



Commonwealth Youth Programme
COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT



**CREATING A SUSTAINABLE DISTANCE EDUCATION
PROGRAMME THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS: *A Case of
Commonwealth Youth Programme***

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TABLE OF CONTENT

ITEM	PAGE
1.0 Commonwealth Youth Programme: Its mission and Objectives.....	3
2.0 Rationale for a Training programme in Youth in Development	
2.1 Why Invest in Youth Workers Training?.....	4
2.2 Does the Occupation Youth Worker Exist?.....	5
2.3 What is the Role of a Youth Worker?.....	5
2.4 Why do we Youth workers need a Specialised Training?.....	6
2.5 What do we Mean by Professionalism?.....	7
3.0 The Role of Partnerships in the Development and Delivery of the Commonwealth Youth Programme Diploma in Youth in Development	
3.1 Who are these Partners?.....	8
3.2 Developing Learning and Teaching Materials.....	9
3.3 Delivery of the Diploma.....	10
3.4 Quality Assurance.....	12
4.0 Lessons Learnt and Voices from the Partners	
4.1 Sharing tools for effective teaching and Learning.....	18
4.2 Tutor Training is a Key Aspect of Student Support.....	19
4.3 Programme Ownership is a basis for Sustainability.....	19
4.4 Partnerships help in Bridging the Distance in Distance Education...	20
4.5 Partnerships Bring in Financial Sustainability.....	20
Appendices	

1.0 COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PROGRAMME: Its Mission and Objectives

Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) is an Intergovernmental Organization created in 1973 by the Commonwealth Head of States at their meeting in Lusaka, Zambia. It works towards a society where young women and men are empowered to develop their potential, creativity and skills as productive and dynamic members of their societies and participate fully at every level of decision making and development, both individually and collectively, promoting commonwealth values of international cooperation. To pursue this mission the Commonwealth Youth programme:

- supports the efforts of member governments in the formulation of policies and development programmes which effectively address the issues and concerns of young women and men;
- assists member governments in establishing and strengthening youth ministries and independent youth networks to support policy and programme development based on the active participation of both young men and women;
- enhances the involvement of young women and men in all CYP's planning and decision-making processes;
- supports the efforts of the youth NGOs and collaborates with International Organisations in the promotion of youth development activities;
- enables young women and men to participate effectively in the planning and decision-making processes of their own countries and in the regional and international fora;
- supports and recognises initiatives by young women and men for their own social and economic development and for the development of their communities and;
- promotes greater awareness amongst young people of their role of the Commonwealth in international relations

In 1974 CYP became operational with four centers: Africa (Zambia), Asia (India), Caribbean (Guyana) and South Pacific (Solomon Islands). At that time, the main objective of CYP was to promote and facilitate the participation of young people in national development. Training was considered the most effective strategy for achieving this objective. CYP conducted a number of specialized training for youth workers at its four regional centers. As a result, CYP developed a wealth of expertise in education and training of youth workers at all levels.

Initially residential training to diploma level was provided through the regional centres. Each centre's programme was tailored to meet the needs of the particular region. These programmes produced a cadre of skilled practitioners capable of advocating the issues and concerns of young people. The quality of the programmes led Commonwealth member governments to call for increased access for a wider

range and larger numbers of people. At the same time recognizing the rapid changes taking place in the education systems as well as in the social and economic context of member states, the welfare professions, and in the daily lives of young people themselves.

In 1995, Commonwealth Youth Ministers agreed to a new Human Resource Development strategy for CYP. Under the new strategy distance education was endorsed as the primary method for ensuring greater access to training. CYP subsequently developed partnerships with Huddersfield University, the Commonwealth of Learning to design and develop the Pan-Commonwealth Diploma in Youth in Development Studies for delivery across the Commonwealth. The new programme was launched at the Commonwealth Youth Ministers' Meeting Malaysia in May 1998. Twenty-four Commonwealth Universities are now involved in delivering the diploma to 2000 registered students from the four regions of the Commonwealth.

