

Challenges Old and New

Education in the Small States of the Commonwealth

Educational Policies and Priorities in Small States
University of Bristol 25 October, 2010

Four Topics

1. **The Small States of the Commonwealth**
2. **Education – The Challenge of Scale**
3. **New Challenges in an Uncertain World**
4. **Small States – A Meaningful Paradigm?**

1 The Small States of the Commonwealth

The classification and ranking of states:

- The Human Development Index (HDI)
- The World Development Indicators – by income
- “Fragile” or “failed states”
- The Corruption Perceptions Index
- The Education Development Index (EDI)
- The Deprivation and Marginalisation Data Set (EFA GMR)

These classifications and rankings:

- Help to measure results and progress (or otherwise) over time against measurable indicators
- Highlight perceived inadequacies and injustices, notably around issues of governance
- Facilitate thinking about how best to assist countries in particular circumstances
- They are in some respects judgmental – externally defined and applied

Some classifications are more neutral:

- Reflecting the realities of climate, geography, and population
- Small states represent one such grouping; one that has gained currency in the Commonwealth, the World Bank and parts of the UN
- And in some measure in academia
- But because “vulnerability”, “dependency” and “fragility” are sometimes associated with small states –the term is not always free of judgemental labelling

Numerically:

- Population is the primary index
- 120 states have fewer than 5 million people (2008)
- 80 are fully sovereign states; 40 are dependent or associated states
- 87 (of 120) have fewer than 1.5 million people; a cut off point for the work of the W. Bank and the Commonwealth (with qualifications)
- 25 fully independent member states of the Commonwealth (out of 54) have populations below 1.5 million

Region	Population < 1.5 million	Population, 1.5 – 5 million
Africa	Cape Verde; Equatorial Guinea; Gabon; São Tomé & Príncipe; <u>Swaziland</u>	<u>Botswana</u> ; Central African Republic; Congo (Republic of); Eritrea; <u>The Gambia</u> ; Guinea Bissau; <u>Lesotho</u> ; Liberia; <u>Namibia</u>
Americas	French Guiana (FRORD); Suriname	Costa Rica; Panama; Uruguay
Arab States	Bahrain; Djibouti ; Qatar	Lebanon; Mauritania; Oman; United Arab Emirates; West Bank and Gaza
Atlantic	Bermuda (BROT); Falkland Islands (BROT); Faroe Islands (DENSG); Greenland (DENSG); Iceland; St Helena (BROT); St Pierre & Miquelon (FRTC)	
Asia	Bhutan; <u>Brunei Darussalam</u> ; Macao–China (SAR); Timor Leste	Georgia; Mongolia, <u>Singapore</u>

**States by Size of Population (a)
(2008 data)**

Caribbean	Anguilla (BROT); <u>Antigua & Barbuda</u> ; Aruba (NETHFA) <u>The Bahamas</u> ; <u>Barbados</u> ; <u>Belize</u> ; British Virgin Islands (BROT); Cayman Islands (BROT); <u>Dominica</u> ; <u>Grenada</u> ; Guadeloupe (FRORD); <u>Guyana</u> ; Martinique (FRORD); Montserrat (BROT); Netherlands Antilles (NETHFA); St Barthelemy (FROC); <u>St Kitts & Nevis</u> ; <u>St Lucia</u> ; St Martin (FROC); <u>St Vincent & the Grenadines</u> ; <u>Trinidad & Tobago</u> ; Turks & Caicos (BROT); US Virgin Islands (UST)	<u>Jamaica</u> ; Puerto Rico (SGUT)
Europe	Andorra; <u>Cyprus</u> ; Estonia; Gibraltar (BROT); Guernsey (UKCD); Isle of Man (UKCD); Jersey (UKCD); Liechtenstein; Luxembourg; <u>Malta</u> ; Monaco; Montenegro; San Marino; The Vatican	Albania; Armenia; Bosnia & Herzegovina; Croatia; Ireland; Latvia; Lithuania; Macedonia FYR; Moldova; Norway; Slovenia
Indian Ocean	Christmas Island (AUST); Cocos Islands (AUST) ; Comoros ; Mayotte (FROC) ; <u>Maldives</u> ; <u>Mauritius</u> ; Réunion (FRORD) ; <u>Seychelles</u>	
Pacific	American Samoa (UST); Cook Islands (SGNZ); Federated States of Micronesia; Fiji Islands; French Polynesia; Guam (SGUT); <u>Kiribati</u> ; Marshall Islands; <u>Nauru</u> ; New Caledonia (FRORD); Niue (SGNZ); Norfolk Island (AUST); Northern Marianas (SGCUS); Palau; <u>Samoa</u> ; <u>Solomon Islands</u> ; Tokelau (NZSAT); <u>Tonga</u> ; <u>Tuvalu</u> ; <u>Vanuatu</u> ; Wallis & Futuna (FROC)	<u>New Zealand</u>

States by Size of Population (b) (2008 data)

