

Chapter 7: Dominica

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Population (1988): 81,300

Population Growth Rate (1980-88): 1.2% per annum

Land Area: 751 square kilometres

Capital: Roseau

GNP per Capita (1988): US\$1,650

Year of Independence: 1978

Primary School Enrolment Rate (1990): 100%

Human Development Index (1987): 0.906

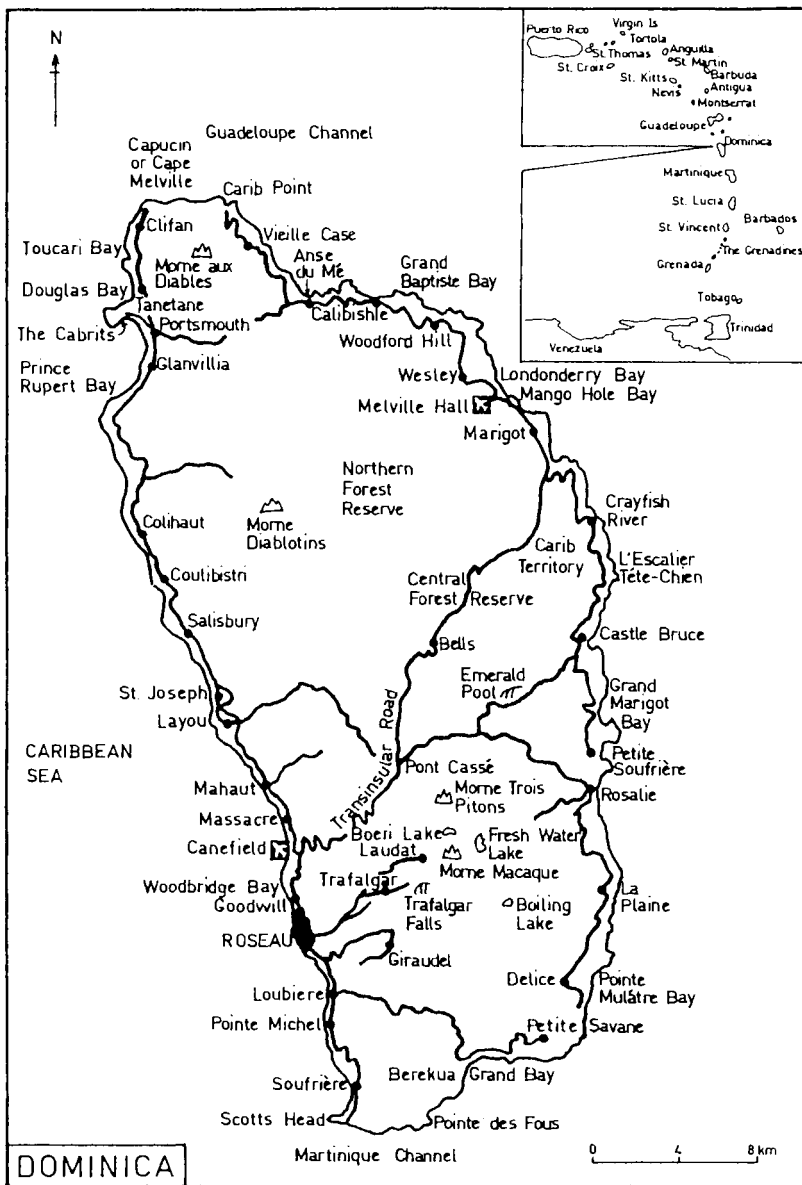
Dominica is the third largest island in the Commonwealth Caribbean (after Jamaica and Trinidad). It is 50 kilometres long and 27 kilometres wide, and has a mountainous topography.

Dominica became a British colony in the 18th century. It formed part of the Leeward Islands federation until 1939, but from 1940 to 1959 was administered as part of the Windward Islands group. A constitution which became effective in 1960 gave Dominica separate status with its own Administrator and an enlarged Legislative Council. In 1967 Dominica became one of the West Indies Associated States, gaining full autonomy in internal affairs. The nation achieved full independence in 1978.

The economy depends on export-oriented agricultural products, especially bananas and citrus fruits. Livestock and fish are also important sources of income and employment, and recent years have brought efforts to diversify into textiles, agro-processing and component assembly. Tourism is less developed than in many other Caribbean islands, but is becoming increasingly important.

1. The Education System

Schooling in Dominica is compulsory between the ages of five and 15.



The structure of the primary school system is similar to that in other Commonwealth Caribbean countries. It has a two-year infant stage, followed by a five-year regular primary stage and an extended senior primary stage of three years for those who do not qualify for secondary education in the Common Entrance Examination. This senior stage is designated as junior secondary education, but the curriculum does not correspond to that in the first three years of senior secondary schools and it is financed mainly from the primary education budget.

