

CHAPTER 1: RATIONALE

1. Origins and aims

- 1.1 It is right and proper that the Commonwealth should take a particular interest in relatively small countries. Of its 47* independent member states, 32 have a population of less than five million. Of these, 27 are below two million and 17 have fewer than 250,000 people. This concern is reflected in publications (see, for example, Section B of Appendix C, Commonwealth Secretariat Publications), meetings and training activities prepared and organised by the Commonwealth Secretariat. There has emerged from these and other deliberations a generic term which it is now customary to use for Secretariat programmes - Island Developing and Other Specially Disadvantaged States - by which is meant, in general terms, small countries and their problems.
- 1.2 At the Eighth Commonwealth Education Conference (8CEC) held in Colombo, Sri Lanka 1980, consideration was given to a Secretariat discussion paper entitled **Education in the Island Developing and Other Specially Disadvantaged States (8CEC/WP/2)** (1 - see references p.15). The paper was based upon responses to a questionnaire sent to 34 independent member states, associated states and dependent territories in 1980 by the Education Division** of the Secretariat.
- 1.3 Following discussion of the paper the Conference recommended that "... the first part of the Secretariat's survey which analyses the significance of scale, isolation and dependence upon the development of education systems should be supplemented and then published by the Commonwealth Secretariat." (8CEC Report, Para. 159) (2).
- 1.4 This monograph is the response to the 8CEC recommendation. Its main aim is to relate information on educational development provided by a sample of 12 Commonwealth countries, both from the questionnaire referred to in 1.2 above and from other sources, to considerations of national scale, isolation and dependency. It does so within the limits imposed by the Commonwealth Secretariat's questionnaire (Appendix A) and its discussion paper for 8CEC. These limits are explored in the sections which follow.

2. Scope and format

- 2.1 The monograph is based primarily on information provided by governments and, in particular, by Ministries of Education. This is of two main types. Of the 34 countries which received the Secretariat's questionnaire in the early part of 1980, 16 responded. Of these 16, 11 countries also presented a Country Paper to 8CEC. These two sets of documents provide the major resource for the monograph. Recourse has also been made to country papers presented to other meetings, to publications on the politics, economics and

* The preparation of this monograph pre-dates the independence of St Christopher-Nevis in 1983 and Brunei in 1984.

** The Education Programme of the Human Resource Development Group since January 1983.

sociology of the countries in question as well as to the yet meagre amount of writing on the overall educational patterns and problems of small countries (see Appendix C).

2.2 The monograph consists of seven main parts:

- (a) Sections 3 and 4 of this chapter provide the context for the main body of the study. Section 3 examines **national smallness** and looks especially at indices which may help clarify the concept and thereby assist more detailed sector studies such as education. Section 4 applies the synthesis developed in Section 3 to the sample of 12 Commonwealth countries which form the basis for the study.
- (b) The second section is incorporated in Chapter 2 and is concerned with **education and national scale**. Six broad issues were set out in the Commonwealth Secretariat's questionnaire (Appendix A) and the discussion paper for 8CEC which resulted. These are considered in relation to the information derived from the 12 country sources. It relates closely to the contextual issues outlined in Chapter 1 and concludes with a summary of the question of scale and its relationship to educational development.
- (c) The 8CEC discussion paper is almost entirely related to scale, the issues of isolation and dependence are much less developed. Consequently, in treating them more fully here, material and ideas other than those deriving from the 12 national sources become more evident. In the third section (Chapter 3), **isolation** is viewed in relation to a number of variables, political, social and cultural as well as the more usual spatial variant. Each variable is considered for its educational implications.
- (d) In Chapter 4 on **dependence and education** in small Commonwealth countries a number of major issues are examined including the legacy of colonialism, post-independence pressures (especially trans-national co-operation), the role of the regional university, and curriculum and assessment problems in regions which encompass a number of small states.
- (e) The fifth section (Chapter 5) - on the basis of the preceding analysis - seeks to point towards possible **conclusions** in areas of particular educational development concern and comments on selected initiatives in some small Commonwealth countries.
- (f) There are three appendices. Appendix A is the Commonwealth Secretariat's 1980 questionnaire. Appendix B comprises 12 country profiles compiled from the documentary information provided by the sample states. This is paraphrased in each case under the six main headings used in the Commonwealth Secretariat questionnaire, namely: institutions, finance, employment, curriculum, expertise, and technology.
- (g) The monograph concludes with a selected bibliography, Appendix C, listing all the sources utilised in addition to the documentary evidence from the sample states. References are listed at the end of each chapter.

