

Foreword

This book owes its origin to discussion at the Ninth Conference of Commonwealth Ministers of Education, held in Cyprus in 1984, on the theme of 'Resources for Education and their Cost-Effective Use'. Ministers requested the Commonwealth Secretariat to analyse ways in which (a) extra resources could be raised for education, and (b) existing resources could be used more effectively.

In response to this request, the Secretariat organised a series of workshops and commissioned several studies. Handbooks for practitioners and policy-makers were produced on the topics:

- * community management and financing of education,
- * practical subjects in secondary school curricula,
- * the cost-effectiveness of small schools, and
- * the design of student loan programmes for developing countries.

The publications have been generally welcomed by Commonwealth educationists, and their interest has encouraged the Secretariat to continue with the line of work. This book on multiple-shift schooling is the fifth in the series.

The Focus of the Book

Multiple-shift schooling was chosen as the focus for this study because although education planners constantly aim for intensive use of classrooms, this particular strategy has been neglected in the professional literature. Varieties of multiple-shift schooling may be found in many parts of the world, both in poor nations such as Sierra Leone and Bolivia, and in prosperous countries such as South Korea and the USA. Multiple-shift schooling offers a means to contain costs and to raise enrolments, and is especial-

ly useful to governments faced by population pressure and constrained budgets.

Yet although multiple-shift schooling has long operated in many parts of the world, the topic has not previously received careful comparative analysis. Official reports and academic studies commonly make only passing reference to multiple-shift schooling, usually pointing out that while the strategy can save money it may also have educational costs. Rarely do the studies examine in depth the exact nature of costs and benefits.

It was with awareness of the need for such comparative analysis that this book was prepared. It cannot pretend to be exhaustive, for it is impossible to catalogue every variation of basic models. However, the book does claim to have accomplished at least in part its twin task of (a) identifying and exploring the economic, educational and social implications of different shift-schooling systems, and (b) indicating how models can be made to work effectively in different contexts.

Audience and Style

The intended readership of the book has been implied by the previous paragraph, but should perhaps be made explicit. The book is intended on the one hand for policy-makers at national and regional levels, and on the other hand for practitioners at the school level. The first group will be mainly interested in the balance of broad economic, educational and social factors, while the second group will be primarily concerned with such practical matters as staffing and timetabling. However, individuals from each group require an understanding of others' perspectives. Professionals from both groups could therefore benefit from careful study of the book as a whole.

In style, the author has followed the example of the previous books in the series. The text is intended to be readable, and has been enlivened with pictures. In many cases Dr Bray has amplified his text through case-study material in separate boxes. This general approach has found favour among both Commonwealth Ministers and others, and we hope that it will be equally welcomed in this case.

Finally, it will be noted that the book takes examples from both Commonwealth and other countries. Although of course the

Commonwealth Secretariat operates chiefly to serve the Commonwealth, we consider it important to share experiences both within that group of countries and between them and others.

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