



House of Commons – House of Lords

**Council for Education in
the
Commonwealth**

**Annual Report
of the Honorary Secretary
on Activities in 2009/10**

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Joint Parliamentary Chairpersons: Tim Boswell MP • Simon Hughes MP • Sally Keeble MP

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July 2009/June 2010

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Lord McNally of Blackpool
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Martin Kenyon (to June 2010)

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Sonny Leong (2012)
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Mark Robinson (to June 2010)
Maureen (Mo) Sibbons (to June 2012)
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Annual Report 2009/10

For the period 1st. April 2009 to 31st. March 2010

Introduction

2009/10 was another busy year – with meetings, campaigns, following up on the previous year’s activities and preparing for the next year. However, as CEC’s 50th. anniversary, this was a special year of celebrating the past and looking forward to the next 50 years. Regular activities were of course also maintained: the Commonwealth Education News, distribution by email of educational news relevant to the Commonwealth, the work of Knowledge Aid for Sierra Leone and the meetings of the Governing Board and its committees. CEC also participated in two major Commonwealth meetings: the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Trinidad and the 50th. anniversary of the first Commonwealth Education Conference, celebrated at the 17th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) in Malaysia.

Celebrating fifty years, looking forward to the next fifty years

The Council for Education in the Commonwealth was founded under the leadership of a cross party group of MPs in the British Parliament following the first Commonwealth Education Conference in Oxford in 1959. Its 50th anniversary year, 2009, also started in Oxford with a major two day conference held in St. Catherine’s College. The theme was “Commonwealth Educational Co-operation - Looking Ahead at 50”. It celebrated half a century of educational co-operation between Commonwealth member states. This conference was led by a distinguished gathering of Commonwealth educationalists including the Hon. Nahas Angula, Prime Minister of Namibia and for many years an education minister, the Hon Naledi Pandor, Minister of Education of South Africa, Ronald Jones, Minister of Education and Human Resource Development of Barbados, Narcisco Matos from Mozambique, Gajaraj Dhanarajan from Wawasan Open University, Malaysia and a wealth of others. The delegates came from the UK as well as a wide range of other Commonwealth countries, including a group of Commonwealth scholars at a number of British universities. It is intended to publish a printed summary of the presentations and findings, while some of the interviews

and lectures from the conference can be accessed on the Council's website.

A history of the CEC, with contributions from a number of those involved, was started and is due to be published in 2011.

The importance of women in the Commonwealth and in the Council was recognised and is being celebrated in an innovative way. A special website has been set up and women of the Commonwealth are being invited to contribute (commonwealthwomensvoices.wordpress.com). We believe that the voices of Commonwealth women captured on this website are inspirational. They challenge the concept that history, whether of a country or the development of education within a country, relates mostly to government decisions or outside interventions. The courage and determination which many of these women have shown to obtain their own education and then to share the benefits of their qualifications with others is a valuable reminder of the importance of the individual. It is encouraging to realise again the influence that such women can have in developing progressive policies at all levels, whether in relation to education, health, business or politics. It is intended that these contributions will be published in a book in co-operation with the Commonwealth Secretariat.

The year ended with the annual Gladwyn Lecture by Ms. Mmasekgoa Masire-Mwamba, Commonwealth Deputy Secretary-General, with the title: "Women as a force for Development in Commonwealth Countries". This was given in the magnificent Robing Room of the House of Lords and was the final celebration of CEC's 50th. anniversary. It considered how best to unlock and realise the potential of women to transform their societies through greater participation in education and in business and employment. The full text is available on the CEC website.

Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan

The action group initiated by the Council in the previous year has continued to meet and to campaign for the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan. The campaign has broadened. It has strongly supported the decision to set up an Endowment Fund as a way of celebrating the CSFP's 50th. anniversary. The endowment fund has been supported by a number of governments including the British Government. It also

accepts and has received donations from individuals. CEC's Governing Board decided to support the Fund as part of the Council's 50th. anniversary programme and donated the sum of £500 in public at the Gladwyn Lecture. The Governing Board also invited individual members of CEC to contribute. So far the latter have donated more than £800. The Endowment Fund is administered by the Association of Commonwealth Universities.

