

## **Chapter 18:**

### **Lessons for Policy and Practice**

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The previous chapter identified some lessons for conceptual understanding of the forces which shape examination systems in small states. The chapter argued that such understanding was among necessary preconditions for a strong chance of success in devising both appropriate policies and workable strategies for implementation of those policies.

In the light of the conceptual remarks, and drawing on the accounts in previous chapters, the present chapter turns to lessons for policy and practice. In a book of this nature, such lessons must of course remain rather general. Moreover, policy makers and practitioners in each country must devise their own strategies according to their specific circumstances. In other words, it is impossible to identify a single set of strategies which could be applicable to all the small states in the world. Nevertheless, the descriptions of different systems have exposed experiences from which some themes can be identified.

Among the many possible ways to organise presentation of such lessons, perhaps the best is via a set of questions. As in Chapter 17, therefore, these questions are set out first. From the questions flow information on the actions taken by practitioners in various small states, together with commentary on the virtues or otherwise of those actions.

This book has noted three basic models for operation of examinations in small states: through national bodies, through regional councils, and through metropolitan agencies. The observation leads to the generic question: How can small states deploy their limited resources to gain the best outcomes in the choice between national, regional and metropolitan bodies? In turn, this question may be rephrased and subdivided:

- If governments of small states decide to operate their own national examination units, what strategies should be used to ensure that those units operate in an optimal manner?
- If governments of small states decide to collaborate with regional partners, what strategies should they employ to minimise costs and

maximise benefits?

- If governments of small states decide to utilise the services of metropolitan agencies, what steps can they take to secure packages which most appropriately serve national goals?

These questions provide the framework for the rest of this chapter. The three strategies are of course not mutually exclusive; but it is useful to consider them one at a time.

A final introductory remark is that among the initial decisions facing policy makers is the form of assessment which they wish to promote. The education systems of the majority of countries covered in this book, particularly at the senior secondary level, remain dominated by formal examinations. This may be a more prominent feature in Commonwealth countries than in other parts of the world. One widespread international trend is away from traditional two- or three-hour, unseen and summative examinations, and in the direction of continuous and school-based assessment. Such movement has implications for arrangements the administration of assessments. However, since formal examinations are likely to remain a major component in most of the education systems covered in this book, this is the emphasis of the chapter.

### **The Design and Operation of National Examination Units**

Discussion on the design and operation of national examination units will here be grouped under four headings. First to be considered will be the location of such units within administrative frameworks. This will be followed by comments on the size and staffing of examination units. The two remaining sections discuss management issues and questions of international recognition.

#### *The Location of Examination Units*

Among the first organisational questions for policy makers is where examination units should be located within administrative structures. The majority of national examination units presented in this book operate in ministries of education. However, the examinations board in Malta is operated by a university; and the syndicate in Mauritius is an independent statutory body.

The role of universities in examination of school-level performance has been considered problematic in various countries, both large and small. While long traditions exist for university involvement in the United Kingdom and some other countries, many observers have reservations about the extent to which universities should be permitted to impose their own definitions of quality on schools. However, it must be recognised that the

amount of direct university involvement in examination boards that bear university names is not always very large. Thus the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) and the University of London Examinations & Assessment Council (ULEAC) largely operate independently of the main administrative structures of their respective institutions.

For some small states, the possibility of asking a domestic university to operate an examination unit does not arise, simply because those states do not have domestic universities. This is the case in Seychelles and Maldives, for example. However, others do have national and/or regional universities. In Southern Africa, the University of Botswana, Lesotho & Swaziland (UBLS) used to play a role in school-level examinations, but the UBLS Schools Examinations Council was disbanded after Botswana withdrew in 1979 and Lesotho and Swaziland also went their separate ways.

Among the countries covered by the present book, only in Malta are school-level examinations controlled by a domestic university body. The University of Malta operated its Matriculation Examination for secondary school leavers until the 1950s. The examination was then replaced by assessments set by United Kingdom examining boards, which in turn were replaced in the late 1980s by those of the University of Malta's Matriculation and Secondary Education Certificate (MATSEC) examinations board. Sultana's chapter in this book indicates that not everyone in Malta was convinced that the university should again be given a dominant role in school-level assessment.

