

17th Conference of Commonwealth Ministers of Education Kuala Lumpur Malaysia

The 17th Conference of Commonwealth Ministers of Education (17CCEM) was held in the International Conference Centre in Kuala Lumpur with over 2000 delegates in several different fora. Keith Lewin represented CREATE and spoke to an invited audience of Ministers and officials on financing education and to the Peoples Forum of aspects of access and transition. Keith Lewin was a member of the Drafting Committee of the Forum for the final communiqué (see attached documents).

The conference programme is at:

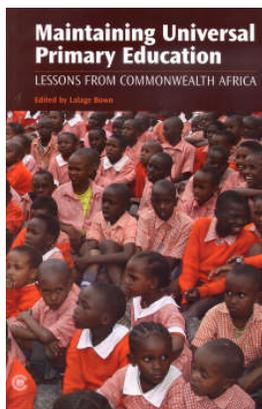
[http://www.17ccem.com/upload/CCEM\(09\)\(O\)1%20Provisional%20Agenda%20for%20Senior%20Officials%20FINAL.pdf](http://www.17ccem.com/upload/CCEM(09)(O)1%20Provisional%20Agenda%20for%20Senior%20Officials%20FINAL.pdf)

An account and video of the CCEM is at

<http://www.cecomm.org.uk/pages/CCEM%20in%20Malaysia>

The Draft Communique of the Stakeholders Forum is attached below.

CREATE launched a book co-sponsored by the Council for Education in the Commonwealth. **Maintaining Universal Primary Education: Lessons from Commonwealth Africa** (SBN No: 978-0-85092-827-3) is edited by Lalage Bown and published by the Commonwealth Secretariat. The contributors investigate the reasons why Universal Primary Education in Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana, Nigeria and Zambia has been approached in the past but has too frequently proved elusive to sustain.



DRAFT

**Stakeholders Forum Statement of the
17th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers
Making Connections and Building Partnerships:
Towards and Beyond Global Education Goals and
Targets
17 June 2009
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia**



The Conference Drafting Committee at work

1. PREAMBLE

- 1.1 We, the representatives of civil society organisations from across the Commonwealth convened at the Stakeholders Forum of the 17th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from June 15-17, 2009.
- 1.2 The Stakeholders Forum developed this Statement from the overarching conference theme of “Making Connections and Building Partnerships: Towards and Beyond Global Goals and Targets” and its four sub-themes of: Making Inclusive Access and Learning a Reality; Achieving a Continuum in Education; Redefining Quality in Education; and Realising the Potential of Non-actors.

2. TOWARDS AND BEYOND GLOBAL GOALS AND TARGETS

Issues

- 2.1 The Stakeholders Forum notes that after nearly a decade of working to implement the Millennium Development Goals and Dakar Framework for Action, it is time to consider how to move beyond global goals and targets.
- 2.2 Commonwealth countries differ considerably in levels of educational participation; the extent of educational inequalities in access between different groups; the degree of progress towards gender parity; and the volume of public and the private resources available to support education. Global goals and targets fail to respond to this diversity.
- 2.3 Further, the persistence of civil conflict, cross border wars, environment disasters and impacts of climate change in some member countries pose formidable challenges to the achievement and sustainability of quality education for all.

Recommendations

- 2.4 Commonwealth Education Ministers are urged to take the lead in developing national goals and targets consistent with international agreements but fit for purpose at the national level.
- 2.5 Such goals and targets could, for example, include high level of participation in pre-school; universal access to basic education; higher enrolment levels at secondary level; a qualified teacher in every class; a class room for every child; core text books for every child; a health check for every child; gender equity; norms for achievement at the end of each cycle; reductions in disparities between schools in pupil-teacher ratios, class sizes and learning resources; freedom from violence in school; and abolition of basic education fees. The specification of national goals and time scale to achieve targets should be locally determined and linked to national development goals.
- 2.6 A broad vision of access to quality education is needed that includes development of appropriate knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that promote critical thinking,

peace, human rights, respect, understanding, concern for the environment and good citizenship.

3. MAKING INCLUSIVE ACCESS AND LEARNING A REALITY

Issues

- 3.1 Shortages of financial, material and human resources to support access to quality education persist in many Commonwealth States; these may be exacerbated by economic recession which may compromise access to adequate school facilities, learning materials and qualified teachers; disparities between educational institutions may grow and inequalities linked to different kinds of disadvantage may be resistant to change
- 3.2 Learning depends on effective pedagogy, affordable learning materials and, increasingly, on appropriate access to information and communications technologies that can support teachers and contribute to understanding; teaching methods do not always match new needs, the availability of learning materials remains patchy, and access to new communication technologies is uneven
- 3.3 Debilitating poverty which results in the exclusion of those from low income households despite nominal abolition of fees and interventions designed to support the most economically vulnerable.
- 3.4 Marginalisation of teachers and children in remote and difficult to reach areas, and exclusion of children of migrants, refugees and internally displaced people especially in areas affected by conflict and natural disasters.
- 3.5 Over-age enrolment and repetition leading to premature drop out, especially amongst girls; disincentives for drop outs to drop back in to school to complete an educational cycle; and uneven implementation of strategies promoting income, gender and other forms of equity.
- 3.6 Use of curricula that lack relevance to children's life world and livelihood futures with achievement targets set at an inappropriate level for most learners; unacceptably low levels of literacy and achievement across core subjects and competencies, and the "silent exclusion" of those enrolled but learning little.
- 3.7 Exclusion from reasonable access to post basic education, especially for children from poorer households.
- 3.8 Lack of recognition of learners with disabilities and other special needs, inadequate provision of learning materials in accessible formats, and inadequate number of teachers for those with disabilities and special needs.
- 3.9 Lack of trained teachers and appropriate learning space

