16CCEM Stakeholders' Forum:
A Report on the Discussions

This report provides a summary of the discussions and debates that took place and the recommendations that were made during the 16CCEM Stakeholders' Forum. The report here needs to be read in conjunction with the Statement to the Ministers which is recorded elsewhere and is posted on the conference website. Most presentations made by the speakers in the various sessions also appear on the website and need to be read by those interested in a fuller exposition of the ideas summarised here – which largely reflect discussions in each session. The keynote addresses by Graca Machel and Blade Nzimande also appear on the website.

In the context of an international focus on quality of education, the focus of the Stakeholders' Forum was deliberately placed around the dynamics of achieving a quality education everywhere in the Commonwealth. The overall theme, namely, ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION: FOR THE GOOD OF ALL, sought to bring into perspective the possibilities and challenges for achieving quality education for all. Four sub-themes provided a framework for how the conference could engage with the issues, dynamics and politics of the main theme. These were:
1. Increasing Access to Quality Education
2. Globalisation, Development and Quality Education
3. The Right to Quality Education
4. Resourcing/Financing of Quality Education

Inevitably, it was difficult to manage discussions in streams in isolation of the issues that constituted the focal substance of other streams. There was, nonetheless, a basic coherence to the presentations in each sub-theme. Each sub-theme was structured around six complementary sessions which sought to draw out the major issues in the discussion relating to it.

Rapporteurs were appointed for each theme. They had responsibility for recording and summarising the proceedings. Their notes were used in the development of the Statement made to the Ministers and in the compilation of this report.

Stream One: Increasing Access to Quality Education

The six sessions in this stream were organised around the following session-headings:
- Universal primary education
- Improving epistemological access
- Attaining gender equity in education access
- Learning support materials and technologies (LSMTs)
- Training the teachers to provide quality education
- Increasing access to quality higher education

In the course of urging the Forum to address itself to overcoming the barriers to learning that impinge on learners' human rights, the presenters in this session complemented each other well in their mix of critique, analysis and recommendations. The presentations included a critique of the dominance of English and other colonial languages, a comment on the loss of local cultures and the emergence of market-based measures to manage school attendance, and the recommendation that new interactive technologies be deployed to assist with ameliorating the worst forms of school exclusion.

The point of departure for the presentations was that early education in the mother tongue is an essential platform for all the effective learning that a child will undertake in his or her life. In relation to this argument which was made powerfully by the first speaker but repeated by others, a key presentation in this session urged that it is necessary for education to recognise the rich cultural capitals that poor people transact amongst themselves and to find ways of validating this for the poor especially but also for others in the broader education environment.

An argument was also made for the abolition of school fees so that the poor and marginalised could access education and enjoy their rights to primary education. Key issues addressed in the session focused on:
- The rights of the poor and marginalised children to access quality education and the consequent requirement of governments to incorporate broader social considerations that go beyond the conventional indicators used in education systems
- The valuing of mother tongue for effective learning
- The incorporation of local and indigenous knowledges in the curriculum
- Responding appropriately to how much schooling costs poor households, and
- The use of qualitative indicators (beyond statistics) such as enrolments to gain a more holistic measure of whether access equity is being achieved.

The second session on Universal Primary Education emphasised the following points:
- Global Monitoring Reports show that significant numbers of children, girls and adults from the poorest households of society, and those living in rural areas, sub-Saharan Africa and highly populated countries, are missing out on education.
- Quality should not be counterposed to equity because they are twin factors that accelerate progress.
- Poverty-stricken children, who are the targeted beneficiaries of UPE, are likely in their local contexts only to have access to printed materials as the source of knowledge and information. This emphasises the importance of printed learning resources at schools serving children from poor communities.

The speakers proposed strategic ways in which to address these challenges, such as early childhood care, no-fee schooling, grants and scholarships, and incentive schemes, investment in teacher recruitment and training, assuring the relevance and flexibility of learning, and developing school governance with the effective participation of communities. Against the repeated recommendation that ICTs could be used to expand access, the clear warning was issued that poorly considered ICT innovations were, in the end, an imposition on under-prepared environments and could come to constitute a new problem for those communities.