The two main alternative models are units within ministries of education or autonomous statutory bodies. Bissoondoyal's chapter indicates that in Mauritius, examinations prior to the 1980s were primarily conducted by the Ministry of Education. The Mauritius Examinations Syndicate (MES) was created as an independent body in 1984, partly because of examination leakages from the ministry and the view of the authorities that a separate body would be better able to operate a secure system. Such events could of course occur in large states as well as small ones; but among the small-state features which could make leakages more likely to occur is the highly personalised nature of small societies, which have many overlapping relationships and roles. Independent statutory bodies with clearly-defined responsibilities and mechanisms for accountability may be able to handle such circumstances more easily.

However, states with small populations must also be mindful of the need to maximise use of scarce personnel and expertise. This factor favours administration of examinations by existing bodies rather than creation of new ones. Examination units located within universities or ministries

commonly draw on personnel in a part-time capacity while those people devote the rest of their time to other work within the organisations. Such individuals can also of course be called upon to contribute to independent bodies, but arrangements are not always so easy.

In summary, arguments can be found to support arrangements of all three main types. The models decided upon in any particular setting commonly reflect traditions in the country concerned, and may be guided by attitudes towards institutional independence or integration which can be found in large states as well as small ones. However, the need in small states to make use of scarce expertise may contribute to decisions to locate examination units in existing bodies rather than in separate specific-purpose ones. Most examination units are located in ministries of education since those bodies are already seen as the legitimate centres of control and expertise on school matters. Examination units in ministries can also draw on other sections of the ministries for financial management, data processing and printing.

#### *The Size and Staffing of National Examination Units*

The country studies in this book have shown wide variation in the number of employees in national examination units. At one end of the spectrum is the Bhutan Board of Examinations (BBE), which in 1996 had just nine staff; and at the other end of the spectrum is the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, which in 1996 had 220 staff.

The disparity in the size of these two bodies may partly be explained by differences in the scale of operations, for Mauritius has twice the population of Bhutan, and also has much higher school enrolment rates. However, the disparity also reflects the fact that the MES is an independent statutory body with its own team of accountants and clerical officers. The MES also undertakes functions not undertaken by the BBE. Most notable is the research section, which in 1996 had eight specialised professionals supported by 12 research assistants and data processors. It seems arguable that the MES is staffed in a very luxurious mode, especially for a small state. By contrast, a case would seem to exist for expansion of the Bhutanese team, especially in the light of plans to take over senior secondary examinations from the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination (CISCE).

Review of the Mauritian structure also helps expose the tendency for bureaucracies in small states to be designed as copies of those in larger states, even though this is often inappropriate. Some analysts have argued that small states need bureaucracies which are significantly different in their characteristics (e.g. Bray 1991; Murray 1985; Warrington 1994). Such analysts have particularly highlighted the scarcity of personnel in small

states, and the fact that government bureaucracies in small states tend to form much greater proportions of total employment than they do in larger states. According to Bissoondoyal, the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate has benefitted from the buoyant economy, which has meant that the organisation has not faced the financial stringency of counterpart bodies elsewhere. Micro-political factors may also have favoured the MES. Whatever the background, it does not seem to be a model which should or could be emulated by many other small states.

Small states which do face shortages of financial and/or human resources might find it useful to look at the examination unit in Samoa. In 1996, that unit had only six staff, including one typist. Rather than recruiting specialists in every subject, the unit drew on the staff of the Curriculum Unit in the Ministry of Education and on the staff of the teachers' college, the national university and the secondary schools. In addition, the unit made use of the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment (SPBEA), and supplemented its internal pool of moderators with residents of Fiji and New Zealand. The unit also kept itself modest in its ambitions for research. While research is obviously desirable in settings of all types, sometimes research cannot easily be justified as a mainstream activity. An alternative is to invite researchers from local and foreign universities to undertake the studies which are priorities.

