

Part II: Asia

Chapter 4: Brunei Darussalam

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Population (1988): 241,000

Population Growth Rate (1980-88): 3.4% per annum

Land Area: 5,765 square kilometres

Capital: Bandar Seri Begawan

GNP per Capita (1989): US\$17,000

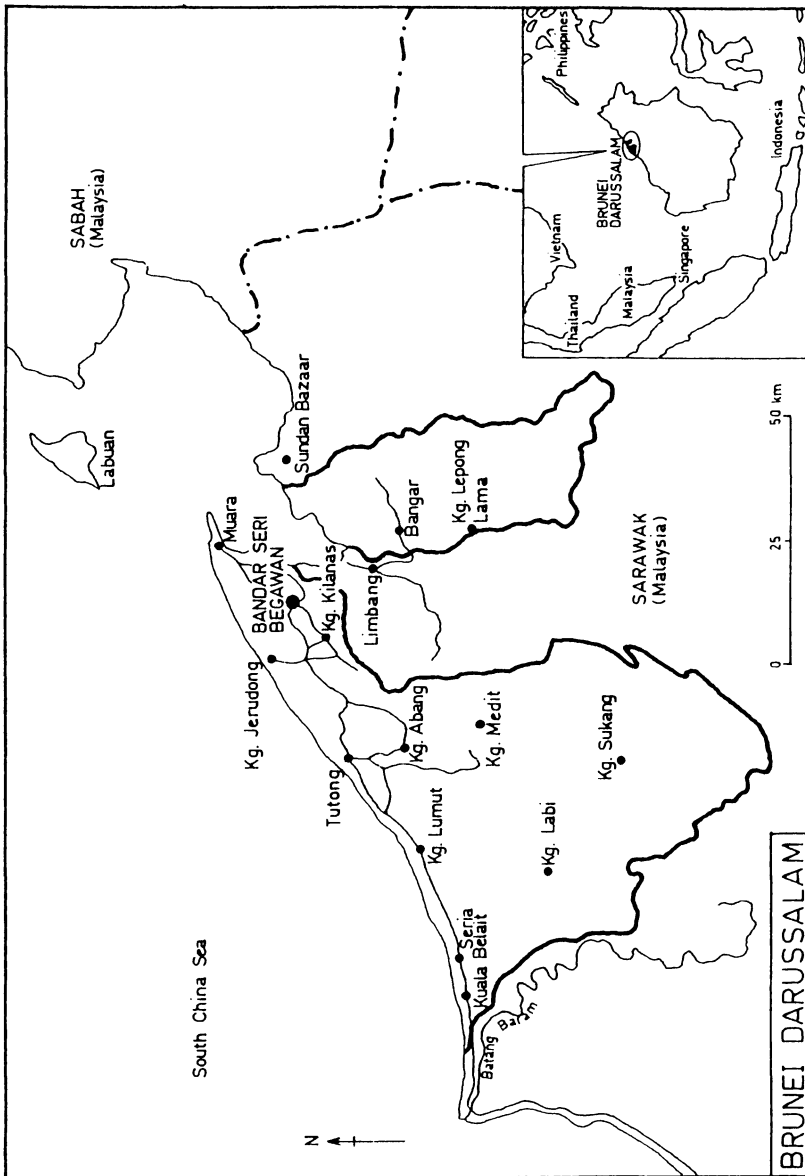
Year of Independence: 1984

Primary School Enrolment Rate (1988): 63%

Human Development Index (1987): 0.770

With 241,000 people and an area of 5,765 square kilometres, Brunei Darussalam is certainly small in population and area. However, the country also has one of the highest per capita incomes in the world. In the context of this book this permits interesting comparative analysis, for whereas many other small states face constraints of poverty as well as size, this is not the case in Brunei Darussalam. This difference in the overall financial environment within the country allows some of the implications of small size to be seen more clearly.

