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## Is 'Small' Always Small and 'Big' Always Big? Re-Reading Educational Developments in Small (and Micro) States

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**IS 'SMALL' ALWAYS SMALL AND 'BIG' ALWAYS BIG? RE-READING EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SMALL (AND MICRO) STATES**

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This volume is concerned with a topic that has only relatively recently started to attract the attention it deserves: educational developments in small states. The volume is guided by the question (i) if and how small states deal with certain policy challenges to their education systems that research has identified as particularly important for their future development, and (ii) whether there is something like typical 'small state behavior' in educational matters. The volume seeks to contribute to a genuinely comparative approach to education in small states. Moreover, widening conventional definitions of smallness, it aims to advance research in the field not only in a thematic but also in a theoretical perspective. Overall, the volume seeks to expand our understanding of small states – and by implication of 'big' states as well –, especially regarding what is general and what is particular about their 'behavior.'

Small states do not always fit into the cookie-cutter models of global development targets, benchmarks, and agendas, such as Jomtien and Dakar.

International agendas are frequently too reductionist and unspecific to match the particular situation of individual states, particularly the situation of many small states. Educational research on small states often contributes to this unsatisfying condition as it frequently focuses on a “vulnerability paradigm”<sup>1</sup> that views small states largely from the perspective of economic, geographic, climatic, and other ‘weaknesses.’ Consequently, small states have traditionally been viewed as passive recipients<sup>2</sup> rather than as drivers, e.g. in educational transfer processes.<sup>3</sup> However, this view does not do justice to the wide variety of small states. It often produces glossy policy recommendations – “development and diplomatic assistance in response to ‘special needs’ of small states” –<sup>4</sup> that often do not even properly identify what these special needs are.

We argue that more systematic, theory-driven comparisons are needed not only (i) between individual small states but also (ii) between small and big states, i.e. states whose population is above the Commonwealth definition, and (ii) within small and big states. In this context, we argue, small states research should see the considerable variety of definitions of small states available, which is sometimes seen as a handicap, as an opportunity and use it much more consciously than in the past. Moreover, small states research should also include alternative definitions of smallness (e.g. definitions that include ‘soft’ criteria, such as collective self-perceptions, external attributions, and others – regardless of the actual size of a state) and further theorize some of the recurrent key concepts, such as vulnerability or strength.

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- 1 Lino Briguglio, “Small Island Developing States and Their Economic Vulnerabilities”, in: *World Development* 23 (1995) 9, pp. 1615-1632.
  - 2 Colin Brock & Michael Crossley, “Revisiting Scale, Comparative Research and Education in Small States”, in: *Comparative Education* 49 (2013) 3, pp. 1-16; Michael Crossley, “The Advancement of Educational Research in Small States”, in: *Comparative Education* 44 (2008) 2, pp. 247-254.
  - 3 Phillip W. Jones, “Taking the Credit: Financing and Policy Linkages in the Education Portfolio of the World Bank”, in: *The Global Politics of Educational Borrowing and Lending*, ed. by Gita Steiner-Khamsi, (New York: Teachers College Press, 2004), pp. 188-200.
  - 4 Godfrey Baldacchino & Geoffrey Bertram, “The Beak of the Finch: Insights into the Economic Development of Small Economies”, in: *The Round Table* 98 (2009) 401, pp. 141-160.

In what follows, we discuss some important implications of such an approach, as this may help agents in different spheres (national, international, regional, trans-regional, global etc.) to better understand the situation of individual small states. In doing so, we first revisit the existing small states research. Here, we identify two important stages, classifying the existent scholarship into ‘first’ and ‘second generation studies.’ This classification echoes Baldacchino who states that “it is high time to stop trying to fit the square practices of small island territories into the round holes of conventional wisdom.”<sup>5</sup> On this basis, we present an outline of the subsequent chapters, particularly regarding their place in the ‘research landscape’ as well as their contribution to new approaches to small states research. Starting from this introduction and the subsequent chapters, we present an outline of what we perceive as important research desiderata for the post-2015 period in the concluding chapter of this volume.

### **SMALL STATES RESEARCH RE-VISITED**

Small states are usually defined by formal criteria, such as size, population, economic capacity, geographic propensity, autonomous jurisdiction, and ecology. Speaking of small states, scholars frequently use different concepts interchangeably: small states, microstates, small open economies, small islands developing states (SIDS), and others.<sup>6</sup> As Figure 1 shows, many small states can also be considered SIDS, and so can many microstates.

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5 Godfrey Baldacchino, “The Challenge of Hypothermia: A Six-Proposition Manifesto for Small Island Territories”, in: *The Round Table* 89 (2000) 353, pp. 65-79, in particular p. 69.

6 Commonwealth Advisory Group, *A Future for Small States: Overcoming Vulnerability* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1997); Commonwealth Consultative Group, *Vulnerability: Small States in the Global Society* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1985); Commonwealth Secretariat/World Bank Task Force, *Small States: Meeting Challenges in the Global Economy* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 2000). Retrieved from: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/PROJECTS/Resources/meetingchallengeinglobal economy.pdf>; Harvey W. Armstrong, Ronan Jouan de Kervenoael, Xinshan Li & Robert Read, “A Comparison of the Economic Performance of Different Micro-States, and Between Micro-states and Larger Countries”, in: *World Development* 26 (1998) 4, pp.