The Department of National Examinations & Assessment in Namibia also deserves comment. This seems to be another case of a small state following a large-state organisational model. In 1996, the Department had as many as 52 posts, to which were added 20 occasional employees for about 10 months of the year. Following a common large-state model, the Department was divided into Administrative and Professional wings. As pointed out elsewhere (Bray et al. 1991, p.52), such divisions are particularly problematic in small states because they fragment small pools of expertise and obstruct deployment across bureaucratic lines. Also, the Namibian model aimed to have specialists for each subject rather than seeking to use staff who were already employed in other posts. The chapter on Bhutan points out that engagement of teachers in the examination process not only helps reduce costs and make use of scarce skills, but also has a valuable in-service function which promotes school-level understanding of the examination processes.

Other ways in which governments of small states can minimise staffing demands include mechanisation, for example with optical scanners. The costs of such equipment might put it beyond the reach of states which are poor as well as small, and attention would have to be given to training in the use of such machines as well as in maintenance. Moreover, optical

scanners are only appropriate for certain types of test. Nevertheless, they are certainly useful in some settings.

Finally, some examination units improve both efficiency and effectiveness by contracting out parts of the examination process rather than trying to do everything themselves. Several chapters in this book mention contracting out of printing, and comparable arrangements can be made for data processing and other functions. Some examination units go even further by purchasing whole papers from other agencies. Thus the governments of Kiribati and Tuvalu have at times purchased papers from Samoa; and several countries in the South Pacific have purchased papers from New Zealand. These are examples of cooperation between small states as well as between small and larger states.

### *The Management of National Examination Units*

Allied to the above comments is the notion that staff in small states must be much more multi-functional than is likely to be the case for their counterparts in the examination units of larger countries. Sanerivi's chapter indicates that staff in Samoa operate very much as a team, so that members can cover for each other at times that individuals are absent. Coverage for absence can be a major problem in small organisations, and requires attention in examination units as much as in other specialist bodies.

Another challenge in small units within small ministries of education is to balance the need for specialisation and development of expertise with the need for career mobility. The chapter by Khan & Persico on Guyana noted that the Examinations Division and the Test Development Unit are handicapped in recruitment by a perception that promotional routes are limited because the teams are so small. Experience elsewhere has indicated that individuals in such circumstances who do wish to be promoted often have to abandon their specialist skills. Such abandonment is especially problematic in small countries, where the expertise of every individual counts significantly within national frameworks. This observation stresses the need for flexibility in promotion structures and in assignment and use of personnel, and underlines the value of being able to call on individuals who may no longer be primarily assigned to examination units.

A further challenge for small examination units arises from the tendency for insularity and staleness. In all organisations, personnel need refreshment from time to time. Small examination units can suffer from 'examiner burnout', in which individuals run out of innovative ideas and, in the worst cases, simply recycle the same types of examination questions from year to year. Large units are more easily able to rotate staff between units, thereby providing variety in tasks and rejuvenation in perspectives.

Several strategies are available to small states to tackle this problem. Collaboration with teachers and lecturers not only reduces the load on a small group of personnel, but also provides avenues for new insights. Small states may also find great value in regional and international connections. Chapter 1 noted the value of links through international bodies including the Commonwealth and the United Nations bodies. Specifically in the field of examinations, and rather different in character, is the International Association for Educational Assessment (IAEA). This organisation was conceived in 1974 with the goal of improving assessment techniques through sharing of expertise and by undertaking specific projects (IAEA 1996a, p.1). Primary membership is institutional, and includes over 80 measurement agencies in different parts of the world. Small states are highly visible in IAEA affairs. In 1996, the President was from Lesotho, and the other seven members of the executive committee included one from Mauritius and another from the Caribbean Examinations Council based in Barbados (IAEA 1996b, p.1). The IAEA is thus a body which groups personnel from large, medium-sized and small states, and in which some of the major concerns of small states are addressed. Also, the 1996 Barbados workshop, the proceedings of which form part of the basis for the present book, recommended the establishment of a Commonwealth Association of Examination & Accreditation Boards.