In 1989 the government operated 55 primary schools. An additional five schools were government-assisted, and six were owned and operated privately. These schools had approximately 15,000 pupils and 630 teachers.

At the secondary level, seven of the 10 schools are run by denominational and other organisations with government assistance. In 1989 the schools had 3,500 pupils and 117 teachers. An additional 600 pupils followed a technical-vocational programme with 52 teachers.

The tertiary education system is centred in the Clifton Dupigny Community College. In 1989 the Academic Division of the college had 188 students, while the Technical Division had 168 students and the Teachers' College had 56 students. The Academic and Technical Divisions had 27 teaching staff between them, and the Teachers' College had nine staff. Dominica is also a member of the University of the West Indies (UWI), and has its own University Centre.

During the period 1984-88, education was allocated an average of 17.6 per cent of the recurrent budget. Within the education budget, in 1988 primary schools were allocated 62.8 per cent of the total, while secondary schools were allocated 23.9 per cent, and policy formulation and administration were allocated 4.7 per cent.

2. The Ministry of Education & Sports

(a) Functions & Organisation

Although the full title of this body is the Ministry of Education & Sports, it is often referred to simply as the Ministry of Education. Education used to be combined with Health in a single Ministry. The functions were split in 1985, partly because of expansion in the two sectors.

Within the Ministry of Education & Sports are three main sections, namely the Education Department, the Sports Division, and Library Services. One rationale for grouping these functions together is that sports activities are concentrated in the educational institutions, and

library services are directed mainly towards the students of the primary, secondary and post-secondary institutions.

Figure 7.1 shows the organisation chart of the Ministry at the time of writing. This is the framework on which this chapter has been based. However, a new structure has been proposed (Figure 7.2), and comparison of the two charts reveals some illuminating points.

Figure 7.1: The Ministry of Education & Sports, Dominica, 1989

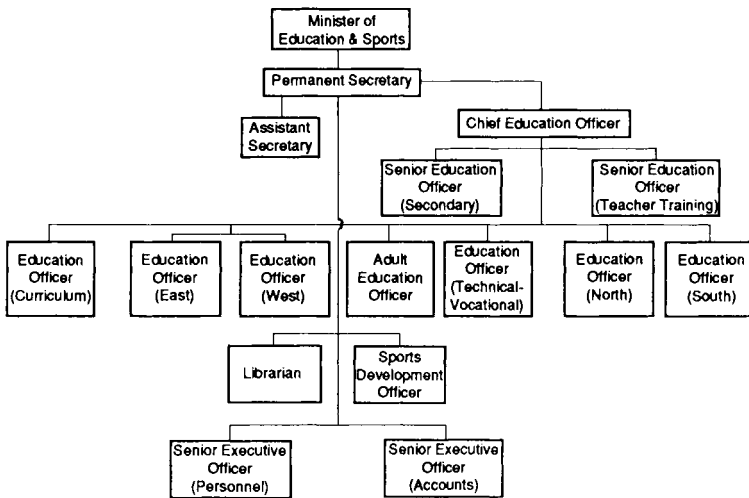
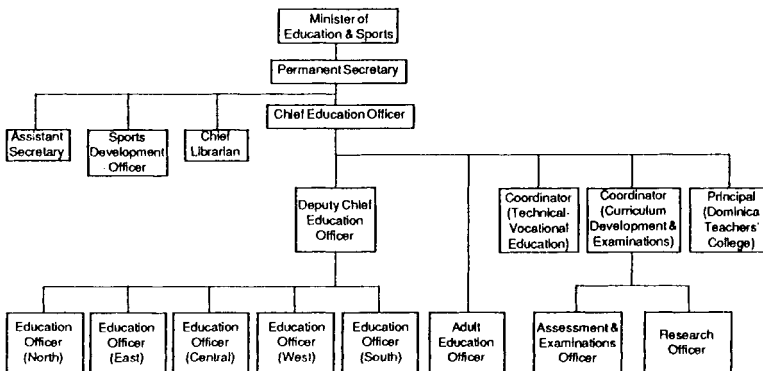


Figure 7.2: Proposed Structure for the Ministry of Education & Sports, Dominica



One of the most important aspects of the proposed structure is the creation of the post of Deputy Chief Education Officer (DCEO). It is intended that the district-based Education Officers (EOs) will report to the DCEO rather than directly to the Chief Education Officer (CEO). The new structure will also include a new post for the Central District.

