Education in Small States

Policies and Priorities

Michael Crossley, Mark Bray and Steve Packer

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This book is dedicated to
Professor Mohammed Kazim Bacchus
(1929–2007)

Comparative educationalist and pioneer of educational research in small states

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Abbreviations

AOSIS	Alliance of Small Island States
ATLIB	Association of Tertiary Level Institutions in Belize
ATP	Advanced Training Programme
BOCODOL	Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning
BPEDP	Belize Primary Education Development Project
CAAM	Caribbean Accreditation Authority for Education in Medicine and other Health Professions
CANQATE	Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CCCJ	Council of Community Colleges of Jamaica
CCEM	Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers
COL	Commonwealth of Learning
CPE	Certificate of Primary Education (Mauritius)
CTRP	Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol
CXC	Caribbean Examinations Council
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DFID	Department for International Development
EAEC	East African Examinations Council
EFA	Education for All
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FTI	Fast Track Initiative (Education for All)
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GCES	Gulf Comparative Education Society
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
GMC	General Medical Council
GNI	Gross National Income
GNP	Gross National Product
GPI	Gender Parity Index
HDI	Human Development Index
HEI	Higher education institution
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
ILO	International Labour Organization
JBTE	Joint Board of Teacher Education (Jamaica)
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals

MESCE	Mediterranean Society for Comparative Education
MIE	Mauritius Institute of Education
NDOE	National Department of Education (Papua New Guinea)
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
OAS	Organization of American States
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECS	Organization of Eastern Caribbean States
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
PRIDE	Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of Basic Education
QA	Quality assurance
RICS	Rural Internet Connectivity System
RNPE	Revised National Policy on Education (Botswana)
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SPBEA	South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UBLS/SEC	University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland Schools Examinations Council
UCJ	University Council of Jamaica
UCLES	University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate
UCSIS	University Consortium of Small Island States
UK	United Kingdom (of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICA	Association of Universities and Research Institutions of the Caribbean
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPE	Universal Primary Education
USA	United States of America
USP	University of the South Pacific
UWI	University of the West Indies
VUSSC	Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth
WAEC	West African Examinations Council

Foreword

To be considered among the frontrunners in the conceptualisation of educational policy and in the delivery of education provision must be music to the ears of policymakers and planners in the small states of the Commonwealth. They have long lived in the shadow of larger states. As recently as two decades ago, some small state analysts felt that, in spite of their numbers, the world community had not yet thought its way through the phenomenon of small states. Indeed, Sir Shridath Ramphal, a former Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, believed that for the most part small states were ignored, imposed upon and generally discounted. Vulnerability and openness were the international community's mantras whenever the circumstances of small states were discussed. Their achievements in fashioning appropriate, workable and affordable responses to the challenges of scale were dismissed by some as making a virtue out of necessity. While it was universally acknowledged that small states have an ecology of their own, the unspoken understanding was that this could not be compared, or at least not favourably, with that of large states. The idea of learning from the South – particularly the small South – was not always palatable or popular.

The work of the Commonwealth Secretariat and the organisations that have contributed to this publication has helped keep the small states issue current over the past two and a half decades. This publication does two important things. First, it meets its stated objective in acting as a 'stimulus for policymakers and other analysts concerned with or engaged in the shaping of educational priorities and strategies for small states' in that it recognises and reassesses the impact and potential of their pioneering work in the field. Second, it helps to redress the imbalance in the published literature on the real scope and nature of educational development in the majority of the small states of the world.

The theme of the 17th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM), 'Towards and Beyond Global Goals and Targets', epitomises the

approach that small states have generally adopted in pursuit of their development agendas – to continually extend their boundaries, look outwards and reach upwards. Educational planners and analysts such as Professor Errol Miller from the Caribbean have always recommended that policymakers in small states should adopt a global perspective, even while they operated at local level to ensure that education responded to small states' immediate needs. The late Professor Emeritus and Vice Chancellor of the University of the West Indies (UWI), Rex Nettleford, also talked of 'outward stretch but inward reach'. The authors of this publication concur with the assessment of these analysts that small states are 'inherently international' and therefore more inclined to look beyond their own borders, to think 'outside of the box' and to envision what lies beyond their current realities. It should come as no surprise that this study shows that many small states are already looking beyond the global goals and targets expressed, for example, in the Education for All (EFA) objectives and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to search for ways in which they can respond more meaningfully to the major external shocks and challenges of the contemporary global environment.

The educational priorities of the majority of Commonwealth small states are no longer simply the provision of basic education or universal primary education (UPE), or to increase access to education for girls. Today's priorities also encompass a broader canvas relating to the potential for cross-sectoral and sustainable development. This involves how to incorporate the realities of climate change, migration and global interconnectedness in financial services, for example, into the school curriculum; how to equip citizens to respond to these new economic, environmental, cultural and political challenges within their own societies and in the wider world; how to provide quality higher education opportunities in the face of growing national indebtedness; and how to take advantage of the knowledge-based economy and be competitive in service-based markets. The elements that could make this possible are clearly identified in this study. These include the generation of local knowledge, both through locally driven and inspired research and through external collaboration; the fostering of innovative international partnerships and collaboration; the careful application of external assistance; integration, co-ordination and regulation within higher education; and the harnessing of the power of new information and communications technology (ICT). But for many education systems these still exist as disparate elements. What is also needed is the creativity, the imagination and the expertise to bring these together in realisable and sustainable ways that can benefit the broad range of small states identified in the study.

With the help of new information and communications technologies, small states are continuing to use more and more sophisticated arrangements to deal with the increasingly complex challenges of the new world order. But they are by no means out of the woods yet, as this study demonstrates in its analysis of the gaps that need to be filled and the imbalances between what small states need in order for them to respond meaningfully to changing global realities and the opportunities that present themselves to meet these needs. The challenges are many, the speed at which they present themselves is unrelenting, as the not-so-level playing field shifts and the goal posts keep moving. Against this backdrop, to simply continue to ask small states to implement outward-oriented development strategies and diversify the structure of their economies not only calls on them to take on a task of herculean proportions, but condemns them to a fate not far removed from that of Sisyphus.

This study goes well beyond such thinking to give fresh impetus to conceptualisations of educational policy generated by small states' planners and to reinforce confidence by recognising how small states have something of their own to contribute when educational issues and priorities are being discussed. Small states have challenged global agendas, based on their own tried and tested experiences, and on their own knowledge derived from locally-grounded and contextually-relevant experience and research.

This research and publication initiative is one of several commissioned by the Commonwealth Secretariat in its continuing efforts to serve its smaller member states and to support their educational advance and development. It gives well-deserved visibility to a group of countries that has long been soliciting consideration as a special constituency by reason of the challenges posed by small size. It will have a significant impact within small states and will bring to the attention of the wider international community what the majority of the small states of the Commonwealth have long contended: that while they must continue to seek external assistance to implement their development strategies, they know best what their own needs are and what their priorities should be. They have much to contribute to the international discourse and to policy deliberations worldwide.

Dame Pearlette Louisy
Governor-General
Government House
Castries, St Lucia

Summary

The Commonwealth classes 33 of its member countries as small states,[1] adopting a broad definition which includes, alongside countries with a population of less than 1.5 million, those larger states that share many similar characteristics – Botswana, The Gambia, Jamaica, Lesotho, Namibia and Papua New Guinea. Small states thus comprise over half of the total membership. Within the group, most are at the lower end of the population scale: 28 have populations below two million, 22 have populations below one million, and 13 have populations below 250,000. The Commonwealth thus has a strong mandate to give special attention to small states, and a considerable history of having done so.

The 17th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in 2009. The fact that this was 50 years after the first conference in Oxford, UK, in 1959 provided a good reason to look back before looking forward. The Commonwealth Secretariat has taken a leadership role in identifying distinctive features of education in small states. The Ministers recognised that this work contains much of value that could usefully be revisited and extended.

The Ministers also recognised that circumstances and modalities have changed significantly over the decades. Changing global contexts that have created dramatic challenges for small states include those relating to climate change, to financial markets and their interconnectedness, to patterns of international migration and to the ongoing intensification of globalisation. With regard to the opportunities brought by globalisation, the internet is seen by all to have significantly reduced the isolation of small states and has created previously unimaginable opportunities to access expertise.

The theme of the 17th CCEM was 'Towards and Beyond Global Goals and Targets'. Drawing on pre-planned consultations and discussions with ministers of education and senior officials from small states, combined with a detailed programme of original research, this book revisits the pertinence of early

Commonwealth work, examines the impact of changing global contexts, documents the changing nature and significance of recent and contemporary education policy priorities, and advances the case for new or strengthened initiatives for education in small states, including those supported by the Secretariat and other organisations.

Key findings highlight how:

- Previous conceptual and theoretical work on education in small states sponsored by the Secretariat remains pertinent for new generations of policymakers and planners. This includes work on school leadership, management and planning, teacher education and supply, and qualifications frameworks.
- Contemporary priorities are especially concerned with how small states can respond to major external shocks and challenges within the environmental, economic, cultural and political domains. In the light of this, future priorities for attention include work on: (i) innovative ways in which education systems in small states can contribute to combating and mitigating climate change; (ii) monitoring the impact of global economic downturns on the provision of basic education in small states; (iii) studies of aid to education in small states – its volume, predictability, forms, culture, reporting requirements, benefits and the extent to which it heightens levels of dependency and obligation; and (iv) more detailed studies of education, training and the labour market in the context of international skills migration.
- Commonwealth small states are relatively advanced in their progress towards basic education global goals and targets.
- The EFA targets and MDGs remain relevant for small states, though their pressing priorities often lie beyond those that currently command the attention of larger states and international development agencies.
- Most small states have achieved almost universal access to basic education.
- Many small states have either achieved or are close to gender parity in primary and secondary schooling. In some, the disparity, especially at secondary level, lies in favour of girls. This is a distinctive priority for future attention.
- Small states have been some of the first countries to shift educational priorities towards issues of retention, quality, equity, inclusion and skills training, and in doing so they have generated much insightful and valuable experience from which others can learn.
- International support for education in small states remains strategically important if existing achievements are to be consolidated and sustained.

- Increased flexibility in the direction of external support is necessary if it is to target small state strategies and priorities that focus upon ways of improving retention, quality, equity and inclusivity in basic education, skills development strategies for youth and adults that are consistent with local needs, and increased commitment to higher education.
- The rise of the knowledge economy has underpinned the expansion and strengthening of higher education, with related implications for the harnessing of ICT, the creation of quality-assurance mechanisms, and improved co-ordination, integration and regulation. The realistic application of ICT in small states can do much to help to transform the future development, management and reach of higher education.
- The potential of locally grounded research to inform educational policy and practice deserves increased attention – as does the strengthening of educational research capacity within small states.
- National, regional and international partnerships and collaborations continue to hold much potential for the success of future developments.
- Commonwealth agencies, including the Commonwealth Secretariat, have a strategic role to play in supporting small states in realising their contemporary educational priorities.
- In pursuing the Secretariat's *Education Strategic Plan 2010–2012* some priority should be given to the generation of appropriate financial and human resources, to cross-sectoral co-ordination and to strengthened focus, in line with input and feedback from well grounded stakeholder groups within small states, including those involved in relevant research.
- The successful track record of the Secretariat in education in small states gives it a clear focus and comparative advantage in ongoing support of such work in the future.

Introduction

The origins of this book lie in work commissioned for the 17th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in 2009. A discussion paper prepared for ministers and senior officials attending the conference stimulated debate and attracted positive feedback (Crossley *et al.*, 2009). In the light of this presentation, additional research and analysis was conducted to produce the present publication. Given that 28 Commonwealth countries have populations below two million (and 22 below one million), the focus on small states is relevant to the majority of Commonwealth members.[2]

This book is designed as a stimulus for policymakers and other analysts concerned with or engaged in the shaping of educational priorities and strategies for small states. It recognises encouraging developments, for example, in the domain of ICT, while also noting the challenges of changing economic and environmental circumstances. The book builds on the work of the Commonwealth Secretariat in this area,[3] and in some respects it is an update of the review prepared by Crossley and Holmes in 1999.[4] It is hoped this may help to support the Secretariat and other Commonwealth organisations as they continue to work with small states worldwide.

The study draws on original research, international databases, related literature and consultations with policymakers, planners and practitioners in both small and larger states. Feedback from ministers and their senior officials at the 17th CCEM provides a core foundation for the analysis. This is combined with insights gained from discussions with personnel from international agencies, including the Commonwealth and UNESCO, and from field visits by the lead authors to Papua New Guinea, Turks and Caicos Islands, Fiji Islands, Solomon Islands and Suriname. Formal written input was contributed by educational planners, practitioners and researchers in small states, including Anguilla, Belize, Botswana, Jamaica, Mauritius, Montserrat, St Lucia and Solomon Islands, and by academic specialists in the field of comparative and inter-

national education. The research draws upon the resources and networks of UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning and the University of Bristol's specialist Education in Small States Research Group (*www.small-states.net*). Original field research carried out by doctoral researchers working at the University of Bristol helped to ground the study in the views of practitioners and in recent empirical evidence of educational policy in practice in small states worldwide, as did material provided by participants in the UNESCO/IIEP Advanced Training Programme. During July 2009, members of the research team participated in the IIEP policy forum on 'Tertiary Education in Small States: Planning in the Context of Globalisation', and this generated further high-level input, many helpful contacts and much valuable information. A mixture of research methodologies characterises the overall study, and the book benefits greatly from up-to-date statistical data compiled for and from UNESCO *EFA Global Monitoring Reports* and from involvement in a parallel study of the performance of Commonwealth countries in achieving global goals and targets in basic education (Packer and Aggio, 2010).

The study draws upon socio-cultural perspectives in the field of comparative and international education that are sensitive to cultural and contextual differences, and to the nature and influence of global policy trends and trajectories. The book therefore aims to bridge the world of research and scholarship, and that of educational policy and practice in ways that can inform ongoing planning within small states and contribute to future regional and pan-Commonwealth consultations on small states' educational policies and priorities.

When the organisers of the 17th CCEM set the theme for the conference as 'Towards and Beyond Global Goals and Targets', they particularly had in mind the EFA goals and objectives and the MDGs related to education. The EFA objectives were set at a conference held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990 (Inter-Agency Commission, 1990) and were given greater specificity in Dakar, Senegal, in 2000 (UNESCO, 2000). Six EFA goals were set in Dakar:

1. Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;
2. Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality;
3. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes;

4. Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

5. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in good quality basic education.

6. Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence for all, so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

The MDGs, set by the UN in 2000, dovetail with these EFA objectives. Among the eight MDGs, two (goals 2 and 3) are particularly concerned with education, namely:

- Ensure that by 2015 children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling;

- Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels of education no later than 2015.

Many small states are well advanced in realising the EFA objectives and the MDGs, but others still have some distance to go. In line with the spirit and core values of the Commonwealth, this book highlights the ongoing potential of co-operation among small states. It also provides lessons that extend beyond the Commonwealth; UNESCO, which has 193 member states, including all the Commonwealth states, provides a forum for such wider consideration of lessons and strategies. The following chapters consider ways in which ongoing partnerships and collaboration at local, national, regional and international levels can help to advance the potential identified here.

