

Foreword

Examinations and certification are of critical concern to small states that are faced with the challenge of balancing the imperative of national goals and priorities with the pressures of external standards and criteria to ensure marketability of local qualifications. The challenges faced by small states to ensure that assessment and qualifications are carried out by methods that are relevant, efficient, economical and fair are compounded by difficulties that are inherent in their limited human and financial resources.

This publication is based on the papers presented at, and the deliberations of, a pan-Commonwealth workshop which took place in May 1996 in the context of the Secretariat's activities to facilitate capacity building for human development in small states of the Commonwealth.

The workshop in Barbados was an initial step to address the concerns of small states in this area of examination systems. The participants were senior officials in ministries of education, representatives of examination boards, and staff from companies that do business in the area of examinations in Commonwealth countries. The workshop provided an opportunity for the participants to focus on issues such as personnel and infrastructure required for the delivery of examinations; international recognition and national priorities; innovative ways of testing; security; and the use of technology to improve efficiency.

This publication elaborates these issues, and is intended for use by ministries of education, examination boards, and institutions. It should also be of value to persons who are conducting research and contributing to increasing knowledge of human development issues in small states. In addition, the Secretariat has been privileged to share its work in small states with other agencies, and hopes that this publication will help to increase awareness at the international level of an area of great importance to all countries, large and small.

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