The third session in this sub-theme, Attaining Gender Equity in Educational Access, highlighted practical issues around gender to show what the new significant problems are that are emerging for a theoretical discussion of gender. The discussion began with an interesting critique of the way in which the focus on male underachievement in education, as 'gender-privileging', had led to the emergence of what was called a male-elite rear-guard reaction. This was followed by a discussion that highlighted the problem of the invisibility of gender violence in schooling and which sought to show that gendered inequality, violence and HIV infection are linked issues in education. Another input suggested that much modern policy in gender and education is misguided in so far as it seeks parity rather than equality. In attempting to give recommendations, the presenters suggested that quantitative measures of gender equity achievements need to be deepened through the use of richer qualitative indicators.

The session on Learning Support Materials and Technology, the fourth, appropriately looked at issues of the accessibility of technology, their costs and their limitations. Taking the conversation around ICT use that was emerging in several sessions a great deal further, and in the process paying much more attention to the strengths and weaknesses of ICTs for expanding access, the first presentation correctly pointed out how much eLearning is increasingly being used for local rather than distance learning processes and that it has not attracted a fundamental rethinking of pedagogy. In supporting this argument, a South African presenter explained how the establishment of what are called education centres which could support rural educational institutions and teachers could assist in bridging the digital divide for individual teachers and institutions disadvantaged through the isolation in rural areas. Drawing attention to some difficulties here, a third speaker said that even where centres are being established, it is still necessary to pay attention to keeping the cost of learning and teaching support materials down. Print and electronic materials and resources each had distinct advantages but any reproduction for educational use incurred a royalty or copyright cost, and these are especially prohibitive for institutions operating on low budgets.

In the two presentations in the fifth session, Increasing Access to Quality Higher Education, one presenter discussed the increasing internationalisation of access to higher education evident in cross-border student mobility, and trans-national institutional collaborative agreements, and the other reflected on the experience of a South African distance institution in managing the demands and tensions of increasing access, maintaining quality, lowering costs and meeting diverse needs in distance education. The first speaker stressed that students' chances to access higher education could be improved through interventions early in their schooling, and higher education could be improved through new modes and models of delivery, accommodating new providers beyond the state, and recognising that a quality higher education experience should be more permeable with trans-national opportunities. Additional issues raised included the fact that there had emerged a rise in private providers and a global shift in the locus of the world's major higher education institutions away from Western countries. In dealing with these developments, the recommendation was made that the Unesco/OECD guidelines be used as an important support to assist governments and institutions to quality assure and regulate the trans-national movement of higher education students and staff.

The final session in this sub-theme related to Training Teachers and School Managers to Provide Quality Education. Not unexpectedly, the discussion was varied and elicited a range of different and contested approaches. The first speaker contended that effective school managers are a key element of quality education in schools. The second and fourth speakers proposed that the duration of ITE programmes should be reduced. The assumption, argued one speaker, could be made that a student-teacher's commitment to his/her future profession would compensate for the shorter training programme. The third speaker presented a critique of ITE and continuous professional development (CPD) based on his observations of current offerings in South Africa. The final speaker criticised full-time workplace-based ITE as overloading students and proposed that protective minima should be set. He also urged that CPD programmes should be established in all countries and CPD should be part of a teacher's contractual entitlement.

Significant about the session was the debate it raised:
• There was no consensus on the duration of ITE programmes and the relative emphasis in such programmes between content knowledge and knowledge of pedagogy. A 'one-size-fits-all' approach, it was argued by some, was not tenable.
• Since school principals are key to facilitating and overseeing that quality teaching and learning takes place in schools, the professional development of school leaders through a contextually relevant school principalship qualification should be an approach adopted more widely among member countries.

Stream Two: Globalisation, Development and Quality Education

The six sessions devoted to this topic worked through the challenges and benefits of globalisation, the impact of globalisation on human movement and, most deliberately, on the relationship of globalisation to the questions of trade, development and democracy.

