

Graduate School of Education/CEC Day Conference Attracts Capacity International Audience

A recent day conference on the theme of Educational Policies and Priorities in Commonwealth Small States brought together key figures from the field of Comparative and International Education with Commonwealth agency personnel, government representatives, guests of honour, 20 Commonwealth scholarship holders and post-graduate students from across the United Kingdom. Delegates responded to the presentation of initial findings from a Commonwealth Secretariat funded research project led by Professor Michael Crossley, Director of the Education in Small States Research Group in the University of Bristol's Graduate School of Education (GSoE). The study has been carried out in collaboration with Professor Mark Bray and UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) in Paris.

The conference, jointly organised by the Research Centre for International and Comparative Studies (ICS) and the Council for Education in the Commonwealth (CEC), drew a large and enthusiastic international audience, including His Excellency, Dr. Sione Ngongo Kioa, High Commissioner for Tonga; His Excellency, Mr. George M. Liswaniso, High Commissioner for Namibia; Mr. S. Sonata Tupou, First Secretary for Tonga; Mr. Charles M. Kabajani, Under Secretary for Formal Education, Namibia; and Mrs. Morina Muuondjo, First Secretary for Namibia.

Professor Judith Squires, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law, opened the day with a warm welcome to the University and the Graduate School of Education. Valerie Davey, Executive Chair of the CEC, chaired the event. Mrs. Florence Malinga, Education Specialist at the Commonwealth Secretariat helped to set the scene with an overview of the work being done by the Commonwealth Secretariat on education in small states. Thanks go to the Commonwealth Secretariat for encouraging and supporting the research.

Three of the research team, Professor Michael Crossley, Steve Packer and Terra Sprague, presented initial findings from the Commonwealth Secretariat commissioned research. In doing so, they addressed the unique challenges faced by Commonwealth Small States - drawing attention to changing global contexts, including climate change, the global economic situation, and the impact of information and communication technologies (ICT). Implications were then explored for educational policies and priorities in basic and higher education, and for future international collaboration and research.

Panellists from four small states/territories, including government figureheads and practitioners, responded with considerable insight and candour about what this research means for their contexts. This provoked perceptive contributions and questions from the audience. The day also celebrated the Commonwealth decadal anniversaries of four small states: Namibia, Tonga, Samoa and Vanuatu.

In 2009, preliminary research findings from this study were presented to Ministers of Education at the 17th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CEM) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and the full research report, titled Educational Policies and Priorities in Commonwealth Small States, will be published in book form by the Commonwealth Secretariat later this year.



25 October 2010: Education in Commonwealth Small States Day Conference. Lead Delegates at the Berkeley Conference Suite, University of Bristol, Graduate School of Education

Pictured LtoR: Mr. S. Sonata Tupou, First Secretary Tonga; H.E. Dr. Sione Ngongo Kioa, High Commissioner Tonga; Mr. Steve Packer, Researcher; Professor Richard Mawditt, CEC Officer; Professor Michael Crossley, Research Team Leader; Professor Judith Squires, Faculty Dean; Morina Muuondjo, First Secretary Namibia; Mr. Charles M. Kabajani, Under Secretary Namibia, H.E. Mr. George M. Liswaniso, High Commissioner Namibia; Valerie Davey, Executive Chair CEC; Terra Sprague, Researcher