Some governments have gone further than merely encouraging staff to attend international meetings, and have organised medium- and long-term attachments. For example, in 1996 three officers of the Botswana Examinations Research & Testing Division visited the Caribbean Examinations Council to look at technical and administrative procedures. Such initiatives are particularly noteworthy since they take participants beyond the more common pathways of Europe and North America.

### *Issues of International Recognition*

Governments of small states which operate national examinations may still be concerned with international recognition. This is unlikely to be a problem at primary and junior secondary levels, where assessments are almost entirely for the local context. However, international recognition is commonly important at senior secondary levels. Even the small states which have national universities are unable to provide the full range of specialisms, and therefore need to send students abroad. Moreover, as noted in Chapter 1, the economies of some small states are highly dependent on remittances from migrants, and some governments actively encourage emigration for purposes of employment.

In some cases, international recognition is achieved through partnership

with metropolitan bodies. For example, Class X students in Bhutan take the Bhutan Board-Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (BB-ICSE) examination, which is a joint operation between the Bhutan Board of Examinations and the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination. Likewise, the Bahamas General Certificate of Secondary Education is a joint operation of the Bahamas government and UCLES. Similar forms of partnership have been set up between UCLES and the governments of Swaziland, Lesotho and Botswana, which have also moved towards localisation of their school certificate examinations.

In other cases, national bodies have achieved broader recognition through partnership with regional bodies. This is most obvious in the South Pacific, where the SPBEA helps ensure the quality of national qualifications, and also disseminates information on the nature of those qualifications. Some states, particularly Tonga and Cook Islands, have gained broader recognition through accreditation by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA); and Nauru's education system has close ties with the State of Victoria in Australia. In each of these cases, as would seem logical, a main goal of partnerships is not globally-international recognition so much as targeted recognition in the larger countries with which the small states have important ties.

Beyond such strategies, however, small states may have to be content with compromises. Greaney & Kellaghan (1990, p.36) discussed concerns about the loss of international recognition of examinations following localisation. They argued that in order to maintain recognition, "it will be necessary for governments to invest more in evaluation and research activities relating to examinations". This is a demanding suggestion, especially for small states. Indeed it is arguably a recommendation which would distort administrative structures and costs more than would be warranted by the outcome. The alternatives are either for small states to accept the possible loss of international recognition, or for them to engage in targeted partnerships of the types mentioned above, or for them to use the examinations of regional and/or metropolitan bodies.

### **Small-State Participation in Regional Examinations Councils**

The chapters in this book have shown that regional bodies can certainly bring benefits to small states, but that they also bring challenges of various kinds. The nature of participation in regional bodies and the extent of the benefits depend on many factors, including the ways that the member states themselves view the bodies. In addition to educational variables, political and economic issues are of considerable importance.



*Making Use of Constitutional Provisions*

The three regional bodies examined in detail in this book have rather different histories and characteristics. The West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) were primarily established to operate regional examinations, whereas the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment (SPBEA) was primarily established to assist members to operate national examinations. WAEC is mainly composed of medium-sized and large states, though does also include The Gambia, whereas the CXC and the SPBEA are mainly composed of small states.

In all three regional bodies, careful provisions have been made to secure the voices of all member states, though the nature of those provisions varies. The WAEC Convention sets out a fixed number of seats on the Council for each member state, allocating The Gambia two seats out of 16. The Convention also stipulates that the Chairpersonship of the Council should rotate between the five member states in a fixed sequence. Careful arrangements are also made for representation of member states on most administrative committees. The constitutions of various CXC and SPBEA structures similarly allow for equal representation of member states on some committees, and for some quasi-proportional representation according to their population sizes on others.

These constitutional provisions provide the framework, but the ways in which the member states make use of the provisions is another matter. Two questions which immediately arise again concern expertise and availability to attend meetings. As already remarked, states with small populations are necessarily limited in their pools of personnel with professional expertise, and such persons who also have good negotiating skills are even more scarce. Because of this, small states may find themselves disadvantaged in comparison with larger states in the recruitment of appropriate people to join regional committees. Also, returning to a point made above, when a person travels to attend a regional meeting, the gap left in the home office is proportionately greater in small states than in larger ones. This may mean that individuals are not easily available to attend meetings, even when they have the necessary expertise.