Brunei Darussalam was a British protectorate from 1906 to 1983, during which time it was known simply as Brunei. The longer name was adopted at the time of independence, and means 'Abode of Peace'. The country is surrounded by two Malaysian states called Sabah and Sarawak. During the 1960s the possibility of joining the Malaysian federation was considered. However in 1963 the decision was made to remain a protectorate of the United Kingdom. In 1975, the United Nations General Assembly called for general elections and for British withdrawal from Brunei. Negotiations in 1978, followed by assurances



from Malaysia and Indonesia that they would respect Brunei's sovereignty, led to a 1979 agreement that Brunei would become fully independent within five years.

The economy has in recent years depended on the export of oil and natural gas, but the government aims to reduce dependence on this source of income by diversifying the economy. Much of the natural resource endowment is in effect being converted into external financial assets, the management of which is likely to play an increasing role in the economy in the coming years. The authorities are keen both to reduce import dependency and to achieve self sufficiency in food production. Development projects are dependent on skilled labour, but the small size and other characteristics of the local workforce make necessary the employment of foreign workers, especially from Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand.

Politically, Brunei Darussalam is a sovereign, democratic, Malay, Muslim monarchy. At present its government has 12 ministries. The appointment of ministers and the creation of new ministries are directly controlled by the Head of State, His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan.

1. National Education Policy and Objectives

The government of Brunei Darussalam sees education as a continuing endeavour to develop the all-round potential of the individual. The system is designed to bring into being an educated and devout, as well as dynamic, disciplined and responsible people. Their virtues should be complementary with the needs of the State and founded on spiritual values which are noble in the sight of Allah.

The main aims of the national education policy are:

1. To foster national identity which will form a foundation for the growth of obedience to Allah s.w.t. and His Prophet, loyalty to the Monarch and love towards the Brunei State; and to build both efficiency and flexibility in the education system in order to meet the development needs of the country.
2. To give all children in Brunei Darussalam an opportunity to play a useful role in national development, so as to fulfil all the needs of the country through the involvement of the people themselves.
3. To inculcate Islamic values in each individual so that all will obey, show forth and hold high the teachings of Islam.
4. To uphold and implement a system of education in which the

Malay language, by the grace of Allah, will continue to play an important role as the National Language, while at the same time recognising the international value of English.

5. To cultivate in each individual the values and cultural norms of Brunei society, centred on the principle of a Malay Islamic Monarchy.

The number of education institutions is set out in Table 4.1. Children enter government schools at the age of five, and stay at the pre-school level for one year before proceeding to six years of primary education. At the end of primary school, pupils sit the Primary Certificate of Education examination before proceeding to the secondary level.

Table 4.1: Numbers of Schools and Pupils, Brunei Darussalam

		Schools	Pupils
Government Schools (1989)	Pre-School	116	3,820
	Primary	116	30,194
	Secondary	16	15,518
Non-Government Schools (1988)	Pre-School	40	2,148
	Primary	26	9,061
	Secondary	10	2,782

The secondary level lasts for seven years: three years in lower secondary, plus two years to the Ordinary Level course, and another two years in higher secondary or pre-university forms. After completing their sixth form education, students with adequate and relevant Advanced Level results may apply for higher education either locally or abroad. The government gives scholarships to students who have been accepted on suitable courses at the Universiti Brunei Darussalam or at universities or polytechnics overseas.

Some children in private institutions enter pre-school at age four and undergo schooling for two years before proceeding to primary education. The duration of each level of schooling is the same as for the government system.

Approximately 5 per cent of the budget is allocated to education. Schooling is free for citizens in government institutions, and tuition, textbooks, transport and accommodation in hostels for students from rural areas are free for all citizens. Snacks in urban and suburban

schools and lunches in remote rural schools are also provided free. Non-citizens are charged a nominal fee for secondary tuition.

At the post-secondary level several institutions provide specialised training. They include the Mechanical Training Centre, the Jefri Bolkiah College of Engineering, the Sultan Saiful Rizal Technical College, the P.A.P. Rashidah Sa'adatul Bolkiah College of Nursing, the Institute Technology Brunei, and the Universiti Brunei Darussalam. The university has four faculties with approximately 200 staff and 900 students.