3. National Smallness

- 3.1 Images and Perceptions: "Small is beautiful", so recently a bold rallying cry, is already a standard cliché, and when coupled with another western stereotype, "tropical paradise", can be little more than an escapist platitude. The world is a different place when perceived from say, Vanuatu, Swaziland or Belize, as opposed to Australia, Canada or Nigeria.
- 3.2 As the world is presently organised, politically and economically, there is in general a disadvantage attached to being a small unit. We live in a world of economies of scale, where the bulk buy and the early order are considered in principle positive, and are in practice very advantageous. They require, however, the backing of a large market and a clear credit-worthiness, and since educational activity is, in effect, subordinate to the wider economic, political and social context, if that context is severely constrained by smallness of scale then educational activity too may be disproportionately dysfunctional.
- 3.3 Despite the long-standing recognition of the multiple disadvantage affecting small countries, there has been an inevitable tendency for the political, demographic and economic scale of larger Commonwealth members to influence some of the deliberations and major activities of the group as a whole. In the field of education this is particularly unfortunate since it builds on the legacy of colonisation bequeathed by some of the larger members, mainly but not exclusively Britain, to the smaller. Indeed it may well be that Beckford was right to imply the comparatively invidious and pernicious quality of the educational legacy of colonialism when he stated that:
- "... the most intractable problem of dependent societies is the colonised condition of the minds of the people". (3)
- 3.4 And yet, is not education in reality one of the most individual of human acquisitions? One which is ultimately effective only at the smallest scale, in operational terms almost totally client controlled. That is to say, that the individual child, student and adult have both a clear perception of their learning needs and a related level of motivation that may be positive or negative in expression. This is not to say that such individual perceptions are necessarily either accurate or in the best interests, however defined, either of the client or the various human groups, local, national or international of which he or she forms a part.
- 3.5 Nonetheless, the providers and sometimes also the purveyors of formal, non-formal, and even to some considerable extent informal variants of education, predictably operate on a much larger and relatively impersonal scale. This is normally the national scale, but increasingly, and especially in the case of regions of small countries the international scale also. This is inevitable, given the roles ascribed to education systems in respect of the enhancement of national cohesion and identity, and the transmission of culture and ideology whether overt or covert.
- 3.6 Consequently, for small countries there is an increased tension between certain potential advantages of smallness and enforced localisation, and heavy demands for employment in the professions, politics and administration, relative to the size of the country. The educational memories of the clientele - of individual classes, classrooms, teachers and incidents - are on a very small scale. This is true in virtually all countries.

- 3.7 But this is not how the providers and purveyors of education visualise the intended outcomes of the exercise. Aims and objectives are often expressed at a high level of abstraction and generalisation, and followed by grand plans and strategies which may be difficult to implement in small political units. That such problems and tensions exist is largely due to the social, economic and political history experienced by individual former colonies, culminating in political independence and its attendant educational demands.
- 3.8 The Global View: Small may or may not be beautiful in the eye of the beholder, but in national political terms it can reasonably be described as normal. This is clearly the case whether geographical, demographic or economic criteria are employed, as Table 1 illustrates.
- 3.9 In general terms, it is the case that the majority of the national units of the world are small in surface area and/or population size, and are also relatively poor. It is true of course that these small countries contain only a very tiny percentage of the world's population, but they do represent over half the education systems in the world. The concern here is with the links between these inevitably small education systems and the individuals for whom they attempt to provide educational opportunities to meet their perceived needs.
- 3.10 Small Countries in the Commonwealth: At the beginning of 1983 the 47 independent member states of the Commonwealth represent approximately a quarter of the world's population. These nations exhibit a gradient of population size from gigantic (India - 730,000,000), to miniscule (Nauru 8,000). Along this gradient occurs a range of national sizes comparable to that of the world as a whole. Rather more than half (27) have populations of less than two million, 17 have less than 250,000 and six have less than 100,000 (see Table 2). To this list may be added a further 17 countries which are associated states or dependent territories, mostly in respect of Britain, but with several related to Australia or New Zealand. There are even dependencies of dependencies, as the gradient descends from miniscule to microscopic. With the exception of Hong Kong all 18 countries in this category have a population below 250,000 (see Table 3).
- 3.11 Small Country Typologies: Typologies seek to clarify data by classifying information according to selected criteria. For example, in Tables 2 and 3 Commonwealth countries with a population of less than two million people are ranked according to population size. Table 4 offers a simple grouping of countries by geographical region. Tables 2 and 3 also indicate whether the countries are islands, littoral, meaning that the country adjoins the sea whilst being part of a larger land mass, or land-locked. Examples of classification by geographical situation are provided in Figure 1.
- 3.12 A typology would also be possible by seeking comparability of social and cultural groupings, which within a country have clear implications for education policy. For example, the countries of Mauritius, Fiji and Trinidad and Tobago are characterised by similarities in their ethnic and religious composition (see Figure 1).
- 3.13 However a typology is arrived at, further sub-divisions within major groups are usually possible. For example, it is easy to formulate a simple division of island nations. Some countries in this group comprise one island only, for example, Barbados or Nauru, while others may consist of scores, even hundreds of islands such as The Bahamas, Seychelles, Tonga or Vanuatu. Obviously, such elementary topographical and spatial attributes have

