

Foreword

This study is a report on some of the major developments that are influencing the evolution of virtual education. It examines not only the nature of these developments, but also the implications for the use of virtual education models, particularly in developing countries. It follows up on our first volume *The Development of Virtual Education: A Global Perspective*. Since the release of that report in 1999, numerous other publications have made their appearance, each contributing in a significant way to the increased level of activity in the field.

This second volume is not an attempt to describe what is happening in the world of virtual education, but more about *where, why* and *how* virtual education is happening. By continuing to monitor developments, we hope to capture major trends, identify critical challenges and consider emerging opportunities as technologies improve, access to those technologies increase and skills to apply them are enhanced.

For The Commonwealth of Learning, this study will be of great value as we explore options

to carry forward the instruction given to us by the 14th triennial Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in Halifax, Canada in November 2000. That instruction required of us to establish a virtual university to serve small states. While we are excited about the instruction, we are also mindful of the enormity of the task. We would not wish to embark on it without gaining adequate knowledge of the requirements to establish such a facility. This study deals with some of those issues, and just as we intend to benefit from the findings, so too is it our hope that others, especially in the Commonwealth, will find the experiences described in this report of value.

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