2. The Ministry of Education

(a) Overall Organisation

When the Ministerial structure was created at the time of Independence, education was administered by the Ministry of Education & Health. In 1986 the two functions were split, and the Ministry of Education is now a separate entity. The structure of the Ministry is shown in Figure 4.1.

At the apex of the Ministry are the Minister and Deputy Minister. They are responsible for decisions on all policy matters. The Minister of Education is also the Vice-Chancellor of the Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

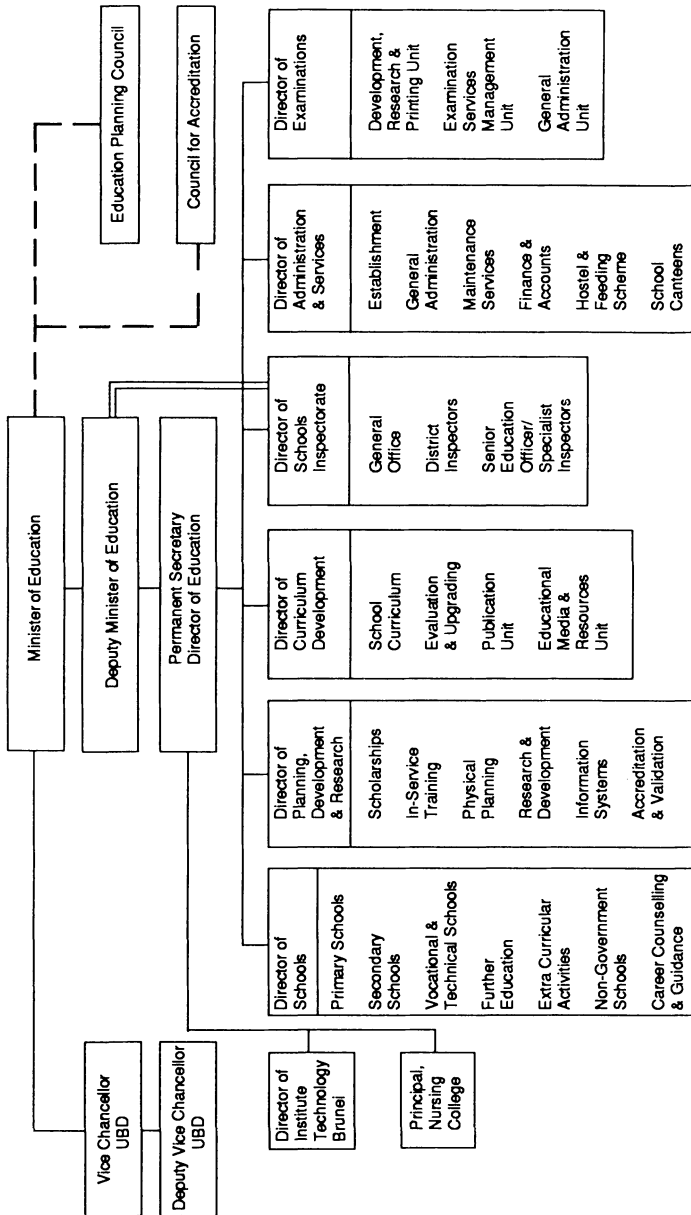
The Permanent Secretary is the administrative head of the Ministry and concurrently the Director of Education having responsibility for professional matters. The Permanent Secretary also heads his own section, consisting of officers with special responsibility for ministerial, administrative and international affairs, including public relations.

The Ministry has six major departments, within each of which are a number of sections. All the directors of departments are responsible to the Permanent Secretary. The departments are entitled:

- Schools,
- Planning, Development & Research,
- Curriculum Development,
- Schools Inspectorate,
- Administration & Services, and
- Examinations.