The DCEO post was partly proposed to allow the CEO to take on new duties. The 1989-94 Education Sector Plan which set out the proposal highlighted problems caused by the absence of a planning unit. It also noted the lack of a consistent procedure for identifying training needs, because of which some individuals had followed courses that were not related to Ministry priorities. These individuals had later been disappointed when on return from their studies they were given responsibilities in areas unrelated to their studies. In such a small Ministry it was still felt impossible to employ specialist planners and training officers. It was therefore decided to place the CEO in charge of both functions, but to provide assistance from the newly-appointed DCEO. The post of Planning Officer has been nominally created, but actually this post is held concurrently by the CEO. A Planning Committee reports to the Minister through the Permanent Secretary, and is chaired by the Planning Officer/CEO. In addition, a post has recently been created for a Project Development Officer with responsibility for preparation, implementation and evaluation of projects.

The proposal also envisages changes in the sphere of curriculum. The Ministry already has an EO (Curriculum). However, the absence of a Curriculum Development Unit has meant that curriculum initiatives have been sporadic, that schools have operated with inadequate curriculum materials, and that objective assessment of the effect of new curricula on educational practice and attitudinal change has been difficult. The new structure will create a Curriculum Development Unit to tackle these problems. The Coordinator of the unit will be assisted by an Assessment & Examinations Officer and by a Research Officer. The Curriculum Coordinating Committee will include principals of primary and secondary schools as well as Education Officers and lecturers from the Teachers' College.

The new structure will also include the post of Coordinator (Technical-Vocational Education). This officer will be responsible for diversification of the curriculum at all levels. The officer will have particular responsibility for the Technical-Vocational Education Project run by the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). The individual will also be a member of the Advisory Committee of the Technical Studies Division of the Clifton Dupigny Community College.

Neither the existing nor the proposed structure has a specialist EO post for primary education. This again reflects the constraints of a

small system. The needs of primary schools have to be met by the district-based Education Officers.

The architects of the new structure also proposed to abolish the post of SEO (Secondary). The rationale was similar to that for not having an EO (Primary). The coordinator of the Curriculum Development Unit was expected to replace the SEO (Secondary), leaving the district-based Education Officers to supervise secondary schools in their areas. However, it now looks less likely that the post of SEO (Secondary) will be abolished. This is partly because the present holder has strong qualifications and experience, and it is important for the system to retain such services.

Whereas the existing structure refers to the post of SEO (Teacher Training), the proposed new structure refers only to the Principal of the Teachers' College. In fact these two posts are combined in one individual. This provides another instance through which the small system promotes efficiency and maximises use of scarce personnel.

The administration of the Ministry is centralised in Roseau, the capital. Portsmouth, the second town, has a District Office with a staff of four comprising the Education Officer (North), an Assistant Education Officer, a clerk/typist and a messenger. The offices of the other district-based Education Officers are in the Teachers' College. The fact that these other Education Officers are all located in one place means that they have to travel extensively, and that the district-focused nature of their duties is not fully supported. It has been proposed to set up offices actually in the districts served by the staff. Although Dominica is geographically quite small, road, telephone and postal communications are not strong. Relocation of the district-focused Education Officers could help strengthen the administration.

On the other hand, the Ministry already faces problems of efficiency arising from the location of officers in different places. The two SEOs, the Principal of the Clifton Dupigny Community College, and the Adult Education Officer each have one clerk and a team of messengers/drivers and cleaners. In practice, these staff do not work only for the units to which they are formally assigned. For example, the technician attached to the Curriculum Unit works for the Teachers' College and the headquarters when the need arises. It has been suggested that this sharing should be strengthened by redeploying such personnel to a central pool for use by all sections as needed. However, sharing is obstructed by the fact that some staff are located in the Teachers' College or in other places distant from headquarters. The obstacle that this creates for efficient utilisation of staff is felt particularly acutely in a small system.

Finally, it will be observed that the Ministry is heavily dominated

by Education. Indeed Sports are directly served only by the Sports Development Officer who, like the Librarian and the two Senior Executive Officers, reports immediately to the Permanent Secretary.

(b) Work Shared and not Undertaken

The Ministry of Education & Sports shares several responsibilities with other ministries. For example:

- * *The Economic Development Unit* assesses plans, programmes and projects for economic viability. It also coordinates projects, and helps identify funding sources.
- * *The Treasury Department* pays salaries and audits all financial transactions.
- * *The Computer Department* processes the results of the Common Entrance Examination.
- * *The Printery* prints forms, certificates and booklets.
- * *The Ministry of Communication, Works & Housing* maintains and repairs physical facilities.
- * *The Ministry of Health* examines and treats students at all levels free of charge.
- * *The Department of Legal Affairs* gives advice when land disputes and other problems arise.
- * *The Department of Agriculture* provides extension services to schools.
- * *The Personnel Department* trains clerical staff.
- * *The Department of Local Government* provides materials for repairs and construction of some facilities. It operates a community-based self-help scheme which assists schools with materials, equipment and technical expertise. Labour is usually provided by Parent-Teachers Associations, Village Councils and other community groups.

