my Broadcasting course at UG but was not unhappy to depart from my haphazard efforts in distance education at IACE.

Then in 1987 I heard of the Commonwealth plan to set up a University of the Commonwealth for Co-operation in Distance Education (the name

was later changed to the **Commonwealth of Learning**). It was meant to help member countries in the creation of their own distance education programs by sharing experiences, expertise and even courses among and between Commonwealth countries. A major emphasis was to be placed on the utilization of appropriate communication technologies.

Remembering my own lonely and futile efforts in 1985, I saw the introduction of The Commonwealth of Learning as one of the most exciting, practical and necessary initiatives to have come out of the Commonwealth. I immediately attempted to acquire a more detailed understanding of The Commonwealth of Learning (COL).

But everywhere one asked, no one seem to know exactly what COL could, would or was capable of doing for individual countries, although expectations were generally high and positive.

In the meantime, in an attempt to quit politics, I applied for and was granted a Commonwealth Scholarship tenable at SFU which was situated less than ten miles from the Headquarters of the newly established Commonwealth of Learning in Vancouver. Not only was I well placed and strongly motivated to investigate COL, but I had the opportunity of a Ph.D. dissertation to answer for myself and many developing Commonwealth countries a number of questions concerning this new international agency which seemed to hold so much promise for urgently needed collaboration in the field of distance education.

My first visit to COL's headquarters (accompanied by Bob Anderson, my senior supervisor at SFU) in late 1989 and discussions with both the President and Vice-President, solidified my interest in this new agency. Its

mandate appeared so urgently relevant to many struggling Commonwealth countries that its success seemed a foregone conclusion. I felt as if circumstances (and fate) brought me to this point - had provided me with a Commonwealth Scholarship, tenable not 10 miles away from the headquarters of this new Commonwealth organization set up to address the very problems I faced only a few years before. Bob Anderson and I agreed almost immediately that the Commonwealth of Learning would be a very worthwhile subject for a Ph.D. study. It would be like providing a "live" commentary of the origins and development of a new organism which was growing right before our eyes.

But even before the euphoria subsided I realized that I needed to formulate a number of specific questions which would both guide my study and illuminate for others the agency under scrutiny. Most of my early questions focused on how developing countries were to be helped and who would provide this help. In essence I saw myself as a crusader for developing countries and this new agency. There were no critical or searching questions such as: Can it succeed given the overwhelming scope of its mandate? Are its foundations sufficiently solid to allow for expansion and growth? Then I realized that even before I could pose a single question I would need to lay the foundation upon which any such discussions could take place. This foundation would have to include researching and detailing the conditions which led to the conception and establishment of the Commonwealth of Learning. It would also have to include details concerning the functions and operations of the agency and an assessment of its effectiveness. I was in effect the pioneer who would have to map the country

for myself and others to traverse. With this overall goal in mind I formulated a number of basic questions which would stimulate my inquiry.

INITIAL QUESTIONS

1. Would a close examination of the history and evolution of the Commonwealth of Learning reveal the assumptions of its constitution and a rationale for its mandate?
2. Could an empirical examination of a range of COL's activities point to strengths and areas of potential problems in the execution of that mandate?
3. Can one assume that distance education and communication technologies is the solution to the many problems (shortage of money, teachers, school buildings and equipment) faced by developing countries in the field of education ?
4. Finally what specific problems would the Commonwealth of Learning face as it moved from one phase to another after its initial five year period?

These questions were distilled into four major objectives for the purposes of this dissertation.

MAJOR OBJECTIVES

- (1) To trace the genesis of the Commonwealth of Learning through the earliest recognition and articulation of specific needs in various

Commonwealth meetings and Conferences to its actual establishment in Vancouver in 1988.

(2) To examine the present mandate, structure and institutional arrangements of the Commonwealth of Learning with a view to critique any shifts which may have taken place between the conception of the idea and its actual implementation.

(3) To examine the operations of the Commonwealth of Learning since its establishment in 1988, through identification, descriptions and review of a cross section of projects undertaken so far. This would include one in depth evaluation of the work COL has done in a developing Commonwealth country on the point of establishing distance education as a formal mode of education and another case study of a pan-Commonwealth project.

(4) Finally, to provide an assessment of COL's overall performance in the first phase of its operations and an analysis of problematic areas which affected its effectiveness and influence or could affect it in the future.

The importance of these objectives and this study

Objectives one and two allowed for the first detailed history of this agency to be written. It required uncovering, documenting and analyzing the conditions, conferences and commissions which were instrumental in bringing about the establishment of the Commonwealth of Learning. They also demanded a focus on the implementation process from ideas to agency, noting any shifts which occurred. In providing this history, the dissertation becomes essential background research for other scholars

wishing to study the Commonwealth of Learning - its origins, its purpose, its establishment and its operations. This by itself was worth the time and effort of this study.

Objective three which called for an examination of the work of the Commonwealth of Learning in the first phase (five years) of operations, added essential detailed information on the types and range of projects planned and executed by this agency. It also provided a dissection of two of the projects undertaken and allowed for analysis and commentary on a few key features of COL's operations including its use of distance education and appropriate communication technologies.

Finally objective four fulfilled both an academic and a utilitarian purpose. Problematic areas were underlined to focus on the need for further scholarly exploration of COL and agencies similar to it. Secondly, given this researcher's personal interest in the possible benefits of an agency such as the Commonwealth of Learning in developing countries, the final objective also aimed at providing the decision-making bodies concerned with its future and the participant who would benefit from such a future, the results of an independent three-year study on fundamental challenges which must be overcome if COL is to continue in any effective way.

This study was ground-breaking and elementary. Ground-breaking, in the sense that it could take nothing for granted since this was the first scholarly study of this agency ever done; elementary, because it sought to identify the major elements from which this initiative was constituted. It was of necessity broad rather than deep. In depth researches would now need to focus on the various elements unearthed. We have suggested at least three

areas for follow-up studies in our conclusion.

METHODOLOGY

This study is meant to be a historical and critical analysis of the Commonwealth of Learning. The areas of examination include the **evolution, structure, function, funding and decision-making procedures of COL, along with an assessment and critique of its work so far.**

Since no full-length study has ever been done on the Commonwealth of Learning, I needed to collect and analyze as many primary documents on COL as I could obtain. These included position papers and Conference material surrounding the genesis of COL. From the Headquarters of COL in Vancouver I interviewed (over a period of two-years) the President, Directors and all the senior officers of the Agency on the operations, achievements and challenges of COL in its first five years. I gained access to a few formal assessments of the COL's individual projects and one major external review of the Agency as a whole. I also gained access to COL's library which housed many of its internal documents. These are summarized and analyzed to provide an overall picture of the performance of COL from its establishment to the end of its first phase of operations in 1993. I also conducted an on-site evaluation of one of COL's projects in a developing country, Guyana, and was a participant observer at one of its projects (COL-BC Fellowship Program) in Canada.

There are, therefore, four distinct methodological stages coinciding with the four objectives set out above. Each stage was antecedent to the one which followed:

(a) Tracing the "genesis" of COL required the classic "historical" data collecting techniques such as locating speeches and conference documents which give early testimony to the need for a "Commonwealth of Learning" and the early conceptual framework for such an agency. The historical approach also allowed for the chronicling of the major players, both individuals and countries, in this planning period.

These primary sources and documents were woven into a single narrative with both explanatory and analytic perspectives. The narrative endeavored to capture the philosophy and principles which informed and inspired the origins on this agency.

(b) The second phase consisted of in depth interviews with the President, Regional Directors (responsible for programs in Africa, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific), and heads of departments. Discussions with these officials not only included functions and responsibilities within the various Divisions of COL, but were wide ranging and sought responses to their interpretation of the mandate of COL, challenges faced and successes achieved.

(c) A third and complementary stage included the examination of a full range of projects undertaken by COL to satisfy various aspects of its mandate. During this stage, I designed and completed a detailed in-country summative evaluation of one of these projects in the form of a case -study illustration of the Commonwealth of Learning at work and used the qualitative research technique of participant observation during one of COL's projects in Canada.

(d) Finally in order to provide an multi-linear assessment of COL's work, I provided both formal and informal; internal and external assessments of the

Agency's work using interviews and documentary reports. This included an analysis of some major challenges to COL's continued existence including the pivotal questions of sharing of educational material and copyright implications, accreditation, funding, and decision-making processes.

Chapter Outline

Following this introduction in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 provides the definitions, concepts and theories which underpin and open up the descriptive and analytic examination of COL throughout the dissertation, focusing on International Organization, Distance Education and Communication Technologies. To give some indication of the rationale for this grouping called the Commonwealth in which the agency is set and the wide mix, in terms of geography and development, of its membership, Chapter 3 provides a brief history of the development of the Commonwealth as well as a summary of Commonwealth experiences and cooperation in the field of distance education prior to the establishment of COL.

Chapter 4 gives the background conditions and problems which motivated action and attempts at cooperation in education leading to discussions and proposals for some form of cooperative action on the part of Commonwealth countries. Chapter 5 concentrates on the two major Commissions (the "Briggs" Commission and the "Daniel" Working Group) which gave form and content to previous proposals for Commonwealth cooperation in education culminating in the establishment of the Commonwealth of Learning in 1988.

Chapter 6 provides an extensive examination of the volume and variety of programs and projects undertaken in the first five years of COL's operations. While Chapter 7 focuses on two case studies, one in Guyana, a developing Commonwealth country, and one in Canada, as in depth examples of the Commonwealth of Learning at work.

Chapter 8 and 9 provide a two-dimensional assessment of the role and work of COL over the first five years. Chapter 8 allows for an internal review as given by senior officers of COL and Chapter 9 for an external review done by an intergovernmental team comprising of experienced scholars from a number of Commonwealth countries. Chapter 10 responds to our initial questions and major objectives, highlighting a number of problem areas which COL has to deal with if it is to continue and grow. It ends with a Conclusion and suggestions for further studies.

¹ Taken from the second paragraph of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Commonwealth of Learning which was signed by the Commonwealth Heads of Governments in September 1988, to formally establish COL.

CHAPTER 2

DEFINITIONS, CONCEPTS AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

The Commonwealth of Learning is premised on three major operational elements. The first involves international cooperation through the formal vehicle of an **international organization**. The second assumes the widespread promotion of **distance education**, making maximum use of the third element, **communication technologies**. This chapter will provide preliminary definitions, concepts and theoretical frameworks which act as background for the assessment of these three elements as they pertain to the Commonwealth of Learning.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION

International organization carries with it two distinct meanings. First, it is a description of the way international affairs or relationships among nations, be they military, diplomatic, economic or social relations, are organized. Second it is often used in the plural to indicate institutions which have been formally constituted for such purposes. Claude Inis makes the distinction this way: "International *organization* is a process; international *organizations* are representative aspects of the phase of that process which has been reached at a given time."¹

Our focus is primarily on international organizations in this second sense, as bodies with membership, common aims, detailed structures and functions, regular meetings and permanent secretariats. Clive Archer

reviews a number of definitions² and comes up with this compact but useful synthesis:

International organization can be defined as a formal and continuous structure established by agreement between members (governmental and/or non-governmental) from two or more sovereign states with the aim of pursuing the common interest of the membership.³

Archer also points to the two major categories into which IOs are placed - those with sovereign states as members, Inter-governmental Organizations (IGOs); and those with non-governmental agencies and even governmental agencies (but not states) as members, International Non-governmental Organizations (INGO or NGOs).

The Role of International Organizations

By using the state as the basic unit in an international organization it is difficult to argue that the conditions existed for any true global IO before the many European colonial empires were dismantled. Many text books in this field begin their history of IOs with the Congress of Vienna in 1815, following the Napoleonic Wars. Taylor and Groom admits, however, that "International institutions, as we are considering them, developed out a Euro-centric world society and are to be found in greatest abundance within the Western developed world."⁴

In the nineteenth century, the big European powers met from time to time, as the "Concert of Europe" to discuss questions of security and generally the prevention of wars. In the twentieth century, however, when

wars became "world wars", a much more permanent and global organization for peace was needed.

The "Great" war was fought over four continents and involved Europe, America and "the colonies". It was therefore difficult not to include non-Europeans in the formation of the League of Nations which was a direct outcome of the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. There was little doubt about the role of the League of Nations. Its Covenant began "In order to promote international co-operation and to achieve international peace and security".⁵ Membership was also open, for the first time, to countries from outside of Europe, including "Dominion or Colony".

The League was overwhelmingly concerned with the prevention of war and the promotion of Peace. Ten of the twenty-six articles in its covenant proposed ways of achieving these goals. But there was also some recognition of the need for international social and economic cooperation. Article 23 of its covenant covered such areas as "humane conditions of labour for men, women and children (sic)" and "matters of international concern for the prevention and control of disease".⁶

It is ironic, however, that as another world war grew closer the League of Nations proved progressively ineffective. In the 1930's, Italy's invasion of Ethiopia, the atrocities and internationalization of the Spanish Civil War, Japan's invasion of China, and Germany's occupation of Austria and Czechoslovakia found the League quite impotent to act. This was partly because major world players were missing, the United States never joined and Germany and the Soviet Union were in, then out again; Italy and Japan were at odds with the League. In addition, a few smaller states also

withdrew when their interests seemed compromised. Why did the League disintegrate under its first major test? Bennett gives these reasons:-

Basically the League of nations failed (and the United Nations may fail) because it was ill equipped to accomplish its goals. It was based on principles that were inadequate to assure peace and cooperation. All national confederations have collapsed or been transformed due to lack of centralized power and due to rivalries among the component units. An international organization with real enforcement powers is incompatible with the principle of absolute national sovereignty. The world was not ready in 1919 or in 1945 to transfer effective control over military forces and compulsory jurisdiction over disputes to the international level.⁷

Bennett touches on one of the major paradoxes and problems of IOs. National sovereignty is held sacred by every member of an IO, but cooperation among states often calls for putting the good of the whole before individual interest. Yet the first task of every country-delegation is to promote and safe-guard the interest of its State. In a world of real and perceived rivalries in-fighting develops and factions emerge.

Such positioning are often seen in the light of game theory - "for *us* to win *they* must lose". The alternative is to find convergent interests where cooperation can provide mutual benefits to all. This is usually much easier to envisage than accomplish. The Functionalist view of international organization suggested ways of accomplishing this by changing the point of emphasis from the players to the game at hand, and insisting that everyone is on the same team.

Theory of Functionalism

David Mitrany enunciated the functionalist theory in his book, A Working Peace System. Mitrany suggested that distrust and disputes caused by elements of ideology, dogma or philosophical system could become less important if nations concentrated on common tasks or problems or functions which were essential for their survival or well-being. The functionalist expectation is that if social, economic and technical goals or needs are identified then a range of IOs can be set up to satisfy those needs. According to this thesis, "form should follow function" that is the function, problem or task dictates both the administrative arrangements and areas of operation within which it is to be tackled.⁸

The hope was that IOs set up on this basis would provide this "working peace system", a world without war, "by tying up the states in a complex web of interdependence and by solving economic and social problems so efficiently and humanely that they erode the material and psychological bases of conflict."⁹

Although there have been many criticisms of functionalism, the lasting legacy of the League of Nations was the many initiatives it took towards functional cooperation. In the last years of the Leagues operations there was a *de facto* change in emphasis. While it failed very badly in promoting peace, it initiated much in the field of functional cooperation, spending nearly sixty per cent of the Leagues budget in 1939 on functional agencies set up by the Secretariat. Many of these agencies were taken over and reorganized by the United Nations. In the end, however, the lesson for

functionalists was clear: in spite of the many attempts at functional cooperation by the League war was not avoided.

The current United Nations with its many arms devoted to specialized agencies for functional cooperation in about thirty different areas, has effectively accepted the thesis of functionalism, but alas, armed conflicts still abound between many member states. Ironically one of the most overworked specialized agency of the UN is the UNHCR - the UN High Commission for Refugees, attempting to take care of the millions made homeless by wars.

The neo-functionalists sought to correct the flaws in functionalism. If functional cooperation was difficult for loosely organized states and did not reduce the chances of war, they argued, then a tightly organized group of states fused around economic interests, with a central institution whose decisions were binding on all member countries, was the answer. This type of functionalism is very close to the "community" concept and, indeed, the European Community is given as a prime example of neo-functionalism at work. E.B. Haas in his 1968 study of the EEC entitled, The Uniting of Europe, uses this as the base for his analysis. Haas has been one of the leading proponents of the neo-functionalist theory of regional integration.

But there are substantial problems with functionalism when viewed as a way to prevent political conflicts among nations. Here Bennett summarizes the major objections to the functional approach to international organization:

The first is the assumption that a clear distinction can be drawn between the political and nonpolitical areas. Examples of politicization in organizations established to promote economic and

social cooperation are numerous. The possibility of transferring habits of cooperation from the economic and social to the political areas may also be questioned. Economic cooperation in the European Community, which is often cited as the shining example of the movement toward functional integration, has yet to prove that it will lead to political integration. Global integration will be much more difficult. Functionalists also tend to underestimate the strength of state sovereignty as a barrier to the transfer of loyalties to the international level. Finally, functionalists often claim that ignorance, poverty, hunger, and disease are the "root causes of war." Historical and empirical evidence furnishes meager substantiation for this claim. Examples are World War I and II, instigated in Europe, not in economically and socially less developed areas of the globe.¹⁰

Some of these points are difficult to counter and yet some of the most popular and hopeful agencies for global cooperation are organized and advertised as efforts of functional cooperation. To name just a handful from around the world - Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development [in Western countries] (OECD), The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Organization of American States (OAS), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the most recent, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL).

Since there have been remarkable achievements in functional cooperation by some of these agencies, and grave problems in others the question is, under what circumstances does functional cooperation, as distinct from "functionalism", succeed. A little later we point to specific problems affecting international organization attempting functional cooperation. Before that, however, we introduce three more approaches to the examination of international organizations. These are systems analysis, interdependence and regionalism.

Systems theory and its applicability to IOs

Systems analysis can occur at the macro level and the micro level in the study of international organizations. At the micro level we can examine the structure within an organization and attempt to assess how effective they are in relation to aims and activities of the organization. It is as if we doing a physical examination of an athlete to see how well her heart or lungs were functioning whilst she ran. Similarly within an IO we can examine the management structure, bureaucracy, policy formulation, decision-making processes, in short, the whole range of institutional patterns to asses how well they work together as a system to accomplish the stated goals.

At the global level Morton Kaplan identifies a number of systems into which IOs can be placed.¹¹ These include a balance of power system, which occurred from time to time in the 18th. and 19th. century; a loose bipolar system, which might be interpreted as the "cold War" period; a universal international system, which the United Nations ideally aims at, but has hardly achieved; and a hierarchical international system which predated

national states but which many third world countries would argue continues to be in place.

Viewing the international scene as a interrelated system naturally leads to the notion of interdependence which has become an approach in its own right.

Theory of Interdependence

An interdependent system is a natural construct for viewing the biosphere in which we live. The rampant industrialization of the earth is now bearing bitter fruit in terms of deforestation, animal extinction and endangering the human habitat. Almost too late we are beginning to realize that ecological systems are interrelated and interdependent. But can this become a framework for assessing international political, social and economic relationships as well? Keohane, Nyle and a number of other scholars have argued that it is.

They argue basically three points.¹² First that the actions or changes of one or a few nations can have an effect, positive or negative, on other nations. This needs no great elaboration. We simply have to think of the collapse of the Soviet Union for justification of this point of view. Second, multiple channels within and without a country are at work in establishing global relations and the state is not the sole actor in this process. National and international economic and cultural agencies, governmental and non-governmental, are just a few of these players in this type of interdependence. And third, that military concerns no longer dominate

international relations which are instead motivated by a complex of issues, creating in turn a complex interdependence.

There is much to elaborate and argue in the above positions but the basic points do seem applicable to the workings of some IOs. Attempting to develop interdependence as a general theory will not prove easy because some countries are more interrelated, hence more interdependent than others. And some are more independent than others.

Neohane and Kyle also note in discussing the above positions that "Linkage between issues will be more difficult for strong states to undertake if force is downgraded, whilst linkage by weak states through international organizations sets agendas, helps coalition-forming and provides arenas for the political activity of weaker states which can use the choice of organizational forum for an issue and the mobilization of votes as a political resource."¹³ We could be describing the UN General Assembly or UNESCO here. This discussion on interdependence points naturally to coalition of interests and these have their strongest manifestation in regional groupings. But before we discuss the theory of regionalism it is necessary to examine in some detail a group of theories which go in the opposite direction of interdependence - dependency theory, which itself was a reaction to development and modernization theories.

Dependency, Development and Modernization Theories

Dependency theory rightly belongs to the ideological and economic sphere of national and international relations. It is closely linked to

Capitalism, Imperialism and Colonialism, and is often seen as a reformulation of Marxism for the second half of the twentieth century: "The idea of dependency is defined in the theoretical field of the Marxist theory of capitalism"¹⁴.

Henrique Fernando Cardoso, Enzo Faletto and especially Andre Gunter Frank are the recognized proponents of the dependency perspectives. But these in turn can be traced back to the critique of the western model of development and modernization theories¹⁵ within the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) in the 1950's and 60's. The capitalist oriented modernization theory argued in essence that the development route for all countries is the same. Therefore, developing countries simply needed to follow the path of capitalism taken by the industrialized countries of Europe and North America to become developed.

W. W. Rostow, a typical representative of this view, in his book, The Stages of Economic Growth, A Non-Communist Manifesto, sets out five stages of development: traditional society, preconditions for take off, take off, road to maturity, and the age of high mass consumption. He regarded the "process of development now going forward in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America as analogous to the stages of preconditions and take-off of other societies, in the late eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries"¹⁶. It clearly implied that some underdeveloped countries (as they were called then) would have to wait patiently for a century or more for this process to work its course. This was indeed the other side of the historical determinism of Marxism.

But the thinkers in ECLA did not agree with this thesis and led by their director, Raul Prebisch, argued that in reality it was merely a poor justification for a continuation of the imperialist pattern of the "centre" and the "periphery", those involved in the production of industrialized goods prospering at the expense of those producing the raw materials. Because of the high prices for industrialized goods compared to the low prices for the raw materials from which these goods were produced, the gap between centre and periphery economies would increasingly widen rather than grow closer¹⁷.

Andre Gunter Frank took this analysis one step further and incorporated Paul Baran's thesis of capitalism as a hierarchical international system in which more developed countries exploit less developed countries, hence more developed countries advanced at the expense of the less developed ones.¹⁸ After his study of the history of capitalism in Latin American countries such as Chile and Brazil, Gunter Frank developed his theory of dependency. He argued that capitalism expanded from Europe and created a single international system with "a whole chain of metropolises and satellites, which runs from the world metropolis down to the hacienda or rural merchant who are satellites of the local commercial metropolitan center but who in their turn have peasants as their satellites"¹⁹. He concludes that far from fostering development, this world capitalism creates and maintains underdevelopment in the "satellite" states. The process of capitalist expansion produces continuous development in the metropolis and continuous underdevelopment in the satellite - "development and underdevelopment each cause and are caused by the other in the total development of capitalism."²⁰ This world system is supported and kept in

place by the financial arrangements and institutions put in place by the highly industrialized capitalist states. Agencies like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank are part of this system.

This is very close to the old imperial and colonial approach of the periphery or colonies existing only to enrich the centre or mother country. The difference here is that the whole world becomes to one degree or another centre or periphery and is, therefore, subject to exploitation, some worse than others. Scholars such as Wallerstein, Emmanuel, and Amin²¹ expanded Frank's argument to cover more than Latin America. They modified different aspects of the thesis but generally held to the conclusion that development in one part of the system occurs at the expense of another and countries are trapped into dependency relationships.

The reason why we included a discussion on dependency, development and modernization theories in this section is to show that we are aware of the wider political, economic and social debates which encircle attempts at any form of cooperation involving countries viewed as being at different levels of development, like those among Commonwealth members, where a small group is referred to as "developed" and the large majority as "developing".

Theory of Regionalism

Countries which share a geographical proximity often share common traditions, values and interests to promote or defend. It would make sense for these countries to get together on a formal basis to achieve common goals. This is the kind of regionalism that is most appealing to countries around the world. Indeed since 1945, the creation of regional organizations

have outnumbered global organizations almost two-to-one. Every region has its own IO and their aims have been continually extended to include economic, social, cultural and political.

For our purposes, Leroy Bennett's description of a regional organization is apt: "a regional organization is a segment of the world bound together by a common set of objectives based on geographical, social, cultural, economic or political ties and possessing a formal structure provided for in formal intergovernmental agreements."²²

Bennett also provides a list of advantages for regional organizations over universal ones. These all point to a more manageable agenda for cooperation and less conflict among countries with a greater degree of homogeneity. But the dichotomy of regional and universal organizations is clearly a false one since the UN itself has recognized the value of regional organizations in creating a series of regional commissions to more effectively carry out its work. Some of these are the Economic Commission of Europe (ECE) with 34 members; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) with 44 members and so forth.

Regional organizations, however, are set up in a number of areas. Some like the United Nations' Commissions are economic; others like NATO and the former Warsaw Treaty Organization are military, some are multipurpose organizations such as Organization of African Unity (OAU) ASEAN, OAS or the Arab League; but the largest group involves "functional cooperation" - OECD, CARICOM, ECOWAS, IDB and the other regional development banks.

It is probably fair to say that the neo-functionalist would be pleased to see the formation of so many regional groupings devoted to functional cooperation. But it is also true to say that like its global counterparts, regional organizations are also pressed with such problems as centralized power versus individual sovereignty and queries as to whether the benefits are equally shared.

The solution to these old functionalist and neo-functionalist problems would seem to lie in moving from regionalism to federalism. But given the present trend of a disintegration of federations such as the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, the time scarcely seems propitious for such a development. Even the EEC which probably has the greatest potential for a federation has shown many internal strains over such elementary propositions as a common European currency. Generally, therefore, there are a number of long-standing problems which affect many international organizations. We summarize these below.

Major Problems in International Organizations attempting Functional Cooperation

(a) National versus International goals

The question of sovereignty continues to prove the biggest barrier to international organization and cooperation. Even as IOs increase, more sovereign states are being formed with their own particular needs and aims. Political, religious, cultural and ethnic rivalries in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas are on the increase spawning new fears, distrust and

perceived self-interests to safe-guard. To expect IOs to be able to deal with so many different perceptions to the mutual satisfaction of all is to ask for a major miracle. Under these circumstances IOs take the least offensive way out. This usually proves to be the least effective also.

(b) The imperative of economics

In a world run by economics and characterized by very rich and very poor countries, economic and other kinds of functional cooperation have proven most attractive in both the creation of IOs and the recruiting of members. But the reality in organizations such as the IMF and the World Bank is the maintenance of the status quo, since the framework for economic reconstruction imposed on most developing countries is western in orientation. Initiatives such as the New International Economic Order (NIEO) by the "poor world" asking for a re-structuring of the world economic system currently organized and controlled by a few rich countries predictably received strong opposition from those countries and died a quiet death. The NIEO along with the New World Information Order slowly disappeared from the UN agenda as the Western "New World Order" (which is no more than the old World Order without the USSR) took over following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

(c) Some members are more important ("equal") than others

In a world system organized around economic power, the rich nations are an unquestionable elite even when seated as "equal" partners around a conference table. Reagan's unsubtle declaration in the 1980's that US aid would not be dispersed to countries who consistently voted against it in the United Nations and other international bodies was hardly the announcement

of a new trend, merely the public confirmation of what most poor countries knew from practical experience.

On the other side of the coin, there can be little pretense that a country like Guyana has the same clout as the USA or even Brazil in the OAS. The USA and Brazil can drum up support among other members that Guyana, with very little economic power to affect others, could. In that same vein, the power of a powerful member to frustrate the position of the combined membership of an IO was graphically illustrated in the late 1980's when the UK singled-handedly blocked a move by the Commonwealth as a whole to declare economic sanctions against an apartheid South Africa, even though such significant members as Canada and Australia were in favour. The USA's fight and eventual victory over the New World Information Order proposed by a great majority of the members of UNESCO is another example.

(d) Competition versus Cooperation

The rhetoric of many international organizations (a quick read of the preamble to most of their constitutions is awe inspiring) cannot hide the reality of a world in which "free enterprise", hence the competition ethic, is now the central gospel; where every member country in every international organization would loudly declare that foreign policy is merely an extension of domestic policy which must place the good of the state before all other considerations, including the good of the planet. This is clearly no fertile ground for global cooperation.

Regionalism also can be as devastating to another region as it is beneficial to its members. Take the EEC and the Caribbean banana industry. Without the special prices obtained under the EEC-ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) Lome agreement, the economy of many of the small islands in the Caribbean would collapse. But under the EEC charter which took effect on the 1st. January, 1993, no such special arrangements can be recognized. Instead the EEC members should buy the cheapest bananas on the world market. The Caribbean cannot hope to produce bananas as cheaply as Central America in the near future. The fate of these small islands now lie in the hands of lobbyist in the halls of the EEC. The stark reality is that altruism is not a viable foreign policy option, economics is.

The Commonwealth of Learning as an International Organization

The approaches detailed above are useful in conceiving of the Commonwealth of Learning as an international organization. They are just as valuable in a detailed analysis of COL within the framework of one theory or another. Our intention in providing them at this stage is to indicate that we are well aware of the many aspects of COL which could be studied from various perspectives. Although our present study does not permit us to follow any of these paths, they are clearly important dimensions which could and should be studied as we have suggested in our Conclusion.

We now turn the second major operational element of the Commonwealth of Learning - Distance Education.

DISTANCE EDUCATION

Distance education has been an on-going practice since the middle of the 19th. century, but was known as Correspondence Study or Independent Study. In many parts of the world today "correspondence study" is still the only form of distance education available. But since correspondence study is primarily print based, it is usually distinguished from "distance education" which is now meant to include print, radio and TV broadcast, telephone and computer communication and instructions.

The main characteristic of distance education is non-contiguous instruction, that is, no daily face to face relationship between tutor and student. Here is an explanation of this aspect:

Distance education comprises one-way traffic by means of printed, broadcast and/or recorded presentations of learning matter and two-way traffic between students and their supporting organization. The one-way presentation of learning matter occurs either through study guides to prescribed or recommended reading. Most of the two-way traffic usually occurs in writing, on the telephone or by other media. ²³

At first glance these characteristics may appear to be inferior to face to face class-room education. However, a number of reasons have made distance education increasingly popular among education planners in rich and poor countries alike. A few of these are:-

(a) A growing demand for educational opportunities in both Developed and Developing countries by large segments of the population previously not able or “not qualified” by traditional standards to continue or improve their education.

(b) The recognition by governments that media mediated education can be very cost-effective and less expensive than attempting to build new colleges and universities or even extending current physical facilities.

(c) That adults who have neither the time nor inclination to rejoin classroom groups generally welcome the opportunity to work in their own homes at their own pace

(d) And, the positive side-effects of distance education on the community as a whole where large numbers of people who are not formally registered in courses are exposed to educational radio and TV broadcasts. ²⁴

Searching for a Distance Education Theory

A distance education theory needs to take into account both the rationale for distance education as well as its organization and mode of delivery. Borje Holmberg, a leading researcher and theorist in this field and Director of the Institute of Distant Education at the Fern Universitat in Hagen, West Germany proposed the following theory:

Distance teaching will support student motivation, promote learning pleasure and effectiveness if offered in a way felt to make the study relevant to the individual learner and his/her needs creating feelings of rapport between learner and the distance-education institution (its tutors, counselors etc.),

facilitating access to course content, engaging the learner in activities, discussions and decisions and generally catering for helpful real and simulated communication to and from the learner.²⁵

This sounds more like the aims of distance education than a practical theory capable of being tested. Prescriptive definitions and aims are often confused with theories of distance education in an area that is still comparatively new and difficult to define much less theorize. There is a very insightful debate on "Distance Education as a Discipline"²⁶ involving a number of leading scholars in this field. Dan Coldeway, the moderator of that debate, concluded:

The difference between education (as a discipline) and distance education (as an emerging discipline) strike me as important in this debate. It occurs to me that an educational expert would probably know little about the current practice, study, and philosophy of distance education simply as a result of the study and knowledge of education. There would be much to learn, new rules to follow, new attitudes and values to acquire; much would be different from your existing store of knowledge, attitudes and philosophy.²⁷

Timely caution it would seem for the planners and executors of COL's distance education projects.

Therefore, to avoid the too narrow prescriptions or too broad generalization currently placed on distance education, Garrison and Shale²⁸ suggested a minimum set of "criteria" which should be associated with the concept of distance education:-

1. Distance Education implies that the majority of educational communication between (among) teacher and student(s) occurs non contiguously.
2. Distance education must involve two-way communication between (among) teacher and student(s) for the purpose of facilitating and supporting the educational process.
3. Distance education uses technology to mediate the necessary two-way communication.

The Garrison and Shale cover themselves by declaring that a certain set of educational practices "do not have to be totally congruent with the criteria to be classified as falling within the concept" of distance education.

Hillary Perraton²⁹, in attempting to cover the entire field, elaborated his distance education theory into thirteen statements (or sub-theories) as guides for distance education planners :-

1. You can use any medium to teach anything.
2. Distance teaching can break the integuments of fixed staffing ratios which limited the expansion of education when teacher and student had to be in the same place at the same time.
3. There are circumstances under which distance teaching can be cheaper than orthodox education, whether measured in terms of audience reached or of learning.

4. The economies achievable by distance education are a function of the level of education, size of audience, choice of media and sophistication of production.

5. Distance teaching can reach audiences who would not be reached by orthodox means.

6. It is possible to organize distance teaching in such a way that there is dialogue.

7. Where a tutor meets distance students face-to-face, her role is changed from being a communicator of information to that of a facilitator of learning.

8. Group discussion is an effective method of learning when distance teaching is used to bring relevant information to the group.

9. In most communities there are resources which can be used to support distance learning, to its educational and economic advantage.

10. A multi-media program is likely to be more effective than one which relies on a single medium.

11. A systems approach is helpful in planning distance education.

12. Feedback is a necessary part of a distance-learning system.

13. To be effective, distance-teaching materials should ensure that students undertake frequent and regular activities over and above reading, watching or listening.

Perraton covered more ground than either Holmberg or Garrison and Shale, and has the advantage of both in distilling the various properties of distance education into simple statements which can be assessed individually, or taken together to give a comprehensive view of distance education. His emphasis on media and communication is very apparent and from his very first statement seems to support the view that communication media is at the heart of the practice of distance education. Yet a few modern theorists in this field would argue that Perraton, like earlier thinkers such as Holmberg and Desmond Keegan³⁰, has not fully accounted for the recent revolution in communication technologies as it affects or could affect the planning and implementation of distance education projects.

Barker, Frisbie and Patrick makes this point very forcefully in an article entitled, "Broadening the definition of distance education in light of the new telecommunications technologies"³¹. They argue that most definitions and theories of distance education are based on traditional non-contiguous, correspondence study where media (radio, TV, audio and video tapes etc.) are merely additives to printed lessons. They suggest instead that:

Telecommunications-based distance education approaches are an extension beyond the limits of correspondence study. The teaching-learning experience for both instructor and student(s) occurs simultaneously - it is contiguous in time. When an audio and/or video communication link is employed, the opportunity for live teacher-student exchanges in real time is possible, thereby permitting immediate response to students inquiries and comments. Much like a traditional classroom setting, students can seek on-the-spot clarification from the teacher. Opportunities for teacher-student

interaction also promote greater spontaneity for all participants in the teaching-learning process. Within these more interactive approaches there is a further breakdown of the degree or level of interactivity possible depending on the type of telecommunication technology and system configuration used.³²

To illustrate this point on interactivity between (among) teacher and student(s) the authors provided the following comparison³³ between "correspondence-based" distance education and telecommunications-based" distance education. Each of these two categories is graded from higher to lower interaction:-

Category 1: Correspondence-based distance education

- Correspondence study based on print materials supported by audio tapes and/or videotapes - **higher interaction**
- Correspondence study based on print materials supported by broadcast signals (radio or television) but with no "real-time" interaction
- Correspondence study based on print materials only - **lower interaction**

Category 2: Telecommunications-based distance education

- Two-way voice link, two-way video (full-motion) link - **higher interaction**
- Two-way voice link, two-way video (freeze-frame) link

- Two-way voice link, one-way video (full-motion) link
- Two-way voice link, one-way video (freeze-frame) link
- Two-way voice link only - **lower interaction**

Interesting and significant as these differences are, Barker and his colleagues have merely touched upon a single aspect of the many implications of new communication technologies for use in distance education. In an era when obsolescence is counted in months rather years (when one thinks of the computer revolution) it is difficult, yet very essential for scholarship to try to keep abreast of these changes. Ironically in the very collection of essays which features the Barker et. al. piece, Randy Garrison goes one step further in his review of the new frontiers for distance education, in a paper entitled: "Multifunction microcomputer enhanced audio teleconferencing: moving into the third generation of distance education"³⁴ With interactive on-line computer classes now a reality, the "fourth generation" of distance education is already here. And so the giddy changes continue. But one needs to recognize this important reality - while some countries might be active in this "fourth generation" of distance education, many poor countries have still not entered the "first generation".

Our need, with regards to a framework for studying the Commonwealth of Learning and its use of distance education and communication technologies, does not require us to venture in detail into the extremely wide and complicated field of new technologies now emerging in distance education. A major requirement, however, is in uncovering guidelines which should be used by institutions and countries in their

selection of distance education as a mode of instruction and the choice of media used in this effort.

As far back as 1984 (and in the language of new technologies a decade is about "two generations" ago) in opening up a discussion on technology in distance education, Tony Bates noted: "New media increase the amount and level of interaction between student and learning materials, and in some cases give more opportunity for human interaction. This means that audio-visual media should in theory become more effective in developing learning. But in turn this raises the question of what likely effect the use of different technologies will have on cognitive thinking."³⁵ This is a fundamental question which needs to be asked and answered before decisions are made on distance education as a whole. Other important questions deal with the context and purpose for distance education and the use or preference of "new" technologies over "older" technologies.

In the final section of this chapter we turn specifically to communication technologies when they are used as educational technology in order to highlight some of these fundamental questions.

COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY AS EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

Definition of Technology

Before we move to the more specific discussion, it is useful to define technology in general. But in attempting to provide a general definition for technology, one is forced to return to the discussions begun by Jacques Ellul 1950's³⁶ in seeking a more comprehensive understanding of the nature and process of technology. Such an understanding is even more crucial in the last decade of the 20th century when new computing miracle-machines are becoming so seductive and overpowering.

Ellul argued convincingly for a re-examination of the common notion of equating technology or "technique" with "machines". He offered instead, a four-dimensional definition. These included Mechanical Technique; Economic Technique; Human Technique and the Technique of Organization³⁷. They are self-evident when closely considered. The machine is highly dependent on financial and economic considerations, human professional skills and organizational needs and administration. It is just as clear that devices and machines, from something as simple as a chalkboard to the most complex computer, should no longer be the only consideration when discussing technology and its application.

This is true whether one is considering technology in general or educational technology in particular. Definitions of educational technology tend to reflect this broader concept.

Here are three definitions of educational technology. All three directly or indirectly underling knowledge, skills and devices.

Educational Technology³⁸

Definition 1

Educational technology is the development, application and evaluation of systems, techniques and aids to improve the process of human learning. *Council for Educational Technology for the United Kingdom (CET)*

Definition 2

Education technology is the application of scientific knowledge about learning, and the conditions of learning, to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of teaching and training. In the absence of scientifically established principles, educational technology implements techniques of empirical testing to improve learning situations. *National Centre for Programmed Learning, U.K.*

Definition 3

Educational technology is a systematic way of designing, implementing and evaluating the total process of learning and teaching in terms of specific objectives, based on research in human learning and communication and employing a combination of human and non-human resources to bring about more effective instruction. *Commission on Instructional Technology, USA.*

What is significant about each of these definitions is the avoidance of equating technology with teaching aids or instructional media. These are implied but only as part of a process with specific aims in mind. Instead, the emphasis is on improving the efficiency of the learning process.

This can be termed a "technology of education" approach in contrast to "technology in education".³⁹ Education in Technology stresses the various types of audio-visual aids used in education including "hardware" - overhead projectors, slide projectors, tape recorders video recorders, Radios, TV monitors and micro-computers etc.; and "software" - overhead transparencies, slides, audio, video and computer programs.

The larger issue of the technology of education must first be faced by education planners before decisions concerning technology to be used in education can be debated. This debate also needs to involve a number of important considerations.

(a) Political and Social Considerations

Because there continues to be a great degree of political ferment in many developing countries as they seek to define and develop themselves as nations, political stability can never be taken for granted. What may seem to be a basic educational goal for one administration may garner very little support from a new government. Educational policies around which educational technology and particularly educational broadcasting should be planned are rarely continuous and consistent as power swings from left to right wing administrations.

Apart from this obvious consideration, there are a few subtle political and social implications which also need to be considered. Arnove highlights these in a series of questions: "Who has access to schooling and what groups systematically benefit from schooling? Whose values are transmitted and in which language? Moreover, who decides the content of the curriculum? What skills are developed in which groups? How extensive is participation? And how meaningful is this participation in relation to important decision making?"⁴⁰

These questions need to be answered in full as an essential prerequisite of the planning process. But neither local education officials nor foreign experts alone can answer them. These answers must come, in part, from a cross-section of the local population including political and social interest groups. Educational planning cannot be haphazard if it is to be effective.

(b) Cultural Considerations

One question posed by Arnove above more specifically relates to the cultural rather than political sphere, unless there are clear indications that the group in power is deliberately attempting to impose its values and language in a heterogeneous, multilingual society. The question is, "Whose values are being transmitted and in whose language?" It is usually quite apparent whose language is to be used and how this can affect someone who speaks another language, but not so clear whose values are embedded in the instructional programs when the language is common to all.

Let us take the case of the American Samoa in 1961. This project was later described as "probably the most glamorous and exciting of the projects reported in the 1967 series [of distance education projects]"⁴¹

Glamorous, because it took place in the South Pacific involving a population of about 20,000 native people who, at the time, learnt mostly by rote and recitation. Students attended school quite irregularly and in dwindling numbers, and many of the native teachers had gone no further than the junior high school level.

Exciting, because the initially well-financed project intended to use television for direct instructions in a society where few had even seen a TV set before. The aims were also very ambitious, not to supplement class-room teaching but to be the central mode of instruction, in order to overhaul and modernize primary and secondary education. Educational television was given centre stage. But the project also exposed the kind of foreign domination, even though benevolent, which takes place when technology and expertise are imported from outside.

Governor Lee's program to reform the education system with "a sudden and explosive upgrading" had Samoa's interest foremost. The initial discussions with the islands' high chiefs, however, focused totally on the introduction of television. It did not deal with the possible cultural conflicts which might result from a group of Americans planning, producing and implementing a new education system for Samoans whose very language they did not understand and whose way of life they did not share. With the best of intentions the planners and producers would view education in terms

of the American landscape, experiences and goals and not with the eyes of a small island-bound population with special customs and rituals.

Schramm, Nelson and Betham in a book-length study of this "Bold Experiment" offered a revealing retrospective:

The classroom teachers had to move into a kind of teaching with which they were unfamiliar, with curriculum in which they had very little input, and with, one assumes, a sense of being manipulated by the television teachers.... The inadequate involvement of Samoan teachers, in particular, must have signaled possible dangers. There is no record that classroom teachers were brought into the initial planning. Just as had been the case before television, policy making and administration were kept tightly in the hands of US. stateside personnel.⁴²

The cultural debate must, therefore, include an examination of the values that reside in the experts, and imported technology and programs when coming from other countries, and the role played by local groups in the planning and implementation process.

(c) Geographical Considerations

Geographical factors include the distribution of the population, the climate and the terrain. A very clear picture of where targeted populations are located must precede all decision on the kind of educational technology required. Broadcast TV or AM Radio may reach urban populations, but cable or satellite TV and short-wave radio may be the only way to reach rural or interior regions.

The same will be true for the kind of terrain which must be covered by educational broadcasting. It is ironic that remote communities cut off by mountains, jungles or water from the centres of education in their countries are the very ones unable to receive radio or TV educational broadcasts. Cable and satellite services are usually impractical because of costs and so are a series of relay transmitters. It is important for planners to realize before hand both the location of the targeted audience and reach of proposed educational technology.

But even when adequate transmitters and studio equipment are available they must be compatible with the climate of the country in which they are put to work. Because almost all types of electronic communication technology are designed in and for temperate countries, they are frequently damaged when placed in hot tropical climates without air-conditioning. The ubiquitous warning on so many electronic equipment: "Store at room temperature" never had in mind a daily room temperature of 35 degrees Celsius.

(d) Technological considerations

The above discussion has already stepped into the technological sphere. For educational broadcasting, for example, one needs to consider not only the type of media to be used (radio, TV, video or audio tapes), but transmission equipment, production equipment, playback equipment, studio space and facilities, trained technical staff and availability of air-time. But there are equally important secondary matters such as the availability of electricity or batteries for receiving sets, and receiving sets themselves.