The Educational Planning Council consists of the Minister, Deputy Minister, Permanent Secretary and all Directors. It provides a forum for discussion of major policy and planning issues. The Council for Accreditation is chaired by the Minister of Education, and includes

Figure 4.1: The Ministry of Education, Brunei Darussalam (1991)



== Note: The Director of Schools Inspectate refers professional matters direct to the Deputy Minister of Education

members from other ministries. Its primary role is to decide on matters of recognition and equivalence of qualifications.

(b) The Departments of the Ministry

(i) *The Department of Schools* is concerned with the direct administration of schools and colleges. It has seven sections, covering primary schools, secondary schools/sixth form, vocational & technical schools, further education, extra-curricular activities, non-government schools, and career counselling & guidance.

(ii) *The Department of Planning, Research & Development* has six sections, covering scholarships, in-service training, physical planning, research & development, information systems, and accreditation & validation. The responsibilities of the Department include:

- conducting educational research;
- monitoring and identifying issues and problems, and making appropriate recommendations;
- collecting, organising and preparing education statistics and data;
- supervising permanent school buildings and teachers' housing projects;
- conducting and arranging internal and external courses, seminars and workshops for officers and staff of the Ministry; and
- administering internal and overseas scholarship awards.

(iii) *The Department of Curriculum Development* has four components entitled the School Curriculum Unit, the Evaluation & Upgrading Unit, the Publication Unit, and the Educational Media & Resource Unit. The roles of the Department are:

- to study, plan and prepare curricular programmes for schools in accordance with National Education Policy;
- to prepare and produce books, including textbooks, workbooks, teaching aids, educational media programmes and curricular materials such as school syllabuses and teachers' guides;
- to carry out controlled experiments and tests in the classroom of the various curricular programmes and materials;
- to evaluate and improve curricular programmes and other materials prepared from time to time so as to determine their suitability, and to monitor the quality of the curricular materials produced;

- to give guidance to teachers in the use of the prepared programmes and teaching aids so that the teachers are properly oriented in the use of these materials;
- to disseminate information relating to the innovation and implementation of the curriculum; and
- to review, evaluate and recommend basic textbooks, supplementary and reference books, as well as other teaching/learning aids for use in schools.

(iv) *The Department of Schools Inspectorate* has three main functions, namely:

- to keep the Ministry of Education informed on the state of schools and educational institution;
- to inspect schools in order to ensure that adequate standards of teaching are developed and maintained; and
- to advise principals, headmasters and teachers on matters pertaining to teaching methods.

(v) *The Department of Administration & Services* has six sections covering the establishment, general administration, maintenance services, finance & accounts, the hostel & feeding scheme, and school canteens. The responsibilities of the Department include:

- establishment, increment, promotion, discipline, confirmation of post, retirement, appointment and recruitment of daily-paid staff, and renewal and termination of contracts;
- vacancies, advertisement and interview;
- filing and despatch;
- schemes for loans, allowances, grants, etc.;
- records of service and leave;
- land ownership and personal guarantor recommendation;
- office management and services, annual estimates;
- land and marine transportation;
- housing;
- tender, quotation and write-off;
- purchase of office stationery and office/school cleaning materials;
- maintenance and repair of buildings and furniture;
- store supervision; and
- labour supervision and maintenance of tools.

(vi) *The Department of Examinations* is mainly concerned with three types of examination, namely the Brunei Junior Certificate of Education (BJCE) which is taken at the end of Form 3, the Brunei Cambridge General Certificate of Education (GCE) 'O' Level examination which is taken at the end of Form 5, and the Brunei Cambridge GCE 'A' Level examination which is taken at the end of Sixth Form. The BJCE is set internally, but the GCE examinations are set and administered jointly with the international branch of the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UK).

The administration and management of the Department of Examinations is divided into three units, namely the Development, Research & Printing Unit, the Examination Services & Management Unit, and the General Administration Unit. In conducting its work, the Department has to:

- examine and assess the results of the teaching process and expenditure through the management of every public examination;
- analyse statistics, and provide feedback to schools and colleges; and
- study and assess tests in order to improve the competency of technical equipment and examinations.