1. New Challenges and Opportunities

A decade into the 21st century, partnerships in international and educational development are at least as important as they were during previous eras. In many respects, however, contexts and modalities for collaboration have changed. Especially evident is the increased intensity of globalisation, which brings both challenges and opportunities. As noted by Bacchus (2008: 141), getting the best from these developments is something that small states cannot do by themselves 'because they are usually "takers" rather than "makers" of the world economic policies'. The global economic crisis which commenced at the end of 2008 hit at least some small states disproportionately hard, especially those that rely heavily on banking and tourism (World Bank, 2009a). Trade liberalisation has been a mixed blessing for many small states, and in some countries the issues of migration and brain drain have become even more prominent than they were before. Climate change has also brought major challenges, especially for island states vulnerable to rising sea levels and intensified hurricanes (Sem, 2007).

More positively, small states have greatly benefited from the technological advances associated with globalisation (Favaro, 2008). Previous generations felt that small states were disadvantaged, for example, by lack of ability to establish specialist libraries and to gain specialist professional advice. The internet permits many households and institutions in small states to have the same access as households and institutions in large states. Moreover, small states are using technology to make productive links over vast areas. Especially exciting is the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC), for which the seeds were sown in 2000 during the CCEM held in Halifax, Canada (Daniel and West, 2008; Daniel, 2010). Other changes include an expanded demand for education. A few small states are still some way from achieving the goal of universal primary education, but most are well advanced and indeed many are close to achieving universal secondary education. As a

result of this progress at primary and secondary levels, demand has expanded for tertiary provision. Further, the expansion of tertiary education is now increasingly prioritised in the global knowledge economy of which small states, like their larger counterparts, wish to be part.

Such considerations highlight the demands on policymakers and planners in small states, who may need additional or to some extent different skills from their counterparts in larger states (Bray, 1992; Atchoarena, 1993; Baldacchino and Farrugia, 2002; Puamau and Teasdale, 2005). Policymakers and planners need strategies to benefit from the fact that small states are sovereign entities, while handling the demands that this may bring for participation in international meetings and other events. Professionals in small states may also need to be more multifunctional than their counterparts in larger states, who are more easily able to specialise, e.g. in aspects of the curriculum, financing and aid negotiation. Small states may be more responsive to reform, since a single actor can have a greater proportionate influence than would be the case in a larger state; but this may bring challenges of volatility (Box 1). Planners in small states are also more likely to face issues of dependency than their counterparts in larger states. These and other issues need further investigation in a range of contexts to identify commonalities across small states, while also recognising the diversity arising from ongoing changes in specific economic, cultural and socio-political contexts.

In tune with the Commonwealth's respect for and understanding of difference, it is important to note the diversity of small state contexts. Any search for common 'best practice' can underplay the significance of differing contextual factors across small states in shaping educational policy and practice. This highlights the dangers that can result from uncritical international transfer of policy models, and the benefits that can be gained from more subtle, mediated and contextualised ways of sharing experience and learning from elsewhere (Crossley and Watson, 2003). At the same time, small states have much in common, and this generates distinctive perspectives and planning priorities that often differ from those in global frameworks. Thus, one may ask how well current global educational agendas and discourses deal with the needs of small states, and to what extent small states look towards or beyond global goals and targets.

There are also differences between the factors shaping global agendas and those driving small state priorities. Commonwealth Secretariat work during the 1980s and 1990s on the distinctive features of education in small states focused largely on the internal workings of education systems. Today, priorities are more concerned with how small states can respond meaningfully to major external

Box 1. Small states and sensitivity to reform

In small states, the role and impact of individuals may be greater than in larger states. Remarks by Schweisfurth (2008: 69–70) with reference to The Gambia illustrate this point. 'Even a single teacher,' observes Schweisfurth, 'can gain the attention of a wide audience more easily than in a more populated system with more bureaucratic layers.' Impact can be extended by the polyvalent roles demanded in small states. 'For example, head teachers often function additionally as inspectors and advisors. This means that one person attending a workshop could potentially have a dual impact, both within their own schools and more widely.' Single institutions, especially at the level of higher education, can also have a much greater impact in small systems than would be the case in large systems.

These features, of course, have other implications. Sensitivity to the impact of individuals can increase volatility, and small systems may lack the checks and balances that are more evident in larger systems. In addition, the fact that individuals must play polyvalent roles may limit the extent to which they can secure depth in specific functions. These are among the challenges with which policymakers and planners in small states must grapple.

shocks and challenges – economic, environmental, cultural, and political (Briguglio and Kisanga, 2004; Pillay and Elliot, 2005). Small states need to secure the human and financial resources to enable their citizens to meet these challenges in their own societies and in the wider world. Co-operation and education are important means of addressing such challenges.

2. An Overview of Education in Small States

As in the general literature, in the present study population size has been taken as the primary indicator for defining which countries and territories to analyse. In its work on the economies of small states, the World Bank uses the threshold of 1.5 million people, but notes that in practice there is a continuum and that some states with populations that are larger than the chosen threshold share some or all of the characteristics of smaller countries.[5]

This view is reflected in the work of the Commonwealth Secretariat, which also uses the 1.5 million population benchmark. However, its annual publication, *Small States: Economic Review and Basic Statistics*, provides data on states with populations up to five million, since many of these share characteristics with the smaller countries. In facilitating dialogue with its members on small state issues, the Commonwealth includes Botswana, The Gambia, Jamaica, Lesotho, Namibia and Papua New Guinea (with a population of over six million people) – but not New Zealand or Singapore – on the grounds that issues of remoteness and insularity, susceptibility to natural disasters, limited institutional capacity and economic diversification, vulnerability arising from economic openness, poor access to external capital, and a relatively high incidence of poverty are present in full or in part in all of these larger small states.

A different classification starting point is 'islandness'. The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs recognises 51 small island developing states (SIDS) which share similar physical and structural challenges to their development. Most of these states suffer from degrees of remoteness, are small in land area and population (less than 1.5 million) and have narrow resource bases that are highly vulnerable to natural disasters. Their economies are open and heavily dependent on trade for national income.[6] Most of these countries belong to the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).[7] As one might expect, a list of small

island states and states classified by smallness of population shows a high degree of coincidence (Appendix 1).

Table 1 lists the world's small states by size of population and geographical region. It separates 87 states with populations below 1.5 million from the 34 states that have between 1.5 and five million people. Of the total of 120 states with fewer than five million people, 80 are sovereign states and 40 are territories in forms of association and dependency with larger countries.[8] Regionally, the greatest concentrations of small states are in the Caribbean and the south Pacific.

Small states in the Commonwealth

Of the 80 sovereign countries with populations below five million, 32 (40%) are full members of the Commonwealth (Table 1). Twenty-three are island states, 15 of which are multi-island countries. When 1.5 million people are used as the benchmark, 25 fully independent Commonwealth countries comprise 53 per cent of the total of 47 small states globally.

Although these Commonwealth member countries have much in common, there is considerable diversity. Table 2 shows levels of income per capita and rankings on the Human Development Index (HDI) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Thirteen of the fully independent Commonwealth small states for which data are available (excluding New Zealand and Singapore) have high or upper-middle income levels (World Bank data) and very high or high HDI ratings (UNDP data). At the other end of the scale, only The Gambia scores low on both indices, but all the Pacific states are lower-middle income countries, with the exception of low income Vanuatu.

The scale and scope of education systems

The systemic challenge for all small states – rich and poor – is to deliver education services for a small number of students from a restricted institutional base. Enabling all children and adults to benefit from a full range of educational opportunities from early childhood to tertiary education is almost inevitably constrained by size, a limited range of expertise and high unit costs of specialisation which countries with fewer than 1.5 million people find hard to bear.

Factors of unit costs appear to be reflected in the high proportions of total public expenditure devoted to education in small states. The global average is 4.9 per cent of GNP, but in Commonwealth small states the average is 7.1 per cent and in only two of the 19 states for which data are shown in Appendix 2 (The Gambia and Mauritius) is the proportion below the global average.

Table 1. Small states and territories by size of population

Region	Population < 1.5 million	Population, 1.5–5 million
Africa	**Cape Verde**; **Equatorial Guinea**; **Gabon**; **São Tomé & Príncipe**; ***Swaziland***	***Botswana***; **Central African Republic**; **Congo (Republic of)**; **Eritrea**; ***The Gambia***; **Guinea Bissau**; ***Lesotho***; **Liberia**; ***Namibia***
Americas	French Guiana (FRORD); **Suriname**	**Costa Rica**; **Panama**; **Uruguay**
Arab States	**Bahrain**; **Djibouti**; **Qatar**	**Lebanon**; **Mauritania**; **Oman**; **United Arab Emirates**; West Bank & Gaza
Atlantic	Bermuda (BROT); Falkland Islands (BROT); Faroe Islands (DENSG); Greenland (DENSG); **Iceland**; St Helena (BROT); St Pierre & Miquelon (FRTC)	
Asia	**Bhutan**; ***Brunei Darussalam***; Macao-China (SAR); **Timor Leste**	**Georgia**; **Mongolia**; ***Singapore***
Caribbean	Anguilla (BROT); ***Antigua & Barbuda***; Aruba (NETHFA); ***The Bahamas***; ***Barbados***; ***Belize***; British Virgin Islands (BROT); Cayman Islands (BROT); ***Dominica***; ***Grenada***; Guadeloupe (FRORD); ***Guyana***; Martinique (FRORD); Montserrat (BROT); Netherlands Antilles (NETHFA); St Barthelemy (FROC); ***St Kitts & Nevis***; ***St Lucia***; St Martin (FROC); ***St Vincent & the Grenadines***; ***Trinidad & Tobago***; Turks & Caicos (BROT); US Virgin Islands (UST)	***Jamaica***; Puerto Rico (SGUT)
Europe	**Andorra**; ***Cyprus***; **Estonia**; Gibraltar (BROT); Guernsey (UKCD); Isle of Man (UKCD); Jersey (UKCD); **Liechtenstein**; **Luxembourg**; ***Malta***; **Monaco**; **Montenegro**; San Marino; The Vatican	**Albania**; **Armenia**; **Bosnia & Herzegovina**; **Croatia**; **Ireland**; **Latvia**; **Lithuania**; **Macedonia FYR**; **Moldova**; **Norway**; **Slovenia**
Indian Ocean	Christmas Island (AUST); Cocos Islands (AUST) ; **Comoros**; Mayotte (FROC); ***Maldives***; ***Mauritius***; Réunion (FRORD); ***Seychelles***	
Pacific	American Samoa (UST); Cook Islands (SGNZ); **Federated States of Micronesia**; **Fiji Islands**; French Polynesia; Guam (SGUT); ***Kiribati***; **Marshall Islands**; ***Nauru***; New Caledonia (FRORD); Niue (SGNZ); Norfolk Island (AUST); Northern Marianas (SGCUS); **Palau**; ***Samoa***; ***Solomon Islands***; Tokelau (NZSAT); ***Tonga***; ***Tuvalu***; ***Vanuatu***; Wallis & Futuna (FROC)	***New Zealand***

Notes: Countries in bold are UN members; countries in italic are Commonwealth members. 2008 data.
Abbreviations: AUST: Australian Territory Administered from Canberra; BROT: British Overseas Territory; DENSG: Self-governing Overseas Administrative Division of Denmark; FROC: French Overseas Collectivity; FRORD: French Overseas Regions and Departments; NETHFA: Part of the Kingdom of The Netherlands with Full Autonomy in Internal Affairs; NZSAT: New Zealand Administering Territory; SAR: Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China; SGCUS: Commonwealth in Political Union with USA; SGNZ: Self Governing in Association with New Zealand; SGUT: Self-Governing Unincorporated Territory of the USA; UKCD: United Kingdom Crown Dependency; UST: Unincorporated territory administered by USA Office of Insular Affairs.

Table 2. Commonwealth small states: income and human development

	Very high HDI 0.900 and above	High HDI 0.800–0.899	Medium HDI 0.500–0.799	Low HDI below 0.500
High income **>US$11,906 GNI per capita**	Barbados Brunei Darussalam Cyprus Malta	Antigua & Barbuda Bahamas, The Trinidad & Tobago		
Upper-middle income **US$3,856–11,905 GNI per capita**		Dominica Grenada Mauritius St Kitts & Nevis St Lucia Seychelles	Belize Botswana Dominica Grenada Jamaica Namibia St Vincent & the Grenadines	
Lower-middle income **US$976–3855 GNI per capita**			Guyana Lesotho Maldives Papua New Guinea Samoa Solomon Islands Swaziland Tonga Lesotho Vanuatu	
Low income **<US$975 GNI per capita**				Gambia, The

Notes: This table includes all independent Commonwealth small states with a population up to five million, excluding New Zealand and Singapore but with the addition of Papua New Guinea. Kiribati has no HDI ranking – it is a lower-middle income country with a population below 100,000. Nauru and Tuvalu have no HDI or income rankings. Each has a population below 100,000. GNI: Gross National Income; HDI: Human Development Index.
Source: UNDP (2009), Table H; World Bank (2009b), p. 377.

In most small states an important part of this expenditure is devoted to extending the scale and scope of education systems through external partnerships. These include regional universities, notably the University of the West Indies and the University of the South Pacific (USP). They also include regional examination bodies such as the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) and regional planning projects and programmes such as the Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of Basic Education (PRIDE). Other opportunities are secured through collaboration with larger states outside the immediate geographic region, including partnerships with universities offering distance education programmes.

From these observations a number of complex issues arise, including the extent to which policymakers and planners in small states must necessarily envisage higher unit costs than their counterparts in larger states. In addition, the advantages and disadvantages of bilateral, regional and international collaboration in the delivery and support of education services must be weighed carefully in terms of value added.

Beyond global goals and targets

Some small states, while they support international commitments to achieve EFA and the MDGs, have found the global focus on universal primary education and gender parity insufficiently attentive to their own achievements and needs. Many small states identify and prioritise more pressing national educational objectives. This is not to suggest that the EFA and MDG agendas have been fully achieved by all small states, especially since the agendas stress quality as well as quantity. Nevertheless, 11 of the 24 Commonwealth states with populations below 1.5 million for which data are available have primary net enrolment rates of 90 per cent or over, and seven have rates of 95 per cent or over (Appendix 2). Certainly, further effort is needed to reach and sustain figures close to 100 per cent, but the picture compares positively with many other parts of the world (Packer and Aggio, 2010). On the other hand, nine countries have primary net enrolment rates below 85 per cent. Solomon Islands, a country that has experienced recent debilitating conflict, has the lowest net enrolment rate (62%) among Commonwealth small states (see Appendix 2). As the *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2011* makes clear, it is largely impossible to project enrolment rates forward to 2015. Aside from the weakness of data there are many education policy and global variables that make projections based on current trends extremely problematic.

Enabling the last 5–10 per cent of the most disadvantaged children to participate in a complete cycle of basic schooling is a challenge which confronts

most states, including higher-income countries. While it may be possible to identify some barriers to schooling that confront the most needy children which are directly related to the smallness of the state (e.g. isolation in countries which are made up of a widely scattered archipelago; problems associated with specialist provision for children with special needs when the numbers in any one community or location are very small and specialist expertise and training is limited; and the limitations of budgets to meet very small scale and localised requirements), it is primarily issues of poverty, conflict, inadequate financing and the poor quality of schooling which afflict small and large countries alike. There are, however, some differences in levels of enrolment over time within the countries of the Commonwealth Caribbean and the Commonwealth Pacific that may be worthy of scrutiny in relation to the policies and strategies that have been pursued in different small states.