During a survey of educational radio in Guyana, I found that there was a good variety of educational programs transmitted to schools on a regular basis, and an enthusiastic well trained staff at the Broadcast to Schools Unit continually producing new programs. However, most of the schools had no receiving sets, and even those that had sets could not receive the programs because of daily electricity outages, the well-prepared educational programs went nowhere.⁴³

(d) Economic Considerations

There is a close relationship between the economic and technological factors since a nation's economic problems, particularly in the developing world, is often the major reason for many of the shortages alluded to above. But economic considerations must go much deeper than this.

The funding for education as a whole must be justified against other social needs - health, food production, roads, housing. Then the cost of educational broadcasting and other forms of educational technology have to be considered against the overall funding available for the national educational program. Often the choice is stark - more benches for students or a radio for the school. The start-up and on-going costs for educational broadcasting have to be made very clear at the outset before any real debate can take place as to cost effectiveness. Expenditure has to be off-set against benefits to the community and the nation.

As Martin Carnoy notes, "most reports by foreign technical assistance agencies underestimate costs"⁴⁴ One-time grants from foreign countries and agencies, and foreign assistance in acquiring start-up equipment confuse

the calculations for the cost of a project five or even three years later. Capital costs for equipment is often not included in the estimates and operating costs which include costs for production, distribution, reception, and support material can vary tremendously depending on the size of the project. Since most of these projects begin as small scale pilots, only when a national program is attempted are the real costs known. By then most funding agencies expect the national governments to foot the major part of the bill.

A Timely Caution

All of the above considerations are critical for the implementation and success of distance education programs in an agency such as the Commonwealth of Learning. Too often countries and even educational institutions have turned to "new communication technologies" when "older technologies" did not provide the expected benefits, failing to realize that technology, whether old or new, only works when it is fully compatible with the needs and circumstances of its operational environment. It is, therefore, essential that those interested in using distance education along with new communication technologies heed the advice of experienced researchers in this field: "Technological developments need to be preceded and accompanied by research and evaluation, to monitor carefully not only the learning but also the cost and organizational implications....The choice to be made, however, is not 'what technology', but 'what kind of teaching we want to provide'"⁴⁵.

In our Conclusion we suggest that one of the studies which should follow on the heels of this one is an evaluation of the projects undertaken by

the Commonwealth of Learning (described in detail in Chapter 6) precisely to test how well distance education programs were matched to the communication technologies used and the context in which they were instituted.

Having enunciated and discussed the concepts and theories surrounding the major elements which underpin the establishment of COL, we now return to the more historical narrative. In the next chapter we provide a brief history of the development of the Commonwealth itself and a sample of its experiences in the area of distance education.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 2

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- 1
- ¹ Claude L. Inis, Swords into Plowshares: The Problems and Progress of International Organization, 3rd. ed., (New York: Random House, 1964), 4.
- ² Clive Archer, International Organizations, (London: Routledge, 1992) 33-37.
- ³ Archer 37.
- ⁴ Paul Taylor and A. J. R. Groom, International Organizations: A conceptual Approach, (London: Francis Pinter Ltd., 1978) 17.
- ⁵ Taken from "Appendix I: Covenant of the League of Nations" in A Leroy Bennett, International Organization: Principles and Issues, 5th. ed., (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1991) 425-434.
- ⁶ Bennet 433-434.
- ⁷ A. Leroy Bennett, International Organization: Principles and Issues, 5th. edn., (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1991) 38.
- ⁸ David Mitrany, A Working Peace System, (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966) 73-81.
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CHAPTER 3

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH AND ITS EXPERIENCES IN THE FIELD OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

A. The (British) Commonwealth Of Nations

There could have been no Commonwealth had there not been a British Empire.

Equally there could have been no Commonwealth but for the negation, withdrawal and transformation of British Imperialism¹.

A Brief History

The British Commonwealth of Nations was indeed born of a contradiction - former Dominions and Colonies of the British Empire putting aside the exploitation, pain and conflicts of the past and joining in a voluntary association of states for the purpose of cooperation in a number of fields.

But from the outset, the Commonwealth was a two-tiered association. There were the Dominions - Canada, Newfoundland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and the Irish Free State - which were legally recognized as sovereign states with full internal self-government by the

British Parliament in 1931. These became the first members of the Commonwealth, according to the Balfour Declaration² : " autonomous Communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown and freely associated as Members of the British Commonwealth of Nations."

In effect, therefore, there was simultaneously a British Commonwealth as well as a British Empire. In 1931, along with the "equal status" Dominions, Britain had many colonies and dependencies in Asia, Africa, the Pacific and the Caribbean.

In essence, there were two markedly different groups of countries over which Britain ruled. As far back as 1908, Lord Alfred Milner, who was later British Colonial Secretary from 1918 to 1921, openly identified the problem which resulted from confusing the two groups. He suggested that the British Empire should really be seen as "two empires". The first empire was the "self-governing empire" including Canada, Australia, South Africa and those Dominions consisting largely of European settlers with internal self-government. The second would be "the dependent empire" which included India, the Crown colonies in Africa and elsewhere and the dependencies, populated almost exclusively by non-Europeans and non-whites and governed directly by Britain .³

This is a very useful distinction in order to understand the development of the Commonwealth in the 20th. century. The first Commonwealth of nations was in place by 1931 consisting of the "Dominions" which were populated and governed by British and European

settlers. They were Canada, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Ireland, in effect an enlarged British family of nations. The second and much more extensive and inclusive Commonwealth was constructed after the hard-fought battle for Independence from Britain starting with India in 1947.

After its independence in 1947 and the partition of the sub-continent into India and Pakistan, both newly independent countries joined the Commonwealth. But then India announced its intentions of becoming a Republic with its own Head of State. It also expressed a desire to retain its membership in the Commonwealth. A clear conceptual shift was needed in order to accept as a member of the British Commonwealth a country whose titular head of state was not the British Monarch. A formula was finally agreed on at the 1949 Commonwealth Prime Ministers Meeting in London which allowed India full membership and set a precedence for other newly independent countries which had chosen republican status:

The Government of India Have informed the other Governments of the Commonwealth of the intention of the Indian people that under the new Constitution which is about to be adopted, India shall become a sovereign independent Republic. The Government of India have, however, declared and affirmed India's desire to continue her full membership of the Commonwealth of Nations and her acceptance of the King as the symbol of the free association of its independent member-nations and as such the Head of the Commonwealth. The Governments of the other countries of the Commonwealth, the basis of whose membership of the Commonwealth in not hereby changed, accept and recognize India's continuing membership in accordance with the terms of this declaration⁴.

There was clearly a compromise on both sides, India in recognizing the King as "Head of the Commonwealth", after having fought for a hundred years to be rid of the British Monarch, and the other members like Canada and Australia for whom the King was unquestionably Head of State.

Derek Ingram, a long-time supporter and scholar of the Commonwealth viewed the entry of India as a turning point in the history of the Commonwealth: " The Commonwealth exists today simply and solely because of India. This statement is not an over-simplification. If India had not agreed to stay within the Commonwealth, and if the republic formula had not been worked out in 1949 the chances are that today there would merely be a group of five white countries banded together for their common good."⁵

In the 1950's and 60's as British colonies all over the world fought for and obtained their political independence⁶, many opted for republican status but also membership of the Commonwealth of Nations. By 1965 the Commonwealth had twenty-one member-states, three from the original five which came together with Britain in 1931, and eighteen from newly independent former-colonies. As can be seen from the list below there was a completely different mix of states and peoples from the group 34 years before.

<u>Countries</u>	<u>Date of Commonwealth Membership</u>
Canada	1931
Australia	1931
New Zealand	1931

Irish Free State/Ireland	1931 formally withdrew in 1948
South Africa	1931 withdrew in 1962 rejoined 1994
India	1947
Pakistan	1947 left in 1972, rejoined in 1989
Sri Lanka	1948
Ghana	1957
Malaysia	1957
Nigeria	1960
Cyprus	1961
Sierra Leone	1961
Tanzania	1961
Jamaica	1962
Trinidad and Tobago	1962
Uganda	1962
Kenya	1963
Malawi	1964
Malta	1964
Zambia	1964

The Gambia	1965
Singapore	1965

The Development of the Commonwealth

The countries of Asia, Africa, the Pacific and the Caribbean were now an overwhelming majority and within another 10 years, by 1985, another twenty-seven members would be added from these regions. In 1965, however, the loosely knit group calling itself the Commonwealth of Nations, because of its drastically increased membership, acknowledged the need for a formal secretariat to coordinate its meetings and activities. The Commonwealth Secretariat was established in that year with headquarters in London and with Canadian, Arnold Smith, as its first Secretary-General.

The "Agreed Memorandum on the Commonwealth Secretariat", signed at the 1965 Prime Ministers Meeting, stated in part that:

The Secretary-General and his staff should approach their task bearing in mind that the Commonwealth is an association which enables countries in different regions of the world, consisting of a variety of races and representing a number of interests and points of view, to exchange opinions in a friendly, informal and intimate atmosphere. The organization and functions of the Commonwealth Secretariat should be so designed as to assist in supporting and building on these fundamental elements in the Commonwealth association. At the same time the Commonwealth is not a formal organization. It does not encroach on the sovereignty of individual

members. Neither does it require its members to seek to reach collective decisions or to take united action⁷.

It was clear from the wording above that the Commonwealth leaders at this time felt it safer to operate as an informal international organization, without even a constitution or specific objectives, apart from the general goal mentioned in the preamble of the above Memorandum, of fostering the "spirit of cooperation which animates the Commonwealth".

But there were too many issues affecting developing Commonwealth countries calling for discussion and some form of action to allow the Commonwealth to continue this way for long. In 1971, the Singapore Declaration or what is more commonly referred to as the "1971 Declaration of Commonwealth Principles" not only contained constitutional characteristics, but attempted to define the Commonwealth, enunciate major principles of the organization and even a promise of action to support these principles.

We reproduce it here in full because it describes the diversity and differences among Commonwealth countries and yet was the basis for a number of key declarations in the next fifteen years which set the Commonwealth firmly on the path to undertaking major debates and in many cases concrete and constructive action on a number of issues.

Declaration of Commonwealth Principles⁸

(Issued by the Commonwealth Heads of Government at their meeting in Singapore on 22nd. January, 1971)

[1] The Commonwealth of Nations is a voluntary association of independent sovereign states, each responsible for its own policies,

consulting and co-operating in the common interests of their peoples and in the promotion of international understanding and world peace.

[2] Members of the Commonwealth come from territories in the six continents and five oceans, include peoples and different races, languages and religions, and display every stage of economic development from poor developing nations to wealthy industrialized nations. They encompass a rich variety of cultures, traditions and institutions.

[3] Membership of the Commonwealth is compatible with freedom of member-governments to be non-aligned or to belong to any other grouping, association or alliance. Within this diversity all members of the Commonwealth hold certain principles in common. It is by pursuing these principles that the Commonwealth can continue to influence international society for the benefit of mankind.

[4] We believe that international peace and order are essential to security and prosperity of mankind; we therefore support the United Nations and seek to strengthen its influence for peace in the world, and its efforts to remove the causes of tension between nations.

[5] We believe in the liberty of the individual, in equal rights for all citizens regardless of race, colour, creed or political belief, and in their inalienable right to participate by means of free and democratic political processes in framing the society in which they live. We therefore strive to promote in each of our countries those representative institutions and guarantees for personal freedom under the law that are our common heritage.

[6] We recognize racial prejudice as a dangerous sickness threatening the healthy development of the human race and racial discrimination as an unmitigated evil of society. Each of us will vigorously combat this evil within our own nation.

No country will afford assistance to regimes which practice racial discrimination which in its own judgment directly contributes to the pursuit of consolidation of this evil policy. We oppose all forms of

colonial domination and racial oppression and are committed to the principles of human dignity and equality.

[7] We will therefore use all our efforts to foster human equality and dignity everywhere, and to further the principles of self determination and non-racialism.

[8] We believe that the wide disparities in wealth now existing between different sections of mankind are too great to be tolerated. They also create world tensions. Our aim is their progressive removal. We therefore seek to use our efforts to overcome poverty, ignorance and disease, in raising standards of life and achieving a more equitable international society.

[9] To this end our aim is to achieve the freest possible flow of international trade on terms fair and equitable to all, taking into account the special requirements of the developing countries, and to encourage the flow of adequate resources, including governmental and private resource, to the developing countries, bearing in mind the importance of doing this in a true spirit of partnership and of establishing for this purpose in the developing countries conditions which are conducive to sustained investment and growth.

[10] We believe that international co-operation is essential to remove the causes of war, promote tolerance, combat injustice, and secure development among the peoples of the world. We are convinced that the Commonwealth is one of the most fruitful associations for these purposes.

[11] In pursuing these principles the members of the Commonwealth believe that they can provide a constructive example of the multinational approach which is vital to peace and progress in the modern world. The association is based on consultation, discussion and cooperation.

[12] In rejecting coercion as an instrument of policy they recognize that the security of each member-state from external aggression is a matter of concern to all members. It provides many channels for

continuing exchanges of knowledge and views on professional, cultural, economic, legal, and political issues among member-states.

[13] These relationships we intend to foster and extend, for we believe that our multinational association can expand human understanding among nations, assist in the elimination of discrimination based on differences of race, colour or creed, maintain and strengthen personal liberty, contribute to the enrichment of life for all, and provide a powerful influence for peace among nations.

This was indeed a high-minded declaration, showing very clearly the presence of an overwhelming number of developing countries in the Commonwealth and acknowledging their social and economic plight as well as their ideals and aspirations. But they also represent an enormous optimism for multinational cooperation within the Commonwealth of Nations which still exist in many Commonwealth countries today and which played a major role in the establishment of the Commonwealth of Learning. These ground-breaking principles were also the basis for a series of other declarations over the next fifteen years dealing with specific problems facing Commonwealth members.

First there was the 1977 "Commonwealth Statement on Apartheid in Sports" (the Gleneagles Agreement - advocating a ban on sporting contacts with apartheid South Africa) which was an elaboration of the seventh paragraph of the 1971 Declaration; second the 1979 Lusaka Declaration on Racism and Racial Prejudice, which was an expansion of paragraph six; third was the 1981 "Melbourne Declaration" on economic matters affecting the Third World (this was during the height of the UN Debate on a New World Economic Order), but was also linked to paragraphs eight and nine of Commonwealth Principles; fourth the 1983 "New Delhi Statement on

Economic Action" was a continuation of the Melbourne Declaration and the 1985 "Nassau Declaration on World Order" was adopted from the principles set out in paragraphs four, ten and twelve. At Nassau in 1985, the Commonwealth Heads also issued the "Commonwealth Accord on Southern Africa" advocating a total ban on social and economic contacts with South Africa until it dismantled its apartheid system.

While it is true that these Declarations and Statements were not binding upon individual member countries, with few exceptions they led to serious action on the part of Commonwealth countries. The fight against apartheid in South Africa is an apt example. Many developing countries took the Gleneagles Agreement so seriously that they meted out harsh punishment to their own sports personalities who had even the slightest contact with South African sports. Guyana actually banned a number of its cricketers "for life" from representing their native country after they had participated in a single cricket tour of South Africa. Britain under Margaret Thatcher was the most glaring exception of a Commonwealth member not subscribing to either the Gleneagles Agreement or the Accord on South Africa. Mrs. Thatcher's was, in fact, the only Commonwealth leader who refused to imposed economic sanctions on South Africa, and this led directly to the wide-spread boycott by developing countries of the 1986 Commonwealth Games held in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Thirty-two countries announced their boycott of the Games. These included all the major African countries (only Botswana, Malawi, Lesotho and Swaziland took part), all the Caribbean countries, and India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh (Pakistan was out of the Commonwealth at the time). In the end only 26 countries participated, primarily dependencies of Britain, along

with Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England as separate entries and Australia, New Zealand and Canada. There was even speculation that Canada was contemplating a boycott of the Games: "Two days before the Games, Canada scheduled a news conference and speculation was running rampant that a 'white' country might join the boycott. Rumors were fueled when Jelinek [Canadian Minister responsible for Sports] canceled the press conference at the last minute"⁹. The day before the opening of the Games, with the Canadian athletes already in the athletes' village, the Minister announced that Canada would participate fully in the Games.

The 1986 boycott of the Commonwealth Games illustrated the kind of result that joint action by a large number of Commonwealth countries could have, albeit, in this case, in a negative sense. But it also demonstrated the power of the rich countries in this grouping to successfully withstand the will of a majority of its members. This draws attention to an important factor concerning the composition of the Commonwealth - a handful of rich nations, another small group of middle income countries and about a third of the member countries among the very poorest nations of the world - indeed consisting of the very poor as well as the very rich.

In the "Economic Data" recorded in the 1992 Commonwealth Factbook, only seven countries in the Commonwealth have a GNP per capita income of more than \$10,000 (US) per year (New Zealand, Singapore and the Bahamas with about \$11,000 each, joining Britain, Australia and Brunei with \$14,000 each and Canada with \$19,000). Eleven member-countries have between \$1,000 and \$7,000 per year. The annual average income for persons living in two-thirds of the countries in the Commonwealth is calculated at less than \$1000, and in sixteen of these less

than \$500 (US) per year. Many countries in the Commonwealth may have an equal voice at meetings, but in reality, they contribute so little to finance the work of the Secretariat and its specialized agencies that they can hardly demand that their own priorities be given precedence over those which might be suggested by big contributors such as Britain or Canada. The UN formula, based on population and national income, is also used by the Commonwealth for budgetary contributions among its members. Some programs are funded by purely voluntary contributions from among the richer member-countries.

A majority of countries in the Commonwealth, therefore, are in need of assistance in many areas of human development and they often look to the richer members in this group for help and by implication leadership in areas of functional cooperation.

Functional Agencies of the Commonwealth

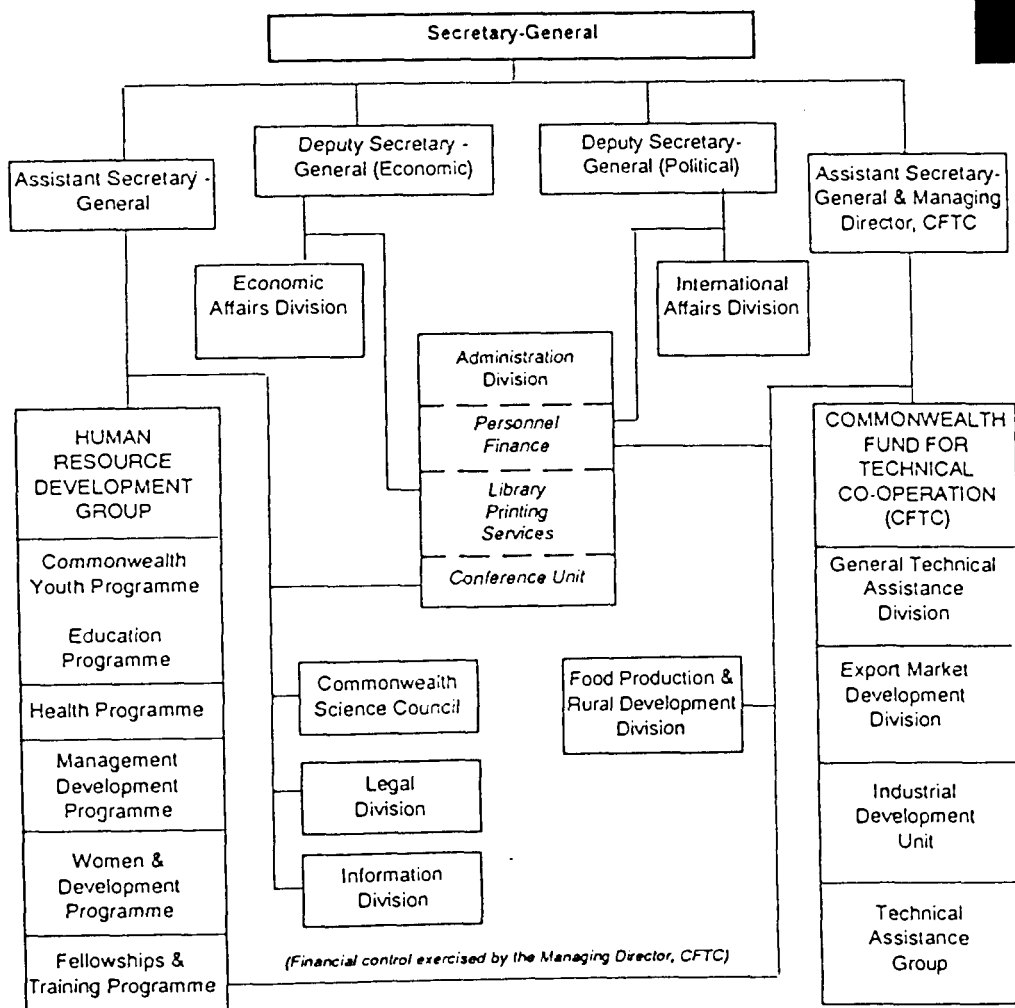
The Commonwealth as a body established a set of specialized institutions and agencies which facilitate functional co-operation in a number of fields. Under the Commonwealth Secretariat itself (see chart below) there are a series of programs and schemes aimed at Commonwealth cooperation in Human Resource Development, Agriculture, Science and Technology as well a major program for sharing expertise - The Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation. In addition there are twenty-one governmental, Pan-Commonwealth specialized organizations, and over fifty non-governmental ones.

[The Chart below was copied from, Commonwealth Organizations (1989), published by the Commonwealth Secretariat in London.]

Commonwealth Organisations

Commonwealth
Secretariat

Structure of the Commonwealth Secretariat



Within the last thirty years the Commonwealth has sprouted tentacles aimed at fostering co-operation in almost every conceivable field of human activity. The Commonwealth of Learning established in 1988 is the most recent Commonwealth governmental agency focused on collaboration in the field of education with the specific intentions of utilizing the techniques of distance education and communication technologies. Before we examine the reasons which necessitated the creation of yet another Commonwealth agency, we present a short description of the kinds of collaboration in education which had already taken place between and among Commonwealth member countries using some form of distance education.

B. Commonwealth Experiences in Distance Education

Twenty years ago, UNESCO spoke of the "geography of ignorance" in describing some parts of the world.¹⁰ The spread of education, it felt, would not only reduce the size of this region, but better equip its inhabitants to develop and prosper. At that time the world's population was about three and a half billion, today it is close to six billion. Almost a billion of those additional souls are now part of a greatly enlarged area of ignorance.¹¹ The geography of ignorance is freely translated as the developing world. Using UNESCO's numbers for 1993, 149 countries were characterized as developing and 40 as developed.

UNESCO's figures also show that in many developing countries, as basic education needs increase, financial resources, educational infrastructure and trained teachers are actually on the decrease. There are, therefore, the most elementary and urgent motives for improving the delivery of education to growing school-age populations in developing countries.

In the sixties and seventies radio and television appeared to be the answer. Taking the lead from the developed world many developing countries introduced these "new educational media" into their educational system to varying extents and with mixed results. In most cases it took the form of schools broadcasting which merely supplemented the on-going school curriculum. In more ambitious programs it was part of a distance education or community development project usually as a pilot project initiated by UNESCO with the assistance and expertise of developed countries.

But the needs and capacities of developed and developing countries in the field of distance education, or education in general, are worlds apart. One group can take for granted a national grid of cable or satellite telecommunications; the other cannot even depend on a continuous supply of electricity to its major centres. One society thinks of providing equal opportunities in education for a minority who falls outside of the mainstream; the other must open up the system to the majority who have never had a chance to begin any formal programs of education in the first place. Janet Jenkins focuses on this fundamental difference between these two worlds:

There is a contrast between the uses to which distance teaching has been put in Europe, North America and Australia and what it is now being asked to do in Africa, Latin America and Asia. In the West it has been used mainly to extend education to fairly small and well-defined groups of people who could not get access to ordinary education. In Africa attempts have been made to use distance teaching on a relatively much larger scale. The aim has been not to expand education to embrace the last 5 per cent of the population, but to offer something to the half of the population who never get to school as children, or the three-quarters or more who receive no adult education. ¹²

This continues to be true for many developing countries. The motives for the use of distance education is critical to the planning of individual projects.

Summary of Early Motives for Use of Educational Broadcasting

In the 1960's these motives fell into five basic categories: ¹³

(a) To upgrade class-room instructions - in many poor countries the education system suffered from both a shortage of trained teachers and a lack of innovative teaching methods. Educational broadcasting usually used the best trained teachers for the on-air programs utilizing updated teaching methods. These could potentially be shared among all the schools in the community.

(b) To teach Teachers - even the programs aimed at class-room students would indirectly provide more inexperienced teachers with teaching methods and styles to emulate. But there were also specific broadcasts aimed at upgrading the skills of teachers. These one-way instruction programs, however, were not as effective as a video presentation followed by group discussions, that is, an interactive approach as was demonstrated in a research project in Columbia.¹⁴

(c) To extend the school - this was one of the most pressing motives for many educational broadcasting ventures. Correspondence colleges and courses were the first attempts of extending the influence of the school, creating, in effect, schools without walls and students of all ages. These courses were strengthened and broadened by radio and television broadcasts. It is in this sense that "open learning" is used. But much of the success in this area has been achieved by rich countries like Britain, Canada, Australia and Japan. Proper planning and funding are probably the major reasons.

(d) To carry basic literacy education programs - developing countries, however, have shown a fair amount of success in mounting basic literacy programs, especially using radio. We allude to a few of these in the next

section. Radio works better than TV because radio is more accessible to the poor people in rural areas where these programs are most needed and much cheaper than TV productions.

(e) To promote adult education and community development projects - this has been another area in which radio in particular (a number of African examples are given later) has been well suited and has achieved some successes in developing countries. In this category are included the many non-formal attempts at health and family education, agriculture and vocational programs.

These were the basic motives which drove many of the early efforts at distance education through educational broadcasting in developing countries. In some cases these motives were only vaguely formulated and understood. The planning process would have been greatly enhanced if a detailed map indicating the strategic roles for television and radio had been available.¹⁵

Problems faced by Developing Commonwealth Countries in the area of Distance Education

Tony Dodds and Solomon Inquai in a review of Distance Education in Africa¹⁶, with an emphasis on Commonwealth Africa¹⁷, identified a number of problem areas in which cooperation among Commonwealth countries could be potentially valuable. These are:-

(a) The absence of science subjects and technical and vocational education in secondary and tertiary distance education programs: The difficulty relates to the teaching of practical or laboratory subjects via distance education. The

human and financial resources needed for the planning and development of these courses are simply not available. Compounding the difficulties is the question of recognition of distance education institutions. In Africa, as in most other Commonwealth developing countries, these institutions have not been given the same recognition and resources as conventional institutions. Dodds and Inquai add, "They have certainly not been given the resources to develop their own network of practical study facilities; nor have they usually been able to get access for their students to laboratory and workshop facilities in existing institutions."¹⁸ Acute staff shortages and a constant battle for a survival budget are the norm in the area of distance education in Africa.

(b) Poor Results in supervised study groups: But even when there is no need for special equipment or laboratories, supervised study groups in distance education often achieve poor results because of the quality of supervisors and mentors. Many of these are primary school teachers with very little ability or qualifications to assist students in work at the secondary school level. In addition many of the study groups operate out of primary schools, churches and community halls, again making a clear distinction between their location (and by implication their importance) and those of their full-time counterparts who are in secondary schools, and colleges.

(c) Administrative and methodological problems: Many distance education programs have attempted to use multi-media approaches to deliver their programs. The usual combination is a radio series supported by printed notes and teacher guides as well as discussion or study groups. In their review, Dodds and Inquai conclude that the various media, radio and print, are not used to their full potential. Often radio becomes the deliverer of a lecture and print a summary of that lecture. Radio's ability to dramatize and

print's potential for visual illustration are not exploited. A major reason for this under-utilization of media has to do with the lack of training of professional and administrative staff running these programs. A third problem in this area is the lack of regular evaluation mechanisms for assessing teaching methods and administrative procedures.

(d) Supplies and maintenance problems: One of the most pressing problems for most of the countries evaluated in Africa was the shortage of distance teaching equipment and supplies such as printing facilities, tape recorders and audio studios. Even printing supplies and audio tapes are usually hard to come by. But even where limited equipment exist, they are poorly maintained and serviced.

The four problem areas described above are common to distance education efforts in many poor Commonwealth countries. While collaboration among Commonwealth countries can assist in alleviating some of these problems in a number of developing countries, the need for careful consideration of the many supporting areas which must be catered for in using even a simple technology such as radio, has to constantly stressed. The problems become even more acute when TV, computers and sophisticated multi-media communication are envisaged. The type of media used in distance education become as important an element in the overall planning process as the course material or course tutors.

A Basic but Subtle Problem

This problem was well articulated in Don Bewley's Paper on "Distance Education in the Commonwealth Islands of the South West Pacific"¹⁹ It is the whole question of the transfer of technology and

educational material from one society to another, especially when the two societies in question come from distinctly different cultural, social and historical backgrounds. Bewley remarked on an earlier assessment he had made in 1980 of attempted collaboration in distance education in the South Pacific Region. At that time he noted:

Little, if any, distance teaching was carried out in any other language than English. The concepts were external, European concepts of logic, science, rationality, taking little account except as descriptive anthropology of any other conceptual and spiritual systems, or of the adaptation of these alien ideas to any different social or intellectual environment. As distance educators, we have been skilled in leaping space and schedule, in individualizing learning opportunities and freeing study from the institutional constraints of class and school, but we must have seemed less skillful in imagining the intellect and attitudes of those recipients of our courses who did not share our cultural and educational backgrounds.²⁰

These challenges continue to face all efforts at multinational and multicultural collaboration.

In the foregoing sections we have noted with examples from various parts of the Commonwealth some of the challenges which attempts at collaboration must actively address. But many countries in the Commonwealth have had a long history of distance education and in some cases positive attempts at bilateral, sub-regional or regional collaboration in this field. These are the foundations which the Commonwealth initiative hoped to build on.

Examples of Collaboration in the Field of Distance Education in the Commonwealth prior to the establishment of the Commonwealth of Learning

Collaboration may occur in any one of the four major components in a distance learning system - (a) course production, (b) delivery, (c) student support and (d) assessment and accreditation. Collaboration may also occur on a bilateral basis, between two countries or two institutions (these may engage in equal or unequal partnerships); or a multilateral basis involving a number of countries or institutions, often on a sub-regional or regional basis. "Global" collaboration is more difficult to conceive or implement and is one of the aspirations and major challenges for COL.

The following, however, are a few examples of collaboration between and among Commonwealth countries (and in some cases donor countries outside the Commonwealth notably the USA) in the field of distance education and open learning. They illustrate efforts at cooperation in joint production and delivery of educational material, exchange and adaptation of material, cooperation in training and exchange of personnel, and collaboration in research. All these, however, on a much smaller scale than envisaged by the more ambitious Commonwealth plan, but, nevertheless seen as good groundwork upon which to build bigger programs.

1. Regional Cooperation in Distance Education

(a) Initiatives from the University of the South Pacific²¹

Because the University of the South Pacific was intended to serve a number of countries in the region - Fiji, Tonga, Western Samoa, Solomon

Islands, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Vanuatu, Nauru, Niue, Tokelau, and the Cook Islands - face to face, as well as distance education were seen as essential modes of operation from its very beginning. The University of the South Pacific (USP) started operations in 1968 and distance education programs came on stream from 1970.

USP uses printed material and a satellite link-up for delivery of its distance education tutorials (voice only) to a number of regional centres in various member countries. Its largest centre, however, is in Fiji. It offers courses for a full undergraduate program as well as extension courses in areas such as health and agriculture. USP has also developed formal links with a number of Universities in the Region notably the University of Papua New Guinea, Massey University in New Zealand and Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education in Australia. Its courses are given full credit by most institutions of higher learning in the region.

The use of a satellite distribution system for the distance education operations of USP was possible because of assistance from PEACESAT/NASA/University of Hawaii which made available the ATS-1 satellite thereby enabling USP to become a pioneer in this field at that time.

In addition, The Australia and South Pacific External Studies Association (ASPESA) which was established in 1972, has a biennial forum and has organized a number of workshops which bring together distance educators from Commonwealth island countries of the South Pacific and their counterparts in Australia.

(b) The University of the West Indies Distance Teaching Experiment (UWIDITE)²²

The University of the West Indies (UWI) , like the University of the South Pacific, serves a number of island states separated by large expanses of water. UWI has three main campuses in Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad with university centres in at least ten other islands.

In 1978 UWI carried out a two-month satellite link-up experiment facilitated by USAID. Using two NASA satellites, the Jamaica and Barbados campuses were linked, with full audio and video capabilities, for educational programs which included rural medical care, agricultural research, a nurse practitioner's program, family life education, the education of the deaf, early child education and university administration. During that two months there were a total of 27 programs organized and produced by the UWI staff in collaboration with the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation, the Goddard Space Centre, the University of Miami, and the Solar Energy Research Centre in Colorado.

After the apparent success of this two month experiment a Caribbean Regional Communications Study (CARCOST) was set up to determine the feasibility of the use of tele-conferencing and satellite communication. It recommended a five-year pilot project which would focus on in-service teacher training, health and agricultural applications and some first year university programs.

Eventually in 1982 the University of the West Indies Distance Teaching Experiment (UWIDITE) was agreed on and financed by a grant from USAID covering three years. Instead of using satellite communication,

however, it was decided that the regional telephone system, providing audio tele-conferencing and a slow-scan video system, were more practical in terms of available technology and budget.

UWIDITE was launched in 1983 with additional funding from the University of the West Indies, a few individual Caribbean countries, the Commonwealth Foundation, the European Development Fund, and the John Hopkins Program for International Education. It was managed and operated by UWI staff and carried programs in Education, Health, Agriculture, Social Sciences and Law, Administration, training of science technicians and a series of outreach programs. Many of these were part of the formal university curriculum, while a number of others were more informal, aimed at specific needs and groups.

2. Sharing Course Material and Joint Course Production in Africa²³

Countries with little experience in course production for distance education can benefit enormously from the sharing of existing material in a particular subject and the joint production of such material. A few examples of this type of collaboration in Africa date back to the 70's and early 80's.

The International Extension College (IEC) made available to a number of fledging institutions in Africa "GCE 'O' Levels" material, developed at its sister college, the National Extension College in the UK. These institutions were the Mauritius College of the Air, the Botswana Extension College and the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre. The material was provided at nominal cost. Similarly countries within Africa itself shared course material with each other often adapting such material for their own specific needs. When the Namibian Extension Unit sought to develop a

basic mathematics course, it used aspects of the first course in mathematics from Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland.

The main problem in using and even adapting a course designed and developed for another society is cultural. Such material often use examples and techniques which are foreign to the user society and lifestyle. An inexperienced distance education agency is much better served by collaboration in which joint production of course material is possible, bilaterally or multilaterally. In Africa a few such attempts were made back in the early 1970's.

Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone agreed to develop a correspondence program aimed at training math tutors in teacher training colleges in all four countries. The training program was developed with the common needs of the four countries in mind and run from the Cape Coast University in Ghana. In addition, "super-tutors" drawn from all four countries visited the various training colleges and held national seminars.

Examples such as those mentioned above were often irregular attempts at cooperation in the field of distance education, course production and training. The advent of proposals for a sustained and elaborate attempt at Commonwealth cooperation was exciting and hopeful news in many parts of the Commonwealth when they began to surface in 1985 and onwards. But the real motives for those proposals which culminated in the establishment of the Commonwealth of Learning had their origins two decades earlier in a series of actions taken by developed Commonwealth Countries with regards to the treatment of international students in their countries. Chapter 4 details these actions and their consequences.

Notes on Chapter 3

¹ Gordon Patrick Walker, The Commonwealth, (London: Secker & Warburg, 1962)15.

² This wording was worked out by Lord Arthur Balfour, former British Foreign Secretary, at the 1926 "Imperial Conference" at which Canada, South Africa and Ireland were all calling for true autonomy from Britain. The 'equal status' provision was approved by a Statute of Westminster in 1931.

³ A. Milner, "Two Empires", Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute, 1907-8, vol. xxxix, pp. 289-300, referred in Mehrotra, S.R. The Commonwealth and the Nation, (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1978)18-19.

⁴ From the "Final Communique - Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 1949" in The Commonwealth at the Summit: Communiqués of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings 1944-1986, (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1987) 29.

⁵ Derek Ingram, Commonwealth for a Colour-Blind World, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1965) 63.

⁶ Some Historians argue that by the 1950's and 60's it was no longer profitable for Britain to retain its colonies and this more than anything else sparked the granting of Independence to so many ex-colonies during that time. For a detailed argument see Eric Williams, From Columbus to Castro (1970)

⁷ The "Agreed Memorandum on the Commonwealth Secretariat" was attached to the "Final Communique - Meeting of the Prime Ministers 1965" and can be found in The Commonwealth at the Summit: Communiqués of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings 1944-1986, (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1987)105.

⁸ Ibid., pp.156-157.

⁹ Cleve Dheensaw, The Commonwealth Games: The First Sixty years, (Victoria, Canada: Orca Books, 1994). 157.

¹⁰ UNESCO, Learning to be: The world of education today and tomorrow, (Paris: UNESCO, 1972), p. xxi.

¹¹ UNESCO, Statistical Yearbook 1992 (Paris: UNESCO, 1992).

¹² Janet Jenkins, "Pessimism and Reality: A More Up-to-date Look at Distance Teaching in the Third World", in Journal of Distance Education, III(1), Spring, 1988, p. 101.

¹³ Wilbur Schramm, Philip H. Coombs, Friedrich Kahnert and Jack Lyle, The New Media: Memo to Educational Planners (Paris: UNESCO/IIEP, 1967), pp. 17-64.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 78.

¹⁵ Bates provides precisely such a chart in A.W. Bates, Broadcasting in Education: An Evaluation, (London: Constable, 1984) 9.

¹⁶ Tony Dodds and Solomon Inquai, "Distance Education in Africa" in Commonwealth Co-operation in Open Learning: Background Papers, edited by Janet Jenkins, London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1988, pp 1-38.

¹⁷ The authors included a general analysis for the following countries:- Botswana, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Seychelles.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 20.

¹⁹ Don Bewley, "Distance Education in the Commonwealth Islands of the South Pacific", in Commonwealth Co-operation in Open Learning: Background Papers, edited by Janet Jenkins, (London:

Commonwealth Secretariat, 1988) 205-230. The countries included in this assessment were Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga, Western Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Vanuatu, Nauru, Niue, Tokelau, and the Cooks Islands.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 219.

²¹ Ibid, pp. 218-229.

²² Information taken from G.C. Lalor and Christine Marrett, University of the West Indies Teaching Experiment (UWIDITE): A Report, (Jamaica: University of the West Indies, 1986).

²³ Examples taken from Tony Dodds and Solomon Inquai, "Distance Education in Africa" in Commonwealth Co-operation in Open Learning: Background Papers, edited by Janet Jenkins, (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1988) 1-38.

CHAPTER 4

THE BACKGROUND CONDITIONS AGAINST WHICH THE COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING WAS CONCEIVED

The idea for the Commonwealth of Learning did not spring fully formed from a gathering of politicians, bureaucrats or academics. It was a long time in the making.

One can trace its original impulse to a series of governmental actions related to foreign students studying in Britain in the 1960's. These actions started a trend which had serious repercussions, particularly for students from poor developing countries seeking higher education "abroad", usually in Britain, Canada or Australia. The "actions" were the institution of differential fees for foreign students attending institutions of higher learning in these countries.

Differential Tuition Fees

Britain

It started first in 1967 in Britain, the country which many ex-colonials from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific viewed as the "Mother Country" and flocked to for higher education. In December 1966¹, the Labour Government announced a differential fee for "overseas" students in higher and advanced education programs in the UK. By 1967/68 the fees for

overseas students were set at £250 compared with £70 for "home" students. By 1981, when the Conservative Government brought in the "full-cost overseas student policy" the fees per year for overseas students were £2000, £3000, or £5000 depending on whether they were in Arts, Science or Medicine and Dentistry. The fees for home students were £740 for undergraduates and £1105 for postgraduate in any field. Hardest hit by these differential fees were students from poor Commonwealth countries.

In 1964/65 Nigeria and India were the country of origin for the largest blocks of overseas students to Britain, with 4000 and 2700 students approximately. Only three non-commonwealth countries had more than 1000 students, Iraq, USA and Iran. By 1978/79, Malaysia topped the list with 13,000, followed by Iran with 9,000; Nigeria and Hong Kong were at 5,000 each, followed by USA 3,700, Greece 3,100 and Iraq 2,400. Among the top 18 with 1,000 students or more were Jordan, Turkey, Libya and Germany².

In a more revealing statistical analysis³, by 1979 the total number for all overseas students was 83,000 and of those 25,800 were from OPEC countries; 14,000 from developed countries; 13,000 from Malaysia; 10,400 from "wealthier" developing countries; 8,300 from "poor" developing countries; 11,600 from "poorer" developing countries and 3,300 from the "poorest" developing countries. In summary the "poor" and "poorest" countries, the categories in which a majority of Commonwealth countries found themselves, accounted for about 25% of the total overseas student population. In 1965 they accounted for about 75%.

Problems with Britain's national economy and cutbacks to education was a major reason for the introduction of differential fees and "full-cost" fees

in 1981. But the argument was also made that more and more students who could afford to pay the full cost for their education were enrolling in Britain's higher institutions of learning. The figures above certainly seem to bear that out, with large increases from oil-rich countries and wealthier Commonwealth countries such as Malaysia.

However, a natural outcome of the large increase of fees for foreign students from 1967 onwards was to make overseas education too expensive for students from poorer developing countries, hence their numbers were bound to decline. It is, therefore, just as reasonable to argue that had the fees not increased so drastically students from poorer Commonwealth countries would have continued to be in the majority.

Canada

In the 1950's Canada was not a major country of preference for overseas Commonwealth students seeking higher education. But by the late 60's and 70's, maybe because of the much higher fees in Britain, the numbers grew steadily. The number of foreign students in institutions of higher education, post secondary and university levels in Canada rose from 7,251 in 1960 to 22,263 in 1970. By 1980 that figure reached 44,000⁴.

The figures do not provide a breakdown of students from Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth countries although it was mentioned that about a third of the 1970 total was thought to originate from the USA. However in 1980 at universities alone, the total number of foreign students was 27,919 and of that total 13,666 or 50% were from Commonwealth countries. The largest commonwealth student population came from Hong Kong - 4,953, and Malaysia - 2,095⁵.

The idea for differential Fees for foreign students in Canada originated in Ontario, where more than 50% of all foreign students were located in the seventies. Because education in Canada comes under Provincial control, the Ontario Government in 1976, followed closely by Alberta, announced its intentions to raise the fees for foreign students above those paid by Canadian students because of the rising number of foreign students and the need to curtail educational expenditure.

In the 1976-77 academic year Ontario raised the fees for foreign students in post secondary institutions by 150% over the fees paid by their Canadian counterparts. The Alberta increase was equivalent to 50% over fees paid by Canadians. The justification by both provinces for these increases was that foreign students did not contribute through taxes etc. to provincial budgets, hence they should shoulder a greater load of the cost of their education in Canada. The justification, however, did not take into account the fact that in order for the foreign student to pay taxes he or she first needed to work, and according to employment regulations at that time the foreign student was only granted a work permit for a job when no qualified Canadians were available for that job, a rare case indeed.

In 1977/78 Quebec followed Ontario's example using the same levels for its differential fees for foreign students. By 1979 the Maritime governments of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Islands gave permission to colleges and universities in those provinces to also charge differential fees. By 1980 only British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Newfoundland had not raised their fees for foreign students⁶.

British Columbia joined this group in 1983, then the Saskatchewan Government allowed its universities to charge differential fees if they wished in 1984. However, to the present time (1993-94), the provinces of Manitoba and Newfoundland still do not allow differential fees for foreign students.

Australia

Although large numbers of Commonwealth students in Asia and the Pacific, particularly from Malaysia and Hong Kong, were attracted to institutions of higher learning in Australia before 1980 there were no formal tuition fees for foreign students. Tuition fees for Australian nationals were abolished in 1974. From 1st. January 1980, however, foreign students were required to pay an annual "overseas charge" of £1100 for undergraduate courses and £1500 for postgraduate, medicine, dentistry and veterinary sciences courses while home students continued to pay no tuition fees. Even with these additional fees for foreign students, the Government of Australia felt additional measures needed to be taken to limit foreign students. Therefore, by 1983 firm quotas for the number of foreign students to be admitted into undergraduate and postgraduate courses were set ⁷.

Other Commonwealth Countries⁸

New Zealand and India are the only two other Commonwealth countries with comparatively large foreign student populations in their institutions of higher learning.

In 1983 New Zealand announced a three tier approach to the question of fees for non-nationals. Under this policy students from the South Pacific, at the university level, pay the same fees as local students. Students from the ASEAN member countries pay a concessionary fee well below full-cost levels (from a 1/4 to 1/6 depending on the courses taken), but a quota on numbers is in place for new students from these countries. Students from all other countries pay the calculated full-cost fee for courses taken at universities in New Zealand.

By 1983, India, on the other hand, had no differential fees for foreign students and no limits on the numbers of students that could be admitted. Because education was heavily subsidized by the government, fees at Indian universities were very low even for such coveted programs as medicine. As a result a large percentage of foreign students in India were studying medicine.