The first of the six sessions in this section looked at how globalisation was shaping education agendas.

Several important points were made by speakers in this discussion. Striking in the session was how many speakers drew attention to the role of the local in relation to the global. The local is an important arena for understanding how processes of globalisation work. It was necessary to focus on how the local could be utilised in developing the possibilities that come with globalisation because this local setting understands what the issues on the ground are and what is needed to effect real change. For this reason, partnerships and creativity in financing post-primary education had to be emphasised. The nature of the partnership agreement was also made the subject of discussion, controversially, raising questions around power. At the same time, an overall increase in educational budgets, with greater financial support for secondary and higher education, is required, as is the need for higher education to establish links with the private sector. In this context, it was suggested that higher education institutions should be more responsive to the consumer behaviour adopted by students in their HE choices.

The second session on Globalisation and Migration highlighted some of the key tensions facing regions of the world, countries and individuals. Arguments were put forward for why people chose to leave their countries of birth, but also showed how these migrations impact on the capacity of countries to sustain their development trajectories. In contrast to this perspective which emphasised the experience of brain drain or loss, it was suggested that the framework or paradigm within which the discussion was set should instead be shifted to be looking at 'brain circulation' or 'brain gain'. A variation on this urged that that there should be a discouragement of what was referred to as 'brain waste'. While there was lively debate in the presentation, it was also agreed that dialogue between strategic partners (countries, multi-lateral organisations regional blocs, employment agencies, industrial partners and governmental agencies) is needed to develop frameworks to regulate student and labour flows. Central to such a dialogue was the necessity for north-south and south-south partnerships and the encouragement of policies and approaches that enable people to return to their home countries.

The third session in this stream, entitled International Trade in Educational Services, had three main speakers who spoke from the vantage points of managing a large education system, a large publishing house and, finally, of the outcomes of a large doctoral study on developments in the trade of educational services. Points raised in the previous sessions were repeated, such as the growth in cross-border services in education and of private providers, but new questions and debates were raised about the allocation of subsidies to students and service providers, whether distinctions should be made between local and foreign nationals and between public and private providers, and, controversially, about the tensions between the private and the public sector. The usefulness of national and international guidelines for the monitoring of services was debated. Inevitably GATS came under heavy scrutiny with one speaker suggesting that unless it is remodelled it will not provide sufficient protection for smaller countries. This, it was suggested, is particularly necessary because the form of the foreign presence in many parts of the world is commercial. Concerns about GATS focused on the dangers that it posed for local public institutions. It was argued that it would weaken public institutions. In light of this, it has become necessary, it was argued, for countries to seek to level the playing fields, to

strengthen state provision of services, and to raise the difficult question of the cultural and moral economies of education markets. The concept of government or state accountability is important to prioritise here, because it was felt that the politics of service delivery demand that the state should always be committed to the public good. The same demand could not be made of private providers.

In the course of the discussion, many questions were raised about the 'predatory' instinct embedded in the broad definition of services encapsulated in protocols such as those of GATS, including understandings such as, "Services are all around us…"; "Services, anything you cannot drop on your foot."

In contrast to the tenor of the foregoing discussion which pivoted on the public service as the premier site for the propagation and development of the 'public good,' the third speaker focused attention on the tensions between government and service providers and the linear argument that the private sector providers are only providers and do not add value and innovation in education delivery. The advantages of private provision were emphasised in relation to issues such as cost efficiency, the ability to measure their service and their ability to offer innovative development services.

The fourth session, Education in National Development, paid a great deal of critical attention to the issues surrounding Education for All (EFA). The suggestion was made that it has to be rethought from a single supply side model to a plural delivery model. Education could be delivered in multiple modes of learning/multiple delivery systems at various levels beyond basic education. Key to this, it was suggested, is recognising that achieving EFA requires a national or sub-national curriculum with local flexibility. It should be based on an integrated and holistic approach to teaching and learning, involving child-centred approaches and local materials. Countries have to target and involve rural and pastoralist communities which should be encouraged to take ownership of what they do. The district level should be key to leveraging participation of local communities. While these locally-based initiatives are important, it is simultaneously necessary, a speaker urged, for further and higher education capacity to be developed, especially in areas such as science, mathematics and technology.