On the MDG gender parity indicators, most small states have either achieved parity in formal schooling (primary and secondary) or the disparity is in favour of girls. The latter is particularly evident in the Caribbean, where enhancement of boys' achievements has long been identified as a priority (Miller, 1991; Kutnick, 2000). Thus, 19 countries have a Gender Parity Index (GPI – females/males) for secondary education above 1.0, and in eight instances the figure exceeds 1.1 (Appendix 2). Only in four countries are the figures well below 1.0, most notably in The Gambia and Vanuatu.

For basic education more generally, the attention of many small states is focused on some of the other EFA goals, notably the extension of access to pre-primary education, where the pattern of public provision is uneven, to improve the quality of formal schooling (primary and secondary) and – especially but not exclusively in the south Pacific – to extend the range of skills development and adult learning opportunities in communities that are heavily dependent on their own resources and local economies.

At the same time, the challenges of addressing economic vulnerability, environmental degradation, climate change and in many instances a paucity of natural resources highlight the importance of imaginative and financially realistic ways to develop skills, knowledge and experience that can sustain small economies. Developing this competency base requires the EFA/MDG agenda, but extends well beyond it. This is leading policymakers and planners to ask how they can best develop a balanced approach to education across the whole sector in ways that go beyond the international priorities of the first decade of the new millennium.

The place of external assistance

Data on aid to education in Commonwealth small states are scarce, especially when questions address the use of aid rather than simply its volume. Nevertheless, some statistics are available. In total, for the 25 independent Commonwealth small states for which data are available (Appendix 2) approximately US$223 million was provided for aid specifically for the education sector in 2007. This compared to just over US$12 billion in aid for education globally.

Appendix 2 shows that very little direct aid funding goes to education in the Caribbean (although St Vincent and the Grenadines is shown in the database of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as receiving US$17 million in 2007). Assistance in the south Pacific is much greater, though it varies from year to year. For example, Papua New Guinea received well over US$100 million per annum at the beginning of the decade, but only US$40 million in 2007. Samoa received US$4 million in 2007 compared with US$24 million in 2006. Aid to Vanuatu fell from US$14 million in 2000 to US$9 million in 2007.

Some forms of assistance are focused specifically on small states. For example, scholarship programmes in Australia and New Zealand are targeted in large part on the Pacific islands. In parallel, Canada has specific scholarship schemes for the Caribbean.

Much work remains to be done to unravel the data on aid to education in small states – its volume, predictability, forms, culture, reporting requirements, benefits and the extent to which it heightens levels of dependency and obligation (Collier and Dollar, 2001; Coxon and Munce, 2008). These questions will gain in importance if negative economic forces and climate change have a serious impact on public service budgets in small states.

3. Changing Global Contexts

This chapter identifies three priorities that were stressed by Ministers during the 17th CCEM. It cannot list all priorities and therefore highlights the strategic importance of selected themes. Looking towards and beyond the EFA and MDG agendas, particular attention is given to climate change, global financial interconnections, and migration, labour markets and skills.

For many years the analysis of the prospects for economic and social development in small states has been informed by the concept of vulnerability. Two Commonwealth reports, the first in 1985 and the second in 1997, defined vulnerability in terms of openness, insularity, resilience, weakness and dependence (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1985, 1997b). The 1997 report recognised (p. xi) that small states face 'a susceptibility to risks and threats set at a relatively lower threshold than for larger states' and that 'their small size gives them less margin for coping than in larger states'.

This ability to cope is being tested to the full in the new millennium. The joint Commonwealth Secretariat and World Bank study, *Small States in the Global Economy* (Peretz *et al.*, 2001), the *Mauritius Strategy for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States 2005–2015* (United Nations, 2005) and the *Declaration on Climate Change* by the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS, 2009) are a sample of international efforts to analyse and publicise the special circumstances of small states in the context of multifaceted global change.

Most of these endeavours have two related thrusts. They analyse the impact of global trends and pressures on the development prospects of small states and they advance the responses and mitigation strategies which small states and the wider international community should implement to counteract, learn from and even benefit from complex global challenges. Education is generally on the margins of these analyses. Its importance in the processes by which small states develop the knowledge and the skills needed to address new challenges is

broadly acknowledged, but fiscal and organisational pressures and the need for context-specific education policy and practice relevant to fast-changing environmental, labour market and trading environments have not received much attention in the international literature.

Climate change

No country is immune from the interconnected challenges posed by climate change, some of which require controversial political decisions. The *Stern Review* on the economics of climate change concluded that 'developing countries are especially vulnerable to climate change because of their geographic exposure, low incomes, and greater reliance on climate sensitive sectors such as agriculture' (Stern, 2007: 104). The *Review* noted that falling farm incomes increase poverty and reduce the ability of households to invest in a better future, forcing them to use up meagre savings just to survive. Millions of people will potentially be at risk of climate-driven heat stress, flooding, malnutrition and vector-borne diseases. An additional 145 to 220 million people could be living on less than US$2 a day, and income losses could cause a further 165,000 to 250,000 child deaths per year in south Asia and sub-Saharan Africa by 2100. Severe deterioration in the local climate could lead in some places to mass migration and conflict, especially as a further two to three billion people are added to the developing world's population during the next few decades.

The situation in many small states, though not as dramatic in terms of total numbers, is in line with this wider picture. A study by AOSIS in conjunction with the United Nations Foundation identified eight major threats:[9]

- Small islands, in both the tropics and higher latitudes, have characteristics which make them especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change, sea level rise and extreme events.
- Sea level rise is expected to exacerbate inundation, storm surge, erosion and other coastal hazards, threatening vital infrastructure, settlements and facilities that support island communities.
- Under most climate change scenarios, water resources in small islands are likely to be seriously compromised.
- Climate change is likely to impact on coral reefs, fisheries and other marine-based resources.
- On some islands, especially those at higher latitudes, warming has already led to the replacement of some local species.

- It is very likely that subsistence and commercial agriculture on small islands will be adversely affected by climate change.
- The effects on tourism are likely to be both direct and indirect, and largely negative.
- Global climate change is likely to impact on human health, mostly in adverse ways.

These impacts of climate change are clearly a major barrier to the achievement of sustainable development goals and require a broad range of mitigation strategies. As the UNDP states, 'responding to climate change will require the integration of adaptation into all aspects of policy development and planning for poverty reduction' (UNDP, 2007: 13). Yet many of the strategies put forward say little about education. An exception is some of the work done under the umbrella of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005–2014). This promotes the argument that climate change has substantial implications for education and learning. It observes (UNESCO, 2009a: 1) that:

- All levels and forms of existing educational and teaching and learning programmes need to be reviewed and re-oriented to address the causes and consequences of climate change;
- Climate change requires educators to include new content in education, training and public awareness programmes;
- Creativity, problem solving and social transformation skills need to be developed and nurtured;
- Positive, participatory action and solution-centred approaches to education and learning need to be developed.

Translating this into the everyday practice of education and training is a challenge in itself. It requires capacities and expertise within small state education systems which may be scarce or even completely absent. It demands skills in tertiary institutions and teacher training colleges of a very different order from more traditional and formal academic pedagogies and training. And it needs to draw in partners and stakeholders beyond formal government-led education systems who are able to work closely with the communities most immediately affected by climate change. For the small states that have addressed the educational implications of disaster preparedness over many decades, in the face of typhoons, hurricanes and volcanic eruptions, a diverse base of skills may already exist; but for countries whose very existence is threatened by rising sea levels, the magnitude of the challenge of how to make education directly rele-

vant to immediate needs requires attention and assistance from regional and international communities. The case of Tuvalu is a dramatic example. In the worst scenario, the entire population would need to be resettled on a new homeland and islanders would become climatic refugees.[10]

The question then is how vulnerability can be reduced through education. Environmental considerations need to be integrated into school curricula and education sector policies. Small island states should incorporate disaster preparedness, response and recovery into educational planning, and should examine the implications of climate change on training needs in areas such as agriculture, fisheries, tourism and environmental management.

In some states, rural development approaches have undergone a fundamental shift to enable them to build on the priorities and capabilities of the poor and engage more stakeholders in breaking the cycle of poverty and environmental degradation. This perspective empowers poor people by giving them greater control over the management of land, water and biodiversity. The approach develops their capacities to increase productivity in a sustainable manner and to diversify their livelihoods through non-agricultural activities. Increasing attention has been paid to sustainable development strategies based on bottom-up approaches that integrate natural resources management in socio-economic development processes (see, for example, Nath *et al.*, 2010). Local development planning can play a key role in strengthening livelihoods. Small states are also finding ways through the UN and other bodies to increase their leverage on larger states whose environmental actions seriously affect small states.

Financial interconnections

The global financial crisis that commenced at the end of 2008 highlighted multiple interconnections across the world, some of which have particular pertinence to small states. A study of the crisis by the Small States Economic Development Network noted that:[11]

- In **Africa**, falling oil and other commodity prices, diminishing tourist returns and foreign direct investment (FDI) flows, and decreases in the level of remittances hit all Commonwealth small states in one way or another. Tourist arrivals in Seychelles dropped significantly during 2009. Botswana was affected by the drop in the price of diamonds.
- In the **Caribbean**, high levels of existing debt mean that there is little fiscal space in which to respond to the crisis. The current account balance as a percentage of GDP in 2008 was negative in nearly all Commonwealth Caribbean states. Growth slowed and unemployment rose.

- In **Pacific** island states, the crisis compounded food and fuel price hikes. Remittances fell significantly in 2009 across most of the region. Kiribati had substantial public savings invested in offshore equity which lost value in world stock markets.

In similar vein, a conference on the impact of the global economic crisis on the Pacific islands concluded that:

- Falls in commodity prices and export earnings from commodities and manufactured items were having significant effects on exporting countries such as Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Fiji Islands and Vanuatu. Volatility would continue to pose a problem for economies that were not sufficiently diversified.
- Declines in tourism receipts because of unemployment and uncertainty in source countries discouraged people from taking expensive overseas holidays, affecting the Cook Islands, Fiji Islands, Samoa, Palau, Tonga and Vanuatu.
- Reductions in income from internationally invested trust and sovereign wealth funds would significantly affect government budgets in Kiribati, Tuvalu, Marshall Islands, Palau and Federated States of Micronesia.
- Although Pacific island banks remained relatively profitable, a high level of foreign ownership made them vulnerable to erosions in the capital of parent banks.
- Most Pacific island countries were highly reliant on development assistance, but ODA flows were likely to be adversely affected as donor countries themselves experienced tighter fiscal positions.

Against this backdrop, Commonwealth Heads of Government stressed that 'the disproportionate impact of the global economic crisis on small states underscored the importance of a conducive external environment to their development'. They encouraged these countries 'to continue to implement outward-oriented development strategies that would assist them to overcome their vulnerabilities and diversify the structures of their economies' (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2009b, para. 82).

More specifically on education, UNESCO's *EFA Global Monitoring Report* (2010: 3) maintains that:

> there is an imminent danger that, after a decade of encouraging advances, progress towards the [EFA] education goals will stall or even be thrown into reverse in the face of rising poverty, slower economic growth and mounting pressure on government budgets.

Much of this analysis is based on the experience of sub-Saharan Africa, where it was estimated that US$4.6 billion a year could be lost in total financing for education in 2009 and 2010.

UNICEF-supported work by the Overseas Development Institute points to the evidence of past economic crises which suggests that compromises in education are likely to be a common coping strategy. There is evidence in some countries of children being removed from school due to deteriorating household finances. However, in small states evidence of the financial crisis impacting on basic service delivery budgets is unclear. A note from the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2009), *Impact of the Global Economic Recession on Education*, recognises that it is very difficult to assess the impact of recession of public service budgets beyond media reports.

Another Pacific study (Chibber, 2009), this time on the threat to the achievement of the MDGs, noted among other findings that:

- Recent UNDP research indicates that the number of those living below national poverty lines in the region jumped from 4 million to 4.5 million over the two years to mid-2009. It concludes that the crisis will add to pressure on traditional support systems and also contribute to the increase in the number of working poor in the Pacific. Already, the proportion of employed people living on less than US$1.25 a day in the sub-region has increased from 35 per cent in 2007 to 38 per cent in 2008.
- Similarly, even though most Pacific countries had appeared to be on track to achieve universal primary education (MDG2), the economic crisis may mean that more children are unable to enrol in school, drop out or experience declines in the quality of education. For instance, in Samoa it is understood that many children have been 'suspended' from school pending the payment of overdue fees for the current year.
- It is feared that lower household incomes or limited access to public services due to constrained government budgets may also lead to increases in infant mortality (MDG4) and maternal mortality (MDG5) rates, and exacerbate the public health challenges of HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases and malaria (MDG6). As in Asia, women are likely to be the most vulnerable in the face of these threats.
- Increases in poverty, horizontal inequalities or extremely skewed progress on the MDGs may also pose a security problem in some Pacific countries, as they can create, exacerbate and sustain the conditions, needs and grievances that feed conflict. As a result, there is a risk that the economic crisis may push some countries into a low human development–conflict trap, with

conflict destroying accumulated physical, social and human capital (UNESCO, 2011).

- The economic and financial crisis further threatens the social fabric as islanders seek employment or social protection in difficult times. A rise in rural-to-urban-to-overseas migration has led to other problems for those left behind. Rural villages and outer islands are being depleted of their young people, often leaving very young children in the care of aging grandparents, which can reduce food security in rural areas and further increases the importance of remittances. Traditional social safety nets are weakening as families are split by migration.

Related work in the south Pacific (PasEFIC, UNDP and UNICEF, 2009: vi) similarly suggests that:

> … the gains in education made by Pacific Island countries are now under threat. More Pacific Island children may not enrol, drop out of school or experience declines in the quality of education. If education budgets decline, teacher salaries may be delayed and public money for new school buildings, school repairs and school inputs such as teaching supplies may be greatly reduced, compromising quality. Where students incur some direct schooling costs, however small, poorer students may be pressed to forego schooling to earn income or to substitute for adult home production. Large youth populations combined with school drop-outs already make youth employment a major concern for this sub-region with the crisis only set to increase levels of youth unemployment. If enrolments and learning levels deteriorate during the crisis, Pacific Island countries may lose a competitive head-start when the global economy recovers. There are also sinister long-term impacts of deteriorating education.

Whether these contentions become real will not become totally clear until the data catch up with the reality. What seems likely as a minimum position is that many small states will need to finance their education services with no more resources than have been available in recent years. And yet the pressures of climate change and of sustaining and increasing levels of economic growth actually require that more resources find their way into education and be used in ways that contribute to mitigating externally driven global challenges.

International migration, labour markets and skills

Forms of migration associated with intensified globalisation also have particular significance in small states. In 2000 the emigration rate of skilled workers

was 43.2 per cent in states with populations below 1.5 million, compared with 7.4 per cent for developing countries as a group (Docquier and Marfouk, 2006; Docquier and Schiff, 2009). Among the small states of the Caribbean, the skilled emigration rate reached 74.9 per cent. The brain drain for university graduates was 31.9 per cent for small states, meaning that 32 of every 100 university graduates lived outside their home countries.