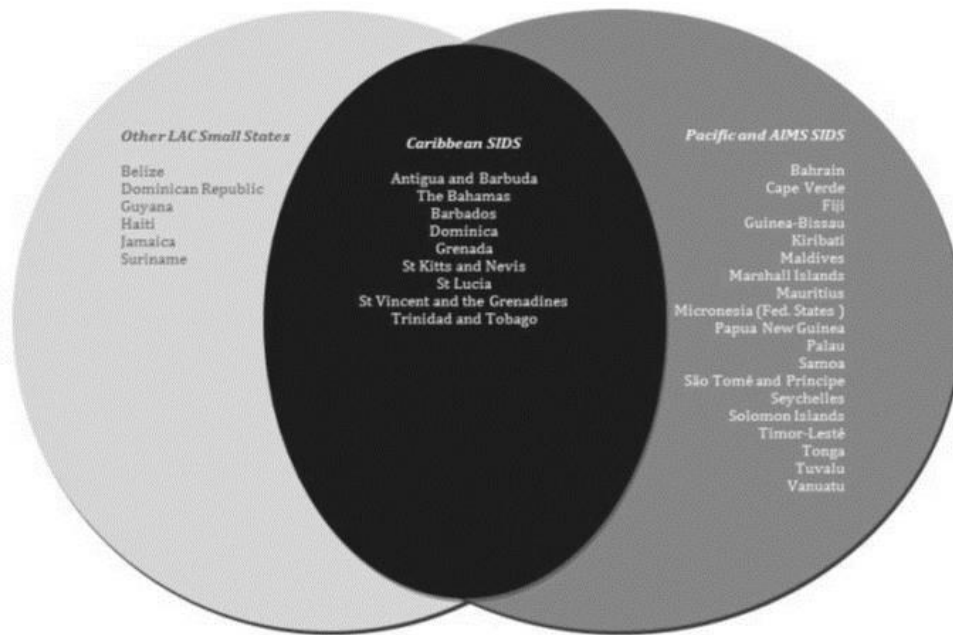


Figure 1: *Small Island Developing States*<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, speaking of small states, scholars often refer to a definition that has been derived ‘for’ and ‘by’ the Commonwealth States under the banner of the London

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639-656; Robert Read, “The Implications of Increasing Globalization and Regionalism for the Economic Growth of Small Island States”, in *World Development* 32 (2004) 2, pp. 365-378.

7 Adapted from Asha Williams, Timothy Cheston, Aline Coudouel & Ludovic Subran, “Tailoring Social Protection to Small Island Developing States: Lessons Learned from the Caribbean”, in: *Social Protection and Labor* (District of Columbia: The World Bank, 2013) 1306, pp. 1-72, in particular p. 8.

Declaration,<sup>8</sup> which established that all member states are “free and equally associated.” The vulnerability thesis, i.e. the notion that small states are “special cases” for protection that is already implied there, dates to the ‘intervention’ or ‘invasion’ (depending on who is speaking) of Grenada in 1983 and eventually became associated with small states at the international level. For example, the notion of SIDS was highlighted under Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (referred to as the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) in 1992:

Small Island Developing States, and islands supporting small communities are a special case both for environment and development. They are ecologically fragile and vulnerable. Their small size, limited resources, geographic dispersion and isolation from markets, place them at a disadvantage economically and prevent economies of scale.<sup>9</sup>

The literature on smallness has been driven by the perception that – given the colonial heritage of many states that are usually counted as small – small states share a high degree of conformity. In fact, many small states that experienced colonization were able to piggyback upon their (former) colonial masters’ global networks and secure lucrative preferential treatment until the formation of the World Trade Organization and had distinctively open economies. However, while this may be true e.g. within the Commonwealth grouping, it does by far not apply to all states that can be considered small based on certain formal criteria like population size.

Looking into the history of small states research, one can identify two broad categories of studies, which we call ‘first generation studies’ and ‘second generation studies.’ These two generations are not to be seen strictly chronologically. Rather, we see this as a broad categorization of approaches that can be found in different works and at different times. ‘*First generation*’ or ‘*orthodoxy studies*’ were geared towards understanding the role and function of aspects such as population size, geography, and ecology.

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8 Commonwealth Secretariat, *The London Declaration* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1949).

9 UNCED, *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Agenda 21, Section II, Chapter 17, Section G* (1992). Retrieved from: [http://www.sidsnet.org/sites/default/files/resources/agenda\\_21\\_ch17-section\\_g.pdf](http://www.sidsnet.org/sites/default/files/resources/agenda_21_ch17-section_g.pdf).

These studies focused on the political and economic systems of small states, drawing attention to the “economics of size,”<sup>10</sup> population size,<sup>11</sup> and other factors to describe the vulnerability and fragility of small states.<sup>12</sup> It was the Commonwealth Consultative Group’s report “Vulnerability: Small States in the Global Society”<sup>13</sup> that led to the entry into the academic lexicon of the interchangeable concepts of small states, micro states, small open economies, and small island developing states (SIDS).<sup>14</sup> Subsequently, Bacchus’s and Brock’s seminal work “The Challenge of Scale: Educational Development in the Small States of the Commonwealth” looked at educational issues affecting small states.<sup>15</sup> Several studies sought to apply Bacchus and Brock’s<sup>16</sup> work to education.<sup>17</sup>

