

# **Commonwealth Education Partnerships**

2015/16

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# Commonwealth Education Partnerships 2015/16

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# Minister's welcome

## Jerome Fitzgerald, Minister of Education, Science and Technology, The Bahamas

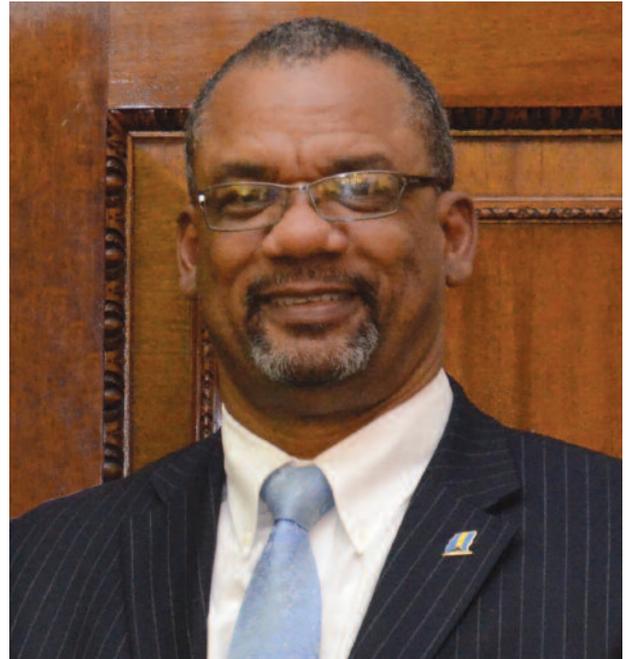
Colleagues,

The world stands at a crossroad, where the past and present will intersect with the future as we chart the way forward for generations to come. The 19th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (19CCEM) is positioned at a climacteric point in time as the Commonwealth seeks to ensure quality education for all its citizens. In some regard, this serves as our moment of truth; indeed, our moment in time when we as countries in the Commonwealth take an honest and objective look at our respective educational systems to determine whether or not we are successful in the delivery of quality education; quality education inasmuch that facilitates performance, paths and productivity which positions our students ahead of the curve.

Just a month prior to 19CCEM, I will have travelled to the Republic of Korea to participate in the World Education Forum 2015. One of the key objectives of this conference is for national governments to agree on a joint position for the education goals and targets in the post-2015 development agenda. This will be adopted by UN member states at a summit in September 2015. I also wish to highlight the fact that three months after this conference, national governments will gather in New York to strategise the new Sustainable Development Goals, which will chart the course for 2015 and beyond. For the past 15 years, emphasis has been placed on access; ensuring that opportunities were created for formal schooling. Today, there is a concerted effort to give greater attention to equity and quality, as these continue to be priority concerns. Additionally, there appears to be an emerging focus that gives attention to harnessing the development of essential life skills necessary for academic success as well as professional achievement.

What I have uncovered as Minister of Education, Science and Technology in the Commonwealth of The Bahamas is that we can no longer operate in a vacuum. Education requires the involvement of various stakeholders to achieve the positive and desired outcomes. The Bahamas has identified this critical fact and is taking the necessary measures to engage as many of the relevant agencies as possible. We no longer operate from the standpoint of creating policies in the absence of representation of those that it impacts the most. Decision makers and policy drafters can no longer sit at the table and create documents without the input of those who live and personify education on a daily basis. Teachers, students, parents, employers and other relevant stakeholders must feel a sense of ownership if we are to obtain the buy-in necessary for significant educational transformation.

Colleagues, I am confident that the 19CCEM will shift the paradigm. A monumental feature of this conference is the deliberate incorporation of fostering cross-sector and cross-border



partnerships to broaden access to quality education. Now, more than ever, this necessitates an alliance between all concerned parties to safeguard the initiatives that will improve our delivery of education. It is a moment of great pride to be able to set the stage for deeper engagement and enhanced dialogue. What we have accomplished is a first and we are elated to bring this added feature to this year's conference. The multi-stakeholder interactions, as a part of the formal programme, will heighten the dialogue between key players in education.

An unprecedented impetus of the 19CCEM is the involvement of the private sector. For the first time in the conference's history, the ministerial meeting will avail itself to input from some of the major players in private education delivery for educational publishing and technology. As I mentioned earlier, in our effort to do away with the insular approach, ministers will have the opportunity to share first-hand their challenges and priorities. Consequently, this will allow the ministers to be informed of the private sector solutions presently in the pipelines.

Unequivocally, this conference is paramount to the future of education for the Commonwealth and, by extension, the world. We cannot underestimate the power that we possess to bring about the changes needed to advance our students, our education systems and our countries. It is an honour to be the host minister of the 19CCEM and to welcome the education ministers of the Commonwealth to The Bahamas.



