



Commonwealth Consortium for Education

Message to Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, Port of Spain, November 2009

Commonwealth Educational Partnerships for an Equitable and Sustainable Future

1. The Commonwealth Consortium for Education, a grouping of two dozen Commonwealth associations in the education sector (see reverse), asks Heads of Government at this CHOGM to focus particularly on ways to create and sustain partnerships between the peoples of the Commonwealth, and between civil society organisations and governments. In essence the Commonwealth is a community of peoples, owing its very existence to past human movement and to ongoing ties across the Commonwealth between individuals, and among the groups and institutions to which they belong. In Trinidad Heads can strengthen those ties.
2. In 2009 the Commonwealth has had cause to celebrate not just its own 60th birthday, but also the 50th anniversary of programmes of Commonwealth educational co-operation launched at the first Commonwealth Educational Conference in Oxford in 1959. At that seminal conference the corner-stones of the educational co-operation programmes that have benefited our countries in the last fifty years were laid. We refer to the series of Education Ministers' Conferences (of which the 17th was hosted by the Government of Malaysia in June this year), to the Commonwealth Education Liaison Unit that has evolved into today's Commonwealth Secretariat Education Section, and to the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP).
3. From the seeds planted then - still earlier in the case of some civil-society associations - the Commonwealth infrastructure for educational co-operation has grown to surpass that in any other sector. In addition to the education work of the Secretariat and Foundation, and the flagship Scholarship Plan, important programmes and linkages are managed by the Commonwealth of Learning, the Commonwealth Education Trust, the Association of Commonwealth Universities, and the two dozen Commonwealth organisations belonging to this Consortium¹. Beyond them is a wide range of formal and informal programmes, links and exchanges between schools and colleges, professional associations and unions, charitable bodies and faith groups.
4. Investment in education is key to broadening opportunities for individual development, thus creating a more equitable society, and to bridging the knowledge and skills gap between nations. As a long-term investment that inculcates understanding, motivation and values in learners it is a key contributor to sustainability, by developing the creativity and effecting the behavioural change on which the survival of our ecosystems depends.
5. With the foregoing in mind we request Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Port of Spain to:
 - Mark the 50th anniversary of the first Commonwealth Education Conference with a statement recognising the value that Commonwealth states and peoples have derived from educational co-operation.
 - Re-affirm the central role that education, training and research play in the quest for equity and sustainability.
 - Make long-term commitments to successful Commonwealth education programmes like the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan, the Virtual University of Small States of the Commonwealth and the Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol to ensure their sustainability in the long term.
 - Encourage all member states to contribute at an appropriate level to the CSFP Endowment Fund and within their capacity to offer Commonwealth Scholarships to their Commonwealth partners.
 - Request Education Ministers to follow up discussions at 17CCEM by preparing a report on the development of national and collective education strategies to foster respect, understanding and good citizenship.
 - Promote the creation of partnerships between schools, colleges and universities across the Commonwealth, and through professional associations, trades unions and voluntary groups of all kinds.
 - Initiate a review, leading to firm proposals for action, of ways in which civil-society bodies, Commonwealth agencies and governments can develop fruitful partnerships in education to benefit all Commonwealth peoples.

¹ The Consortium has charted these in two new 2009 publications "Commonwealth education directory 2009" and "Working together in education: a Commonwealth update".

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Members of the Commonwealth Consortium for Education at October 2009

FULL MEMBERS

Association of Commonwealth Examination and Accreditation Bodies
Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies
Association for Commonwealth Studies
Association of Commonwealth Universities
British Empire and Commonwealth Museum
Commonwealth Association of Museums

Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa
Commonwealth Association of Science Technology and Mathematics Educators
Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management (CCEAM)

Commonwealth Countries' League Education Fund
Commonwealth Human Ecology Council
Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit
Commonwealth Teachers' Group
Council for Education in the Commonwealth
The English-Speaking Union of the Commonwealth
Institute of Commonwealth Studies (University of London)

League for the Exchange of Commonwealth Teachers

Link Community Development

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Commonwealth Business Council
Commonwealth Relations Trust
Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council
Royal Commonwealth Society
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SPECIAL MEMBERS

Commonwealth Secretariat
Commonwealth Foundation
Commonwealth of Learning