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- 10 William Demas, *The Economics of Development in Small Countries – with Special Reference to the Caribbean* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1965).
- 11 Simon Kuznets, “Population Change and Aggregate Output”, in: *Demographic and Economic Change in Developed Countries* (Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1960), pp. 324-351.
- 12 Lino Briguglio, “Small Island Developing States,” op. cit. (note 1), p. 1; Peter Bune, “Vulnerability of Small States: The Case of the South Pacific Region and Fiji”, in: *Courier* 104 (1987), pp. 85-87; Sir Frank Holmes, “Development Problems of Small Countries”, in: *Co-Operation and Development in the Asia Pacific Region: Relations between Large and Small Countries*, ed. by Leslie V. Castle & Sir Frank Holmes (Tokyo: Japan Economic Research Centre, 1976), pp. 43-66.
- 13 Commonwealth Consultative Group, *Vulnerability: Small States in the Global Society*. (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1985).
- 14 Armstrong, Jouan de Kervenoael, Li & Read, “A Comparison of the Economic Performance”, op. cit. (note 6); Commonwealth Advisory Group, *A Future for Small States*, op. cit. (note 6); Commonwealth Consultative Group, *Vulnerability*, op. cit. (note 6); Commonwealth Secretariat/World Bank Task Force, “Small States”, op. cit. (note 6); Read, “The Implications of Increasing Globalization”, op. cit. (note 6).
- 15 Mohammed Kazim Bacchus and Colin Brock, *The Challenge of Scale: Educational Development in the Small States of the Commonwealth* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1987).
- 16 Bacchus & Brock, “The Challenge of Scale”, op. cit. (note 15).
- 17 Mark Bray, *Education Planning in Small Countries* (Paris: UNESCO, 1992); Mark Bray and Steve Packer, *Education in Small States: Concepts, Challenges and Strategies* (Amsterdam: Elsevier Science and Technology Books, 1993).

Those studies identified ‘behavioral characteristics’ of smallness, such as “exaggerated personalism, limited resources, inadequate service delivery and donor dependence,”<sup>18</sup> and focused on aspects like the economic impediments of development in areas like South-South migration, the politics of education in small states,<sup>19</sup> the effects of indigenous knowledge and values upon the policy process,<sup>20</sup> research capacity,<sup>21</sup> financial and human capital limitations,<sup>22</sup> the impact of donor aid on local decisions,<sup>23</sup> adult education,<sup>24</sup> higher education financing,<sup>25</sup> co-operation and collaboration,<sup>26</sup> post-socialist transformation,<sup>27</sup> and others.

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- 18 Paul Sutton, “Caribbean Development: An Overview”, in: *New West Indian Guide/Nieuwe West-Indische Gid* 80 (2006) 1/2, pp. 45-62, in particular p. 13.
  - 19 Rudolph W. Grant, “Education in Small Jurisdictions, With Reference to the Commonwealth Caribbean”, in: *Compare* 231 (1993), pp. 25-35.
  - 20 Frank Holmes & Michael Crossley, “Whose Knowledge, Whose Values? The Contribution of Local Knowledge to Education Policy Processes: A Case Study of Research Development Initiatives in the Small State of Saint Lucia”, in: *Compare* 342 (2004), pp. 197-214.
  - 21 Crossley, “The Advancement of Educational Research”, op. cit. (note 2).
  - 22 Didacus Jules, “Adult Education Policy in Micro-States: The Case of the Caribbean”, in: *Policy Studies* 13 (1994) 3/4, pp. 415-432.
  - 23 Tavis D. Jules, “Power and Educational Development: Small States and the Labors of Sisyphus”, in: *Current Discourse on Education in Developing Nations: Essays in Honor of B. Robert Tanachnick and Robert Koehl*, ed. by Michael O. Afolayan, Dallas Browne & Didacus Jules (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2006), pp. 17-29; Tavis D. Jules, “Beyond Post-Socialist Conversions: Functional Cooperation and Trans-Regional Regimes in the Global South”, in: *Post-Socialism is Not Dead: Rereading the Global in Comparative Education*, ed. by Iveta Silova (Bingley: Emerald Publishing, 2010), pp. 401-426.
  - 24 Jules, “Power and Educational Development”, op. cit. (note 23).
  - 25 Godfrey Baldacchino & Charles Farrugia, *Educational Planning and Management in Small States: Concepts and Experiences* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 2002); Kofi K. Nkrumah-Young, Jeroen Huisman & Philip Powell, “The Impact of Funding Policies on Higher Education in Jamaica”, in: *Comparative Education* 44 (2008) 2, pp. 215-227.
  - 26 Tavis D. Jules, “Re/Thinking Harmonization in the Commonwealth Caribbean: Audiences, Actors, Interests, and Educational Policy Formation”, PhD. Diss. (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 2008); Tavis D. Jules, “Re-reading the Anamorphosis of Educational Fragility, Vulnerability, and Strength in Small States”, in: *Current Issues in Comparative Education* 15 (2012) 1, pp. 5-13.
  - 27 Tavis D. Jules, “Trans-Regional Regimes and Globalization in Education: Constructing the Neo-Caribbean Citizen”, in: *Globalizing Minds: Rhetoric and Realities in*



In essence, rather than focusing on the “specific consideration of the smallness and islandness features,”<sup>28</sup> many first generation studies started from the perceived weakness of many small states as well as the way these states seek to respond to both endogenous and exogenous external influences.

In contrast to that, ‘*second generation studies*’ pay more attention to the potential strengths of smallness, while at the same time recognizing the consequences of the fragilities and vulnerabilities that many small states possess as part of their inherited material baggage. Moreover, analyzing the self-projections of small states, particularly when this self-projection provides greater diplomatic leverage,<sup>29</sup> they do not pigeonhole their analysis to nominal concepts like population, size, geography, ecology, climate change, and environmental sustainability.