Recommendations

- 3.10 Maintain or increase resource allocation to education from the national budget, especially where recession threatens the educational gains of the past; ensure that basic education is fee free, and that disparities in access to education linked to disadvantage are reduced
- 3.11 Reform pedagogy to meet the changing needs of young people, increase the availability of learning materials; and make use of opportunities to use new telecommunication technologies to improve access at affordable costs.
- 3.12 Ensure that pro-poor strategies are used to reduce costs to households, provide incentives to attend and achieve, and promote the development of understandings, values, attitudes, skills and culture that help learners make responsible life choices; assume responsibility for the environment and climate; and minimise substance abuse and other behaviours that risk ill health, including HIV/AIDS
- 3.13 Make full use of community capabilities to improve access for excluded groups including those who never enrol and offer emergency assistance to regenerate access to education in areas affected by conflict and national disasters in ways that engage communities in sustainable action.
- 3.14 Campaign to enrol all children at an appropriate age (5 or 6 years old) and develop curricula and pedagogy to minimise repetition and reduce drop out, facilitate the re-enrolment of drop outs and implement special measures to reduce inequities between groups including fee subsidies, cash transfers, scholarships and bursaries, bicycles and mid-day meal schemes.
- 3.15 Develop and adopt different curricula suited to learners' circumstances and capabilities with appropriate recognition of local languages, cultures and multi-cultural mixes, and values and preferences of students.
- 3.16 Monitor and evaluate levels of literacy and achievement of core competencies to identify schools and children performing well below their grade level with a view to reduce "silent exclusion", empower learners and ensure that learning is managed effectively.
- 3.17 Improve access to secondary schooling and higher levels by adopting measures to increase availability and affordability so that transition rates improve.
- 3.18 Enable schools to provide appropriate physical access to those with disability; ensure appropriate diagnostics, train teachers to work with children with special needs.
- 3.19 Balance the supply of qualified teachers with demand at affordable costs using appropriate training methods; implement the Teacher Recruitment Protocol; and consider multi-grade pedagogy where school size is small

4. ACHIEVING A CONTINUUM IN EDUCATION

Issues

- 4.1 Most Commonwealth countries lack adequate provision for progression through all stages of life starting with early childhood education (ECE) through to primary, secondary, higher and tertiary education, and then to adult and senior adult education.
- 4.2 ECE remains low priority in most Commonwealth countries and is often largely privatised and inaccessible to the poor.
- 4.3 While gross enrolment at primary level has significantly increased, dropout remains high and transition to secondary level remains low in many low income Commonwealth countries.
- 4.4 The cost of providing universal free secondary education is beyond the reach of low-income Commonwealth countries without reforms which reduce costs per student.
- 4.5 Inability to cope with varied learner needs and to incorporate multifaceted challenges is an issue for most governments

Recommendations

- 4.6 Improve the links and relationships between educational levels to enhance progression and participation at different stages in life; partner with the non-government sector to develop opportunities to engage with a continuum of educational opportunities for children and adults.
- 4.7 Improve the availability and quality of ECE; train and support ECE teachers to recognise and respond to learner' needs and implement appropriate strategies to achieve secure literacy and numeracy.
- 4.8 Explore and adopt strategies to increase efficiency of the school system, adopt cost recovery strategies where appropriate balance these with pro poor subsidies to ensure participation of the poor; explore alternate delivery options where these are feasible such as open schools.
- 4.9 Provide more opportunities for lifelong learning by making curricula more relevant to the needs of learners at various stages and explore flexible modes of delivery using ICT and open and distance learning.
- 4.10 Make education at all levels more relevant to employment and critical issues effecting life such as the environment, climate change and HIV/AIDS.

5. REDEFINING QUALITY IN EDUCATION

Issues

- 5.1 Despite significant success at increasing participation in basic education, many countries are not expected to achieve the goal of universal access to good quality education by 2015. Factors contributing to poor quality education include lack of consensus on what constitutes quality in education, inability to agree on criteria by which quality can be judged as well as targets and indicators by which it can be measured.
- 5.2 The poor and children with other disadvantages and vulnerabilities remain excluded or only experience education of low quality. Differences in access linked to gender persist despite many years of gender sensitisation, poor health and nutrition can compromise sustained access, loss of a parent and other household shocks may undermine participation.
- 5.3 Unnecessarily narrow definitions of the quality of education can compromise progress. Where quality is limited to literacy, numeracy and characteristics of the learning environment, it overlooks needs to acquire of values, attitudes and skills that promote critical thinking, peace, respect and human understanding and many other valued outcomes.