Because demand for places in higher institutions of learning in many other Commonwealth countries was so low, no stated policies were in place, implying that all students foreign and domestic would pay the same fees. In a few developing Commonwealth countries, however, there were provisions for either differential fees or a limit to foreign students.

Many commonwealth countries such as Bangladesh, Kenya, Malaysia, Tanzania, Uganda and Guyana had no provisions for differential fees, partly because very few foreign students were enrolled in their universities, but also because for many of these, education at the tertiary level including university was either free or required a very small token fee.

Singapore required overseas students to pay a fee 50% higher than home students, but in return provided a government tuition grant to these same students which resulted in virtually eliminating the differential fee. Both Zimbabwe and Nigeria had open door policies towards foreign students at the graduate and postgraduate levels, although both lacked the capacity to fully service their own populations in this regard. What is also typical is that although Nigeria for example had announced that it had reserved 5% of its places for international students only about 1% was actually taken. Commonwealth students, particularly from developing countries were flocking instead to Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand where both high differential fees and formal or informal quotas were in place.

As many poor Commonwealth countries drifted into greater economic difficulties at home at the same time robbing them of the ability to strengthen their educational bases at the post-secondary and university levels, an economic recession was forcing rich Commonwealth countries such as Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand to seek ways of cutting back on expenditure resulting in cutbacks to education, and eventually differential fees and quotas for international students. One of the end result was to make foreign training inaccessible to the poorest students, further aggravating the gap between the rich and poor within the Commonwealth group itself. The Commonwealth Standing Committee on Student Mobility commenting on this situation at the end of 1983 stated:

It is now five years since Britain's decision to introduce full-cost fees for overseas students.... The ensuing period has seen parallel fee-raising moves elsewhere in the Commonwealth by other major host countries, and only India, among the five major Commonwealth receivers of students from abroad, does not charge non-nationals

more than home students. As a result Commonwealth student mobility appears to have reached a plateau. If the principle of full-cost fees were to extend far into North America, where Canada and the United States are major hosts, or were to be applied in Australia, overseas study opportunities available to Commonwealth students would diminish seriously.⁹

And it did.

The Commonwealth Standing Committee on Student Mobility

The Commonwealth Standing Committee on Student Mobility was created for the specific purpose of addressing the rising tide of differential fees in Britain and other developed Commonwealth countries as they affected student mobility and access to higher education in the Commonwealth.

Commonwealth Education Ministers who met in Colombo, Sri Lanka in 1980 voiced increasing concern about the implications of increased fees for overseas students and its effects on human resource development in many poor member countries. The effect was particularly devastating to many smaller Commonwealth countries which did not possess adequate higher education facilities of their own. Even if they had universities and many did not, these often did not offer higher than a bachelor's degree. The Meeting therefore recommended the immediate establishment of a Commonwealth Consultative Group on Student Mobility with the following terms of reference¹⁰:-

- (a) To examine all available information on existing levels of fees for overseas students at tertiary level institutions in

Commonwealth countries and how these have affected student mobility.

(b) To examine all other constraints on student mobility, and to recommend ways in which the constraints identified can be overcome in order to promote and maintain pan-Commonwealth student mobility at all levels of tertiary education.

(c) To advise the Secretary-General on what measures may be taken by Commonwealth governments and relevant national and international agencies to foster and develop student mobility between Commonwealth countries.

The Commonwealth Secretary-General, Shridath Ramphal, invited the following Commonwealth scholars and education experts, in their individual capacities, to serve as members of the Consultative Group:-

Sir Hugh Springer (Barbados) - Chairman and former Secretary-General of the Association of Commonwealth Universities;

Prof. Ungku A. Aziz (Malaysia) - Vice Chancellor of the University of Malaysia;

Mr. W. A. Dodd (Britain) - Under Secretary and Chief Education Adviser, Overseas Development Administration;

Dr. A.T. Johns (New Zealand) - Chairman, University Grants Committee;

Prof. D. A. Low (Australia) - Vice Chancellor, Australian National University;

Dr. C. R. Mitra (India) - Director of Birla Institute of Technology and Science and Past Chairman of Assoc. of Commonwealth Universities;

Prof. H. A. Oluwasanmi (Nigeria) - Former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ife;

Mr. D. Bethel (Britain) - Director of Leicester Polytechnic and Deputy Chairman of the Committee of Directors of Polytechnics;

Prof. Alan J. Earp (Canada) - President and Vice-Chancellor of Brock University and President of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada;

Dr. F.S.C. Kalpage (Sri Lanka) - Secretary, Ministry of Higher Education and Chairman of University of Grants Commission;

Sir Roy Marshall (Britain) - Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hull and Chairman of the Commonwealth Liaison Committee;

Prof. J. M. Mwanza (Zambia) - Vice Chancellor of the University of Zambia;

Mr. G. H. Wilson (Britain) - Director of UAC International and Chairman of the Overseas Students Trust.

The recommendations of the Consultative Group in 1981 were four-fold¹¹ :-

(a) That Commonwealth governments give consideration to fee exemption or support on the basis of reciprocal student exchange; students of high quality; and self-financed students who would directly benefit the development needs of their countries;

(b) That the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan should provide additional places in institutions of higher learning for high quality students; for students to take first degrees where facilities or places are not available in their home country; for shorter courses in specialized fields; and for split courses where students are able to take part of their requirements at home and a part abroad;

(c) That Commonwealth governments consider the setting up of a Commonwealth Higher Education Program to foster cooperation in this field; and,

(d) That a Commonwealth Standing Committee on Student Mobility be established to consider and advise on all aspects of student mobility including those mentioned in the first three recommendations.

The Report and recommendations of the Consultative Group were considered by the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Melbourne, Australia in October 1981. Paragraph 84 of the *Final Communiqué* of that meeting stated:

Heads of Government reaffirmed that student mobility and educational interchange within the Commonwealth were important to the national development efforts of Commonwealth countries and to maintaining Commonwealth links. While noting the factors contributing to the situation, they recognized that there was widespread and serious concern that the recent very substantial increases in overseas student fees in some countries were creating impediments to the movement of student and teachers between member countries. They expressed their appreciation for the report of the Consultative Group on Student Mobility within the Commonwealth and urged that early and sympathetic consideration be given to the implementation of its recommendations.

One of these recommendations was the formation of a Commonwealth Standing Committee on student Mobility to address a number of problems in this area. By early 1982 a ten-member Committee chaired by Sir Roy Marshall was established and the First Report of this Committee¹², issued in July 1982 dealt with these problems under the following heads:-

1. Tuition Fee (Differential fees for foreign students in Britain Canada and Australia)
2. Need for Fee Concessions by the Developed Commonwealth Countries to foreign students from developing Commonwealth countries
3. Need for Student Assistance - award schemes (scholarships etc.) for students from poorer Commonwealth countries to study in the more Developed ones
4. Need to have academic programs relevant to the needs and developmental level for students from developing Commonwealth countries, and,
5. The need to create a Commonwealth Higher Education Program which would have three main functions:-
 - (1) the collection and dissemination of information on education for the benefit of the entire Commonwealth, including steps already taken on a bilateral or multilateral basis to enable Commonwealth cooperation in higher education

(ii) foster and initiate action with regard to the creation of Centres for Advance study and Research in various parts of the Commonwealth

(iii) become a channel for promoting Commonwealth discussion on a wide range of higher education matters

The Commonwealth Higher Education Program foreshadows many of the objectives of the later Commonwealth of Learning but before moving to delineate that evolution, we need to take a closer look at the kind of progress made in dealing with the major problem which motivated this Standing Committee during its first four years. That problem was the rising tide of differential tuition fees that students from developing countries were being asked to pay first in Britain then, Canada and later Australia and New Zealand , the four major Commonwealth countries to which overseas students were attracted.

The Commonwealth Ministers of Education at their Ninth Conference in Nicosia in July 1984 addressed the topic of student mobility and issued the following ten point Declaration:-

1. We declare our belief in the value of student mobility within the Commonwealth and our determination to foster it.
2. We declare our recognition of the responsibility of Commonwealth governments, in both receiving and sending countries to formulate policies - with regard to fees, awards, places, stability in access and other measures - on study abroad within the Commonwealth, which will contribute to this end.
3. We declare our intention to use our best endeavors to ensure that the Commonwealth collectively raises the level of intra-

Commonwealth student exchanges above their 1983/84 levels to the greatest extent possible in the next triennium.

4. We declare our desire to promote a wider network of educational exchange among Commonwealth countries. More countries should participate actively in exchange so as to multiply the linkages between our individual member countries. In this regard efforts to promote South-South linkages in the Commonwealth deserve high priority.

5. We declare our overwhelming belief that, reflecting the benefit to the host country from receiving Commonwealth students and with a view to preserving Commonwealth links, fees or equivalent charges levied on students from other Commonwealth countries should be less than "full-cost".

6. We urge those of our members who charge higher fees to Commonwealth than non-Commonwealth students not to introduce any discrimination against Commonwealth countries in the matter of fees for students from abroad, and to review their current practices and report back to us within 15 months.

7. We declare our commitment to the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan, as a means of promoting Commonwealth student mobility. We affirm our intention to seek ways to develop and strengthen it. We have pledged ourselves to reach a level of 1,650 awards in 1985 and to maintain awards at least at that level.

8. We declare our conviction that consultation between our governments in this area is essential. We pledge ourselves to promote consultations whenever major adjustments to policies affecting students from other Commonwealth countries are contemplated.

9. We declare our intention to meet again late in 1985 at the time of the UNESCO General Conference for the purpose of assisting performance in the realization of these goals, and in order to consider what practical and collaborative measures may be taken to further

student exchange between our countries in pursuit of the above objectives.

10. Finally, we declare our concern that the Commonwealth Higher Education Unit in the Commonwealth Secretariat should have the necessary resources to support our common endeavors in this field and to service the Commonwealth Standing Committee on Student Mobility.

Like so many resolutions and declarations emanating from international organizations, this one stated an admirable set of intentions and hopes but had no power whatsoever to commit any member-country to specific actions. This became very clear by the time the Standing Committee issued its next annual report.

The Fourth Report of the Standing Committee on Student Mobility issued in 1985 found the situation of differential fees and quotas for foreign students virtually unchanged and in some instances even worse.

In Australia overseas students fees were raised even further in 1985 and the total numbers declined from the year before. In Britain the numbers of Commonwealth students also fell with no relief from the "full-cost" fees, and in Canada there was a sharp fall from 1984 as fees rose even further and British Columbia and Saskatchewan joined the other six provinces in charging differential fees for overseas students, the largest portion coming from Commonwealth Countries¹³.

By now it was probably clear to all concerned that differential fees and quotas in the developed commonwealth countries were here to stay and more practical long term solutions for access by developing countries to the world pool of education and training was needed.

The Fourth Report of The Standing Committee on Student mobility reluctantly conceded that the economic climate in all parts of the Commonwealth and, indeed, the world as a whole called for "alternative patterns to supplement conventional student mobility". They proceeded to give a list of "innovative possibilities for extending student mobility by new and supplementary devices"¹⁴.

These "innovative devices" were given under three broad headings:-

(a) Preparatory Courses - encouraging students from developing countries to complete secondary education in their home country before even thinking of applying for university places overseas by making such courses compatible with requirements abroad. In this way secondary education would not attract such a large catchment of students especially from rich developing countries.

(b) Split-site Courses - allowing students to enroll in universities programs from their home country and do courses both locally and abroad. They would, therefore, spend less time in foreign universities. This approach would also encourage the greater development of distance education policies and practices.

(c) Sustaining Higher Education Development - under this heading the committee suggested a number of strategies for collaboration and cooperation between institutions of higher education in developing and developed commonwealth countries, in the hope of lessening the feeling of dependence on educational institutions in the "North " and creating more "South-South" flows. These strategies involved:-

- i. **Staff Development:** more emphasis on staff development and training of educational personnel in developing countries with the assistance of more developed countries and regional and international agencies such as the Commonwealth Secretariat through the Association of Commonwealth Universities, the British Council, the International Development Program of Australian Universities, and the International Development Office of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada.

- ii. **Libraries, Teaching Materials and Equipment:** in order to develop strong academic bases in less developed Commonwealth countries, educational institutions in these countries must have access to good library services and appropriate teaching material and equipment. Again it was envisaged that developed countries would assist in providing needed reference books and journal as well as assist native personnel in production of locally written educational materials. [It is significant to note that in this discussion the Committee noted that "**Until the basic provision of adequate reference books and periodicals is tackled, ventures into more advanced areas of new information technology could prove to be something of a luxury**". To "reference books and periodicals" they could very well have added "and such basic educational equipment as desks, chalkboard, chalk etc."]

- iii. **Distance Teaching in Higher Education:** Distance teaching using correspondence, radio, audio, TV supported by some face-to-face was viewed as a major strategy, having already proven its usefulness in developed as well as a few developing countries. Educational as well as economic factors could be addressed by the greater use of distance education. In this regard the Commonwealth Secretariat held a meeting in January 1985 involving specialists on Distance Education. This meeting, which was held at Cambridge, England issued a series of recommendations dealing with studies on cost effectiveness, training, production of course material and institutional cooperation in distance education in the Commonwealth. The Standing Committee endorsed all these recommendations¹⁵.

iv. New Information Technologies: In this area the Committee was cautious. While acknowledging the benefit of computers and satellite transmissions in the sharing of educational resources, it also feared that costs for such new technology could easily overwhelm some developing countries if careful thought and judgment were not exercised. On the other hand if these new technologies were not investigated by developing countries and continue to be rapidly adopted by developed countries then the gap between educational opportunities for rich and poor would continue to widen.

v. The Role of Institutional links: Although alluded to in a number of the above, the Committee stressed the need for institutional links, educational exchanges and joint research between rich and poor commonwealth countries.

vi. Cost-Effectiveness Strategies in Higher Education: Finally the Committee highlighted one of the most important, yet difficult factors underlining all of the above strategies to developing and sustaining higher educational institutions in poor commonwealth countries, that is, the cost. While many of the strategies envisaged assistance from the rich countries, poor developing countries themselves must be the first to devote thought, energy and resources, no matter how limited, to educational development in their own countries.

These "innovative devices" reviewed in the report of the Fourth Meeting of the Standing Committee were to spark a new emphasis in the work of this committee and ideas for a new form of Commonwealth cooperation in the field education. Distance Education had also emerged a key to innovation. The Fifth meeting of the Committee enunciated seminal ideas for the creation of a formal mode around which assistance, cooperation and collaboration might flourish.

This fifth report was both a review of the past five years and a call for a new departure and a very ambitious venture into international cooperation in

an area and on a scale not tried before by a large group of countries at various stages of development.

"The Time Has come, we believe, to create a Commonwealth Fund for Higher Education Cooperation¹⁶":

These were the strident words of the Fifth Report of the Standing Committee on Student Mobility in 1986 that started plans which would very quickly mature into the Commonwealth of Learning by 1988.

The recommendation for this new Commonwealth Fund was intended to :-

- draw on a wider range of expertise than any single donor country possesses;
- extend the range of resources on which they can draw for books, equipment, training and other expertise;
- enlarge the possibilities of funding regional institutions and facilities;
- make possible the promotion of professional networks as channels for the exchange of experience and collaborative research;
- offer developing countries the opportunity to contribute their own skills and experience in promoting educational development among their partner countries in the Commonwealth¹⁷.

The structure and make-up of the Commonwealth itself were seen as the framework around which all of the above could be developed. A

common language, similar institutional patterns and educational philosophies and formal, regular meetings of governmental and non governmental bodies all pointed to a distinct advantage over similar international initiatives.

The "Fund" itself was pegged in financial terms at £15 million annually (our emphasis) to be used primarily in the following areas:-

(a) Collaboration in distance education and open learning - which was seen as a major new strategy to address many of the old problems of student mobility.

(b) Institutional development in Commonwealth developing countries - institutional linkages, training and staff development, and, strengthening of library services and improved educational equipment were necessary supplements to the proposed initiatives in distance educational.

(b) Greater participation of women in higher education, joint research into other problems common to the Commonwealth, and a formula for the exchange of such information within the Commonwealth were also slated as urgent goals for the Fund.

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Conference in Nassau in 1985 had already endorsed the move towards exploring the potential of collaboration in distance education. They stated in their final Communiqué:-

"Particularly encouraged by the potential for collaboration in higher education through distance education and the use of new technologies, they [the Heads of Government] requested the Secretary-General to explore the scope for new Commonwealth initiatives in the field of open Learning."¹⁸

This "request" led to three sets of actions. First, two one-day meetings were organized, one in London in March 1986 and the other in Vancouver in May 1986. The meetings were meant as consultations among educators with experience in distance education and open learning from all parts of the Commonwealth. Second, based on recommendations from these two meetings, background papers on ways of furthering Commonwealth co-operation in distance and open learning were commissioned. Third, with financial assistance from the British Overseas Development Administration, a review of Commonwealth experience in this area was started.

The second and third initiatives above bore important fruits in what appeared later as a combined document entitled Commonwealth Co-operation in Open Learning: Background Papers edited by Janet Jenkins. In that document distance education efforts in many Commonwealth countries in Africa, Asia, the Pacific and the Caribbean were summarized. Experts in this field also prepared papers on such topics as "Costs and Costing of Distance and Open Education"¹⁹; "Media and Distance Education"²⁰; "Training Opportunities for Commonwealth Distance Educators"²¹; "Information and Documentation Resources"²²; "Distance Teaching for Agriculture"²³; "Distance Teaching for Health Care"²⁴ and "Evaluation in Distance Learning"²⁵.

The meetings mentioned above and this comprehensive survey and documentation of distance education and open learning in the Commonwealth, set the stage for the next step towards the establishment of the Commonwealth of Learning. That was the appointment of a Group of Experts or the "Briggs Commission", as it was popularly called, to report and

recommend on "Commonwealth Cooperation in Distance Education and Open Learning".

Notes on Chapter 4

¹Facts and figures for the discussion on the introduction of differential fees in Britain are taken from a publication by the Overseas Students Trust which was established in 1961 by a group of transnational companies as an "educational charity" to study and canvas for the improvement of the lot of overseas students to the UK. The publication is: Peter Williams, ed. The Overseas Student Question: Studies for a Policy, London: Heinemann (for the Overseas Students Trust), 1981.

²Ibid, Table 2.4 on p. 31.

³Ibid, Table 2.1 on p. 32.

⁴Canadian Bureau for International Education, The Right Mix: The Report of the Commission on Foreign Student Policy, (Ottawa: CBIE, 1981)18-19.

⁵Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth Student Mobility: A Time for Action - The Third Report of the Commonwealth Standing Committee on Student Mobility, May 1984, (London: Commonwealth Secretariat) p. 2 - Table 2.

⁶Canadian Bureau for International Education, The Right Mix: The Report of the Commission on Foreign Student Policy, (Ottawa: CBIE, 1981) 20-21.

⁷Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth Student Mobility: A Time for Action - The Third Report of the Commonwealth Standing Committee on Student Mobility, May 1984, (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1984) 7-8.

⁸Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth Student Mobility: A Time for Action - The Third Report of the Commonwealth Standing Committee on Student Mobility, May 1984, (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1984) pp. 11-15

⁹Ibid, pp. 1.

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- 10 Commonwealth Secretariat, Student Mobility within the Commonwealth: Report of the Consultative Group, (21-23 April 1981, London), (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1981) 3.
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- 14 Ibid, pp. 20-29.
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- 16 Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth Student Mobility: Commitment and Resources - The Fifth Report of the Commonwealth Standing Committee on Student Mobility, August 1986, London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1986) 9- 20.
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- 18 Commonwealth Secretariat, "The Final Communique of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, 1985" in The Commonwealth at the Summit: Communiqués of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings 1944-1986, (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1987) 286.
- 19 Greville Rumble, "Costs and Costing of Distance/Open Education" in Commonwealth Co-operation in Open Learning: Background Papers, edited by Janet Jenkins, (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1988) 247-283.

20 A.W.Bates, "Media and Distance Education" in *Ibid*, pp. 335-355.

21 Jo Bradley, "Training Opportunities for Commonwealth Distance Educators" in *Ibid*, pp. 355-371.

22 Keith Harry, "Information and Documentation Resources" in *Ibid*, pp. 305-335.

23 Chris Garforth and David Warr, "Distance Teaching in Agriculture" in *Ibid*, pp. 391-411.

24 Janet Jenkins, "Distance Education for Health Care" in *Ibid*, pp. 411-425.

25 Alan Woodley and Adrian Kirkwood, "Evaluation in Distance Learning" in *Ibid*, pp. 283-305.

CHAPTER 5

BIRTH OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING

The single most significant development towards the creation of the Commonwealth of Learning was the appointment of a Committee of distinguished Commonwealth experts in the field of education by the Commonwealth Secretary General, Shridath Ramphal, in October 1986. The Group's mandate was to explore the potential for Commonwealth Cooperation in distance education and open learning and make recommendations on appropriate means of accomplishing such cooperation.

Members of the Expert Group (The Briggs Commission)

Members of the group were drawn from all the regions of the Commonwealth as follows:-

Lord Briggs of Lewes, Provost of Worcester College, Oxford (Chairman)

Professor Akin Adesola, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Lagos

Dr. Anastasios Christodouiou, Secretary General of the Association of Commonwealth Universities

Mrs. Marjorie Crocombe, Director of Extension Services of the University of the South Pacific

Professor Rex Nettleford, Director of Extra-Mural Studies and Director of Studies, Trade Union Education Institute at the University of the West Indies

Professor Gaddam Ram Reddy, Vice-Chancellor, Indira Gandhi National University, New Delhi, India.

Dr. Raymond Rickett, Director of Middlesex Polytechnic, Britain

Professor Ronald L Watts, Professor of Political Studies, Queen's University, Canada and formerly Principal and Vice-Chancellor of Queens University

Professor Sir Bruce Williams, former Director of the Technical Change Centre, London and previously Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Sydney, Australia.

On this Commission (popularly known as the Briggs Commission after its Chair, Lord Briggs) the Commonwealth Secretariat was represented by:-

Mr. M Malhoutra Assistant Secretary-General

Mr. P R C Williams Director, Education Program

Mr. D M Mbiti Assistant Director, Education Program

Mrs. G Larose Head, Higher Education Unit

Dr. H D Perraton Education Officer in charge of distance education.

Support Staff from the secretariat were Mrs. A Morton, Mrs. L de Silva-Packer, Mrs. S Edwards, Mr A Amoa-Awua, Miss D Cole and Miss T Addo.

Terms of Reference of the Briggs Commission

The terms of reference reflected the mandate set by the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Nassau in 1985, "particularly encouraged by the potential for collaboration in higher education through distance education and the use of new technologies, they requested the Secretary-General to explore the scope for a new Commonwealth initiative in the field of open learning."¹

The Commission's stated terms of reference were:

1. Having regard to existing Commonwealth resources and experience in distance and open learning, and the range of communication and information technology already in existence or becoming available:

(a) to identify educational needs and opportunities within the Commonwealth that could usefully be addressed through new Commonwealth initiatives at the higher educational level;

(b) to examine the most appropriate forms that such initiatives might take with a view to complementing and strengthening the work of existing institutions and where appropriate creating new ones;

2. To report to the Secretary-General by 30 April 1987.²

Towards a Commonwealth of Learning: The Brigg's Commission Report

The Commission met as a body in London three times, each time for three days, and corresponded regularly between meetings by post and fax. They used as background material for their work the various reports put out by the Commonwealth Standing Committee on Student Mobility and the comprehensive report describing "Commonwealth Co-operation in Distance Education" which was commissioned earlier in 1986 by the Commonwealth Secretariat.

The Commission's final report was divided into five sections: (1) The Challenge (2) Needs and Opportunities (3) Communication Technologies (4) Patterns of Cooperation and (5) The Proposal. We will deal with each in turn.

(1) The Challenge

The Commonwealth experts viewed the challenge in three dimensions. The first was to convert the rapid development of new communication technology utilizing videos, satellite, computer and multimedia approaches for educational use in Commonwealth countries. It was acknowledged that even in the rich countries, use of these new communication technologies for educational purposes was not widespread. An extension to this challenge, however, was that simpler forms of communication such as radio broadcasts and audio cassettes could be fully utilized more effectively.

The second challenge was the need to make use of "distance education" and "open learning" approaches in order to make education more available in countries where educational opportunities were limited for various reasons. Since rich and poor countries within the Commonwealth had a long history of using distance education, the real challenge was to expand cooperation in distance education to include countries that had not used such approaches before.

The third challenge, upon which the first and second depended, was to ensure that cost effectiveness could be clearly demonstrated for the introduction, use and expansion of distance education efforts within and among Commonwealth countries. Cost effectiveness in the use of distance education depended not merely on the type of media used for delivery - print, radio, tv, satellite or computer, but on the scale of operation or the amount of students served. Poorer Commonwealth countries were in no position to experiment with educational approaches which called for an even greater financial outlay than their often shrinking education budgets would allow. Sharing resources, material and human, which already existed and developing joint approaches to future needs in poorer Commonwealth countries, were seen as the key elements of this third challenge.

2. Needs and Opportunities

The needs in developing Commonwealth countries were immediate and apparent. At the national level, secondary education was often a privilege two-thirds of the population could not afford. Tertiary education, whether university or vocational, was out of the reach of 90 per cent of the population. Using figures from UNESCO for the year 1985, the experts

showed that in developed countries 87 per cent of the secondary-school-age population were enrolled in high schools compared to 37 per cent for developing countries. At the tertiary level the comparison was even more startling. In developed countries enrollment of qualified entrants were 33 per cent whilst in developing countries only 6 per cent of those qualified for entry into tertiary educational programs were actually in a program.

The main reasons for this low enrollment, particularly at the higher education level were:- too few places available at universities, colleges and technical institutes and the geographical remoteness of many would-be students from their countries' institutions of higher learning. In developing countries, rural residents faced a doubly difficult burden of acquiring higher education. First there were usually limited places available, because of a shortage of secondary schools (the best were located in the capital or urban centres) and universities (often no more than one for each country, with campuses in the capital); but even when admitted, the rural residents or their parents must be able to bear the financial burden and social problems which accompany relocation in a new environment or community. Well organized distance education programs would provide welcome opportunities for easing some of these difficulties.

In addition, those persons who missed primary, secondary or tertiary education in their youth had none or very limited opportunities to upgrade their education at a later stage. The concept and possibilities of "open learning"³ would be of great interest to such groups in both developed and developing countries in the Commonwealth. Open learning utilizing distance education methodology would be of enormous benefit to individuals and nations as a whole.

Apart from these basic and obvious needs in many countries in the Commonwealth, existing schools and universities that attempted programs in distance education often lacked, both in numbers and qualifications, a staff that could make use of the new approaches, techniques and technologies in this field. The need for assistance and collaboration with institutions more experienced in this field was, therefore, critical to new or expanded programs.

Even at the level of individual subject areas there were many common needs identified by developing countries. These were primarily in the areas of "agriculture and rural development"; "primary and preventative health care"; "accountancy, business education and management; education and the training of teachers; languages; and history and cultural studies. All these areas lent themselves to many types of collaboration both bilaterally and multilaterally within the Commonwealth of nations. With each need, therefore, there seemed to be opportunities for assistance and cooperation using distance education and old and new communication technologies.

3. Communication Technologies

Because distance education relies as heavily on the mode of delivery as it does on the courses to be delivered, the Commission specifically deliberated on the forms of old and new communication technologies which could be put to use in this field. The main challenges and opportunities for collaboration seemed to reside in reviewing and improving the use of standard technologies such as print and audio as well as exploring the

possibilities of incorporating satellite, video and computer based delivery systems.

The print medium, for example, had been made even more feasible and manageable through desk-top publishing using the appropriate computer hardware and software. Training in this area required comparatively little time and could be done in-country within the agencies that needed it. The twin challenges were the availability of the necessary equipment and an adequate pool of trained personnel.

Radio or TV broadcasts were seen to be as important to the development of distance education as print. The challenges in this area were to reexamine the use of live broadcasts and encouraging the greater use of audio and video cassettes. Cassettes had the distinct advantage over live broadcasts of being more flexible and available to students whenever they needed them. In addition, audio conferencing or teleconferencing, using normal telephone lines could be very effective, both in terms of cost and performance, in linking far-flung campuses or centres of a universities such as the University of the West Indies or the University of the South Pacific. Links could also be established among universities in various regions.

Educational television and video cassettes had been in use in developed countries for many years. Whilst studies have indicated their effectiveness in education, they are much more expensive to produce than radio or audio programs. Both production and transmission of video programs require highly trained personnel and large budgets on an on-going basis. Assistance and cooperation in this area was seen as the only

way possible for poor countries to be able to make use of this fairly "old" communication technology. On the other hand, using the "newer" satellite communication for both audio and video was more difficult and expensive to organize, although both Canada and India had some successes in using the cheaper low-orbiting satellites for educational purposes.

The Commission cautioned that educational, economic, geographic and cultural considerations must all go into the mix when considering the use of one communication technology over another. These factors along with the specific needs and existing facilities within a country or region would impact on the type and patterns of cooperation which were possible within the Commonwealth.

Patterns of Cooperation

The Commonwealth had a number of advantages in considering various types of cooperation in the field of distance education and open learning. The Commission noted five such advantages.

First the shared history of the Commonwealth allowing it to develop after the independence of many of its members along a unique path of functional cooperation in various fields including economic, educational and technological. Second, English is the common language for education in most Commonwealth countries. Third the educational systems in many commonwealth countries, both developed and developing, share many features in common, especially at the tertiary level. The Association of Commonwealth Universities, linking universities across the Commonwealth had been in existence for more than 75 years. Fourth, because the Commonwealth encompassed both developed and developing countries,

there was a variety of experiences and expertise available within this group. Finally, the Commonwealth had a rich history of the use of distance education and England, Canada and Australia, have been among the leaders of the world in this field.

These seemed to provide a good foundation upon which bilateral and multilateral cooperation in education could develop. The Commission, therefore, identified the following areas for cooperation:-

1. Materials Development

Acquisition and delivery of teaching materials - where educational needs for widening access or raising quality can be met from material that already exists elsewhere in the Commonwealth;

Promoting or commissioning teaching materials - where educational needs cannot be met from material that already exists or where common courses can best be developed on a co-operative basis.

2. Institutional Development

Staff training - in the techniques of distance education and the management of distance education programs;

Facilitation of inter-institutional communications links - whether to support distance education or for more general academic purposes;

Information and consultancy - to provide an information and consultancy service on open and distance education;

Evaluation and applied research in distance education - to support and organize evaluation research.

3. Support to Individual Students

Mutual accreditation procedures - to ensure that students can get credit recognition for courses taken at a distance from another Commonwealth country;

Assisting the development of local support services to students - where co-operation can raise the quality of these services and fill gaps in student support.⁴

The Proposal by the Commonwealth Group of Experts

The creation of a "University of the Commonwealth for Co-operation in Distance Education"

The Commission's overall proposal called for "the creation of a new institution to promote collaboration in distance education throughout the Commonwealth. Its object would be to widen access to education, to share resources, to raise educational quality and to support the mobility of ideas, of teaching, of relevant research and of people."⁵ It suggested that the new institution be called the **University of the Commonwealth for Co-operation in Distance Education**. The "role and function" of this new institution were to facilitate: (a) development and sharing of teaching materials, (b) support for individual learners and (c) institutional development.

Constitution and organization

The Commission suggested a "small but flexible central organization" with strong communication links to other Commonwealth institutions of learning. It suggested a Governing board of not more than eleven members, broadly representative of the Commonwealth as a whole. The Governing

Board was to undertake the immediate tasks of the location of this new institution, details concerning its constitutional status and mode of operation, and appointing its chief executive and senior staff.

The staff was envisaged in three sections, (a) professional, concerned with the main functions of the agency - information, course development, training, research, and communication technology; (b) educational - to undertake subject areas initially identified; and (c) administrative.

The Commission also suggested that the location of the new agency should require a country to have good communication links in order to make electronic and other forms of exchange simple. The country would also need to have "an established infrastructure of services, and to be in a place to which it was possible to attract and recruit professional support staff from throughout the Commonwealth".⁶ It was hoped that the new agency would build on the strengths of already existing regional agencies, associations and proposals related to distance education.

Finance and Funding

The initial budget focused on the establishment and operations of the headquarters of the new institution for its first five years. At 1987 prices, it suggested a total expenditure of £28 million or an annual expenditure of £5-£6 million (about Can. \$12 million). Additional finances would be required for the establishment of regional centres or to support specific regional initiatives. It was hoped that the agency could attract funds from international and regional development banks and bilateral and multilateral agencies for

such endeavors. The core budget of £5-6 million per annum, however, would need to be met by contributions from Commonwealth member countries either on a voluntarily basis or using some kind of formula for contribution.

Approval by Commonwealth Heads for the "Briggs Report" Proposal

The "Briggs" Commission Report and proposal was presented to the 1987 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting held in Vancouver in 1987. It not only received the full endorsement of the meeting but also a Canadian offer for siting the headquarters of this new Commonwealth agency in Canada with pledges of specific funding from a number of member countries. Their decision was summarized as follows in the final communiqué:

Heads of Government agreed to create a Commonwealth institution to promote cooperation in distance education, which may become the University of the Commonwealth for Cooperation in Distance Education. They endorsed in principle a Canadian proposal to establish a Commonwealth University and College Network for distance education. The Canadian proposal was for a headquarters in Canada and various units for example in Britain, the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, Eastern and Southern Africa, West Africa, South Asia and the Pacific and any other appropriate place. Canada undertook to provide £2 million from federal and provincial sources towards the capital costs and in addition £1 million towards recurrent costs over a five-year period. India offered £1 million over a five-year period and Nigeria £1.5 million over the same period, together with television services and free physical facilities. A number of other countries including Australia, Barbados, Botswana, Britain, Brunei Darussalam, New Zealand and Zimbabwe promised to contribute to the program at an early stage. Malta also offered itself as a centre and promised physical facilities.⁷

In addition, the Heads of Government also asked the Secretary-General "to convene a working group to develop the financial and organizational framework, establish appropriate guidelines and set priorities for the institution with a view to ensuring the relevance of programs and the appropriateness of educational technologies to countries' particular situations and needs."⁸ The working group was to consist of representatives of the main donor countries and other persons with "substantial experience" in distance education. The aim was "to start the first cooperative programs as early as possible."

It is not without significance that the final paragraph of this section which dealt with the establishment of this new agency returned to the thorny question of student mobility and differential fees for overseas students in some Commonwealth countries. The section concluded:

The Heads of Government remained mindful of the crucial importance of student mobility within the Commonwealth to which they saw distance education as a complement. They endorsed the hope expressed by Education Ministers that all member countries would, in due course, give consideration to the possibility of a favorable fee-regime for Commonwealth students. They expressed their appreciation of the work of the Standing Committee on Student Mobility and invited it to continue its work with an enlarged mandate as recommended by the Education Ministers.⁹

In effect, the Heads of Government Conference, no doubt with the insistence of developing Commonwealth countries, wished to keep the question of students' access to institutions of higher learning in developed Commonwealth countries alive, and not allow this new initiative to overshadow or minimize the problems still being experienced in this area.

**Institutional Arrangements for Commonwealth Cooperation in
Distance Education - The "Working Group"**

Following the Vancouver Summit and the decisions of that meeting, a "Working Group", as requested by the Heads, was convened under the Chairmanship of a Canadian, Dr. John S Daniel. Other members of the group were divided into two groups - "representatives from main donor countries" and "individual members" who were selected for their expertise in the field of distance education.

The Composition of the Working Group was as follows¹⁰:-

Chairman

Dr. John S Daniel
President, Laurentian University, Ontario

Canada

Members

Representatives of Main Donor Countries

Prof. Malcolm Skilbek, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of Deakin Univ.	Australia
Dr. Roger O Iredale, Chief Education Adviser, Overseas Dev. Admin.	Britain
Hajah Misli binti Haji Awang, Director of Planning Research and Dev.	Brunei Darussalam
Mr. Noble Power, Vice President, Multilateral Branch, CIDA	Canada
Dr. Jack Newberry, Director of Access Programs, Ministry of Advanced Education, B.C.	Canada
Mr. Abhimanyu Singh, Deputy Secretary, Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development	India
Prof. P. Serracino Inglott Rector, University of Malta	Malta
Mr. L Renwick Visiting Fellow, Stout Research Centre, Victoria Univ. of Wellington	New Zealand

Prof. Akin Adesola
Vice-Chancellor, University of Lagos

Nigeria

Individual Members

Dr. A Christodoulou (Britain)	Secretary-General, Assoc. of Commonwealth Universities
Mrs. Marjorie Crocombe (Cook Islands)	Director of Ext. Services, Univ. of the South Pacific
Dr. J H Horlock (Britain)	Vice Chancellor, Open University, Britain
Prof. G C Lalor (Jamaica)	Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Univ. of the West Indies
Prof. G Gam Reddy (India)	Vice-Chancellor, Indira Gandhi National Open Univ.
Mr. Kenneth Tsekoa (Lesotho)	Permanent Secretary, Min. of Education, Lesotho.

Commonwealth Secretariat

Mr. M Malhoutra	Assistant Secretary-General
Mr. P R C Williams	Director, Education Prog.
Dr. H D Perraton	Chief Proj. Officer, Ed. Prog.

Note: At the second meeting of the Group, Canada was represented by:

Mr. Stewart Beattie	Director, Commonwealth Div., Dept. of External Affairs, Ottawa, and
Mr. John A Watson	Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Advanced Education, British Columbia.

As is clear from the list above, the promise of funding biased the composition of the working-group, under-representing poorer Commonwealth countries and over-representing the wealthy ones,

particularly Canada, where COL was to be located. From the earliest stages of the development of COL, financial contributions were a major criteria for deciding which countries would play leading roles in this new agency. We provide a full discussion on the question of funding and its overall implications in our final chapter.

The Report of the Working Group (The Daniel Report)

The Group met twice in London and established a planning sub-committee which met in Vancouver and Milton Keynes between meetings of the whole Group.

Their final report was structured under the following headings - Purpose and Function; Structure; Governance; Staffing; Service and Facilities; Priorities; Implementation; and Budget and Finance - which we summary in order below.

1. Purpose and Functions

The main purpose of the new institution was to "help Commonwealth countries to develop in a cost-effective way their facilities for distance learning in order to enhance educational opportunity as a means of assisting their social and economic development."¹¹ It was envisaged that the target group for the cooperation in distance education would be a wide range of post-secondary-school-age learners. The widest range of appropriate communication technologies were recommended for use in this effort drawing material and expertise from "a network of colleges, universities and other educational and training institutions" around the Commonwealth.

The Group suggested that the new agency be called **The Commonwealth of Learning** in order to capture the spirit of the whole range of cooperative distance education activities that could be fostered.

Specifically the functions were seen as three-fold, to support institutional development; to share teaching materials and techniques; and to institute support services for individual students including mutual accreditation among Commonwealth countries. These matched closely the functions envisaged in the recommendations of the Briggs Commission.

2. Structure of the Commonwealth of Learning

The Group proposed a structure that would allow activities of four types. First a headquarters to provide "central management and direction of common services and cooperative activities". The headquarters would, therefore, develop policy, identify needs and programs to satisfy such needs, and arrange for the acquisition of materials or development of material for use in collaborative efforts.

Second, the structure should allow for some measure of decentralization. It was thought that an agency based in a Commonwealth member-country, away from London and the Commonwealth Secretariat, could more effectively service a pan-Commonwealth project. In addition the structure could also allow for establishing secondary centres in various regions of the Commonwealth. Since Malta had offered to provide all the facilities for such a centre in that country, the example was made that a centre in Malta, could build on common interests in that area such as sea-related studies and educational management in small states.

With this regional-needs-approach in mind, the structure of the new agency should allow for decentralization in order to meet common regional needs through regional cooperation. The governments and institutions in a particular region could better identify needs, and plan and execute cooperative programs that would take into consideration common geography, culture and socio-economic conditions. Staff training, course development and implementation, common delivery services and credit transfers all lent themselves more readily to regional cooperation. Regional educational centres such as the University of the West Indies and the University of the South Pacific seemed natural sites for the development of this kind of regional Commonwealth cooperation. Regional sites in Asia and Africa could be explored or developed.

Finally, the structure of the Commonwealth of Learning should be seen as a network of colleges, universities, and distance and teaching agencies throughout the Commonwealth, open to public and non-profit institutions involved in the education of adults at a distance. COL would then be seen as the central coordinator of the network, elaborating "its role as broker and catalyst, and as promoter of new initiatives."¹²

3. Governance

In formulating the Governance procedures for COL, the Group took into consideration the need for evolution and development of the agency responding to changing needs and available resources. The Group, therefore, suggested a Governing Board with overall responsibilities for policy and activities at the Headquarters and in all regional and decentralized projects. It was suggested that the Board be made up of

government representatives as well as "distinguished individuals" in the field of distance education, with representation from all parts of the Commonwealth with an attempt to balance donor countries and other members and large and small countries.

With these various criteria to satisfy the proposal for the constitution of the sixteen-member Board was as follows:-

The Board will comprise¹³:

1. the Chairman appointed by the Board (nominated by the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth after due consultation);
2. one member appointed by each of the five Commonwealth governments which have pledged the largest financial contributions to the agency or programs approved by the Board over the forthcoming three financial years;
3. one member appointed by name by each of four Commonwealth governments as agreed by the Commonwealth Education Ministers, following a principle that allows for rotation;
4. three members appointed by the Board
5. two members appointed by the Commonwealth Secretary-General;
6. the Commonwealth Secretary-General or the Secretary-General's representative;
7. the President of the agency ex officio.

The term of office for board members were also detailed:

Members of the Board will be appointed for a term of three years, with one-third retiring each year but initially one third of the members will be appointed for two years, one third for three years and one third for

four years. Members will be eligible for re appointment for a further term but should not serve a longer consecutive period than six years.¹⁴

The Chair of the Board "who will be a person of international standing" would have a term of office of three years and eligible for a second term of three years. Decisions of the Board would generally be by consensus or where necessary by a simple majority of members present, except in financial matters where a two-thirds majority would be required. The Chairman would have "an original and casting vote". The board would be expected to meet at least once each calendar year. Its quorum should be ten members.

4. Staffing, Services and Facilities

The President and Chief Executive of the agency was to be appointed by the Board of Governors on recommendations from the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Secretariat. The appointee was expected to have senior administrative skills in education (at the level of a Vice-Chancellor of a university) as well as the respect and ability to deal with education and Government officials at the highest level.

In addition to the President, the agency would need professional and educational staff to implement the various programs of the agency (information, training, research and evaluation, communication technology and course development) and administrative staff. The guidelines for recruiting these staff members are to follow criteria agreed on for similar appointments at the Commonwealth Secretariat, seeking the highest standards of efficiency but also allowing for recruitment from as wide a

geographical base as possible. The Heads of Divisions were to be appointed by the Board of Governors, whilst the second and third levels of staff would be approved by the President and Heads of Divisions.

On the question of services and facilities needed by the agency, the Government of British Columbia offered to provide headquarters accommodation for the first five years of the agency's operation and Canada offered to provide basic communication equipment needed for the headquarters. These communication equipment would include telephone, telex, fax, electronic mail, and computer hardware and software systems as well as audio-visual equipment.

5. Budget and Finance

The agency was to be financed in the following ways:-

- (a) Fixed pledges from member countries for a specified period of time, either over three or five years, as core funding;
- (b) On-going voluntary contributions from Commonwealth member countries and contributions from both public and private organizations;
- (c) Bilateral donors willing to fund special projects in a particular country or multilateral agencies, including Development Banks interested in funding special or regional projects; and
- (d) After the agency is fully established fees, where appropriate, for services provided both within and outside the Commonwealth.

6. Implementation

The working group prepared a Memorandum of Understanding¹⁵ establishing the constitution and governing structure of the agency which they hoped Commonwealth Governments would accept and adopt by September 1988 in order to bring the new agency into existence. The Vancouver Headquarters agreement was to be signed separately with the Government of Canada after the Agency was established.

**The Commonwealth of Learning comes into being on the 1st.
September 1988 with Headquarters in Vancouver**

On the 1st. day of September 1988, Commonwealth Governments gave their formal approval to the Memorandum of understanding designed by the Working Group and, in effect, established the Commonwealth of Learning. Two months later, at its first meeting held between the 12th. and 14 th. November 1988 in Vancouver, the newly constituted Board of Governors (using the formula for selection of members outlined above) elected Lord Briggs of Lewes from the U.K as its Chairman and appointed Trinidadian-born James Maraj, as the agency's first President and Chief Executive Officer. Dr. Maraj had been chosen from a short-list of about a dozen Commonwealth applicants.

On 14th. of November 1988, the Headquarters Agreement, which designated Vancouver as the site of the headquarters of the Commonwealth of Learning was signed with the Government of Canada. This marked the very first time that an official Commonwealth organization had its headquarters outside of Britain. Also on the 14th. of November, the then Premier of British Columbia, Bill Vander Zalm, presented the lease for the headquarters premises, at 800 Hornby Street in Vancouver, to Lord Briggs. The Commonwealth of Learning was not only the newest international organization in existence but now was the first ever to be situated in Canada.