Table 1

SURFACE AREA

Percentage of the nations of the world		
Over 1 million sq. km	Between 1 m and 100,00 sq. km	Less than 100,000 sq.km
13	35	52

POPULATION

Percentage of the nations of the world		
Over 50 million	Between 50 million and 5 million	Less than 5 million
7	38	54

GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT (GNP) PER CAPITA

Percentage of the nations of the world		
Over US\$ 5000	Between US\$ 5000 and 1000	Less than US\$ 1000
15	30	55

Notes:

1. These figures, compiled from United Nations and World Bank data for 1978, are for 'national units' responsible for their own education systems, and are not confined to territories designated as politically independent.
2. It is not implied that GNP reflects the living standards of the mass of the population.

Table 2

POPULATION, AREA AND GNP FOR COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES WITH A POPULATION
BELOW TWO MILLION (1980)

Country	Population		Area sq. km.	GNP US\$ per head (1980)	Geographical Type		
	Total 000s 1980	Density per sq. km.			Island(s)	Littoral	Land-locked
1 Lesotho	1,341	44.2	30,355	390			*
2 Trinidad and Tobago	1,168	227.7	5,128	4,370	*		
3 Mauritius	958	513.7	1,865	1,060	*		
4 Botswana	800	1.3	600,372	910			*
5 Guyana	793	3.7	214,969	690		*	
6 Fiji	630	34.3	18,272	1,850	*		
7 Cyprus	620	67.0	9,251	3,560	*		
8 The Gambia	603	53.4	11,295	250		*	
9 Swaziland	557	32.0	17,365	680		*	
10 Malta	343	1085.4	316	3,470	*		
11 Barbados	249	577.7	431	3,040	*		
12 The Bahamas	241	17.3	13,395	3,300	*		
13 Solomon Is.	229	8.0	28,446	460	*		
14 W. Samoa	156	54.9	2,842	560	*		
15 Maldives	154	513.3	300	260	*		
16 Belize	145	6.3	22,964	1,080		*	
17 St. Lucia	124	201.3	616	850	*		
18 Vanuatu	117	7.9	14,763	530	*		
19 Grenada	110	319.8	344	690	*		
20 St. Vincent and the Grenadines	107	275.8	388	520	*		
21 Antigua and Barbuda	100	226.2	442	1,270	*		
22 Tonga	97	138.8	699	520	*		
23 Dominica	83	110.5	751	620	*		
24 Seychelles	60	214.3	280	1,770	*		
25 Kiribati	59	66.6	886	770	*		
26 Tuvalu	9	321.4	28	570	*		
27 Nauru	8	380.9	21	n.a.	*		

