

# Foreword

Many governments currently face a bleak economic outlook. Developing countries in particular have been hit by droughts and bad harvests. They face static or declining markets for their exports, and escalation of import costs has squeezed their finances to the very limit. Many countries are heavily in debt, and world interest rates are high. In consequence, governments find themselves in a financial strait-jacket.

At the same time, the public clamour for expansion of secondary and higher education has forced governments urgently to seek ways to meet demand. At their 1984 conference, Commonwealth Ministers of Education requested the Secretariat to examine ways (a) to improve use of existing resources, and (b) to find alternative sources of finance.

To meet this request, the Secretariat drew up a programme of workshops. The first was held in Africa, and looked at ways in which community efforts can be mobilised to supplement government funds. A second workshop was held in the Pacific to compare the costs of small schools with the costs of large ones. And a third workshop was held in the Caribbean to discuss cost-effective teaching of secondary school pre-vocational subjects. In addition, the Secretariat commissioned Maureen Woodhall to write a guidebook for governments considering introduction of student loan programmes.

This book is the chief product of the Caribbean workshop. Its precise subject was chosen after consultation with educators in the region. Their views reflected the concern of many Ministers of Education at the growing number of unemployed school leavers, a desire to see secondary school curricula made more relevant to life after school, and a recognition that vocationalisation of education has heavy cost implications.

The workshop itself was held from 19 to 26 June 1986 in Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago. It was attended mainly by secondary school principals, educational supervisors, examiners, and administrators concerned with practical subjects. Its proceedings, of course, were mainly shaped by Caribbean educators; but I feel confident that people

in other countries can also benefit from the analysis that has been distilled and presented here.

Peter R.C. Williams,  
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