On the other hand, some functions which would normally be undertaken by Ministries of Education in larger countries are not undertaken at all in Dominica. For example, the Dominica Teachers' College only trains teachers for all-age schools. These schools have a primary section (5-12 years) and a junior secondary section (13-15 years). No provision is made for specialised subjects or for technical-vocational education. Teachers at the senior level may be trained in regional institutions (Antigua, Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados and St. Lucia) or in such countries as the United Kingdom, USA, Canada and

France.

It must be recognised that overseas training has some advantages. External donors meet most of the costs, and experience of other countries broadens the trainees' horizons. However, difficulties arise from the cultural biases of the foreign programmes; and some of the trainees sent abroad never come back. Also serious is the limitation on numbers. Partly because of the lack of local training provision, about 60 per cent of senior secondary teachers remain untrained. Canada's Organization for Cooperation in Overseas Development (OCOD) has helped reduce this difficulty by running two-week workshops in specialised areas. In addition, projects have been launched by the UWI and through the OECS technical-vocational project. However, these projects will not be able to solve the problem completely.

Similarly, although moves have been initiated to strengthen curriculum development, Dominica will remain handicapped by the lack of specialist staff in each subject area. Also, the schools can only use books developed generally for the Caribbean or for other parts of the world. Because of the constraints on expertise and on the size of the market, no textbooks have been prepared specifically for Dominica. However, textbooks in some subject areas have been written for Caribbean students.

Finally, it was noted above that Dominica is unable to afford a full-fledged planning unit. This has created difficulties in coordination and efficient use of resources. Related to this is the lack of research. The proposed structure does envisage employment of a Research Officer in the Curriculum Development Unit, but many other areas also require research. Although policy-makers can learn from research in other countries, foreign studies are often a poor substitute for local ones.

3. Personnel

(a) Numbers

Excluding principals, lecturers and teachers, the Ministry of Education & Sports has 66 establishment posts (Table 7.1). In addition, the Ministry employs the Principal and Director of Clifton Dupigny Community College, a laboratory assistant for the College, 19 tutors and lecturers, 11 instructors/senior instructors, 58 school principals, and 605 teachers/assistant teachers. It also employs 70 cleaners and 18 watchmen in non-establishment posts. Thus the total employment of the Ministry is 850 (assuming that all posts are filled), of which 7.8 per cent hold administrative posts in the headquarters or districts.

Table 7.1: Personnel in the Ministry of Education & Sports, Dominica, September 1989

	Number		Number
<i>General Administration</i>		<i>Technical Staff</i>	
Minister of Education	1	Chief Education Officer	1
Permanent Secretary	1	Senior Education Officer	2
Assistant Secretary	2	Education Officer	7
Senior Executive Officer	2	Assistant Education Officer	6
Executive Officer	2	Field Supervisor	1
Senior Clerk	4	Adult Zonal Officers	7
Maintenance Supervisor	1		
Production Technician	1		
Statistical Assistant	1		
Junior Clerk	16		
Stores Clerk	1		
Driver	5		
Messenger	5		

(b) Specialisation/Generalisation

Because the Ministry is small, it is unable to permit extensive staff specialisation. Individuals are often requested to undertake several different types of work. Tasks may be allocated simply to people who are capable of undertaking them, with the result that jobs are gradually established that expect the postholders to perform unrelated duties. Likewise, new staff may be appointed to posts that require performance of very eclectic tasks.

Every job description contains the statement: "The worker is expected to perform any other relevant duty that may be required to enhance the scope and quality of the education system." This indicates that even when individuals do specialise, they may still be called upon to perform unrelated tasks. Three examples may illustrate this point.

- * *SEO (Secondary)* has to coordinate and supervise the 10 Secondary schools, and register students for these schools. The officer also has to organise and coordinate the Youth Rally for the Independence Day celebrations. While these tasks entail separate knowledge and experience, the rationale for grouping them is that they all involve secondary school students.
- * *The Junior Clerk* is responsible for registration of incoming and outgoing mail, and for filing. The officer also works as a typist

and as an accounts clerk.

- * *The principal of the all-age school* has to manage the operations of the school, supervise and evaluate the teaching staff, teach specific subjects, and serve as a member of the curriculum development team of the Ministry.