Table 3

THE ASSOCIATED STATES AND THE DEPENDENT TERRITORIES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (1980)*

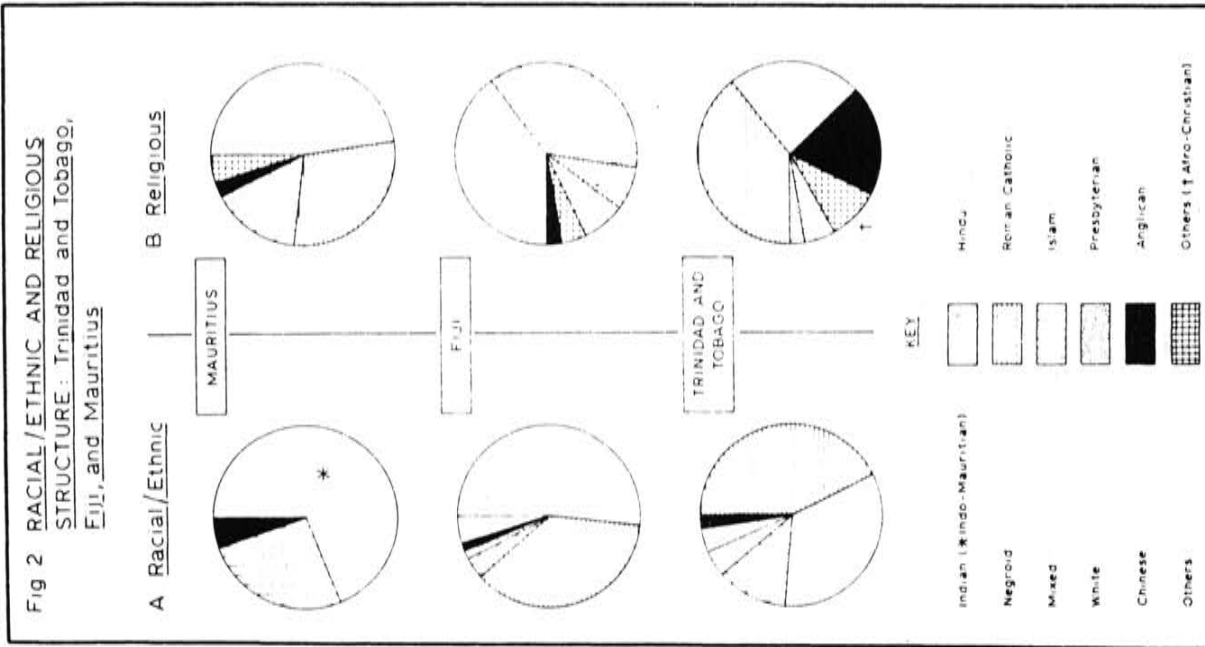
Country	Status	Population		Area sq. km	GNP US\$ per head (1980)	Geographical Type		
		Total (1980)	Density per sq. km.			Island(s)	Littoral	Land-locked
1 Brunei	Associated State (UK)	220,000	38.2	3,765	2,620		*	
2 Bermuda	Dependency (UK)	59,000	1,113.2	53	9,440 (1979)	*		
3 St. Christopher- Nevis	Associated State (UK)	50,000	19.1	262	920	*		
4 Gibraltar	Dependency (UK)	30,000	5,000	6	4,320 (1979)		*	
5 Cook Is.	Associated State (NZ)	20,000	85.5	234	1,300	*		
6 Cayman Is.	Dependency (UK)	17,340	6,619	259	n.a.	*		
7 British Virgin Is.	Dependency (UK)	12,800 (1979)	81.7	153	n.a.	*		
8 Montserrat	Dependency (UK)	12,074	118.4	102	n.a.	*		
9 Turks & Caicos Is.	Dependency (UK)	7,400	14.83	499	n.a.	*		
10 Anguilla	Dependency (UK)	6,500	71.43	91	n.a.	*		
11 St Helena**	Dependency (UK)	5,216	42.7	122	n.a.	*		
12 Niue	Associated State (NZ)	3,600	13.90	259	n.a.	*		
13 Christmas Is.	External Territory (Australia)	3,184	23.59	135	n.a.	*		
14 Norfolk Is.	External Territory (Australia)	2,180	62.8	35	n.a.	*		
15 Falkland Is.	Dependency (UK)	1,890	1.47	1,287	n.a.	*		
16 Tokelau	Territory Overseas (NZ)	1,600	160	10	n.a.	*		
17 Cocos Is.	External Territory (Australia)	487	34.5	14	n.a.			
18 Pitcairn	Dependency (UK)	60	1.3	47	n.a.	*		

* The table excludes only Hong Kong (Population in 1980 - 5,147,900) and five dependent territories with no permanent population.

