

PREFACE

Recognition of the interdependence of countries in the modern world does not lessen the determination of Commonwealth member states to reduce their dependence on foreign resources where needs can be met through better utilisation of indigenous resources. The more effective use of natural and human resources is the foundation of development policies in developed and developing countries alike.

Twenty-eight countries of the Commonwealth have a population each of less than two million. For them, as for other countries of the Commonwealth, it is important that national resources should be put to the fullest and most effective use. Many of the small countries suffer from a paucity of natural resources as well as cultural and industrial exploitation; they suffer too from problems associated with isolation, scale and limited political muscle on the world's economic and political negotiating stage. The most precious resource available to them consists of their people. It is they who, with a judicious combination of traditional and newly won skills, can ensure that their total resource base is put to the best possible use.

It is now widely recognised that the contribution of technical and vocational education is a crucial component in the development of the Island Developing and Other Specially Disadvantaged States of the Commonwealth. It is a contribution which is increasingly seen as encompassing a range of training programmes, courses and activities designed and implemented locally, to match specific and urgent national development needs. It was in recognition of this that the Eighth Commonwealth Education Conference (8CEC) meeting in Colombo, Sri Lanka 1980 recommended that the Secretariat should provide opportunities for the small states of the Commonwealth to meet together to examine the diversity and similarity of educational need. It recommended too that special attention should be given to an examination of the problems of achieving and supporting appropriate innovation in the field of technical and vocational education, though it was recognised that this would have different connotations in different countries.

It was against this background that the Education Division (now the Education Programme of the Human Resource Development Group) organised a regional meeting for the countries of the Commonwealth Caribbean in Nassau, The Bahamas, from 26-30 April 1982. As the report which follows shows, it was a very practical meeting of technical educators. It addressed itself to the ways and means by which technical and vocational education and training can be flexible and innovative in its response to real and urgent development needs. This report is offered to all member countries as a tool by which those with responsibility for policy and training may examine their own national and institutional policies in order to enhance their contribution to meeting the needs of our smaller member countries and to assist the fullest utilisation of indigenous resources.

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