

PREFACE

One of the characteristics of Commonwealth co-operation is its special concern for small states. Membership of the Commonwealth stands at 49 countries in 1984 of which 34 have a population of less than five million, and 29 under two million. Of those with under two million people, 22 are island nations. It is not surprising therefore, that the economic and social development of a group of countries, which in Commonwealth parlance are termed "Island Developing and Other Specially Disadvantaged States" should provide the focus for a number of Commonwealth programmes and projects.

At the meeting of Commonwealth Senior Education Officials held in London in 1979 it was recommended that a study on small states should be prepared for the consideration of Ministers of Education at the Eighth Commonwealth Education Conference (8CEC). It was further recommended that a special sub-committee should be set up at 8CEC to consider the study. During the early part of 1980 a questionnaire survey was carried out by the Commonwealth Secretariat's Education Division (which became the Education Programme in the Human Resource Development Group in January 1983). The information obtained in response to the survey provided the basis for the 8CEC paper "Education in the Island Developing and other Specially Disadvantaged States". One of the recommendations of the 8CEC was that the first part of the paper, which analysed the significance of scale, isolation and dependence on the development of education systems, should be supplemented and then published by the Commonwealth Secretariat. This study is the result of that recommendation.

Though based largely on the 1980 survey and on the Country Papers submitted to 8CEC, the study has been supplemented by sources from the as yet limited literature on education in small states. It is restricted to countries with a population of less than two million - an arbitrary boundary, but one which allows the vast majority of Island Developing and Other Specially Disadvantaged States in the Commonwealth to be included. Within this group the study concentrates upon a sample of 12 countries from the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean and the South Pacific.

It is hoped that member countries will find the analysis of scale, isolation and dependence in relation to educational provision one which contributes in a practical way to the national and international debate on policy development in relatively small countries. At the same time, as the study highlights, the diversity of geographical, historical and social contexts represented in even the small sample of countries that receive particular attention warns against over-hasty attempts to replicate apparently appropriate solutions to problems which in fact are directly specific to a community or to a country.

Special thanks are due to the author of the study, Mr. Colin Brock, Chairman of the International Education Unit in the Institute of Education at the University of Hull for his willingness to take on a difficult task in a relatively uncharted field. In addition, mention must be made of the officials in the Ministries of Education around the Commonwealth who provided the information on which this study is based. The Commonwealth Secretariat is conscious of the burden which is placed on relatively small Ministries when they are asked to provide detailed information for international surveys, and gratefully acknowledges their contribution to this study.

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