Significantly, the session - almost uniquely so in the conference - raised the issue of climate change. It was argued that climate change has become much more than a scientific debate, but a growing public concern. Public education at all levels about this is necessary.

Related to the debate around learning was the next and fifth discussion on education and the labour market.

Given the wide-spread absence of skills in the Commonwealth, the point was made that it remained necessary for the conference to focus on skills acquisition. Skills are the key driver of economic success. Many countries lack qualified TVET lecturers. Two models of delivery for education and training of college lecturers were promoted: (1) a triad arrangement between work specialists, TVET colleges and faculties of education; and (2) a triad relationship between universities of technology, TVET colleges and members of the professions. Programmes and qualifications should be designed on a 'fit for purpose' basis, a speaker explained, and another asked that university and TVET lecturers spend time in the workplace to update knowledge and familiarise themselves with the requirements of the workplace.

The final session in the stream was devoted to a discussion of the relationship between education and what was described as 'Commonwealth values.' While it was not clearly stated what these Commonwealth values are, the discussion focused on human rights and the pedagogical approaches that are necessary for teaching human rights. Issues raised included the following:

- Helping students to learn and acquire a deep understanding of values.
- Helping students to distinguish and make linkages between the political, civil, economic and social dimensions of values.
- Showing how values can be nurtured in social dialogue, civic processes and community life.
- Basing education on concepts such as *ubuntu* (the African approach to sharing), reconciliation and justice.
- Commonness should be emphasised.
- Emphasising the multi-dimensional aspects of identity, thus allowing learners to cut across stereotypical views of other people.
- Making intercultural dialogue the key to learning about rights and values. Such dialogue must move from discussion among like-minded people to substantive initiatives that involve bringing divergent groups of people together.
- Generating the capacity for full participation in the democratic life of the school, the community and the wider world.
- Sharing examples of good practice across the Commonwealth.
- Critically focussing on the history of colonialism, dispossession and post-colonial development.
- Moving away from a mono-centric curriculum with a parochial focus on racial, ethnic or nationalist development to a non-centric focus on interdependence and co-existence.
- On-going teacher professional development to enable teachers to teach and inculcate values in light of the complex world of young people.

Stream Three: The Right to Quality Education

The first of the six sessions in this stream worked with the issues of Mitigating the Impact of HIV/AIDS. Issues raised were varied but pivoted on what the insiders, the teachers, were able to do and what value could be added by bringing outside agencies, such as NGOs, into the school.

In discussion, the following key points were raised:

- Speakers felt that there was a need for more collaborative approaches and partnerships around HIV/AIDS among all stakeholders.
- NGOs are, it was felt, limited in terms of scope and reach of interventions. To improve on this, there is a need for good advocacy strategies, a focus on what they do best, such as working on a small scale in innovative and creative ways.
- Governments have to ensure that schools are adequately resourced in terms of qualified and dedicated support staff, so that educators can focus on their core function – teaching.
- There is a need for country-wide human resources plans that take cognisance of HIV/AIDS as a strong determinant of supply and demand.
- An important observation that was made by one of the speakers was that teachers need to focus on their core function, teaching, not burdened with additional tasks related to care for HIV-infected learners. The burden of this argument was that good teaching would be as beneficial for children as the provision of welfare services.

Interestingly, the question of orphans and the complexity of their conditions received a great deal of attention in this session, as it did in the next session on disability and exclusion.

Session two dealt with the Challenges of Disability. The discussion brought to the fore some of the more challenging theoretical issues and practices relating to disability. Important general arguments were made, including the fact that much education provided to children

throughout the world failed to 'fit' with the circumstances in which children find themselves. The injunction was that systems everywhere have failed to recognise how universalised and standardised education systems fail young people and cause them to leave, drop-out and lose faith in education. The text of teaching therefore, cannot be dealt with outside of the context in which it takes place. Systems thus have to have the capacity to adapt themselves constantly.

