

Foreword

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Issues in Education and Technology addresses two important topics that currently preoccupy many decision-makers. There is hardly a more topical issue in today's world than the impact of technology on society, as it fuels unprecedented changes which influence how we live and work within different countries as well as across national boundaries. These changes offer the hope of increased benefits for many countries, but they also raise fears that some developing countries will be left behind and so become even further marginalised. There is therefore a sense of urgency about the need to cope with unfolding circumstances and to seize emerging opportunities. One of the key challenges facing decision-makers everywhere is how best to harness the great potential of these rapidly unfolding technologies to the complex goals of human development.

A second topical issue for most decision-makers concerns the role of education in the development process, as we enter a new millennium. Leaders in developed and developing countries routinely express a new sense of vision about the ways in which education can empower individuals, communities and nations to make choices for their own development. This is critical in the face of global changes that place a premium on knowledge and information as the key to development. Investment in education has therefore emerged as a major priority for the political leadership in most countries. This raises difficult questions about the kind of reforms and innovations needed in education, as a precondition for any major investment of scarce resources. Underlying these questions are issues of how to spread the benefits of education to all citizens; how to improve its relevance and efficiency, and how to ensure value for money in the provision of education and the management of education systems.

In addressing these issues, *Issues in Education and Technology* uses educational analysis as a basis for exploring the role of technology in dealing with key educational problems. This approach involves a strong focus on educational issues and problems, with technology treated as a prolific tool that serves human purpose in helping to solve problems in education. This book avoids the danger of technological determinism, concentrating instead on a level-headed analysis of educational issues and technological possibilities.

I sincerely hope that this Commonwealth publication will inspire and inform decision-makers and all those concerned with investments in technology for the development of education. The jargon-free approach and careful analysis of education and technology issues from first principles is refreshing and illuminating for non-specialists. It is also my hope that the illustrative case studies from different parts of the Commonwealth will provide valuable insight into how a number of countries are dealing with the challenges involved in the strategic use of technology to improve education.