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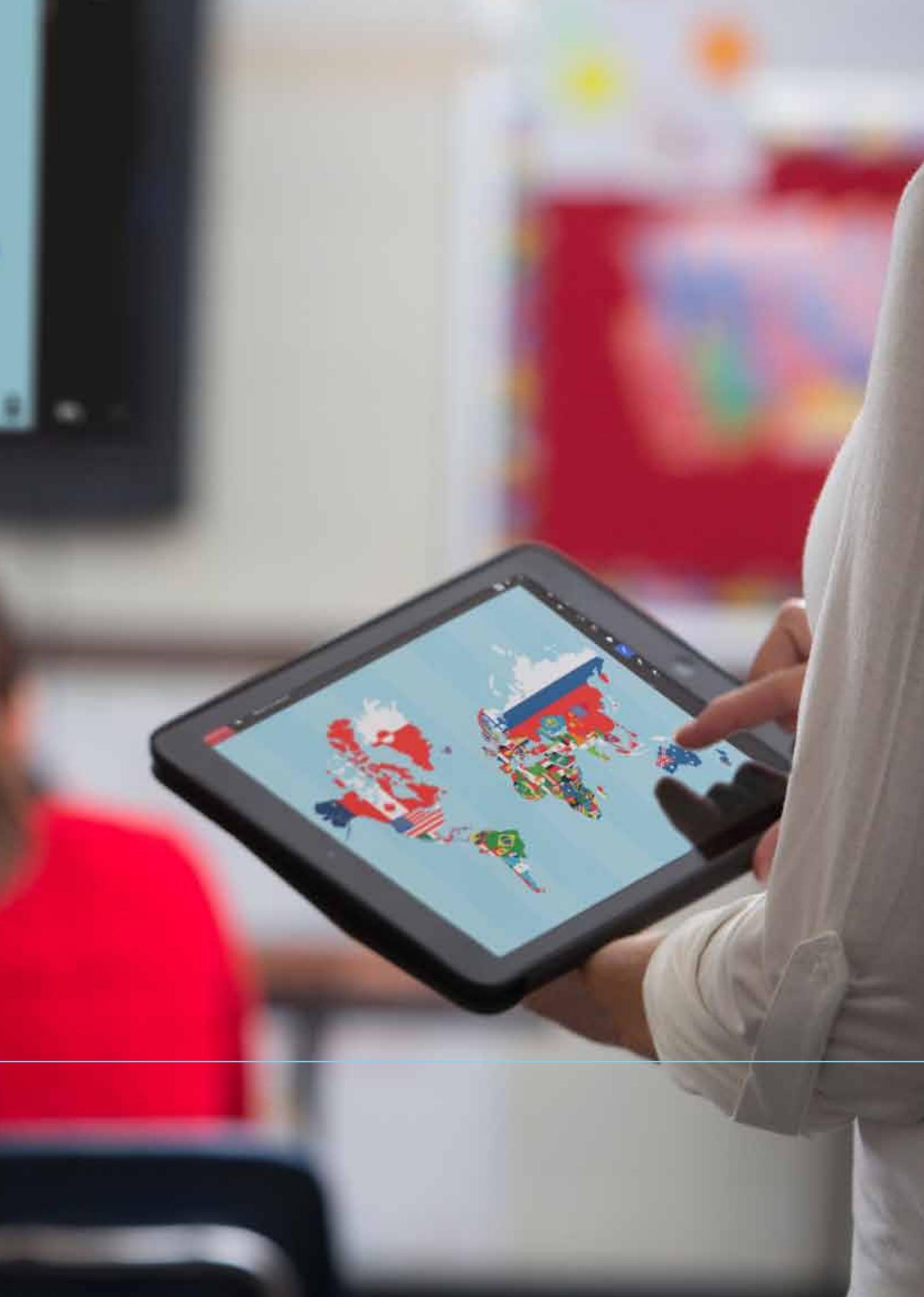
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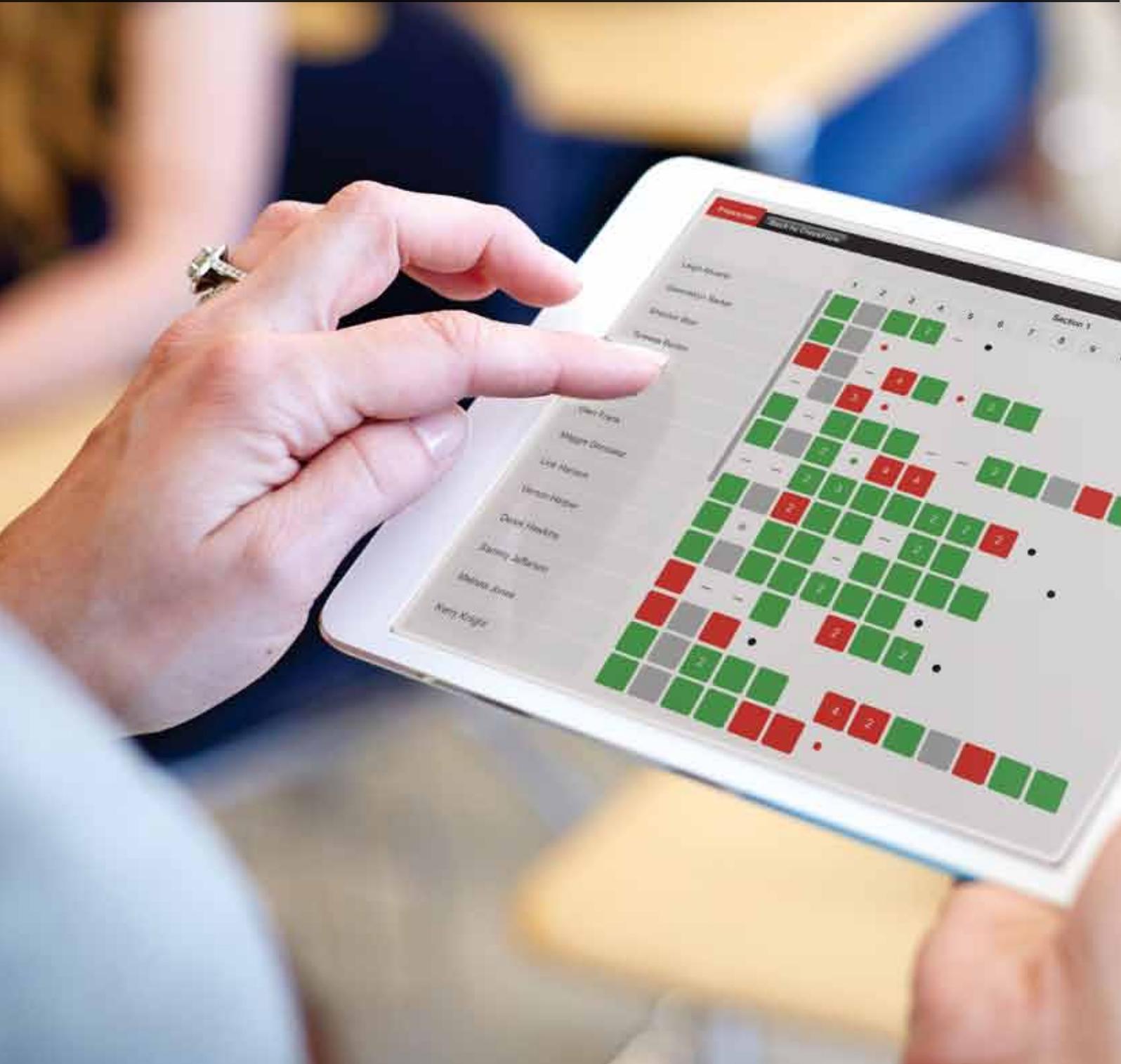
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# Foreword