Composition of the First Board of Governors of COL

CHAIRMAN

Lord Briggs	Chancellor of the British Open University, Provost of Worcester College, Oxford, and former Vice Chancellor of the University of Sussex.	Canada Mr. Don M E Hamilton President, General Communications Corp. Ltd. Vancouver.	Dr. A Christodoulou Secretary General of the Assoc. of Commonwealth Universities and formerly Secretary of the British Open University.
		India Prof. G Ram Reddy Vice-Chancellor, Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi.	Dr. John s Daniel President, Laurentian Open University, Canada and the Chairman of the Working Group that prepared detailed plans for the establishment of COL.

GOVERNMENT NOMINEES

Australia Prof Malcolm Skilbeck, Vice Chancellor, Deakin University.	Malta Prof P Serracino Inglott Pro-Rector, University of Malta.	Prof P Sir Quo-Wei Lee Chairman of the Hang Seng Bank; Chairman of Council, Chinese University Hong Kong, and Chairman, Hong Kong Education Commission
Barbados Sir Roy Marshall, Chairman, Commonwealth Standing Committee on Student Mobility and Higher Education Co-operation, formerly Vice-Chancellor of the University of the West Indies and the University of Hull.	Nigeria Alhaji Hafiz S Wali Director National Teachers Institute, Kaduna.	Mr. William L Renwick Senior Research Fellow, Victoria University of Wellington and former Director-General of Education, New Zealand.
Britain Dr. Roger O Iredale Chief Education Adviser, Overseas	Zimbabwe Prof Walter J Kamba Vice-Chancellor, University of Zimbabwe and former Chairman of the Council of the United Nations University.	Mr. Shridath Ramphal Commonwealth Secretary

OTHER MEMBERS

The Staffing of the Commonwealth of Learning

COL responded to the edict of ensuring participation and activity in all parts of the Commonwealth by structuring its divisions to cover all the regions of the Commonwealth. Hence a Director was appointed to oversee programs and services to each of the major regions of the Commonwealth - Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and the South Pacific. Each Director for regional programs was also given responsibility for some clearly perceived functional aspect of COL's operations, for example, "information services", "material acquisition and development", and "continuing professional education".

Since it was envisaged that communication technologies would play a major role in COL's activities, a Director for Technologies and Communication Development was appointed. A Director of Administration and Finance was also named.

In its first year of operation, the senior staff at the Headquarters of the Commonwealth of Learning were as follows:-

President and Chief Executive Officer - Prof. James A Maraj (Trinidadian and former Vice-Chancellor of University of the South Pacific and Assistant Secretary-General in the Commonwealth Secretariat);

Vice-President and Director of Asian Programs - Prof. G Ram Reddy (Indian and former Vice-Chancellor of Indira Gandhi National Open University);

Director of African Programs and Information Services - Alhaji Hafiz Wali (Nigerian and former Director of the National Teachers' Institute in Kaduna, Nigeria);

Director of Caribbean Programs and Materials Acquisition and Development
- Dr. Dennis Irvine (Jamaican and former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Guyana);

Director of South Pacific Programs and Continuing Professional Education -
Mr. Peter McMechan (New Zealander and former Director of Extension Services at the University of the South Pacific);

Director of Technologies and Communication Development - Mr. John Quigley (Canadian and seconded from Canada's Department of Communications);

Director of Finance and Administration - Mr. James Reed (Canadian);

Assistant Director of Administration and Finance - Mr. Sooknath B Lakhan (Trinidadian).

Funding for the first five years¹⁶

The funding for the first five years of operations of the Commonwealth of Learning came from voluntary pledges by member countries. Initial financial pledges were received from 12 Commonwealth countries totaling £15 million or approximately \$30 million Canadian dollars for the first five years (see details below). Some of the pledges were for specific projects or purposes whilst others allowed free use of funds anywhere in the Commonwealth. For example Britain (£1-2 million) and Malta (the funding of a regional centre) pledged funds or support for activities within their own countries, and Australia (£1 million) pledged funds for activities in the Pacific and Southern Africa. Some funds were made available for use by COL in any part of the Commonwealth, for example, Canada (£4 million), Brunei (£3

million), Nigeria (£1.5 million) and India (£1 million). It was expected that at least 80 per cent of total expenditure would be for program work.

The initial twelve pledges came from:-

Australia	£1 M	For agreed projects in the South Pacific and Southern Africa;
Britain	£2 M	For information Services through ICDL at the U.K. Open University;
Brunei	£3 M	For use anywhere in the Commonwealth;
Bangladesh	£30,000	For use anywhere in the Commonwealth;
Botswana	£50,000	For use anywhere in the Commonwealth;
Canada	Cdn \$5 M	From Federal Government through CIDA
	Cdn \$2 M	From Federal Government through the Department of Communications
	Cdn \$5 M	From Government of British Columbia
All the Canadian Funds to be use anywhere in the Commonwealth;		
Cyprus	£8,000	For use anywhere in the Commonwealth;
India	£1 M	For use anywhere in Commonwealth plus an offer of the use physical facilities at the Indira Gandhi National Open University;

Malta	£5,000	For use anywhere in Commonwealth plus offer of physical facilities at the Univ. of Malta;
New Zealand	£37,000	For use anywhere in the Commonwealth;
Nigeria	£1.5 M	For use anywhere in Commonwealth plus offer of physical facilities including TV;
Sri Lanka		Offer of physical facilities.

COL's Areas of Operation in its First Year

COL was off to a quick start, by the time the Board of Governor's sat for their second meeting in New Delhi in March 1989, the agency was already able to report activities in its major mandate areas involving programs in training, institutional development, information services, course material acquisitions and study fellowships. At the Board's third meeting in November 1989 in Vancouver, exactly one year after its formal establishment, COL presented a report of program highlights for that year. It was described in policy terms, as "contact and exploration". Here is a sample of activities around its main bases of operation undertaken in the first year¹⁷:-

(a) Training: Contacts were made with the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), Deakin University in Australia, The Open Learning Agency in British Columbia and London University with a view to developing a cooperative program leading to a diploma in distance education and distance learning. COL also convened a conference of agricultural and distance education experts from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and

India to explore the development of a regional co-operative in-service training program for agricultural workers. Under COL's auspices, agreement was reached among several countries in the South-West Pacific to hold workshops focusing on the application of distance education methodologies in in-service training of primary school teachers.

(b) Institutional Development: COL arranged for experts to visit and advise Mauritius, Uganda, Guyana, Swaziland and Tanzania on ways of strengthening distance education capacity in their individual countries. This included an examination of distance education management, organization and technology and a report to COL on the type of assistance needed and the possibility for institutional linkages. As part of a COL's action plan for Southern Africa consultations were held with the permanent secretaries of Education of Botswana, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Swaziland to explore opportunities for collaborative programs in distance education.

(c) Courses/Material Acquisition: COL completed arrangements for the 40 courses from the Correspondence College of New Zealand to be made available to the University of Papua New Guinea. Similar arrangements were made for 100 courses from the Laurentian University in Canada to be made available to the University of Mauritius. The Laurentian courses were also made available to other interested developing Commonwealth countries. COL received permission from UNESCO to annotate and re-represent appropriate material developed by that organization for use in Commonwealth countries. These included a 28 volume series on environmental education.

(d) Information Services: The major effort was to develop a "demonstration model" of the type of information database that could be shared among Commonwealth countries. This demonstration database, presented to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Kuala Lumpur in October 1989, contained 8,000 descriptions on the types of programs and courses offered by distance education institutions around the Commonwealth and information on the institutions themselves. As part of its contribution to COL the British Overseas Development Administration and the United Kingdom Open University were expected to provide a vastly expanded database to be produced by the International Centre for Distance Learning (ICDL) for use by COL as part of its Commonwealth -wide information network.

(e) Study Fellowship Program: COL developed the Study Fellowship program in close collaboration with the Government of British Columbia which provided the funding for this program. The program itself was designed to allow between eight to ten fellows from Commonwealth Countries to visit B.C. for about two weeks each year in order to observe the work of B.C. distance education institutions, such as North Island College, the Open Learning Agency, and the B.C. Universities, and have discussion with relevant officials. In addition to having exposure to innovative distance education practices, the visiting scholars would also have an opportunity to share experiences and problems in this area and suggest possible solutions. In 1989 ten Fellows visited the headquarters of COL and various distance education agencies in B. C. as part of the Study Fellowship program. This project is examined as a case in Chapter 7.

(f) Consultancy Services: In its first year of operations a number of Commonwealth countries requested COL to provide consultants to advise

on particular aspects of their distance education plans or programs. COL was able to recruit and arrange consultancy for five Commonwealth countries: Mauritius - to recommend an organizational structure for distance education and a system of accreditation along with it; Swaziland - for advice on the development of a strategic plan for a distance education program; Guyana - to assist the Ministry of Education and the University of Guyana in planning increased activity in distance education; Jamaica - to assist in a needs survey in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the University of the West Indies; and Tanzania - to advise the Committee for the Establishment of an Open University in Tanzania on media technology. Three consultants were recruited from Canada, one from Britain and one from Hong Kong.

In summary, therefore, COL was able to begin valuable work in most of the areas identified by both the Brigg's and Daniel's reports and summarized in the Memorandum of Understanding. The 1989 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Kuala Lumpur acknowledged this obvious success in their Final Communiqué¹⁸:

H heads of Government expressed their satisfaction with the significant progress which had been made by the Commonwealth of Learning since its inauguration less than one year ago. They noted the wide range of collaborative activities which had been initiated and were also able to see something of the data base which is being built up on study opportunities in distance education throughout the Commonwealth. They reaffirmed their belief in the potential of the new institution to accelerate human resource development through distance education techniques and commended the Board of Governors and all who were responsible for giving the new institution an encouraging start.

The Communiqué also underscored the need for increased funding of the Agency:

Heads of Government also acknowledged the organization's need for adequate resources and in this context called for increased contributions to The Commonwealth of Learning's core budget, especially from those countries which had not yet contributed, and for greater flexibility in the use of other resources. They strongly endorsed the Board's call for making education and training materials more readily available throughout the Commonwealth.

The last point related to the thorny question of "copyright" for course materials, particularly from the more developed Commonwealth countries like Britain, Canada and Australia. Funding and copyright would prove to be two of the more difficult issues which would affect the work of COL in the years ahead. Detailed discussion and analysis of both issues can be found in Chapter 10.

Nevertheless, the first year of operations provided a sample of both the possibilities inherent in such an agency and the real needs which it could address, raising even further the expectations of poorer member countries of the Commonwealth. Indeed, the first five years continued to demonstrate COL's vast potential, but at the same time underline nagging problems which have to be faced and overcome if future successes are to be achieved.

In the next Chapter, we will give an indication of the sheer volume and variety of programs and projects undertaken in those first five years and then, using cases studies and interviews, point to underlying problems, both internally and externally that currently affect its operations and threaten its future effectiveness.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 5

¹ Commonwealth Secretariat, "The Final Communique of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, 1985" in The Commonwealth at the Summit: Communiqués of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings 1944-1986, (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1987) 286.

² Commonwealth Secretariat, Towards A Commonwealth of Learning: A Proposal to create the University of the Commonwealth for Co-operation in Distance Education, (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1987).

³ Roger Lewis and Doug Spencer, What is open Learning? London: Council Educational Technology, 1986, pp. 9-10, provide the following definition of Open Learning: " 'Open Learning' is a term used to describe courses flexibly designed which tries to remove barriers that prevent attendances at more traditional courses, but also suggests a learner-centred philosophy. Open-learning courses may be offered in a learning centre of some kind or most of the activities may be carried out away from such a centre (eg, at home). In nearly every case specially prepared or adapted materials are necessary."

⁴ Ibid. p. 50.

⁵ Ibid., p. 60.

⁶ Ibid., p. 68.

⁷ Commonwealth Secretariat, Final Communique - Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting , Vancouver 1987, in The Round Table: Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs, Jan. 1988, p. 97.

⁸ Ibid., p. 97.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 97-98.

10 Information taken from:- Commonwealth Secretariat, The Commonwealth of Learning: Institutional Arrangements for Commonwealth Co-operation in Distance Education - Report of the Working Group, (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1988).

11 Ibid., p. 5.

12 Ibid., p. 11.

13 Ibid., pp.26-27.

14 Ibid., p. 27.

15 See Appendix A for full text of the first version of "The Memorandum of Understanding".

16 Information Taken from a file of documents created by COL in 1989 to introduce the Agency to the public entitled, The Commonwealth of Learning.

17 Information taken from, The Commonwealth of learning Annual Report 1989: A Year of Contact and Exploration.

18 Commonwealth Secretariat, "The Final Communique of the Heads of Government Meeting in Kuala Lumpur, October 1989", in The Commonwealth Yearbook 1991, London: Commonwealth Secretariat, p. 36.

CHAPTER 6

THE COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING AT WORK - THE FIRST FIVE YEARS, 1988-1993

The Commonwealth of Learning devised its work plans around operational bases which were both geographic and functional in nature. Its first three-year strategic planning document covered the period 1990 -1993. As its 1989 Report noted 1988 was used to set up its headquarters and 1989 for "exploration and contact" with appropriate institutions and agencies.

COL's "Strategic Plan 1990-1993"¹ catered for "Regional Program Activities" - in Africa, Asia, The Caribbean and the Pacific; as well as "Pan Commonwealth Programs". There was a third base of activities grouped under the heading "Functional Program Areas". Communications and telecommunications were viewed as a separate field of activity in the planning process. Altogether, therefore, COL's activities were planned and later grouped under four broad headings:- (a) Regional Programs, (b) Pan Commonwealth Programs, (c) Functional Programs and (d) Technologies and Telecommunications. In compiling A Compendium of Activities², for its first five years in operation, however, COL combined Functional and Technologies and Telecommunication programs into a single category. We will summarize COL's activities for its first five years under these three headings. This summary cannot cover all the activities undertaken by COL, and does not attempt to do so, but will provide a map of the range of programs undertaken and types of collaborative strategies utilized.

A. Regional Programs

(1) African Region:

At the request of particular governments in the region consultancies were arranged by COL to assist these countries in the establishment of distance education programs or upgrading existing programs. Countries which benefited from such consultancies during this period were:-

Botswana³, Ghana⁴, Kenya, Malawi⁵, Mauritius⁶, Namibia⁷, Uganda⁸, Seychelles, Zambia⁹, Swaziland¹⁰ and Zimbabwe¹¹.

In the case of Tanzania, a clear line of progression can be traced from the first reaction of COL in 1989¹² to Tanzania's request for assistance in the establishment of an Open University, to a comprehensive proposal for the establishment of the Open University of Tanzania prepared by Professor Peter Kinyanjui, Assistant Director of African Programs at COL by February, 1993¹³.

The work started by COL in collaboration with a number of other international aid agencies won assistance from UNESCO and developed into an action plan for the establishment of Tanzania's first Open University. This open University was inaugurated in January 1994 and started offering its first courses in February. The Prime Minister of Tanzania is the first Chancellor of the Open University as proof of the high esteem and importance placed in this institution by the government of that country.

In addition to the general focus on distance education in Africa, teacher training and regional cooperation in this field was also a large area of concentration¹⁴. COL sponsored visits to Nigeria by education officials

from Gambia and Sierra Leone to study operations of the Nigerian National Teachers Institute, which has some of the most extensive distance teacher training programs in West Africa. In 1992, COL provided two consultants to work with the Ministry of Education in Zimbabwe to strengthen the in-service education programs for the secondary school system.

Efforts to promote regional cooperation in various fields of education have been a major emphasis. COL in conjunction with the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau (AIDAB) designed a project to revitalize and strengthen the Distance Education Association of South Africa (DEASA). DEASA was originally formed to promote cooperation in distance education activities in that region but had fallen victim to poor planning and a very limited budget. Under the COL-AIDAB project, DEASA was assisted in convening a number of workshops on distance education techniques for member countries¹⁵. Similar efforts are being made to revive the work of the West Africa Distance Education Association (WADEA).

Other regional projects initiated by COL were the Eastern African Project on Primary Health Care and a VITA (Volunteer in Technical Assistance) satellite project for West Africa. The project started by VITA, was taken over by "SatelLife" an international not-for-profit organization which uses micro-satellite technology to serve the health communication and information needs of countries in the developing world. This satellite project hopes to transmit and exchange distance teaching material using low earth-orbiting satellites. It hopes to link the National Teachers Institute of Nigeria, the Gambia College, the University of Ghana and the Freetown Teachers College in Sierra Leone, which have all agreed to share learning materials

and expertise in teacher training and other distance education programs. The efforts are on-going.

COL also provided a number of consultants and equipment for short, in-country training programs in the use of computers, desk-top publishing and tele-conferencing in countries such as Ghana, Malawi and Mauritius.

(2) Asian Region

(a) South Asia

The Asia Region is divided into South-Asia and South-East Asia. South-East Asia encompasses two-thirds of the people in the Commonwealth and including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Maldives, COL has focused more on projects within individual member countries.

India, with a projected population of one billion by the year 2000, and four well established open universities - Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), Ambedkar Open University (formerly Andhra Pradesh Open University), Kota Open University, and Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University, is both in need of, and well set to develop collaborative work among these educational agencies. It is also a ready source of assistance to other developing countries in the region.

Since training of staff is critical to the success of the open learning agencies in India, COL assisted in the establishment of a "Mobile Training Team" in 1991 to serve all four major open universities. The team, made of specialists from the four institutions, was seen as a precursor to a specialized training institution for distance education in India. Since then,

IGNOU has been designated as COL's first "Centre of Excellence" for the training of Commonwealth distance educators, with particular reference to training in the region. In addition, COL in association with IGNOU has launched a Commonwealth wide fellowship program for the training of distance educators. It is called the "Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship Scheme" and offers 100 fellowships to graduates from 14 Commonwealth developing countries¹⁶ to enroll and complete a two-year Masters of Distance Education Program offered by IGNOU through distance education. Those enrolled will not be required to even leave their home country. COL and the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation in India are funding these fellowships. It is hoped that more countries can be included as other funds become available.

With the encouragement and support of COL an important meeting involving the heads of seven Boards of Secondary Education offering distance education, from the states of Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab, and West Bengal, met in Mysore in May 1992 to discuss strategies of sharing course material and ways of developing joint syllabuses.

A diploma course in the training of distance educators prepared by IGNOU has been made available through COL for use in other Commonwealth countries. There has also been some sharing of course material from University of British Columbia to IGNOU in the area of forestry. COL also provided a number of the distance teaching agencies in India with word-processing and desk-top publishing equipment and arranged for training programs in the use of such equipment.

COL opened discussions with Pakistan's Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) in 1991 as to possible collaboration. As a result, women's education, technical and vocational education and training were identified. Since that time COL has sponsored workshops on:- "Women's Literacy Program - The Role of Distance Education"; Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Pakistan (TVET); and a workshop on script writing for video. COL has also provided two desk top publishing units and twelve fax machines to AIOU.

In 1991, Bangladesh sought assistance from COL in the establishment of the Bangladesh Open University (BOU). COL released its Vice-President, G. Ram Reddy, who had been the first Vice-Chancellor of the Indira Gandhi Open University, to assist Bangladesh in this task. The Bangladesh Open University came into being in 1992 with financial assistance from the Asian Development Bank. COL also undertook to provide training programs for staff and the transfer of some course material to be used in the early stages until the University could develop its own.

In Sri Lanka COL assisted the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) to update its undergraduate programs in science and technical/vocational education and training. It is also seeking to acquire for OUSL suitable course material in nursing, horticultural engineering, journalism and technical and vocational training courses from other Commonwealth institutions.

The Maldives has been identified to participate in a credit transfer and accreditation "off-shore" project organized by COL with the Open Learning Agency of British Columbia. This pilot project will attempt to deliver degree

programs at a distance to small states in the Commonwealth from the Open Learning Agency in B.C. So far the Maldives, the Seychelles and Gambia have been invited to participate and they have responded positively. The project is still in the planning stage.

In addition to projects in individual countries, COL also organized meetings aimed at increasing regional cooperation in distance education. To promote regional cooperation and particularly to discuss the sharing and exchange of course material, a Meeting of South Asian Vice-Chancellors took place in Sri Lanka in 1991. In 1992, the Chairs of the University Grants Commission of Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and India met with COL's President, James Maraj, and agreed to find ways for closer cooperation and integration of their distance education efforts.

In 1993, at a meeting chaired by COL's President, the Vice-Chancellors of open universities in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka developed a Plan of Action "for deepening regional cooperation in higher education". Elements of the action plan included:- sharing of course materials, joint development of programs and materials, mutual recognition of students' credits, and exchange of faculty and technical personnel. COL was also asked to draw up a roster of experts and specialist in this field drawn from the region's academic community for use in various aspects of the action plan.

(b) Southeast Asia

This sub-region contains Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Singapore. Malaysia and Singapore are two NIC's (newly industrialized countries) and Brunei is "oil-rich" and, one of the largest contributors to

COL's first five-year budget¹⁷. Compared to Malaysia, with over 17 million people and Singapore with a population of about 2.5 million, Brunei has about a quarter of a million people.

Because of Brunei's very generous contribution to COL's overall operations, it is not surprising that a special project was undertaken on its behalf. At the request of the Brunei government, COL undertook a study of the distance education needs in Brunei. As a result, the COL/Brunei Centre for Professional and Continuing Education was established in 1992 on the campus of the University of Brunei Darussalam. The 1992 Board of Governors meeting was held in Brunei and the Chairman of the Board, Lord Briggs, presided over the official opening of the COL/Brunei Centre. The Centre is intended to focus on a range of technical and vocational training delivered by distance education techniques. COL located a senior program officer in Brunei for two years to assist in the operations of the centre.

Malaysia's main interest was in utilizing distance education as a major element in a Master's program in medical general practice. COL assisted this effort by sending consultants to Malaysia to assist in the planning process. It also sponsored a three-week study tour of various Canadian universities carrying similar programs for Dr. Chin Gek Liew, Coordinator of the Family Medicine Program, at the University of Kebangsaan, in Malaysia. COL has also worked with the national university's Faculty of Medicine to develop a "health" distance education tele-conferencing network, which could be used as a pilot project for similar efforts in the region.

In 1991, COL's headquarters' staff met with and gave advice to Dr. Seet Ai Meet, a former Singapore Minister of Education, who was contracted by the Singapore Government, to set up the country's first distance education institution. With typical Singaporean resolve and efficiency, the Singapore Open University was established in 1992 by the Singapore Government.

3. Caribbean Region

In general, the Commonwealth Caribbean comprise of twelve independent states - a string of small islands bracketed by Belize on the coast of Central America and Guyana on the coast of South America. Its total population is about 5 million but it represents a quarter of the member countries of the Commonwealth.

Because of its compact geographical location, and a common history, culture and language, joint regional programs would seem to be ideal. But many of the these countries have never used distance education in any planned or deliberate way, hence the basic rationale, organization and infrastructure for such attempts needed first be developed in individual countries before joint programs or collaborations could be affected.

With this in mind COL assisted a number of the countries in the Caribbean to first undertake an analysis of the role distance education could play, and then formulate plans for incremental action towards the achievement of specified goals. In the process institutional capacities and staff training in the techniques and management of distance education had to be given urgent priority.

At the request of Caribbean governments, COL sent consultants to Antigua & Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and St. Lucia to advise on the use of distance education techniques and technology, and the development of specific projects for a few of these countries.

The Bahamas was interested in developing a Distance Education Network to link New Providence with the Family Islands. COL and the Ministry of Education in that country had initial discussions on plans for such a project. However, a working program is still to be developed. A senior official at COL said they were awaiting a formal request from the Bahamas in order to proceed.

Jamaica sought to implement a distance education program aimed at upgrading the skills of primary school teachers, using the University of the West Indies certificate and diploma courses. COL provided experts to assist in the planning and equipment for the implementation process¹⁸. This project successfully graduated its first batch of students in the Certificate of Education Program in 1993. It is in the process of taking some of those graduates through the diploma program. Now in its 4th. year, it has become an on-going program in teacher education in Jamaica completely organized and run by Jamaicans.

St. Lucia's aim was to extend its only Community College which was situated in its capital, Castries, to its rural Southern Region so that students in that area could also benefit. COL formulated a project proposal in 1991¹⁹ and with the assistance of the Commonwealth Fund for Technical

Cooperation and the North Island College of B.C. this extension was accomplished in 1993.

Guyana wanted to introduce pre-university courses for students who lived in the far-flung regions outside the capital city, Georgetown, where its only university was situated. This project is currently progress and will be examined in detail, as a case study, in the next chapter.

Apart from assistance to individual countries, COL has held a number of regional workshops aimed at regional cooperation in distance education. Some of these were:-

- (a) in 1990 a workshop on the use of the computer in distance education for seven Caribbean Islands-states that make up the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). COL has provided computer and desk-top publishing hardware and software to a number of Caribbean countries;
- (b) in 1990 a workshop on the adaptation of distance education course material received from other distance education institutions for participants from thirteen Caribbean countries (Montserrat, though not an independent state is usually included as a separate entity in many Caribbean initiatives);
- (c) in 1991 a workshop on planning and management of student support services for all Commonwealth Caribbean countries;
- (d) in 1992 a workshop on course design for interactive audio-conferencing for the staff of the University of the West Indies and the University of Guyana;
- (e) in 1993 a meeting and workshop to discuss the implementation of a Distance Education Pilot Project, to begin sometime in 1994, that would link

the seven members of the OECS²⁰ in the Caribbean and demonstrate the feasibility of a distance education network within the OECS. This was followed in March 1994 by meeting of senior education officials from all six independent OECS states. The purpose of that meeting was to determine the membership and mandate of the Steering Committee for the Pilot Project. At that time it was also ascertained that at least three countries would be ready to offer courses in the pilot project network by September 1994. The other three hoped to come on stream in 1995.

A major initiative which could have far-reaching impact if successful is currently under active consideration by the University of the West Indies. It started out as a detailed appraisal aimed at exploring possibilities for off-campus study leading to university certification in the Caribbean. Three Commonwealth scholars, Chandrasekhara Roa of India, William Renwick of New Zealand and Douglas Shale of Canada, visited UWI's three major campuses, in Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad, and all its university centres in the smaller islands to hold discussions with its officers on the implications for the introduction of distance education as a complementary mode operation to the university's tradition on site classes.

The team's findings and recommendations were issued as a report to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of the West Indies²¹. From this appraisal UWI was able to present a project proposal to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and have since obtained funding for the introduction of distance education as an alternative and complementary mode of learning. The plan is to begin with the three main campuses then eventually include all the university centres in a common telecommunication and video link.

4. Pacific Region

This region includes Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Western Samoa. Apart from Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea, this region, like the Caribbean, consists of a number of small island-states with comparatively small populations. Much of the collaborative work is done by and through the University of the South Pacific (USP) , which serves all the small states in this region. But COL has also undertaken projects, particularly with support from Australia, in individual countries in the Pacific Region.

In Papua New Guinea a 1992 COL/AIDAB (Australian International Development Assistance Bureau) project was aimed at developing the technical capabilities of that country's two national distance education institutions, the College of Distance Education (CODE) and the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG), to produce course materials. COL also arranged for the acquisition of some essential equipment by UPNG for the production of course material. Another COL/AIDAB project in 1991 and 1992 arranged three workshops for members of the Papua New Guinea Association of Distance Education in the areas of course development, management and planning of distance education.

In 1993, COL was instrumental in the inauguration of the Solomon Islands Distance Education Network (SIDEN) by assisting in the installation of a tele-conferencing network between the national capital, Honiara, and the provincial capitals in outlying islands. This national network will also be used by the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE) which

began a new distance education program. A COL/AIDAB project provided SICHE with basic distance education courses in English and Mathematics and training for staff. Further course development and training was being organized under funding arrangements from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

In Tonga a COL/AIDAB program arranged a workshop on distance education in 1990 and as a follow up phase assisted the Community Development and Training Centre in Nuku'alofa to establish a distance education centre. A COL/AIDAB program have also provided a consultant to Vanuatu to investigate the availability of course material in English from a number of Australian sources to be use in that English Teaching program.

Apart from individual country projects, the University of the South Pacific has been the focus for some of COL's major programs in this region. In 1991 an four member international team of experts, at the request of USP, did an intensive review the University's distance education efforts which resulted in COL publication Distance Education at the University of the South²². As a result of this review, a number of projects were put in place with assistance from various agencies. The Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation focused on ways to improve administrative practices and New Zealand School Correspondence School provided a team to assist in the restructuring of management systems and extension activities.

Also arising from the recommendations of the general review was a project to examine the educational communication needs and options for the Pacific region.

COL has also organized two regional workshops for USP staff. The first in 1990, in Vanuatu, dealt with training in course development. The second in Australia in 1991 involving Centre directors from all USP regional countries focused on efficient student support services.

Following a recommendation by a 1991 meeting of COL/AIDAB Regional Advisory Committee, an important regional structure was created, the Pacific Islands Regional Association of Distance Education (PIRADE), formally inaugurated in 1993. The new group intends to work closely with other distance education associations in the Pacific with the hope of developing further links and cooperation.

5. Other Commonwealth Countries

The United Kingdom, Malta and Canada do not fall within any regional grouping and are, therefore, treated separately.

Because of the UK's own vast experience and infrastructure in the field of distance education through the operations of their famed Open University, COL has done very little work in that country. But through the UK's contribution of the Open University International Centre for Distance Learning (ICDL) data-base made specifically for use by COL and its members, the distance education programs of the Open University and other major distance teaching institutions in the Commonwealth have been given Commonwealth-wide exposure.

During the planning stages of COL, Malta offered its facilities as the site for a regional centre. But the establishment of regional centres was not feasible during COL's first five-year program, given its small budget,

therefore, plans for regional centres were not discussed. But, we will return to the feasibility or need for regional centres in our final chapter.

Canada's role in and benefit from COL is unique because the Agency operates within this country. Canada's financial contribution, at the Federal and Provincial levels combined, is substantial - easily the highest of all Commonwealth countries by a large margin. Some of the benefits which accrue, however, may not be readily recognized. There is the public relations and foreign policy value of hosting the only full-fledged Commonwealth agency outside of the Britain, an agency which is unambiguously intended to assist poorer Commonwealth partners in the critical area of human resource development.

There is the subtler but more tangible benefit to the province of B.C. of money spent by COL's staff members and overseas visitors to on-going meetings at COL's headquarters. There is the great exposure of B.C.'s distance education facilities, programs and experts to the rest of the Commonwealth. The annual COL's Visiting Fellowship which has brought educational representatives from nearly every country in the Commonwealth over the past five years is organized around visits to and discussions with B.C.'s main distance education institutions and universities. This program will be examined in detail in the next chapter.

But the striking irony of this situation is that not many Canadians are even aware of the existence of COL or its potential benefits to the Commonwealth as a whole and Canada in particular. In a simple survey of two groups of students at Simon Fraser University (SFU) one in the Communication and the other in the Education, the results were startling.

I asked the two groups, totally 78 students at SFU, three questions as follows:-

1. Have you ever heard of the Commonwealth of Learning?
2. If "yes" what type of work is it involved in?
3. Where is it located (country and city)?

Not one single respondent answered "yes" for question #1. They, therefore, did not proceed to questions 2 or 3.

Both the Canadian Federal government and the Provincial government of BC seem to be missing an opportunity to publicize their substantial contribution in assisting developing Commonwealth countries in the field of education through the work of COL, and in the process gain popular support for their continued involvement. On the other hand, COL may need to re-examine its own public communications program with the intention of creating more links with international, national and regional media agencies and ground-root social organizations, in order to make its role and activities better known and appreciated. It is a safe bet to assume that, if university students in the Vancouver area know nothing about a Commonwealth education agency situated in Vancouver itself, the situation would be little better in Commonwealth countries further away from the Headquarters of COL.

B. Inter-Regional and Pan-Commonwealth Programs

(a) Environment: COL has developed an "Action Plan" on the environment which includes the following components - public awareness of environmental problems; environmental education; sustainable development; professional development in the management of the environment and marine resource management. A number of pilot programs covering these areas have already been developed and executed.

Public awareness surveys on environmental problems and remedies were conducted in Jamaica and Malaysia. COL has co-produced with The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) a video on Sustainable Development drawing from experiences of the Commonwealth as a whole. In 1990 COL began to develop a generic distance learning course on environmental education for in-service primary teacher training. The draft syllabus and modules have already been written and will be available to the Commonwealth after a comprehensive review by selected experts in this area.

In the professional field, COL and UNESCO's division of Engineering and Technology are cooperating in the development of a multimedia postgraduate learning materials in environmental engineering. COL and the Foundation for International Training (FIT) have also cooperated in revising and expanding a manual and video on Decision Making and the Environment, which was originally created by FIT and the Open Learning Agency of B.C. In the area of marine resources, COL commissioned the Marine Affairs Program at Dalhousie University in Collaboration with the

International Centre for Ocean Development (ICOD) to produce a Catalogue of Audio-Visual Materials in Ocean Development and Management.

The results of all these projects and productions are available for use in all the countries of the Commonwealth.

(b) Women in Development: COL has specifically identified women as a major target group in the Commonwealth in need of greater access to education in order to improve their own lives and play a more active role in their communities. COL acknowledged and supported the priorities and goals set by both the Nairobi Forward-Looking strategies for the Advancement of Women and the Commonwealth Plan of Action on Women and Development and has sought to establish cooperative approach with other regional and international agencies and institutions in sharing knowledge and expertise and developing joint educational and training programs. Some of these programs deal with:-

- i. Women's literacy - COL and the Allama Iqbal Open University of Pakistan co-sponsored a symposium on *Women's Literacy Programs - The Role of Distance Education* in 1991. Participants from ten Commonwealth countries in the Asia-Pacific area attended along with representatives from UNESCO, CIDA and the UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women). Recommendations to COL from this meeting included suggestions for exchanges and sharing of material and resources on training, dissemination of appropriate information to Commonwealth member countries, and research and evaluation of existing programs.
- ii. Women and Sustainable development - In 1991 COL along with the Foundation for International Training held a Consultation Meeting on

Women and Sustainable Development which looked at ways to increase women's capabilities in this area. Following this conference, an extensive research and resource document entitled Linking Women and Sustainable Development was developed. The document not examined the historical international dimensions of this topic but suggested that this theme be included in educational and training curriculum development throughout the world.

iii. Women in Development Educational Course - In order to allow for study of the areas mentioned above and others dealing with women and development, COL sponsored a workshop in conjunction with the Summer Institute on Gender Development (SIGAD) at St. Mary's University in Halifax, Canada in 1992 to come up with ideas for a Women in Development distance education course to be used throughout the Commonwealth.

This course would include core and operational modules which could be included in programs taken at the certificate, diploma and undergraduate levels. The International Development Agency (IDRC) of Canada agreed to provide major funding for this project with the World Bank and COL contributing also. Working with the SIGAD, and the International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC) COL has put in place a curriculum outline and project timetable for the module on *Theory of Gender and Development* which will cover four areas - introduction to theory; historical development; theoretical perspectives on feminism and development; and implications of theory for practice. It is expected to be completed by the end of 1994 and available for use in both formal and non-formal education and training programs.

(c) Technical/Vocational Education & Training: In 1990 a COL conference held in Hong Kong on Technical and Vocational(Tech/Voc) Education and Training by Distance, led to a number of initiatives in this area. In 1991 COL appointed a Senior Program Officer with particular responsibility for Technical and Vocational Training. Later that year, a Tech/Voc Reference Group was formed. The group consisted of fourteen members from both the developed and developing Commonwealth countries. The group was responsible for considering and submitting priority Tech/Voc projects to COL for implementation. Here are a few projects which were implemented in this area.

A computer centre facility, at the National correspondence College in Luanshya in Zambia was created and the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) undertook to provide basic training courses developed by that institution for the centre in Zambia. The National Correspondence School of Zambia was responsible for liaising with and testing the suitability of the OUSL material for use in Zambia.

COL sponsored the upgrading of trade skills of seventeen technical staff members of the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education and the Western Samoa Institute of Technology at the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand. COL also sponsored a regional workshop in Nassau in the Caribbean as the first phase of a Caribbean technical/vocational teacher/instructor training project.

COL reached an agreement with the Kelowna Campus of the Okanagan College in B.C. Canada to develop an introductory course on basic water technology including the causes of and solutions to water

pollution. This material is to be used first at the Vancouver Community College then in the Women's Technical Training Centre in Quetta, Pakistan as a pilot for transfer to other developing countries. The British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) supported by COL produced a video on "Instructional Skills for Vocational/Technical Instructors" and was used in the Bahamas in a teacher training project.

COL has also acquired and distributed to fifty-seven Commonwealth Institutions, two video programs produced by Adelaide College of Technical and Further Education dealing with strategies that can be employed to overcome problems of distance in the tech/voc training.

C. Functional Programs

Functional programs primarily described areas of professional education in major fields of activities such as the Law and Public Administration, Health Sciences including Medicine, Nursing and Pharmacy, and the field of Information services and information technologies.

(a) Law and Public Administration: As a first step to addressing the needs of developing Commonwealth countries, COL after consultations with the Commonwealth Law Association and the Commonwealth Legal Education Association in 1992, compiled a Directory of Continuing Legal Education in the four Developed Commonwealth countries, Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. This Directory was circulated as a source book of education and training resources to all Commonwealth authorities responsible for continuing legal education. In 1992, COL also sponsored a workshop in Vancouver for chief justices, and directors of continuing judicial education programs in the Commonwealth. The workshop reviewed current activities and common needs in this area. It also made recommendations to COL for creation of links in training new recruits to the Bench. A record of the workshop was published as Continuing Judicial Education: A Review of Practice and Potential in the Commonwealth. The 10th Commonwealth Law Conference in Cyprus in 1993 took addressed other recommendations in the Workshop Review.

COL is working with the Commonwealth Secretariat Legal Division to develop a distance education program for legislative drafters. Such a course could be used with each country of need. Phase one of this project

developed a curriculum for such a course by experts in this field. Phase two of the project, currently in progress and funded by COL and CFTC adds content and an instructional design which is in the testing stage. The six-module course is expected to be available to Commonwealth countries sometime in 1994.

(b) Health Sciences, Nursing, Pharmacy and Medicine: In these fields, COL has facilitated surveys and compiling of resource material in particular geographical areas and the use of distance education methods for training. COL funded the production of a primary health care resource book for use by the East Africa network of co-operating medical schools. In nursing COL commissioned a survey of nursing education in the Commonwealth with emphasis on the post-basic training. COL hopes to coordinate training efforts in this field with the World Health Organization.

A project advisory group has been set up to develop a course for the training of pharmacists and those responsible for management of essential drugs in the Commonwealth. The curriculum for this course has already been written as phase one of this project. Phase one of a project aimed at delivery medical postgraduate education from a distance was also completed in 1993. This was the establishment of a distance education network with the University Kebangsaan Malaysia as the centre and audio-conferencing links to five bases hospitals situated outside of the peninsula.

(c) Information Services

COL's information services take a number of forms - databases, directories, consultancies, acquisition and transfer of materials, book schemes and research and evaluation. All these services, whether

developed in response to individual or regional needs are available to the entire Commonwealth.

The largest **information database** on distance education so far has been developed by the International Centre for Distance Education (ICDL) at the Open University in Britain for COL as part of Britain's contribution. The ICDL/COL database, available on CD ROM, contains descriptions of more than 20,000 distance education courses and programs offered by over 310 educational institutions in the Commonwealth. The database also contains over 3,000 entries on distance education literature, research, and study.

COL has also commissioned and completed **directories** on teacher education and distance education course designs, legal education and technical/vocational education and training referred to earlier.

Providing expert information on needs, opportunities, and resource for institutional development or expansion in individual countries has best been accomplished by COL sponsoring experienced **consultants** to those countries for a period of time. COL's consultants have provided such services to Brunei, Ghana, Guyana, Jamaica, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Saint Lucia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. These were dealt with in some detail in the during our discussions of COL's regional programs.

Another major information service provided by COL is assisting in the development, **acquisition and transfer of educational material** to various institutions in the Commonwealth. These have already been noted under specific projects and programs. COL has basically functioned in two roles, first as a broker in securing samples of appropriate learning and

teaching material or courses at the request of specific institutions or countries for inspection, review or reference. The other function is to secure the necessary consent or copyright clearance for material which institutions or countries wish to use as part of their on-going curriculum. In some cases, a single fee is paid for a collective license agreement which allows for the use of these material by any of COL's members.

This collective license has been established, for example, with the Open Learning Agency of B.C. for seventeen first year science mathematics and business courses; British Columbia Telephone Company for twenty-four computer application courses; the Indira Gandhi National Open University of India for a full Diploma in Education courses and several management courses; the University of Victoria for one business computer course; the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants in the UK for accountancy courses; Scitech of the U.K. for a complete program on primary science; Encyclopedia Britannica Educational Corporation in the USA for seventy videos on science for primary/junior secondary level; and the University Staff Development and Training Unit in the UK for a professional development program for university teachers.

According to COL's Director of Material Acquisition and Development, the acquisition and use of material developed elsewhere is seen as a bridge leading to local design and development. COL's future emphasis will be as facilitator and promoter of cooperative development of material among regional institutions or those with mutual interests, and international inter-governmental and non-governmental development of material of Commonwealth-wide applicability.

Since books on distance education for both staff and students are difficult to come by in many of developing Commonwealth countries, COL, under a "**Book Scheme**" initiative and operating through the British Council in cooperation with the Overseas Development Administration (ODA) of the UK, has provided eighteen books on distance education to sixty five universities in developing Commonwealth countries. All these books were published in the UK. Ten titles originating in other countries were also provided to these universities. Phase two of the book-scheme-project will make available twenty-three other titles on distance education to fifty-seven Commonwealth institutions under the COL-ODA collaboration.

Research and evaluation has been undertaken by COL, particularly on a regional basis. Some of these regional activities in this area included: A review of distance education courses at the University of South Pacific; a similar review at the University of the West Indies; an analysis of student's perceptions about distance education courses at the University of the South Pacific; an examination of the use of radio in education in the Commonwealth Caribbean; a study of the library resources in support of distance education in the Caribbean; identifying barriers faced by women in accessing distance education in the South Pacific; and an examination of the ways of addressing the many issues involved in the area of women and development.

(d) Information Technologies and Telecommunications: From the conception of COL the use of a variety of communication technologies was seen as central to its mandate and projects. Communication and information technologies were to be the primary instruments for the creating and expanding access to education in many parts of the developing

Commonwealth, and absolutely essential for the organization and delivery of distance education programs. The following communication technologies and techniques have been favoured by COL for this purpose:-

(a) "Audio-teleconferencing" - this approach attempts to make use of an already existing telephone network in most countries to add an interactive voice dimension to the traditional, passive print and post delivery method used in many distance education programs in developing countries. In some instances diagrams and pictures can be added to the audio-conferencing sessions by linking computers to the system. Brunei, Guyana, Kenya, Mauritius, Namibia and the Solomon Islands have all benefited from COL projects using this approach.

(b) Desktop Publishing - is another popular innovation pushed by COL. It is seen as a sure method of giving local course writers and designers control over the printing and publishing aspect of their work and in general allowing for better coordination and management of the production aspect of distance education programs. COL has, therefore, sent "experts" to a number of Commonwealth countries to train local personnel in the application of desktop publishing. In many cases a few computers and desktop publishing programs have also been provided. COL's desktop publishing consultants have provided training in Botswana, The Gambia, Ghana, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Sierra Leone.

(c) Institutional Networking - the technique of linking distance education centres within a single country is taken a step further, allowing for

the creation of networks among institutions within a particular country and within particular regions and even in the Commonwealth as a whole.

The "SatelLife" Project in Africa aims at linking a number of institutions in West Africa via low-earth orbiting satellite technology. The Gambia College, The National Teachers Institute of Nigeria, the University of Ghana, and the Freetown Teachers College of Sierra Leone have already agreed to share course material and trained teachers in distance education using this approach. UWIDITE (the University of the West Indies Distance Teaching Experiment) and University of the South Pacific networks have already been discussed under regional programs.

Under active study is an initiative to develop a "Commonwealth telecommunication link". The first phase of this effort is to create regional links among Commonwealth countries. The Asia/Pacific region is the first under current consideration for the development of a telecommunication network which could support a regional distance education network. Electronic Messaging Networks (E-Mail) which are rapidly spreading out into many corners of the world is also a very obvious opportunity available for Pan-Commonwealth networking. Existing networks in various regions of the world - VITANET in Africa, APFNET developed by the Asia-Pacific Foundation in Vancouver and CUNET - Caribbean University Network - linking University sites in the Caribbean and some countries in South and Central America and developed by the Organization of American States, are being studied for use in a Commonwealth link.

(c) Training in distance education and communication technologies - with the increasing use of new technological approaches to distance

education comes the need for increased training in these technologies. As a base document, COL commissioned the Open Learning Agency of B.C. to produce a set of distance education training material which included three work- books and a 30 minute video entitled, Technology in Open Learning and Distance Education: A Guide for Decision-Makers.

COL has also sponsored various training projects in the Commonwealth, for example, educational radio and TV production workshops for staff of the Namibia Broadcasting Corporation; educational TV production for staff of members-systems of the Caribbean Broadcasting Union and field based production for educational broadcasting producers in Ghana. There have also been seventeen national and fourteen regional workshops dealing with training in a variety of areas such as course writing, editing and production, course writing for audio-conferencing, instructional design and development, management of student support services, and the use of the computer as a management tool in distance education.