Second generation studies display some other features as well. *First*, they accept that there is no unified definition of small states in an interconnected world where large populations are no longer confined to particular spaces, topographies, and ecologies.<sup>30</sup> The central argument here is that the constant focus on definitional issues has led to a certain under-theorization of other factors of what it means to be small. We will return to this point below.

*Second*, there has been a growing recognition of the limitations of the vulnerability approach or “deficit discourse,”<sup>31</sup> a discourse that one-sidedly focuses on the perceived handicaps of small states and led to the development of the “economic vulnerability index,”<sup>32</sup> which measures small size, insularity and remoteness, proneness to natural disaster, environmental factors, and other characteristics, such as demography and external dependency.

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*International Schools*, ed. by Iveta Silova and Daphne P. Hobson (Chapel Hill: Information Age Publishing, 2014), pp. 247-276; Jules, “Beyond Post-socialist Conversions”, op. cit. (Note 23).

28 Baldacchino, “The Challenge of Hypothermia”, op. cit. (note 5).

29 Ibid.

30 Godfrey Baldacchino, “Governmentality is All the Rage: The Strategy Games of Small Jurisdictions”, in: *The Round Table* 101 (2012) 3, pp. 235-251; Tom Crowards, “Defining the Category of Small States”, in: *Journal of International Development* 14 (2002), pp. 143-179.

31 Godfrey Baldacchino, “Meeting the Tests of Time: Small States in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, in: *Current Issues in Comparative Education* 15 (2012) 1, pp. 14-25.

32 Briguglio, “Small Island Developing States”, op. cit. (note 1).

By contrast, second generation studies increasingly see smallness as a complementary category that is ebbed within “strategic flexibility,” which asserts that, given the ability of many small states to develop rapid responses to both the threats and the opportunities of rapidly changing global environments, it is quite possible that “small states thrive in the modern global order.”<sup>33</sup> Smallness is therefore not uncritically accepted anymore as an excuse for lack of economic development.<sup>34</sup> In other words, second generation studies dismiss the structural weakness that have catapulted many small states to be seen as being specialists in providing “niche-filling export strategy, flexible specialization, enhanced entrepreneurship and economic deregulation.”<sup>35</sup> Rather, they content that small states do not necessarily perform better or worse than big states just because they are small.<sup>36</sup>

*Third*, the second generation of small states studies also recognizes that the nature and the role of the nation-state is changing, especially in emerging and frontier markets, and that new hemispherical and regional players, such as custom unions, regional trade agreements and “trans-regional regimes,”<sup>37</sup> are becoming central players: “globalization fosters intra- and interregional co-operation as it redistributes the importance to regions.”<sup>38</sup> One important consequence of this is a shift from “inter-regionalism” – the relationship between two distinct, separate regions – to “trans-regionalism” – i.e. common “spaces” between and across regions that are shaped by constituent agents (e.g. individuals, communities, organizations).<sup>39</sup> This happens as trade relations move away from “old” or “closed regionalism,” which is

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33 Godfrey Baldacchino & Geoffrey Bertram, “The Beak of the Finch”, op. cit. (note 4), in particular p. 142.

34 Armstrong, Jouan de Kervenoael, Li & Read, “A Comparison of the Economic Performance”, op. cit. (note 6).

35 Briguglio, “Small Island Developing States”, op. cit. (note 1), in particular p. 1624.

36 Baldacchino, “The Challenge of Hypothermia”, op. cit. (note 5); Commonwealth Secretariat, *Overcoming Vulnerability: A Future for Small States* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1997).

37 Jules, “Re/thinking Harmonization”, op. cit. (note 26).

38 Michael Reiterer, “The New Regionalism and Regional Identity Building: A Lesson from the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM)”, in: *CHIR Conference on Regional Integration and Cooperation* (Tokyo: University of Foreign Studies, 2004), in particular p. 2.

39 Christopher M. Dent, “From Inter-Regionalism to Trans-Regionalism? Future Challenges for ASEM”, in: *Asia Europe Journal* 1 (2003) 2, pp. 223–235.

premised upon intra-regional and bilateral trade, to “new” or “open regionalism,” which advocates internationally competitive outward-oriented strategies,<sup>40</sup> reduces external import barriers,<sup>41</sup> decreases intra-regional transactional costs,<sup>42</sup> liberalizes intra-regional markets,<sup>43</sup> and restructures the public sector.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, to facilitate the growth of “new regionalism,” there is now a trend towards creating “formal mechanisms”<sup>45</sup> to deal with transactional costs. Transaction costs refer to all resources that are spent in negotiation efforts, including time, personnel, money, prestige, and even power, which is sometimes lost with bargaining concessions.<sup>46</sup> Overall, the regional level now has often the role of providing “coordination of funding, provision, and regulation of education”<sup>47</sup> through policy exchange at the multi-governance level.