## Commonwealth Secretary-General Kamallesh Sharma

Education, always among the highest priorities for the Commonwealth and its citizens, takes on an even greater prominence this year with the 19th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (19CCEM) taking place in The Bahamas, and returning to the Caribbean for the first time in 25 years. This triennial conference is the largest of all our Commonwealth ministerial gatherings, and the most diverse in what it offers. The theme for this year's conference is 'Quality Education for Equitable Development: Performance, Paths and Productivity'. Included among the wide range of issues that will be addressed by ministers are financing for education, ICT-based learning, curricula, teacher training and programmes that lead to gainful employment, and social and economic development.

*Commonwealth Education Partnerships* is published annually and renders a valuable service by presenting an overview of the broad range of Commonwealth activity and engagement in the sphere of education, and thereby helping to maintain a well-informed sense of networking and connection between meetings. The word 'partnerships' in the title conveys the fact that educational co-operation in the Commonwealth is increasingly carried forward collaboratively by a range of partners, particularly by Commonwealth-accredited organisations.

In this respect, 2015 heralds even more dynamically connected possibilities for educational partnerships in the Commonwealth. Our new digital platform, the Commonwealth Education Hub, is to be launched at 19CCEM. It offers opportunities for online digital interaction in real time, and greatly facilitates access to peer-reviewed educational resources and expert support. This makes it far easier for teaching professionals, policy makers, administrators and other stakeholders in education to draw on the vast Commonwealth reservoir of wisdom and knowledge, and to develop new approaches collaboratively with peers and colleagues. We trust that this will develop into a great Commonwealth resource, as no social advance is possible without education, particularly in serving the burgeoning young in the Commonwealth.