COL has produced a series of handbooks and training manuals in the use of telecommunications for educational audio-conferencing. In addition COL is designing a Commonwealth Educational Media Training Program (CEMREP) to include a wide range of training in different types of educational communication technologies.

The foregoing summary of initiatives, projects and programs undertaken by COL over the first five years (actually over a period of three years, since the first two years were taken up in necessary activities of setting up and making contacts) are impressive. It is clear that the over-all strategy was to make an impact, no matter how small, in almost every

Commonwealth country. This summary, however, does not and could not provide information concerning details of planning and implementation, and problems encountered. Only in examining a couple of projects in detail are such discussions possible. In the next chapter we focus on two of COL's projects in the form of case-studies, in order to provide this analysis.

Notes on Chapter 6

- 1 Commonwealth of Learning, Strategic Plan 1990-1993, Vancouver: COL, 1991.
- 2 Commonwealth of Learning, A Compendium of Activities, (Vancouver: Col, April 1993).
- 3 Colin J. Yerbury, (from Simon Fraser University, Canada), Evaluation of the Distance Education Unit, Department of Non-Formal Education: A report for the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education of the Republic of Botswana, (Vancouver: COL, 1991).
- 4 R.A. Aggor, (from the University of Ghana), P. E. Kinyanjui (from COL headquarters), N.K.Peku (from University of Cape Coast, Ghana), and J.C. Yerbury (from Simon Fraser University, Canada), Survey on Distance Education in Ghana: A Report for the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Ghana, (Vancouver: COL, 1992).
- 5 Tom Pebble, (from Massey University, New Zealand), Distance Education at the University of Malawi: A report on a Consultancy on behalf of the Commonwealth of Learning, (Vancouver: COL, 1990).
- 6 John Daniel, (from Laurentian University, Canada), Distance Education for Human Resource Development in Mauritius: The Way Forward, (Vancouver: COL, 1989).
- 7 Commonwealth of Learning, Distance Education in Namibia: A Concept Document (At the request of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Namibia), (Vancouver: COL, 1991).
- 8 John Chick, (University of New England, Australia), Building for the Future: The Development of Distance Education Programmes at Makerere University of Uganda, Vancouver: COL, 1990.
- 9 Ormand Tate, (from The Correspondence School, New Zealand), Distance Education in Zambia: Report on a Consultancy, Vancouver: COL, 1991.

10 Glen M. Farrell, (from Open Learning Agency of B.C., Canada). Distance Education for the University of Swaziland: A Report for the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Swaziland prepared at the request of the Commonwealth of Learning, (Vancouver: COL, 1989).

11 N. Kala, (from the Ministry of Education in Zimbabwe), Distance Learning in Zimbabwe: an implementation report on the establishment of external degree courses for secondary school teachers and of a programme on educational management training and supervision, Vancouver: COL, 1992.

12 Alan K. Cutting, (from the Educational Technology Centre of the City Polytechnic of Hong Kong), The Role of Media Technology within the Proposed Open University of Tanzania: A Report prepared at the request of the Commonwealth of Learning for the Planning Committee of the Proposed Open University of Tanzania, (Vancouver: COL, 1989).

This Report fed into a larger one which was presented to the Tanzanian Minister of Education in 1990 entitled , A Report of the Committee on the Establishment of an Open University in Tanzania

13 Peter Kinyanjui,(from COL Headquarters but at the time seconded to UNESCO), A Plan for the Establishment of the Open University of Tanzania, (Vancouver: COL, 1993).

14 Commonwealth of Learning, Perspectives on Teacher Education - Teacher Education in Science, Mathematics, and Technical and Vocational Subjects: Report of a Round Table on Teacher Education convened by the Commonwealth of Learning in Vancouver, June 15-19, 1992, (Vancouver: COL, 1993).

This Round Table was attended by 22 Commonwealth experts in the field of Teacher Education, drawn from 13 countries. Nigeria and Zimbabwe were represented and the Round Table was chaired by COL's Director for African Regional programmes. The 19 papers included in this report reflect a broad range of experiences in teacher training in the Commonwealth.

15 DEASA, A Handbook in Record Keeping for Records Officers in Distance Education: Report from a Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (DEASA) Workshop, (Vancouver: COL, 1992).

16 The fourteen Commonwealth countries/ regions are Bangladesh, Barbados, Eastern Caribbean States, The Gambia, Ghana, Guyana, Maldives, Mauritius, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tanzania, Tonga and Zimbabwe.

17 Of the £15 million pledged for COL's first five years of operations, Brunei pledged and paid "up-front" £3 million. COL was, therefore, able to earn interest on this deposit.

18 Sally Hagg, and Jennifer O'Rourke (from the University of Waterloo, Canada), Teacher Training by Distance Education in Jamaica: Report of a Consultancy undertaken on behalf of the Commonwealth of Learning, (Vancouver: COL, 1991).

19 George Knox, (from North Island College in B.C. Canada), A Learning Centre for the Southern of Saint Lucia and other Distance Education/Open Learning Projects: A Report of a Project Implementation Consultancy, (Vancouver: COL, 1991).

20 The OECS or Organization of Eastern Caribbean States is a formal grouping of six independent states, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts-Nevis, Antigua and Barbuda, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada and Dominica as well as the British Dependency, Montserrat. The OECS attempts to integrate economic and social policies and create as many areas of functional cooperation as possible. The field of education has only recently come under consideration although a common Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) has prepared and marked examinations for secondary school completion in all the English-speaking Caribbean countries for over a decade.

21 William Renwick, (Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand), Dough Shale (from University of Calgary, Canada) and Chandrasekhara Roa (from Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, India), Distance Education at the University of the West Indies, Vancouver: COL, 1992.

22 The review team was made up of the following education experts:- Mr. William Renwick from New Zealand, Professor St.Clair King from Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. Douglas Shale from

Canada and Mr. Peter McMechan, COL's Director for the Pacific Region. Their report was issued in August 1991 and was published by COL in Vancouver as Distance Education at the University of the South Pacific.

CHAPTER 7

TWO CASE STUDIES ILLUSTRATING THE COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING AT WORK

Having looked at a wide range of projects undertaken by COL in response to its mandate over the first five years of operations, it is useful to complement this macro view of COL at work with a micro examination of two specific projects - one dealing with a single member country and the other dealing with the Commonwealth as a whole. The first case study deals with a COL country-project which assisted in the establishment of a network for distance education programs in Guyana. The second case study deals with a project aimed at the entire Commonwealth and run in collaboration with the Province of B.C: the COL-BC Visiting Fellowship Program.

CASE STUDY No. 1: COL-IACE Distance Education Project in Guyana

The Country

Guyana is a former British colony populated primarily by Negroes and East Indians (roughly 40% each) whose forebears came as slaves and indentured laborers in the 17th., 18th., and 19th. century. There are also small pockets of Chinese and Portuguese immigrants, dating back to the 19th. century, substantial numbers of indigenous natives (about 5%), called Amerindians, and a growing "mixed" group. The total population of Guyana

is estimated at 800,000. About one-third live in and around the capital, Georgetown, and the rest in the rural countryside and hinterland, covering an area that is one and half times the size of Bangladesh and 20 times the size of Jamaica.

Basic infrastructure such as all-weather roads, potable water supply and electricity can be found only along a thin band of the coast bordering the Atlantic Ocean. Over 90% of the country is a rugged interior punctuated and divided by rivers, rapids, mountains and ancient forests. Many of the villages and settlements in the hinterland can only be reached by boat or small aircraft piloted by those skilled in the always dangerous task of landing on unlit, unpaved airstrips.

For administrative purposes, the country is divided into ten regions. Five of these are found along the below-sea-level coastland, which is about one hundred miles long and twenty-five miles wide and in continuous need of expensive protection from incursions by the Atlantic Ocean; and five in the hinterland which constitutes the remaining 83,000 square miles of Guyana. The five coastal regions house nearly 80% of the population.

The challenge for Guyana has always been to encourage Guyanese to break their historical ties to the narrow and limited coastal strip and venture out into the heart of the country where most of its rich agricultural, mining, mineral wealth and breath-taking natural beauty can be found. But since all the major industrial, business and educational opportunities can only be found on the coastland, not many are willing to "rough" it in the interior.

Elementary or primary education is compulsory up to the age of fourteen and primary schools can be found in all the regions of Guyana. Secondary schools are not as plentiful. The most prestigious secondary schools, however, all the technical and vocational colleges and the only university, the University of Guyana (UG), are found on the coastland, more specifically, in and around Georgetown.

At the best of times the rural and interior population were at a distinct disadvantage in terms of educational opportunities. With Guyana's current and prolonged economic recession which has seen the country slip from among the richest in the Caribbean to one of the poorest, exceeding only Haiti in that regard, the quality of education even on the coastland has fallen. This is due in large part to deteriorating school buildings, shortage of basic school supplies and, most devastating of all, the loss of many qualified and talented teachers to private enterprise or emigration abroad. Teachers are the lowest paid certificated professionals in Guyana. The situation outside of the urban areas is even worse.

Add to these problems a dearth of those qualified to even apply for admission to the Teachers Training College or the University of Guyana and the long term prospects for improvement in education in Guyana becomes dark indeed. A partial solution to some of these problems was seen by education planners and the Ministry of Education as the introduction of distance education programs in Guyana.

IACE and Distance Education in Guyana

The Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (IACE) operating out of the University of Guyana was the former Department of Extra-Mural

Studies of the University. It was established as the Extra-Mural Department in 1976 and provided non-university courses at the request of organizations and community members in Georgetown and two other centres on the coastland.

The Extra-Mural Department became the Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (IACE) in 1985 and re-organized itself into three divisions: The Program and Conference Division - responding to needs identified by government and non-governmental agencies; The Teaching of English as a Foreign Language - particularly for non-English speaking residents and foreign embassy staff; and The Distance Teaching Division.

While the two other divisions were fully at work from the start, the Distance Teaching Division existed in name only until 1989 when the IACE contacted the newly established Commonwealth of Learning for assistance.

COL and Distance Education in Guyana

COL's first response was to provide a "project identification consultancy". Professor John Turner of the University of Manchester in the U.K. visited Guyana for about two weeks in 1989 to assess the background conditions and major educational needs, and recommend possible distance education projects to address some of these needs.

The consultant's report¹ identified ten possible projects which could improve the service and quality of education in Guyana and to which COL and other collaborating agencies could contribute.

The ten projects were:-

- (1) Expanding a proposed foundation course in Teacher Education administered through distance education to a number of interior regions of Guyana;
- (2) Enhancement of a on-going "Hinterland Teacher Upgrading Program" through distance education assignments;
- (3) A pre-entry university program which would offer English, Mathematics and Basic Science;
- (4) Enlargement of Distance Learning Capacity of IACE by providing additional staff, equipment and a vehicle;
- (5) Provision of appropriate educational video programs for use by IACE;
- (6) Expanding facilities at the University Centre for Communication Studies to include a functional radio broadcasting studio to carry distance education support material - UNESCO was already in the process of providing an audio recording facility for Communication Studies at UG;
- (7) Linking UG with the UWIDITE distance education project run by the University of the West Indies;
- (8) Distance Education programs for small entrepreneurs in Guyana;
- (9) Distance Education in basic agriculture and
- (10) Distance Education in health.

From this challenging list of possible areas of action, COL chose to concentrate its initial support efforts on developing the capacity of IACE to organize and implement distant education programs by providing

equipment, training and funding for the specific purpose of providing pre-university English, Maths and Basic Science courses by distance. The more general objective was to create a distance education network in the process which could carry any number of programs for other purposes and needs. It is this project which we examined and evaluated on site, in Guyana for the purposes of this case study.

Guyana Distance Education Network

My initial attraction to the Commonwealth of Learning, as stated earlier (pp. 2-5), was partially because of my inability to draft a feasible proposal for the introduction of limited distance education programs at the University of Guyana in my home country. I left for my studies in 1989. In that same year Guyana approached COL for help and by 1992, COL had initiated a full-fledged assistance program in Guyana which is currently on-going.

In COL's A Compendium of Activities - April 1993, the project was summarized as follows:-

The University of Guyana (UG), with endorsement by the Government of Guyana, requested COL's assistance in developing a distance education program for more effective delivery of the pre-university courses offered by the University's Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (IACE). This assistance took the form of providing UG with a desktop publishing centre, including the required training of staff; the development of learning materials; and the provision of financial,

professional, and technical assistance in the installation of a tele-conferencing network between Georgetown and the regional study centres at Anna Regina, New Amsterdam and Linden. The first link of the system, between Georgetown and Linden, is now in operation and the completion of the two remaining sites is in hand.

The official inauguration of the University of Guyana's distance program took place on November 7, 1992. (p.24)

I concluded that a field evaluation of the Guyana project after a full year in operation would not only shed light on how successful this type of collaboration has been, but would be both philosophically and empirically appropriate given this researcher's initial motives for studying COL. The field evaluation took place in January 1994 over a three-week period in Guyana.

The Field Evaluation - A Summative and Human Evaluation of the University of Guyana's Distance Education Project facilitated by the Commonwealth of Learning

Aims - To answer the following questions:-

A. In general, how well have the program plans and objectives been translated into action plans?

B. In particular:

(a) What are some contextual and practical problems in such an effort?

(b) How well have various sectors (government, institutions and individuals) reacted as partners in cooperation?

(c) Who are the beneficiaries, how have they benefited and how do they feel about the project as a whole?

(d) Finally, what lessons have been learnt and how can these be used to improve projects of this kind?

Method

The primary method was face-to-face discussions with those responsible for the planning and implementation of the project both at COL's headquarters and on site in Guyana. These included COL's administrative personnel and consultants, the local Director and staff of the project in Guyana, and Guyana's Education Ministry officials. There were also visits to a few of the distance education centres and discussions with resident-tutors and students who benefit from the project.

The focus was on the human face and human benefits of COL-Guyana project and the actual and potential problems which must be faced and overcome by such a collaboration.

Discussion

1. Objectives

(a) The first objective was to give the IACE the capability and support to deliver pre-university entrance courses in English, Mathematics and Basic Science. This was to be done by strengthening IACE's planning capabilities in distance education courses; providing suitable course material for use or adaptation by IACE for this program; staff training; and providing telecommunication equipment to link various IACE centres to the IACE headquarters in Georgetown for the purposes of this pre-university program.

(b) The second major objective was to expand this communication and telecommunication link of the various IACE centres in Guyana into a distance education network which could be used not only for the pre-university course, but a proposed teacher-training program by distance education, and in due course many other distance education programs. The intention was to link all ten regions of Guyana in a single network using telephone and computer communication technology.

The immediate task was to bring on line and link the three centres which were situated in the most populous regions outside of Georgetown. The three were in Linden, New Amsterdam and Anna Regina. These IACE centres were functioning for some time providing face-to-face instruction in a number of outreach programs for the communities in which they were situated. They were now, however, expected to begin their first true distance education program - the pre-university courses.

2. Accomplishments and Challenges

In this joint effort between COL and IACE to initiate a distance education program for Guyanese students, especially in the rural areas of the country, both partners had challenges to overcome and objectives to accomplish. Here is a brief assessment of how each fared.

(a) COL: In its Guyana Distance Education Project description², COL undertook to provide assistance in training, material acquisition and development, and telecommunications and technical assistance in the installation of a tele-conferencing network.

In the area of training, COL arranged for short term attachments and visits to distance education institutions in Canada for the four most senior officers of IACE including the Director, Samuel Small who was among the first batch to come to B.C. under the Commonwealth Visiting Fellows program in 1989. During discussions with this researcher, the Director described his exposure in B.C. to the wide range of approaches and context for distance education as "eye-opening and inspiring".

In 1990, Jennifer O'Rourke of the University of Waterloo in Canada visited Guyana and conducted a one week workshop for distance education staff of IACE, instructors of the Guyana Teachers Training College and staff of the National Centre for Resource Development (NCERD). Twenty-five persons attended and benefited from this workshop. The workshop focused on the following subject areas:- Introduction and orientation to distance education; selection of media for distance education; examination of print related media; writing scripts and recording audio tapes; testing course material with students and evaluation of material. Throughout the five-day

workshop participants were also involved in practical exercises to illustrate the areas mentioned above.

Given the different background experience, goals and expectations of participants, Ms. O'Rourke concluded, "the resulting workshop was something of a compromise, and may not have been satisfactory to all participants. However, the group as a whole made tangible progress in several important areas."³

Another aspect of training which COL provided was linked to the provision of two computers to IACE with the appropriate software programs for desktop publishing. COL provided on site training for sixteen staff-members drawn from IACE and the Ministry of Education in the use of both the computers and desk-top publishing program.

In the area of course material, COL provided IACE with first-year-university science and mathematics courses which were acquired from the Open Learning Agency in British Columbia. It was hoped that these could be adapted for use in the pre-university effort. IACE found that the mathematics course was of too high a level for use and felt that the science course needed a great amount of adaptation to make it truly relevant to the Guyanese environment and society.

Telecommunication and tele-conferencing assistance by COL took the form of providing tele-conferencing ports and bridges, initially for the big centres in Georgetown, Linden, New Amsterdam and Anna Regina, then the equipment to link potential centres in all ten regions of Guyana. A COL senior technician, Mr. Al Trask visited Guyana in 1992 and 1993 to discuss the installation of the equipment with telecommunication personnel in that

country. It was installed and working first at Linden in 1992 and then in New Amsterdam and Anna Regina in 1993.

(b) IACE: The staff of IACE designed and wrote the first two modules of the Pre-University English Course. The full course of four modules is intended to bring a learner with only a primary or elementary school education up to the level of university entrance capability by the time he or she graduates. The first module, therefore, deals with the most basic elements in English - word functions or parts of speech. Module two moves to sentence construction. Three and four would deal with paragraph and longer compositions.

IACE started offering the Pre-university English course by distance education to the Centre at Linden in November of 1992. In June 1993, the program was launched in New Amsterdam and in December 1993 the centre at Anna Regina came on stream.

The modules are really detailed illustrated workbooks meant as self-explanatory lessons. Each lesson consists of explanations of basic concepts and principles and appropriate exercises for students to complete and submit to their assigned tutor-markers⁴. Students enrolled in this program are, therefore, expected to work on their own at their own pace. They meet with tutor markers assigned to each centre once per month when they receive feedback on their work done so far. They also have an opportunity to discuss difficulties and problems at this time. When students complete all the exercises for a particular module, they are required to write an in-class final examination on the entire module. If successful they can then move on to the next module.

The tele-conferencing sessions occur approximately about once every three months, and take the form of an hour and a half long telephone link between the course writers and main tutors at the headquarters in Georgetown and students at one of the outlying centres. The discussions include common problems faced in the understanding or working through of exercises in the modules and the effectiveness of tutor-markers and their feedback to students. The hope was that with the appropriate telephone bridge, the headquarters in Georgetown would be able to interact with students at two or more centres at the same time. On this matter, however, when this researcher visited Guyana for the purpose of this evaluation, he encountered a typical example of some of the very simple but crucial problems faced by poor countries in the area of distance education and the use of technology, new and old.

COL's technician had discussed with, and provided the necessary equipment to, the Guyana Telephone and Telecommunication Company (GT&T) in order to create the type of link needed for inter-connecting the various centres. But nothing happened for about six months after that. The Director of IACE confessed to me that he did not know what the problem was and could not get a ready explanation from GT&T. I gained access to the Chief engineer through my personal friendship with the Director of Communication at GT&T. I was told by the Chief Engineer that a minor piece of equipment needed for the bridge was not available in Guyana and he was awaiting its shipment from COL.

COL on the other hand, took it for granted that this electronic part was available in Guyana, and indeed, thought that the bridge was not only installed but fully operational for several months before I arrived in Guyana.

A few telephone calls and an air-mail package to Guyana soon rectified the situation. But the real lesson is that in poor countries nothing can or should be taken for granted with regards to technology, even one as old as the telephone.

The telephone component of IACE's program is one of three major challenges which it must face and overcome. Telephone charges for long distance calls in Guyana are astronomical when calculated in Guyana dollars (one Guyana dollar is equivalent to one cent Canadian). If the teleconferencing aspect is to become more central in the delivery of course material and support services to students, then long distance charges will sky-rocket and become impractical for IACE or the University of Guyana to bear. Both suffer from an acute shortage of funds, partially resulting from the country's long economic slide downwards and a government policy of requiring that students pay no tuition fees for tertiary education at government institutions. This policy, good-intentioned as it was, robbed the university of badly needed finance at a time when inflation was rampant and subventions from government continued to decline in real terms. The no-fees policy has been in place for over 20 years as the physical infrastructure of the country's only university continues to deteriorate and staff salaries remain the lowest in the English-speaking Caribbean.

This acute shortage of funds at the University has also translated into a shortage of the most basic equipment for UG and IACE. Whilst the IACE, therefore, can boast of possessing desk-top publishing hardware and software (provided by COL), it does not have a simple photo-copying machine. IACE would need to find the equivalent of one-year's salary for all

three of its senior officers in the distance education division to purchase a middle of the line model.

IACE's second difficulty also stems from budgetary problems - both a shortage of staff in real numbers and a shortage of qualified persons to develop, design and write course material. The distance education division is staffed by three extremely hard-working and intelligent women. However, they are not only expected to organize course production and delivery, but revise modules already produced, adapt those acquired from COL, and design and implement on an on-going basis student support in a variety of ways, and the training of tutor markers who operate at the regional centres. It is no surprise that IACE is behind schedule in the production of the remaining modules for the English course and its adaptation of Mathematics courses acquired from Caduna College in Nigeria. The Basic Science course will certainly take much longer to get off the ground since the current plan is for IACE to develop this course on its own.

The third challenge for IACE's distance education effort is more subtle than the two discussed above but equally critical to its success. IACE needs to co-opt stake-holders from a much wider base than at present, in order to share the initial and on-going costs that are necessary in all new educational programs, particularly in distance education projects. On the other hand, to make distance education really viable and cost effective in Guyana, and in any country, it has to reach and benefit large numbers of learners in areas not serviced by conventional means. If the IACE tele-conferencing network is fully established in all ten regions of Guyana, then it can and should be used by the University, the Teacher's Training College, the Ministries of Education, Health, Agriculture and for training of

Government and private enterprise employees in a wide variety of endeavors. IACE has not as yet devised such a broad-based plan, but this approach could ensure its success in both the short and long term.

(c). Students in the pre-university course: By the end of 1993 three regional centres were offering the pre-university English course to residents in those areas. According to IACE tutors the student profile varied enormously from young school drop-outs who wanted to re-enter the field of formal education studies to "house-wives" and factory and field workers interested in upgrading or renewing their skills in the particular subject. The initial enrollment for each of the three regional centres offering the pre-university course was extremely impressive. In Linden 204 students enrolled for the Basic English course, in New Amsterdam 215 students and in Anna Regina 114 students.

The response of a small group of students indicated general satisfaction with the organization and effectiveness of the course. Their response was acquired through a questionnaire which was administered to a group of 25 students at one of the regional centres. The questionnaire focused on:

- (1) arrangements for the physical operations of the course;
- (2) the effectiveness of the modules or workbooks;
- (3) course-work and assignments including role of tutor markers and tele-conferencing sessions;
- (4) the development of self-help study groups

(5) over-all reaction to the course.

Responses:

(1) On a five-point scale ranging from "excellent" to "poor" or "strongly agree" to "disagree", 23 respondents scored "arrangements" for the course as "excellent" or "good", the remaining two scored it as "satisfactory".

(2) All "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that the course modules were easy to work with and effective as a learning tool.

(3) "Course- work and assignments" as well as "role of tutor-markers" were all scored as "excellent" and "good". The "tele-conferencing sessions" were also scored as "excellent" or "good" except for one "satisfactory".

(4) On questions concerning the development of, or participation in "self-help study groups", 10 of the 25 did not respond and the remaining 15 rated this category as "unsatisfactory" or "poor". This is clearly an area that has been ineffective and unsuccessful.

(5) All 25 respondents, however, concluded that they "would be able to make use of what they learnt" and will "recommend" the course to others.

Because these questions were answered by a non-random sample of students at only one of the regional centres, it cannot be seen as a general assessment of the IACE's distance education effort by its students. It can merely point to areas or trends which need to be further examined.

However, "scientifically" organized and executed evaluations are essential for identifying strengths and weaknesses in IACE's approaches and course material. This is the only way it can improve its services to

students in the outlying regions. IACE's Director readily agrees, but points to the inevitable limitations of money and staff to undertake on-going evaluations. These are additional, compelling reasons for the IACE's distance education endeavors to become more broad-based involving not merely the University of Guyana, but the Teachers Training College and other professional and even technical schools. In this way it will become an important part of a larger national education program involving both the government and non-governmental sectors in Guyana.

(d) Ministry of Education: The Minister of Education in Guyana agreed that the IACE and the Ministry need to coordinate their efforts and is hoping to work out a formal arrangement between the two.

During an interview, he identified in-service teacher training, mathematics and science education for rural schools as areas in which the services and net-work of IACE could be extremely useful. His officers were currently working on the collaborative details with IACE.

The Minister elaborated, "Teacher training is a matter of very high priority for us. An ODA (Overseas Development Administration) feasibility study in in-service teacher-training in the hinterland has already been done. With ODA funding we hope to begin this aspect of teacher-training using the distance learning mode. Here is where the Ministry will collaborate with IACE in the delivery of education in this training program".

The Minister continued, " With the assistance of the World Bank, the Ministry will be working towards the unification of the secondary streams - General Secondary Schools, Community High Schools and 'tops' of primary schools. Central to the unification strategy is a common curriculum with 3

core subjects - English, Maths and Science. Because we are desperately short of teachers in Maths and Science, we will have to provide a delivery in these subjects through the Distance Learning mode. Again, collaboration with IACE will be crucial."

It is clear from the above response by the Minister of Education in Guyana, that because of limited financial and trained human resources, the country's educational system will need to rely increasingly on distance education as a solution. It makes an even more pressing case for central planning and special funding, on a long-term basis, for IACE and an enlarged vision of its mandate and scope. The central government, through its Ministry of Education, is the most appropriate body to articulate this vision and then invite all interested sectors, public and private, to work on the details and implications.

Summary

The Institute of Adult And Continuing Education (IACE) of the University of Guyana launched its first ever "Pre-University" distance education programs in November 1992 with financial and technical assistance from the Commonwealth of Learning (COL).

In these programs IACE hoped to provide courses in English, Mathematics and Basic Science to students outside of the capital, Georgetown, who wished to qualify for admission to Guyana's only University. IACE currently serves three centres - Linden, New Amsterdam and Anna Regina. All three are significant regional and population centres in

Guyana. In Linden 204 students enrolled for the Basic English course, in New Amsterdam 215 students and in Anna Regina 114 students. They were all granted COL bursaries and therefore paid no fees. Every indication is that student enrollment will be just as high for the other pre-university subjects when they are introduced.

COL bursaries were part of the assistance package in this effort. COL also provided the telecommunication equipment which facilitated the regular tele-conferencing link-up between a centre and the headquarters of IACE in Georgetown. Tele-conferencing is envisaged to be more central to this program although currently print material continues to be the major base for the subject taught. Other components of COL's assistance included training programs locally and in Canada for the principal distance educators involved in this project, and the acquisition of Maths and Science material from other Commonwealth countries to be adapted for use in Guyana.

An assessment of the project found that the schedule for bringing other centres into the program (eventually nine altogether) has not gone as well as expected and the most that can be hoped for at this time is probably the addition of two more centres by 1995.

The use of tele-conferencing has also not been as major a component as expected because of basic problems with the telecommunication system in Guyana, the unavailability of phone lines to the interior of Guyana and the very high cost of telephone charges.

Course material for the Maths and Science programs were expected to have been adapted for use in 1993, but while the Maths programs, adapted from a course developed by Caduna College in Nigeria and

supplied free of charge to Guyana, may be ready for September 1994, the Science modules sent by COL were found to be too high for the introductory level needed. Discussions with COL for a more appropriate set continues. IACE is, therefore, very much behind schedule in the introduction of both the Mathematics and Science courses.

On the positive side, however, the staff at IACE were responsible for developing and writing the complete English modules now in use. The success in this regard has motivated them to attempt the same with Science modules. The staff was also very pleased with the enthusiasm with which they were received in the communities in which they operated. In addition, the efforts of IACE has widespread support not only from the Ministry of Education in Guyana but from the main media outlets, radio, TV and the newspapers, who have indicated that they are willing to assist as carriers of IACE material whenever appropriate.

Finally, regular, well organized evaluations of on-going programs are essential during this formative period of IACE's efforts in distance education. It is also clear that IACE alone will not be able to sustain the cost, or provide the human resources needed for a fully functioning, versatile distance education agency. Short and long term plans to involve interested agencies and appropriate resources must be formulated and acted on as early as possible.

CASE STUDY No. 2: COL/BC Visiting Fellowship Program

The first case study examined a project affecting a single country. This second case study looks at a project which involves a majority of Commonwealth countries and is jointly financed and executed by the Commonwealth of Learning and Provincial Government of British Columbia.

Background

In an initial monetary pledge to the operations of the Commonwealth of Learning the Government of B.C. earmarked \$50,000 Canadian dollars to assist in the funding of a five-year project which would allow about ten commonwealth educators per year to visit B.C to study advanced techniques and technology in the field of distance education.

This program was called the Visiting Fellowship Program and was aimed particularly at benefiting educators in developing Commonwealth countries. The first group of ten fellows drawn from the following 10 countries visited B.C. in 1989:- Brunei, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Mauritius, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. Individual fellows were selected by their own governments on an by invitation of COL. For two weeks the visiting fellows had discussions on a one to one and group basis with the senior officers at COL's Headquarters and visited all B.C.'s major educational institutions, universities and colleges which use distance education techniques and technologies. These visits normally allowed for exposure to both the technical and tutorial aspects involved in the preparation and delivery of distance education courses.

The program has continued on an annual basis since 1989. In 1990 the Fellows were drawn from - Bangladesh, Botswana, Barbados, India, Malawi, Nigeria, Pakistan, The Gambia, Uganda and Zambia. For 1991 the participants came from Dominica, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malaysia, Namibia, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Seychelles, and Sierra Leone; and the 1992 Fellows represented Bahamas, Malta, Maldives, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Nigeria, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

The 1993 Visiting Fellowship Program was monitored by this researcher who was allowed access into meetings and had discussions with fellows and sought feedback from them on the program as a whole. This case study will, therefore, use the 1993 experience as a first-hand illustration of the Fellowship Program.

The 1993 COL/BC Visiting Fellowship Program

Aims

The three main aims of this case study are:-

- (a) to provide details of the participants and contents of the Fellowship program;
- (b) to give an indication of the reaction and impressions of the participants to the activities they were exposed to during the two-week program;
- (c) and to offer an over-all analysis of the usefulness of the program to both participants and sponsors.

Methodology

Since this researcher actively participated in some of the joint activities and discussions concerning problems and possible solutions faced by the participants' home-countries in the field of distance education, some objectivity will be lost but a more intimate and interventionist narration of a participant observer will be added. In addition to these joint discussions, I had informal one- on-one "coffee-break-chats" with many of the participants on their roles in their countries' distance education efforts and the challenges they face on returning home. I also administered a twelve-item questionnaire which primarily sought verbal descriptions of reactions to specific aspects of the Fellowship programs⁵.

Participants of the 1993 Fellowship Program

Nine visiting fellows participated in the 1993 program. They were either senior educators attached to major educational institutions in their countries or senior officers of their ministries of education. The nine participants were:-

1. Mrs. Jessie Kentish, Head of the Teacher Training Department of the Antigua State College in Antigua and Barbuda;
2. Ms. Cynthia Thompson, Principal of the Belize Teacher' Training College;
3. Mr. Desmond La Touche, Dean, Division of Adult and Continuing Education of the Grenada National College;

4. Mrs. Veronica Fyfield, Officer Responsible for Schools' Broadcasting in the Ministry of Education, Youth and Community Affairs of St. Kitts and Nevis;
5. Mrs. Veronica Augustin, Coordinator of the Southern Extension Service of the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College in St. Lucia;
6. Dr. Ban Kah Choon, Head of the Department of English Language and Literature of the National University of Singapore;
7. Ms. Blandina Mkayula, Science & Technology Policy Officer of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education in Tanzania;
8. Ms. Marcia Riley, Educational Broadcasting Officer of the Ministry of Education in Trinidad And Tobago;
9. Mrs. Margaret Ah Tune, Acting Principal of the Western Samoa Teachers' College.

Contents of Fellowship Program

The activities planned for the 1993 Visiting Fellowship Program were almost identical to the program for the four preceding years. They covered a period of three weeks which were broken up into three parts.

(a) The first three days were devoted to touring the headquarters and having discussions with the officers in charge of activities in various regions of the Commonwealth. After meeting the heads of COL's divisions and functions,

the participants were invited to seek interviews with those individuals who could best assist or advise on on-going efforts in their own countries. For example, Mrs. Augustin of St. Lucia had discussions with the senior program officer responsible for the projects in the Caribbean concerning ways of addressing a few problems which had arisen in a COL sponsored extension project for the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College. Ms. Blandina Mkayula of Tanzania told me she had very useful sessions and a commitment for immediate action on procuring suitable course material for Tanzania's proposed Open University (due to be launched opened in September 1994) from COL's Director for African Programs.

(b) The largest portion of the three weeks was spent in visits to major educational institutions and agencies on the mainland of British Columbia. Whole day visits were made to Simon Fraser University, University of British Columbia, University of Victoria, the Open Learning Agency, North Island College, South Island Regional Correspondence School, the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, British Columbia Institute of Technology and Capilano College. The visits were both tours of the various institutions as well as opportunities for discussions with their senior officers on the organization of distance education programs, and the types of distance education techniques and technologies used.

(c) The final portion of the three weeks, the last two days, were spent at COL's headquarters and allowed the participants an opportunity to make formal presentations on the state of distance education in their individual countries as well as to comment on the activities they participated in over the past three weeks. The formal presentations are usually collected and reproduced as a COL Document⁶. Most of these presentations gave a

history of distance education practices in their own countries, often taking the form of broadcast to schools programs, and then outlined current or proposed plans for improvement and enlargement of such practices. It was significant to note that in every presentation, "Teacher Training" was identified as either the target of current or proposed programs of distance education.

Participants' Reactions to Visiting Fellowship Program

During the presentations the participants' comments on the Visiting Fellowship Program as a whole were full of praise for COL and admiration for the agencies they visited. There was a sense of awe, in the majority of comments, on what they had seen and heard. They were extremely impressed by the type and level of technology both available and used by the institutions visited.

However, in response to a few participants who bemoaned the lack of "sophisticated" tele-courses and multimedia course offerings in their own countries, I cautioned the group against the introduction of techniques for which "our" societies [meaning third world societies] were both unprepared in terms of infrastructure and unfamiliar in terms of design and production. Financing such technologies in many developing countries would be a major problem by itself. I proposed that more detailed study be made of adapting existing "old technologies" such as radio, audio-tapes and better designed and presented print material for new tasks.

Although the group was in general agreement with my observations I sensed, in less formal discussions afterwards, understandable ambivalence and frustration. They saw the many uses to which they could apply the

techniques and technology to which they were exposed and, therefore, longed for their acquisition and application in their own systems. On the other hand, they were fully aware of the many limitations within their own countries that would make such applications impractical and even counter-productive.

Seven of the nine participants completed and returned the questionnaires which I developed (see Appendix C for a sample questionnaire). The questions sought comments on the length of the program, the relevance of various activities to their personal needs and those of their countries, thoughts on activities that could be included to strengthen the program, and possible follow-up activities.

Five of the seven felt three weeks duration was adequate for this program, the other two felt it should have been longer. All seven found the activities beneficial in some way to themselves and the work of their country. Phrases such as "stimulating and worthwhile", "of great value to me", "purposeful", "provided insights", summarized the general written response. But one participant put into writing the sentiments that a few others expressed to me orally. She stated, "While fellows appreciate the reasons for arranging visits to the various distance education institutions, I feel that the exercise became monotonous after the first five or so visits."

This was obviously at the back of the minds of many when they responded to the area of possible improvement to the program. Six of the seven felt that there should have been sessions for:- "hands-on activities", or "workshop/seminar activities on particular aspects of distance education" or "demonstrations of technology with hands-on elements", or "workshop on

media production", or "greater attention to providing hands-on experiences in the area of ed. technology since most of us had no previous experience with the equipment seen."

Suggestions for follow-up activities, therefore, centred mostly around the need for seminars and workshops in their own countries to support and organize "hands-on" activities of the kind mentioned above, and ways of utilizing ideas gained during this program. There were also thoughts on creating a network of interest and personnel using the "Visiting-Fellows" as coordinators in their own countries.

Discussion

In general the completed questionnaires demonstrated the seriousness and high expectations with which participants approached this program. There was no doubt that the visiting fellows were impressed and inspired by some of the visits they made, but there is equal danger of creating even greater frustration, to use the words of one of the fellows, "if nothing changes when we return home". There are no provisions in this program for follow-up activities.

Without concrete plans or financial provisions for follow-up activities these visits could easily become no more than public relations exercises for British Columbia's educational institutions and personnel. Each visiting fellow returns home with a file full of names and addresses and stories to tell of the advanced distance education techniques and technology available in British Columbia and Canada as a whole. More likely than not when COL

can afford to send a consultant to one of these countries the B.C. or Canadian consultant will be in high demand.

But, there is a counter-part to the Visiting-Fellows Program called the "Out-Going B.C. Fellowship Program" which is also a COL/B.C. project. The Out-Going Fellowship Program offers awards to B.C. educators to spend about a month in designated developing countries giving advice and guidance on various aspects of distance education. The program started in 1990 and since then about eight Out-Going Fellows have been granted awards each year.

From 1990 to 1993 Out-Going Fellows were sent to twenty developing Commonwealth countries and were drawn from the following Canadian educational institutions:- Simon Fraser University, the University of British Columbia, the University of Victoria, University College of the Caribou, the University College of Okanagan, the Open Learning Agency, North Island College, Capilano College, Camosun College, the College of New Caledonia, Kwantlen College, the British Columbia Institute of Technology, Malaspina College, Northern Lights College, Northwest Community College, Vancouver Community College and the B.C. Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology.

The stated aim of the out-going program is to give B.C. educators an opportunity "to experience at first-hand working in developing countries,"⁷ however, a panel comprising of COL and B.C. Government representatives select awardees by matching their expertise to expressed needs of educational institutions in developing countries.

Our intention is not to provide, as we did with the visiting fellows, a detailed description of this program. It is to underline the fact that these out-going fellowships were not intended as follow-up or even complementary activities to the visiting fellowship programs. The out-going fellowships were no doubt of benefit to both B.C. educators and the countries they visited, as a progress report undertaken by Prof. Peter Evans of the University of Victoria concluded⁸. But more pertinent questions are: could the visiting fellows' presentations and interactions at COL's headquarters not have been used as more accurate gauges to the immediate needs of developing countries and fed into the out-going fellowship program; and, the always controversial query, would qualified consultants or Visiting Fellows with a more mixed educational and cultural backgrounds (for example from developing countries such as India or Nigeria) not serve the needs of some of the recipient countries better?

The question of securing finance to fund visiting fellows from Africa or India would surely arise. But could B.C. not continue its financial support of this program and permit four of the eight annual awards to go to non-Canadians, in the interest of providing developing countries with as broad a range of consultants as possible, while still allowing educators in B.C. to specifically benefit from the program? These are possibilities which need to be explored.

Overall, however, the visiting fellowship program was envisaged as a single round of activities providing each developing Commonwealth country the opportunity to expose one of their senior educators to the process and practice of distance education in a province of Canada in which distance education has achieved remarkable success. This first round of visits,

concluding in 1993, permitted representatives from 46 developing Commonwealth countries to come to British Columbia.

If the program is to continue for a second round, then mere visits to educational institutions of interest will not suffice. After a non-partisan review of the past five years of visiting fellowships, proposals should be made to the B.C. Government to renew their funding and interest, but encourage other agencies within and outside of Canada to participate and provide a more broad-based program for both visiting fellows and out-going fellows.

The need for out-side evaluation of all of COL's completed, current and on-going projects has to become a priority at this stage of the agency's evolution. There are important lessons to be learnt from the initial initiatives, particularly with respect to assessments and ideas from those who have been directly touched by projects. The evaluations have to deliberately target reactions from local administrators, planners, producers and populations within individual countries.

The president and directors of COL all agree about the need for regular evaluation. As they strive to construct a reliable and consistent tool and schedule for such purposes, they will have to include consideration for all the constituencies involved, from the most obvious such as funding agencies to the most important, the people for whom these programs are meant.

But now we turn to a more comprehensive evaluation of COL in its first five years of operations. Built into the mandate of COL was a review of its activities after its first five years by a non-partisan group of Commonwealth experts. In the next chapter we will examine that review in

some detail, provide summaries of individual assessments by the president and directors of COL and offer our own analysis of its achievements, weaknesses and immediate challenges as it moves into its second phase.

Notes on Chapter 7

1 John Turner, (from Manchester University, U.K.), Distance Education in Guyana: Report of a Project Identification Consultancy - September 1989, Vancouver: COL 1990.

2 Project description taken from the files at COL's Headquarters.

3 Jennifer O'Rourke, (from University of Waterloo, Canada), Distance Education in Guyana: Report of a Consultancy undertaken on Behalf of the Commonwealth of Learning, (Vancouver: COL, 1990).

4 See Appendix B, for a sample lesson taken from the Pre-University English Course. The IACE staff was very proud of their production as well as they should be, since a quick look at the sample lesson would show that it is comparable to distance education modules produced anywhere in the developed countries.

5 See Appendix C for sample questionnaire

6 The presentations for the 1993 programme can be found as a COL Publication under the title: Visiting Fellowships Programme: Paper Presented by the 1993 Visiting Fellows, October 1993, Vancouver: Commonwealth of Learning.

7 Commonwealth of Learning, A Compendium of Activities (Vancouver: COL, April 1993) 47.

8 Peter O. Evans, (from the University of Victoria, B.C. Canada) Study Fellowship Programmes: Progress Report, (COL: Vancouver, July 1992) 17-21.

CHAPTER 8

ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE AND WORK OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING

A two-dimensional assessment

This assessment involves two different types of evaluation: the first, dealt with in this chapter, originates from the agency itself and allows for a sample of the thoughts and voices within COL. The second, found in Chapter 9, is a formal evaluation undertaken by a special external review committee mandated by the Commonwealth Heads of Government to take place after the first five years of COL's operations.

AN ASSESSMENT FROM WITHIN

Over a period of about three years I have had numerous conversations with the president, directors, senior officers and staff at the headquarters of the Commonwealth of Learning. There were formal interviews and informal discussions. While much of what was said could have been found in the reports already quoted in previous chapters, I found in particular, that the senior officers, drawn from the different regions of the Commonwealth, were very passionate about the work of COL and provided a unique perspective on some aspects of its operations, not found in the

agency's reports. Because these officers are all accredited experts in their fields and have been with COL from its inception, I felt it was important to capture this view from within in the actual voices in which they were offered to me.

In this chapter, therefore, we present three samples. The first gives a perspective of COL's performance within a single region (the Pacific) from the Director of that region; the second provides a wider view of the Agency's potential to move from regional to pan-commonwealth import as seen by the Director for Materials Acquisition and Development; and finally excerpts from interviews with the President of the Agency on a number of important themes.

(a) An Assessment by Mr. Peter McMechan, Director of the Pacific and South East Asian Division of the Commonwealth of Learning

Mr. Peter McMechan, has headed the Pacific and South East Asian Programs Division since the establishment of COL. He also has responsibility for "Continuing Professional Education". After two lengthy in-person informal discussions on the significant of the work of COL in the Pacific over the past five years, he agreed to provide me with a considered, written summary of his assessment giving much details on programs and projects undertaken and constraints and challenges encountered. I reproduce his assessment in a shortened and edited form below, because it underlines, in an ordered and authoritative way, what one of the founding directors sees as the main achievements and problems of COL in a

particular region and its importance to the development of the Commonwealth as a whole.

REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

The Regional programs for the Pacific and South East Asian Division of COL, outlined in the 1990-93 Strategic Plan Document have largely been accomplished and they are on-going. The work falls under three broad groups:

1. Institutional Support

There has been, and there remains, a clear need for an agency function, dealing with requests or concerns from any of the institutions, or controlling ministries or governments. The work has also been concerned, in the initial stages of the agency, with making known the co-operative framework of the Commonwealth Program. The Division has dealt with a very wide range of requests, including:

- **materials**, access to particular materials; making known materials available within the region to other programs of COL;
- **facilitating contracts** between institutions, including consultation meetings in Australia and New Zealand involving over thirty distance education institutions;
- **arranging** locally a variety of COL programs such as Fellowships, Distance Course Scholarships;
- **seminars and symposia** attendance; and
- **general information** services, including hosting many visitors.