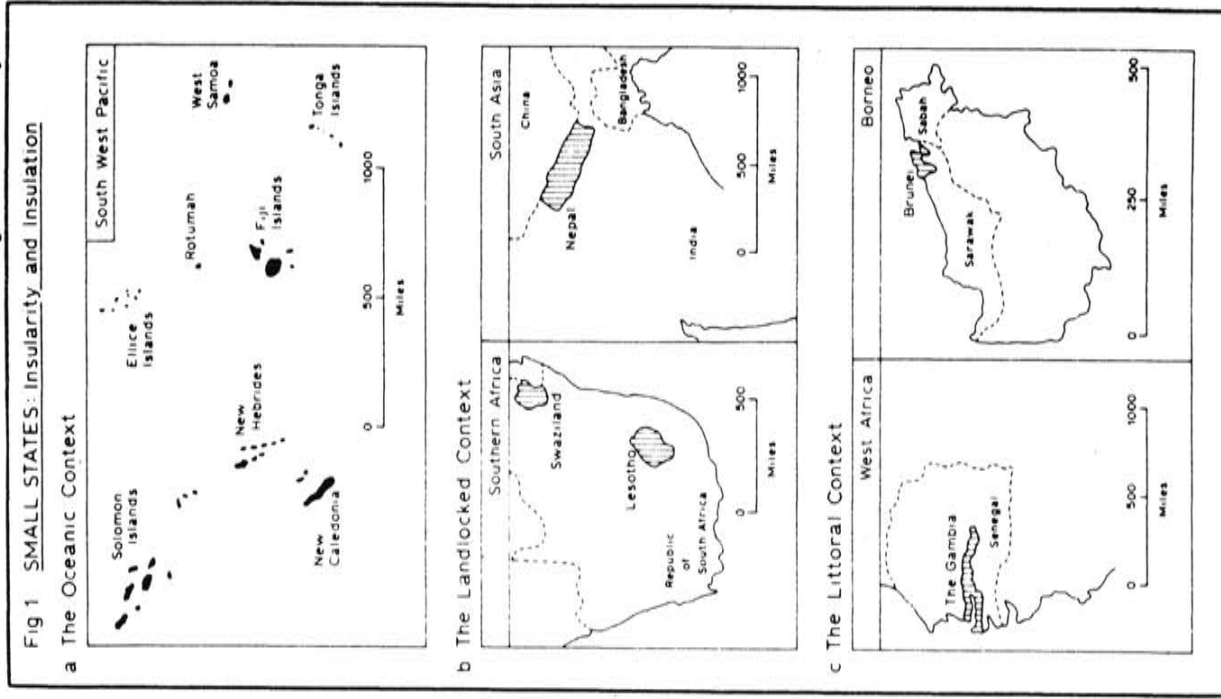
** St. Helena has administrative responsibility for Ascension Is. (Population 1,022) and Tristan da Cunha (Population 323).

Figure 1

A. Small States by Geographical Type



B. Cultural and Ethnic Comparability



Source: Brock, C. Problems of Education and Human Ecology in Small Tropical Island Nations, in Brock, C and Ryba, R (eds) A Volume of Essays for Elizabeth Halsall: Aspects of Education No.22. University of Hull. Institute of Education 1980, pp.71-83.

Table 4

**A REGIONAL GROUPING OF SOME INDEPENDENT COUNTRIES, ASSOCIATED
STATES AND DEPENDENT TERRITORIES WITHIN THE COMMONWEALTH**

(Ranked According to Size of Population)

