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'Higher Education in Small States: Opportunities and Challenges'

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A growing body of literature shows that small states are not simply scaled-down versions of larger states. They have ecologies of their own, with both opportunities and challenges that arise from their small size. The 'small-states lens' indicates some commonalities despite diversity:

- Small states *are* states, rather than just provinces or suburbs in larger countries.
- But statehood exists in a context of dependency, and with limited human resources.
- Small states have distinctive social features. People have close interpersonal connections, and personnel must be multifunctional.
- Institutions may lack economies of scale, and they face tensions of national, regional and international.

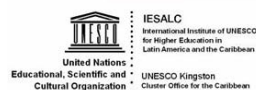
This leads to a mix of opportunities and challenges.

The contemporary era has brought changing contexts. They include the forces of globalisation, the opportunities of technology, changing trade regimes, and economic crisis and volatility. Demand for higher education has expanded because of expansion of primary and secondary education.

For higher education, this leads to demand for national universities. The policy and planning questions are then what should be done nationally, regionally and through external institutions. Related questions concern the role of research, and the arrangements for off-shore institutions.

Strategies for gaining economies of scale include multilevel institutions, multi-faceted institutions, international recruitment, regional cooperation, and distance education. Small states are traditionally open to cross-border provision, which brings further opportunities and challenges. As systems expand and inter-linkages increase, some system of accreditation and credit equivalence becomes necessary. This can create further demands on small states, because these systems require qualified personnel for negotiation. However, much can be learned from comparison, both within the Caribbean and from other parts of the world which have many small states. The South Pacific has particular relevance, and further lessons can be learned from Asia, Africa and Europe.

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Further Reading

- Baldacchino, G. & Farrugia, C.J. (eds.) (2002): *Educational Planning and Management in Small States: Concepts and Experiences*. London: The Commonwealth Secretariat.
- Bray, M. & Packer, S. (1993): *Education in Small States: Concepts, Challenges and Strategies*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Crossley, Michael; Bray, Mark & Packer, Steve (2009): 'Education in the Small States of the Commonwealth: Towards and Beyond Global Goals and Targets', *The Round Table*, Vol.98, No.405, pp.731-751.
- Martin, M. & Bray, M. (2009): 'Tertiary education in small states: Development trends and policy implications'. Paris: UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP). See www.iiep.unesco.org

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