Both the Commonwealth Education Hub and *Commonwealth Education Partnerships* – which is published digitally, as well as in print – show practical application of the recognition given in our Commonwealth Charter to 'the importance of information and communication technologies as powerful instruments of development; delivering savings, efficiencies and growth in our economies, as well as promoting education, learning and the sharing of culture'.

# Overview

## Joanna Nurse, Director, Health and Education Section, Commonwealth Secretariat

*Commonwealth Education Partnerships 2015/16*, which is to be launched at the 19th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (19CCEM) in The Bahamas, has been written at a key moment in the history of human development. The CCEM is held every three years, with the 18th conference having been held in Mauritius in 2012. The 19th conference will be held in June 2015, a month after the World Education Forum in Incheon, Republic of Korea and three months before the United Nations' conference on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will be held in New York, USA, in September.

The World Education Forum, initiated by UNESCO in conjunction with six co-convening agencies, is a sequel to the World Education Forum that was held in Dakar, Senegal, in 2000. That event revisited the Education for All (EFA) agenda that had been agreed upon in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, and established six major goals with a target date of 2015. These goals were dovetailed with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set by the United Nations in 2000, which also had a target date of 2015 and which will be revisited at the SDGs conference in New York.

Commonwealth countries have been firmly committed to the EFA goals and the associated MDGs. At 16CCEM, which took place in 2006 in Cape Town, South Africa, the Commonwealth Secretariat

was directed to provide regular reports of Commonwealth progress towards the goals and to give priority to member countries that emerged as being at risk of not meeting them. Following on from this, 17CCEM, held in 2009 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, was explicitly focused on the goals, as was 18CCEM. This year's 19CCEM in The Bahamas will carry forward the decisions made at the World Education Forum and prepare the way for the conference on SDGs in September 2015 – 19CCEM will also look ahead to the implementation of the goals with the target date of 2030 through a process that will be agreed by ministers.

Taking these key issues into account, the theme of the 19CCEM in The Bahamas was agreed upon as 'Quality Education for Equitable Development: Performance, Paths and Productivity – The 3 Ps'. The theme was felt to be truly relevant to all Commonwealth countries – rich and poor, large and small. All countries face challenges of quality and equity, albeit manifested in different ways, to fit different cultures and stages of development.

*Commonwealth Education Partnerships 2015/16* examines the different elements of the conference theme – along with other topical issues in education – with chapters dedicated to quality, equity, higher education, literacy and pathways to employment. These valuable contributions have been written by key researchers,



academics, journalists, NGOs and other leading commentators in the field of international education. In-depth research and case studies help to give a snapshot of the educational achievements of Commonwealth countries and regions for different age groups, as well as illuminating some of the barriers to progress.

In Chapter One, *Quality education for equitable development*, Trey Menefee and Mark Bray look at the meanings of 'quality' and 'equity' in an educational context (pp. 27–29) while Fatimah Kelleher examines the role of education in women's economic empowerment in Chapter Two, *Access, inclusion and equality* (pp. 66–70). In Chapter Three, *Performance in higher education*, John Kirkland looks at what the Commonwealth's role should be in education (pp. 90–92), while in Chapter Four, *Vocational and transnational paths*, Tim Unwin asks how high educational standards can be maintained in universities, as higher education seeks to keep up with demands for changing models of delivery in the 21st century (pp. 125–128). Chapter Five, *Literacy and the study of literature* (pp. 136–158), looks at the importance of reading, and its contribution to both personal development and the development of nations, right through from early primary school to post-graduate level.

Other themes that have emerged in this year's book are the relationship between the state and non-state education providers, the benefits of vocational training, the increasing demand for higher education in developing countries, different approaches to reducing the number of out-of-school children and the impact of transnational education.

The country profiles towards the back of the book give an outline of the education systems, policies and aspirations of each of the 53 member countries, with key data to measure progress against the Millennium Development Goals and other benchmarks. Reference tables at the back of the book allow country comparisons for enrolment rates, ratios of males to females in education among different age groups and rates of illiteracy.

As the international community looks ahead to the new targets for 2030, it must be aware that some earlier targets remain unmet. This situation demands continuing efforts to achieve the earlier goals as well as to meet the new targets.

In years to come, patterns in 2015 will be seen as a benchmark for monitoring progress in the same way that 2000 was a benchmark and, before it, 1990. *Commonwealth Education Partnerships 2015/16* is thus valuable, both for taking stock and for looking forward.