2. Institutional Development

There are two potentially complicating factors. First, while COL has been from the outset both strongly oriented towards and reliant upon the regional University of the South Pacific (USP), our mandate also included the clear role of assisting the participating countries of

the SUP region in their own endeavors to develop alternative patterns of higher education. Second, the vast distances involved in this region (and the large number of small countries) inevitably orient all work towards a communications base. All the institutional development projects have had a unity with the institutional networking framework mentioned below. Such projects have taken place at the University of the South Pacific, Tonga, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Kiribati, Vanuatu, Western Samoa, Southwest Pacific and Brunei.

3. Institutional Networking The major activity in all parts of the wider region has concerned the development of an integrated policy for educational communications (in conjunction with the Telecommunications and Technology Division). Work over the last year (1993) suggests that the networking concept inherent in the Briggs Report, and at the foundation of the establishment of COL can, indeed be achieved. It is probable that this will happen in the Asia/Pacific region first, and the model will be able to be reproduced in other major Commonwealth Regions.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the work of the Commonwealth of Learning as an international program concerns the development of systems to enable the efficient delivery of particular courses of study from appropriate teaching centres (including locations in the so-called 'developing' world) to appropriate learning centres, wherever these may be located. In small states, learning centres may be national central locations; in island states the learning centres may include outer islands previously excluded from adequate provision; in large countries the learning centres may extend the learning network beyond crowded capital cities.

Within the co-operative and collaborative frame work which underlies the work of a Commonwealth Agency established to promote human resource development through distance education and communication technologies, there are three major strands in this development of networks:

- the development of networks which provide tested teaching instruments which can be adapted to localized circumstance. The provision of such materials should assist in minimizing the expensive and time-consuming period at the from end of distance education. Such materials may be in print, audio-visual materials, or data which can be processed;
- the development of conferencing networks, using audio or video technologies (or combinations of both) to allow teaching centres to mangle networks of learning centres for particular tasks; and
- the development of electronic mail networks to allow interactive communication between teaching institutions and learning centres, and between a variety of teaching institutions in order to provide collaborative teaching.

Examples of activities, or COL project work, in each of these three strands can be drawn from all the various regions of the Commonwealth.

FUNCTIONAL ACTIVITIES - Continuing Professional Education

Work in the functional area of continuing Education has been undertaken in close collaboration with Commonwealth Professional Associations and with other international agencies active in this field. Such cooperation is important in ensuring that COL keeps abreast of new developments in a wide range of professions and in exploring potential funding sources. The work included:

- The collection, codification and dissemination on a pan-Commonwealth basis of comprehensive information about Continuing Education activities. In some cases (Nursing; Legal Education) this has taken the form of Directory Services. In another (Judicial Education) leaders of the profession have been brought together with experienced educators who are able to offer assistance

in the definition of needs and to explore ways of sharing resources on an international basis in meeting them.

- The commissioning of course development to meet generic educational needs in areas such as: Public Administration - for drafting legislations in Commonwealth jurisdiction, in conjunction with the Commonwealth Secretariat Legal Division; Health - for pharmacists and non-pharmacists responsible for management of central government and regional stores of pharmaceutical drug supplies, jointly with Commonwealth Pharmaceutical Association and WHO; Resource Management - in collaboration with UNESCO; and Women in Development in coordination with the IDRC in Canada.

- The investigation of means to facilitate the shared use of course materials (e.g. by increasing awareness of Copyright requirements and seeking legitimate ways of reducing their capacity to restrict collaboration) and or Commonwealth-wide delivery of courses (e.g. making learning modules on basic nutrition, originally developed for the Pacific, available for adaptation and use in other areas of the developing Commonwealth).

- Providing assistance to national and regional groups in the development of local Continuing Professional Education delivery. This has been of particular significance so far in promoting opportunities for Medical Practitioners serving in local and often remote areas to access continuing education to update practicing skills and assisting linkages between medical Schools on a regional basis in East and West Africa.

(b) Part of a Conversation with Dr. Dennis Irvine, Caribbean Programs and Material Acquisition and Development of the Commonwealth of Learning¹

Dr. Dennis Irvine has been with COL from its inception as Director for the Caribbean and Material Acquisition and Development. He has been one of my major contacts at COL and has always been forthright and frank about the achievements and problems of COL. The extract below is from one of the many interviews I had with him.

R.D. : What have been the main achievements of COL over the past five years?

D. I. : One of the truly remarkable achievements is to have gotten this organization off the ground in such a short period of time. One has to remember that when the Commonwealth of Learning was established in 1988 September, the actual mandate of the agency departed significantly from the expectations that the conferences and studies preceding it had led people to believe would be the outcome. The Briggs Report, for example, envisaged something like the formation of a Commonwealth Open University. It was seen primarily as located in the context of higher education, enabling students from different countries in the Commonwealth to access educational programs from distance education institutions around the Commonwealth. In this guise this agency would have been an educational centre from which students would learn what courses were available, how to access or register in such courses, and then given some kind of accreditation for their efforts. Our efforts would, therefore, have been almost exclusively in making higher education more accessible from one Commonwealth country to another.

However, when the Commonwealth Ministers of Education met in 1987 to discuss COL, they were much more concerned with the potential of distance education for human resource development generally; and human resource development for many countries in the Commonwealth meant technical and vocational training, teacher training and many other areas that had nothing to do with university education. There was, therefore, a qualitative shift in the concept of COL which was radically different from what was being proposed by the Briggs Report.

The first major task of this agency was to translate this new mandate into action. It was much more diffuse than the original proposals. The Memorandum of Understanding encapsulated the main objectives under this new mandate and outlined the major functions of the new institution.

Our first objective in 1989 was to design a plan of action which would focus on the key functions and be transformed into working programs and projects on the ground. During that year, we were involved in a series of consultations in all the areas of the Commonwealth, trying to ascertain what countries required most in the way of human resource development. The needs expressed became the basis for the action plan and projects which we have undertaken for the past three years or so. If you take a look at our compendium of activities 1990 -1993, you will have some idea of the tremendous amount of projects and programs in a number of key areas that we have been able to put in place in just three years - all firmly based on our strategic plan formulated between 1989 and 1990. Basically we have fulfilled what we set out to do over that first period.

The second major achievement of the Commonwealth of Learning has been its successful advocacy role in the field of distance education. When we started a mere handful of developing countries knew anything about the usefulness, potential and functioning of distance education programs or institutions. As an advocate of distance education we have been able to show not only the potential and success of distance education in countries where it had been in place for some time now, but we have been able to actually assist countries in planning, setting up or expanding distance education units and agencies in their own countries. More and more developing countries have come to see the vast potential for human resources development in making distance education another tool in their overall education program. I think we were also successful in showing that distance education should not be seen as a separate form of education, but an additional or complementary mode of organizing and delivering existing educational programs.

We have also been able to show that distance education not only expands access to education, but can also definitely improve the quality of education offered, when compared to some traditional face-to-face programs. Because distance education is constantly focusing on the learner, in other words it is learner-centred, it avoids some of the old pitfalls of traditional class-room education where the focus is on the teacher or lecturer and his or her lectures. The philosophy and methodology of distance education insist on the full focus being on the learner since the first criterion of a good distance education course is that the learner should be able to understand it by himself or herself. But as additional help, a good distance education program would also include student support in various forms. So,

far from distance education being inferior to traditional class-room methodology, it is often superior in pedagogical quality.

Another achievement of COL has been the way in which we latched on to a feature of distance education that may have been obvious, but not fully recognized in fact, and that was the role that it could play in professional education. We are not talking of teacher training here, which has been a major focus of COL in its own right, but continuing professional education in such areas as health, law and engineering. Indeed, all the major industries and professional institutions now recognize the need for continuing training or re-training. Many have become aware that this can be done by distance education methodology on the job or worksite without having their members or workers "return to school". I guarantee that this will prove to be an increasingly important role for distance education in both developing and developed countries.

R. D. : Can we move to the other side now, and talk about the major challenges facing COL now and in the immediate future?

D.I. : First, because of the many projects we have undertaken in over 40 countries, we have built up expectations which we may find difficult to fulfill, given the fact that we would hardly have the funding over the next three or five years to do all the things that countries would like to have done. I suspect that we would probably have less of a "core" budget than we had for the first five years. We, therefore, have to convince Commonwealth countries that this is an organization that has an important role to play in education generally, and worthy of funding at a certain level. I think the

Progress Review Committee's recommendations concerning a core budget of the order of \$5.0 million (Canadian) annually is about right.

We will also have to be able to resource money outside of our normal government funding for special projects. We can aim to become the executing agency for projects which have to do with distance education or have a distance education component, funded by major international organizations such as the World Bank and other Development Banks, Foundations etc. in some of the developing Commonwealth countries.

At this time, until we can work out a practical financial plan for the next three or five years we will remain in a state of uncertainty as to what or how much we will be able to do in the future.

In the first period of our existence we spread our wings very widely, and very deliberately, in order that all the member states of the Commonwealth might become aware of what we were capable of doing, and of the benefits of the organization for them. Quite clearly we will not have the resources to continue this way, we will have to narrow our activities and be much more selective in what we do and where we do it. I think in this next phase we will have to use much more a model-building approach - that is - if we undertake a project in say, Jamaica, such a project should have applicability in other Caribbean countries such as Guyana or Trinidad. It may mean sharing plans, materials or resources of a given project within the Caribbean and not depending on COL to send people or funds to each of those countries to do a similar project. In fact, the results of the project in Jamaica may be capable of being transferred and used in other countries outside of the Caribbean region. COL would then be able to focus its funds

and efforts on a smaller number of special "demonstration" projects that have relevance for a large number of member countries. In this way, although operating on a reduced budget, COL could still make a significant impact within the Commonwealth as a whole.

C. Edited Excerpts from a lengthy Interview with James Maraj, the President of the Commonwealth of Learning

The President of the Commonwealth of Learning, Professor James Maraj, is Trinidadian by birth and has held a number of high profile positions in various parts of the Commonwealth. Before becoming the first President of COL he was Assistant Secretary-General at the Commonwealth Secretariat and a former Vice Chancellor of the University of the South Pacific.

Below are edited excerpts taken from a lengthy interview with Dr. Maraj. The interview was conducted in two sessions over two days. It took the form of an open conversation from which I have selected, edited and arranged his remarks under three themes which are important to this examination of the Commonwealth of Learning. There were of course many other interesting insights and comments which have been omitted for the sake of order and brevity.

On Review of COL's performance over the first five years

Dr. Maraj: Very valuable and much appreciated work has been done in that time but there will always be mixed reviews of the Commonwealth of Learning. That is intrinsic to the nature of the organization, the various constituencies we serve, the different expectations held etc.

There are a few reasons for that. One is we have such a wide variety of constituents. Generally, if you speak to government officials, particularly in

developing countries, you will get a very positive view of what COL has done in the first five years. On the other hand if you were to discuss our work with some institutions with whom we have not had much to do, particularly in some of the developed Commonwealth countries, you may get a different reaction. You will get a much more positive reaction from the Indira Gandhi National Open University in India or North Island College in B.C. (Canada) with whom we have done a lot of work. So it is inevitable that those who benefit from COL and have worked closely with COL would better appreciate what has been done in the first five years.

A second point to note is that not all Commonwealth Countries would have been equally enthusiastic about the establishment of COL. Canada was extremely supportive and that is one of the reasons why the headquarters are based here. Many of the developing Commonwealth countries saw the great need for such an agency and the assistance it could provide. So COL was seen as more beneficial to some in the Commonwealth. This would also colour an assessment of the agency.

A third reason for mixed reviews has to do with how COL was perceived in the first place. Some clearly expected us to be merely a link or network for existing Open Universities in the field of Higher Education. But when an agency is established as an intergovernmental organization, the members are governments, and we report to the Heads of Government of the Commonwealth. We had to get our directions from the members themselves and not necessarily from individual institutions.

We started an extended period of consultation with member governments as to what their most urgent educational needs were. Some

wanted us to do work in Literacy, others strongly voiced their need for Technical and Vocational Education, still others wanted Professional and Continuing Education. The priorities identified by member governments varied very widely and often were not focused on higher university education. There were also the economic and technological conditions which dictated different approaches in different regions and countries. These were enormous challenges which COL had to face in undertaking to accommodate as many requests from governments as possible within our budgetary and staff capabilities.

If you look at our Compendium of Activities² of projects accomplished over the first five years, you will see a great variety of projects in over forty Commonwealth countries. That I think, for an agency that started from scratch in 1989, is a remarkable achievement.

Some may question the wide variety of projects we have undertaken in this period. Well, in part, this has a lot to do with how we are funded and organized. Although funding is on a voluntary basis, the ultimate authority of the agency resides with the Heads of Government of 51 countries (now that South Africa has joined the Commonwealth). We had to demonstrate that we were capable of doing projects covering a massive area representing the needs as articulated during our consultations with individual governments. We had to prove ourselves and show what we were capable of doing in order to sustain the interest and support of the majority. After this first period we can now proceed to focus on more specific strategies. Sometimes it is forgotten that it has only been five years since we started. The full development of an international institution such as ours takes time.

On Using Distance Education as the Major Pillar of COL's

Activities

Dr. Maraj: My overall view of COL's work is that it should be involved in educational innovation and reform, particularly in developing Commonwealth countries. The techniques of distance education can certainly be used for this purpose. But I don't think we should go into a country and 'wave a flag' for distance education. Instead we should go into a country and ask 'what are the problems in education that you face and how can we best address those problems?' Distance education may have a significant role to play in addressing those problems, but it is not a panacea.

Another point to bear in mind is that the rapid development of distance education over the past decade was primarily as a response to needs in higher education in the developed world. I am not sure that the strategies used can readily be transferred to the application of distance education for primary and other levels of education in developing countries. In higher education, the assumption is that students are capable of independent studies. This is not the case in primary, secondary and, even technical and vocational education, which are the major areas of need in developing countries. So we need to think very carefully about how we use distance education.

I see distance education as also being offered along with traditional modes of education. A dual mode university, for example, would not need to keep students on-site for as long a period as they do now. Mixed modes of delivery of education are on the increase.

On Funding of COL

Dr. Maraj: In terms of Funding, 30 million Canadian dollars were pledged for the first five years of operation, of that we actually received only 25 million. Our expenditure over that period illustrates very graphically an increase in spending as we increased our project activity. We went from 1 million in the first year to 3.6 million in the second to 4.7 and then 8 million in the fourth and 8 million in the fifth. In the last two years the number of projects and programs with a technology component increased substantially.

With the very positive report of the work of COL by the external Progress Review Committee in 1993, we felt sure we would receive, at least, the same level of funding as we did for the first five years. But the pledges at the November 1993 Heads of Government Meeting fell far short of that amount.

Unfortunately, the forty or so Developing countries, who have said that they have benefited enormously from the work of COL and would certainly want it to continue at the same level of operation, are in no position to make significant financial pledges towards the work of the Agency and those countries who may be in a better position to contribute seem to have other priorities.

In chapter 10 we will return to a number of these issues raised by the President and the directors. The next chapter, however, provides a synopsis of the major external review of COL by an inter-governmental group drawn from the wider Commonwealth, along with our own analysis and discussion.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 8

¹ This is an edited extract of a long interview conducted with Dr. Irvine.

² Commonwealth of Learning, A compendium of Activities - 1990-1993, (Vancouver: COL, 1993).

CHAPTER 9

AN EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

The Progress Review Committee

"Clause 13" of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Commonwealth of Learning, which was signed by Commonwealth Governments to establish COL, provided for an external review of the agency after its first five years. This Clause states:

Commonwealth Governments will undertake a full review of the progress of the Agency after it has been in operation for five years, including specific provisions in this Memorandum of Understanding, to determine whether any changes in the arrangements are considered desirable¹.

Members of a Progress Review Committee were appointed by the Commonwealth Secretary-General in March 1993. The Members of the Committee were:-

Chairman: Dr. H Ian Macdonald
President Emeritus, York University, Canada

Miss Sheila Browne
Principal of Newnham College (1983-1992), Cambridge
University, U.K.

Professor Jeff Gawthorne
Deputy Vice Chancellor, Murdoch University, Western
Australia

Dr. Iftikhar N. Hassan
Director, Women Studies, Allama Iqbal Open
University, Islamabad, Pakistan

Alhaji Yahaya Hamza
Director General, Federal Ministry of Education and
Youth Development, Lagos, Nigeria

Professor V.C. Kulandai Swamy
Vice Chancellor, Indira Gandhi Open University, India

Mr. Leton F. Thomas
Principal, Sir Arthur Lewis Community College,
Castries, Saint Lucia

Secretary: Mr. David Bartlett
Former Secretary to the Canada Council

The Terms of Reference of the Committee were:-

1. Assess COL's performance and achievements since its establishment;
2. Consider the balance and achievements in its strategic plan and the programs and activities through which they are being realized in various parts of the Commonwealth;
3. Review the development and management of the organization and consider the appropriateness of its present structure as an institution promoting education at a distance;
4. Examine the implications of its mode of financing;

5. Recommend any changes to the Memorandum of Understanding which may be desirable;
6. Report to the Commonwealth Governments with recommendations for COL's further development.

The Committee started its work in April, 1993 and met in Vancouver on 5-9th. August, 1993 to develop its conclusions and finalize its report. Over the intervening four months the Committee engaged in three types of "measurements". It interviewed the President and Senior Staff at COL's Headquarters and reviewed COL's operations and project reports and publications. Second it sent out a detailed questionnaire to 244 individuals and institutions who had been involved in or affected by COL's projects or programs in some way². Third, members of the Committee paid visits to a number of institutions in Commonwealth countries in which COL's projects had been executed, and met and interviewed a large number of persons in those countries³.

The Progress Review Committee Report

(a) COL's Projects and Programs: The Committee viewed the overall output of COL - about 250 projects in 40 countries as both impressive and successful in response to its main functions and objectives as outlined in the "Memorandum of Understanding"⁴. Chapter 6 has already given a good sampling of these projects. But in attempting so much did COL spread itself too thin and compromise on efficiency? The Committee "did not subscribe to the suggestion that COL had cast its net too wide" over the first five years, or

that "the Agency, in attempting to respond to the request and requirements of the whole spectrum of its membership, has missed an opportunity to make a really significant contribution to a few, carefully selected, large pilot projects."⁵

In fact it supported COL's attempt to touch a maximum of Commonwealth countries, the Committee concluded, "There is no evidence that small projects are necessarily less cost-effective than large projects.... While a more structured and rigorous process of project selection may well be indicated for the future, it is important that all COL members and associated institutions have some indication that their unique needs are recognized."⁶ This conclusion seems to support the conscious strategy, as enunciated by the president in his interview earlier, of working in as many Commonwealth countries as possible .

On the question of sacrificing efficiency for the quantity of projects undertaken, the Committee felt that the peculiar nature of the Commonwealth as a voluntary grouping with a wide variety of needs called for a different approach than employing the purely "business" concept of "efficiency":

It would obviously be more "efficient", as the term is used in the business world, for COL to concentrate on a limited range of distance education "product" which can be applied with minor modifications in a few selected Commonwealth countries. Of course, avoidable waste is not to be condoned, but it is implicit in the Memorandum of Understanding that "efficiency" in this sense was not a primary consideration in defining the functions of the Agency.⁷

This is clearly a contentious point for many countries, particularly developed countries, that preach (even though they do not always practice) "business efficiency" at all cost. But someone from the Third World would tend to agree with the Committee on their interpretation of "efficiency". Developing countries know only too well how difficult it is to get funding and support for badly needed, small-scale local projects from the shrinking budgets of international and multilateral agencies. Considerations such as "cost effectiveness" and overall efficiency of project plans become standard criteria for rejecting rather than supporting such projects. On the other hand, however, COL itself faces drastic cuts in its budget for the next five years and it will certainly have to change its strategy in terms of selection and funding of projects. "Efficiency" will probably have to become a major criteria in this process.

(b) The Questionnaire Survey: This survey sought to measure "respondents' perceptions of the importance of COL's activities in promoting distance education, the effectiveness of COL's assistance, the value of a variety of COL program areas, and their satisfaction with opportunities of providing input into COL activities."⁸ It also invited suggestions on ways of making COL's activities more effective.

The respondents were identified as "Clients and beneficiaries (educational and other institutions which are candidates for COL project support), Government Ministries (senior officials in Commonwealth ministries of education and other relevant ministries), Donors/Partners (representatives of funding agencies which have been associated with COL's work), and Agents (organizations and individuals who have provided services to COL or to COL's clients as consultants, advisors and providers of

materials).⁹ From information provided by COL, 244 potential respondents were targeted.

The Committee drafted the questionnaire and commissioned the Institute for Social Research at York University in Canada to gather the information and analyze the results. Completed questionnaires were received from 140 of the 244 potential respondents.

In summary the surveys findings revealed that:-

- i. 86% of these respondents viewed COL's role as a catalyst in promoting distance education;
- ii. 52% felt that COL's actual activities were "very important" in promoting distance education in their country or organization;
- iii. 63% (of the 127 who expressed an opinion on this question) felt that COL's services were "complementary" to the work of other agencies and 36% felt that COL's services were "unique". Only one respondent felt that COL's services duplicated that of other agencies;
- iv. Of those that received funding from COL, 50 respondents felt the funding was "adequate" and 22 felt it was "inadequate";
- v. On the question of most "valuable program area", the top three scored as "very valuable" were: training in distance education practices (37%), materials acquisition (23%), and technology and telecommunications (14%).
- vi. 71 participants of the survey said that COL had been "instrumental in developing a sustainable activity within their region", and these

activities were broken down into the following categories: creation of a distance education centre (17 respondents), training programs for teachers and others (15 respondents), and the providing funds for start-up costs and "seed" money for training of distance education staff;

vii. 101 respondents offered suggestions on how COL could be more effective in serving their needs: 25 suggested establishing stronger links with member countries and more sharing of information and publications, 20 wanted more training in distance education and training in the development and writing of distance education programs locally, 14 felt financial assistance should be increased, and 11 suggested that there should be more follow-up evaluation and research on local distance education efforts.

In general, the survey participants responded very positively to COL and its activities over the first five years. However, at the end of the section which discussed the findings of their survey, the Committee offered an important caution: "many of the respondents, as professionals and associates or beneficiaries of COL, may have tended to moderate any criticism [of the Agency]"¹⁰

(c) Field Visits and Interviews

Committee members visited seventeen Commonwealth countries to have a first hand look at COL's projects in progress and hold discussions with a wide of range of officials including government policy makers, educational administrators, and teachers¹¹. More specifically, the Committee sought to understand the political, social and other conditions in which

COL's activities took place; and gauge the need and urgency of some of the requests made to COL.

The main conclusions formed from the visits and interviews were:-

(a) That COL has made a significant contribution to the development and expansion of distance education capability in most of the countries visited by accelerating interest in distance education, by helping to establish electronic communication networks between and among distance education centres and sites, and by providing a bursary system in some countries which enabled the enrollment of large numbers of students in distance education courses;

(b) That COL encouraged and fostered regional cooperation by the planning and executing of many regional seminars, workshops, and round table conferences - this in turn motivated the establishment or reactivation of regional professional associations and activities, the importance and need for regional coordinators of COL was also noted [currently only two regional coordinators are in place, one in India for the Asian region and one in the Caribbean for that region];

(c) That all countries visited acknowledged the "crucial" role played by COL in assisting in the design and development of course material through sharing of information and, in some cases, sharing of course material itself.

But along with these positive conclusions the Committee noted the importance for COL to carefully order "its contributions" so that "they do not outpace local capacity". The Committee also recognized both the urgent need of many countries to gain access to distance learning material and the

difficulties "due to copyrights and commercialization of distance education materials" which currently exist in this area. These are two major areas for consideration which we will deal with in the next chapter.

(d) COL's Governance, Management, Administration and Funding:

Although these aspects of COL can easily be lost in consideration of its much more public and publicized projects and programs, they were nevertheless one of the most important components of the Review Committee's work. Three of the six stated goals in its terms of reference dealt with governance, management, administration and funding.

COL's Board of Governors, made up of 17 voting members¹², has the overall responsibility for determining and enunciating the principles, policies and priorities which must then be translated into COL's strategic plans, programs and projects. The management and administration of these then fall to the President and the directors of the five divisions into which COL is organized - four regional divisions, Asia, Africa, the Pacific and the Caribbean, (each regional division also has responsibility for at least one functional area of operations, such as "Training" or "Materials Acquisition") and the Telecommunication and Technologies division. Current and future funding obviously plays a major role in determining what strategies and programs are possible.

The Committee found that the Board "enjoyed the participation of very senior figures from the Commonwealth" and that in its seven meetings since its formation in 1988, it had to grapple with major policy issues as well as "intractable and time consuming practical problems". The Committee did not, however, elaborate on either the policy issues or the practical problems. The

Committee also did not comment on the composition and representation of the Board. We will deal with these in Chapter 10.

On the subject of Management and Administration, the Committee felt that the organizational structure of the agency into its various regional divisions, while allowing staff to become alert to needs and conditions of particular regions may also lead to duplication or omission of services when dealing with across-region activities which fall within a regional division. However, COL's basic personnel and financial practices, which fall within a central administrative arm, were seen as functioning well.

It was clear from their report, that the Review Committee saw funding as the most urgent and problematic issue under consideration. Bearing in mind that COL's funding for the first five years was on a purely voluntary basis with no firm pledges after that period, the Committee not only had to decide what would be an appropriate level of funding for the agency following this first period, but also needed to come up with proposals as to how this amount could be raised on an on-going basis. We include their complete proposals in their overall recommendations which follow.

(e) Recommendations of the Progress Review Committee (PRC)

The recommendations of the Committee were¹³:-

1. in recognition of the need and desire for the services which COL should and does provide, COL be strengthened and its financial base secured, to carry further the work that it has initiated in distance education and open learning;

2. to this end, the following financial arrangements be adopted:

i) the total contributions to COL from Commonwealth countries be CDN \$10 million per annum for a period of at least five years;

ii) of this \$10 million, the central budget be established at \$5 million per annum for headquarters costs, and be determined by means of an agreed formula based on the relative capacity of countries to pay as indicated by parameters such as GNP and GNP per capita;

iii) in addition to the \$5 million per annum for the central budget, a minimum of \$5 million per annum be provided by Commonwealth countries through voluntary contributions for COL projects in member countries;

iv) each Commonwealth country commit itself to a total sum of money appropriate at least to the five year period and to a pattern of progress payments that is convenient to its circumstances. The aim should be to put at COL's disposal several months in advance of its financial year, the full amount of funding for that year;

3. that the Board of COL develop a fund raising strategy with the objective of putting into operation, by June 1994, an effective program to secure funds from a broad spectrum of sources;

4. in order to ensure the most effective form of operation to meet the demands placed upon COL, an organization and management review be undertaken, along with such other studies as may emerge from it, as soon as possible.

In compliance with its terms of reference, the P.R.C. Report and Recommendations were presented to the 1993 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) for its consideration.

Response of CHOGM and COL's Board of Governors to the Progress Review Report

The CHOGM was held in Cyprus in October 1993, and the Commonwealth Heads were once again very supportive of the activities of COL in light of the very favourable Report of the Progress Review Committee. As a result, the Official Communiqué of the Meeting noted the following:-

Heads of Government received with satisfaction the Report from the Commonwealth of Learning and an independent Progress Review which commended the achievements of the organization since its inception. They noted, however, the grave financial situation now facing The Commonwealth of Learning. They made a strong appeal for increased contribution from a greater number of member countries with the intention of maintaining its valued services and of enduring the pan-Commonwealth character of the organization.

Having recognized the threat to COL's future because of the uncertainty which existed in the area of funding, the Heads made the appeal for increased contributions from a larger number of members. But the Meeting did not consider or rule on the practical recommendations in the Report on how this could or should be done, for example, an agreed formula

which asks each Commonwealth member country to contribute toward COL's core budget based on their GNP or GNP per capita.

Indeed, in the CHOGM Report of the Committee of the Whole, the only specific decision taken which arose from the Progress Review Committee (PRC) Recommendations had to do with still another "review". The "Committee of the Whole" picked up on the final recommendation of the PRC for an organizational and management review, presumably to be done after the whole question of COL's funding and, hence, future was assured. But the CHOGM Committee of the Whole after noting the positive conclusions of both COL's clients and the PRC on the work of the agency over the past five years continued:

The Committee [of the Whole] further noted the recommendations for an organization and management review: it asked that this be undertaken expeditiously and that it include an examination of the governance structure.

On the question of funding for COL in the immediate future, the Committee was much less specific:

The Committee welcomed member countries' reaffirmation of their commitment to COL, as an instrument of continuing Commonwealth co-operation. It recognized that COL's current budget [1993-94] of C\$6 million reflected a reduction of 25 percent from that of the two preceding years and that funds in prospect for 1994-95 were of the order of only C\$3.5 million. In light of this situation, the Committee strongly urged all governments to contribute resources to enable the organization to maintain its services.

The call for another review as a result of an overall review was strange, indeed. In our discussion below we look for reasons to explain this approach.

Discussion

The reasoning behind the particular approach and emphasis by CHOGM can only be inferred. The only countries which had made any significant pledges or contributions to COL's 1994-95 budget were Canada, Britain, Australia and India. Canada is by far the biggest donor, agreeing to provide nearly two-thirds of the \$3.5 million new funds for 1994-95. Canada was particularly interested in a governance review of COL and after the Board of Governors Meeting in November 1993, it was announced that the Government of Canada was providing funds to permit the Governance Review and Mr. Alan Barry of Canada was to undertake that review. It was also known that Britain was a major supporter of an organization and management review. COL's board announced at the same meeting that the British Government was funding the Organization and Management Review by a team of three experts chaired by Sir William Taylor of Britain. The other two members were Mr. John Fielding of Britain and Mr. Robert McLaren of Canada.

These two reviews might very well shed important light on the way forward for COL after some realistic funding base has been established for the agency for at least the next three years. What is clearly in question is the timing of these reviews - immediately after an extensive inter-governmental team had given COL a very positive assessment and the CHOGM its continued blessings. Their funding and composition, with Britain and Canada both funders and reviewers, point to a disturbing trend. It underlines a known fact in the life of international organizations. Major funders have more influence and their points of view more practical import than "ordinary members". It is an issue which was opened up in Chapter 2

in our discussions on "Major problems in International Organizations"¹⁴ and an issue which we will return to, as it relates to COL, in our "Conclusion".

On the other hand, if one were to put oneself in Canada's position, where one is asked to provide the bulk of funding for a Commonwealth-wide Agency, for the foreseeable future, it is reasonable to argue that one should ensure, as contributions and contributors grow smaller, that the agency is governed and administered in as efficient and effective a manner as possible, corresponding to the reality of a significantly smaller budget and group of financial contributors. So from the point of view of countries like Canada a governance and organizational and management review makes a lot of sense at this turning point.

One of the important questions that COL's membership has to face is: With just a handful of countries willing or able to contribute significantly to the operations of COL, will it still be able to operate as if all members were share-holders and, hence, with equal say in deciding future policies and programs? An additional question comes to mind: If only a small number of countries contribute to finance distance education projects in mostly poor countries, how tempted will these countries be to openly declare these contributions as bilateral foreign aid, without the guise of Commonwealth co-operation confusing its purpose? For instance, will a country such as Canada which is currently providing nearly two-thirds of the 1994-95 budget not be tempted to utilize these funds next year as straight bilateral aid to those developing countries which seem most in need of education and training for developmental purposes? Then comes that whispered question: Is it really worth the trouble to keep COL alive?

Before we offer answers to these questions in our final chapter, there are a few important issues which need to be addressed as both a background and rationale for such answers. These issues are at the centre of COL's future in whatever form it might take. They, therefore, require detailed critical appraisal. In order to do this in a systematic fashion and complete the overall architecture of this dissertation, we return to our initial questions and major objectives posed in chapter 1 which adequately cover the range of issues which we need to conclude on.

Notes on Chapter 9

¹ See Appendix A for a copy of The Memorandum of Understanding.

² Appendix D provides a copy of the questionnaire sent out by the Review Committee.

³ Appendix E provides a list of persons interviewed.

⁴ See Appendix A.

⁵ Progress Review Committee, Report of the Progress Review Committee on the Commonwealth of Learning, (Vancouver: COL, 1994) 6.

⁶ Ibid., p. 7.

⁷ Ibid., p. 7.

⁸ Ibid., p.8.

⁹ Ibid., p.8.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 10.

¹¹ The full list of those with whom the Committee members had discussions in the countries visited can be found in Appendix E.

⁸ See the Memorandum of Understanding in Appendix A for the make-up of the Board, and the criteria by which different categories of members are appointed.

¹³ Progress Review Committee, Report of the Progress Review Committee on the Commonwealth of Learning, (Vancouver: COL, 1993) 28.

¹⁴ See Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 10

INITIAL QUESTIONS AND MAJOR OBJECTIVES

As I write this final chapter on the Commonwealth of Learning in late 1994, it coincides with a crucial period of rethinking by its Board and major funders of the role and organization of COL and possibly its very existence in the form we now know it. These deliberations and debates will probably not result in any firm decisions before the next Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting scheduled for 1995. In the meantime COL is effectively in limbo, the euphemism used by the administration is "in a period of transition". Transition to what is anyone's guess at this stage. For this reason our concluding analysis of various aspects of COL gains new importance and urgency, especially if it is able to shed some penetrating light on both the achievements and difficulties of the Commonwealth of Learning in this first phase of its operations.

In order to do this in some systematic way, we return to the "Initial Questions" and "Major Objectives" set for this Dissertation in Chapter 1.

INITIAL QUESTIONS

1. Would a close examination of the history and evolution of the Commonwealth of Learning reveal the assumptions of its constitution and a rationale for its mandate?
2. Could an empirical examination of a range of COL's activities point to strengths and areas of potential problems in the execution of that mandate?

3. Can one assume that distance education and communication technologies is the solution to the many problems (shortage of money, teachers, school buildings and equipment) faced by developing countries in the field of education ?

4. Finally what specific problems would the Commonwealth of Learning face as it moved from one phase to another after its initial five year period?

These questions were distilled into four major objectives for the purposes of this dissertation.

MAJOR OBJECTIVES

(1) To trace the genesis of the Commonwealth of Learning through the earliest recognition and articulation of specific needs in various Commonwealth meetings and Conferences to its actual establishment in Vancouver in 1988.

(2) To examine the present mandate, structure and institutional arrangements of the Commonwealth of learning with a view to critique any shifts which may have taken place between the conception of the idea and its actual implementation.

(3) To examine the operations of the Commonwealth of Learning since its establishment in 1988, through identification, descriptions and review of a cross section of projects undertaken so far. This would include one in depth evaluation of the work COL's has done in a developing Commonwealth

country on the point of establishing distance education as a formal mode of education and another case study of a pan-Commonwealth project.

(4) Finally, to provide an assessment of COL's overall performance in the first phase of its operations and an analysis of problematic areas which affected its effectiveness and influence or could affect it in the future.

The questions and objectives overlap to a great degree and appear to align correspondingly. These alignments also suggest three major thematic divisions: (a) COL's history and development; (b) COL's functions and operations; and (c) COL's major problem areas. We will, therefore, divide this chapter into these three thematic sections. In each section we will summarize, draw conclusions and offer responses to apparent or implied questions. In total, this chapter pulls together the main themes of this dissertation and in so doing provide a concise but critical grasp of the subject matter as a whole.

(a) **History and Development of COL**

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 of this study deal specifically with the background conditions, conception and establishment of the Commonwealth of Learning in its present form. It is clear from these chapters that its constitution and mandate were heavily affected by its history and evolution.

As shown in chapter 4 the idea for COL was an indirect response to the extreme difficulties created for international students from developing Commonwealth countries after the introduction in Britain, Canada and Australia of differential fees for foreign students (amounting in some cases to three times the fees paid by "home" students). By 1981, Britain went one step further, and introduced the concept of "full cost" fees for foreign students at its institutions of higher education (that is calculating the full cost of all the subsidies that go into a nation's education system), making it possible for these fees to increase even more dramatically and on an annual basis to keep pace with the rising cost of living. Canada, Australia and New Zealand followed closely behind.

Around this time the Commonwealth Ministers of Education Conference responded to the protests of Ministers from Developing Commonwealth countries on the barriers these increases created for students from poor Commonwealth countries. The Ministers' Meeting agreed to the establishment of a "Consultative Group on Student Mobility" to examine the question of differential fees and how these affected the availability of higher education for students from Commonwealth countries and, of course, ways of remedying the problems faced. This "Consultative Group" soon became a "Standing Committee" on student mobility and,

between 1981 and 1985 produced five reports each urging countries (in reality the three developed Commonwealth countries) to either do away with differential fees altogether or ease the burden on students from developing Commonwealth countries in some way. The broader question of assisting some of these countries to improve their abilities in the field of higher education also came into focus.

By 1984 it was clear that differential fees was becoming an essential strategy for funding institutions of higher learning in the developed Commonwealth countries. It was also becoming clear that the number of students from poorer Commonwealth countries were getting smaller, replaced by students from new oil-rich countries or NIC's (newly industrialized countries) like Iraq, Iran, Nigeria, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore. For example in Britain in 1965, according to figures presented in Chapter 5, students from the "poor" and "poorest" countries accounted for 75% of the overseas student population; by 1979 when differential fees were in full force, they accounted for only 25%. The increased fees had effectively put university education overseas out of reach of a large majority of students from poorer Commonwealth countries. By 1981, however, as the figures revealed, the developed Commonwealth countries would merely be subsidizing a majority of students from comparatively rich countries if they abolished or lessened the impact of differential fees at this time.

The Commonwealth Standing Committee on Student Mobility turned its attention to a number of "innovative" proposals aimed at assisting poorer students and poorer Commonwealth countries in improving their educational institutions. The proposals focused on "Distance Education" making use of "New Communication Technologies", and the sharing of

educational resources. The Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Nassau in 1985 were "Particularly encouraged by the potential for collaboration in higher education through distance education and the use of new technologies, they requested the Secretary-General to explore the scope for new Commonwealth initiatives in the field of open learning."¹ From this point on as the second part of chapter 4 and all of chapter 5 reveals, the wheels were set in full motion for the creation of the Commonwealth of Learning, while the issue of differential fees became an unresolvable side issue.

It is interesting to note that in dissolving itself in 1992, the Commonwealth Standing Committee on Student Mobility and Higher Education Cooperation (the "Higher Education Cooperation" was tacked on to their title after the establishment of COL in 1988) entitled its final report: "Favorable Fees For Commonwealth Students: The Final Frustration". The Committee admitted that after eleven years, having failed to win any concessions from the four developed Commonwealth countries on the differential fees issue, and indeed, seeing it being adopted in a few of developing Commonwealth countries as well, "it could play no further useful role in seeking an accommodation on the matter of fees for Commonwealth students from abroad"². On the positive side, however, it pointed to its role in the development of the Commonwealth of Learning.

Returning to the development of COL, it is significant to note that even before the Brigg's or Daniel's Group had met, their major mandate was more or less fixed - create an agency that would foster collaboration in distance education in order to assist both students and institutions of learning in the field of higher education in developing Commonwealth countries. Why was

distance education singled out as the corner stone for this structure? Here one can only speculate since the "in camera" discussions of the Standing Committee and the Ministers of Education are not available for examination.

First, by the start of the 1980's following the successes of the Open University of the U.K. and the flowering of similar institutions in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka, distance education had gained both popularity and respectability as a viable alternative to traditional on-site education at the college and university levels. It would seem logical, therefore, that if students from developing countries were experiencing problems in gaining access to traditional universities in the Developed countries, distance education had the potential of delivering the courses to them in their own countries, hence cutting down on expenses for travel and residential fees. Questions of differential fees would be made irrelevant, whilst convenience and cost would be much more attractive.

Second, three of the richest countries in the Commonwealth Canada, Australia and Britain were under pressure from poorer members to find some solution to the problems created by the introduction of differential fees at their universities and colleges. All three had resources, expertise and much experience in distance education, which they could share. Again the logic here would seem apparent. They could provide assistance to poorer Commonwealth countries without having to subsidize richer countries whose students could afford differential fees. Indeed all three countries already had in existence agencies whose main function was to help poorer countries in the area of development. Britain had the ODA (Overseas Development Agency), Canada had CIDA (Canadian International

Development Agency) and Australia had AIDAB (the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau).

Third, and although this may appear insidious, it would surely have been obvious to free market economies like these three countries, that they would find a ready and almost captive "market" for their distance education courses and expertise and its tie-in with communication technologies. It is probably easier to make this suggestion in the 1990's environment of rampant commercialization of education material than in the early 1980's, but it is not too far-fetched to imagine it having an effect on the decision of the developed countries to support the establishment of COL in the 1980's in its present form. Indeed, the British Government provided its major support to COL through its own International Centre for Distance Learning (ICDL) in the form of an information data base, sent to all developing Commonwealth countries, which featured a predominance of distance education material available in Britain at its Open University, a virtual shopping catalogue.

On the part of many developing Commonwealth countries the idea of distance education delivering on their "doorstep" courses which their young people formerly had to travel overseas to obtain, would have been extremely attractive. In addition, it was a well established trend that a significant percentage of foreign students from developing countries never returned to their country of origin after their training was over, and even when they did return had problems adjusting to their local environment after four or five years of absence³. There would also be very enthusiastic support for Commonwealth cooperation in distance education from countries such as India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka which already had open universities and others like Tanzania and Bangladesh that were actively planning to open

such universities. There would also be many smaller countries struggling to establish distance education programs on a smaller scale but very much in need of assistance in this field (my own experience in Guyana recounted in Chapter 1 would have been typical).

It was, therefore, not surprising that the Commonwealth Ministers of Education when they met in 1987 to consider the Briggs Report, announced "unanimous endorsement of the concept of establishing arrangements for the development of multilateral Commonwealth co-operation in distance education as set out in the Briggs report and overwhelming support for its broad proposals."⁴

But the support was not as unanimous as this declaration led one to believe, because on that same page of the report, no doubt included at the insistence of Britain itself, it stated: "The representative of Britain welcomed the ideas in the Briggs report while generally favoring bilateral [our emphasis] rather than multilateral support for activities in distance education. The British Government was in principle willing to fund the further development of the International Centre for Distance Learning [ICDL] housed at the British Open University, as a contribution to Commonwealth co-operation. Similarly the British Government was in principle willing to make bilateral funding available in support of the Commonwealth project through, for example, funding for the purchase of British open University materials, training, and consultancy."⁵ It would seem that Britain, seen as the chief "culprit" in the advancement of differential fees, was intent on getting as much as it gave in this proposed cooperative effort. What can be said in its favour, is that Britain had been consistent in its attitude to COL throughout

stating its position very clearly at the start, which prompted one senior official at COL to remark, "Britain never came to the party."

In the end, however, the greatest irony surrounding the establishment of COL is that the Ministers of Education and Heads of Government of the Commonwealth, having failed to reach any compromise or foster any sense of Commonwealth cooperation on the single issue of preferential treatment for students of the Commonwealth in Britain, Canada and Australia and New Zealand, undertook the much more difficult and complicated task of creating an agency, funded primarily by these rich countries, to foster an elaborate series of cooperative efforts in the comparatively new field of distance education. Distance Education was new for the majority of countries in the Commonwealth.

But an examination of the mandate of COL underlines the pivotal role of distance education. The Memorandum of Understanding⁶ which formally brought COL into being states very clearly, "The purpose of the Agency is to create and widen access to opportunities for learning, by promoting cooperation between universities, colleges and other educational institutions throughout the Commonwealth, making use of the potential offered by distance education and by the application of communication technologies to education." Note that higher education is implied as the focal point of concentration.

Yet, by the time COL had developed a three-year strategic plan for 1990-93 (see chapter 6), teacher-training in Africa, women's (literacy) education and technical, vocational and continuing professional education in Asia and the Pacific had become just as important an area for COL, as

developing institution capabilities in distance education at the higher education level. How and why did this shift of emphasis occur? According to the president of COL and one of its regional directors (see interviews in chapter 8) the agency spent the first year consulting with member governments on their most urgent needs in education. After that the strategic plan was developed, responding to these needs and approved by the Board of Governors for execution. Indeed, in responding to the various needs of developing countries COL ended up funding many of these projects from its own budget. It became a funder of projects rather than a generator of funds for projects as the Memorandum of Understanding envisaged. This was a significant shift of the role it was envisaged to play.

Nevertheless, this initial period of consultation with member countries in order to define needs and formulate an appropriate work program was actually recommended by the Daniel Group in the section of their report dealing with COL's "Priorities"⁷: "We do not wish to constrain its [COL's] choices in advance, for in practice the Agency would need to develop and adapt its work responsively in the light of priorities of member countries".

But, the agency's mandate constrained it from the start to spreading the gospel of distance education and new communication technologies throughout the Commonwealth without first ascertaining what the specific needs were in individual countries, or whether distance education was the most effective way of addressing those needs. Was this a case of "putting the cart before the horse"?

Much of the success of distance education has been in the area of higher education through the establishment and operation of open

universities and distance education divisions within traditional universities. After its consultations, this new agency was now being asked to use distance education in areas of basic literacy, teacher-education, and various types of technical and vocational training in countries with very limited technological infrastructure, educational organization and funding. It is no wonder that COL ended up organizing and funding many of these initial projects itself. In many cases it was asked to create something out of nothing. Very few funding agencies would be drawn to projects with such little foundation.