3. Personnel

The government localises posts whenever possible, and localisation has been achieved to a large extent within the 'administrative' departments of the Ministry of Education. Within the schools, however, the situation is different. There is a major shortage of local teachers qualified to teach at sixth form level, particularly in science. Also, the policy of bilingualism necessitates both the teaching of English as a separate subject and the use of English in a range of disciplines. Local manpower must for the time being be supplemented from overseas.

The Schools Department faces a particular problem because the teaching profession appears to be regarded as an educated pool from which other employers can draw. Also, many local teachers see the advancement of their careers not in the teaching profession as such, but in the administration. Even relatively junior administrative posts may be sought as a way to leave schools and join the administrative ladder. The administration is perceived as offering both better working conditions and enhanced promotion prospects. Some sections, such as the Inspectorate and the Curriculum Development Department normally

expect to recruit only experienced teachers, and senior officers appear to prefer, in principle, to recruit into the Ministry those with direct experience of the school system.

As an alternative to the recruitment of expatriates, a strong staff development policy is being implemented, with training and education being available within the Ministry, through the Civil Service Training Unit, or by secondment overseas. Performance on courses is seen as one way to appraise staff for possible promotion.

The loss of senior, experienced staff for long periods clearly stretches scarce resources, and this has led to particular interest in distance learning and opportunities for part-time study. The latter will clearly be facilitated by the presence of the newly-established University, which provides undergraduate and in-service courses in Arts, Management & Administration, and Arts & Science Education.

4. Work Characteristics

(a) The Social Context

Most of the administrative departments of the Ministry of Education are located in a single building, and most schools and colleges are easily accessible. The Ministry operates in a complex web of professional, social and kin networks, the nature of which is strongly influenced by the small size of the country.

This milieu may be perceived in different ways. To some officers it seems to offer opportunities for faster and more effective communication, albeit sometimes of an informal nature. This may presume that individuals are likely to respond more promptly and positively to people that they already know. Also, requests may be targetted to individuals rather than anonymous departments.

Yet to others, the milieu presents problems. For example, as there is strong security of tenure, management style has to reflect the need to sustain workable relationships at many levels. There is an often expressed preference for requesting or persuading rather than instructing. Individuals may be particularly sensitive to criticism which is open and confrontational in the 'western' mode. They may prefer more indirect, which are seen locally as more sensitive, means to resolve problems. This includes the consultative approach reflected in the word *mesyuarah*. A formalised system of staff appraisal highlights such issues. One such system has recently been introduced in a common format throughout the government service by the Establishment Department of the Prime Minister's Office.

The existence of personal links may lead to an expectation among colleagues that agreement over particular issues will necessarily be forthcoming, i.e. that it will be more difficult to say "no". Those experiencing such pressure may appeal to procedures specified by the Ministry or in the General Order in an effort to depersonalise their decisions. Where differences do occur, particular care is required. Any lack of frankness is likely to be exposed in the longer run in such a small setting, and could be counterproductive.

The management of confidential material such as personal files or examinations also becomes more difficult in a small society. This is true both in the procedures required and in the potential pressures from within and outside the Ministry. The considerable mix of information systems, from traditional files to computer-based storage, adds to the problem.

(b) Specialisation

The view of specialisation varies considerably through the Ministry. Some Departments, such as Examinations, have a relatively specific brief, and tend to be seen as not requiring specialist skills beyond general administrative skills and experience of the education system. On the other hand Inspectorate staff tend to be recruited as specialists in particular subjects. However, such specialists may also have to take responsibility for administration. The Department of Planning, Development & Research has a wide brief which places particular demands on senior staff and must be taken into account in the selection of staff.

There is considerable mobility within the Ministry. Staff who are adaptable outside the confines of their original specialisations usually have greater opportunities for progression.

(c) Coordination

Coordination is a widespread problem in young bureaucratic systems. An important feature in the Ministry of Education is the weekly meeting of all Directors of Departments. The Minister, Deputy Minister and/or Permanent Secretary may also attend. The meetings provide a regular forum for vertical and horizontal coordination and discussion of broader issues. Formal information flows involve the use of minutes of meetings, departmental circulars and memoranda. Such flows are strongly reinforced by informal meetings and communication at all

levels.

