

The CEC: 2007 to 2010

What It Is and What It Does

The Council for Education in the Commonwealth (CEC) is seized with the importance and urgency of expanding and improving the provision of education throughout the Commonwealth. It regards the quality of education that the majority of Commonwealth citizens receive as depressingly inadequate, and considers this a continuing affront to the more affluent minority.

The Council aims therefore to promote more and better education and training for children and adults at all levels across the Commonwealth by:

- providing a forum for informed discussion
- engaging in advocacy with UK ministers and Commonwealth Governments
- influencing agendas, discussions and conclusions of the Conferences of Commonwealth Education Ministers and Commonwealth Heads Of Government Meetings.
- forming partnerships in pursuit of these agendas with the wider Commonwealth community, especially through High Commissions in London and the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Status and Relationships

CEC is a voluntary organisation, and a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. The CEC has *formal Commonwealth accreditation*, enabling it to be represented at CHOGM and CCEM and their associated civil society events. *All Commonwealth High Commissioners accredited to London are honorary members of the CEC.*

Ever since its foundation the Council has had a *Westminster base*. It is very fortunate in its links with Parliament through its Patrons in the House of Lords and Parliamentary Chairpersons in the House of Commons. In addition, it has other members drawn from the main political parties and a Parliamentary Liaison Officer. This parliamentary connection gives CEC a unique role in education advocacy in the Commonwealth.

In addition, the Council regularly acts in partnership with a number of like-minded bodies, such as the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Foundation, the Commonwealth of Learning, the Association of Commonwealth Universities, the Commonwealth Consortium for Education and its constituents, the UK Forum for International Education and Training (UKFIET) and the Institute of Education of the University of London. (The Institute is not only a member of CEC, but also offers CEC members free reference library reading rights.)

CEC has a special relationship three bodies: the British Council, the League for Exchange of Commonwealth Teachers (LECT) and the Royal Commonwealth Society/Commonwealth Club (RCS). The British Council is a long-time collaborator and supporter, while LECT provides us with an administrative base and the RCS offers privileged membership rates to CEC members.

How CEC Works

The Council's main resource is its *membership*, now standing at 135 individual and 13 corporate members. Membership records and subscription renewals are handled by the Charities Aid Foundation.

As a voluntary body, the Council is responsible to its membership through the Annual General Meeting. Members are also kept in touch through the publication of a Newsletter. They and the wider public can also visit the Council's web-site: www.cecomm.org.uk.

Management and policy-making functions are undertaken through an elected Governing Board, which has three Committees: Finance and General Purposes; Policy, Strategy and Public Affairs;

and Programmes, Projects and Communications. Executive functions are carried out by CEC officers, with support from Committee members where necessary. CEC members who are not on the Board may be invited to serve on the two latter Committees.

The Council's *finances* come from subscriptions (enhanced by Gift Aid), from surpluses on events, and from occasional work for the Commonwealth Secretariat and others. Current systems of budgeting and financial control have enhanced the Council's financial position.

THREE YEAR PLAN, 2007 – 2010

INTRODUCTION

This plan is first and foremost for CEC members, but it also provides others with a clear picture of the Council's character and activities. The plan is a rolling one, up-dated year on year. A draft is first put to the Annual General Meeting and then has to be approved by the incoming Governing Board. The Board is responsible for carrying it out, mainly through its three Committees, with the voluntary help of members and in collaboration with other agencies.

This present updating of the Plan for the period 2007-2010 has been strongly influenced by the Spring Conference convened by the Council in March 2007 to chart future directions for its work, and attended by about 40 people. The main conclusions were that

- 1) The Conferences of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEMs) and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGMs) should remain central to CEC's work and the bulk of its activities geared to influence them.
- 2) CEC's links with the British Parliament and Government, the Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth High Commissions should be its enduring channels of bringing knowledge and advocacy to bear.
- 3) CEC should endeavour to promote education about the Commonwealth, particularly but not only in the UK, among all groups of learners.

The 3-year Plan will pursue these three areas of work. It will also include a modest programme of special events, as well as measures to strengthen the Council itself. The period spans the year 2009, which, as the Spring Conference noted, will mark the 50th Anniversary of the creation of CEC, as well as of inter-governmental education co-operation in the modern Commonwealth. This will be an occasion for celebration of past achievement and for looking ahead to the future. The Council plans to mark the anniversary with celebratory events.

1] Contributing to the CCEM and CHOGM:

CEC will focus on four main events – the 17CCEM in Malaysia (2009), the CHOGMs in Uganda (2007) and Trinidad and Tobago (2009), and the Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning in London (2008). Through working groups of members, it will contribute suggestions for the themes to be discussed and will develop substantive papers on the central issues. CEC will also participate actively in the forums for civil society that will attend each of these meetings.

In addition, CEC will discuss with the Commonwealth Secretariat the possibility of producing and publishing an overview of Fifty Years of Commonwealth Cooperation in Education in time for 17CCEM.

In parallel, CEC will monitor the implementation of the decisions of the 16 CCEM (2006). It will pay particular attention to the theme of educating the Commonwealth about the Commonwealth. CEC will also follow up implementation of the Cape Town (16 CCEM) Plan of Action in relation to:

Measures to ensure progress with, and sustainability of, universal primary education in Commonwealth countries

The development of school and college linking in the Commonwealth

Policies that emphasise the linkages between the different levels of education, and the part to be played by secondary, tertiary and lifelong education provision in supporting Education for All

Strengthening and revitalising universities in Commonwealth developing countries, particularly in Africa

Support for the Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships Programme

Support for the Commonwealth of Learning

The expansion of Open Education Resources for schools and universities.