Apart from this obvious shift of becoming a funding agency instead of a facilitator of funding activities, the agency also left itself open to criticism that it had failed to execute its mandate on the question of higher education whilst taking on a large array of needs in various other levels of education, for which it had neither the operational capacity nor the funding to satisfy on a long term basis. It finds itself in a "no-win" situation. The many developing countries in which it has initiated projects will now expect both follow-up and extension of these projects, but given COL's budget and resources this will not be possible in the future; on the other hand the major donors who supported the idea of distance education for higher education collaboration would be disappointed that so little has been achieved in this area, and so little use made of their own distance education institutions, programs or experts. Indeed, much of the success in this field has been on a regional basis either at regional universities, the University of the South Pacific and the University of the West Indies, or chiefly galvanized around the efforts and leadership of Australia in the Pacific, and India in Asia. These regional successes are due at least in part to the role of COL in siting projects in and

around the universities, but these very successes would draw attention to a major failing of COL in not being able to "decentralize" its operations and create regional centres to plan and execute programs aimed at increasing regional cooperation in the field of distance education. The Daniel Group in discussing the "Structure" of the agency (paras. 12 to 25) devoted over two-thirds of that section to possibilities and potential for regional cooperation (paras. 14 to 24)⁸.

The COL's response to this criticism is that its initial budget and staffing was much too inadequate to allow for that kind of regional presence. Instead its headquarters structure allocated a Director and a very small staff for each of the major regions - Asia, Africa, The Pacific and the Caribbean. The division for "African Programs, Teacher Education and Research & Evaluation Division", within COL's headquarters structure is a good example of how limited its staffing is. In that division there is officially a Director, assistant Director and a Secretary. The Director left in 1993 and the Assistant is now (1994) Acting Director with his lone support staff being his secretary. There are fourteen Commonwealth countries in Africa, the majority in great need of assistance in the field of distance education. According to sources within COL, a new Director has not been appointed in order to utilize those funds for project expenses in Africa, given the current shortage of project funds in the agency's budget. A similar situation has arisen in the Caribbean Region. The director of that region ended his contract period and departed in July 1994, yet a new appointment is not envisaged in the near future. That saving also being put to use in projects, this time in the Caribbean. If, therefore, the agency has been unable to

adequately staff its headquarters, it is very unlikely that it could have developed any feasible scheme for the creation of regional centres.

(b) **Functions and Operations**

Chapters 6 and 7 provide a comprehensive description of the volume and variety of programs and projects initiated and executed by COL. It is impressive and covers a vast area of activities in the field of education. It advocated and attempted to use distance education for many types of educational activities - from teacher training, to an action plan for the environment, to the education for "women in development". Chapter 6 reads like a wish list from the Third World, and indeed it was. COL had descended in many of these countries and asked what they wished to accomplish with distance education and immediately started working on fulfilling their wishes.

The result was a truly impressive list of accomplishments within three years in about forty countries. Anyone looking at their "Compendium of Activities" for that period would have had little trouble in concluding that not only was COL busy at work, but that it was involved in very useful and innovative work as well. The members of the inter-governmental Progress Review Committee (see chapter 9) certainly thought so, and COL's "clients" whom they spoke with also enthusiastically reflected this view. On the range and volume of projects documented in that Compendium of Activities alone, one would have to score COL in the high nineties. From this standpoint it, indeed, did remarkably well in such a short period of time. But was it as complete a success story?

It is only when one turns to an in depth analysis of a few of COL's projects can one respond to this question. In Chapter 7, we did precisely that, examining in detail two of these projects, one in Canada and one in Guyana. First we participated in COL-BC Visiting Fellowship Program in which senior education officials from developing Commonwealth countries were brought to BC for about three weeks. While this program was extremely informative in scope as far as distance education activities in British Columbia was concerned, it was actually an elaborate, well-intentioned, public relations exercise for the province's distance education institutions and experts. When asked, participants were quick to say how useful it was in opening their eyes to the possibilities of distance education, but more often they would return to the feeling of frustration and helplessness they experienced when they compared these conditions and activities to what was possible and actually happening within their own countries. Would a COL-India visiting fellowship program not have been more appropriate in terms of matching needs and environmental and social conditions? The familiar question immediately arises, "but who would fund such a program?"

More fundamental problems were revealed in our examination of COL-University of Guyana Distance Education Project. Again, there was much excitement among the local staff concerning COL's support and involvement in establishing a pre-university distance education program. The aim was to provide pre-university courses in English, Maths and Basic Science for those adults who did not possess the required entrance qualification for the University of Guyana. The project was also meant to link a number of interior centres with the main campus in the capital. Tele-conferencing using ordinary telephone lines was decided as the mode for

this link-up. The links were established among four of what was eventually expected to be ten centres country-wide.

Having heard of the success of introducing tele-conferencing in Guyana from officials at COL headquarters, we were surprised to learn on our visit to Guyana, that the tele-conferencing sessions were only once every three months, and really did not play any major role in the delivery or tutorial of the pre-university courses. The reason for this was that the rate for long-distance telephone calls were so high and the budget for the Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (IACE) of the University of Guyana so low, that they simply could not afford these sessions more than once per term. There were other problems but this was the most obvious and clearly the most fundamental since it calls into question the planning process for distance education and the use of communication technology (in this case tele-conferencing) on the part of both COL and IACE.

It is ironic that, with the assistance of the Open Learning Agency (OLA) in British Columbia and under the direction of Tony Bates, COL itself created an excellent multi-media package (three booklets and a video) entitled, Technology in Open Learning and Distance Education: A Guide for Decision-makers⁹, which was distributed by COL to all Commonwealth countries. At the very heart of this "kit" was the constant warning that the introduction of technology in distance education must start with "ACTIONS", an acronym for an integrated planning process which included considerations of Access, Costs, Teaching functions, Interaction and user-friendliness, Organization, Novelty and Speed. The planners of the Guyana project clearly did not follow this list. The Guyana pre-university program, therefore, remains print-based supported by weekly meetings with a

resident-tutor. But one has to add that had COL not taken on the Guyana project, it is very unlikely that the program would have gotten off the ground so quickly. In addition the print-based modules are very well designed (see Appendix B for a sample lesson) again a product of COL-IACE collaboration. It may be the case of being thankful for "small mercies", whilst continuing to work on the bigger problems.

Here, however, is a good point to address the question of distance education and new communication technologies as a panacea for the problems experienced by developing countries in the field of education. This is generally a received view from the developed world that was turned into a truism by both the Brigg's and Daniel's groups. But until and unless "ACTIONS" (in COL-OLA kit mentioned above) are taken in each individual case, this is a foolhardy (and often very costly) assumption to make. The reality, however, is that more and more developing countries are slavishly following trends of the developed world in the use of technology in the hope of soon becoming prosperous like they are. It almost never works because the conditions and context in each set of countries are so different. John Lent discusses this conundrum faced by the Third World as a whole with regards to new communication technologies:

One part of this first conundrum where the trend is much more pronounced than in the 1970's concerns the rapidly escalating dependence of the Third World nations upon industrialized countries and multi-national corporations for information/communication technology. Third World nations are clamoring to be part of the so-called information age, without having the capital, technology, and know-how necessary to be self-sustaining. This sounds familiar because it is the same scramble these same countries found themselves in a couple of decades ago when television and radio

were promoted as their panacea. Despite a phenomenal growth between 1975 and 1985 that saw radio receivers in the Third World more than double and TV sets triple, there was not much support for the notion that these media were societal cure-alls, which was the thinking of the 1950's and 1960's.

Third World nations today are fed a full diet of information on computers and satellites and how they can solve many development problems. The results have been the generation of myths concerning the capabilities of new information technology - rather than well thought-out national policies that look at the technology's effects upon the national economy, labor force, privacy, cultural values, and dependency relationships."¹⁰

Lent's thought-worthy commentary holds just as true for the use of communication technologies in the field of distance education as it does for information as a whole. COL's promotion of distance education leaves it perilously close to also being the promoter of new communication technologies in distance education, a role which would make it an agent of the developed countries whose interest in this field are biased by their own experiences and the educational products and technologies they have to sell. The safe-guard is for developing countries to inculcate an attitude of questioning and meticulous planning which eventually leads to a well-thought-out decision on which media technology is most appropriate for a particular program in a particular country. This is no easy task and one which COL is currently ill-equipped to undertake.

If, therefore, COL is reduced even further, in the next phase of its operations, to a clearing-house for distance education programs (and there have been serious internal proposals along these lines), then it would indeed become a marketing agency for the developed world's educational

products including its educational technology. The wheel would then have turned full circle with overwhelming irony - in order to alleviate a situation (differential fees) in which the developed countries were charging students from developing countries vastly increased tuition fees, a Commonwealth agency was created which now facilitates those same countries to sell their education courses directly to developing countries, while differential fees continue to increase. This would clearly be a massive perversion of the original intentions of the Commonwealth of Learning.

(c). **Major Problem Areas**

This third section is the largest, and deals with four major problematic areas for COL - sharing of educational resources, accreditation, funding and decision-making. Attempts to share educational material and promote cross-institution accreditation are closely linked, and so are funding and decision-making: this is why we will proceed to discuss these problems in a linked manner.

1. **Sharing of Educational material and Accreditation**

One of the primary functions of COL is " assisting in the acquisition and delivery of teaching materials and more generally facilitating access to them."¹¹ This is a particularly important function in light of the extreme shortage of trained personnel in many developing Commonwealth countries capable of developing course material for distance education programs. In countries such as Britain, Canada and Australia there is no shortage of either distance education course developers or courses.

The Briggs Commission saw the solution to this problem in simple, idealistic terms "by fostering agreements with colleges, universities and other educational institutions throughout the Commonwealth. Under these agreements, the latter would be encouraged to make their own best distance-teaching materials available to others in the network, at the same time arranging to grant credit for each other's courses."¹²

Neither sharing of materials nor cross-country accreditation have proceeded as expected over the first five years. We will return to accreditation later. But one of the major problems in the sharing of

educational course material is copyright clearance. Contrary to the expectations of the Briggs Commission, colleges and universities, particularly in the developed countries, must adhere to copyright laws which deal with academic property within their individual countries and cannot make unilateral decisions to release courses for use or adoption elsewhere. The irony of the situation is that whilst developing countries like Nigeria or India, which do not have such strict copyright laws, can and do make available more readily their courses for use and adoption elsewhere, the better endowed countries cannot. However, probably as a psychological remnant of Colonialism, most developing Commonwealth countries give higher credence to courses developed in Britain or Canada than they do for courses developed in India or Nigeria.

In addition, there is the question of the cost of obtaining course material and, of course, the commercialization of educational materials in free market systems. Even when copyright clearance has been obtained for courses in developed countries, the basic cost for development or production is often too high for many developing countries to meet, given the striking disparity of currency value between rich and poor Commonwealth countries. When these costs include considerations of profit-making they are completely out of reach of the majority of countries that need them. The external Progress Review Committee noted in their Report that "access to distance learning material through COL is seen by the member countries as extremely important for achieving parity of prestige between the course materials, course credits and degrees amongst the developed and developing countries. The need is urgent and legitimate, but the response is fraught with difficulties due to copyright and

commercialization of distance learning materials."¹³ COL recognized the difficulties in this area and took a number of initiatives in the hope of addressing them.

In 1992 it commissioned a large, well-recognized Australian Law Firm, Phillips Fox:

To examine existing arrangements for international copyright clearance, particularly of print materials, in selected Commonwealth countries, with a view to providing specific recommendations to COL, and therefore its client institutions, about the appropriate modalities for obtaining international copyright clearance of materials utilized in courses and programs available by distance.¹⁴

The Team from Phillips Fox selected the four developed Commonwealth countries for its study - Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. They not only examined the overall national regulations, but looked specifically at arrangements governing distance education courses within these countries, then reviewed, on the ground, the practices of two tertiary institutions in each country to give concrete examples of actual copyright clearance procedures. After detailed interviews with those involved in these operations, the Team made its recommendations to COL on the possible future role of the agency in this matter.

Their conclusions covered a wide spectrum of interest, but there were three significant points made directly affecting the goals of COL in its plans to share educational material across the Commonwealth. The first was that no body existed internationally or nationally to represent educational users

in the matter of copyright, but, not surprisingly owners of copyright are very well organized. "This enables them to make more effective and more profitable arrangements for the exploitation of their work"¹⁵. Second, colleges and universities were very uneven in their practices and lacked clear-cut procedures in dealing with the clearance of copyright material for educational use, due in part to lack of information on such topics as authors, publishers and right holders. Third and most significant, "None of the laws of the countries studied would provide the license necessary for institutions in those countries to make available to institutions in other countries materials copied according to the law." Even in lawyers' language that seems clear enough and will probably present the biggest challenge to COL. The Consultancy team, however, offered a series of recommendations concerning the role for COL in this matter.

These recommendations can be broken down into four areas:-

(a) The first suggested that COL could develop a series of guidelines on copyright law dealing with educational material to supplement or influence existing regulations in Commonwealth countries . This move could be supported by developing a directory of copyright collecting societies in each country along with standard procedures and check lists for obtaining copyright clearance.

This recommendation, whilst feasible would require detailed, prolonged work and lobbying by COL especially within the major countries such as Britain, Canada and Australia, and would probably face an uphill battle in its attempts to establish one set of copyright guidelines for "educational material" as distinct from those governing other printed or

electronic material without having to intricately change the national law and international conventions on copyright.

(b) The second set of recommendations envisaged COL in the role of a "clearing house", where it would deal with individual copyright owners, publishers and collecting societies in obtaining clearance for material needed in some other country. This would call for an agency structure which was not only able to receive and dispatch requests for clearance, but also arrange for credits and payments and offer client institutions advice on rates and alternative material at lower costs.

This recommendation would require COL to create a whole new division with new expertise and tasks. But more than that it would call for a rethinking of its functions. For COL to become a clearing house for educational material, it would need to establish a whole new series of formal relationships with collecting agencies, publishers and owners and would end up being no more than agents of them and client institutions. On the other hand there is no indication that material obtained at the request of poorer countries would become any cheaper, only less complicated to acquire. The general assumption is that requests will come primarily from developing countries for educational material from the developed world.

(c) The third set of recommendations are less involved. They suggest that COL could become an active participant in the "international copyright arena". COL could gain observer status at the Berne Convention, for example, and represent international educational interests. It could negotiate an agreement with the International Federation of Reproduction Rights Organizations (IFRRO) to become a representative of distance

learning institutions in the Commonwealth (the recommendation actually suggested distance learning institutions "worldwide"). But even attempting to represent distance education institutions in the Commonwealth might prove too great a challenge, since COL would have to convince an institution such as the Open University in Britain to be allowed to speak on its behalf. This seems very unlikely. It is the all-encompassing nature of the last part of this recommendation that might prove unfeasible.

(d) The only truly feasible recommendation is the very last one, which reads: "Purchasing rights in certain materials". Not only is it feasible but indeed is one of the few positive steps that COL was able to take in this area. But even here there are areas of confusion. It is often not clear whether the copyright was granted for a single use or multiple uses by many groups and institutions in a single country.

As a closing note on the work of the consultancy, no reason is given why the law firm did not choose one or two developing Commonwealth countries as part of their study. This could have added important dimensions to both the study and COL's perspective on this matter. For instance, it would have been very informative to compare and contrast the approaches of India, Malaysia or Nigeria with Britain, Canada or Australia.

As a follow-up to the work of Phillips Fox, COL's Board of Governors at its meeting in November 1992 asked the agency to convene "a panel of experts with knowledge of the issues of Copyright as it pertains to teaching/Learning materials with a view to making definite recommendations to the Board about the possible nature and extent of COL's role and activities in this complex matter".

This panel was convened in February, 1994 and consisted of the following experts:-

Mr. John Collins, in Publishing in Australia;

Mr. Peter Banki of Phillips Fox of Australia;

Mr. John Strain, Associate Director of the International University Consortium at the University of Maryland in the U.S.A.;

Mr. Andre Wagstaff, Director, Marketing and Publications and Events of the National Council for Educational Technology in the U.K.;

Mr. Doug Lord, Senior Corporate Counsel, TV Ontario in Canada;

Mr. Mike Reddington, Director of Marketing, Open Learning Agency, B.C. Canada;

Mr. C.R. Pillai, Director, Planning and Teacher's Affairs, Indira Gandhi National Open University, India;

Ms. Christine Swales, in Course Development and Publishing in Hong Kong.

Using the Phillips Fox report as background material and with terms of reference of their own¹⁶, the group met for two days at the end of which they came up with their own set of recommendations. These were not remarkably different from Phillips Fox's, but less ambitious. There was one very striking departure, however: they categorically stated that COL should "not act as a clearing house for transaction of copyright permissions".

On the whole, the recommendations urged COL to provide a register for those interested in making available course material and those interested in acquiring such material; to continue the practice of acquiring rights to certain materials which was of common interest to member states; and to develop a "Standard Procedure for copyright Protocols" for use in all 50 Commonwealth countries. The Group also called attention to the need for monitoring "new technological developments, delivery of educational materials and associated Copyright issues".

Apart from the call to develop a "standard procedure for Copyright Protocols" in the Commonwealth, the other recommendations were practical but very limited. The Group appeared to have admitted that there were no simple solutions to such a complicated problem and that while sharing of educational materials might be an attractive and desirable goal it was beset by many legal and financial barriers.

There is an alternative route taken by Nigeria for example around these legal and financial barriers. That is to allow for unlimited use of there material by any Commonwealth country that so desires without cost or specific license. But this process is apparently only possible in countries that do not have intricate copyright laws and licensing procedures. If COL urges countries like Nigeria or Guyana to follow such practices whilst being unable to create inexpensive access to materials in the developed countries, it could be accused of actively fostering a double standard and taking advantage of the absence of copyright safe-guards in developing countries. COL would finds itself in a double-bind. There is certainly the need for standard procedures for copyright protocols, but these if eventually agreed upon and applicable to developing as well as developed Commonwealth

countries may need to be formulated in such a way that it would greatly complicate such a straight forward move by countries such as Nigeria.

However, as one of COL's senior officers from Asia pointed out, if educational courses from U.K or Australia were available on the same basis (equal costs and conditions of use) as courses from Nigeria or India, most developing Commonwealth countries would opt for the courses from the developed Commonwealth countries. The reasoning behind such a choice is easy for anyone who has grown up in a "colony" or ex-colony to understand. Greater value and credit has always been given to products, including educational "products", from the "mother country" and its more immediate "children", like Australia or Canada than those locally produced or coming from other poor "step-children". In educational terms there is a clear link between where a course originates and the accreditation given to it by other Commonwealth countries. Most students from developing countries are aware of the higher value placed on courses from developed countries, and hence the value of being accredited from one of these institutions of higher learning.

Linked closely to the sharing of course material, therefore, is the issue of accreditation. The grand goal of the Briggs Commission was that "any learner anywhere in the Commonwealth, shall be able to study any distance-teaching program available from any bone fide college or university in the Commonwealth".

At first, the more practical hope was that the use of shared courses in specific programs in Mathematics, Science and Technology, for example, would result in students gaining accreditation for such work not only at their

local institution but also, if they needed, at the institution where the course was developed. This would then lead to the possibilities of split-site programs where part of the work-load is completed in a student's home-institution and a final, shorter period, done in residence overseas. This could then develop in such a way that the local student would be able to complete the entire program through distance education courses administered from overseas, and supported locally by in-country tutors. The student would have no need to leave his own study or work environment in order to receive equal accreditation with resident students overseas.

Again, there were very few successes in this area. The most notable exception involves an initiative from a developing rather than a developed Commonwealth country. This is the Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship Scheme, which was launched in April 1994. This Scheme allows students from Commonwealth countries to register, from their home countries, for post graduate degree programs by distance at the Indira Gandhi National Open University in India. The Masters of Distance Education Program is the first set of courses to be offered. If these prove successful it is hoped to include offer other courses.

But it must be admitted that accreditation across national borders is a complicated process especially when it is attempted on this grand scale involving fifty-one countries. It is much easier for a distance education institution or open university to reach a bilateral agreement with a particular educational institution in another country on the question of split-site courses, sharing material and eventually working out suitable procedures for proper accreditation. It becomes more difficult if the overseas institution had to deal with, for example, a dozen colleges and universities in a single

country. It becomes a bureaucratic nightmare when the intention is to create a network which encompasses thousands of schools in fifty-one countries. Again, it would seem the planners of COL were over ambitious in their intentions.

2. Funding and Decision-Making

The funding arrangements for the Commonwealth of Learning was both short-sighted and problematic from the start. An international Agency such as this one, intending to service fifty-one countries with a mandate (described in detail in Chapter 4) broader than the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Canada or even the Canadian International Development Agency's (CIDA) work in education, was given a start up-budget of \$25 million Canadian to function for five years. IDRC's budget for 1992-93 alone was 107.27 million Canadian dollars, whilst CIDA spent for that same twelve months 185.58 million Canadian dollars as "Assistance Disbursements for Scholarships and Miscellaneous Programs"¹⁷.

Add to this fact the strategy used for financing, one based on purely voluntary contributions from member-countries, and a not too surprising trend develops, a very small number of countries paying the giant share for the upkeep of COL for the first five years. We present below a complete list of countries, their pledges and their actual contributions for the first five years of the agency's existence. Following this list and its explanations we will draw some obvious conclusions in describing the problems underlining the future funding of COL. The numbers presented below were obtained from COL's Administrative Division.

Statement of Pledges Made and Funds¹⁸ Received by COL to June, 1993

Country	Notes	Pledges Made	Funds Received
Canada	See Note 1		
Prov. of B.C.		\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000
CIDA		\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000
Dept. of Communications		\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000
Brunei	See Note 2	£3,000,000	£3,000,000
Britain (i)	See Note 3	£2,000,000	
(ii) per annum		£50,000	£ 150,000
Australia	See Note 4	A\$2,000,000	A\$ 220,000
India		£1,000,000	£1,842,284
Nigeria		£1,500,000	£ 600,000
New Zealand	per annum	NZ\$ 50,000	NZ\$250,000
Zimbabwe		£ 72,600	£ 72,600
Botswana		£ 50,000	£ 50,000
Bangladesh		£ 30,000	£ 30,538
Barbados (i)		£ 10,000	£ 12,500

	(ii) per annum from '93 Bds.\$ 6,500	Bds. \$ 6,500
The Bahamas	£ 10,304	£ 10,304
Sri Lanka	£ 10,000	£ 10,000
Trinidad & Tobago	£ 10,000	£ 10,000
Mauritius	US \$ 20,000	US \$ 20,000
Guyana	US \$ 50,000	US \$ 19,755
Cyprus	£ 8,000	£ 8,000
Jamaica	J \$ 300,000	\$ 14,440
Maldives	£ 5,000	£ 5,000
Malta	£ 5,000	£ 5,000
Tonga	£ 5,000	£ 5,000
Dominica	\$ 7,390	\$ 7,390
Vanuatu	\$ 4,000	\$ 4,000
Kenya	US \$ 50,000	-
The Gambia	£ 5,000	-
Belize	£ 2,500	-
St. Lucia	EC \$ 10,000	-

Pakistan for 1993-94 £ 10,000

Solomon Islands for '94 to '96 US \$ 5,000

Note 1: Canada provided a total of Can. \$12 million for the first five years of COL, the largest contribution by any single country and almost half of the amount received for the operations of COL between 1988 and 1993. As indicated above this sum came from three sources - the Department of Communications of the Federal Government primarily to be spent for communication equipment needed by COL at its headquarters and for projects; again from the Federal Government but this time through CIDA to finance various projects undertaken by COL; and from the Province of British Columbia to be used by COL for projects. The Province provided an additional \$430,000 for the B.C. Visiting and Outgoing Fellowship programs from 1989 to 1993 (the B.C. Fellowship Program is discussed in Chapter 7)

Note 2: Oil-rich Brunei with a population of 250,000 was the second largest contributor to COL's five-year budget. At the time the sum was pledged, Brunei stated that it was to be used by COL untied to any conditions. At the second Board of Governors meeting held in New Delhi in March 1989, however, Brunei sent a Note to the Board advising it that it had decided that half of its contribution of £3 million would now be tied to distance learning programs which would be coordinated by the University of Brunei Darussalam. It can be speculated that Brunei's new approach had been triggered by the examples of Britain and Australia (see notes 3 and 4) who tied the major part of their contributions to national agencies. On the intervention of the then Commonwealth Secretary General, Shridath

Ramphal, Brunei eventually changed its mind and withdrew the note by the next Board meeting, so that its full contribution of £ 3 million was untied. This was, however, a one-time contribution and in 1993 Brunei stated that it could not provide any funds for COL for its next period.

Note 3: Britain agreed to contribute £2 million pounds over the five-year period April, 1989 to March, 1994 under a bilateral arrangement with the British Open University, to develop the information database at the international Centre for Distance Learning (IDLC) and build in academic transfer information. COL was informed that £1,566,766 was paid by the Overseas Development Agency in Britain to the British Open University as of June 1993 for services on this database. Britain has offered to reimburse COL for "Goods and Services" charges incurred in Britain and has pledged £100,000 for program support for 1993/94 as a "once off" contribution.

Note 4: Australia's pledge of A \$2 million over five years was directed specifically to COL/AIDAB (Australian International Development Assistance Bureau) programs in South Pacific and Southern Africa. Of the \$2 million, \$220,000 was given to COL towards its core budget, the rest was to be administered by AIDAB in the projects for the South Pacific and South Africa. COL was advised that \$1,601,960 was expended on COL/AIDAB as of June 1993.

Discussion

What is immediately obvious on a close examination of the contributors and their contributions above, is that two countries, Canada and

Brunei, provided over 75% of the five-year budget for COL's operations. Add to these two the contributions of four other countries, Australia, Britain, India and Nigeria and it is close to 97% of the budget. If one adds the contributions of the seventh and eight largest contributors, New Zealand and Zimbabwe, one has accounted for 99% of COL's budget. In short forty-two members of the Commonwealth of Learning was able to provide less than 1% of its five-year budget. Even this is not quite accurate, because that 1% was actually provided by fifteen countries; twenty-seven member countries contributed nothing in financial terms.

This overall picture must have been daunting for large and small contributors, especially when among the larger and smaller contributors were countries such as India, Nigeria, Bangladesh and Guyana, all suffering from acute economic problems. But given the funding strategy used for COL's first five years, this summary is not surprising. Both the "Brigg's" and "Daniel's" Reports were very idealistic in their approach to funding.

The "Brigg's" proposals on funding for COL's first five years were based on these hopes: (a) "generous support from member countries", (b) "It [COL] might obtain funds from a wider range of sources than those provided by member countries. These could include international development banks, bilateral and multilateral agencies, wanting to support particular activities of importance to them...; private funds and foundations; industry and commerce" and, (c) "it [COL] would increasingly be able to raise revenues by making its services and materials available. Institutions both within and outside the Commonwealth would in appropriate circumstances be charged for these and would themselves seek aid from agencies for this purpose".¹⁹ The "Briggs Commission", obviously expected enthusiasm for its proposals

to be matched by corresponding financial contributions, especially when one notes that its proposed five-year budget for headquarters operations alone totaled £22.5 million in 1987²⁰. It had also suggested regional centres to be financed separately. The total budget would have had to be more than twice the size of the Can. \$25 million that COL eventually obtained.

The Daniel Working Group suggested basically the same strategy and sources of funding as the Briggs Commission with this additional caution, "The Commonwealth of Learning will need to be entrepreneurial in seeking funds from other sources in addition to this core finance from governments. Continuing sustained efforts will be needed to involve and maintain the interest and support of governments and other agencies both public and private."²¹ This would have required a vibrant public relations and marketing section at COL's Headquarters. The current structure of COL has no such section and a single staff-member designated "Public Affairs Officer" working out of the President's office is responsible for preparing and distributing COL's occasional Newsletter²² and information brochures.

The reality over the first five years has been that COL was unable to raise any other funds apart from those pledged to its initial five-year budget. Even here, as has been shown above, the amounts pledged fell significantly short of the actual sum received. The agency entered its sixth year of operation, 1993/1994, existing on bank-interests accumulated from the lump-sum payments it had received in its first and second year from a number of its contributors particularly Brunei, which paid up its total pledge of £3 million very soon after COL came into existence.

As of July/August 1994, it was unclear to COL's administration how much money they would have available for both basic headquarters expenditure and project support over the next twelve months. To say that the agency is in a bind is putting it mildly. It is unable to say (at least to this researcher) how much money it has to spend in the next fiscal year and, therefore, cannot respond to the additional request of providing a summary or projection of its program for 1994/1995/1996. When asked about this vicious circle, the Chairman of COL's Board, Canadian Ian Macdonald, attempted to provide the global context of the dilemma in which COL found itself²³:-

It is a demonstrated fact that multilateral organizations are having to work very hard these days to maintain their viability. There are a lot of them; there are a lot of demands. There are many on-going dramatic events and crises taking place in the world which seem to readily justify assistance, both humanitarian and financial. It is much more difficult, given all these urgent demands on donor countries, to win support for long term but no less important programs involving education and human development. So the Commonwealth of Learning continues to operate in a very competitive environment for the voluntary funding of international efforts.

We also operate in the Commonwealth composed of a large number of countries who want, need and value the services of COL but are not in a position to contribute very much financially to its budget. Then there are other countries in the Commonwealth which do not need these services as much but are in a position to provide both financially and through experts in their open universities and

other educational institutions to the work of COL. These are the countries to whom we have to look for the largest contributions. We will need to work very hard to convince them to continue and even increase their support and demonstrate that we are providing invaluable services to large numbers of countries which urgently need them. Of course there will be a lot more accountability requested from these countries and we will have to be prepared to justify, in detail, what we are doing and show that our budget is being used in the most efficient manner. It will be tough attempting to satisfy everyone.

There is a real dilemma in our very composition. On the one hand, we are not a non-governmental body which automatically makes its own way seeking funding and affiliation as it sees fit. On the other hand, we are not a fully funded inter-governmental agency, for example, like the UN which has a formula for assured funding by its members. We are an inter-governmental organization with voluntary funding. Because of this it is not clear from one budget period to another precisely how much funding will be available. This then affects our ability to plan on even a medium term basis. It is difficult to produce a realistic plan unless we have an idea of what the level of funding for the next period would be and, without such a plan, it is difficult to propose a budget or attract appropriate funding - the "chicken and egg" dilemma.

Overall, however, we are concerned about the outlook for COL but by no means discouraged; we are all convinced that COL plays an important role in the Commonwealth and will survive. I am

currently in contact with a number of member-countries on the funding situation, and we are preparing a comprehensive brief and list of proposals on this and other matters for the Commonwealth Ministers of Education Meeting to be held in Islamabad in November 1994.

Even with this insightful explanation and sense of optimism from the Chairman of the Board, it remains evident that no firm solutions have been found that would ensure COL some fixed and dependent level of funding for the foreseeable future. The agency remains in limbo until at least the Ministers of Education Meeting scheduled for November, 1994. Funding proposals and strategies as well as recommendations of the Board regarding the two additional reviews done in 1994 - The Governance Review and the Organizational and Management Review²⁴ - will also be presented.

It is tempting to speculate on links between the acceptance of proposals from these two reviews and the willingness of some of the countries which called for these reviews to continue or increase their support of COL (Canada called for, funded and executed the Governance Review; and Britain was the main proponent and single funder for the Organizational and Management Review in which two of the three reviewers were British, the other was Canadian). Such a link can be no more than speculation, however. When asked specifically about the possibility of pre-conditions for support by some countries (namely Canada, Britain and Australia) based on the adoption of measures proposed in one or both of these reviews, the Chairman of the Board said no such sentiments were expressed by representatives of any member-country and that recommendations from these two reviews were addressed to the Board as a whole for their

consideration. The Board in turn makes its own decisions on internal organizational arrangements, in keeping with its mandate, and makes recommendations to the Ministers of Education and the Head of Government with regards to overall policy changes.

The crux of the matter, however, remains the same. COL will have to "mark time" - maybe until the Education Ministers meeting in November this year or more likely await a decision from the meeting of the heads of Governments in November 1995. Even then, there is no guarantee that adequate funding will be provided for it to continue the type of activities it initiated during its first five years. Indeed, there is no guarantee that it will have the same kind of mandate it did in this first period or even be the same kind of organization.

CONCLUSION

It is probably true that the planners of COL were idealistic in their very approach to this new agency. Out of the crisis of differential fees they created an agency which was meant to solve not only the problem of student mobility and access to education, but a generation of difficulties in education which existed for a long time in many developing countries in the Commonwealth. Distance education and communication technologies were, indeed, viewed as the panacea for all these educational ills. The truth, however, is that many of these deficiencies are deeply rooted in the economic, political and social history of a country and unless the remedy is aimed at the disease instead of the symptoms it is bound to fail.

This is not to conclude that COL has failed. It would be difficult to look at the list and descriptions of projects attempted and accomplished and make such an assessment. The inter-governmental review certainly did not, and after my own study, I cannot.

The Commonwealth of Learning has awoken many Commonwealth countries to the wide possibilities of distance education and in the process forced them to look for alternative solutions to the nagging problems of shortage of trained teachers, school buildings, money and equipment. It has shown by its own involvement in these countries what some of these alternatives can be. Its headquarters' staff members are all highly qualified professionals who have a full grasp of the complexity of the tasks which they were assigned, yet remain undaunted by the challenges. Their optimism is impressive.

One of the bright stars that has emerged from the activities of COL has been one of the poorest but most advanced developing countries in the area of distance education, India. Not only has its monetary contribution been significant but so has its leadership role in distance education in Asia and, through the Rajiv Gandhi Fellowships Program, the entire Commonwealth. This is certain to be an inspiration to other developing countries large and small.

Another outstanding accomplishment of COL over the past five years has been the enormous amount of research it has generated in and for developing countries in the field of distance education through its staff, consultants and conferences. There have been over seventy documents published by COL. Each would qualify as a full-fledged academic research at any university. These could not have been done in such a short period of time, had COL not initiated them. But one of the main failings of COL has also been in this area. Not a single one of its publications has found its way onto the shelves of the conventional universities right here in British Columbia in Canada, where its headquarters are located. Academics and students alike, who are not directly involved with its work, have never seen one of its publications and in many cases have never even heard of the agency. It is unlikely that the situation is any better in Commonwealth countries further away from the headquarters.

This criticism about its publications holds true for its work in general. It has been ineffective in promoting itself, partly because of its limited public communications strategy, almost entirely focused on reaching those who are directly concerned with its work through its occasional newsletters. No links have been established with news agencies and networks in the developed

or developing world, or even the information divisions of educational institutions and foundations around the Commonwealth. From the outside, the Commonwealth of Learning, even with all its accomplishments, appear obscure, insular and even irrelevant and unnecessary.

Our study has led us to conclude that it is not irrelevant or unnecessary, but it needs at this stage to re-examine and clearly enunciate the driving motive for its continued existence. Its purpose and functions are clouded by the now defunct issue of student mobility and access to educational institutions in Britain, Canada and Australia. It is also clear that in the first five years it felt compelled to impress the Commonwealth as a whole with a wide range of projects in order to prove its value and competence.

The real issue now seems to be how to help poorer Commonwealth countries in their overall educational plan. This help can either take the form of working with these countries in identifying ways in which distance education can be an important element within their overall system. Or it can explore other ways and means which may or may not involve distance education. There is a fundamental difference between these two approaches. One takes for granted the application of distance education in some form, regardless of what the problem is; the other does not, although distance education remains one of a number of options.

This approach will also call for an open debate and a deliberate decision on whether the Commonwealth of Learning's main function is to facilitate multilateral cooperation or multilateral assistance. They are not mutually exclusive but each calls for a very different orientation. Part of the

difficulty which the Commonwealth of Learning faced in its first five years of work was a confusion as to its primary role. It tried to be both, a catalyst for multilateral cooperation in distance education projects as well as a funding agency for such projects.

The Commonwealth Ministers of Education and Heads of Government will need to be frank and honest in deciding what exactly will be that role, and who can best play significant parts in the in the next five years, both in terms of leadership and funding. In particular, Canada and India, have shown that they continue to be the strongest supporters and two of the most active participants, and should, therefore, be in the forefront. Australia seems to prefer a leadership role in its own region, where it is making an excellent contribution. It should be acknowledged openly that Britain's main interest is in developing bilateral cooperation, and given its enormous experience and expertise in the area of distance education it can play an important role in projects of this nature. The tiny oil-rich kingdom of Brunei, which was the second largest funder in the first period should be wooed back into being a chief participant. This may be possible if its role as a one of the founders of the Agency is publicized, acknowledged and fully accredited. There is clearly an untold story here since Brunei was one of the first countries to unhesitatingly pledge £ 6 million for the first five years which it paid in full by 1989. It has indicated it will not repeat this contribution for the next phase of COL's operations (unofficial stories which I have heard stated that Brunei felt it was neglected after it paid up and also it was not given the importance within the agency which other major funders enjoyed). Other medium range countries like New Zealand, South Africa, Malaysia, Malta, Singapore, Zimbabwe and Nigeria (when it has regained some semblance

of stability) should be given special incentives to join the front-line funders and participants.

The role of poorer Commonwealth countries, which need educational assistance the most but can contribute financially the least, is more difficult to define. However it is done, COL has to ensure that it traverses with great care that thin line which divides assistance from dependency. It will be the saddest irony of all if in attempting to strengthen the ability of some developing countries to adequately educate their own populations, COL's efforts make them dependent and subservient to techniques, technologies and experts outside of their countries.

Follow-up Studies

Now that the Commonwealth of Learning has been opened up in terms of history, features, functions, operations, accomplishments and problems, a few follow-up studies readily offer themselves:-

(a) First and most urgently there should be a series of evaluations of a carefully selected cross-section of the large number of distance education related projects undertaken by COL over the past five years. In 1994, COL had in fact commissioned Ms. Jennifer O'Rourke to develop a methodology for evaluating distance education projects, using COL projects as the basis. This may be useful for internal evaluations, which at present is very limited, but the type of evaluations we suggest should be undertaken by suitable scholars not commissioned by COL, and most importantly should be drawn from the geographic areas in which the projects are located. This would ensure that the evaluators are aware of and sensitive to local social, economic and other related conditions which outsiders would not readily take into considerations. These evaluations could be organized and administered by the appropriate regional or national universities within the Commonwealth and results fed back to the Commonwealth of Learning and the Commonwealth Ministers of Education. These evaluations if accomplished before November 1995 can go a long way in assisting the Commonwealth Heads of Government in making meaningful decisions concerning the form and function of COL for the next period. On a purely academic level they would allow a number of universities to have a first hand appraisal and contact with the work of COL whilst studying an on-going project in their country or their region.

(b) Another study similar to the one above but with a different locus should be an examination of the use of Distance education and Communication technologies in developing countries using COL projects as its base. Questions such as integrated planning, pedagogical relevance, and technology transfer or adaptation would be central to this study. Our discussion of distance education and communication technologies in Chapter 2 provides the framework on which such a study could build.

(c) Because of the width of this first study we were unable to provide an in depth analysis of COL as an international organization, but Chapter 2 identifies a number of directions in which such a study could take. This is an important question in its own right within the field of international relations and international cooperation. Theories of international organizations and international relations could be tested using this new international agency as a case study. An important question on the value of COL as an inter-governmental organization versus COL as a non-governmental organization with government support, could be answered. Questions on the merits of multilateralism, bilaterism and regionalism could also be argued. These discussion and conclusions would be of value to both the academic community and the decision- makers and participants of COL.

In summary, if COL is to become a permanent and valuable agent for educational innovation, cooperation and assistance within the Commonwealth, it is essential that scholars from all regions become involved in the analytic, critical and evaluative process which can aid necessary reform and provide much needed authenticity to this new agency. The projects undertaken by COL provide a fertile field of exploration for scholars in developing and developed countries and, given the geographic

spread of these projects, are highly suited for collaborative research and publication.

We hope that this study has opened up a new field of inquiry for scholars from both developed and developing countries, and that follow-up research, in turn, will eventually result in programs which will make this world a more hospitable place for our sisters and brothers who suffer in silence in so many countries on earth.

¹ Commonwealth Secretariat, "The Final Communique of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, 1985" in The Commonwealth at the Summit: Communiqués of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings 1944-1986, (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1987) 286.

² Commonwealth Secretariat, Favourable Fees for Commonwealth Students: The Final Frustration (Seventh Report of the Commonwealth Standing Committee on Student Mobility and Higher Education Cooperation), (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1992) 26.

³ A full discussion on these questions can be found in: Lakshmana G. Rao, Brain Drain and Foreign Students: A study of the Attitudes and Intentions of Foreign Students in Australia, the USA, France and Canada, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979).

⁴ Commonwealth Secretariat, Report: Tenth Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (Nairobi, Kenya, 20-24 July, 1987), (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1987) 45.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 45-46.

⁶ See Appendix B.

⁷ Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth of Learning: Institutional Arrangements for Commonwealth Cooperation in Distance Education - Report of the Working Group, (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1988) 15-19.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 8-11.

⁹ A.W. Bates, Technology in Open Learning and Distance Education: A Guide for Decision-makers, (Vancouver: COL and the Open Learning Agency, 1991).

¹⁰ John A. Lent, "Four Conundrums of Third World Communications: A Generational Analysis" in Beyond National Sovereignty: International Communications in the 1990's, edited by Kaarle Nordenstreng and Herbert I. Schiller, (New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1993) 240.

¹¹ From The Memorandum of Understanding on the Commonwealth of learning: As Agreed by Commonwealth Governments on 1 September 1988. Vancouver: COL, 1988, p. 3.

¹² Commonwealth Secretariat, Towards A Commonwealth of Learning (The Briggs Report), (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1987) 63.

¹³ Progress Review Committee, Report of the Progress Review Committee on the Commonwealth of Learning, (Vancouver: COL, 1993)15.

¹⁴ From the "Terms of Reference for this Consultancy", reproduced in Phillips Fox, The Commonwealth of Learning Copyright Consultancy Report, (Sydney, Australia: Phillips Fox, 1992).

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁶ The Terms of Reference are included in the "Workshop Report" (a 14 page internal document of COL). They are specifically responded to, in the recommendations given by the expert group.

¹⁷ Figures taken from CIDA's Annual Report 1992-1993, Ottawa: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1994, p.29 & p.36.

¹⁸ The amounts are in Canadian dollars unless otherwise stated.

19 Commonwealth Secretariat, Towards A Commonwealth of Learning (The Briggs Report), (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1987) 70-72.

20 Ibid., p. 71 for details.

21 Commonwealth Secretariat, The Commonwealth of Learning: Institutional Arrangements for Commonwealth Co-operation in Distance Education, Report of the Working Group, London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1988, p.21.

22 The Commonwealth of Learning produces COMLEARN a ten to twelve-page newsletter about twice each year. It gives brief descriptions of on-going programmes of COL in various regions and updates on important meetings organised by COL. From 1990 when it started publication to its latest issue in October 1993, there have been six issues of COMLEARN.

23 This is an edited extract transcribed from a taped conversation with Dr. Ian Macdonald, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Commonwealth of Learning, on the Future Funding of the COL. Dr. Macdonald, a Canadian, took over as Chair of the Board from Lord Briggs at the end of 1993.

24 I was unable to obtain approval from the Board to have access to the Reports of these two Reviews on the grounds that they were confidential, internal documents addressed to the Board for its consideration; and only after the Board had reported back to either the Commonwealth Ministers of Education (scheduled for November 1994) or the Heads of Government Meeting (scheduled for November 1995) with its recommendations, could these documents become available for public examination.

APPENDICES

1. Appendix A: The Memorandum of Understanding on The Commonwealth of Learning
2. Appendix B: A Sample Lesson of the University of Guyana's English Distance Education English Course
3. Appendix C: A Sample Questionnaire given to the participants of the COL-BC Fellowship Program
4. Appendix D: A Sample of the Questionnaire sent out by the Inter-Governmental Progress Review Committee
5. Appendix E: List of Persons Interviewed by the Progress Review Committee

Appendix A**The Memorandum of Understanding on The Commonwealth of Learning**

This version was a drafted by the " 'Daniel' Working Group" and signed by the Commonwealth Heads of Government in 1988 to formally establish the Commonwealth of Learning.

**Draft Memorandum of Understanding for the Establishment of the
Commonwealth of Learning (as submitted by the "Working
Group" for approval by Commonwealth Governments)**

I PREAMBLE

1 Commonwealth Heads of Government at their meeting in Vancouver, in October 1987 considered the report Towards a Commonwealth of Learning submitted by an expert group chaired by Lord Briggs and agreed "to establish a Commonwealth institution to promote co-operation in distance education, which may become the University of the Commonwealth for co-operation in distance education".

2 This Memorandum of Understanding provides for the establishment of an institution to be called the Commonwealth of Learning, an Agency which will be an international organization with international legal personality and which will have member-countries of the Commonwealth, through their governments, as participants.

II PURPOSE AND FUNCTIONS

3 The purpose of the agency is to create and widen access to opportunities for learning, promoting co-operation between universities, colleges and other educational institutions throughout the Commonwealth, making use of the potential offered by distance education and by the application of communication technologies to education. The agency's activities will aim to strengthen member countries' capacities to develop the human resources required for their economic and social development, and

will give priority to those developmental needs to which Commonwealth co-operation can be applied. The agency will work in a flexible manner and be capable of responding effectively to changing needs. It will serve the interests of Commonwealth member countries and of the Commonwealth itself, working in co-operation with governments and other Commonwealth agencies and educational institutions and doing so in a way that is consistent with the principles that have guided the Commonwealth. In performing its functions the agency will seek to ensure the appropriateness of programs and of distance-education techniques and technologies to the particular requirements of member countries.