The depressive effect of emigration on the stock of human capital is widely recognised as a major development challenge and as a factor of vulnerability. More positively, in some small states remittances from migrants are the most important source of foreign exchange. Moreover, migration can increase rates of return from investment in higher education due to the probability of earning higher salaries abroad. Nevertheless, on balance most developing countries, and in particular small developing countries, suffer more than they benefit from migration (Beine *et al.*, 2008). Small states lose productivity in part because of limitations in the extent to which people remain at home to make use of new technologies. According to Schiff and Wang (2009), the loss of productivity growth is three times higher in small states than in other countries.

The link between small states' diaspora and domestic economic development is therefore significant. The concept of brain drain in relation to diaspora carries a negative stigma, seen as an international issue of outflow and loss of investment. The situation of small states, however, offers an interesting twist to this concept. Having long lived with outward migration because of their scale and isolation, it can be argued that small states are relatively comfortable with this situation. Writers from small states, such as Baldacchino, challenge the concept of brain drain in small states, offering an alternative 'cyclical and multiple migration model, both to properly explain at least some of the more contemporary patterns of human traffic across frontiers, as well as to posit a more diffusive, positive-sum model of human capital flows' (Baldacchino, 2006: 143). In doing so, he highlights the attractions of returning to small states, such as recapturing a sense of home and political reform, as well as other incentives mentioned below. In this way, Baldacchino reconceptualises brain drain in small states as 'brain rotation'. Another example of diasporan return to the home country is the phenomenon known as the 'reverse wave', mainly to Caribbean states, whereby many countries are seeing the return of some of the Caribbean-born diaspora who left in the 1950s and 1960s for the UK.

In the light of this, there is room for planning and research priorities in small states to strengthen understanding of the trends of outward and return migration, to plan for it and take better advantage of its potential. Small states could, for example, assist returning emigrants to integrate back into their home

countries, allowing them to make use of the skills they have developed abroad. These, according to Baldacchino (2006: 144), could include 'educational innovation, entrepreneurship support, small business development, management of flagship public/private enterprises and opportunities for direct financial investment'.

Another dimension of this challenge relates to the structure of domestic labour markets. In the eastern Caribbean, employers struggle to find qualified candidates in emerging skill areas, yet large cohorts of low-skilled young people suffer from underemployment and unemployment. World Bank (2007) figures indicate that in St Kitts and Nevis finding a first job takes on average 14 months for a common entrance examination graduate. In other words, the education system does not adequately prepare young people for the world of work. This situation requires attention to the type of technical and vocational education provided. In the eastern Caribbean most secondary schools offer some kind of vocational subjects, but the relevance and quality of the skills acquired are questionable. The arithmetic of labour market balances has much less margin for error in small states than in larger states. In highly specialised areas, needs can be met by one or two individuals. Anything less than this small number is a severe deficit and anything more is a problematic surplus.

Beyond the economic perspective, youth exclusion from the labour market is a major social problem in some states. This is obvious in the Caribbean, where concerns about violence and social disruption are often at the core of the public debate. The youth issue is also very significant in the south Pacific and has been highlighted in Samoa, for instance, where according to the 2001 census 37 per cent of the 15–19 age group were not at school (Afamagasa, 2005).

In societies which have undergone economic liberalisation and diversification, small and medium size enterprises make up the largest proportion of employers and this has implications for both education and skills training. Where businesses are struggling to survive, it is particularly difficult to engage employers' interest in technical and vocational education and training (TVET), including work-based training or the provision of work experience. Difficulties also exist in analysing and understanding labour market opportunities, both in the present and future. The dynamic and rapidly changing character of small states' economies makes this especially challenging for policymakers and researchers alike. In large mature market economies, planners are increasingly interested in skills forecasting as part of anticipating future labour market needs. However, the economic volatility and relatively recent independence of most small states make this far more difficult, particularly in the context of economic shocks and unpredictable external events.

In many small states future labour markets will be shaped more by what hap-

pens outside the state than by what happens within. In any case, significant proportions of the population find work outside the state, within the region or beyond. Consequently, key competences, which together contribute to their employability, including adaptability, entrepreneurship and interpersonal skills, may be as important as skills that are specific to particular occupations.

Despite high expectations, TVET sections in ministries of education are often under-resourced and experience high staff turnover. There are often ambiguous relations between policy design and implementation. While a most promising avenue for relevant and responsive TVET is through strong co-operation among relevant stakeholders (ministries of education, ministries of labour, schools, colleges, employers' associations, chambers of commerce, trade unions and universities), this can be difficult to achieve. This can partly be explained by continuing mistrust between the public and private sectors, and bureaucratic hierarchies which do not always facilitate policy dialogue and networking. Moreover, where small states are highly politicised and culturally diverse, and exhibit social fragmentation, progress in TVET is an even greater challenge, which requires a national vision for co-ordinated human resource development.

4. Conceptualising and Delivering Basic Education

Basic education can be challenging to define. In some settings it is seen as being coterminous with primary education, while elsewhere it is taken to include some years of secondary and/or pre-primary education. The concept of basic education is also relevant to adult learning, and in this context refers to content rather than years of schooling. The MDGs stress the objective of universal primary education, but the EFA objectives are broader and include a focus on both early childhood and adult learning. UNESCO (2009b, p. 4) observes that basic education 'covers notions such as fundamental, elementary and primary/secondary education'. It adds that basic education 'is directed to the full development of the human personality' and that the state 'guarantees the right to basic education of good quality based on minimum standards'.

An overlapping concept concerns the period of compulsory education. In Commonwealth small states, compulsory education ranges from six to 12 years of provision, beginning when children are between four and seven years old (Table 3). Most education systems require 10 or 12 years and begin at six years old. In many cases, compulsory education includes mandatory years of pre-primary, primary and lower secondary schooling.[12]

While definitions vary, it is universally agreed that at least some form of basic education is a human right. This was stated in the 1948 UN Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26) and repeated in the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 28). The report of the Commonwealth Commission on Respect and Understanding, chaired by Amartya Sen, has drawn further attention to this matter (Sen, 2007). Basic education is also widely accepted in the international literature and policy discourse as essential for development and poverty reduction (see e.g. Lee, 2004; Cohen *et al.*, 2006; Lewin, 2007). For the purposes of this book, the term basic education refers to

Table 3. Compulsory education in Commonwealth small states

	Years of compulsory education	Compulsory education begins at age		Years of compulsory education	Compulsory education begins at age
Below 100,000			**1–1.5 million**		
Tuvalu	8	7	Swaziland	7	6
Nauru	11	6	Mauritius	6	6
St Kitts & Nevis	12	5	Trinidad & Tobago	7	5
Dominica	12	5	**Above 1.5 million**		
Antigua & Barbuda	12	5	Gambia, The	6[a]	6[b]
Seychelles	10	6	Botswana	10	6
Kiribati	10	6	Lesotho	7	6
100,000–250,000			Namibia	10	6
Tonga	9	6	Jamaica	6	6
Grenada	12	5	Singapore	11	6
St Vincent & the Grenadines	11	5	Papua New Guinea	9	6
St Lucia	12	5			
Samoa	10	5			
Vanuatu	7	6			
250,000–1million					
Barbados	11	4			
Maldives	7	6			
Belize	10	5			
Bahamas, The	12	5			
Brunei Darussalam	6[a]	6			
Malta	11	5			
Solomon Islands	6[a]	7[b]			
Guyana	10	6			
Cyprus	9	6			

[a]Number of years of primary education, not total years of compulsory education
[b]Number of years of secondary education, not beginning age of compulsory education
Source: Commonwealth Secretariat.

educational provision for children which, depending on national definitions, may or may not include some years of pre-primary and/or secondary schooling.

Access

The global picture

Access to basic education has been the major priority for education authorities worldwide for many decades. The 1990 World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand (Inter-Agency Commission, 1990), gave the agenda particular focus and momentum was maintained by the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal (UNESCO, 2000). Enrolment in primary schooling has greatly increased, with the number of out-of-school children falling by 33 million between 1999 and 2007 (UNESCO, 2010: 1). However, much remains to be done to meet the global goals for UPE, and this is a particular challenge for the poorest countries. The 2010 edition of UNESCO's *EFA Global Monitoring Report* observes (UNESCO, 2010: 1) that 72 million children are missing out on their right to education simply because of where they were born or who their families are, and that 54 per cent of these children are girls. The report indicates that if current trends continue, 56 million children will be out of school in 2015. It highlights the need not only to maintain efforts within existing frameworks, but also to modify approaches and reconceptualise access in ways that capture contextual diversity.

Attention to basic education access was further strengthened by the EFA Fast Track Initiative (FTI), launched in 2002.[13] The FTI is a mechanism that is designed to assist low income countries to develop technically robust sector plans and facilitate additional funding through their implementation. Among the 40 countries endorsed for assistance at the end of 2009, seven were small states and three of these, The Gambia, Guyana and Lesotho, were members of the Commonwealth (Fast Track Initiative, 2010a: 6). Evaluation of the FTI's work at mid-term showed that much remained to be done (Fast Track Initiative, 2010b). From the evaluation report, the annual *EFA Global Monitoring Reports* and other sources it is clear that the issue of access to basic education remains a global priority that requires continued international attention. However, for many small states the picture differs from that in larger countries.

The small states situation

The 2010 *EFA Global Monitoring Report* (UNESCO, 2010) indicates that 18 of 24 Commonwealth countries with populations under five million for which data were available have reached an 80 per cent primary net enrolment rate (NER) or better, with 11 of these having reached 90 per cent (see Appendix

2). However, in certain Commonwealth small states, such as Solomon Islands, The Gambia and Nauru, access to basic education remains a major challenge, with primary NERs remaining below 75 per cent (Appendix 2).[14] At secondary level, nine of the 26 Commonwealth small states with populations under five million for which data are available have reached the 80 per cent secondary NER or better, with three having reached 90 per cent (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2009a). Many Commonwealth small states thus have an early record of achieving universal primary education. According to the first *EFA Global Monitoring Report*, published in 2002, eight of the nine Commonwealth small states (<1.5 million) for which there were data at that time had already achieved 90 per cent+ primary NERs (UNESCO, 2002).

Another indicator that small states are doing well in access to basic education is their longstanding effort to focus on secondary and tertiary provision. While globally many international development agencies are now paying renewed attention to secondary and tertiary education, some Commonwealth small states had begun to prioritise post-secondary provision as early as the 1985 pan-Commonwealth meeting in Mauritius (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1986; Crossley and Holmes, 1999). This was partly because of the continuing challenge faced by small states in handling unit costs with small numbers of secondary and tertiary education places and labour markets which are sensitive to small fluctuations in supply and demand.

Retention

While most Commonwealth small states have achieved the major goals of initial enrolment in basic education, continued attention needs to be given to the retention of students throughout the period of compulsory schooling. Issues of drop-out also require focus on repetition, which is often a precursor to dropping out. Retention in basic education, of course, also impacts on students' engagement in secondary and higher education and on their potential for future income generation. Factors determining school retention include participation in early childhood education, health, and respect for indigenous knowledge and local languages (Box 2).

While retention is by no means a challenge exclusive to small states, it is particularly important in this context because of its links to system efficiency and cost-effectiveness when each 'loss' of scarce human resources has a major impact upon society as a whole. The failure to hold children within education systems is considered in economic terms to be a form of wastage (Eisemon, 1997; Brophy, 2006); it is arguable that small states need to use their human and financial resources even more efficiently than do larger states.

Box 2. Factors influencing school retention in Botswana

A 2008 study of the isolated Ngamiland north-west district in Botswana contributes to the research on basic school retention. It argues that factors leading to the poor retention of rural ethnic minority children include policy decisions that fail to recognise the impact of language and identity differences; in-school factors such as infrastructure, the language of instruction and corporal punishment; and out-of-school factors, including community poverty, cultural traditions, illiteracy, age of school entry and early pregnancy (Pansiri, 2008).

Nevertheless, the overall statistical picture for primary school retention in Commonwealth small states is relatively positive. Primary completion rates are also well above the world average and above the more general levels for the respective regions. Furthermore, in cases where rates are below the regional average, significant improvement between 1999 and 2005 has been documented (UNESCO, 2008).

Early childhood education

Recognising the link between enrolment in early childhood education and improved retention for the completion of compulsory education, the record that Commonwealth small states have in providing access to early childhood education and care is reflected in Appendix 2. This shows that gross enrolment rates (GERs) in pre-primary education range from 55 to 125, with many systems at or beyond 100.

While ways of improving retention stand out as priority strategies within this present study, the enrolment data for Commonwealth small states noted above also suggest possible links between a commitment to high levels of provision in the pre-primary sector and 100 per cent NERs at the primary level (UNESCO, 2010). With the EFA 2015 deadline rapidly approaching, policy-makers and planners within systems that have achieved much in terms of access are therefore increasingly prioritising ways of reaching the 'last 10 per cent', to achieve the goal of universal primary education. As indicated above, this includes many Commonwealth small states – whose experience may well prove helpful for other systems, large and small alike. In Appendix 2, for example, small states that have greater than 90 per cent NERs at the primary level can be seen to place a high priority on pre-primary provision. Further research is needed to understand the significance of such relationships, but the importance of sound early childhood education is emerging as a priority worldwide, and it is increasingly clear that high levels of access and retention, in all sectors, are

closely related to issues of quality, secure foundations for learning and the provision of relevant, rewarding and engaging learning experiences for all.

Quality

Conceptualisations of quality

Quality of education can be approached in two different ways. The economic or utilitarian approach to quality of education has strong links with human capital theory and economic notions of development. This tends to measure quality through learning outcomes assessed by standardised examinations. The rights-based approach to quality is linked to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1989). It stresses child-centred approaches, inclusion and democratic participation, and gives particular attention to equality in monitoring outcomes. These approaches may be blended in forms that can be particularly relevant for the complex quality demands of small states.

Education quality trajectories in small states

In an increasingly globalised environment, many small states recognise the need to position themselves as knowledge economies through strategies examined in the Commonwealth publication *Working Smart and Small* (te Velde and Saeed Qureshi, 2008). National development plans in the Caribbean, for example, aim to create competitive advantage through human skills development, including technological, entrepreneurial and managerial capabilities (Bernard, 2003). Such plans have strong implications for the purposes of education and how quality may be perceived. Education for participation in knowledge economies requires more than the simple transfer of skills and knowledge to students; they must also learn to be critical and creative (Bacchus, 2008). These skills are unlikely to be fully developed during the basic education cycle, so a foundation beyond basic literacy and numeracy is now increasingly prioritised. This allows small states to move away from the common practice of 'importing' entrepreneurs towards a more effective model of delivering entrepreneurship (Baldacchino, 2008). Fostering such creativity and critical thinking is largely dependent upon the nature and quality of education (Wint, 2002). Bacchus, (2008: 142) summarised the complexity of this challenge:

> While innovative approaches are generally necessary in all educational systems they are of particular importance in small states to help them survive, both economically and culturally, by exploiting more fully their already slender resources and not be perpetually dependent on other societies for aid.

This statement points to other dimensions of educational quality which are of great importance to small states – those of cultural relevance and human rights (Brock, 2011). Differences in the quality of education in culturally diverse and multi-ethnic small states such as Fiji Islands, Guyana and Mauritius have implications for the greater inclusion of ethnic subgroups in national educational programmes. Such diversity is certainly evident in larger countries, but its impact on education and social cohesion as a whole can be felt more acutely in small states (Pirie, 2000; Trimikliniotis, 2004).