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- 40 Mikio Kuwayama, *Open Regionalism in Asia Pacific and Latin America: A Survey of the Literature* (New York: United Nations, ECLAC, 1999); Helen McBain, “Open Regionalism: CARICOM Integration and Trade Links”, in: *Regional Integration in Latin America and the Caribbean: The Political Economy of Open Regionalism*, ed. by Victor Bulmer-Thomas (London: Institute for Latin American Studies, 2001), pp. 275-294.
- 41 Shang-Jin Wie & Jeffrey A. Frankel, “Open Regionalism in a World of Continental Trade Blocs”, in: *IMF Staff Papers* 45 (1995) 3, pp. 440-453.
- 42 Raquel Fernández, “Returns to Regionalism: An Evaluation of Non-Traditional Gains from RTAs”, in: *National Bureau for Economic Research*, Working Paper No. 5970 (1997). Retrieved from: <http://www.nber.org/papers/w5970>; Clark W. Reynolds, “Open Regionalism: Lessons from Latin America”, in: *Kellogg Institute for International Studies*, Working Paper No. 241 (1997), pp. 1-38.
- 43 Kuwayama, *Open Regionalism*, op. cit. (note 40).
- 44 Sutton, “Caribbean Development”, op. cit. (note 18); Matthew L. Bishop & Anthony Payne, “Caribbean Regional Governance and the Sovereignty/Statehood Problem”, in: *The Caribbean Papers* (Waterloo: Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2010) (=The Caribbean Papers, 8), pp. 1-24.
- 45 Roger Dale, “Specifying Global Effects on National Policy: A Focus on the Mechanisms”, in: *Journal of Educational Policy* 14 (1999) 1, pp. 1-17.
- 46 Tavis D. Jules & Michelle Morais de Sá e Silva, “How Different Disciplines Have Approached South-South Cooperation and Transfer”, in: *Society for International Education Journal* 5 (2008) 1, pp. 45-64.
- 47 Roger Dale, “Introduction”, in: *Globalisation and Europeanisation in Education*, ed. by Roger Dale and Susan Robertson (Oxford: Symposium Books, 2009), pp. 7-19, in particular p. 11.

Moreover, many second generation studies move from *priori definitions* to *posteriori conceptualizations* of smallness, problematizing aspects like size and scale and providing evidence of a “small scale syndrome,”<sup>48</sup> which is based on a “syndrome of behavioral issues.”<sup>49</sup> Similarly, Crossley and Sprague suggest that in a post-2015 era, smallness should be used to access “nuanced and contextually sensitive attention.”<sup>50</sup> Moreover, a new set of research has identified new types of small jurisdictions, such as *favelas* or shantytowns, as rather akin to prevailing concepts of small states, particularly from a perspective of fragility and vulnerability.<sup>51</sup> Another new set of studies has looked at “facilitators and barriers to change”<sup>52</sup> in examining why external reforms fail within certain small states. Yet, an additional set of newer small state research has problematized how small states respond to international reform impulses based on, for example, higher education league tables,<sup>53</sup> large-scale international assessments like the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA),<sup>54</sup> or expertise provided by “international knowledge

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- 48 Godfrey Baldacchino, *Global Tourism and Informal Labour Relations: The Small Scale Syndrome at Work* (London: Mansell, 1997); Baldacchino, “Meeting the Tests of Time”, op. cit. (note 31); Baldacchino, “Governmentality is All the Rage”, op. cit. (note 30); Jules, “Re-reading the Anamorphosis”, op. cit. (note 26).
- 49 Baldacchino, “Meeting the Tests of Time”, op. cit. (note 31).
- 50 Michael W. Crossley & Tera Sprague, “Learning from Small States for Post-2015 Educational and International Development”, in: *Current Issues in Comparative Education* 15 (2012) 1, pp. 26-40.
- 51 Rolf Straubhaar, “A Broader Definition of Fragility: The Communities and Schools of Brazil’s Favelas”, in: *Current Issues in Contemporary Education* 15 (2012) 1, pp. 41-51.
- 52 Jermone De Lise, “Explaining Whole System Reform in Small States: The Case of the Trinidad and Tobago Secondary Education Modernization Program”, in *Current Issues in Comparative Education* 15 (2012) 1, pp. 64-82.
- 53 Justin J. W. Powell, “Small State, Large World, Global University? Comparing Ascendant National Universities in Luxembourg and Qatar”, in *Current Issues in Comparative Education* 15 (2012) 1, pp. 100-113.
- 54 Richard Welsh, “Overcoming Smallness Through Education Development: A Comparative Analysis of Jamaica and Singapore” in: *Current Issues in Comparative Education* 15 (2012) 1, pp. 114-131.

banks”<sup>55</sup> like USAID.<sup>56</sup> Authors conclude e.g. that in retorting international pressures, many small states use a “positioning development strategy,” as in the case of Singapore,<sup>57</sup> or “emulate global norms simultaneously with serving local needs,” as in the case of Luxembourg and Qatar, to build national and institutional scientific capacities.<sup>58</sup> In essence, many small states give the perception to “Go Global”<sup>59</sup> using a “global speak,”<sup>60</sup> but in effect, they just adapted their rhetoric to different audiences. Reform speak therefore often gives rise to “reform bilingualism – national and global”<sup>61</sup> or “reform trilingualism – national, regional and international,”<sup>62</sup> i.e. depending on who is listening, arguments and rhetoric change.

The second generation of small state research has advanced *yet another remarkable finding*: Certain small states employ the notion of being small strategically and define themselves as small only when it is advantageous to them. Those self-definitions are often referred to as what we call “geostrategic.” For example, the 38 states that are grouped as SIDS have been leveraging their smallness very strategically by portraying their small size as rendering them particularly vulnerable to exogenous shocks. However, in many instances, their quality of life indicators as well as their health and education attainment are better than in many bigger states. We agree with Baldacchino’s assessment that smallness is often based on institutional constraints:

[A] small state is a state that either believes it is small, and/or else is seen to be one, and is expected to behave accordingly; also because of its historical unfolding and resource availability. ‘[Q]uite convincingly, it can be argued that a state is ‘small’ when it feels and

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55 Jones, “Taking the Credit”, op. cit. (note 3).