4 Within this broad framework, the functions and objectives of the agency will include:

- 4.1 assisting the creation and development institutional capacity in distance education in member countries;
- 4.2 facilitating the channeling of resources to projects and programs in distance education;
- 4.3 providing information and consultancy services on any aspect of distance education including the selection of appropriate technology;
- 4.4 undertaking and supporting staff training in the techniques and management of distance education;
- 4.5 facilitating inter-institutional communication links;

4.6 undertaking and supporting evaluation and applied research in distance education;

4.7 assisting the acquisition and delivery of teaching materials and more generally facilitating access to them;

4.8 commissioning, and promoting the adaptation and development of teaching materials;

4.9 establishing and maintaining procedures for the recognition of academic credit;

4.10 assisting in the development of local support services for students;

4.11 stimulating and supporting any other activities that fall within the agency's areas of interest by such means as may be approved by the Board of Governors.

5 The agency will operate through a headquarters in Vancouver, such units in other regions of the Commonwealth as may be set up, and networks of teaching, information and research institutions.

6. In carrying out its functions the agency will respect the integrity and interests of co-operating agencies and institutions, as well as their right to work together independently of the agency.

III GOVERNANCE

7 There will be a Board of Governors which will have overall responsibility for determining the principles, policies and priorities that will

guide the agency in its day-to-day activities and whose functioning will be in accordance with the following provisions.

7.1 The duties of the Board will include consideration and approval of program priorities and of the annual work program and budget, the making of staff regulations and financial regulations, and the appointment of the President. The Board will report both to meetings of the Commonwealth Heads of Government and to those of Education Ministers.

7.2 The Board will comprise:

7.2.1 if not otherwise a member of it, the Chairman appointed by the Board

7.2.2 one member appointed by name by each of the five Commonwealth governments which have pledged the largest financial contributions to the agency or programs approved by the Board over the forthcoming three financial years;

7.2.3 one member appointed by name by each of four Commonwealth governments agreed by Commonwealth Education Ministers, following a principle that allows for rotation;

7.2.4 three members appointed by the Board;

7.2.5 two members appointed by the Commonwealth Secretary-General;

7.2.6 the Commonwealth Secretary-General or the Secretary-General's representative;

7.2.7 the President of the agency ex officio;

except in the case of the first Board where the Commonwealth Secretary-General will after appropriate consultation propose which four countries should be invited to make appointment to the Board under par 7.2.3 and will himself after appropriate consultation appoint the five further members provided for by paras 7.2.4 and 7.2.5.

7.3 In making decisions relating to appointments to the Board due regard will be paid by each appointing authority to the need for the Board to represent adequately all regions of the Commonwealth, distance education and education generally, and business and communication sectors.

7.4 Members of the Board will be appointed for a term of three years, with one third retiring each year but initially one third of the members will be appointed for two years, one third for three years and one third for four years. Members will be eligible for re appointment for a further term but should not serve a longer consecutive period than six years. Members appointed under paras 7.2.2 and 7.2.3 may appoint alternates to represent them in their absence.

7.5 In the exercise of their responsibilities members will at all times have regard to the interest so the Commonwealth as a whole.

7.6 The board may invite up to five persons representing governments or organization contributing to or otherwise significantly assisting the agency's activities to participate on an advisory basis in the deliberations of the Board.

7.7 The Board will meet at least once each calendar year.

Ten members will comprise a quorum.

7.8 The Board will have a Chairman who will be a person of international standing, with a term of office for three years. The Chairman will be appointed by the Board on the nomination of the Commonwealth Secretary-General made after appropriate consultation. The Chairman will be eligible for appointment for a second term of three years.

7.9 The board may establish committees including an Executive Committee and delegate functions to them.

7.10 The Board's decisions will generally be taken by consensus or where necessary by a simple majority of members present and voting, except in respect of financial matters in which case a majority of two-thirds of the members present and voting will be required. The Chairman will have an original and casting vote.

IV ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

8 The President will be the chief executive officer of the agency and will be responsible to the Board of Governors for the administration and operations of the agency, for the implementation of its policies and programs, and for its financial management. The President will be appointed for a fixed term not exceeding five years in the first instance. The President will appoint other members of staff in accordance with such general guidelines as the Board may from time to time determine, and having regard to the appropriateness of recruiting widely among Commonwealth countries.

Appointments of senior staff will be made in consultation with, and with the agreement of, the Chairman.

9 The Canadian government will introduce legislation as may be necessary in order to give the agency a legal personality under Canadian law and to accord the agency and its staff the immunities and privileges as set out in the Convention on Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations (1948), as accepted by Canada.

10 When the prospect of activities of the agency in the territory of another Commonwealth government renders it appropriate, the agency and such government will confer with a view to such government taking steps to accord corresponding immunities and privileges in its territory to the agency and its staff.

11 The agency will be funded by voluntary contributions from Commonwealth Governments, which will to the maximum possible extent be made in such form as to be freely usable for the purposes of the Commonwealth of Learning, augmented by grants from provinces, states or territories of Commonwealth countries and other appropriate agencies and donors and by income from provision of services. The agency will also be able to seek additional funding from governments, international agencies, institutions and private sources to finance specific collaborative distance education projects. The agency will be empowered to invest and to borrow funds within such limits as the Board may from time to time prescribe, but it will not be authorized to enter into financial commitments which are not covered by firm pledges of funding.

V FINAL PROVISIONS

12 This Memorandum may be amended from time to time as agreed by Commonwealth governments upon the proposal of the Board of Governors or of a Commonwealth government.

13 Commonwealth governments will undertake a full review of the progress of the agency after five years, including specific provisions in this Memorandum of Understanding, to determine whether any changes in the arrangements are considered desirable.

14 This Memorandum will come into effect immediately after Commonwealth Governments have, at a specially convened meeting of High Commissioners or their representatives, signified their approval of the Memorandum.

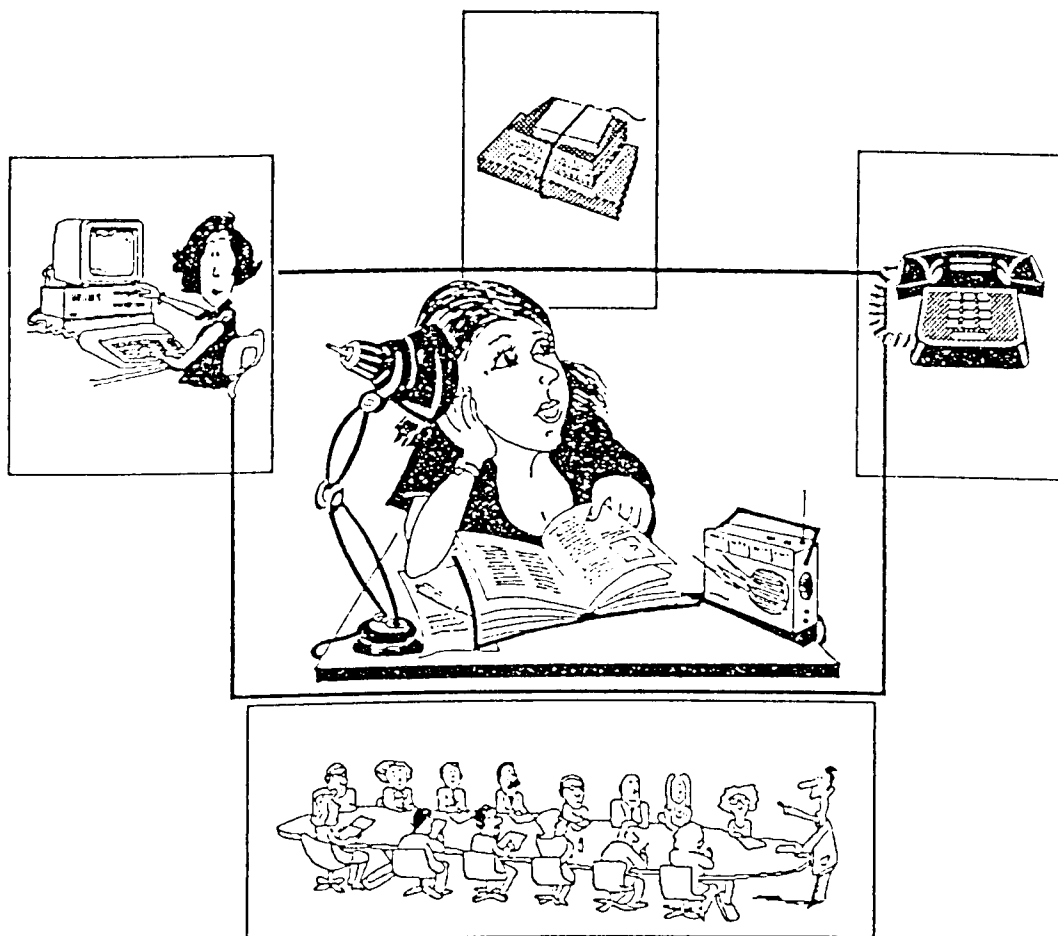
Appendix B

A Sample Lesson from the University of Guyana's "Pre-University Distance Education English Course"

[Copied from the actual Course Material which is sent out to students]

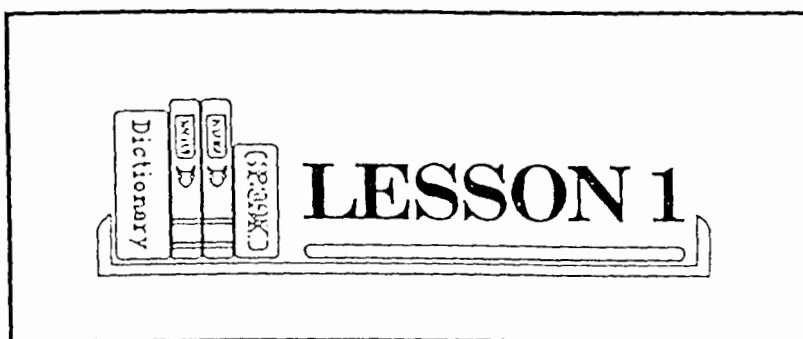


INSTITUTE OF ADULT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF GUYANA



PRE-UNIVERSITY ENGLISH
via
DISTANCE EDUCATION

MODULE 1
Word Functions



LESSON 1 - THE NOUN

OBJECTIVES

In this lesson we are going to take a fresh look at nouns. At the end, you should be able to:

- (a) recognize nouns
- (b) identify different kinds of nouns
- (c) use nouns correctly.

CONTENT

1. As you are aware, when we are being introduced to someone, we identify ourselves by name:

Hello, my name is Sean.



We also identify professions by name:

He is a doctor; she is an artist.

Items of foodstuff have names too:

We bought *rice*, *flour*, and *oil*, but no *meat*.

In fact, all objects are identified by name:

The *pen* is on the *table* in front of the *classroom*.

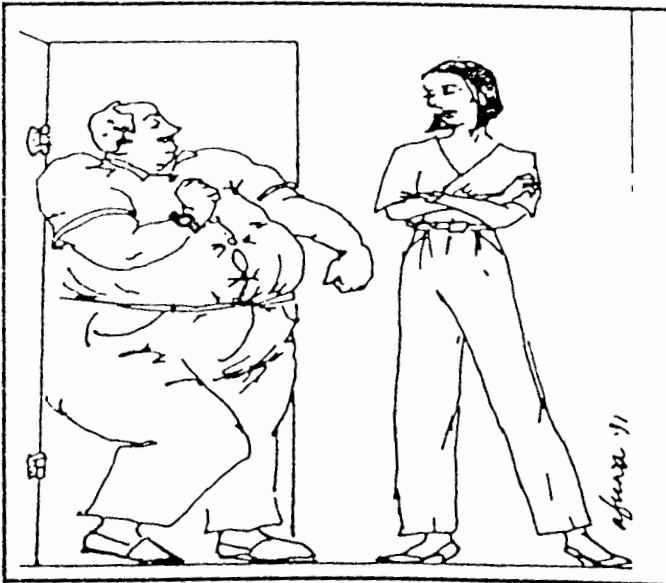
Words that we use to identify in this way are called *nouns*.
Nouns are name-words.

The nouns in these sentences are in italics:

Cows, *sheep* and *horses* are grazing in the *field*.

The *books* on the *shelf* belong to *Maria*.

My *cousin* lives in a large *house* with four *bedrooms*.



A very fat *man*
was trying to squeeze
through the *door*.

I'd like to have a *mango*. I don't like *guavas*.

A thin *cat* was mewing under our *window*.

SELF EVALUATION

EXERCISE 1A

Underline the nouns in these sentences:

1. Mary won a pen and pencil at the fair.
2. Yellow curtains are hanging at the windows.
3. The plums on this tree are very sweet.
4. She told Jane to open the window, sweep the room, and spread the sheet.
5. He took his umbrella, raincoat and hat from the wardrobe.

6. The frightened dog
jumped out of the pool and
brushed against the waiter.
The tray of glasses fell.



"The frightened dog...."

Now check Appendix 'A' to see if you underlined the correct words.

2. *Proper Nouns*

You may have noticed that some of the nouns you underlined begin with a capital letter. That is because they are **proper nouns**. Your own name, the name of your friends, the name of your town or village, the days of the week are all **proper nouns** and begin with a capital letter. Proper nouns name specific persons or things.

Below are some examples of proper nouns:

the names of countries -	Guyana, Barbados, England, Aruba;
the months of the year -	March, May, June, December;
the names of rivers -	Berbice, Demerara, Barima, Waini;
the names of languages -	English, Spanish, French, Dutch;
the names of holidays -	Easter, Diwali, Phagwah, Mashramani,
the names of newspapers -	Chronicle, Stabroek News, Guardian, Sun;
the names of places -	Bartica, Cuffy Square, Promenade Gardens.

3. *Common Nouns*

Nouns written without a capital letter are called **common nouns**. These are name-words that can be used in a general way. That is, they can be used for a particular group of things or a member within the group.

Some examples of common nouns are: **government, computer, building, policeman, street, people, school, museum, magistrate.**

Sometimes some of these words may be used as proper nouns as in these examples: **Regent Street, St. George's School, Guyana Museum, Magistrate Paul.**

In each case a specific person or place is identified.

You may see the difference between *common nouns* and *proper nouns* from Table 1:

Table 1

Common Nouns	Proper Nouns
boy	Harry
day	Sunday
dog	Rover
minibus	Cabanna
rum	El Dorado
restaurant	Chow Loon
brother	Charles
book	Miguel Street

Study the example below, then add **five** common nouns and **five** proper nouns to the table.

Common Nouns	Proper Nouns
example: girl	Patricia
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

4 *Collective Nouns*

Another kind of noun names **groups** or **collections of people** or items, and is called the **collective noun**.

In the examples which follow, the words in italics name a collection or a set of individual items or individual people:

We picked a *bunch* of bananas last Sunday.

There are 20 children in my *class*.

The *furniture* in this room consists of chairs and tables.

Our *team* won the rounders match against Rovers.

Which of these columns contains collective nouns?

(Check at the bottom of the page for the answer)

Column 1	Column 2
spanner	equipment
sheep	flock
thief	gang
cow	herd
book	set

Use a dictionary to find the items that the following collective nouns are made up of. The first has been done for you.

Collective Nouns	Items
class	students
team	_____
family	_____
audience	_____
flock	_____
gang	_____

Answer: column 2

N.B. Please turn to Page 210 for Self Evaluation Exercise 1B

5. Abstract Nouns

Now study the nouns in italics in the sentences below.

We have friends: We speak about our *friendship*.

We feel warm: We speak about our *warmth*.

We are healthy; we speak about our *health*.

We are happy: We speak about our *happiness*.

She is a child: We speak about her *childhood*.

She is young: We speak about her *youth*.

Did you notice that each of the italicised nouns indicates a state or condition, that is, something that we cannot see or touch?

Did you notice too that the italicized nouns are formed from source words in the previous sentence?

friends	→	friendship
warm	→	warmth
healthy	→	health
happy	→	happiness
child	→	childhood
young	→	youth

The abstract noun

- (1) names a state or condition
- (2) is formed from words related to the particular state or condition

Write the abstract nouns formed from the words given in the following column:

	Source	Abstract Nouns
example:	sane	sanity
	prepare	-----
	grow	-----
	clean	-----
	dirt	-----
	true	-----

Remember that your abstract noun must name a state or condition, and not a person. You may use a dictionary to assist you.

Check below for the answers.

Answers: truth dirtiness cleanliness growth preparation



SELF EVALUATION

EXERCISE 1 C

Using arrows, match the words in Column A with their corresponding abstract nouns in Column B.

Column A

beautiful

insane

provide

hot

skilful

offend

breathe

deliver

starve

grow

Column B

provision

heat

insanity

skill

beauty

delivery

starvation

growth

breath

offence

Check Appendix 'A' to see if you have matched the words correctly.

6. NUMBER IN NOUNS - *Singular and Plural*

Look at the following sentence:

A pen is on the table.

The word **A**, tells us that the noun which follows, names one item or unit. In other words, it tells us that the noun **pen** is **singular** in number.

We also introduce one item or a singular noun each time we use the following words before a noun:

- (a) that ... **that** *boy* is ill.
- (b) every ... every *house* is given a coat of paint.
- (c) this ... this *container* is empty.
- (d) another ... another *name* for Agricola is Jonestown.

When we say a noun is **singular** in number, we mean that it names one item only.

Some introductory words tell us that more than one item or unit - that is, a plural noun will follow:

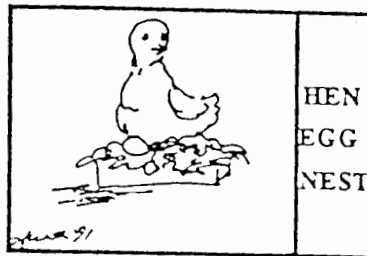
- (a) those ... **Those** *monkeys* are mischievous.
- (b) many ... **Many** *hands* make light work.
- (c) several ... **Several** *days* passed before I saw him again.
- (d) some ... **Some** *boys* are stealing the cherries.

When we say a noun is plural in number, we mean

that it names more than one item.

Let us look at how plurals are formed:

The hen laid the egg in the nest.



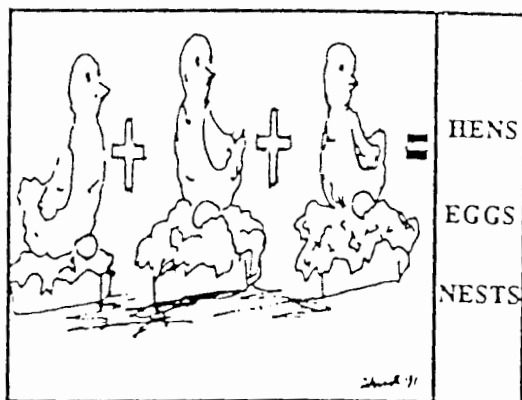
To make the sentence plural, the nouns must be plural.

The sentence would then read:

The hens laid the eggs in the nests.

This sentence contains three plural nouns:

hens, eggs, nests.



to the nouns hen,
egg and nest we have
added s to form the
plural.

We also add s to form the plural of girl, hat, grocer, tailor.

Singular

girl
hat
grocer
tailor

Plural

girls
hats
grocers
tailors

Not all plurals follow this pattern.

For example:

Paul has the boxes.

In this case we have added - es to the noun box to form the plural.

Here are some other nouns to which we add es:

kiss, fox, march, bush and waltz.

Singular	Plural
kiss	kisses
fox	foxes
march	marches
bush	bushes
waltz	waltzes

From these we can see that if the noun ends in s, x, ch, sh and z we form the plural by adding es.

What do we do to the singular noun *baby* in order to form the plural, *babies*

Appendix C

**Sample Questionnaire given to Participants of the COL-BC
Fellowship Program**

**Questionnaire for Visiting Fellows of the Commonwealth of
Learning - 1993 Program**

1. Name:..... Country:.....

2. Professional Position:.....

3. Ministry/Agency:.....

4. Work Address and telephone no:

.....

5. Title of Your

Presentation:.....

.....

6. Please comment on the length of the visiting fellows program - too long,
too short etc.

.....

.....

.....

7. Please comment on the relevance, value etc. of the activities undertaken
during this program (be as specific as you like - use back of page if you need
more space):

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

8. What other activities do you feel could or should have been included in the program?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

9. What have you gained from this program?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

10. Can anything you have seen or learnt during this program be of use in your country ?(please specify)

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

11. What follow-up do you think there should be to this program - by COL and/or your country?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

12. Any other comments on the organization and execution of this program?

.....
.....
.....

Appendix D

A Sample of the Questionnaire sent out by the Inter- Governmental Progress Review Committee

[Copied from Annex III of the Report of the Progress Review Committee - August 1993, which was submitted to the Commonwealth Heads of Government in November, 1993]

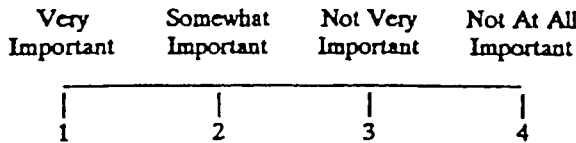
ANNEX III

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) Questionnaire

What do you think is the primary role and function of COL? Please circle only ONE response.

- A provider of funds 1
- A partner in projects 2
- A catalyst in promoting cooperation in distance education 3
- Other (specify) _____ 4

In your opinion, how important are COL activities in promoting distance education in your country/organization/area of interest? Please circle a number between 1 and 4.



In general, are the services provided by COL to your country/organization/area of interest:

- | | | |
|---|---|--------------|
| Unique | 1 | Please go to |
| Complementary to other agencies' programs | 2 | question 4 |
- A duplicate of other agencies' programs 3

Please specify which agencies' programs are duplicated by the services provided by COL.

In what ways has your country/organization/area of interest helped COL to fulfill its mandate? Please circle all that are appropriate.

- Providing financial support 1
- Providing personnel for projects 1
- Providing materials 1
- Other (specify) _____ 1

Have you ever requested support from COL?

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|--------------|
| No | 1 | Please go to |
| Yes, but proposal was denied | 2 | question 7 |
| Yes, but proposal is under review | 3 | |
- Yes, the project proceeded 4

Was the funding provided by COL the only funding received?

- Yes 1
- No 2

ANNEX III

6a. Was the level of funding provided by COL:

Adequate	1
Inadequate	2

6b. Did the type of program supported by COL prove to be:

Appropriate to needs	1
Not appropriate to needs	2

7. Please identify the areas in which COL has been of assistance to your country/organization/area of interest and rate COL's effectiveness in these areas:

	Very Effective Assistance	Somewhat Effective Assistance	Not Very Effective Assistance	Very Not Effective At All	Not Applicable
Facilitating access to distance education	1	2	3	4	9
Supporting training of personnel in techniques and management of distance education	1	2	3	4	9
Creating a distance education capability	1	2	3	4	9
Facilitating acquisition of study material	1	2	3	4	9
Provision of equipment	1	2	3	4	9
Fellowships	1	2	3	4	9
Other (specify)	1	2	3	4	9

8. Please rate the value of each of the following program areas of COL to your country/organization/area of interest.

	Very Valuable	Somewhat Valuable	Not Very Valuable	Not At All Valuable	Unable To Judge
Training in distance education practice	1	2	3	4	9
Materials acquisition and development	1	2	3	4	9
Teacher education	1	2	3	4	9
Student support services	1	2	3	4	9
Evaluation and research	1	2	3	4	9
Women in development	1	2	3	4	9
Environmental issues	1	2	3	4	9
Technology and telecommunications	1	2	3	4	9
COL publications	1	2	3	4	9

8b. If you rated more than one program as being Very Valuable (a score of "1"), which would you say was most valuable?

8c. If you rated more than one program as being Not At All Valuable (a score of "4"), which would you say was least valuable?

ANNEX III

9. Please indicate how seriously each of the following factors impedes your optimal use of COL's exchange course materials.

	Very Seriously	Somewhat Seriously	Not Very Seriously	Not At All	Not Applicable
Relevance	1	2	3	4	9
Adaptability	1	2	3	4	9
Reproduction	1	2	3	4	9
Lack of technical competence	1	2	3	4	9
Other (specify) _____	1	2	3	4	9

10. Please identify any program areas among the following which you feel COL should be addressing in your country/organization/area of interest but is not. Please circle all that are appropriate.

Training in distance education practice	1
Materials acquisition and development	1
Teacher education	1
Student support services	1
Evaluation and research	1
Women in development	1
Environmental issues	1
Technology and telecommunications	1

11. Identify any program areas not listed in question 10 which you feel COL should address.

- 11a. Can you think of any additional steps COL could take to facilitate the use of distance education in your country/organization/area of interest?

- 12a. How satisfied are you with the work done by COL through:

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Not Very Satisfied	Not At All Satisfied	Not Applicable
Field staff	1	2	3	4	9
Headquarters staff	1	2	3	4	9
Consultants	1	2	3	4	9
Other (specify) _____	1	2	3	4	9

ANNEX III

12b. How satisfied are you with opportunities to provide input:

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Not Very Satisfied	Not At All Satisfied	Not Applicable
To COL activities generally	1	2	3	4	9
To planning and implementation of COL projects in your country/organization/area of interest	1	2	3	4	9

13. In your view, what has been the single most important contribution of COL to:

Your country _____

Your organization/institution _____

Your areas of interest _____

14a. Has the assistance of COL been instrumental in developing a sustainable activity (i.e., expected to continue 5 years or more) in your country/organization/area of interest?

Yes 1

No	2	Please go to question 15.
Not applicable	9	

14b. Please describe this project and indicate COL's most important contribution to this activity. Please use a separate sheet of paper if the space provided here is not adequate for your comments.

5. Briefly suggest how COL could be more effective in serving the needs or interests of your country/organization/area of interest. Please use a separate sheet of paper if the space provided here is not adequate for your comments.

ANNEX III

Respondent Identification:

16. Name: _____

17. Name of Organization: _____

18. Position within Organization: _____

19. Which of the following best describes your organization?

Educational institution	1	
Ministry/government department	2	Please go to question 20
Development agency	3	
Foundation	4	
Other (specify)	5	

19a. Is it ..

Primary	1
Secondary	2
College	3
University	4
Technical institute	5
Other (specify) _____	6

20. In your organization, which of the following are you responsible for? Please circle all that apply.

Establishing policy	1
Implementing policy	1
Allocating the budget	1
Recruiting/selecting personnel	1

21. In distance education policy, which of the following are you responsible for? Please circle all that apply.

Establishing policy	1
Implementing policy	1
Allocating the budget	1
Recruiting/selecting personnel	1
Not in distance education	1

22. For how many years have you known about/worked with COL?

_____ Years

Appendix E

List of Persons Interviewed by the Progress Review Committee

[Copied from Annex II of the Report of the Progress Review Committee - August 1993, which was submitted to the Commonwealth Heads of Government in November, 1993]

ANNEX II

PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

This is a partial list of people who met with members of the Review Committee in the course of field visits, and discussions at COL headquarters in Vancouver and elsewhere. In some cases the names of all the participants in group discussions were not recorded, and the Committee accordingly regrets that some people have not been identified. A few people participated on more than one occasion, and are recorded here only once. The sources are listed according to the country and institution where the Committee members met them, rather than by their own nationality. The COL Executive Committee and Secretariat are listed under "Commonwealth of Learning".

Our apologies for any mis-spelled names, which were difficult to verify in the time available to the Committee.

BRUNEI

Ministry of Education:

His Excellency Pehin Aziz, Minister
 Dato Razak, Permanent Secretary
 Mr. Omar Khalid, Assistant Director
 Mr. John Williams, Technical Education Adviser

Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

Dato Paduka Lim, Permanent Secretary

University of Brunei:

Dato Abu Bakar, Vice-Chancellor
 Datuk Professor Sharom, Permanent Academic Advisor

CANADA

British Columbia Ministry for Advanced Education, Training & Technology, Victoria:

The Honourable Tom Perry, Minister
 Mr. Shell Harvey, Assistant Deputy Minister
 Dr. Nick Rubridge, Director, Colleges & International Education

British Columbia Distance Educators [at COL June 4]:

Ms. Kathleen Bach, Director, Health and Part-time Studies
 British Columbia Institute of Technology
 Mr. Tony Bates, Executive Director, Research and Strategic Planning
 Open Learning Agency
 Mr. Mike Foster, Manager, Information Technology Training
 B. C. Tel Education
 Dr. Douglas K. Jardine, President
 Capilano College

Mr. Tom Toulson, Director, International Education and Contract Development
Services, Vancouver Community College

349

Dr. Carl Whiteside, Department of Family Practice, Faculty of Medicine
University of British Columbia

Mr. John Wiebe, Business Development Manager
MPR Teltech Ltd.

Dr. Colin Yerbury, Director, Centre for Distance Education
Simon Fraser University

Canadian Department of Communications, Ottawa:

Mr. John Quigley

Mr. Frank Symons

Canadian Department of External Affairs, Ottawa:

Mr. Manfred von Nostitz, Director-General, Commonwealth Affairs Division

Mr. Louis Guay, Deputy Director, Commonwealth Affairs

Mr. Brian Long, Director, Education Division

Canadian International Development Agency, Ottawa:

Mr. John Copland, Director General, Multilateral Programmes Branch

Ms. Marnie Girvan, Director, Women in Development

Mr. Robert Benoit, Senior Programme Manager, Commonwealth, MTC

International Development Research Centre, Ottawa:

The Honourable Flora MacDonald, Chairman of the Board

Laurentian University, Sudbury, Centre for Continuing Education:

Professor Marian Croft, Director

Professor Michael Dewson, recently Vice President of Laurentian

COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING

Executive Committee members (in London):

Lord Briggs of Lewes, Chairman

Professor W.J. Kamba, Vice-Chairman (former Vice-Chancellor, University of
Zimbabwe)

Mr. D. Hamilton, Vice-Chairman, President, General Communications
Corporation, Canada

Professor C.D. Blake, Vice-Chancellor, Charles Sturt University, Australia

Dato Hashim, Ag. Permanent Secretary of Education, Brunei

Dr. R. Iredale, Chief Education Advisor, ODA, England

Dr. S.L. Kavaliku, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education, Tonga

Mr. A. Singh, Education Secretary, Government of Rajasthan, India

Dr. M.M. Bunza, Director, National Teachers' Institute, Nigeria

Staff Members in Vancouver:

Professor James Maraj, President

Dr. Dennis H. Irvine, Director of Caribbean Programmes and Materials
Development

All other Directors and most of the other Executive and Senior Programme staff

Mr. John W. Steward, Head, Administration and Finance

Price Waterhouse & Co. (COL Auditors, Vancouver)

Mr. S. M. Marett, Partner

Mr. K. Isomura

FIJI

University of the South Pacific:

Mr. Esekia Solofa, Vice-Chancellor

Dr. Srinivasiah Muralidhar, Head, School of Humanities

Dr. Claire Matthewson, Director, University Extension

Mr. Cliff Benson, Director, Institute of Education

Mrs. Ruby Va'a, Acting Head, Distance Education

Mr. Alastair Kendrew, COL-funded instructor in text processing

Miss Carol Mills, University Librarian

GHANA

Ministry of Education, Accra:

The Honourable Harry Sawyerr, Minister of Education

Dr. N. Kofinti, Deputy Minister of Education

Mr. Kote, Director of Secondary Education

Mr. R.J. Mettle Nunoo, Centre for Non-Formal Education

Mr. D.Y. Owusu, Centre for Non-Formal Education

University of Ghana, Accra:

Professor C.K. Nukunyah, Pro-Vice Chancellor

Professor Marinda Greenstreet, Director, Institute of Adult Education

Mr. R. Aggor, Head, Distance Education Unit

Mrs. Esi Sutherland Addy, Head of African Studies

University of Cape Coast, Accra:

Professor Samuel K. Adjepong, Vice-Chancellor

Professor Nathaniel Kofi Pecku, Dean, Faculty of Education

Ministry of Education, Georgetown:

The Honourable Rev. Dr. Dale Bisnauth, Minister of Education

Mr. Oswald Kendall, Chief Education Officer

Mr. Fitzroy Marcus, National Centre for Educational Research & Development

University of Guyana:

Professor Dennis Craig, Vice-Chancellor

Mr. Sam Small, Director, Institute of Adult and Continuing Education

Miss Lynette Anderson, Co-ordinator, Distance Education Division

Mr. Francis Glasgow, Resident Tutor Linden Centre

Mr. Waldron, Resident Tutor New Amsterdam Centre

Caribbean Community Secretariat:

Mrs. Faith Wiltshire, Director, Functional Co-operation

HONG KONG

Open Learning Institute:

Professor Dhanarajan, Director

INDIA

University Grants Commission, New Delhi:

Professor G. Ram Reddy, Chairman

Indira Gandhi National Open University:

Dr. S. K. Gandhe, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Officiating Vice-Chancellor

Professor G. L. Anand, Pro-Vice-Chancellor

Professor B. N. Koul, Director, Distance Education Division

Professor M. B. Menon, Director, School of Education

Professor V. V. Mandke, Director, School of Engineering and Technology

Professor M. M. Pant, Director, School of Computer and Information Sciences

Professor G. S. Rao, Director, School of Humanities

Colonel P. K. Dutta, Director, School of Health Sciences

Professor R. K. Grover, Director, School of Management Studies

Professor R. K. Bose, Director, School of Sciences

Professor Pandav Nayak, Director, School of Social Sciences

Mr. K. Narayanan, Registrar (Administration)

Dr. K. Anjanappa, Registrar (Admissions)

Professor Devesh Kishore, Director, Communication Division

Professor A. A. Shamim, Director, Computer Division

Professor D. C. Pant, Director, Evaluation Division

Mr. S. C. Johorey, Finance Officer, Finance & Accounts Division

Professor R. Satyanarayana, Librarian, Library & Documentation Division

Colonel S. C. Mohan, Joint Registrar, Material Distribution Division

Mr. B. Selvaraj, Registrar, Printing & Publication Division

Dr. P. K. Mehta, Director, Regional Services Division

Mr. C. R. Pillai, Director, Teachers Affairs & Planning

Mr. Rama Rao, Post-Production Centre

Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University:

Dr. Ram Takwale, Vice-Chancellor

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University:

Professor S. Bashiruddin, Vice-Chancellor

Kota Open University

Professor T. N. Bhardwaja, Vice-Chancellor

National Open School

Professor M. Mukhopadhyay, Chairman

Regional Co-ordinator, Commonwealth of Learning:

Professor O. S. Dewal

JAMAICA

Ministry of Education, Kingston:

The Honourable Burchell Whiteman, Minister of Education

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education

Mr. Barrett, Chief Education Officer

University of The West Indies:

Sir Alister McIntyre, Vice-Chancellor

Professor G. Lalor, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Science & Technology, Principal,
Mona Campus

Professor Rex Nettleford, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, for Outreach and Institutional
Relations

Dr. B. Barley, Campus Co-ordinator, Women and Development Studies

Mrs. Emmanuel, Administrator, Women and Development Studies

Dr. Hyacinth Evans, Dean, Faculty of Education, Mona Campus

Miss V. McClennan, Project Officer, University of the West Indies Distance
Teaching Enterprise

Miss R. Burgess, Programme Co-ordinator, Canada/University of the West Indies
Institutional Strengthening Project

Dr. Claude Packer, Lecturer,

National Training Agency:

Mr. Robert Gregory, Director

College of Arts, Science & Technology:

Dr. Alfred Sangster, President

Professor Leslie Robinson

KENYA

University of Nairobi:

Professor F.J. Gichaga, Vice-Chancellor

Professor (Mrs.) F.A. Karani, Principal, College of Education and External Studies

Mr. J.O. Odumbe, Dean, Faculty of External Studies

Mr. K.A. Mazrui, Chairman, Department of Distance Studies

Mr. P.N. Keiyoro, Acting Chairman, Department of Education, and staff members
of the Department of Distance Studies

Lecturer, administrator and students at the Nairobi Regional cum Study Centre

Lecturer, administrator and students at the Nyeri Regional cum Study Centre

Lecturer, administrator and students at the Nakuru Regional cum study centre

MAURITIUS

Ministry of Education and Science:

The Honourable Armoogum Parsuraman, Minister

Mr. Gurudev Pertaub, Permanent Secretary

Professor Mrs. Shakti Ahmed, Special Advisor [also Co-ordinator of Distance
Education at the Tertiary Education Commission]

Tertiary Education Commission:

Professor Rais Ahmed, Executive Director

Industrial and Vocational Training Board:

Mr. Suresh Munbodh, Director, and colleagues

Mauritius College of the Air:

Mrs. Seetulsingh, Director

Mauritius Institute of Education:

Mr. Ramdoyal, Director

Ms. Devi Venkatasamy, former Deputy Director, currently in charge of the National
Centre for Curriculum Research and Development

Mr. Preadeth Chitamun, Lecturer in Education, and a colleague who is a Lecturer in
English and Linguistics

University of Mauritius:

Professor J. Manrakhan, Vice-Chancellor

Professor Baguant, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Head of Engineering and Director, Department
of Extra-Mural Studies

Mr. Paraho, Administrative Officer

Mr. Bauruth, Lecturer in Mathematics

Mr. Golam Hussein, Lecturer in Mathematics

Dr. M.K. Jain, Lecturer in Mathematics
 Mr. Revin Paray, Lecturer in Mathematics
 Mr. R. Unruth, Lecturer on Computer Science

NIGERIA

Ministry of Education and Youth Development:

Alhaji Yahaya Hamza, Director General
 Dr. Osino, Assistant Director, BACA
 Mrs. Obinani, Chief Education Officer, BACA

University of Abuja:

Dr. I.E.S. Amdii, Associate Professor of Policy Analysis and Director of Academic
 Planning
 Mallam Yaqubu H. Habi, Registrar
 Professor Albert O. Ozigi, Director, Centre for Distance Education

National Teachers Institute, Kaduna:

Dr. M.M. Bunza, Director
 Mr. Francis Mutuah, Director, Professions and Field Operations
 Mr. M.B. Kaoje, Director, Finance
 Mr. Itamah, Director, Examinations

Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria:

Dr. A.N. Ema, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic
 Professor Tukur Saad, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Administration
 Professor Eminefo Akerejola, Director of Academic Planning
 Dr. A. Mohammed, Director, Institute of Education
 Dr. Gideas Tseja, Head, Division of Distance Education

PAKISTAN

Ministry of Education, Islamabad:

Dr. Abdul A. Khan, Joint Educational Adviser

University Grants Commission, Islamabad:

Mr. Saeed Ullah Shah, Adviser

Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU), Islamabad

Dr. Muhammad Tariq Siddiqi, Vice-Chancellor
 Mr. Amar Jaleel Kazi, Director, Institute of Educational Technology
 Mr. Javed Kasuri, Deputy Director, Institute of Educational Technology
 Mrs. Z. A. Mahmood, Deputy Librarian
 Mrs. Ayesha Akbar, Incharge, South Asian Distance Education Resource Centre
 Mr. Liaquat Hussain, Incharge, Computer Centre
 Professor Javed Iqbal Syed, Director, Bureau for Academic Planning and Course
 Production

Dr. M.S.K. Shibli, Professor of Urdu

Dr. Azhar Hameed, Director, Regional Services

Mr. Hafeez Ullah, Registrar

Mr. Ali Asghar Husnain, Planning and Development Officer

Dr. S. A. Siddiqui, Professor of Education

Dr. Athar Khan Koti, Professor of Educational Planning and Management

Dr. M. A. Bukhari, Chairman, Teacher Education Department

Dr. M. Aslam Asghar, Chairman, Department of Technical and Vocational
Education

Dr. S. A. Shirazi, Chairman, Department of Agricultural Sciences

Dr. Parveen Liaquat, Chairperson, Department of Women Education

Dr. Qudsia Riffat, Chairperson, Department of Science Education

Professor Razia Abbas, Director, Bureau for University Extension and Special
Programmes

Mr. Alec Fleming, United Kingdom ODA Consultant to AIOU

Mr. T. Walsh, Overseas Development Agency Projects Manager

Mr. Abdul Hameed Khan, Director, Regional Student Centre, Rawalpindi

Mr. Ilyas Ahmad, Deputy Registrar, Vice-Chancellor's Office

Mr. O. V. Mutaz, Assistant Public Relations Officer

Quaid-i-Azam University :

Professor Parvez Cheema, Chairman, Department of International Relations

UA NEW GUINEA

Ministry of Education:

Mr. Jerry Tetaga, Secretary

Mr. Tim Poesi, First Assistant Secretary

College of Distance Education:

Mr. Dikana Kema, Director, and fourteen staff members of the College

University of Papua New Guinea, Extension Studies Department:

Professor Josphe Sukvianob, Vice-Chancellor

Professor Hal Markowitz, Director, Extension Studies Department

Mr. Garrick Johns

SEHELLES

Ministry of Education:

The Honourable Mme. Simone Testa, Minister

Mr. Patrick Pillay, Principal Secretary

Mr. Bernard Shamlaye, Director General, Educational Management

Brother Deniscourt, Director General, and other officers

Mr. Keith Gristock, Co-ordinator of Distance Education

Seychelles Polytechnic:

Mr. Steve Huddleston, Director

Mrs. Barbara Quan Yat Coune, Assistant Director - Administration

Mrs. Marie-Therese Purvis, Assistant Director - Studies (Also Head of School of Education)

Mr. Flavien Joubert, Head of School - Hotel & Tourism

Mrs. Jenny Adrienne, Head of School - Continuing Education

Mrs. Anne Lafortune, Head of School - Humanities & Sciences

Mr. Brian Tytherleigh - School of Education

Mr. Jeff Clark - School of Education

SINGAPORE

Ministry of Education:

Miss Lee Keow Jit, Assistant Director

Singapore Institute of Management:

Dr. Seah Chiong Tian, Division Head, Director of Open University Degree Programmes

Asian Mass Communications, Research and Information Centre:

Dr. Anura Goonasekera, Head of Research

Regional English Language Centre:

Dr. Audrey Ambrose-Yeo, Project Director, and colleague

SOLOMON ISLANDS

Ministry of Education, Honiara:

Mr. Walter Ramo, Secretary

Solomon Islands College of Higher Education [SICHE], Kukum Campus:

Mr Ian Hind, Deputy Director

Mr. Barry Densley, Head, School of Industrial Development

SICHE Distance Education Centre, Panatina Campus:

All staff involved in the production and teaching of modules for the Adult Education Proficiency Award Distance

University of the South Pacific, Honiara Centre

Mr. Esau Tuza, Director

SRI LANKA

Ministry of Education, Colombo:

The Honourable A. Hameed, Minister of Justice and Minister for Higher Education

Dr. Dharmasiri Peiris, former Secretary to Ministry of Education, currently Secretary, Ministry of Public Administration

University Grants Commission:

Professor Arjuna Aluwihare, Chairman University Grants Commission

Open University of Sri Lanka:

Professor Dayantha Wijeyesekera, Vice-Chancellor

Professor H. Sriyananda, Dean, Faculty of Engineering

Professor J.N.O. Fernando, Dean, Faculty of Natural Sciences

Dr. Chandra Goonawardana, Acting Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and Professor of Education

Dr. Buddhi Weerasinghe, Director of Educational Technology

Dr. T.A.G. Gunasekera, Director, Regional Education Services

Mr. Rumkin De Silva, Senior Lecturer

Dr. Arjuna De Zoysa, Senior Lecturer

Dr. P.K.D.P. Kudahgama, Acting Head, English Division

Mrs. Sita Kulatunga, Lecturer in English & Copy Editor Educational Technology

Dr. Goonasekera, Director, Educational Support Services

Mr. D. D. Prabhath, Educational Assistant, Computer Centre

Mr. Tissera, Public Relations Officer

GANDA

Makerere University, Kampala:

Professor Senteza Kajubi, Vice-Chancellor

Professor Waswa Balunywa, Dean, Faculty of Commerce, and some faculty members

Professor J.C. Ssekamwa, Dean, School of Education

Mr. Anthony Okech, Director, Institute of Adult and Continuing Education

Mr. Julis Odurkene, Head, Department of Distance Education and one of his senior colleagues

Staff members of the Department of Distance Education

The Academic Registrar and Senior Academic Deputy Registrar

A number of tutors for B.Ed. and B.Com, and students, mainly in the B.Ed. programme

Ministry of Education:

Mr. Onen Negrís, Director and Acting Head of Educational Radio and T.V.

UNITED KINGDOM

Association of Commonwealth Universities, London:

Dr. A. Christodoulou

Commonwealth Secretariat:

Mr. P.R.C. Williams

Dr. Hilary Perraton

Institute of Educational Technology, Milton Keynes

Professor David Hawkrige

International Centre for Distance Learning, Milton Keynes

Dr. Keith Harry, Director, and others

International Extension College, London

Mr. Tony Dodds

Ms. Bernadette Robinson

Open University, Milton Keynes

Dr. John Daniel, Vice-Chancellor

Mr. Ted Jones, Associate Director, International Activities

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