Sen's capability approach acknowledges economic imperatives but recognises that economic growth cannot sensibly be treated as an end in itself. Development, Sen remarked (1999: 14), 'has to be more concerned with enhancing the lives we lead and the freedoms we enjoy'. Sen's approach thus gives space to the incorporation of human capital and economic priorities within the context of sensitivity to local values in a balanced way. Sen has had a considerable influence on pan-Commonwealth policies and his work is as applicable to small states as it is to larger ones.

Education quality initiatives in small states

While conceptualisations of educational quality in small states necessarily vary according to context, some small states have played pioneering roles. At the 2000 Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in Halifax, Canada, the Commonwealth put special emphasis on the improvement of school quality by launching the School Improvement Programme in Small States (SIPSS). Initiatives launched or strengthened as a result of this programme have included school performance measurement in Seychelles, gender equity initiatives in The Gambia, improvement of school interpersonal environment and culture in Trinidad and Tobago, and literacy and language improvement in Malta (Degazon-Johnson, 2003).

Two core areas for quality are the curriculum and pedagogy. In past decades, internationally inspired initiatives designed to promote curriculum reform as a way to improve basic education quality have often focused on leadership training (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1994) and textbook provision and the production and use of teacher support materials (Crossley and Murby, 1994). While these remain important, today more attention is being given to curriculum reforms designed to focus on ways of knowing and learning, often to prepare students for active contribution to technologically-advanced knowledge economies. Emphases on new forms of creativity and critical thinking may require delivery methods that include the incorporation of information and communication technologies and learner-centred pedagogies. The Commonwealth has priori-

tised teacher training in ICT as part of its *Education Strategic Plan 2010–2012* (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2010). Care nevertheless needs to be taken to ensure that curriculum and pedagogic reforms are consistent with local cultural, contextual and professional realities if successful implementation is to be achieved (Crossley, 2010).

Box 3. Curriculum and pedagogic reform in Botswana

A recent critique (Tabulawa, 2009) of Botswana's curriculum reform under the Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) stresses the importance of a national approach to educational quality that balances financial and utilitarian considerations with a more culturally sensitive human rights-based approach. While the RNPE made learner-centredness the national pedagogy as a means to preparing students for competition in a new global market, Tabulawa argues that this pedagogy 'may not be congruent with the socio-cultural context of Botswana, making it difficult for teachers to adopt it' (2009: 98). This example reveals how national approaches to educational quality must be capable of balancing local contextual factors with national economic imperatives.

Focus on quality has necessarily required methods of assessment. The most obvious method in the domain of academic achievement is examinations. The Commonwealth Secretariat has sponsored work on policies and practices in examination systems in small states (Bray and Steward, 1998; Bray, 2001). This work has reviewed strategies for conducting external examinations, particularly at the end of the secondary cycle, bearing in mind the balance needed by small states between national relevance and international portability of qualifications, and the technical demands that the organisation of examinations may impose on countries with small bureaucracies. The Caribbean Examinations Council is a very significant body which organises regional examinations in consultation with national authorities; the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment (SPBEA) plays a comparable role, albeit in a less centralised way. In Africa, the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) serves The Gambia, as well as its much larger neighbours, including Nigeria and Ghana. However, the fact that other regional bodies have ceased to exist, including the East African Examinations Council (EAEC) and the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland Schools Examinations Council (UBLS/SEC), underlines the challenges that regional bodies face. Some small states prefer to use the services of external providers such as the University of Cambridge Local

Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), while others prefer to operate entirely on their own. This diversity shows again that no single model is likely to be uniformly followed by all small states, and that in each setting the authorities must devise arrangements which suit their own needs in the context of political objectives, historical circumstances and available professional expertise.

Box 4. Context sensitivity and curriculum reform in Papua New Guinea

In Papua New Guinea, a new outcomes-based curriculum was introduced nationally in primary schools from 2004 (NDOE, 2003) and in secondary schools from 2008 (NDOE, 2006). The new curriculum was intended to be 'inclusive' and hence was 'designed to meet the needs of all students irrespective of their abilities, gender, geographic locations, cultural and language backgrounds, or their socio-economic backgrounds' (NDOE, 2002: 25).

However, research carried out in primary schools in the eastern highlands of Papua New Guinea revealed considerable curriculum non-compliance among teachers (LeFanu, 2011). For instance, rather than giving students significant control over their own learning as required by the curriculum (e.g. by allowing students to select their assignments), teachers tended to retain control of this process.

Interviews with the teachers revealed that there were numerous reasons for the disparity between the requirements of the curriculum and the actual practice of the teachers. First, many teachers admitted they were unable to implement the curriculum. They attributed this to various factors, including lack of access to in-service training and key curriculum documents, including syllabuses and teachers' guides; a serious shortage of textbooks; large class sizes; and tensions between the requirements of the curriculum and those of the national examination system. Second, the teachers did not believe that the new curriculum always represented the best way of meeting the educational needs of their students. In particular, they believed that 'teacher-centred' pedagogical approaches such as teacher exposition and rote learning still had an important role to play, particularly given the resilience of traditional Melanesian attitudes to teaching and learning in Papua New Guinea.

Also worth noting is tension between reforms at national level and implementation at school level. In Papua New Guinea, implementation of curricular and pedagogic reform has been especially problematic at school level. Researchers have shown how international agencies and agendas have dominated national educational policy formation and implementation at the expense of local input and appropriate sensitivity to the contextual factors at national, provincial and school levels (Webster, 1997, 2000; Ako, 2002; LeFanu, 2011).

A further element that is relevant to quality of education concerns the teaching force. Alongside the discussion of retention of pupils examined above are questions about retention of teachers. Iredale *et al.* (2009: 125) examined the implications of this matter for New Zealand, Cook Islands, Fiji Islands and Vanuatu. They noted the growing mobility of teachers and asserted that:

> This is making it more difficult for small countries, especially in Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Pacific, to meet the demands of universal primary education under the MDGs and UNESCO's EFA goals.

The Commonwealth is concerned about such international flows of teachers, and in particular the loss of highly-skilled personnel from small states. In 2004, education ministers adopted the Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol (CTRP) which seeks to balance 'the rights of teachers to migrate internationally on a temporary or permanent basis, against the need to protect the integrity of national education systems and to prevent the exploitation of scarce human resources of poor countries'. A review of implementation (Ochs and Jackson, 2009) focused strongly on small states, noting that some small states are recruiters rather than suppliers of teachers. Recruiting countries include Antigua and Barbuda,The Bahamas, Mauritius, Seychelles and Swaziland, as well as larger countries such as South Africa and the UK. However, small states are dominantly suppliers of teachers, including Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and Lesotho. The Ministry of Education of Guyana has reported that it needed to double the number of teachers trained each year in order to have an adequate supply after loss through migration. Clause 3.2 in the Commonwealth Protocol observes that:

> … the organised recruitment of teachers may be detrimental to the education systems of source countries, and to the costly human resource investments they have made in teacher education. Recruiting and source countries should agree on mutually acceptable measures to mitigate any harmful impact of such recruitment.

At the same time, source countries benefit from remittances, and the Commonwealth has been very mindful that such recruitment and mobility cannot (and arguably should not) be prohibited altogether. This, nevertheless, remains a priority for ongoing attention.

Equity and inclusion

The contemporary priority?

Equity and inclusion increasingly dominate international education agendas and priorities for educational policy and planning worldwide. The EFA agenda

now takes this position by focusing on the marginalised. The 2010 edition of the *EFA Global Monitoring Report*, entitled *Reaching the Marginalized* (UNESCO, 2010), stresses the importance of identifying and providing education for individuals who suffer from mutually-reinforcing disadvantages. The report provides a deprivation and marginalisation in education (DME) dataset and presents an inclusive education triangle to help education systems combat marginalisation. The report calls for equity-based targets and monitoring, while stressing the need for policies that 'address underlying causes such as social inequalities, gender disparities, ethnic and linguistic disadvantages, and gaps between geographic areas' (UNESCO, 2010: 11). Initiatives in Solomon Islands illustrate the potential for community support to reduce disadvantage (Box 5).

Gender equity

The global approach to gender in education is often seen in terms of girls' empowerment. This is evidenced in many programmes, such as the UN Girls Education Initiative, the UN Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality and the 2010 E4 (Engendering Empowerment: Education and Equality) conference held in Dakar, Senegal. Gender equity priorities focus first upon raising girls' school enrolment. Among Commonwealth small states in

Box 5. Addressing isolation: schooling in rural Solomon Islands

Rurality and its impact upon the education of children in the Solomon Islands was the topic of a paper presented by Stanley Houma at the 2009 Commonwealth Conference of Education Ministers, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Houma noted that 84 per cent of the population of the Solomon Islands live in rural communities, that 31 per cent of students enrolled in Grades 1–3 do not continue to Grades 4–6 and that a further 30 per cent of Grade 6 students do not proceed to secondary education. The majority of students who do not progress live in rural areas. Houma described schooling in the Solomon Islands as closed and unaccommodating. The way to improve education equity for students and communities in rural areas, he argued, is through the creation of community learning centres that are open to 'those beyond the enrolled population', offering a wide range of educational services, including community libraries and distance learning. This, Houma suggested (2009: 69), could lead to the establishment of village learning groups aimed at enhancing 'meaningful community-wide education in rural Solomon Islands'.

which this is a priority are Antigua and Barbuda, Guyana, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, where gender parity indices (GPIs) favour boys at both primary and secondary levels (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2009d). Until recently, this was the case in The Gambia, where boys' enrolment was higher than girls' across all education levels – a disparity that was fuelled by 'poverty, fears of pregnancy, high opportunity costs for schooling and unfriendly school environments' (Degazon-Johnson, 2003: 128). Between 1999 and 2007, government initiatives in conjunction with community actions in The Gambia achieved a dramatic change from 0.86 to 1.07 GPI (UNESCO, 2010).

Other small states, particularly in the Caribbean, show a different gender equity picture. According to the Commonwealth Secretariat (2009d), 23 of 31 Commonwealth small states for which there are data have GPIs that favour boys at primary level, but at secondary level 21 of 29 countries for which there are data favour girls. This disparity does not occur as a global phenomenon until the tertiary education level. In fact, at secondary level, the global GPI is 0.92 at primary and only 0.95 at secondary (UNESCO, 2010). While small states do not want to work against girls' empowerment, much of their own gender policy planning needs to prioritise education for boys.

In the Caribbean, one reason for the disparity at secondary level is a high boys' drop-out rate. In Trinidad and Tobago, for example, 2006 and 2008 boys' drop-out rates were higher than those for girls in all but two school districts and 14 per cent higher nationwide (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 2009; see also De Lisle *et al.*, 2010). Research has pointed to possible explanations for early male drop-out, including 'harvesting' of boys into the workforce; a wage gap favouring males; the targeting of boys for participation in illegal globalised activities such as drugs and small weapons; and a high incidence of boys' engagement in the music and sports industries (Gayle and Levy, 2007; Bailey, 2009). Box 6 presents data for Jamaica.

Beyond priorities for enrolment and retention, evidence is beginning to show that girls, globally, are achieving better at school. Bernard, however, while writing about the Caribbean regional perspective, cautions against viewing 'male underachievement' as being solely gender based and argues that 'this concern needs to be located within the wider context of examining the ways in which gender operates and intersects with other variables to influence educational and eventually life outcomes for both sexes' (Bernard, 2003: 108). These intersecting variables, Bernard argues, include socio-economic status, family structure and socialisation practices. Similarly, Bailey (2009: 103) argues that 'a distinction needs to be made between male underachievement and male under-participation'. While there are fewer boys in higher levels of schooling,

Box 6. The gender challenge in Jamaica

Jamaica has been the focus of much research on boys' educational participation, drop-out and achievement (Beckles, 1996; Jha and Kelleher, 2006). Indicators of both enrolment and achievement favour girls, particularly at secondary and tertiary levels.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture, together with Jamaican sociologists (Evans, 1999; Chevannes, 2002; Bailey, 2003), have identified this gender inequality as based on academic underparticipation, leading to poorer performance. Research has identified boys' survival rates from enrolment to the end of secondary schooling as almost 50 per cent lower than those of girls. According to CARICOM's Commission on Youth Development (2010), a much higher percentage of boys drop out of the school system than girls, with 'drop-out' young people (aged 15–24) – mainly boys – making up 30 per cent of the total youth population (Government of Jamaica, 2009). Of this youth population, 26.2 per cent of males (compared with 7.9 per cent of females) are considered illiterate. Twenty-five per cent of those who drop out of secondary schooling have only reached Grade 9 or less (Government of Jamaica, 2009).

Studies have identified a number of underlying social issues that contribute to this problem, including the historical hegemony of black Caribbean masculinity; a culture of male marginalisation linked to curriculum and student–teacher interaction; absenteeism leading to underperformance; boys' participation in crime and violence linked to socio-economic background; and self-perceptions connected to gendered values of education.

they are clustered in sciences and technical crafts, which she deems the more 'critical areas of the curriculum'. One effort to address these priority areas, which takes into account the concept of multiple variables as raised by Bernard, is the Caribbean Community's (CARICOM) gender mainstreaming strategy. This regional strategy addresses policy and programmatic levels of inequality in the sectors of education, health, and labour (CARICOM Secretariat, 2003).

Looking beyond the Commonwealth to lessons from other small states, a study in the Netherlands Antilles researched boys' underachievement and showed the varied factors leading to male underperformance, the outcomes of which led to recent legislative changes to address these disparities (Narain, 2010). The study showed that multiple factors lead to boys' underperformance, including at-home primary socialisation, female-oriented institutional factors (such as high female staff ratios) and a failure to take account of the difference between boys' and girls' developmental pace. It is argued that this combination of factors, occurring at an early stage of education, can have considerable and negative knock-on effects

throughout and beyond boys' school careers. Outcomes of the study include a data-driven gender policy and change in legislation which extended the age for compulsory education from 6 to 16 years old to 4 to 18 years old.[15]

Reaching other marginalised groups

Achieving EFA at the global level, as shown in this section, is increasingly about the difficulty of reaching the hard to reach. Small states have been prioritising this need for some time now, and there is much that others can learn from their experience. This goes well beyond the issue of gender disparity into other arenas, such as special needs provision (Cohen, 2009; Mitchell, 2009) and cultural and linguistic equality (Coxon and Munce, 2008; Dhanarajan, 2009). Here, small states have an equally strong history of awareness, research and action. This is evidenced, for example, in a recent report on the Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of Basic Education, which have supported 'sharp interventions in line with national educational priorities that may not otherwise have been available through bilateral or other modalities of funding arrangements' (Puamau, 2009: 1). PRIDE national sub-projects have covered a wide spectrum, including inclusive education, language and culture (Box 7).