The paper will seeks to highlight the experiences of Commonwealth Youth Programme in developing and implementing a supported distance education Diploma in Youth in Development. The paper argues that partnerships are key in creating a sustainable distance education programme which can overcome not only barriers to access but also the barriers to quality and portability of the programme. The paper also alludes to the fact that quality assurance in distance and open learning should not be compromised if sustainability is to be achieved. Distance education should not be assumed as a low-cost alternative because doing so, can undermine the quality and impact of distance education programmes by systematically depriving them of the necessary resources.

2.0 RATIONALE FOR A TRAINING PROGRAMME IN YOUTH IN DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Why Invest in Youth Worker training?

The need for youth development training emanates from the premise that - in order to work optimally with young people, the intensive, complex and demanding nature of youth work requires youth workers to possess and demonstrate a high level of knowledge, skill and self-development. The demographic imperative ensures that we pay attention to *young people*, not always for the right reasons, and sometimes for our own very selfish ends, but we pay attention no less. In our plans then, we develop *programmes* that engage young people. So, we have young people, and we have programmes, but how often do we focus on those who *deliver* these programmes – youth workers.

Often, youth workers are perceived as those whose role it is to keep young people out of the way, provide recreation and fun for them and generally keep young people off the streets through a variety of programmes. This is true, but is greater than that. There is little understanding and even less appreciation that ***Youth work is a distinctive field of practice and a highly demanding professional skill which carries with it considerable responsibilities and pressures.*** Thus, the critical need for formal recognition of both youth work and youth workers is required at a number of levels:

- at the level of young people;
- at the employer level and
- at government level.

Our advocacy work for this fledging profession and the driving force behind our work is the need to improve the delivery and quality of work through the provision of the best possible training and learning experiences. While it is true that someone without this training and quality of learning experience could work with and for young people, and that youth worker might be able to survive the experience and perform the job in a minimal way, this does not mean that we should accept such an obviously unsatisfactory situation for our children and youth. The knowledge, skills and self-development necessary to perform the important roles that a youth worker does in the day to day lives of young people requires intensive and systematic training.

2.2 Does the occupation " Youth Worker" exist?

Across many countries in the Commonwealth and beyond, we cannot even describe what a "youth worker" is or even what a youth worker does. In many countries the occupational category does not even exist, or where it does, it is yet not clearly defined or conceptualised by the majority of stakeholders, including policy makers. Therefore, Youth work is not widely recognised as a formal career as yet, and those who practise the profession are limited, and this limitation is further exacerbated by the lack of funding and other resources as well as the absence of government subsidies for posts in this field of work.

The major weakness of youth work in many countries is the absence of any direct funding and availing of resources by government to the youth work service. Neither is there provision of funds for the documentation and highlighting of effective youth work programmes nor good youth work practice. This means that the services of youth organisations are limited and they cannot provide adequately for the needs of young people.

Commonwealth Youth Programme among other things plays an advocating role. Advocacy, to try to ensure that the voice of youth workers are heard where decisions are made, training programmes are developed, priorities are set, allocation of financial resources are made and human resource development is decided upon.

2.3 What is the Role of a Youth Worker?

What does a youth worker actually do?

For the purposes of this paper, let us assume that the primary focus of youth worker is *to develop the personal, social and citizenship competencies of young people*. It could be said therefore that *youth work is essentially developmental and the personal development of young people lies at its core*. So the vision of Commonwealth Youth Programme for the diploma across the Commonwealth, is:

- The recognition of Youth in Development Work as a profession in countries of the Commonwealth and the CYP Diploma as the international standard for qualification in professional youth work.
- That Youth in Development Work is recognised and established in the curriculum of Partner Institutions, and the creation of Youth Development Departments and or Youth Studies Units.