Parliamentary pressure was sustained during the year by means of questions in both Houses, early day motions, interventions in debates and organising a special "Westminster Hall" debate- so that the importance of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan remained on the agenda. This was supported by the work of the action group.

Conferences and Meetings

A major part of the work of the Council is to provide a platform for the discussion of educational issues as they relate to the Commonwealth. Each year the Council holds a conference in conjunction with its AGM. However this year the conference in Oxford referred to above took its place. Instead we were very pleased to welcome the Minister of Higher Education, Mr. David Lammy, to our AGM at the beginning of July 2009 to report on the Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers which had been held in Malaysia (see report below).

On February 24th the Council welcomed the Commonwealth Secretary General to a meeting in Parliament where we were hosted by the UK branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. Mr. Kamallesh Sharma, who spoke under the title of "CHOGM 2009 - What Happened? What Next?", gave a background to how the CHOGMs actually work - with the important support of the Government leaders by their High Commissioners, especially from London. He then focused on a number of issues including that of climate change, which the CHOGM had discussed shortly before the international conference in Copenhagen and acted as a preparation for it. The CHOGM was also important in that it gave a voice to smaller countries - of which there are a significant number in the Commonwealth - so that they were able to express their concerns on an equal basis with the larger countries. A reception was held after in which members were able to interact with each other as

well as with Mr. Sharma. The meeting was notable in the number of High Commissioners who attended.

CEC was involved in two meetings arranged by UKFIET, the UK Forum on International Education and Training, of which the Council is a corporate member. The first was the biennial UKFIET conference in Oxford in September, at which the Council was instrumental in arranging for Sir Shridath Ramphal, former Secretary General of the Commonwealth to give the opening keynote address. In addition, the CEC, jointly with the Social Transformation Programmes Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat organised a session on “Policies, Politics and Educational Progress in the Commonwealth”. Three speakers led the discussion. Vijay Krishnarayan, Deputy Director of the Commonwealth Foundation, spoke on “Political moments and Commonwealth educational policy processes since 1959”, Mark Robinson, the UK chair of the Commonwealth Consortium for Education (former Executive Chair of CEC and current member of our Governing Board) discussed “Working with parliamentary links to maintain Commonwealth educational profiles: the experience of the CEC” and Rasheda Choudhury, Campaign for Popular Education as well as a former Minister of Education in Bangladesh, talked about “Responding to the challenges of the future”.

The second UKFIET occasion in which CEC members were involved was sponsored by the UK National Commission for UNESCO. It was the annual presentation in March 2010 of the report of the UNESCO Monitoring team of the Education for All process. This year, the focus of the report was “Reaching the Marginalized”.

As CEC is a founder institutional member of the Commonwealth Consortium for Education (CCfE), a number of CEC members attended its pre CCEM triennial conference in Malaysia in June 2009 on the subject of “Learning to Live Together - Education for Social Cohesion”. This meeting was run in association with the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (the National University of Malaysia). The conference deliberations were rooted in “Civil Paths to Peace”, the report of the Commission on Respect and Understanding presented to the CHOGM in 2007. In particular, the conference focused on the chapter devoted to Education and Youth. The conference made a submission to the Ministers emphasising

the importance of education which binds different cultures, countries and traditions together in practical action.

International meetings of the Commonwealth

The 17th. Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in June 2009 with the theme: “Education in the Commonwealth: Towards and Beyond Global Goals and Targets”. The Council submitted a memorandum to the Conference emphasising the need to continue support for the Millennium Development Goals in education. In addition it emphasised the importance of the CSFP (Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan) in binding the Commonwealth together. Finally it highlighted the proposal from the 16th. CCEM that a Ministerial Steering Committee should be set up to review the implementation of the educational plan of the Secretariat. Alongside the Ministerial meeting, there were four Forums: for Teachers, Stakeholders, Youth and (for the first time) Vice Chancellors. In addition, there was an exhibition for commercial, academic and non-governmental organisations. CEC was a major part of the CCfE stand. In the Stakeholders Forum, a useful three and a half day programme was held with both plenary and panels in parallel sessions, one of which was organised by a CEC delegate, ‘Chandra’ Chandramohan. This was about the private sector in Commonwealth higher education.