Box 7. Language, culture and inclusive education: recent PRIDE projects

The Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of Basic Education was designed as a seven-year project (2004–2010) implemented by the Institute of Education at the University of the South Pacific and jointly funded by the European Union and New Zealand aid. The project has served 15 Pacific small states and territories, eight of which are part of the Commonwealth. PRIDE projects that have focused on marginalised groups by addressing language, culture and inclusive education include the following:

Samoa: Development of a sustainable system of inclusive education for children with disabilities

Solomon Islands: Support for children and youth who are visually impaired; a vernacular education project; and a study of the supply, demand and deployment of special education teachers

Tonga: Development of a Tongan inclusive education pilot project

Vanuatu: Support for development of language policy and inclusive education

More information can be found on the PRIDE website: www.usp.ac.fj/pride

Extending the boundaries

While basic education has dominated international and national agendas worldwide since the early 1990s, the experience of small states demonstrates how their own priorities have differed from international preoccupations with primary education. As evidenced above, even in the 1990s many Commonwealth small states accorded greater priority to new initiatives in secondary and tertiary education than they did to the primary sector (see also Crocombe and Meleisea, 1998). The case of the Belize Primary Education Development Project (BPEDP) provides a clear example. This seven-year, US$12.64 million initiative funded by the Belize Government, the World Bank and the then UK Overseas Development Administration began in 1992 and aimed to improve the quality and effectiveness of primary education (Crossley and Bennett, 1997). Yet the country had a strong desire at that time to focus on secondary and tertiary education reform. Educational planners in Belize thus had the difficult task of reconciling national priorities for post-primary developments with international agendas that favoured investment in the primary sector (Van der Eyken *et al.*, 1995).

It can also be seen that many small states extended their conceptions of basic education to the lower secondary sector well before this became a global pattern. Their concerns to add pre-primary provision to the basic education equation also often emerged earlier. Moreover, there is much evidence to suggest that many small states have worked hard to retain investment in adult education through engaging with lifelong learning initiatives, consistent with the original Jomtien definition and scope for basic education. In fact, non-formal education was identified as a local priority in the Pacific Islands throughout the 1980s, designed to meet the needs of the rural and urban poor, especially adults and the unschooled (Crossley *et al.*, 1987).

In conclusion, it is argued that small states have long pushed and extended the boundaries of basic education. They have therefore developed considerable experience from which others may learn. Their priorities have ranged across different sectors of education and have not been confined to the narrow concept of basic education that has tended to dominate international discourse.

5. Priorities for Higher Education

Planning for higher education

The importance of higher education is increasingly recognised as small states seek ways to cope with and take advantage of the knowledge economy and service-based markets (Bourne and Dass, 2003; Sweeney, 2003; Atchoarena *et al.*, 2008; Bacchus, 2008). Knowledge economies require highly educated citizens to innovate, collaborate, research and adapt within an increasingly complex world. In consequence, many strategy documents of Commonwealth small states contain concepts such as lifelong learning, partnership and the development of science and technology, alongside investment in higher education and research capacity (Malta Policy Unit, 2005; Botswana Tertiary Education Council, 2007; Mauritius Ministry of Education and Human Resources, 2008; Nolan, 2008 [Seychelles]; Louisy, 2010).

Demand for tertiary education also comes from the expansion of secondary education, which itself follows the expansion of primary education resulting from the EFA movement. As noted above, in a growing number of countries, including almost all small states, lower secondary education has become part of compulsory basic education. While the world average GER in secondary education was 66 per cent in 2006 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2008: 91), most small states had rates above 70 per cent. The exceptions among Commonwealth small states were Lesotho, The Gambia, Namibia, Solomon Islands and Nauru. Even in these countries, education systems had expanded at the base and were therefore exerting pressures at secondary and post-secondary levels.

Expansion of higher education is accompanied and facilitated by diversification. Initially, secondary or post-secondary colleges were upgraded and integrated into new tertiary institutions, such as multipurpose community colleges (Grant-Woodham and Morris, 2009; Wolff, 2009). In the Caribbean, this was evident in Dominica, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada, and

St Kitts and Nevis. Other small states have created or are planning to create national universities based on the amalgamation of existing tertiary education institutions. This is the case, for example, in Samoa, Seychelles, St Lucia, Cyprus, Cape Verde, Maldives, and Antigua and Barbuda. These institutions are a clear expression of national sovereignty and pride, and develop a concept of the university that is tightly linked to national development concerns and the local labour market.

In many small states, higher provision includes a large number of cross-border providers (Hosein *et al.*, 2004; Martin, 2007). In the Caribbean, foreign-owned medical schools are a well-established phenomenon. In recent years, offshore campuses and franchised programmes in a range of disciplines have proliferated in various parts of the world, being offered either as stand-alone enterprises or as partnerships with local institutions. These can be beneficial to both parties, but require careful management. Planning concerns include not only the ways in which external providers serve small states, but also the ways in which small states are used as a base to serve larger states. Concerning the latter, the number of 'degree mills' offering sub-standard and fake credentials has greatly expanded. Because such enterprises can damage the reputations of all involved, they are now emerging as a key focus for planners (Hallak and Poisson, 2008).

Strengthening integration, co-ordination and regulation

The movement to expand and diversify higher education systems to embrace private providers raises delicate issues of co-ordination and control. Small states are responding to these challenges by strengthening national capacity to plan, by creating national co-ordinating bodies and by encouraging mechanisms for quality assurance.

Most states have long included sections for higher education in their overall education plans. In addition, several small states, such as Mauritius, Botswana and Malta, now have stand-alone plans for higher education. The preparation of both integrated and stand-alone documents provides an opportunity to analyse the status and role of the higher education sector, particularly in relation to the labour market.

The increased concern about higher education is also reflected in the development of administrative structures. Countries such as Brunei Darussalam and The Gambia have created higher education divisions in their ministries of education. Other countries have created specialist ministries, such as the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education in Trinidad and Tobago. Some states, such as Botswana, Fiji Islands, Mauritius, Malta and Papua New Guinea,

have also created higher education commissions as national buffer organisations to take charge of policy development, strategic planning and monitoring of the higher education sector (Martin and Bray, 2009). These organisations are commonly headed by renowned academics and supported by technical secretariats.

Qualifications frameworks and quality assurance schemes are additional instruments for integration and regulation of higher education. Qualifications frameworks allow for better regulation of diversified higher education, both through the provision of level-specific and subject matter descriptors and also through reference statements for quality assurance initiatives. The following example from Maldives in Box 8 explains an accreditation process.

Box 8. Qualifications framework for tertiary education in Maldives

A lack of variety of programmes offered in Maldives has driven an increasing number of students to pursue higher education in foreign countries. Additionally, the expansion of private actors in higher education has driven a need to distinguish between 'degree mills' and legitimate institutions, as well as to protect consumers from fraud. These concerns prompted the creation of the Maldivian National Qualification Framework (MNQF) in 2001 on the recommendation of the Maldivian Accreditation Board (MAB). By way of this framework, qualifications offered by in-country institutions, as well as those offered by institutions abroad, are recognised and validated.

Accreditation of courses and programmes in Maldives is a two-step process. First, institutions must obtain consent from the MAB by submitting course documents for approval. This pre-approval is compulsory for public institutions only; however, increasingly, private institutions are applying for this approval as well. Second, a MAB audit panel visits applicant institutions, typically before the first cohort of students completes the new programme. During this audit, staff qualifications, course delivery, student outcomes, institutional capability and teaching facilities are evaluated.

Such accreditation has created an awareness of quality among all stakeholders in higher education in Maldives and has created further assessment activities in Maldives College of Higher Education.

Source: Adapted from a contribution by Fathimath Shakeela to the IIEP *Online Forum on Tertiary Education in Small States*, 18 October–26 November 2010

As noted in Box 8, quality assurance schemes respond to the challenges posed by the private sector and the need to protect the consumers of higher educa-

tion services from low quality and fraudulent providers. Furthermore, public higher education may also be exposed to external assessment. Small states need to be more sensitive to cross-border providers and foreign qualifications when defining the scope for quality assurance. The size of the higher education sector determines the choices to be made with regard to quality assurance. The basic principles of 'good practice' are the same whatever the size of the sector, but creation of a quality-assurance system in small states encounters challenges of cost-effectiveness. Ways through which small states can address these issues include design of multifunctional and multi-level quality assurance agencies, adoption of regional solutions, building of quality assurance capacities in universities and drawing on the expertise of larger countries (Stella, 2008)(see Table 4).

Initiating discussion to raise awareness and appreciation of quality assurance (QA) among all personnel in higher education institutions is a first step to establishing QA systems, as noted in Box 9 about the beginnings of such a system in Belize.

Box 9. Quality assurance for tertiary education in Belize

In Belize, there is no formal quality assurance system at the tertiary level. The Association of Tertiary Level Institutions in Belize (ATLIB) initiated a discussion on QA among member institutions in 2004 in anticipation of the eventual establishment of an accrediting body. As a result, many institutions now have personnel with some responsibility for QA, and most now have quality control measures in place. There is an active dialogue amongst institutions on QA, and a medium-term project to establish a National Articulation Framework amongst the junior colleges and the national university.

There is a long way to go, however. Quality Assurance must be formalised in all institutions, and even when institutions have personnel with responsibility for QA, it must be a shared institutional responsibility. It is not enough that senior administrators have an awareness and appreciation for QA: everyone in the institution must be educated in its importance and must share in the responsibility.

Source: IIEP 2010: Adapted from a contribution by Arid Cynthia to the IIEP *Online Forum on Tertiary Education in Small States*, 18 October–26 November 2010.

Jamaica provides a strong example of a quality assurance system that reflects the national government's commitment to QA and co-ordination among multiple managing bodies.

Table 4. Structures for quality assurance of higher education in small states

	Multi-functional quality assurance structure	Multi-level quality assurance structure	Regional solutions
Tonga	Tonga National Qualifications and Accreditation Board		Pacific qualifications framework
Maldives	Maldives Accreditation Board		
Barbados	Barbados Accreditation Council		UWI, CARICOM
Mauritius	Tertiary Education Council		Southern African qualifications framework
Seychelles	Seychelles Qualifications Authority		Southern African qualifications framework
Dominica	National Accreditation Board		UWI, CARICOM
Bahrain		Bahrain Accreditation Council	
St Lucia		TVET and Accreditation Unit	UWI, CARICOM
Botswana	Tertiary Education Council		Southern African qualifications framework
Trinidad & Tobago	Accreditation Council of Trinidad & Tobago		UWI, CARICOM
Bahamas, The	National Accreditation and Equivalency of The Bahamas		UWI, CARICOM
Samoa	Samoa Qualifications Authority		Pacific qualifications framework
Belize	National Accreditation Council		UWI, CARICOM
Namibia	Namibia Qualifications Authority		Southern African qualifications framework

UWI: University of the West Indies; CARICOM: Caribbean Community
Source: Martin and Bray (2009), p. 20.

Leadership in higher education is also needed for the agenda of quality EFA, since excellence at lower levels of education systems requires a strong systemic standard of teaching, leadership and research competence that comes through advanced studies available only in higher education. To this end, a number of Commonwealth small states have begun prioritising degree level teacher certification (Bennell and Molwane, 2008).

Box 10. Quality assurance for tertiary education in Jamaica

In Jamaica, there is a well structured quality assurance system which is managed mainly by the University Council of Jamaica (UCJ), which is the national accreditation agency under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, demonstrating the government's commitment to QA. The UCJ, through collaboration with the higher education institutions (HEIs) and its work with international bodies, has developed standards that all HEIs have come to agree with and implement. There are, for example, institutional and programme standards.

In addition to the UCJ, there are other bodies which help to manage QA in the sector. The Joint Board of Teacher Education (JBTE) oversees teacher education programmes, the Council of Community Colleges of Jamaica (CCCJ) oversees Community Colleges, and the Ministry of Education manages various aspects through its tertiary unit. It is important to note that notwithstanding the various agencies and groups, the UCJ is the body that accredits programmes. Bodies such as the CCCJ, however, work directly with institutions under their charge to help them develop, implement and maintain established standards.

Institutions also employ staff whose main responsibility is to lead the QA process, leading to continuous improvements in the system. Furthermore, the presence of the QA systems in Jamaica has provided for an almost all-inclusive tertiary sector. Qualifications are recognised, leading to transferability of credits.

Source: Adapted from a contribution by Adamson Cebert to the IIEP *Online Forum on Tertiary Education in Small States*, 18 October–26 November 2010.

Small states may face challenges in the specialist training of teachers, especially for subjects which require training of only a few teachers each year, such as upper secondary music, advanced mathematics and foreign languages. One solution is to send teachers abroad for training. For example, Solomon Islands has long benefited from the teacher education facilities of neighbouring Papua New Guinea; teachers from Montserrat have been trained in Antigua; and specialist Maldivian teachers have been trained in Sri Lanka and elsewhere.

The Caribbean has achieved much in this regard, with the ironic result that their teachers are actively recruited to work in the USA, UK and Canada. This has led to a debilitating effect in some Caribbean countries, so many of whose well-trained teachers have emigrated that it has left large gaps in their capacity to provide quality schooling (Fulford, 2008). The Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol adopted by Commonwealth Ministers of Education in 2004 has thus become a regional planning priority because to date it has had

only a limited impact on the haemorrhaging of Caribbean teachers (Jules, 2009).

Both qualifications frameworks and quality assurance schemes are connected to the mobility agendas of students and professionals. There are thus numerous regional and multi-state solutions in this area, such as the Pacific Qualifications Framework, an initiative launched in 2009 as an umbrella structure for the national qualifications frameworks in the south Pacific. In the Caribbean, a regional network of quality assurance agencies, CANQATE, was created in 2002 to facilitate the sharing of information about quality assurance systems in the Caribbean and disseminate good practices. CARICOM has also been active in the co-ordination of quality assurance at regional level, as the organisation in charge of implementing the Caribbean single market and economy.

Box 11. Regional quality assurance under CARICOM

The Caribbean Accreditation Authority for Education in Medicine and other Health Professions (CAAM) was launched under the aegis of CARICOM in 2004. CAAM was created as a regional accreditation body after the General Medical Council (GMC) of England advised it that it would no longer be responsible for accreditation of medical schools outside the European Union.

CAAM is the legally constituted body which accredits medical, dental, veterinary and other health programmes leading to professional degrees required for practice in CARICOM member states. By judging the compliance of programmes with nationally and internationally accepted standards of educational quality, CAAM serves the interests of both the students and the general public.

CARICOM also has plans to create a broader accreditation agency in order to:

- establish an internationally recognised system of post-secondary education for the Caribbean;
- promote the mobility of skilled individuals;
- contribute to economic and social development; and
- ensure international recognition and agreements with state entities for reciprocal recognition.

Source: CARICOM Secretariat website; CAAM website; Parkins (2008)

Small states nevertheless continue to face tensions in developing policy solutions that fit their particular needs and contexts, while regional or multi-state

initiatives, which comply with broader policy agendas of economic development, continue to affect their choices. This naturally limits room to manoeuvre, but it provides increased opportunities to bring national higher systems into line with policy development at regional and international levels. Thus, policy-makers and planners may ask what sorts of partnerships are desirable and can be tailored for what sorts of circumstances for quality assurance in the context of broader goals. One model which deserves wider attention is highlighted in Box 11 above.

Harnessing the power of technology

Information and communications technologies have revolutionised the processes of teaching and learning throughout the world (McIntosh and Varoglu, 2005; Law *et al.*, 2008). Small states, as well as large states, are benefiting, partly because they are no longer so isolated. In the past, populations in small states were disadvantaged in access to specialist libraries that could only be justified for populations of sufficient size. Now a great deal of information is available on the internet; people who can access the internet in small states are able to gain the same information as their counterparts in large states. In addition to its direct benefits, the ICT revolution is a response to the need for a technologically adept population that can learn independently and cope in the global marketplace. Evidence of shifts in the modes of operation can be found in the massive enrolment of online students in the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL, 2007), the University of the South Pacific (Whelan, 2008; Chandra *et al.*, 2010), and the University of the West Indies (Marshall *et al.*, 2008; Thomas and Soares, 2009). The Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) is also using technology to accomplish goals that would previously have been very difficult, if not impossible (Box 12).