2.4 Why do Youth Workers Need a Special Training Course?

Since youth development is about providing opportunities and capabilities to the young people it means that those working in this sector need to have a specialised body of knowledge and skills. This specialised body of knowledge and skills will enable the youth workers to perceive things differently. In addition, youth workers need specialised training because:

- Youth work just like any other development sector is increasingly evolving. This is due to the fact that the problems and challenges facing the young people are also ever evolving. The young people of any generation have unique demands, problems and characteristics. As such there is need for specialised knowledge and skills of how to respond to such challenges.
- The nature of education and training for effective youth work has evolved significantly and, as in other occupations, it is vitally important to enhance the quality of our human resources in order to ensure the quality of our youth development programmes

- It has become apparent that borrowing skills from other social and physical sciences has not been beneficial to the youth sector. For a long time, youth workers have come from physical and social sciences that do not have specialisation in youth work. The result has been mediocre services to the youth people. The specialised training in youth work is therefore inevitable if meaningful results are to be achieved in the youth sector.

Commonwealth Youth Programme believes that for a youth development training to be effective, it has to be within an educational structure which is accessible throughout the country, especially in rural areas, and without the need for youth workers to leave their paid employment to do so. It is this belief which lead to the development of a web of partnerships with universities and governments of member states.

2.5 What Do we mean by Professionalism?

We mean the recognition of the CYP Diploma by employers, national public service commissions and relevant professional bodies as a **professional qualification** deserving appropriate grading and remuneration.

By a professional qualification, we mean:

- Rigorous training to ensure professional standards of education and practice
- Competence of practise to ensure the delivery of a quality youth service
- Commitment to young people and the youth work industry;
- Accountability by youth workers;
- The development of a body of knowledge through research and documentation of good practice;
- Adherence to a code of ethics to improve the capacity of and support for individual youth practitioners

It is vitally important that those who work with young people as a profession continue to grow and develop themselves in order to:

- enhance their effectiveness;
- maintain their enthusiasm and commitment;
- model the process of human growth and development for the young people with whom they work

The importance of partnerships in developing any profession cannot be overemphasised. Different players in the partnership web need to perform specific tasks if the profession is to be developed and above all be able to be sustained. Experience has shown that disintegrated and uncoordinated efforts have in many sectors of development not produced sustainable results.

3 THE ROLE OF PARTNERSHIPS IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY OF THE COMMONWEALTH YOUTH DIPLOMA IN YOUTH IN DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Who are these Partners?

The Diploma has now completed the Pilot phase in the Asia, Caribbean and South Pacific regions, and in a couple of countries in the Africa region, and it will in early 2003 be reviewed by Commonwealth Youth Ministers to enable them to shape a future course of action. This is because the mandate for the Pilot Programme runs until June 2003.

Commonwealth Youth Programme is piloting a multi-partner and multi-institutional, accredited programme which is innovative and groundbreaking. It therefore, requires continual assessment.

This Programme brings together Governments, NGO's, the corporate sector, the youth sector and young people themselves in a unique programme. - It is a *process* project because it involves many players working together towards a common goal. This means that we have to forego the traditional ways in which partners have done business in the past; it means we are moving into uncharted territory, we have no blueprint, we are shaping it together.

There are many other partners which exist in the pan-Commonwealth Diploma delivery mechanism, all of which comprise a spider web of interdependent and independent relationships to ensure quality. An increase in the range of partners/ sponsors now includes the local private sector, trans-national corporations, donor agencies, multilateral development agencies, foundations and NGOs. Each region has its own unique web of partnership. While in other countries governments are providing 50% of tuition, in some regions governments are committed to offer quality work placements within government departments. In all the four regions of the Commonwealth the partnerships are formalised through the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Financial Agreements (FA) signed by the Secretary General of the Commonwealth, the Vice Chancellor of a respective University and the Ministry of Youth in a particular countries. The signing of the MOU and FA at the highest level of authority has not only ensured the institutional links but has meant that the partnership remains even when personalities move on.

Continuous consultations with all Partners has to maintained the dialogue in relation to the Programme and to ensure its sustainability. The need for a permanent constructive engagement is continuous because this process is one of those consultations. It is not the intention of the CYP to impose the programme on Universities, but at the same time neither do Universities have to view the programme as separate from their usual operations. The partnerships seek to work *within* the university systems; but also take cognisance of those outside of it. Partner institutions, and indeed all the other stakeholders have to have clear and defined roles, and the standards for those roles have to be explicit, transparent and **agreed upon**. This has been achieved through various regions and institution specific meetings but also through pan-Commonwealth fora. Agreement on a common goal has not been easy, neither is the process for getting there always very clear. It is further complicated by another spider web of relations, relations between partner institutions and partner support institutions, where Partner Support institutions have to provide quality assurance through institutes other than themselves.