	Very High HDI 0.900 and above	High HDI 0.800 - 0.899	Medium HDI 0.500-0.799	Low HDI below 0.500
High Income >US\$11,906 GNI per capita	Barbados Brunei Darussalam Cyprus Malta	Antigua & Barbuda The Bahamas Trinidad & Tobago		
Upper Middle Income US\$3,856 - 11,905 GNI per capita		Dominica Grenada Mauritius St Kitts & Nevis St Lucia Seychelles	Belize Botswana Dominica Grenada Jamaica Namibia St Vincent & the Grenadines	
Lower Middle Income US\$976 - 3855 GNI per capita			Guyana Lesotho Maldives Papua New Guinea Samoa Solomon Islands Swaziland Tonga	
Low Income <US\$975 GNI per capita			Lesotho Vanuatu	
				The Gambia

**Sovereign Commonwealth States:
Income and Human Development
(<5 million people: 2008 data)**

“Islandness”

- Small states have a high degree of “islandness”
- 15 small states in the Commonwealth are multi-island states; nine are single island states
- *Mauritius Strategy for Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (2005–2015)*
- *Alliance of Small Island States – Declaration on Climate Change*
- UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States
- Three Commonwealth small states in Southern Africa are landlocked

2. Education – The Challenge of Scale

- The higher up the system the more difficult it is to provide specialist provision and expertise
- Unit costs (although data are scarce) are relatively high
- For 19 Commonwealth states 7.1% of GNP is devoted to education (the global average 4.9%)
- Systems are “extended” beyond national borders (regional universities; exam councils; assessment boards; scholarship programmes)

Systemic challenges

- **What price a national curriculum?**
- **Beyond formal schooling**
- **Serving outer islands**
- **The multifunctional administrator**
- **Managing external relationships; financing regional bodies**
- **Developing and sustaining policy, planning and organisation and management skills**
- **Managing aid and technical assistance**
- **Maximising the strengths of “smallness”**

3 New Challenges in an Uncertain World

- **Small states are vulnerable in terms of their openness and their levels of dependence**
- **Small states face a susceptibility to risks and threats set at a relatively lower threshold than for larger states**
- **Small size gives states less margin for coping than larger states**

These vulnerabilities and their educational implications are heightened by:

- **Climate Change**
- **Global Financial Recession**
- **The Impact of Globalisation on Skills and Migration**

Climate Change

One recent study (AOSIS/UN) highlights:

- Threats to infrastructure, settlements and facilities from inundation, storm surge, and erosion
- Compromised water resources
- Threats to marine based resources (reefs/fisheries)
- Adverse effects on subsistence and commercial agriculture
- Largely negative effects on tourism
- Potentially negative effects on health

The challenge for education:

- Education has figured relatively little in the definition of strategies to combat climate change
- But education facilities and activities are threatened
- And the higher order knowledge and the skills required to combat climate change are weak
- How can education lessen the heightened vulnerability of climate change?
- States may draw on disaster management know how

But more is needed

- Teaching, learning, training and public awareness programmes need constant review and re-orientation to address the causes and consequences of climate change
- Positive, participatory action and solution-centred approaches to education and learning need to be developed
- Disaster preparedness, response and recovery need to be built into education planning and programme strategies

Global Financial Recession

- Growing but not conclusive evidence of the impact of the global recession on education
- *A disproportionate impact of the global economic crisis on small states ...CHOGM 2009*
- Pacific: falls in commodity prices, a decline in tourist receipts, reductions in income from trust and sovereign wealth funds and potential reductions in levels of foreign aid threaten levels of government income for public services
- Past economic crises suggest compromises in education are likely to be a common coping strategy ... in some countries children removed from school due to declining household finances (UNICEF/ODI)

Globalisation, Skills and Migration

- The migration of skills from small states is not new but it is intensifying
- The emigration of skilled labour from small states (1.5 million) has been estimated as six times higher than for developing countries as a whole
- 32 among every 100 graduates live outside of their own small states home

But it is a complex equation

- **Remittances from migrants are the most important source of foreign exchange in some small states**
- **Migration can increase rates of return from investment in higher education with the likelihood of higher salaries abroad**
- **Small states lose the capacity to use new technologies**
- **The loss of productivity growth is three times higher in small states than in other countries (Schiff and Wang 2009)**

At the same time:

- **There are significant problems in domestic labour markets**
- **In the Caribbean there is a shortage of skills to meet emerging employment needs yet there is a large cohort of underemployed and unemployed young people**
- **The balance of the labour market is highly sensitive. In highly specialised areas needs can be met by one or two individuals – less is a severe deficit – more is a problematic surplus**
- **A central research, policy and planning challenge**

4 Small States – A Meaningful Paradigm?

- Attention to education in small states at the global level is relatively limited (Commonwealth, IIEP). Why is this?
- Much of the learning about improving education systems comes from regional cooperation e.g. PRIDE in the Pacific
- And through issue specific initiatives – such as distance learning (CoL)
- Given the global challenges pressing in on small states interest may be re-ignited in safeguarding and advancing education and basic public service provision in small states