A third question concerns costs. Regional meetings require expenditure on airfares and accommodation, and the expenses may be a proportionately heavier burden on small states than they would be on larger ones. Sometimes the regional meetings are held in the small states themselves, in which case airfares and accommodation are not needed. However, on those occasions a different financial burden arises because the host country must provide facilities and hospitality for the visitors.

Despite these issues, small states in general receive favourable treatment in regional organisations. Ndure's chapter in this book points out that in the WAEC framework, The Gambia has a much louder voice than, for example, parts of Nigeria with equivalent population sizes. The same remark would to some extent apply within the CXC and the SPBEA, though of course the disparity in country sizes in those organisations is much less than in WAEC.

*Making Use of Regional Resources and Expertise*

Even when small states have a voice, the question remains what they would say, and how they can use the resources offered by regional organisations. Most obvious, of course, is the access to the regional examination. In general, small states are able to enter small numbers of candidates for these examinations because the addition of candidates from other states creates a sufficient clientele to permit the operation to be economically viable. In the WAEC case, the withdrawal of Nigeria and Ghana from the West African School Certificate examination meant that for most of the 1990s that examination probably was not economically viable. In this case, however, Sierra Leone and The Gambia benefitted from the overall resources of WAEC, which was enabled by other activities to continue to operate the regional examination. WAEC maintained a long-term view on regional examinations, and for this reason designed a West African Secondary Senior School Certificate Examination for launching in 1998.

Member states may also access technical expertise for domestic operations. Ndure's chapter notes that The Gambia was able through WAEC to gain the services of a Ghanaian test development specialist and a Nigerian computer expert. Because these individuals were employed by the regional organisation, they were very familiar with its structures and processes. Moreover, they were more willing to work in The Gambia than other expatriates might have been because the service was for the umbrella organisation and therefore contributed to, rather than detracted from, their prospects for promotion.

Also evident in all three regions is that small states ask regional bodies to assist with *national* examinations as well as regional ones. This is especially evident in the South Pacific, where the SPBEA provides technical expertise for the majority of national School Certificate examinations and also for several primary school examinations. In the Caribbean, the CXC assists with primary school examinations in St. Lucia and Trinidad & Tobago; and WAEC operates national examinations for all its member states. Regional bodies should therefore be seen as a resource to meet national needs as well as regional ones.

*Dealing with Wider Political and Economic Factors*

As noted in the previous chapter, the two regional examination boards which collapsed during the 1970s, i.e. the East African Examinations Council (EAEC) and the University of Botswana, Lesotho & Swaziland Schools Examinations Council (UBLS/SEC), chiefly died because of macro-political factors rather than narrower educational ones. Also, as noted by Ndure, WAEC was one of six regional bodies founded in West Africa during the period immediately after the second world war, and is the only one still to survive. The bodies which had collapsed were the West African Court of Appeal, the West African Currency Board, the West African Airways Corporation, the West African Cocoa Research Institute, and the West Africa Institute of Oil Palm Research. The reasons for their collapse were again primarily political, as the governments of the member states pulled in different directions. These patterns send a signal to the still-existing regional bodies about their vulnerability to wider political forces.

Political factors have also played a major role in the basic membership of regional bodies. Bahamas never joined either the West Indian Federation or the CXC, chiefly because its leaders preferred to operate separately from the other Caribbean governments; and in 1977 Cayman Islands left the CXC, chiefly because of concern about Jamaican dominance, which was at that time strongly flavoured by communist and black-power ideologies. Moreover, the ability of WAEC, the CXC and the SPBEA to cross language boundaries has been very limited. All have moved slightly beyond the Commonwealth, as evidenced by Liberia's membership of WAEC, St. Maarten and Saba's affiliation to the CXC, and the Marshall Islands' membership of the SPBEA. However, none have recruited the non-Commonwealth francophone territories in their respective regions. Likewise, the CXC has not attracted the Spanish-speaking or other Dutch-speaking territories; and WAEC has not attracted the Portuguese-speaking states. WAEC also lost the membership of West Cameroon when it was split off from Nigeria in 1961 and was joined with the Republic of Cameroon. West Cameroon retained an anglophone education system, but for the next 16 years tied its secondary school system to the examinations of the University of London before establishing its own examinations board. Again the move was chiefly political, since the decision-makers in Cameroon wished to distance themselves from Nigeria and saw WAEC as being dominated by that country.