Improving the quality of education can be hampered by inadequate resource allocation to education and may also be adversely affected by poor use of existing resources.

- 5.4 Teachers are at the heart of education provision but too often investment in improving teacher competence and capability is not prioritised; skill shortages, low motivation, absenteeism and poor teacher management remain important issues in some systems which need to be addressed
- 5.5 Teachers need to respond adequately to the changing pedagogical requirements of a fast changing world and changing characteristics of students.

Recommendations

- 5.6 Increase access to quality education by working to generate greater consensus about what constitutes quality education and how it may be provided; identify appropriate targets and indicators to judge progress and monitor the impact of interventions
- 5.7 Exclusions linked to poverty, gender, health status, and household and other forms of disadvantage need identification and constructive intervention; Pro poor subsidies, gender responsive pedagogy, social safety nets, can all assist in reducing disadvantage
- 5.8 Broader views of quality education are needed which promote cognitive, affective and other valued outcomes and help generate commitment to creative and effective pedagogy and educational practice.
- 5.9 Wherever possible investment in learning resources should be maintained or increased and steps taken to make the best use of existing resources
- 5.10 Investment is needed to improve the quality of teacher-training, expand opportunities for professional development, improve recruitment systems, establish

better reward systems, enhance learning skills, and increase the effectiveness of school management.

- 5.11 Continuing professional development is needed to upgrade teaching skills to reflect new needs arising from globalisation, the changing environment, different groups of learners, and the availability of new learning technologies

6. REALISING THE POTENTIAL OF NON-STATE ACTORS

Issues

- 6.1 Limited partnerships between schools and tertiary education institutions and civil society within and across countries which can enable personal, professional and community development and create active global citizens. Partnerships can bring global dimensions to the curriculum and contribute to social cohesion and respect and understanding.
- 6.2 Problematic regulatory environment for private and non-profit organisations offering education services.
- 6.3 Ambiguities about legal status, accountability and beneficial ownership in some public-private partnerships and public concern with public subsidy of commercial gain
- 6.4 Weak regulatory capacities and structures of governance, lack of transparency and risks of corruption.
- 6.5 Complex and costly processes of interaction between state and non-state organisations in education, particularly when there is an imbalance in status and experience.

Recommendations

7. Encourage and support partnerships between educational organisations including those between public and private/NGO organisations
- 7.1 Ensure statutory registration of all bodies and appraise their provision according to preset national standards.
- 7.2 Create mechanisms to impede profiteering from education in poor and difficult communities including transparency and accountability.
- 7.3 Require all bodies (public and private) to adopt and adhere to appropriate governance strategies.
- 7.4 Undertake rigorous risk assessments to the person and institutional capacities to deliver services.

8. CONCLUSION

The Stakeholders Forum notes that while there is a desire among Ministers to move forward, progress in educational development since the 16 CCEM has been uneven and much distance remains to be travelled if all children in the Commonwealth are to benefit from universal access to basic education, young adults are to realise fully their educational potential, and adults and senior citizens are to enjoy access to educational services. The Stakeholders Forum draws attention to continued needs for action under four headings:

Access: Access to education has improved, especially where successful programmes to support Education for All have been implemented. However access to basic education remains compromised where attendance is irregular, many children in school are overage, learning achievement is low, learning materials are scarce, and educational infrastructure is poor quality.

Equity: Poverty continues to be the largest single source of exclusion from basic education in many low income Commonwealth countries. Other factors include in different ways gender, poor health and nutrition, household shocks and family insecurity, and in some cases social exclusions related to ethnicity, language and location.

Efficiency: Far more children and adults could benefit from access to education if provision was managed more efficiently. Costs are sometimes high because of inefficiencies in teacher deployment, poor management of human resources, low productivity, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of incentives to be more efficient.

Effectiveness: Evidence on levels of achievement remains unsatisfactory in some systems. Many children perform well below the norms for their age and grade, too many fail to complete primary and secondary schooling successfully, and too much learning is considered of little value by those who are asked to explain reasons for drop out. Whatever steps Ministers may take deliver on promises to improve the reach and quality of investment in education they should consider how they are likely to enhance access, equity, efficiency and effectiveness.

The Forum also reaffirms the Commonwealth Foundation's Kampala Civil Society Statement to the 2007 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and calls upon Ministers to implement paragraph 50g which states: "We request Commonwealth Education Ministers to report on ways in which education systems can contribute to creating a culture of peace, tolerance, mutual respect and other key Commonwealth values."

The Forum also reaffirms the need for Ministers to implement existing commitments to educational development and human rights advanced at the Commonwealth level.



Twin Towers next to the KL Conference Centre



Opening Ceremony KLCC



Keith Lewin at the opening reception with Hajah Noor Rezan bt. Bapoo Hashim, Deputy Director, Ministry of Education Malaysia



Opening Address by the Prime Minister of Malaysia Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak



Ministers in Conference



Closing Ceremony

