

Preface

The purpose of this book is to help anyone considering the use of distance education and trying to decide how it should be organised. The acclaimed success of the world's twenty-five open universities gives the impression that learning at a distance demands the establishment of an open university. But, in practice, there are many different ways in which governments, universities, or private bodies can teach students at a distance. Our aim is to explore and compare the options that may be available.

The idea for the book came from a meeting of specialists on distance education called by the Commonwealth Secretariat and held in Cambridge in 1985. Their much more significant finding was that it was worth looking harder at ways of promoting Commonwealth co-operation through distance education: a conclusion that led on to the establishment of The Commonwealth of Learning. Background work for The Commonwealth of Learning held up the production of this book but work done on their behalf has confirmed that there is a continuing interest in its theme.

We are glad to acknowledge permission to reproduce material in the book from Professor Fred Jevons (in box 2), Mr Greville Rumble (in boxes 1 and 6) and Professor Don Swift (in box 4). We are also grateful for comments on the book at draft stages from a number of members of staff of both the Commonwealth Secretariat and The Commonwealth of Learning and from Dr Anastasios Christodoulou, Dr Meshack Matshazi, Ms Louise Moran, Dr Ian Mugridge and Mr Greville Rumble. Responsibility for the contents of the book rests, however, with the author and it does not necessarily represent the views either of the Secretariat or of The Commonwealth of Learning.