Other developments in the Caribbean and south Pacific provide further examples of ways in which small states have been able to grasp the opportunities offered by ICT. In 1999, the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) launched a project to support ICT policies in its region. The strategic framework covered many dimensions, including access, learner-centred pedagogies, teacher professional development, lifelong learning and information management (OECS Education Reform Unit, 2001). The recommended model was adopted in Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Grenada, St Lucia, and St Vincent and the Grenadines. Gaible's (2009) evaluation showed significant progress in learning. Parallel initiatives in the south Pacific were launched in 2008. They are made possible through a satellite-based Pacific

Box 12. The Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth

The establishment and growth of the VUSSC as a global network for higher education is based on principles of working together for the common good with few external resources. The structure complements regional education networks such as the Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network, through which countries co-operate to develop their human resources within a traditional political framework with support from international donor/lending agencies.

Facilitated by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), the VUSSC relies on the work of individuals in small universities and colleges around the world who share their knowledge and learning materials about common issues such as teacher professional development, fisheries, construction and disaster recovery. The internet is an essential tool (West and Daniel, 2009).

Rural Internet Connectivity System (RICS), consisting of low-cost satellite broadband internet. Nevertheless, policy-makers and planners need to exercise caution with such schemes. Major investments are required not only in hardware, but also in training and socialisation of teachers, learners and families. Rapid changes in technology can bring social disruptions that have not been anticipated; in some respects small states can become more, rather than less, dependent on large states because the innovations demand machines, technical support and foreign exchange.

Many of the issues raised in this section, and in the book as a whole, point to the significance of contextually grounded research – in higher education and elsewhere – in informing educational policies and priorities in small states. This potential is considered in more detail in the following chapter, which focuses on international consultation, collaboration and partnerships.

6. International Consultation, Collaboration and Partnerships

Small states are inherently international. Simply because of their small size, they have to be outward looking. As a result, an international outlook is for small states a much more natural way of life than in larger states. To the many remarks that have already been made on the value of international collaboration and partnerships, this chapter commences with an elaboration of the potential of different forms and levels of partnership, and of the role and potential of educational research for Commonwealth small states.

Forms and levels of partnership

Partnership is a much-used term in both educational and development discourse, but it is characterised by considerable distance between rhetoric and reality. Translating intentions into successful practice is often more difficult than many partners realise. Within the Commonwealth, however, there is a strong tradition of effective partnerships, consultation and co-operation – not least among Commonwealth small states. In a special issue of *The Round Table*, Lee (2009) draws attention to the 50 years of Commonwealth education co-operation between the first Oxford conference on Commonwealth education, held in 1959, and the 17th CCEM, held in Kuala Lumpur in 2009. The annual publication of the book *Commonwealth Education Partnerships* also testifies to the enduring centrality of partnerships in Commonwealth plans and activities (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2009d).

International consultation, collaboration and partnerships continue to hold considerable potential for the realisation of the Commonwealth mission for small states. Examples of specific collaboration are visible throughout the previous chapters, but here attention is paid to the different forms and levels that

such partnerships do and might take, and to the potential that may be gained from continuing to prioritise partnerships between and with small states in particular.

Regular pan-Commonwealth meetings in the political and economic spheres often focus upon the broad concerns of small states – through, for example, Foreign Ministers Meetings, Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meetings and the biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings. In addition to supporting such events, the Commonwealth Secretariat supports small states in areas such as trade and through the provision of a joint office for Commonwealth permanent missions to the United Nations.

Beyond this, much is done to facilitate regional meetings and collaboration between small states. Thus, in the 12 months following the 17th CCEM, regional consultations were arranged in the Caribbean, south Pacific, southern Africa and south-east Asia, with Secretariat support to build upon and advance the agenda identified in Kuala Lumpur for education in small states (Appendix 5). Such consultative dialogue can do much to help identify country, regional and international priorities that will shape and drive future Commonwealth work in this arena.

Further developments along these lines could do much to stimulate innovative collaboration between, for example:

- richer and poorer Commonwealth small states;
- those in the North and those in the South;
- large and small Commonwealth states;
- small states and the often neglected smaller Overseas Territories (Fisher, 2005);
- public and private sectors; and
- Commonwealth and other groups and agencies.

The other agencies include UNESCO/IIEP, whose own interest, involvement and engagement is reflected in the convening of the 2009 Policy Forum on Tertiary Education in Small States (Martin and Bray, 2009) and the IIEP Online Forum on Tertiary Education in Small States (UNESCO/IIEP, 2010). Such cross-agency collaboration was reinforced in October 2009 with a co-operation agreement between the Commonwealth Secretariat and UNESCO (UNESCO, 2009d). While a broad memorandum of understanding has existed between the two organisations since 1980, this agreement further solidifies the organisational partnership and focuses attention upon resource management towards the mobilisation of competencies for development and equality. The

potential of strengthened partnerships and collaboration is also visible in the efforts of agencies, including the Secretariat itself, to conduct education and development debates within broader cross-sectoral collaboration initiatives designed to be part of much wider policy dialogue and action. In such ways the Commonwealth can build upon its own strengths in education through on-going regional and global partnerships in which it has an established comparative advantage.

At the same time, membership of international bodies has a demanding side. By definition, small states have limited numbers of personnel, so when a single person from the ministry of education or a similar body in a small state has to go abroad for an international meeting, the absence from domestic duties creates a much greater proportional impact. By corollary, maintaining permanent representation at the headquarters of international organisations such as UNESCO places a much larger burden on small states than on large ones. Small states may also find that they lack personnel with the technical expertise available to larger states for analysis of and negotiation on specific issues.

Mechanisms through which small states handle such challenges include collaboration to present a collective voice. For example, New Zealand has at times represented other south Pacific states in UNESCO meetings. Comparable arrangements can be made for other organisations.

Moreover, technological advances have greatly assisted in this area, as in many others. With the internet, video-conferencing facilities and other mechanisms, it is easier for personnel in small states to participate in discussions without ever leaving home. And similarly, when officers do leave home to attend international meetings, they are able to remain in touch through e-mails and other forms of communication in a way that was previously impossible. Maintenance of such contacts can reduce the gap which arises in a small state when an individual is not physically available in the office.

It is important, nevertheless, for international organisations themselves to be sensitive to these issues. Bodies such as the Commonwealth Secretariat and UNESCO have a responsibility to be aware of the demands that their meetings can impose on small states. This underlines the need to be realistic and ensure that increased co-ordination among international agencies reduces overlap and parallel demands.

The place of research and research capacity building

In much of the above analysis the importance of locally-grounded research in helping to shape policy development and implementation is clearly evident and research, particularly in higher education, features as a priority activity for

small states in the Commonwealth's *Education Strategic Plan 2010–2012* (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2010). The 1985 workshop in Mauritius, which launched the Secretariat's work on education in small states, stressed that they should not be seen simply as scaled-down versions of larger states: they have an ecology of their own, which requires local research to supplement and perhaps modify the insights that can be obtained from larger countries (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1986: 5–6). In all domains, globally informed but locally relevant innovation is required of future generations of leaders, and the recent Kuala Lumpur Communiqué underpins this by prioritising the advancement of education in small states through 'a variety of capacity-building and research initiatives' (Appendix 5).

Strengthened local research capacity is also vital if small states are to develop more genuine partnerships and engage more effectively and critically in mediating, adapting or, where appropriate, challenging global agendas (Holmes and Crossley, 2004; Crossley, 2008). As Dame Pearlette Louisy (2001: 435–436), Governor-General of St Lucia, has pointed out:

> It is not easy to avoid the dangers of 'uncritical international transfer' if one lacks the national or institutional capacity to undertake the type of research or investigative enquiry necessary to 'customise' the experiences of others … The region's continued dependence on external financing for its development projects further strengthens the control of the development agencies (many of whom find it easier to adopt a 'one size fits all' policy), making it extremely difficult to bring its own perspective to policy decisions taken on its behalf.

Small states may always be constrained in this area, but, once again, one way of resolving such problems lies in greater collaboration among small states (rich and poor) across the Commonwealth and their counterparts in larger states (Mayo, 2008). In the Caribbean, the Association of Universities and Research Institutions of the Caribbean (UNICA) was founded in 1967 to foster co-operation among higher education centres in the region (UNICA, 2010). The Mediterranean Society for Comparative Education (MESCE) serves the countries of that region, including Cyprus and Malta, and the Gulf Comparative Education Society (GCES) serves the small and larger Arabic-speaking states of the Gulf.[16] Even in times of economic stringency, such collaborative strategies can do much to focus more effective and relevant research upon the distinctive environmental, financial and educational concerns of small states.

As indicated in this study, comparative experience also suggests that while small states can learn much from global research partnerships and trajectories, their concerns have much in common with socio-cultural comparative perspec-

tives that caution against the uncritical international transfer of educational policy and practice (Crossley and Watson, 2003). While this orientation recognises the benefits to be gained from experience elsewhere, it is equally sensitive to Commonwealth values as embedded in the *Report of the Commonwealth Commission on Respect and Understanding* (Sen, 2007), and acknowledges how contextual differences often deserve greater consideration in educational policy development and implementation. This is not to say that small states cannot learn from elsewhere or from each other, but this is a more complex and subtle process than is often acknowledged. As Stenhouse (1979: 5–6) argues: comparative studies of education should 'deal in insight rather than law as a basis for understanding,' and insights derived in this way can then help to 'tutor judgement' with regard to the potential of experience for adaptation or guidance elsewhere. This, we suggest, also applies to the methodologies and processes of research and to the international transfer of new modalities for research capacity building (Crossley, 2011).

Box 13. The University Consortium of Small Island States

The University Consortium of Small Island States (UCSIS) brings together the Universities of Malta, Mauritius, South Pacific, Virgin Islands and West Indies. Its principal objective is to promote research, training and dissemination of information on the common challenges. Participating institutions co-operate to: (a) develop and implement a graduate programme focusing on development issues in small island developing states; (b) develop visions, values and skills for effective advocacy; and (c) elaborate methods for research programmes. Since the inception of UCSIS, UNESCO has supported the Consortium through its status as a UNITWIN network.

Source: UNESCO (2009c)

Innovative international partnerships and collaborations can help small states to strengthen their own local research capacity, but influential global trends currently promote 'big science' approaches that prioritise, '… growing international interest in systematic review methodology and its associated privileging of quantitative research strategies such as randomised controlled trials, in evidence-based policy', (Vulliamy, 2004: 261). Such forms of research capacity have their place, and can play an important role, but for small states, much contemporary experience suggests that priority should also be given to research strategies and modalities that are grounded in their own distinctive contexts and cultures. This points to the benefits to be gained from varied and mixed methodological strategies – including qualitative fieldwork, case study, action

research, discourse analysis and the application of post-colonial perspectives (Crossley and Tikly, 2004).

Throughout this book many of the research priorities that emerge from the discussion highlight the need for more locally grounded studies, carried out by researchers from small states who are familiar with the distinctive local challenges raised by, for example, climate change, international financial trends, migration patterns or the cultural and linguistic dilemmas facing education.

Ways in which practising teachers in Mauritius are working in partnership with ministry officials to carry out locally-led action-research as a way of inspiring qualitative improvements in their own pedagogy illustrate many of the above issues and principles (Box 14).

In the final chapter we revisit the main issues raised throughout the book, identify the key priorities that emerge from the text, and consider major challenges and possible ways forward for the future.

Box 14. The Learning Enhancement Programme in Mauritius

What is it?

The Learning Enhancement Programme is an after-school programme for Standard IV (9-year-old) students and teachers. It directly addresses three culturally sensitive issues relating to education quality: (a) unequal opportunities for all Standard IV pupils to participate in high quality after-school activities that prepare them for the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) exam; (b) training teachers to use child-centred pedagogy in an integrated curriculum; and (c) eventually obtaining parent and teacher approval for the future dissolution of the CPE. Developed in 2009 by the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE), at the request of the Mauritius Ministry of Education and Human Resources, the programme began in February 2010.

Why was it created?

The 2007 National Primary School Curriculum Framework stresses an integrated and inclusive pedagogy that will prepare children to be successful citizens in a knowledge economy. The MIE has been training teachers to use child-centred approaches in their classrooms so that the pupils will develop the critical and creative thinking skills required for a knowledge economy. However, many teachers find it difficult to implement them due an overemphasis on teaching to the test, (as a shortcut to ensuring CPE examination success) as well as societal pressures for good grades in the CPE.

How does it work?

The MIE created enhancement programme booklets which outline how to conduct child-centred activities that integrate Standard IV subject matter, using group work, technology, creative arts and outdoor activities. MIE academics model these activities in webcasts filmed at the Mauritius College of the Air, which enhancement teachers watch live or in an archived format from computer labs at their school. The teachers are encouraged to try the strategies and share what they learn with their colleagues, using basic action research. The MIE also conducts face-to-face training sessions with teachers.

What will happen next?

The MIE will evaluate the programme and incorporate what it learns into similar programmes for Standards III–VI. Over time, and in conjunction with many other programmes, the MIE and the Ministry hope to improve education quality by making schooling curriculum based instead of examination based.

Mauritius Ministry of Education (2007). *Primary Curriculum Framework*. Available at: http://www.gov.mu/portal/goc/educationsite/file/primary-curr-framework.pdf

7. Conclusions

The Commonwealth has a special interest in small states because over half of its members are in this category. Commonwealth work has naturally focused on Commonwealth countries, but it has also contributed to wider agendas which include those of UNESCO as a universal organisation with 193 member states. Some of the work of the Commonwealth Secretariat has therefore been carried out in partnership with UNESCO, and with its International Institute for Educational Planning. The ministers of education who participate or are represented in the CCEM also participate or are represented in wider global forums. In addition, many small states, particularly in the Caribbean and south Pacific, operate effectively together in regional bodies.

This concluding chapter advances the case for new and strengthened educational initiatives in and for small states, to be supported by Commonwealth organisations and in partnership with other strategically placed agencies and personnel. The preceding chapters have demonstrated that small states face distinctive challenges arising from their scale, and that they also have distinctive benefits – including the fact that they are states and therefore have a voice in international arenas that is unavailable to comparable population groups within larger states. Much of the conceptual and theoretical work on education on small states sponsored by the Secretariat from the 1980s to the early 2000s, along with work on management, leadership and planning, is still useful for a new generation of policymakers and planners who may be unfamiliar with what has been done in these areas. The review of this work carried out by Crossley and Holmes (1999) serves as a useful summary of previous debates, issues and achievements – and as a foundation upon which this current study builds.

What most distinguishes contemporary challenges and priorities from those of previous decades is the fact that today's priorities are more concerned with how small states can respond to major external shocks and challenges within the economic, environmental, cultural and political domains. A key priority for

future work thus focuses upon understanding how these global issues impact on education and how education systems in small states themselves should respond. This requires thinking beyond education alone and demands greater cross-sectoral development planning and interdisciplinary research.

The research reported here demonstrates that Commonwealth small states have made good progress towards the achievement of global goals and targets. The EFA targets and MDGs remain relevant for Commonwealth small states; but many of their most pressing priorities lie beyond those that command the attention of larger states and the agendas and resources of influential international development agencies.