Delegation of authority when people are absent is not generally perceived as a problem among senior staff. The chief reason is that others normally act for their colleagues on a temporary basis. However, whilst formal authority to act may be arranged among senior staff, it is less usual at junior level. In these cases staff absences may require handling in some other fashion.

(d) Decision-Making Styles

While decisions on routine procedural aspects of the Ministry's operation may be taken at almost every level of the system, those decisions which are deemed to concern 'policy' must carry the authority of the Minister or Deputy Minister. Apart from major and obvious issues, however, interpretations may differ among less senior staff about what should or should not be classified as policy or procedure.

Once a clear decision is taken at the highest level, implementation is effected through a hierarchical system. It would not normally be seen as appropriate for decisions to be questioned from below, though there is sometimes scope for individual decisions about the promptness of handling instructions.

Senior staff have a clear preference for a consensus style of decision-making. Consultation would normally occur within a particular sphere of the hierarchy, or within one level above or below, in order to establish a coalition of support. There is thereby a reduced emphasis on individualistic action or proposals, although this is still possible.

(e) Centralisation/Decentralisation

The degree of centralisation is not generally perceived as an administrative issue, given the small size of the education system and the country as a whole. The population, and therefore schools, colleges and Ministries, are concentrated in the Brunei-Muara District and nearby coastal region.

The above comments on decision-making style are pertinent in this respect. Authority to act on substantial issues or those involving the use of resources tends to be centrally located. Nevertheless, since 1987 school Principals have been given greater flexibility of action with regard to budgeting and spending.

In terms of the procedures adopted by the administration, there is a high degree of standardisation. This is to some extent linked with the

requirement to follow general government procedures on budgeting, purchasing etc.. For example, if the Ministry recruits a graduate as a junior administrator, a particular salary has to be paid and there is little flexibility to discriminate between the more able recruit with more responsibility and the less able with a more routine job. The processes of recruitment and of work appraisal also have to follow standardised government procedures.

5. Relationships with Other Organisations

Whilst it is not uncommon for senior officials to have commitments outside their own ministries, the practice affects some ministries more than others. For example, Finance tends to be more affected than Education.

Nevertheless, one prominent example of sharing concerns the Minister of Education, who is concurrently Vice-Chancellor of the Universiti Brunei Darussalam. As the latter is a young, developing institution, the time commitment is significant.

Another major area of essential collaboration concerns staff recruitment and promotion. The Ministry of Education determines its requirements for new posts and staff levels, and drafts suitable advertisements for publication. Prior approval for such posts has to be obtained from the Establishment Department of the Prime Minister's Office. The Public Service Commission must also be involved if a specific appointment is being considered. For example a Commission member must sit on the board which interviews shortlisted candidates. Final proposals for appointments must then be sent to the Prime Minister for approval.

Salaries and allowances of all government employees (whether local or expatriate) are paid through the Treasury, which is part of the Ministry of Finance. Liaison between the Ministry of Education and the Treasury over salary and other entitlements is therefore essential. The principal section involved in the Ministry of Education is the Department of Administration & Services.

Departments of the Ministry of Development must be consulted about proposals for new buildings or major modifications or repairs to existing buildings. Implementation may be through the Public Works Department and/or through private contractors, and liaison is through the Department of Planning, Development & Research and the Department of Administration & Services.

The private sector also plays a role. For example tenders are invited to supply equipment and consumables to the Ministry. This includes printing, publishing, and the supply of food for school canteens.

The most prominent company in the country is Brunei Shell Petroleum. The company provides bursaries and scholarships for local students to pursue studies relevant to the company's fields of interest, e.g. in physical sciences, mathematics and engineering. The Sinaut Agricultural Training Centre was formerly a joint venture between Brunei Shell Petroleum and the Government. It was formally handed over in 1987 to be fully administered by the government, and now comes under the auspices of the Ministry of Industry & Primary Resources. There remains a continuing dialogue between the company and the government about appropriate collaborative arrangements in education.