Economic factors may also play a part, because such factors determine the context within which education and examination systems operate. The issues concern not only syllabus design but also numbers of candidates for examinations and pass rates. As noted in Chapter 17, major tensions can

arise between countries concerning grade boundaries and cut-off points. Economic factors also, of course, determine the ability of member governments to pay their dues. All three regional examinations boards covered in this book have difficulty in persuading at least some member governments to meet their financial obligations.

These macro-political and economic factors are largely beyond the influence of educational policy-makers. However, at least some scope for negotiation may exist. Thus, all three of the regional bodies covered here have continued to provide services to governments in financial crisis, even on occasions when those governments have been unable to pay their basic dues. Also, in the Caribbean, for example, arrangements have been made for governments to pay the CXC in local currencies, even when those currencies have not been freely convertible. This has enabled at least some governments to be able to retain assistance from the regional body even when they were unable to make comparable arrangements with metropolitan boards.

### **Small States as Clients of Metropolitan Examinations Agencies**

In general, metropolitan examinations boards have become more flexible and responsive to the needs of their clients than used to be the case. This is partly the result of changing relationships in a post-colonial world, and partly a simple matter of good business practices. Small states would be well advised to capitalise on this fact. With reference to Malta, Sultana quotes Zammit Mangion (1992, p.354), who points out that the Maltese "never fully exploited the facilities which the English examining boards would have been ready to provide to tailor their examinations ... to Maltese needs".

The extent to which metropolitan boards may be willing to embark on special tailoring has been exemplified in this book by patterns in Namibia and Mauritius. In Namibia, UCLES has created a Higher International General Certificate of Secondary Education (HIGCSE) examination solely to serve Namibian needs, particularly for access to universities in South Africa. Also, at the level of the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE), UCLES facilitates and approves papers in no less than seven local languages: Oshikwanyama, Oshindonga, Otjiherero, Rukwangali, Setswana, Silozi and Afrikaans. In Mauritius, UCLES has prepared special syllabuses and examinations in French, to match the higher standards generally expected in Mauritius than in the majority of other countries that use the UCLES French papers; and UCLES has also tailored papers in economics, geography and history more closely to the Mauritian context. Elsewhere, UCLES has developed a Normal ('N') Level examina-

tion to suit the needs first of Singapore and later of Brunei Darussalam. This fits the streaming policies of those countries, the governments of which want greater flexibility than can be achieved through just the Ordinary ('O') and Advanced ('A') Levels.

Some tailoring to the needs of clients is also evident in the South Pacific and the Indian Ocean. During the 1970s, South Pacific Options were introduced in the New Zealand School Certificate examination, and an alternative English paper was developed for the University Entrance examination. The 1980s and 1990s brought evolution of this picture with the establishment and development of the SPBEA, and with the formation of the NZQA. The chapter by Murtagh & Steer notes that the NZQA has even operated at the school level in Vanuatu. In the rather different context of Maldives, the chapter by Waheed points out that the ULEAC has made special arrangements for fisheries science to be a Mode 2 subject specially tailored to Maldivian needs.

In many cases, small states may be able to secure assistance from metropolitan bodies as part of bilateral aid packages. During the 1970s, what was then called the Overseas Development Administration of the UK government paid for staff of the UK Southern Region Examinations Board to work with educators in Anguilla and St. Kitts & Nevis; and more recently, UCLES has worked with Ministry of Education officials in The Gambia.