Key recommendations emerging out of the discussion, in recognition of the Commonwealth's commitment to the Millennium Development Goals of Education for All and to the forthcoming UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in particular Article 24, were that the Ministers of Education should:

(a)   recognise the right of all learners with disabilities to education;
(b)   ensure that learners with disabilities are not excluded from early childhood education and care and from free and compulsory primary and secondary education;
(c)   take steps to ensure the development of an inclusive education system at all levels;
(d)   establish goals to enable persons with disabilities to develop to their fullest potential their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities;
(e)   ensure that the individual requirements of learners with disabilities are accommodated;
(f)   ensure that effective individualised support measures are provided in environments that maximise academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion. Such measures include:
      (i) a flexible common curriculum
      (ii) differentiated teaching methods
      (iii) appropriate assessment techniques
      (iv) suitable accessibility arrangements
(g)   ensure that all teacher education programmes and professional development programmes for teachers include full consideration of the above points.
(h)   accept that the above points will also apply to all learners experiencing barriers to learning and development within the education system and society.

Session three looked at the Right to Secondary and Higher Education. The experience of the presenters in this session provided it with its essential character. Themes picked up by all the speakers included the importance of human rights of all students and learners, particularly the right to access. A tension which was not fully articulated emerged in the discussion between what was considered to be the implicit acceptance by academic leaders of the hegemony of neo-liberalism and its human capital ideology and that of their continued commitment to the notion that education has to address several dimensions of the human being's development. The argument was made that universities are not only repositories of past human endeavour, but are specifically also instruments of civilisation. Some of the speakers spoke forcefully of the obligations of education to the latter project.

Broad areas of consensus in the discussion revolved around the following:
•   Education, or schooling, should be considered and managed in an integrated manner. Genuine, high quality access to primary education will result in a demand for secondary education. It should not be, however, just any secondary education, but rather high quality secondary education, that prepares learners for HE. This also implies concerted investment in the early childhood sector.
•   There needs to be a focus on the continuing professional development of teachers who should be skilled and empowered to deal with complex and challenging environments. Sound knowledge of subject content, innovative teaching methodologies and adequate and useful resource materials are essential.

Lifelong Learning as a Right was the focus of session four. The presentations provided substantial empirical data on the situation with respect to lifelong learning in several

countries in the world. The point of these presentations was essentially to make the argument that the right of people to lifelong learning is not being fully respected in many places.

In showing how and why this is problematic, the arguments for lifelong learning and the benefits to be derived from it were made by all the speakers. In particular, it was said that lifelong learning allows for the various purposes of learning – for work, for leisure, for life and for love - to be realised.

It was suggested that lifelong learning education policy should be embedded in the education policies of all countries and individual policies should seek out opportunities to further the progressive agenda of lifelong learning, from ECD to HE.

The fifth session in this stream looked at the Rights of Children in Schools. The session was lively and brought a diverse range of perspectives to the discussion on the value of good, rounded, and comprehensive education for all children. Highlighted was the experience of working-class children in the United Kingdom and low-caste children in India. Presentations looked at the value of sport for child development, the limiting and discriminatory perspectives teachers hold about childhood, particularly those childhoods that are different from their own in race, class, gender and caste terms.

Key points made included the following:

- There is an abundance of available evidence that sport and appropriate physical exercise enhance physical well-being, academic achievement and positive self-image among young people. Government should ensure that schools, teachers and communities are adequately resourced to provide regular and constant opportunities for sport and physical education.
- It is not only physical distance but also and particularly social and cultural distance that are embedded in the curriculum and in teacher-student relationships that prevent a child from learning.
- Social hierarchies in the classroom reduce the child's sense of self-worth.

Following this session, the final session (session six) on Defining the Right to Education flowed almost seamlessly. The session brought forth strong critiques of the dominance of cultural forms that had their origin outside of the essential experience of many local communities, the dominance of commercialised understandings of learning, the dominance of human capital approaches to education and the uncritical appropriation of science and technology.