The latest Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) was held in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago in November 2009. The memorandum submitted by the Council to the CHOGM focused on the importance of the Endowment Fund for the CSFP. CEC member ‘Chandra’ Chandramohan was responsible for a workshop session within the People’s Forum on the theme: “From Art to Education - building on reconciliation”. This was based on the work of Knowledge Aid Sierra Leone. One of our delegates, Martin Kenyon, was also part of the delegation which presented to the Foreign Ministers a joint statement from the three Forums (the People’s Forum, the Youth Forum and the Business Forum). Due to the effort of another CEC member, Peter Williams, the final statement did recognise the importance of Education to the Commonwealth.

Publications

“Maintaining Universal Primary Education. Lessons from Commonwealth Africa”, edited by Lalage Bown, is the final publication of CEC research commissioned by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the CRE-ATE* research consortium headed by the University of Sussex. Every country that has worked towards, and then attained, universal primary education has celebrated that achievement as a great step forward. However maintaining universal primary education, once achieved, offers new challenges. It is these challenges that were examined in the research covered in this book. Copies at a heavily discounted price for CEC members can be obtained by emailing the Honorary Secretary.

External Relations

CEC owes a good part of its effectiveness to its alliances with a number of organisations: the Commonwealth Consortium for Education, the British Council, the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, the Royal Commonwealth Society, the Institute of Education of London University, the Association of Commonwealth Universities, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, UKFIET have all assisted in one way or another in enabling CEC to implement its activities. In addition, of course, CEC maintains contact with and contributes to the thinking of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, which holds responsibility for universities and helps fund the CSFP, and the Department for International Development, which contributes significantly to education in the Commonwealth.

Members may have noted that CEC helps the Commonwealth Consortium for Education publicise its quarterly Calendar of Commonwealth Education Dates on the CEC website. The British Council has generously continued to host the CEC AGM –Ann Weidemann is our contact there; the Royal Commonwealth Society offers CEC members a concessionary rate for membership; the Institute of Education allows members of the CEC to use its reference library at no charge; the Association of Commonwealth Universities is naturally a close partner in support of the CSFP and its Endowment Fund; while the cooperation with UKFIET has been detailed above.

CEC made two submissions on the DfID Education Strategy Consultation Paper: *Eliminating World Poverty: Assuring our Common Future*.

One on its own and one as part of the contribution to the UKFIET submission.

Our most important partners are the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Foundation. The Secretariat's Social Transformation Programmes Division (STPD) headed by Caroline Pontefract, with the Education Section directed by Henry Kaluba, were essential partners in staging both the 50th anniversary conference and the UKFIET workshop at Oxford. Both Caroline and Henry left the Secretariat this year, Caroline after a relatively short term and Henry after many years. Both gave CEC great support and helped make its work very productive.

CEC has also been a regular participant in the bi-annual consultative meetings with Civil Society called jointly by the Secretariat and the Commonwealth Foundation.

These relationships are of the essence of the CEC's mission to ensure that adequate attention and resources are dedicated to delivering more and better education for all the peoples of the Commonwealth.

Knowledge Aid for Sierra Leone

The centre for the teaching of computer and internet skills has continued successfully with the support from Plan International's branch in Sierra Leone. The UK support committee has continued to meet in the UK and monitor progress.

The lessons learnt from this work have been described by Knowledge Aid Sierra Leone (KASL) members Martin Kenyon and Bala Chandramohan who ran a workshop at the Commonwealth People's Forum at CHOGM in Port of Spain. The presentation: *From Art to Education ... building on reconciliation*, highlighted the progress KASL made so far and explored the possibility of making enhanced use of Open Education Resources (OER) in future development. KASL team also stressed the need for consolidating the success achieved in reconciliation through expanding educational opportunities. The presentation was received well.

Chandramohan submitted an abstract on *Promoting access to, and success in, open learning in heavily disadvantaged countries: experience of Sierra Leone* to the 6th Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning

organised by Commonwealth of Learning and Indira Gandhi Open University, New Delhi at Kochi, India in Nov 2010. The abstract has been accepted by the organisers and Chandramohan will be presenting a paper at the Conference. It is hoped that the paper will enhance the visibility and prestige of KASL and provide opportunities for linking and partnering with similar initiatives in West Africa and elsewhere.