56 Brent D. Edwards, Jr., “Small States and Big Institutions: USAID and Education Policy Formation in El Salvador”, in *Current Issues in Comparative Education* 15 (2012) 1, pp. 83-99.

57 Welsh, “Overcoming Smallness”, op. cit. (note 54).

58 Powell, “Small State, Large World, Global University”, op. cit. (note 53).

59 Valentyna Kushnarenko & Ludmila Cojocari, “Internationalization of Higher Education in Post-Soviet Small States: Realities and Perspectives of Moldova”, in: *Comparative and International Education* 15 (2012) 1, pp. 132-144.

60 Gita Steiner-Khamsi & Ines Stolpe, *Educational Import: Local Encounters with Global Forces in Mongolia* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006).

61 Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, *Educational Import*, op. cit. (note 60).

62 Jules, “Re/thinking Harmonization”, op. cit. (note 26).

acts small – implying that it could become smaller or less small at different points in its history.<sup>63</sup>

There are some features that apply to large bodies of both first and second generation small states research alike. *First*, current definitions of smallness are often entrenched within the question of what it means to be a state in an era of globalization. Moreover, notions of smallness are often embedded within a post-colonial discourse, which has given rise to what we call a “geostrategic educational perception” where many states project themselves as big or small just as they need it in particular situations. With the “move from ideological competition between communism and capitalism to geo-economic competition between different forms of capitalism,”<sup>64</sup> one consequence of this geostrategic educational perception is an often “uncritical international transfer.”<sup>65</sup> Moreover, with the current move from government to governance within global educational policy, we adhere to Robertson and Dale who call for a move away from “methodological nationalism.”<sup>66</sup> Education in small states is not primarily associated with the working of the nation states, but is often formed through several collaborative governance structures.<sup>67</sup> We thus rely on an “anamorphosis perspective of re-reading the *raison d'être* of small states

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63 Baldacchino, “Meeting the Tests of Time”, op. cit. (note 31), in particular p. 16.

64 Dent, “From inter-regionalism to trans-regionalism?” op. cit. (note 39), in particular p. 227.

65 Brock & Crossley, “Revisiting Scale”, op. cit. (note 2); Crossley, “The Advancement of Educational Research”, op. cit. (note 2); Pearlette Louisy, “Globalisation and Comparative Education: A Caribbean Perspective”, in: *Comparative Education* 27 (2001) 4, pp. 425-438.

66 Susan L. Robertson & Roger Dale, “Researching Education in a Globalising Era: Beyond Methodological Nationalism, Methodological Statism, Methodological Educationism and Spatial Fetishism”, in: *The Production of Educational Knowledge in the Global Era*, ed. by Julia Resnik (Rotterdam: Sense Publications, 2008), pp. 19-32.

67 Roger Dale, “The Lisbon Declaration, the Reconceptualisation of Governance and the Reconfiguration of Educational Space”, in: *RAPPE Seminar on Governance, Regulation and Equity in European Education Systems* (2003), pp. 1099-1120; Roger Dale & Susan L. Robertson, “The Varying Effects of Regional Organizations as Subjects of Globalization of Education”, in: *Comparative Education Review* 46 (2002) 1, pp. 10-36; Jules, “Re-reading the Anamorphosis”, op. cit. (note 26).

research [...] [since] conceptually, small states are increasingly relying on networks which allow them to constrain their efforts on the best possible solutions.”<sup>68</sup>

A *second* common feature is that – maybe owing to the historically strong association of small states research and developmental concerns –, considerable portions of small states research implicitly or explicitly are concerned with states that are one way or another vulnerable (e.g. economically or ecologically) or otherwise ‘disadvantaged.’ Important as this focus is, it often obstructs that not all states that fall into one of the many definitions of small states<sup>69</sup> are equally vulnerable (cf. Luxembourg and Guyana). Also, what constitutes vulnerability is frequently not

sufficiently reflected upon either: In certain respects, some small states are in fact not more or even less vulnerable than many big states. Moreover, vulnerability is a rather subjective concept that is often ideologically charged and deeply embedded in prevailing notions of (Western) progress.

A *third* feature that applies to both first and second generation research on small states is that genuinely comparative research is still underdeveloped. Rather, many contributions present case studies. There are two broad categories: single-country studies and geostrategic/geo-hemispherical studies focusing on larger entities, such as the Commonwealth countries, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Even major edited volumes are often merely collections of such case studies. Apart from dealing with education in small states one way or another, they often lack a strong common thematic, theoretical, or methodological focus. Often, there are holistic characterizations of states as small – as if small states were monolithic entities. This often ignores the vast differences not only *between* but also *within* given entities: Not all states that are small by formal criteria, such as population size, are small and vulnerable, neither as a whole nor in all their individual parts. At the same time, not all big states are/behave big in all their parts. Economically and politically big states may behave rather small, while small states (in the above sense) may act rather big. A case in point of a big state behaving rather small in certain educational matters is Germany. Based on a broadly shared conviction of the superiority of its education system, Germany avoided international research on school quality for a long time. However,

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68 Jules, “Re-reading the Anamorphosis”, op. cit. (note 26).