3.2 Developing Learning and Teaching Materials

After deciding that the best mode of delivery for the training in youth development is through distance education, Commonwealth Youth Programme subsequently developed partnerships with Huddersfield University, the Commonwealth of Learning module writers and Instruction Designers from various Commonwealth universities to design and develop the Pan-Commonwealth Diploma in Youth in development Studies for delivery across the Commonwealth¹. The result of the partnership in material development thirteen core modules² and a tutors' manual which have cases studies from different regions. The modules have gone through the accreditation process at 24 universities and in all cases, they have been approved as materials which are fit for a diploma programme. The learning and teaching materials were developed based on the objectives of the diploma programme which are to:

- Provide flexible and accessible learning opportunities for young women and men who are involved in youth development activities;
- Offer programmes of HRD activity to priority groups whose work has significant impact upon the issues faced young women and men;
- Develop non-traditional methodologies, such as distance education where applicable, to enhance cost effectiveness and wider access to training;
- Develop replicable models of excellence in the sphere of youth focused HRD;
- Build the institutional capacity and management systems of tertiary institutions for the delivery of the Diploma in Youth and Development through distance education and to provide financial resources to support institutions involved in the implementation of the Diploma;
- Develop and distribute modules and support training materials, at both tertiary and more elementary levels, to participating institutions and training partners;
- Develop a resource network of tutors, mentors, and support staff to manage the delivery of the Diploma through distance education, and a cadre of trainers and personnel to deliver stand-alone and short-term training courses. These courses may be especially targeted at building expertise in the area of young people with special needs, for example HIV/AIDS modules, and building courses that use popular mediums for reaching young people, for example - Youth Leadership through Sports module.

3.3 Delivery of the Diploma

Since Commonwealth Youth Programme is not an academic institution and that even if it were one, it could not offer to all commonwealth countries, it was felt necessary to enter into partnerships with credible universities which are offering distance and

¹ See appendix 1 for the development phases

² The list of modules is in Appendix 2

open learning. A total of 24 universities are now involved in the delivery of the diploma³. The model of partnership differs from region to region. In other regions, CYP is in partnership with a university (Partner Institution) while in Africa, some Partner Institutions are also delivering in partnership with other universities (Partner Support Institution).⁴ In addition, the member states in Africa are active partners in the sense that they provide 50% of the tuition fees.

The agreed mode of delivery of the pan-Commonwealth diploma in youth in Development Studies is supported distance education. This methodology:

- Is flexible, and allows the programme to be adapted to meet the needs of different learners and situation;
- Uses a range of teaching and learning methods, including print materials, tutorials, individual and group work;
- Makes use of available technology whilst recognizing its limitations and the need for face-to-face learning situations; Links in with existing programmes run by partner institutions;

The following four forms of support are available to all students:

1. *Learning Materials*

The learning materials are designed to actively engage students in meaningful learning. Learners are asked to perform certain tasks, to experiment, to help make sense of the concepts and to find ways of interrogating theory through practice and vice-versa. The materials relate directly to the generic core competencies and the learning outcomes of each module.

2. *Tutorial Support*

Learners have a minimum of six (6) hours of tutorial support per module. The approach to providing this support vary from institution to institution, depending on the number of students and other circumstances. Support is also offered face-to face (either one-to-one or in groups), via telephone or through computer-based communications systems.

³ See Appendix 3

⁴ See appendix 4 for Partnership models

3. *Learning Contract*

The learning contract is designed to guide and direct the learning process. This is important when:

- (a) learners are required to engage in self-directed study, and
- (b) persons involved in supporting the learning process can not meet often.