In addition, improved technology, particularly in international communications, has greatly reduced the distance that used to separate metropolitan bodies from their clients. Such technology includes electronic mail and fax; and international telephone calls and air travel have become much cheaper. As a result, small states are much less isolated than many of them used to be.

A further example of technological development is that special computer packages have now been prepared to serve the needs of small states. Chapter 1 of this book cited computer programming as one area in which small states cannot easily achieve economies of scale, for a single programme developed for a national system would serve only a small number of pupils. Recognising this fact, UCLES has developed a Small Examinations Processing System. It is said to be capable of administering complex examinations with up to 10,000 candidates (UCLES 1994, p.14), and is currently used in the Lesotho, Bahamas, Botswana and Swaziland.

Small states have also gained benefits from metropolitan bodies in the links between those bodies and regional organisations. In the South Pacific, the New Zealand examining boards played a major role in the establishment and early operation of the SPBEA. Similarly, at the inception of WAEC the

Universities of Cambridge and of London were formal partners in the organisation. They each held seats in the WAEC Council, and provided practical advice on strategies and procedures. The architects of the CXC decided against a formal link with any of the metropolitan bodies, but they did solicit technical advice from both UCLES and the Educational Testing Service in Princeton, USA. They also arranged for UCLES Chief Examiners to review CXC processes in individual subjects, and to make public pronouncements (usually positive) on the extent to which the CXC standards matched those of UCLES.

However, small states also need to bear cost considerations in mind. This book has stressed that metropolitan examinations are not necessarily more costly than regional or national ones; but they do demand foreign exchange, and they may have hidden costs in the form of imported textbooks which accompany the metropolitan syllabuses. These factors stress the need for policy makers to undertake careful accounting.

Despite the international recognition that metropolitan examinations bring, policy makers should be aware that international certificates cannot always be considered part of a 'gold standard'. Kahn (1990) investigated patterns in the UCLES school certificate, paying particular attention to the percentages of students gaining different grades in various science subjects. His data focused on the results of candidates in Singapore, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Mauritius and Swaziland, and showed how the introduction or removal of candidates from other countries affected the overall pool and caused fluctuations in the grades of students in individual countries. Kahn concluded from his analysis that planners should interpret changes in the performance of students from individual countries with caution, because the changes might reflect fluctuations in the overall pool rather than real changes in the performance of specific groups of students. Kahn suggested that such factors underlined the desirability of national governments operating their own examination systems and moving away from metropolitan boards. The chapters in the present book indicate that the issue is not necessarily so simple, though Kahn's analysis is certainly instructive and important.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter has considered in turn the advantages and disadvantages of, and some of the strategies involved in, operation of national examinations boards, participation in regional councils, and use of metropolitan agencies. The chapter has stressed that each arrangement may have merits and problems, and that policy makers in small states should carefully assess what is desirable and feasible in their own settings.

At the same time, the three models should not be considered mutually exclusive. Thus the chapter by Stanley-Marcano & Alexander indicates that in Trinidad & Tobago all three types of examination operate side by side. They serve different, though overlapping, groups of clients; and they meet different, though overlapping, needs. Similar patterns can be found in other countries. They illustrate the forms of pragmatism which may be found in many countries as their governments and peoples seek the ways to get the best of all worlds. The Introduction to this book pointed out that the style of educational development is too frequently modelled on what is appropriate and fashionable in large states, and that small countries have an ecology of their own which demands strategies which may differ from those in larger states. The ways in which small states organise their examination systems are a good example of this.

Eckstein (1996) is among people who have highlighted the value of comparative studies of examinations. He pointed out (p.239) that:

We still have much to learn on the subject, and it is far too important to be neglected. Comparative study of examinations has made us increasingly aware of the complex and multiple effects and causes of particular assessment practices.

Eckstein went on to highlight the practical, as well as conceptual value of comparative studies. This particular book has addressed a topic which has to date received very little attention in the literature. In the process, it has exposed many complexities and some fascinating relationships. However, much more research remains to be done. It is hoped that this book will stimulate further enquiry by analysts in states of all sizes.