69 For example, Michael Crossley, Mark Bray & Steve Packer, *Education in Small States: Policies and Priorities* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 2011).

in response to economic difficulties in the post-Cold War era and the ensuing PISA-shock, leading politicians, media representatives, and other prominent agents started to display an almost submissive deference to Scandinavian countries, whose education systems were almost unanimously identified as panacea for all sorts of problems – although much of what German observers praised as exemplary about Scandinavia was in fact highly contested there.<sup>70</sup> More recently, this difference seems to be shifting to some Asian ‘tiger states.’ The picture gets even more diverse, and often contradictory, if one differentiates between different policy levels. For example, the same politicians who pledged to ‘learn’ from Scandinavian and other states frequently implement policies that were in fact rather idiosyncratic. Thus, in the German case, being and acting big and small very much depends on the particular context we look at. Similarly complex configurations, we argue, may occur *within* and *between small states* as well as *between small states and other ‘big’ states*. Helpful tools to uncover and to understand those phenomena are provided by the rich literature on educational borrowing and lending as well as the politics of educational transfer,<sup>71</sup> neo-institutional accounts of education as well as their critics, or works on educational policy multilingualism, i.e. the phenomenon that the very same agents may argue and act entirely differently depending on their respective audiences.<sup>72</sup>

*Fourth*, in small states research, there is often a certain lack of analytical distance and awareness of historical developments. Often, studies are (i) written from the perspective of those immediately concerned or from the perspective of scholars who strongly identify with the states, regions, etc. they are concerned with, and (ii) they are often geared towards presenting workable solutions for pressing challenges of the present. On the one hand, this approach is certainly a boon, as it may afford a kind of immediacy academic discussions often lack. On the other hand, while this perspective is both legitimate and necessary, it may also obstruct a larger view of overarching developments and long-term trends.

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70 Mareike Kobarg & Manfred Prenzel, “Stichwort: Der Mythos der Nordischen Bildungssysteme/Keyword: The Myth of the Nordic Educational Systems”, in: *Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft* 12 (2009), pp. 597-615.

71 See for example Gita Steiner-Khamsi & Florian Waldow (eds.), “Policy Borrowing and Lending”, in: *World Yearbook of Education* 2012 (New York: Routledge, 2012).

72 For example, Jules, “Re-reading the Anamorphosis”, op. cit. (note 26).



## **THE SCOPE OF THIS BOOK**

When we started conceptualizing this volume, it was our ‘mandate’ to potential authors to venture outside established research frames. Finding suitable texts was much more difficult than we had envisaged, though. Apart from the usual time constraints inherent in the modern ‘academic industry’ that prevented authors from writing a proposal or submitting a promised chapter, established research patterns turned out to be surprisingly robust: A number of the proposals we received in response to our call for contributions did not at all engage in the line of thought we envisaged. Moreover, while the texts that were finally included in this volume leave the trodden paths of small (and micro) states research one way or another, on the one hand, they firmly remain within established research frames on the other hand as well. However, put together, the chapters of this volume blaze a new and promising trail in small (and micro) states research, a trail that will at some point hopefully develop into a proper ‘research highway.’

*Michael Crossley* and *Terra Sprague* draw a detailed map of the complex trajectories of small states research to date. Rooted in the ‘classic’ Commonwealth small states context, their chapter presents an intriguing analysis of the intellectual history and the varying contexts of small (and micro) states research with all their strengths and weaknesses and, on this basis, provides readers with a broad range of possible starting points for future research on education in small states beyond established research frames, for example, regarding new geographic units of analysis, hitherto little-researched areas of education, as well as new conceptual and methodological approaches. Crossley’s and Sprague’s chapter is therefore an ideal starting point for framing the subsequent chapters.

One first step towards the crucial expansion of conventional definitions of smallness we propose earlier in this introductory chapter is *Rolf Straubhaar’s* text. Straubhaar extends the concept of small states by convincingly analyzing *favelas* in the Brazilian metropole of Rio de Janeiro as fragile small or micro states. It is against this background that he shows how Rio’s educational administrators deliberately employ the fragility of *favelas* to promote certain market-based policies adapted from elsewhere and, on this basis, present themselves as crafters and champions of new policy models which they think should be “brought to scale” throughout not only

Brazil but the whole of Latin America. This thinking and acting – or trying to act – ‘big’ questions conventional wisdom, according small states and their agents act as merely passive recipients of educational models from bigger and by definition more ‘successful’ contexts.

If the application of the concept of the small state to Brazilian *favelas* may seem somewhat consequential, given the small size and the high fragility of *favelas*, *Sardar M. Anwaruddin* challenges received understandings even a bit further by characterizing a country as small that by all conventional small states definitions is anything but small: Bangladesh. It is against this backdrop that Anwaruddin goes on to analyze the country’s English language education policies in their connection with a new technology-based approach to teacher training and development called English in Action. Anwaruddin states that this kind of technological mediation may be helpful for the professional development of teachers in small states outside Bangladesh as well as. Moreover, in a broader context, he argues that his analysis may also enhance our understanding of educational reforms in small states in general.

Unlike Straubhaar and Anwaruddin, *Anna Baldacchino* and *Godfrey Baldacchino* are not concerned with widening existing definitions, but, rather, they work on a different aspect of ‘classic’ small states research: a certain lack of truly comparative approaches and the relative neglect of certain areas of education. Taking a comparative look at Malta and Barbados (with the United Kingdom, their former colonial master, as reference point), Baldacchino and Baldacchino map the evolution of early childhood education. Like in other fields of education, they argue, neo-colonialism has proved to be “even more tenacious, ubiquitous, and influential than imperialism” in early childhood education. Analyzing a hitherto neglected area of education in small states in combination with post-colonial theory from a strictly comparative perspective, offers original insights into the general situation and the challenges of early childhood education in small states.