Learning Contracts create independent, assertive learners who are seeking out learning opportunities for them to demonstrate academic and professional progression and development . They also focus the attention of learners on providing evidence that they have met the module outcomes. Learning contracts provide clarity as a result of dialogue between learners and tutors about what they need to do and more important how to achieve this. Thus, they allow negotiation about appropriate pieces of work to be submitted for assessment. In addition, learning contracts allow flexibility and variety in the form that assessed work can take, e.g. reports, seminar papers, academic essays, critical recordings and reflections, and policy papers.

4. *Practice Development*

Each module of the programme requires learners to undertake projects or practical work within an organisation. This is designed to provide opportunities for them to apply their knowledge and to understand the situations in which they work. This also helps them to develop as reflective practitioners, and to apply theory and practice in a balanced way. Learners are required to record their experiences in their learning journal. These journals are assessed and graded. This aspect makes this course different from academic courses. The Commonwealth Youth Programme diploma is therefore both an academic and professional course.

3.4 *Quality Assurance*

When Quality Assurance is used in distance education, there is a tendency to think that it applies only to producing quality materials. But quality materials are not enough if they are not delivered properly. Therefore operational processes and systems are just as important as the materials themselves. Every partner must have clear and well-understood responsibilities before quality can be ensured. Since we cannot expect everything to proceed smoothly, especially since we are about forging new ground, the Quality Assurance Mechanisms provides us with a tool to help ensure that the University can make positive interventions, where it needs to, to raise the standard of delivery of a youth work course.

Commonwealth Youth Programme established a pan-Commonwealth Quality Assurance so that:

- All participating institution's mission and aims are known and understood by all the other partners and stakeholders;
- The systems through which work will be done are well thought out, foolproof and communicated to all;
- The roles and responsibilities are clear and understood;
- The institution's sense of what quality means is defined and documented;

- Systems are established to assist partners and to facilitate all of us working to plan;
- In the event of things going wrong, there are agreed ways to rectify them.

Objectives of the Pan-Commonwealth Quality Assurance

- To build robust and genuine partnerships, based on equality and equity and based on open and honest dialogue;
- To have a shared vision and build consensus on the aims and objectives of the Diploma;
- To delineate the different roles and responsibilities of each key stakeholder, have a clear focus on the tasks of each partner and ensure that each partner delivers what they say they will to agreed standards;
- To promote a youth empowerment paradigm and contribute to the highest level of service that young people deserve;

Underpinning Values for Pan-Commonwealth Quality Assurance Mechanisms?

The pan-Commonwealth quality assurance mechanism is based on 3 values

◆ Quality

- High quality teaching and learning
- Strong student support systems
- Ongoing staff development activity
- Review of management and organisation
- Curriculum delivery and development

◆ Equality

- Opening up access to learners
- Parity of standards
- International recognition (e.g. someone who passes the course in Sierra Leone should be able to practise in Guyana)
- Equal partnerships

◆ Democracy

- Accountability
- Transparency and accountability
- Acknowledging regional contexts (e.g. Region-specific modules)
- Capacity building

How is Pan-Commonwealth Quality Assurance being achieved?

The Pan-Commonwealth Quality Assurance is being achieved through:

1. Instructional materials

Instructional materials from the CYP have been prepared with Quality Assurance mechanisms in place. But, however good the materials may be, no effort will be spared to reach the highest standards. Materials can still be further improved by feedback from learners through:

- Systematic feedback from learners through their assignments (e.g. which assignments are too difficult or too easy?);
- Surveys – for example, asking students which assignments were most helpful;
- Student queries and letters to tutors – listening to complaints and concerns; student meetings and tutoring will bring attention to problems so that they can be tackled promptly.

2. Student support

In a classroom with face-to-face interaction, it is less likely for students to drop out. But distance education naturally has a higher attrition rate. Tutors are trained and periodically sensitise so that they are able to deal effectively with learners and promote interaction between learners themselves, and learners and tutors. This can be done through:

- Diagnostic marking – marking must explain why answers are wrong and tutors are required to write copious comments for students to learn. Marking should be prompt and returned to students as soon as possible;
- Organisation of sufficient tutorials.

