

## Foreword

In the last few years the Commonwealth Secretariat's Education Programme has organised a set of activities focusing on the educational development of small states. This programme has been developed at the express wish of Commonwealth Ministers of Education who met in Cyprus in 1984, in Kenya in 1987, and, most recently, in Barbados in 1990. The mandate partly reflects the composition of the Commonwealth, for 28 of its 50 members have populations below 1.5 million. National smallness of scale, and the problems and benefits which derive from this, are at the heart of a range of Commonwealth programmes.

In 1985 the Government of Mauritius was generous host to a group of educators, administrators and academics from the Caribbean, Europe, the Indian Ocean, Southern Africa and the South Pacific. This group helped to conceptualise the impact of smallness of scale on national educational development, and to set the parameters for a programme of Commonwealth activities.

The Mauritius meeting identified many issues which relate closely to smallness. When planning for higher education and training, for example, difficult choices must be made about trade-off between the development of national institutions and the use of regional and overseas institutions. Similar predicaments are faced in the sphere of curriculum development and examinations: how far is it cost-effective and appropriate to prepare local syllabuses, and what attention should small states pay to foreign curricula and the international credit-worthiness of overseas examinations? Many small states also have to find ways to provide education and training which are sufficiently flexible to fit fluctuating employment markets.

The Mauritius group recommended that the Commonwealth Secretariat should develop a programme of activities based on its findings. It was proposed that initiatives should facilitate a network of links, exchanges and collaborative activities, backed by an approved set of funded meetings and studies.

Since 1985, three issues identified in Mauritius have received detailed attention at pan-Commonwealth meetings. In 1987, in associa-

tion with the Institute of Education at the University of the South Pacific, consideration was given to the supply, training and professional support of education personnel in multi-island situations. A year later, working with the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College in St. Lucia, the focus was on post-secondary colleges in small states; and in 1989 a project on the organisation and management of ministries of education in small states was initiated in Malta in association with the University of Malta.

This book is a product of the Malta meeting and of a set of case studies which was commissioned subsequently. It is intended as a practical work which sets out the experiences of various countries in a readily accessible form.

The book is based on the observation that most models for public administration have been developed in the context of medium-sized or large states, and are not necessarily appropriate to small states. For example, in small ministries of education it is necessary to group tasks together, and to require administrators to be multi-functional. It is also necessary to devise different management strategies for societies in which social networks are complex and overlapping.

A companion book has been published simultaneously, and presents in a country-by-country format edited versions of 14 studies prepared for the project. It is entitled *Ministries of Education in Small States: Case Studies of Organisation and Management*, and is also available from the Commonwealth Secretariat. The companion book provides supplementary material for those who wish to explore in more depth the issues raised here.

The Commonwealth Secretariat has also prepared other publications to alleviate the paucity of training and professional materials which take specific account of the needs of education systems in small states. They are listed on the back cover.

Finally, the Commonwealth Secretariat would like to thank the author of this book and the advisory team which assisted in its preparation, the authors of the case studies, and the participants in the project workshops for the high quality of their contributions. We believe that the project has made a considerable conceptual and practical contribution to the field, about which we are both pleased and proud.

Peter R.C. Williams,  
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