

# COMMONWEALTH REGIONAL TRAINING COURSES FOR EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATORS AND SUPERVISORS

The University of Nairobi is hosting a three-month course from January 17th to April 15th, 1977 for Educational Administrators and Supervisors from all the Commonwealth countries in Africa.

The course which is jointly financed by the Commonwealth Secretariat Education and the Kenya Ministry of Education was for some 30 participants chosen from District Education Officers, Inspectors of Schools, Secondary School Headteachers and Principals of Teachers' Colleges in the member countries of the Commonwealth in Africa. The course aimed at bringing the fundamental professional knowledge of the participants up-to-date, so that they could further develop their understanding of the issue and techniques involved in effective teaching-learning process. It was also aimed at guiding the participants on how to improve their own general education and expose them to skills and techniques for effective school administration and supervision. It attempted to develop adequate professional competence in the participants, so that they would act as resource persons in their own countries and organize similar in-service courses for their colleagues and subordinates.

The course was officially opened by the Minister of Education Mr. Taita Towet on 17th January, 1977 at 10.00 a.m. in the Faculty of Education Lecture Theatre II. In his opening speech the Minister said he hoped that at the end of their three-month course they would no doubt come out with concrete suggestions on how best the education institutions may be tackled and how best to improve the curricula.

The Minister pointed out that experience had proved that in the organization of in-service education programme priority should be given to the in-service education of key personnel. The encouragement for and guidance in the in-service education should come from the senior officers in charge of school administration and supervision and directly responsible for the qualitative improvement of school education.

In the past, he further pointed out, a mistake made in the field of in-service education in many countries had been that most of the attention was paid to the education of teachers. The education of school administrators and supervisors was generally ignored or provided through very short nationally organized courses. Experience, he went on, was left to be the best teacher of educational administrators and supervisors. The result has been that due to their lack of adequate and up-to-date understanding of the concept, need, aims and objectives, methods, etc. of education, they have often created difficulties in the way of their teachers in implementing the new ideas gained during their pre-service and in-service education, and consequently, much of the time, money and energy spent on the education of teachers were wasted.

In order to rectify this situation and also in view of the important role education played in the realization of national aims and objectives and socio-economic development of the developing countries, he said, both the Fifth Commonwealth Education Conference in Australia (1971) which the Minister himself attended and the Specialist Conference on Teacher Education in Changing Society held at Nairobi in 1973, underlined the Universities of Malaya in Malaysia and Jamaica in the West Indies.

The meeting had strongly endorsed the need for establishing regional training centres in the Commonwealth. With an over-riding concern that courses should be practical in their orientation, and relevant to the needs of participating countries, agreement was reached on the content and learning methods to be used and on the principles applicable to the administration and development of regional courses for educational supervisors. The planning committee provided a base and rationale of training which were expected to be adopted in all the regions of the Commonwealth. The curriculum for the three-month course the Minister was opening

was prepared on the basis of the recommendations of the planning committee.

The Minister noted that in some countries, Universities and teachers colleges offered courses in educational administration, but most of these catered mainly for pre-service entry and they provided longer courses than was envisaged for Commonwealth regional training centre. The committee agreed that the need for in-service courses of 2-9 months was far greater than the provision available in any country represented. It seemed likely that the participants who already faced the responsibilities of running a college, a school, or a school district would gain more from a practical course in this area than did pre-service entrants who were not immediately faced with the same tasks. Participants in a regional course would also have the additional advantage of sharing the experience of others from other countries.

The target groups for the three months course, he said, were not those at the pinnacle in their ministries of education like permanent secretaries and the P.E.O.'s, who would perhaps be too busy to leave their work for any period of time. It had been agreed that those to be chosen would be lower down the echelon but would still be people who were in a position to influence policy and to ensure that the schools would benefit from the training.

The Minister continued and noted that it had been found desirable to train participants from different levels in the same country so that when they return home they could work as a team and their influence might be more effective. If a head-teacher, senior education officer and a director took part together in a course they would form a core of people with experience in this kind of training, who would then initiate national training sciences. He hoped that those who had come to this first course would leave with enough knowledge, skill and competence to do what the committee envisaged,

The Minister noted that the course was an experimental one. He, however, hoped that it would be a success so that a permanent centre could be justified. The preparation of the detailed syllabus and organization of the course had been done by the Faculty of Education and particularly by the department of Educational Admini-

stration, Planning and Curriculum Development, in complete consultation with the Ministry of Education, the University Administration and the Commonwealth Secretariat. It was therefore hoped that by the end of the three months, useful experience would have been gained to apply it in future courses in permanent regional centres in the Commonwealth countries.

Even though it had been found necessary to limit the number of participants to 30 only, the Minister hoped that in future, doors would be open to many more as more and more courses of the kind got organized.

Prior to making his speech and declaring the course open, the Minister, and the course participants who were gathered there for the official opening, were welcomed by the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Professor F.M.M.O. Okatcha, who was deputising for the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. J.N. Karanja. But before inviting the Minister to address the participants, Professor Okatcha, as an illustration of the kinds of problems school administrators were faced with said the following.

"One morning a fourteen year old secondary school pupil reported late for his class. Because of this lateness, the teacher punished the pupil. At about 6 p.m. when the boy had returned home, he saw the teacher on a bicycle. The boy took some stones and started throwing at the teacher. The following morning when the boy went to school, he was punished by the teacher for having thrown stones at home. What is not clear here is *whether or not it is a proper educational practice for teachers to punish pupils for offences committed after school hours. Should this be the responsibility of the parents or the heads of schools?*" To conclude, he hoped that the participants to the course would be able to discuss this issue and other related issues in educational administration and supervision.



The Minister for Education Mr Taitta Toweett M.P., makes his address at the official opening of the Commonwealth Secretariat Seminar held at the University of Nairobi. Listening attentively are the Director of Education Division in the Commonwealth Secretariat, Dr. Cockey (2nd Right), Dean of Faculty of Education, Prof. F.M. Okatcha, and the Director of Bureau of Educational Research in the Faculty of Education, Dr. A. Maleche (farthest back) and Mr Ngunze from the Ministry of Education.



The Minister of Education, Mr Taitta Toweett happily declares the seminar open. Also in the picture is the Director of Education in the Commonwealth Secretariat.



A section of the participants and other guests who attended the opening ceremony listen attentively as the Minister of Education makes his opening address.