KASL website, has been moved it to Wordpress, a new and free website provider where it is being updated and improved (knowledgeaid.wordpress.com). Karen Streten, the UK Support Group member who maintains the website, preferred this provider as it provides easy and speedy access.

Website and regular publications

The Council's website (www.cecomm.org.uk) has continued to grow in content. The texts of most of the lectures given to the Council have been placed on the website, plus those from the Annual Conference. Other relevant papers and news items are finding their way to the site. The number of visits per week is around 1,200 – almost exactly the same as last year. Some of these come from the continents of Africa and Asia.

The Hon. Secretary circulates to those members who have informed him of their email address information about CEC's programme as well as other Commonwealth educational matters.

Three Commonwealth Education News were produced this. This is an important source of news about education activities both within the CEC as well as the wider Commonwealth.

Organisation and membership

Our Patrons and Joint Parliamentary Chairpersons, along with their staff, have responded positively to the demands we have made on them. We are very grateful to all of them.

Towards the end of 2008-2009, the Council was down to one patron (Lord Judd) for several months after the death of Lord Thomson. Frank Judd has however has been very committed in his support for the Council. In March 2009, we were delighted that Lord McNally of Blackpool agreed to replace Lord Thomson, and further delighted, when Baroness Morris of Bolton agreed towards the end of the year to become our third

patron. And it was good to have all three patrons present at the Gladwyn Lecture in December, the final event of the 50th anniversary year.

The Council has no paid staff of its own. As reported last year, we have remained with our legal base at Commonwealth House. The Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council (CYEC) has continued to forward any correspondence from there to the Honorary Secretary. We are very grateful for this important service. The future of Commonwealth House seems to have been resolved for the medium future and the Council will continue to use it as its official address. In the meantime, major mailings were contracted out to an agency local to the Hon. Secretary. However at the end of the year, an agreement was made with the CYEC for them to take over the dispatch of these mailings.

The Board held its regular three meetings during the year. One meeting took place in July (shortly after the AGM) with the main purpose of appointing the officers and deciding the membership of the three main committees. The other two meetings were in November and then in March – this last in parliament. The Board has three committees which report directly to it – the Finance and General Purposes Committee, the Policy, Strategy and Public Affairs Committee and the Programmes, Projects and Communications Committee. In addition, the Knowledge Aid Sierra Leone Support Committee sends regular reports to the Hon. Secretary and Treasurer as well as having a representative from the Governing Board. The Board leaves the detailed work to its committees and deals itself with broader policy matters. The Board is very grateful to the observers to the Governing Board meetings from the Joint International Unit of the government departments that deal with education, the British Council and other relevant NGOs who make some very valuable contributions to the Council's work.

The finances of the Council, administered by Richard Mawditt, are stabilising, as can be seen in the accounts and report presented along with this report. The financial discipline which he has introduced has been of great benefit to the work of the Council.

The Council depends on its individual membership for several reasons. The finances of the CEC – giving it a solid base for its core expenses – are provided by the subscriptions of its individual members, both per-

sonal and corporate. The work of the Council, the core administration and also the educational research, policy making and advocating and other aspects of education in the Commonwealth, which are the Council's main purpose, are all done by its members, mostly on a voluntary basis. The Council has a total of 90 ordinary members, 6 corporate or institutional members and 20 honorary members. In addition, all of the High Commissions based in the UK are honorary members. All honorary members (both individual and corporate) have full voting rights.

The email addresses of over half of our members are held by the Council. It would help the Council greatly if more members offered their email addresses. We use these addresses to circulate information both specifically for the Council (such as meetings convened at short notice) and other educational material from, for example, UNESCO or UKFIET, which might be of interest to our members. These email addresses are not and will not be given to any other organisation.

Our membership numbers this year have stagnated at about the same level as the previous year. This is a matter of some concern and the Executive Chair has formed a small team to tackle it. The Governing Board will be keeping a careful and supportive eye on this effort.

The 2009 AGM approved the proposal that there should be a life membership option with a one off payment of £300. This is in the process of being implemented along with the redrafting of the membership form to make it more user friendly. At the same time, members are reminded that a legacy to the CEC is a very real way of continuing to support the work of the Council for Education in the Commonwealth.