Comparative Perspectives on Education Policy Priorities in Commonwealth Small States

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Education in Small States Research Group: www.smallstates.net
Education in Small States: Policies and Priorities

Publication details:
Structure of the Presentation

- Small States: Definitions and Distinctive Characteristics
- Educational Research in Small States
- Origins and nature of the Research Project
- Main Findings
- Implications of the Study
Small States: Definitions

Defining Small States:

‘The Commonwealth classes 32 of its 53 member countries as Small States, adopting a broad definition which includes, alongside countries with a population of less than 1.5 million, those larger states that share many similar characteristics – Botswana, The Gambia, Jamaica, Lesotho, Namibia and Papua New Guinea’ (Crossley et al 2011 pxvii)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Population &lt; 1.5 million</th>
<th>Population, 1.5 – 5 million</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>Cape Verde; Equatorial Guinea; Gabon; São Tomé &amp; Príncipe; Swaziland</td>
<td>Botswana; Central African Republic; Congo (Republic of); Eritrea; The Gambia; Guinea Bissau; Lesotho; Liberia; Namibia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Americas</td>
<td>French Guiana (FRORD); Suriname</td>
<td>Costa Rica; Panama; Uruguay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arab States</td>
<td>Bahrain; Djibouti; Qatar</td>
<td>Lebanon; Mauritania; Oman; United Arab Emirates; West Bank and Gaza</td>
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<tr>
<td>Atlantic</td>
<td>Bermuda (BROT); Falkland Islands (BROT); Faroe Islands (DENSG); Greenland (DENSG); Iceland; St Helena (BROT); St Pierre &amp; Miquelon (FRTC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>Bhutan; Brunei Darussalam; Macao-China (SAR); Timor Leste</td>
<td>Georgi; Mongolia, Singapore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>Anguilla (BROT); Antigua &amp; Barbuda; Aruba (NETHFA) The Bahamas; Barbados; Belize; British Virgin Islands (BROT); Cayman Islands (BROT); Dominica; Grenada; Guadeloupe (FRORD); Guyana; Martinique (FRORD); Montserrat (BROT); Netherlands Antilles (NETHFA); St Barthelemy (FROC); St Kitts &amp; Nevis; St Lucia; St Martin (FROC); St Vincent &amp; the Grenadines; Trinidad &amp; Tobago; Turks &amp; Caicos (BROT); US Virgin Islands (UST)</td>
<td>Jamaica; Puerto Rico (SGUT)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Europe</td>
<td>Andorra; Cyprus; Estonia; Gibraltar (BROT); Guernsey (UKCD); Isle of Man (UKCD); Jersey (UKCD); Liechtenstein; Luxembourg; Malta; Monaco; Montenegro; San Marino; The Vatican</td>
<td>Albania; Armenia; Bosnia &amp; Herzegovina; Croatia; Ireland; Latvia; Lithuania; Macedonia FYR; Moldova; Norway; Slovenia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Ocean</td>
<td>Christmas Island (AUST); Cocos Islands (AUST); Comoros; Mayotte (FROC); Maldives; Mauritius; Réunion (FRORD); Seychelles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>American Samoa (UST); Cook Islands (SGNZ); Federated States of Micronesia; Fiji Islands; French Polynesia; Guam (SGUT); Kiribati; Marshall Islands; Nauru; New Caledonia (FRORD); Niue (SGNZ); Norfolk Island (AUST); Northern Marianas (SGCUS); Palau; Samoa; Solomon Islands; Tokelau (NZSAT); Tonga; Tuvalu; Wallis &amp; Futuna (FROC)</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
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Small States Quick Facts

• 120 States with populations below 5 million
• 87 of these have populations below 1.5 million
• 80 of the 120 are sovereign states
• 40 of the 120 are territories in forms of association and dependency with larger countries
• 51 of the 120 are Small Island Developing States
• Broad range of economic and human development indicators
And others as diverse as

- Botswana
- Armenia
- Brunei Darussalam
- Panama
- The Vatican
- United Arab Emirates
- Turks & Caicos Islands
Small States Distinctive Characteristics