3. Academic advice

It is the responsibility of the Participating institutions to:

- Inform learners who their tutors are;
- Inform tutors who their learners are;
- Ensure that learners and tutor communicate;
- Encourage learners to read other literature in addition to the instructional materials.

4. Counselling support

Learner problems that will require referral to counsellors include but not limited to:

- Financial difficulties;
- Family problems;
- Difficulty in maintaining motivation;
- Problems finding time to study;
- Physical impairments (e.g. limited mobility, hearing, sight impairment).

5. Administrative support

Learners are given the following kinds of information:

- Office hours;
- How to contact the tutor;
- Who to write to or telephone about different matters;
- Deadlines for sending tutor-marked assignments;
- Dates of exams;
- Location and hours of nearest learning centre;
- Names and addresses of other learners (with their permission) so that students can form their own study groups;
- Updates on curriculum changes.

6. Collaborative efforts

Since the CYP programme is a collaborative one, no effort is spared to cultivate and sustain the partnership. Commonwealth Youth Programme ensures that all partners have and commit full support to this partnership.

7. Training

Training and staff development is critical for ensuring quality in distance education and as such it is an integral component for this Programme. Commonwealth youth programme is encouraging participating institutions see training as an investment, not a cost. This is because knowledge expires while at the same time individuals and groups have to:

- Take on new roles, since open and learning and distance learning is unfamiliar;
- Adapt to new ways of teaching and communicating;
- Use new technologies that alter familiar processes of teaching and communication;
- Develop better skill in teamwork;
- Ensure periodic updates to keep skills and knowledge current.

Structure of the Pan-Commonwealth Quality Assurance

As the CYP is not a tertiary institution, the management and coordination of pan-commonwealth Quality Assurance is undertaken by the University of Huddersfield, who acts on its behalf.

The Pan-Commonwealth Quality Assurance team consists of 10 External Regional Moderators (ERMs):

- 3 ERMs for Africa from the University of Zambia, University of South Africa, University of Ghana, Legon;
- 2 for Asia from the Mahatma Gandhi University and the Open University of Sri Lanka;
- 2 for the Caribbean from the College of the Bahamas and the University of Guyana;
- 2 for South Pacific from the University of the South Pacific and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology;
- 1 pan-Commonwealth moderator: from the University of Huddersfield;

Each moderator is appointed and attached to the respective partner institution for a period of 3 years.

Roles for each partner in the Pan-Commonwealth Quality Assurance Mechanism

Roles and responsibilities for each partner are clearly outlined and shared by everyone. There are many partners in quality assurance, which form a spider web of relationships to ensure quality:

1. The CYP Pan-Commonwealth Office (PCO)

The Pan-Commonwealth Office (PCO) has overall responsibility for the implementation of the Diploma. The PCO ensures that the courses are delivered across the 4 regions in a consistent and integrated way, in accordance with its new strategy. The PCO also ensures that appropriate arrangements are in place to establish and operate the programme in an effective manner.

The PCO:

- Establishes mechanisms for QA working alongside the PCQAA;
- Provides the module framework;
- Establishes agreements with each partner institution for the accreditation and delivery of the Diploma and carry out the necessary follow-up work;
- Provides each partner institution with supported distance education material on the common core curriculum;
- Monitors and reviews the Programme;
- Takes appropriate action based on the Pan-Commonwealth annual PCQA report
- Provides and delivers the 13 core Modules and Tutor Guides, brochures, etc;
- Provides Proformas for reporting/monitoring and review;
- Facilitates international links;
- Partner MoU's and Financial Agreements.

2. The CYP Regional Offices

The Regional offices are a key body with overall responsibility for the delivery of the Diploma, ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place to establish and deliver the programme within the region.