2] Strengthening links with the British Parliament and Government, the Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth High Commissions:

-Parliament: Several All-Party Parliamentary Groups concern themselves with particular Commonwealth countries or with subjects that affect education in the Commonwealth: CEC will develop relations with them and their members. It will also pursue the possibility of a Westminster Hall debate to focus more parliamentary attention on education in the Commonwealth.

-British Government: The Council will press for:

(a) Appropriate follow-up of:

The British Government commitment to implementing the Commission for Africa Report;

The 2004 International Education Strategy first issued by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and now the responsibility of the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS);

The human development implications of the most recent Department for International Development (DFID) policy White Paper on development

The activities of the UK's Commonwealth Education Fund, due to complete its current phase in 2008.

(b) Adequate public support role for

The public interest work of the British Council and the BBC in international education

The new Centre for Commonwealth Education at the University of Cambridge

The British Empire and Commonwealth Museum at Bristol

The Council will mobilise working groups of members to make itself a valued and rapidly responsive resource for the British government in matters of education in Commonwealth countries.

-High Commissions: CEC will hold at least one liaison/briefing meeting a year with Commonwealth High Commissioners and their Education Officers. It will also encourage them to participate in its public meetings.

-Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth Foundation: CEC will participate substantively in all the public consultations, formal and informal, that the Secretariat and Foundation convene on education.

-Partners in the UK: CEC will work closely with civil society groups having similar aims and will develop new and closer partnerships with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Commonwealth Business Council, the Commonwealth Local Government Forum, Commonwealth Teachers Grouping and the Global Campaign for Education.

-Partners in Commonwealth Countries: CEC will link up with kindred bodies in Commonwealth countries to bring advocacy to bear simultaneously on their and the British governments.

3] Promoting education about the Commonwealth among all groups of learners:

The Annual Conference and the annual Gladwyn Lecture will continue as vehicles to keep the CEC membership and a wider public informed on current prominent issues.

In addition, the Council will organise four or five public meetings a year, at least one of which will be held outside London. During 2007 it will celebrate educational progress since independence in four countries, India and Pakistan (60 years), Ghana and Malaysia (50 years).

A study visit to Malta in 2005 was extremely successful. CEC will explore the possibilities of arranging at least one further study visit within the next three years.

As part of its effort to ensure follow-up to decisions at the 16 CCEM, CEC will consult with other concerned and experienced organisations in the field of education about the Commonwealth to assess how the Ministers' recommendation on the subject can be taken forward through a co-ordinated approach. Independently and through co-operation with its partners CEC will:

- Campaign for the development of curricula for in-school and out-of-school learners to develop a greater sense of awareness of, and identity with, the Commonwealth and its values
- Promote the provision of appropriate educational materials through the internet and for hard-copy use by schools and others
- Encourage its members to launch relevant initiatives at local level, working where appropriate with Commonwealth diaspora groups
- Meet with interested MPs to raise issues about the Commonwealth and the function and funding of Commonwealth institutions
- Try out ways of persuading the media to give more prominence to the Commonwealth
- Seek to engage active interest and contributions from the private sector.

4] Programme of Special Activities:

In addition to its three priority thrusts the following special activities are foreseen:

-50th Anniversary: A celebration in 2009 will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Council. This will coincide with the 50th anniversary of Commonwealth education co-operation and the 50th birthday of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan.

-Development Projects (including research): CEC will continue to sponsor 'Knowledge Aid for Sierra Leone' (KASL), which promotes the use and adaptation of Open Education Resources from the Internet for the benefit of secondary schools. It will continue to waive the overhead costs it incurs in supporting, monitoring and taking formal responsibility for the project. CEC would like to see KASL expanded and more funding mobilised for it.

In the second half of 2007 the CEC will finalise for publication by the Commonwealth Secretariat its research report on the sustainability of Universal Primary Education.

The Hon. Projects Officer will continue to explore opportunities for appropriate project research and development. One of these may address the role of diaspora groups in supporting Education for All and other education development projects in their countries of origin.

5] Strengthening the Council for Education in the Commonwealth

Membership: A rolling recruitment drive will aim to increase membership to 200 individual members and 40 corporate members by the fiftieth anniversary in 2009. Students temporarily in the UK from the Commonwealth, including Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows, and Commonwealth-originating diaspora groups resident in the UK are recognised as two constituencies with potential interest in CEC membership and programme activity. There will be an overall focus on recruiting younger members and in that regard the Council is actively

exploring participation in the Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit project on “putting Youth Engagement into Practice.”

Information and communications: All members will continue to receive *Commonwealth Education News* two to three times a year, so that they can stay abreast of the Council’s own activities and events and also of Commonwealth programmes and initiatives. The redeveloped *web-site* will be kept up to date and expanded.

Governance: There will continue to be a conscious effort to redress the age imbalance in the Governing Board, following recent success in achieving better gender balance.

Management: The Council will recruit an assistant to the Hon. Secretary to ensure sufficient capacity to manage an increasing programme of activity. A volunteer fund-raiser will be appointed as soon as possible.

Finances: To strengthen its financial stability. The Council aims to increase its regular income from membership, donations and overhead to at least £15,000 by 2012. It is seeking fund-raising advice and will also seek to attract support from the private sector. The annual subscription rate for individual members will rise by £5 to £30 from April 2008.