Similar to Baldacchino and Baldacchino’s chapter, *Renata Horvatek* and *Armend Tahirsylaj* are concerned with two states that meet many of the formal criteria of ‘classic’ definitions of smallness on the one hand but, on the other hand, do not belong to the group of small island states in the Commonwealth and elsewhere that are usually in the spotlight of small states research. Analyzing minority education in post-independence Croatia and Kosovo from a comparative perspective, Horvatek

and Tahirsylaj argue that within the theoretical framework of small states, minorities can be analyzed as ‘small’ communities in the wider context of the nation state.

Yet another undoubtedly small state, which for its want of obvious vulnerability as well as other reasons has not played a significant role in small states research, is presented by *Lukas Graf* and *Daniel Tröhler*: Luxembourg. According to them, Luxembourg is “of substantive conceptual interest as a multilingual and multicultural country located centrally in Western Europe and a founding member of the European Union.” Graf and Tröhler argue that Luxembourg is constantly balancing out the global and the local. Here, Luxembourg is showing a tendency to orient itself towards the educational systems of dominant neighboring nations, which, they argue, is characteristic of many other small states as well. This is not necessarily a sign of subservience, for like many other small states, Luxembourg is able to use the direct co-operation with its neighbors to extend the reach of its educational system beyond its national borders. This can be interpreted as a form of ‘educational geostrategic leveraging,’ which in this case is the strategic capacity to act rather big in a particular area.

In the ensuing chapter, *Nigel O. Brisset* compares a small and a mid- to large-sized country from two different regions of the world when dealing with transnational higher education, which is now a major mode of higher educational provision internationally. Analyzing Jamaica and Malaysia, Brisset explores if and how state size affects national responses to transnational education. In this context, he develops and tests a theory of small state behavior, according to which small states are defined by an impulse to reduce their vulnerability rather than to exploit opportunities when faced with external phenomena like transnational education. Using the British Council’s opportunities matrix as an analytical framework to identify policies that develop environments favorable to transnational higher education, Brisset charts the different ways state size shapes responses to transnational higher education.

*Michael Anthony Samuel* and *Hyleen Mariaye* take a more methodological approach. Drawing on concepts of critical distance between small island researchers and their research contexts, their chapter explores the setting up of a narrative institutional biographical research project on the development teacher training in post-independence Mauritius. Samuel and Mariaye present valuable insights into what can be considered a methodological narrative turn to reveal a discourse about

small islands beyond the usual vulnerability and deficiency paradigm. The study attempts to explore how small islands can generate interpretations of themselves and their agentic potential and offer a new theoretical lens for reading other (bigger) contexts.

Like Samuel and Mariaye, *Pascal Sylvain Nadal*, *Aruna Ankiah-Gangadeen*, and *Evelyn Kee Mew* focus on Mauritius too, albeit from a different perspective. They point out that Mauritius is a small island state that, while often being cited as a reference for success on different accounts, displays the tensions inherent in endeavors to become 'big' due to a certain discrepancy between a desire to achieve international standards and local needs and realities, which in the case of Mauritius and its language-in-education policies leads to a de-valorization of received values. In particular, the chapter sheds light on deeply-engrained colonial mind-sets, even half a century after independence.

In the next chapter, *Matthew J. Schuelka* turns to educational policies in Bhutan, arguing that Bhutan eschews many of the generalizations attributed to small states.

His focus is on efforts by the government to infuse 'gross national happiness' into the school system through the Educating for the Gross National Happiness and the Green Schools initiatives. Schuelka argues that Bhutan does not follow the kind of economic development script that would be expected given its small size. Rather than being acted upon from above or being a mere recipient of foreign policies, Schuelka points out, the Bhutanese case displays what he calls a policy construction, in which policy actors make decisions based on their own individual experiences and the political realities of their country – rather than being coerced towards isomorphic global institutions. Ultimately, he argues, context matters when examining the making of the policy and practice of education in a small states.

Finally, *Richard O. Welch* and *Parna Banerjee* turn our attention to processes of policy borrowing and lending in math education between small and big states:

Singapore, Jamaica, and the United Kingdom. In particular, Welch and Banerjee show that Singapore, despite being a small state by many conventional criteria, acts as a lender of educational practices for both small and big states alike. Moreover, they argue that the strong link between physical size and (global) power is increasingly shrinking. Small states – especially when they are so successful in economic terms and/or regarding their educational performance like Singapore – are

likely to play an increasingly larger role in shaping educational policies and practices in big states as well.

In the final chapter of this volume, we try to tie together the different threads presented in the preceding chapters and, on this basis, to suggest a possible agenda for future research. Out of the many implications and suggestions for future research the chapters of this volume provide on many levels, we would like to pick out but the following two: (i) One of the aspects that appears throughout virtually all chapters is that small states (however one defines them) are prone to what we call ‘educational geostrategic leveraging,’ i.e. both the willingness and the ability to use soft power grounded in strategic-level bargaining and cooperation. We argue that dwelling on the notion of geostrategic leveraging much more systematically than in the past might significantly shift small states research away from what some critics call its ‘obsession with vulnerability and deficit.’ (ii) Moreover, in this context, definitional questions need to be addressed systematically too. The purely – or predominantly – formal criteria of smallness of the past, we argue, need to be significantly revised to account for the rapid development of the past few years. In this context, we would like to quote from the piece written by Michael Anthony Samuel and Hyleen Mariaye in this volume. Samuel and Mariaye argue that, “small is not a matter of size but a matter of negotiating influence.” Maybe this quote can act as a good starting point for future discussions on alternative definitions of smallness.