- Ensures that the programme is informed by and applied in appropriate manner taking specific regional requirements on board;
- Takes part in publicising the Programme in member countries;
- Assists in recruitment and selection of students together with partner institutions;
- Prepares and produces regional-specific materials to supplement the core modules;
- Provides tutor training and capacity building assistance in accordance with the legal agreement;

- Offers professional advice and guidance on youth development work to partner institutions;
- Assists the PCQAA, ERMs and the PCO in monitoring and reviewing the programme;
- Works with and builds links between member governments and partner institutions;
- Constantly monitors the delivery of the Diploma in the countries in the region, ensuring quality control mechanisms in accordance with the communication protocols;
- Produces an annual report on progress in the region based on the PCQA proforma;
- Assists partner institutions to identify appropriate work-based experience for students;
- Develops an annual report;
- Facilitates and funds the visits of the ERM to the partner institution.

3. *The Partner Institutions/Partner Support Institutions in the Regions*

- Are responsible for the internal validation and accreditation of the programme;
- Work alongside the Regional Office in recruiting and selecting students;
- Deliver the modules by the methods of supported distance education;
- Provides tutorial support to the students;
- Makes available the resources of the institutions to students;
- Establishes internal examination and quality assurance processes;
- Provide information as requested by other partners mentioned in the Agreement including an annual report pro-forma;
- Liaise with the ERMs appointed through the PCQAA (on behalf of the CYP);
- Provide a sample of scripts for each module to the ERM;
- Ensure that internal QA mechanisms are applied;
- Assists on monitoring and review of the programme;
- Produces an annual report for the CYP and the PCQAA on the implementation of the Programme. The report reviews the matters as set out in the Notes of Guidance, in accordance with the reporting format in the Financial Agreement and as per the proforma supplied by the PCQAA.

4. *The Pan-Commonwealth Quality Assurance Agent (PCQAA)*

The Pan-Commonwealth Quality Assurance Agent is the University of Huddersfield, which acts on behalf of the CYP. The University of Huddersfield was selected to be the Pan-Commonwealth Quality Assurance Agency based on two reasons:

- Up until May 2000, the United Kingdom was not located in any region of the Commonwealth. Sourcing a University based in the UK gave it a greater degree of objectivity;

- Youth and Community work training track record Huddersfield has a good track record in youth and community work based on a youth development paradigm.

The PCQAA:

- Accredits the programme in conjunction with the PCO;
- Is responsible for quality assurance for the programme as a whole;
- Appoints, coordinates and supports the work of the ERMs;
- Moderates a sample of students' work at Pan-Commonwealth level;
- Organises and facilitates the annual meeting of ERMs;
- Assists in monitoring and review of the programme;
- Offers advice and guidance to the RCs;
- Provides a pan-Commonwealth annual report to the CYP;
- Liaises closely with the PCO.

5. *The External Regional Moderators (ERMS)*

The External Regional Moderators (ERMs) act as the interface between partner institutions, regional offices and the PCQAA (acting on behalf of CYP). In so doing, during the Pilot phase, their role is critical to the process of monitoring and evaluation. Their remit is not to detract from the internal procedure of any one institution, but to bring a value-added dimension.

- Is in frequent (usually bi-monthly) contact with the partner academic institution and the RC and as the situation demands;
- Receives sample scripts for each module from the partner institution;
- As an observer, attends examination boards of the partner institution (whenever possible and as agreed by the RC);
- Produces an annual report commenting on the development and implementation of the Diploma as per the proforma of the PCQAA;
- Attends an annual meeting of all ERMs involved in the Diploma;
- Provides advice, guidance and support to the partner institution, the RCs and the PCQAA.

Each stakeholder in the PCQA process is linked to the other by agreed communication protocols in a spider web of relationships. The first pan-Commonwealth External Regional Moderators meeting took place in July 1999 (New Delhi) and the first pan-Commonwealth moderation meeting took place in July 2000 (Dhaka). The latter meeting examined over 200 scripts, assignments and student journals. The second pan-Commonwealth moderation meeting took place in July 2001 (Goa). All the reports are available to all partner institutions to request.

6. *Government of Member State*

Political will and commitment

The role of governments is to ensure that CYP and participating universities are implementing a diploma programme as mandated by the Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Youth Affairs. We are in the Pilot phase until 2003, and Governments need to provide the political will to carry the programme through. Governments should also mainstream youth development - from health to gender to community development. Mobilisation of young people will play a key role.