- Remoteness / Isolation
- Islandness w/ 51 Small Island Developing States (SIDS)
  - Climate Change and Rising Sea Level Concerns
- Limited Human and Natural Resources
  - ‘Managed Intimacy’
Education Research in Small Sts

• The Importance of Context in Educational Development and Reform

• Previous Work in Small States
  • 1960/70’s Origins in politics/economics
  • 1980’s Education emerged as a research area
    • Bacchus & Brock (1987)
    • Bray et al (1991)
  • 1999 Crossley & Holmes review of education in Commonwealth Small States
Origins & Nature of the 2009-2011 Research Project

- 2009 Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

- Building upon the 1999 Crossley & Holmes Review
Origins & Nature of the 2009-2011 Research Project

• Research Methodology included:
  • Literature reviews and updates
  • Face to face discussions with Ministers at CCEM
  • Field visits to Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Surinam, Solomon Islands and others
  • In depth qualitative interviews with small states stakeholders
  • Use of internet databases & parallel statistical research (Packer & Aggio 2010)
  • Focus group discussions with IIEP/ATP participants
  • Participation in the 2009 UNESCO/IIEP Policy Forum

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Key Findings 1: The Big Picture

- Previous conceptual and theoretical work on education in small states sponsored by the Commonwealth Secretariat remains pertinent for new generations of policy makers and planners.

- Contemporary planning and development priorities are especially concerned with how small states can respond to major external shocks and challenges within the environmental, economic, cultural and political domains.

- Climate change is particularly troubling for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), being at the sharp end of threats to land and sea resources associated with rising sea levels. Education is seen to have a central role to play in supporting Sustainable Development for SIDS. This includes contributing to the reduction of vulnerability, and to disaster preparedness, which needs to be included in educational planning and skills training across sectors.
Key Findings 2: EFA & MDG

Good News

- The Education For All targets and Millennium Development Goals remain relevant for small states, though their own pressing priorities often lie beyond those that currently command the attention of larger states and international development agencies.

- Commonwealth small states are relatively advanced in their progress towards basic education global goals and targets and small states have achieved almost universal access to basic education.

- Many small states have either achieved or are close to gender parity in primary and secondary schooling. In some, the disparity, especially at secondary level, lies in favour of girls.
Key Findings 3: Extending Boundaries

- Small states have been some of the first countries to shift educational priorities towards issues that focus upon school effectiveness, quality, inclusion, skills training and higher education. In doing so they have generated much insightful and valuable experience from which others within and beyond small states can learn.
- Increased flexibility in the direction of external support is necessary if the distinctive growth and development needs of small states are to be met.
- The rise of the knowledge economy underpins the current expansion and strengthening of higher education with related implications for improved coordination, the harnessing of ICT and quality assurance mechanisms.
Key Findings 4: Research and Partnerships

- The potential of locally grounded research to inform educational, social and economic policy and practice deserves increased recognition, as does the strengthening of research capacity within small states.

- National, regional and international partnerships and collaborations continue to hold much potential for the success of future development.

- Commonwealth agencies, including the Commonwealth Secretariat’s partnership with the World Bank, have a strategic role to play in supporting small states in meeting their distinctive needs and realizing their contemporary priorities.
Key Findings 5: International Support

• Priority needs to be given to the generation of appropriate financial and human resources, to cross-sectoral coordination, and to strengthened focus; in line with input and feedback from well grounded stakeholder groups within small states, including those involved in relevant research.

• International support for education in small states remains strategically important if existing achievements are to be consolidated and sustained in ways that promote growth and development.
Broader Implications of the Study

- Small States have **distinctive** needs and priorities that differ from dominant global, international agendas and targets.

- The Small States’ experience demonstrates the need for development agencies and researchers to pay increased attention to the importance of context.
Learning from Small States

• There is much that the international development community can learn from the experience of Small States

• ‘While [small states] must continue to seek external assistance to implement their development strategies, they know best what their own needs are and what their priorities should be. They have much to contribute to the international discourse and to policy deliberations worldwide.’

• Implications for the Post 2015 Education and Development Framework

Dame Pearlette Louisy, Governor-General, St Lucia

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References