Finally, close liaison is maintained with the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which administers the Religious Teachers Training College and the Religious Schools. Islamic Religious Education now forms part of the curriculum in all education institutions.

6. International Links

The Ministry is affiliated to a wide range of international organisations, reflecting historical and cultural links as well as the implementation of specific initiatives. Close bilateral links have long existed with the United Kingdom, Malaysia and Singapore. Recent years have brought increasing links with Australia, Canada and the USA.

Brunei Darussalam also plays a strong role in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and in the South East Asian Ministers' of Education Organisation (SEAMEO). Brunei Darussalam has provided considerable financial support for SEAMEO institutions, including INNOTECH in the Philippines, the Regional English Language Centre in Singapore, and RECSAM in Malaysia. Responsibility for liaison between these bodies and the Ministry tends to rest with the senior officers of the Permanent Secretary's office or with the Department of Planning, Development & Research.

Because the country is both small and young, the Ministry has to rely on outsiders for certain types of professional expertise. Table 4.2 indicates the principal areas in which external consultants were employed in 1988 and 1989.

Another aspect of small size is reflected in the examination system. In order both to avoid the manpower strains that would arise if Brunei Darussalam ran all its examinations, and to gain the international recognition of a widely-known certificate, the government has continued to make use of the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate. If Brunei Darussalam were larger, it would have a larger pool of professionals from which to draw qualified staff, and it could

Table 4.2: External Consultants Employed in Brunei Darussalam, 1988-89

No. of Persons	Focus	Period	Agency
1	teacher supply for government schools	2 months	IDP (Australia)
1	reading skills	2-3 weeks	Singapore Ministry of Education
2	management course for headteachers	2 weeks	Malaysia Ministry of Education
1	assessment and implementation of school curriculum		Malaysia Ministry of Education
5	curriculum and other areas in technical and vocational education	2 years	Assoc'n of Community Colleges of Canada
1	management course for principals and headmasters	2 weeks	

establish its own system which would have sufficient weight to attract its own recognition. But with the country's small size adherence to Cambridge seems to provide the best strategy, especially since the Examinations Syndicate is prepared to offer subjects specially tailored to local syllabuses.

7. Conclusions

The fact that Brunei Darussalam is very wealthy has enabled it to evade some of the constraints of size faced by other small countries. The Ministry is not overburdened by a need to avoid financial diseconomies of small scale, and it has been able to import many teachers and materials.

However, even Brunei Darussalam faces some constraints from small size. For political reasons the government is anxious to promote localisation, especially in the decision-making parts of the Ministry. The authorities still find themselves hampered by shortages of qualified local manpower. In Brunei's case the manpower constraints arising from small size are exacerbated by the youth of the country and its previously underdeveloped education system.

Partly because of these factors, the Ministry is unable to offer some services which would be normal in larger, even if poorer, countries. For example the Ministry has no education psychologists or specialists in

education for the handicapped. Likewise, although the Ministry can undertake some publishing, it is impossible to cater for the full range of subjects and levels.

To deal with the constraints of size, Brunei adopts some strategies which are common in most small states. Efforts to optimise the use of scarce expertise are exemplified in the fact that the Minister of Education is also Vice-Chancellor of the Universiti Brunei Darussalam. And while the government does run some examinations of its own, it has retained links with the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate. These links provide both technical expertise and recognition of qualifications in the wider world.

This chapter has also shown that Brunei Darussalam, like most other small states, is a close-knit and highly personalised society. This influences the operation of the Ministry both positively and negatively. On the positive side, colleagues know each other very well and have many informal channels of communication, but on the negative side close interpersonal relationships can sometimes make neutral decision-making very difficult.

Finally, it has been noted that the small geographic size of the country reduces the need for decentralisation of decision-making. In this sense the tasks facing the Ministry of Education are simplified. The fact that the Ministry can operate without district offices also avoids a further pressure on scarce manpower resources.