Africa	Caribbean	Indian Ocean	Mediterranean	South Atlantic	South Pacific
Independent Countries					
Lesotho Botswana The Gambia Swaziland	Trinidad & Tobago Guyana Barbados The Bahamas Belize St Lucia Grenada St Vincent and the Grenadines Antigua and Barbuda Dominica	Mauritius Maldives Seychelles	Cyprus Malta		Fiji Solomon Islands Western Samoa Vanuatu Tonga Kiribati Tuvalu
Associated States and Dependent Territories					
	Bermuda St Kitts- Nevis Cayman Is. British Virgin Is. Montserrat Turks & Caicos Anguilla	Christmas Is. Cocos Island	Gibraltar	St Helena (including Ascension Island and Tristan Da Cunha) Falkland Is.	Cook Islands Niue Norfolk Island Tokelau Pitcairn

considerable impact on the differential effectiveness of educational provision. However, this has not prevented many governments from operating highly centralised and supposedly homogeneous systems of education. The predictable outcome is that of extreme diversity and disparity in such basic areas as access to education at different levels, acquisition of teaching materials and other school supplies, and opportunities for in-service teacher education.

- 3.14 A more sophisticated approach to the classification of small states is to relate more than one set of the criteria by which 'smallness' is recognised. Shand (4) in his typology of selected Pacific and Indian Ocean states links size of population, land area and the domestic economy in one matrix (see Table 5). As Shand recognises, the divisions are arbitrary, with population figures, land area and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) figures broken into three groups, small, very small and micro. Whilst the number of conclusions which can be drawn are limited it would appear that there is a gradient of compounded disadvantage, with obvious implications for education.
- 3.15 These and other ways of classifying small countries help both to identify means of comparability that may be of mutual or practical interest, and also to serve to illustrate the diversity that exists between and even within small scale national units.

4. A synthesis from twelve cases

- 4.1 Twelve independent Commonwealth countries form the basis for this study. Each country has a population of less than two million. They are in rank order of population size (1980), Botswana (800,000), Guyana (793,000), Fiji (630,000), Cyprus (620,000), Malta (343,000), Barbados (249,000), Western Samoa (156,000), Belize (145,000), Grenada (110,000), Seychelles (66,000), Kiribati (59,000) and Tuvalu (9,000). Each country responded to the Commonwealth Secretariat's questionnaire in 1980 (Appendix A) and, with the exception of Belize (not a member until 1981) presented a Country Paper to the Eighth Commonwealth Education Conference.
- 4.2 The twelve exhibit considerable variety when viewed in terms of different small country typologies. Between them they represent each of the five geographical areas containing small member states of the Commonwealth (see Table 4). They also cover the range of physical variants; large "empty" country (e.g. Belize, Botswana, Guyana); littoral country (e.g. Belize, Guyana); land-locked (e.g. Botswana); single-island country (e.g. Cyprus, Malta); multi-island country (e.g. Fiji, Kiribati, Seychelles, Tuvalu).
- 4.3 In Table 6 information on population (1980), area (sq. km) and Gross National Product (GNP) per capita (1980) is applied to a typology based on Shand (see Table 5). To encompass all twelve countries four categories are included under area and population.
- 4.4 The most obvious characteristic of the sample set of small Commonwealth countries is that of disparity. In general terms they are not comparable. This is mainly due to the relatively large difference in scale within the sample. However, this does not in itself invalidate the notion of scale in terms of a gradient across an arbitrary category of countries within any given demographic range as a possible factor influencing education, however it may be defined. In this case it is necessary to apply the notion of scale to education in the form of the six categories of information chosen by the

Table 5

**CLASSIFICATION OF SELECTED PACIFIC AND INDIAN OCEAN STATES AND TERRITORIES
BY SIZE OF POPULATION, LAND AREA AND DOMESTIC ECONOMY**

Population	Land Area			
	Small 10,000-30,000 sq. km.	Very Small 500-10,000 sq. km.	Micro ≤500 sq. km.	
	Domestic Economy			
	Small \$A100m**	GDP Very Small \$A25-100m	Micro ≤\$A25m	
Small ≤250,000	Fiji			
Very Small 25,000-250,000	New Caledonia	Solomon Is. Vanuatu		
		French Polynesia Guam	W. Samoa TTIP* Tonga Kiribati	American Samoa Seychelles Maldives
Micro ≤25,000				Nauru Cook Is. Wallis & Futuna Tuvalu Niue Tokelau

Source: Shand, R T **Island Smallness: Some Definitions and Implications** in Shand, R T (ed.), **The Island States of the Pacific and Indian Oceans: Anatomy of Development**. The Australian National University. Development Studies Centre. Monograph No.23, 1980, p.14.

* Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

** \$A Australian Dollars.

Table 6

CLASSIFICATION OF TWELVE COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES WITH A POPULATION
OF LESS THAN TWO MILLION BY SIZE OF POPULATION, LAND AREA AND
DOMESTIC ECONOMY (1980)

Population	Area											
	200,000-750,000 sq. km		1,000-200,000 sq. km		100-1,000 sq. km		100-1,000 sq. km		100-1,000 sq. km			
Domestic Economy GNP - US\$												
	>3000	1000-3000	<1000	>3000	1000-3000	<1000	>3000	1000-3000	<1000	>3000	1000-3000	<1000
500,000-1m			Botswana Guyana	Cyprus	Fiji							
200,000- 500,000							Barbados Malta					
10,000- 200,000					Belize	W. Samoa		Seychelles	Kiribati Grenada			
<10,000												Tuvalu

Commonwealth Secretariat for their 1980 questionnaire. The individuality and limitations of that particular exercise must be borne in mind when even tentative suggestions of apparent relationships are put forward below. This will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

- 4.5 Of the twelve countries in the sample six have a GNP (1980) of below US\$1000 per capita. They are then some of the poorest countries in the world although it has to be remembered that such figures may seriously discount an important subsistence economy. Of the six, four are island countries, two of which are relatively compact, and two of which are spread across thousands of miles of ocean (see Table 6). In all four cases the population is well below 200,000. At the other extreme are two countries, Guyana and Botswana with a relatively large area, a low overall population density, with people clustered along the coastline or the line of rail. Belize with a significantly smaller population and area has these spatial characteristics as well.
- 4.6 Barbados and Malta, set in the Caribbean and the Mediterranean respectively, are readily comparable on the basis of the three sets of information used in the typology. They are small compact islands with a relatively high GNP. They both benefit from a central trading location and have a long history of regional economic influence. In such situations the need for an internal natural resource base for manufacturing is not so pressing. Opportunities for assembly, reprocessing and service activities relieve the constraints of a relatively small internal market on the development of a manufacturing sector. Fiji and Cyprus, although much larger in terms of population and area display similar characteristics. Fiji is a widely scattered archipelago but its main island of Vitu Levu performs many of the central regional functions associated with the other more compact countries. To go further in the recognition of categories or sets is to risk creating artificial groupings which lend little to the understanding of educational development which is the concern of this paper.
- 4.7 In a recent categorisation of developing countries in the Pacific, Fisk (5) recognises five main groups:
- Category 1 Countries with large underdeveloped agricultural and mineral resources with good prospects of raising incomes to the point where they can stand independent of aid. Fisk cites Papua New Guinea as one example in this category.
- Category 2 This category includes Fiji alone, which is characterised as being able to develop without aid except for the fact that its modern energy base is now dependent on imported oil.
- Category 3 Countries which have a resource endowment adequate to sustain the population well above minimum subsistence but not at the levels to which they aspire and possibly not even at their present levels of income. Fisk includes Tonga and Western Samoa.
- Category 4 The countries in this group are the poorest in the Pacific region and include the atoll countries of Tuvalu and Kiribati. Such countries have limited and poor agricultural resources and have a high population density relative to the resource base. Small size, internal dispersal over wide areas of ocean and remoteness

limit the possibilities for export-oriented industry. Migration is one partial solution.

Category 5 Fisk calls this a catch-all category and includes Nauru and American Samoa which have very special resource or historical characteristics.

- 4.8 Fisk's taxonomy is specifically designed to highlight the potential for aid to contribute to national economic development. It would be difficult to ascribe the twelve countries of this study to each of the categories. Nevertheless, Botswana and Guyana have some of the characteristics of category 1. Malta, Cyprus and Barbados are akin to Fiji in category 2. In category 3 Western Samoa might be associated with Belize, Seychelles and Grenada. Kiribati and Tuvalu are already assigned to category 4.
- 4.9 The exercise of classification of small countries brings forth some features of contextual significance for understanding education and its institutional development. The degree of correspondence between indices of scale; the degree of national compactness; the natural resource base; and regional location show considerable variation within the sample group of 12 countries and therefore limit the likelihood of a significant "small country solution" to the questions raised in the Commonwealth Secretariat questionnaire.

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