
The Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management

by Art Stevenson

This article draws attention to a new Commonwealth association for professional administrators established in August 1994 at a meeting in Charlottetown.

The new association was created because the forces of globalisation are affecting governments everywhere, and administrators can benefit from increased contacts with their counterparts in other countries. There are already strong networks among academics, but public administration practitioners need to have better contacts. Since the Commonwealth countries have similar government structures and institutions based on the Westminster model, it will be particularly useful for them to have information about innovations - successful or otherwise, in other Commonwealth countries.

The Association is directed toward Commonwealth public servants, elected or appointed, and it was the result of two years' preparation by a Steering Committee of fourteen senior officials, chaired by Sir Kenneth Stowe.

The association was jointly sponsored by the Commonwealth Secretariat in London and the Canadian Institute of Public Administration in Canada. Funding for the inaugural conference and start-up in 1994 was provided by the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau, Canadian International Development Agency, the Commonwealth Foundation, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Overseas Development Administration of the U.K.

The Inaugural Conference in Charlottetown was planned around the theme Government in Transition.

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Papers were presented by representatives of 22 of the Commonwealth's 51 member nations. There was a surprising degree of agreement about the issues facing governments today.

Professor Sandford Borins attended and wrote a summary report on the Conference entitled *Government in Transition: A new paradigm in public administration*. He concluded that: Despite the diversity of the Commonwealth Countries, there was a common pattern in their responses. So strong is this common pattern that it could be labeled a new paradigm in public administration. The new paradigm which has emerged in little more than a decade emphasizes the role of public managers in five components:

- Providing high-quality services that citizens value;
- Advocating increased managerial autonomy, particularly from central agency control;
- Organizations and individuals being measured and rewarded on the basis of whether they meet demanding performance targets;
- Providing the human and technological resources that managers need to meet their performance targets; and
- A receptiveness to competition and an open-minded attitude about which public purposes should be performed by the public sector as opposed to the private sector.

The first meeting of the CAPAM board since the inaugural meeting was held in London on January 20, 1995. The Commonwealth Secretary-General Chief Emeka Anyaoku welcomed the President and Board

Members. He said: "CAPAM is uniquely placed to develop the networks and build a professional constituency with the potential to add the real value of practical knowledge and hands-on experience to the Secretariat's work in this area."

The Board approved a CAPAM vision which outlined financing, membership and programme plans to make CAPAM a self-sufficient autonomous organization over the next five years.

Some of the highlights of current programmes underway can be summarized as follows: CAPAM plans to enter into formal affiliation agreements with existing associations of public administrators to improve the distribution of information about best management practices among their members. An affiliation agreement has been concluded with The Institute of Public Administration of Canada, The Royal Institute of Public Administration of Australia, The New Zealand Institute of Public Administration, The African Association for Public Administration and Management, The Caribbean Management Development Association, The Indian Institute of Public Administration and The Strategic Planning Society and The Public Finance Foundation in the U.K.

Regional and national seminars have been held – the first in South Africa, June 7-10, 1995 covering Southern and Eastern Africa Countries with a theme "Encouraging Diversity Within a Unified Public Service". The first National Seminar took place in Malaysia on September 1, 1995 – entitled "The Public Service – New Strategic

Dimensions for the 21st Century".

Plans for 1996 include a regional conference in Trinidad and Tobago, January 24-26, 1996 covering the Caribbean with a theme "Emerging Issues in Executive Development: A Blueprint for the Future in the Caribbean".

The next Biennial Conference will take place in Malta, April 21-24, 1996 with the theme "The New Public Administration: Global Challenges - Local Solutions".

CAPAM membership is open to both individuals and institutions. Institutional membership includes five individual memberships and access to publications of affiliated associations as well as a special advice line under development which will respond to requests for information about public administration developments throughout the Commonwealth. The first issues of our quarterly newsletter to members entitled the "Commonwealth Innovations" is available. Selected papers of the Charlottetown Inaugural CAPAM Conference have been published in the special issue of Public Administration and Development, guest edited by Paul Collins and Mohan Kaul.

Finally, the *Public Administration and Development Journal* becomes the CAPAM Journal, January 1, 1996.