Funding

Another major area in which governments are expected to be active participants is in the coordination of funding for **institutional** fees. CYP has estimated a figure of US \$1 260 per student as a ballpark figure of costs of delivery of the Diploma in the Africa region. CYP commits and provides 50 percent of this cost on the condition that governments are committed to raising the other 50 percent. This responsibility can be met through a combination of funding from government departments themselves as well as contributions from other stakeholders, such as the corporate sector.

Aspects of Quality Assurance

There are seven aspects of PCQA

1. Curriculum design, content and organisation (Learning Materials)
2. Teaching Learning and Assessment
3. Student progression and achievement – (i.e. when students complete the course, do they have base of knowledge in youth work which is good enough to move up academically or professionally?)
4. Student support and guidance
5. Learning resources
6. Quality management and enhancement – (i.e. how do we improve?)
7. Aspects specific to Pan-Commonwealth operation

4 LESSONS LEARNT AND VOICES FROM PARTNERS

4.1 Sharing Tools for effective teaching and learning:

Participants in the Commonwealth Youth Programme diploma in youth development have all agreed that distance education posed distinct challenges to learners. These challenges have been solved where there have deliberate efforts for fostering certain skills, and encouraging certain activities, in learners. These have included:

- Skills development:
 - Self initiative;
 - Resourcefulness;
 - Discipline;
 - Paradigm shift in learning style (emphasis on “active learning” mindset)

- Student support initiatives:
 - Making use of resources, both within and outside the institution;
 - Forming own study groups;
 - Forming English tuition groups;
 - Through appreciation and application of the Learning Contract and Learning Journal.

The sharing of tools for effective teaching and learning has enabled those institutions which are not specialised in open and distance learning to deliver an effective distance education programme. Partnerships therefore demystifies the complexity of distance education. It has been possible in the Commonwealth Youth Diploma in Youth Development to have a programme designed by non distance institution and the programme delivered by both experts and non-experts in open and distance education .

4.2 Tutor Training is a key aspect of Student Support.

Tutors, as the main source of assistance to learners, are the best mechanism to support the learning process. Supporting tutors by making supplementary readings easy to find, ensuring that web access is available when necessary, and helping to schedule learner-tutor meetings is essential to the success of the program. Providing more support to tutors is a cost-efficient way to increase the success of the program

4.3 Programme Ownership is a Basis for Sustainability

When partners shared the vision of the programme they own it. Once the programme is owned, areas for improvements are identified and worked on. The perception at it participating institutions have affected their level of ownership on the programme. In some institutions the programme is still perceived as an outside the programme while in some institutions it is an integral part of the university programmes. Where the programme has been internalised, there have tremendous improvement. Additional materials have been provided, extra budget allocated and

articulation and pathways established. Thus while the programme is still in its pilot phase, some institutions already know the direction after the pilot phase.

4.4 Partnerships Help in Bridging the Distance in Distance Education.

The main limiting factor in distance education is the physical distance which exists between the learner and the institution providing the opportunities for learning. Through the partnerships which exist in the Commonwealth Youth Programme, it has been possible for an institution to offer courses to other countries with the help of local institutions. Zimbabwe Open University is also able to offer to Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia and Zambia without having students to send their scripts to Zimbabwe. Also, due to the collaboration with tutors, learners in respective countries are able to have mentor close to them.

4.5 Partnerships Bring in Financial Sustainability

As mentioned earlier, distance education should not be considered as a cheap form of education. Less investment in distance education is a major factor which makes it inferior to residential training. Through the partnerships in the diploma programme, it has been possible for each partner to contribute financial, technical and logistical support which has made the programme successful. While the initial investment by Commonwealth youth programme was seen as a huge amount, the reality on the ground has shown that for every £1.00 that CYP has contributed, the other partners together are putting in £2.00. Thus the return on the investment by CYP has been very encouraging. This has been possible because the corporate ownership of the programme objective by all actors in the partnership web.