Commonwealth small states have achieved much in terms of providing access to basic education – though for some, such as Solomon Islands, The Gambia and Nauru, access remains a challenge. Factors influencing retention, equity, inclusion and improved quality have therefore long been prioritised and will continue to demand concerted attention. This has, however, already generated much valuable experience in developing strategies to deal with such issues and dilemmas.

In terms of gender, many small states have either achieved or are close to parity in primary and secondary schooling, or the attendance disparity, especially at secondary level, favours girls. This is particularly evident in the Caribbean, where the enhancement of boys' achievement remains a distinctive priority. Some small states remain the exception, however, and regional differences are evident, with the greatest gender challenges remaining in small states located within, or close to the shores of, sub-Saharan Africa.

A further set of priorities revealed here relates to the fact that small states have been among the first to extend the concept and boundaries of basic education to prioritise secondary and higher education and, in tune with early EFA agendas, to reprioritise adult and lifelong learning. They have done much to pioneer efforts to move beyond what have long been the dominant global goals and targets, and to prioritise skills training for the modern economy, strategies to deal with the migration of teachers and other professionals, the expansion and strengthening of higher education, and the use of ICT. The achievements of the VUSSC are notable, as are related strategies to strengthen the quality, co-ordination, integration and regulation of higher education within and across small states. Each of these distinctive issues demonstrate substantial achievements, at the same time as they call for ongoing support for clear, focused and collective attention across Commonwealth small states in the immediate future.

Other related issues for future work and ongoing development include

further theoretical research on the conceptual premises and distinctive rationale for focused attention on small states; increased awareness of the potential and limitations of education policy transfer from the perspective of small states; studies of the implications of higher unit costs in education when compared to larger states – and of strategies to deal with this; more research on the volume, predictability, forms and impact of aid to education in small states; and attention to the factors that underpin the sustainability of educational achievements in a global context, where challenging economic prospects intensify international concerns about increasing incidences of fragility, insecurity, conflict and poverty.

As a follow-up to the 17th CCEM, the Commonwealth Secretariat's *Education Strategic Plan 2010–2012* identified four broad priority areas – with priority 2 reflecting the trajectory of our own research and focusing directly upon small states. The remaining three priority areas, consisting of inclusive education for sustainable development, quality education and research also resonate closely with many of the issues raised here, making recent Commonwealth initiatives important benchmarks for education in small states. While the new *Strategic Plan* provides a coherent and supportive framework for ongoing work, it also highlights the importance of maintaining and strengthening international and regional partnerships to secure the resources and specialist expertise required to achieve significant impact with and within small states. In doing so, priority must also be given to establishing or revitalising strong professional networks and partnerships between small states, to focusing upon a programme of core and deliverable activities, and to generating appropriate external and internal sources of funding. To assist with such work, and consistent with its profile as a listening and responsive organisation, the Commonwealth Secretariat may find it helpful to establish an Education in Small States Advisory Panel, with input from a variety of different stakeholder groups, including those involved in relevant research. Given the magnitude and unpredictability of the global environmental, economic and political challenges faced by small states in today's rapidly changing world, the importance of well-grounded, cross-sectoral and multi-disciplinary initiatives is also highlighted by our own findings, if contextually appropriate and sustainable development is to be achieved.

Much can be learned from the collective experience of small states, but while collaborative work is vital, contextual differences caution against the search for simplistic blueprints for replication. Efforts to support locally grounded research and to strengthen evaluation capacity within small states, in collaboration with external agencies, therefore emerge as a further cross-cutting priority for attention. Such developments could do much to promote the sharing of insights

derived from the creative and distinctive experience of small states in ways that will help them to learn more from each other, engage in more balanced and equal global partnerships, and contribute to the shaping of sustainable international agendas for the future.

In conclusion, it is hoped that this study will prove to be informative and helpful for all engaged in educational development within small states worldwide. We also hope that it will support the ongoing work of the Secretariat itself, as it strives to build upon its deservedly strong international profile and comparative advantage in work designed to support the educational and development goals of small states throughout the Commonwealth and beyond.

Appendix 1

Commonwealth Small States: Population, International Indices, 'Islandness' and Aid

	Total population (2008)	Percentage of population aged 0–14 (2008)	HDI ranking (2007)	EDI ranking (2007)	Geography	Aid per capita, constant US$ (2007)
Below 100,000						
Tuvalu	12.200	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	MI	1,821
Nauru	13,800	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	I	2,330
St Kitts & Nevis	49,000	n.a.	62	n.a.	MI	359
Dominica	73,000	n.a.	73	n.a.	I	442
Antigua & Barbuda	86,000	n.a.	47	n.a.	MI	15
Seychelles	86,000	n.a.	57	n.a.	MI	40
Kiribati	97,000	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	MI	317
100,000–250,000						
Tonga	104,000	37	99	49	MI	400
Grenada	106,000	28	74	n.a.	I	159
St Vincent & Grenadines	109,000	27	91	72	MI	588
St Lucia	170,000	27	69	60	I	122
Samoa	182,000	40	94	n.a.	MI	415
Vanuatu	231,000	39	126	n.a.	MI	293
250,000–1 million						
Barbados	255,000	18	37	64	I	67
Maldives	310,000	29	95	58	MI	100
Belize	311,000	36	93	80		69
Bahamas, The	335,000	26	52	73	MI	–
Brunei Darussalam	397,000	27	30	44		–
Malta	411,000	16	38	61	MI	–
Solomon Islands	507,000	39	135	n.a.	MI	536
Guyana	763,000	30	114	n.a.		367
Cyprus	864,000	18	32	13	I	–
1–1.5 million						
Swaziland	1,168,000	40	142	93	L	52
Mauritius	1,269,000	23	81	63	I	136
Trinidad & Tobago	1,338,000	21	64	57	MI	13
Above 1.5 million						
Gambia, The	1,660,000	42	168	116		32
Botswana	1,905,000	34	125	92	L	135
Lesotho	2,017,000	39	156	103	L	93
Namibia	2,114,000	37	128	74		145
Jamaica	2,689,000	30	100	n.a.	I	45
Papua New Guinea	6,448,000	40	148	n.a.	MI	59

HDI: Human Development Index; EDI: Educational Development Index; 'Islandness': L = Landlocked; I: Island; MI: Multi-Island.

Sources: UNDP (2009); World Bank (2009b); UNESCO (2010).

Appendix 2

Selected Education Indicators for Commonwealth Small States

	GER in pre-primary education, % (2007 or latest year)	NER in primary education, % (2007 or latest year)	Gender parity in secondary education GPI (F/M): gross	Adult literacy, % 15+ latest year (2002–2007)	Total public expenditure on education, % GNP	Total aid to education, constant US$m (2007)
Below 100,000						
Tuvalu	106	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	3
Nauru	79	72	1.19	n.a.	n.a.	1
St Kitts & Nevis	117	96	0.91	n.a	10.9	7
Dominica	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	5.5	3
Antigua & Barbuda	102	74	0.96	99	n.a.	–
Seychelles	125	n.a.	1.13	92	4.9	1
Kiribati	113	n.a.	1.14	n.a.	n.a.	2
100,000–250,000						
Tonga	113	96	1.04	99	4.9	3
Grenada	81	76	0.99	n.a.	n.a.	4
St Vincent & Grenadines	102	91	1.24	n.a.	7.5	17
St Lucia	94	87	1.13	n.a.	6.9	3
Samoa	95	n.a.	1.13	99	n.a.	4
Vanuatu	108	87	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	9
250,000–1 million						
Barbados	105	97	1.03	n.a.	6.7	–
Maldives	111	96	1.07	97	8.3	8
Belize	123	97	1.07	n.a.	5.8	1
Bahamas, The	103	89	1.09	n.a.	n.a.	–
Brunei Darussalam	106	93	1.04	95	n.a.	–

	GER in pre-primary education, % (2007 or latest year)	NER in primary education, % (2007 or latest year)	Gender parity in secondary education GPI (F/M): gross	Adult literacy, % 15+ latest year (2002–2007)	Total public expenditure on education, % GNP	Total aid to education, constant US$m (2007)
250,000–1million (contin.)						
Malta	100	91	1.00	92	4.9	–
Solomon Islands	101	62	0.84	n.a.	n.a.	44
Guyana	112	n.a.	0.93	n.a.	6.5	8
Cyprus	102	99	1.02	98	7.3	–
1–1.5 million						
Swaziland	113	87	0.89	84	7.9	5
Mauritius	101	95	0.99	87	3.9	47
Trinidad & Tobago	100	94	1.07	99	n.a.	1
Above 1.5 million						
Gambia, The	83 (2008)	67 (2008)	0.96 (2008)	n.a	2.1	6
Botswana	107	84	1.05	83	8.8	3
Lesotho	114	72	1.27	82	11.00	18
Namibia	109	87	1.17	88	n.a.	14
Jamaica	91	86	1.05	86	7.0	11
Papua New Guinea	55	n.a.	n.a.	58	n.a.	40

GER: Gross Enrolment Rate; NER: Net Enrolment Rate; GPI: Gender Parity Index; GNP: Gross National Product
Source: UNESCO (2010).

Appendix 3

Questions Posed to Ministers of Education at the 17th CCEM

An initial version of the present study was an agenda item for the 17th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in June 2009. A number of questions provided the framework for the subsequent discussion. The answers to these questions have helped to inform the shape and contents of this book. The questions are listed below.

1. How well do current global educational agendas and discourses deal with the real needs of small states?
2. To what extent are small states looking towards or beyond global goals and targets?
3. In what ways can co-operation between Commonwealth small states be a distinctive and strategic asset, generating insights from which other Commonwealth states may also have much to learn?
4. How can small states secure the human and financial resources that will enable their citizens to meet these challenges in their own societies and in the wider world? To what extent are co-operation and education important means of addressing such challenges?
5. To what extent must policymakers and planners in small states envisage higher unit costs than their counterparts in larger states? What are the pros and cons of collaboration in delivery and support mechanisms?
6. How can the EFA and MDG agendas be kept to the fore and achieved by the target date of 2015? What supplementary goals should small states set for themselves, individually and in groups?
7. Through what mechanisms can small states retain special priority in external assistance programmes? In what ways should these programmes be tailored to meet the needs of small states, e.g. with respect for cultural diversity, and with different design and reporting requirements compared with similar programmes for larger states?
8. What balances need to be achieved in the introduction of ICTs? Where can small states find independent professional advice on the advantages and potential pitfalls?

9. What sorts of partnerships are desirable and how can they be tailored for what sorts of circumstances for quality assurance in the context of broader goals?

10. Where from here do Commonwealth Ministers of Education wish to take discussion and identification of avenues for action?

Appendix 4

Conferences of Commonwealth Ministers of Education

Year	Venue	Theme
1959	Oxford	Inaugural meeting
1962	New Delhi	No theme
1964	Ottawa	No theme
1968	Lagos	No theme
1971	Canberra	Matching needs to resources
1974	Kingston	Managing education – innovation, implementation, consolidation
1977	Accra	The economics of education
1980	Colombo	Education and the development of human resources
1984	Nicosia	Opportunity beyond constraint
1987	Nairobi	Vocational orientation of education
1990	Bridgetown	Improving the quality of basic education
1994	Islamabad	The changing role of the state in education: politics and partnerships
1997	Gaborone	Education and technology: challenges for the 21st century
2000	Halifax	Education in a global era: challenges to equity, opportunities for diversity
2003	Edinburgh	Closing the gap: access, inclusion and achievement
2006	Cape Town	Access to quality education: for the good of all
2009	Kuala Lumpur	Education in the Commonwealth: towards and beyond global goals and targets

Appendix 5

Priorities from the 17th CCEM Communiqué

With regard to the Secretariat's programme for the next triennium 2009–12, Ministers emphasised that there was a need to prioritise the work to take account of global trends and to focus on those areas where the Commonwealth has a comparative advantage and a proven track-record. In this light, Ministers urged the Secretariat to focus its work on the following areas:

i. Advancing education in small states through a variety of capacity-building and research initiatives;

ii. Continuing work on the Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol and comparability of teacher qualifications, focusing on the quality and professional status of teachers;

iii. Continuing work on the identification and training of school leaders, based on their demonstrated leadership abilities;

iv. Promoting gender-related work in schools, including on boys' under-achievement, and girls' access and completion;

v. Fostering education for respect and understanding based on core Commonwealth values;

vi. Education for sustainable development, with particular emphasis on climate change;

vii. Enhancing the delivery of multi-grade teaching; and

viii. Strengthening HIV and AIDS education.

Source: Commonwealth Secretariat (2009c)

Notes

1 This number excludes Fiji Islands, which was suspended from membership of the Commonwealth on 1 September 2009. Fiji Islands has a population of 837,000.

2 The Commonwealth Secretariat's formal definition of small states is countries with populations of 1.5 million or less, but its grouping of small states includes Botswana, The Gambia, Jamaica, Lesotho, Namibia and Papua New Guinea because they share many of the characteristics of small states. A recent Secretariat concept note states that there are 33 small states out of a new Commonwealth membership total of 54 countries.

3 The Secretariat organised a seminal conference on education in small states in Mauritius in 1985 (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1986), and during the subsequent decades undertook work on the organisation and management of ministries of education; post-secondary education; consultancies for education systems; examinations and assessment; telecommunications; and planning and management (Bacchus and Brock, 1987; Bray et *al.*, 1991; Bray and Packer, 1993; Lloyd and Packer, 1994; Commonwealth Secretariat, 1997a; Bray and Steward, 1998; Baldacchino and Farrugia, 2002).

4 Crossley and Holmes (1999).

5 The World Bank's website on its work on the economies of small states is to be found at http://web.worldbank.org/website/external/projects/0,,contentMDK:21512464~pagePK:41367~piPK:51533~theSitePK:40941,00.html

6 For the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (Division of Sustainable Development)'s work on small island developing states see www.un.org/esa/dsd/dsd_aofw_sids/sids_members.shtml.

7 See www.sidsnet.org/aosis/about.html

8 Some territories are not included in Table 1. These are places which are not permanently populated or have populations with few if any students.

9 www.ipcc.ch/publications_and_data/ar4/wg2/en/ch16s16-es.html accessed 30 April 2010.

10 http://www.alofatuvalu.tv/

11 http://www.ssned.org

12 Compulsory education is usually required by law. This does not mean, however, that it is enforced, as enrolment figures in low-performing countries show.

13 See www.educationfasttrack.org

14 Non-Commonwealth small states have a more mixed experience. Of the 57 non-Commonwealth small states for which there were data, only 32 had primary NERs of 80 per cent or better, 27 of which had reached 90 per cent or better, with only one reaching 100 per cent (UNESCO 2010). This left 25 non-Commonwealth small states reporting primary NERs below 80 per cent.

15 See www.uwi.edu/cgds/publications.html

16 See www.mesce.org, http://gces2010.webs.com/aboutthegces.htm

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This publication argues for work by the Commonwealth and others on the particular and distinct challenges of education in small states, and for the need to examine the impact of changing global contexts, to document the changing nature and significance of recent and contemporary education policy priorities, and to advance the case for new and strengthened initiatives for education in small states.

The study will be of direct interest to a wide range of stakeholders involved in educational and social development in small states, to policy-makers, administrators, researchers, students, comparative educationalists, international agency personnel and practitioners at all levels in small states, throughout the Commonwealth and beyond.

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