The strong argument was made that from a macro perspective, schools look the same around the world and that the possibility for social improvement seems obvious BUT, school systems do not necessarily function as planned, some do not function at all and systems are not easy to change.

Since education is delivered in local sites, change without contextual local understanding of practice cannot bring us closer to quality education. There needs to be a top-down, bottom-up approach.

Suggestions made include the idea that national education coalitions have to be developed, and where they exist, must be strengthened, in order to mediate the tension between quantitative goals and quality of education.

Stream Four: Financing/Resourcing of Quality Education

The first of the six sessions in this sub-theme looked at Sources of Educational Funding. The following topics were discussed:

- Household financing of basic education - patterns and policy tensions
- Collaboration in Education for All - experiences of government support for non-state provision of basic education in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa
- Sources of education finance - affordable quality education in public-private partnerships.

A key issue raised by a number of speakers related to the abolition of school fees and the level (primary, secondary, tertiary) at which this could be made affordable, as well as the implications of abolishing fees for the provision of quality education. A dilemma faced by many countries is that of how to broaden participation in education without lowering the quality of education.

The three presenters proposed various strategies based on the experience of their countries or organisations. The services of the IIEP were described. It was also emphasised that governments should establish clear frameworks for state-NSP relations. To promote these it was proposed, *inter alia*, that strategies be worked out on how to use the available pool of teachers, the use of vouchers for education, so that parents can choose the school for their children.

The context against which session two worked was that of poverty, exclusion and human rights. The discussion focused on the priority areas for addressing these needs such as educational investment, strategic planning, teacher training and ICT development. The point was made emphatically that addressing poverty is primarily the responsibility of governments.

In relation to exclusion, a speaker insisted that governments increase their budget allocation to promote access to quality education, especially at secondary level. While issues such as the strengthening of teacher training and the introduction of 'smart technology' were raised, a number of speakers were more controversial. One, taking the debate in a somewhat different direction, suggested that instead of massification, governments should develop models in terms of which access could be selective based on democratic and human rights principles.

The third session on Educational Financing Systems affecting Educational Quality had three speakers who provided, variously, an overview of educational financing systems and their effect on educational quality, the different approaches countries have adopted on educational financing systems such as centralisation and decentralisation and ring-fencing. The discussion pointed to the importance of centralising and decentralising where it is appropriate, recognising the persistence of inequalities in education and the issue of commodification and decommodification of education. A new development noted in many countries is the increasing demand for private tutoring as a result of government equalisation financial policies.

Session four focused on the Role of Non-educational Spending in Improving Educational Quality. The key issue in this session, picking up the issues of the first and second sessions, is the need to consider wider contextual factors that affect educational quality. The argument was made that unless there are wider redistribution policies that seek to transform social inequalities, educational reforms are not likely to have any effect. In this respect, the role of the communities themselves, their networks and use of these networks as resources to deal with educational problems, such as HIV/AIDS, gender violence, infrastructure issues such as water and electricity, unemployment, etc, are important. Significantly, although there was an agreement on the need to deal with these non-educational factors, it was felt that there is a challenge in how to make government understand the role of non-educational factors.

Taking up the issues of civil society, the fifth session looked at the question of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). It was argued that PPPs have an important role to play in resourcing/financing of quality education. The challenge in developing countries is how to attract the interest of private sector agencies to enter into partnerships with government to provide resources or finance. During discussion time, a few issues were raised such as the need to guard against private sector agencies exploiting partnerships to serve their own interest and for a mind-shift amongst such providers around the need for the public service.

The final session in this stream examined Strategies for Achieving Resource Equity across Educational Systems, and focused on the examples of Scotland and Malaysia and the challenges they faced in establishing equitable delivery systems. The point was made that while the Scottish system is very good, it has a problem with regard to marginal or rural poor communities. What the government has not yet achieved is equity of outcomes. Malaysia, on the other hand, is faced with many challenges of diversity in its allocation of resources. The point was made that in developing countries, there is a need for political will and intervention of the central government to achieve resource equity across educational systems.