The multi-faceted nature of such duties can lead to difficulties. Most serious are the problems of inefficiency and ineffectiveness which arise from overwork. Also, officers sometimes find their professional schedules disrupted. For instance the SEO often has to suspend the supervision of schools in order to meet the demands of examination bodies. In some cases, officers are prevented from taking their annual leave because they are required to undertake urgent additional tasks.

Nevertheless, some jobs have remained specialised. For instance when the chief accounts and personnel officers go on leave, they are replaced only by other accounts and personnel officers. The replacement staff are usually redeployed from other ministries. It has been suggested that personnel in one administrative or clerical post should be given some orientation to perform other duties to alleviate shortages of skilled people at least on a temporary basis. For instance when the Accounts Clerk is away, the Registration Clerk normally processes teachers' salaries.

(c) Expertise

The Ministry is handicapped by the small pool from which it is able to recruit. The population is small, and the Ministry has to compete with other employers. In addition, many well-qualified people choose to migrate rather than to look for jobs at home. The most popular destinations have been the United Kingdom, the USA, Canada, and other Caribbean countries.

Two results of the shortage of trained recruits are first that qualified personnel are given particularly heavy loads, and second that untrained officers are given tasks which should be undertaken by trained ones. This can cause considerable tensions. On the one hand some individuals who have had specialist training resent having to undertake a multitude of tasks which do not use this training; and on the other hand untrained officers clamour for benefits because they perform the tasks of trained personnel.

Tensions also arise in the recruitment of expatriates, some of whom have limited experience of small states and of situations in which resources are in such short supply. Employment of expatriates may

also create problems of cultural conflict; and the departure of individuals on completion of contracts may create a void.

(d) Job Definition and Appraisal

The Ministry of Education, in conjunction with other Ministries, is presently preparing and revising job descriptions for all its employees. Prior to this exercise, the tasks performed by individual officers were to a large extent shaped by their immediate superiors. In some cases, however, individuals were left to define their own jobs because their immediate supervisors were not well acquainted with specialist needs, strategies and priorities.

Supervisors who lack specialist experience in the work areas of their subordinates have also found difficulties in staff appraisal. The usual strategy in such circumstances has been for the supervisors to consider such factors as demeanour and willingness to undertake tasks promptly and effectively. However, the subtle processes for weighing up and assessing individuals are not necessarily effective. Personality differences often determine the types of assessment and grades given. The proposed appraisal system seeks to address this problem; but clear lines of responsibility have to be established, and training of appraisers is essential for effective implementation of the system.

(e) The Hierarchy

There is broad agreement within the Ministry that the short administrative pyramid causes difficulties for promotion and morale. Ways to deal with these difficulties include provision of incentives through further training and increase in salary benefits, and job rotation to reduce staleness.

The latter, however, is partly dependent on the skills and transferability of individuals. Generalists have better chances of promotion, and specialists have to abandon their specialisations if they want to gain more senior posts. This problem affects the system negatively, especially when the specialists cannot be replaced. One example is a tutor at the Teachers' College who was a specialist in reading. Wishing to gain a better salary and travel allowances, the officer took a post as district Education Officer even though this required abandonment of the specialism. Another example was the Science Coordinator who accepted the more senior post of Education Officer (Curriculum).

Nevertheless, there is some room for flexibility within the ranks of

EO and SEO. If the Ministry wishes to retain the services of a well-qualified individual without requiring that person to change jobs, it may be possible to promote an EO to become an SEO. However, this depends on the size of the establishment and on competing priorities, and is not always possible.

4. International Linkages

Small Ministries of Education rely heavily on overseas linkages because of financial constraints and the shortage of technical personnel. This may create heavy demands. It also causes difficulties when individuals are taken away from their offices by international meetings.

(a) Aid

Many developing countries of course benefit considerably from foreign aid. Such assistance provides not only material resources but also technical expertise and exposure to new ideas. However, aid may also have negative sides. Aid often has 'strings', and many projects spend a great deal of money on foreign consultants. In some cases aid also encourages complacency and stifles innovation. It is therefore necessary for countries to learn to refuse aid that is not in keeping with development plans and goals. Recipient countries should also try to have proper input and representation when negotiating with overseas agencies, should use nationals for in-service training, and should develop the ability to modify projects to fit the national context.

The problem for small states is that these recommendations may be easier to make than to implement. Because small states have small pools of manpower, they may find it difficult to secure officers who are adept at project analysis and negotiation. It may also be difficult to find appropriate individuals to send for in-service training and to act as counterparts.

(b) Regional Organisations

Dominica is a member of several important regional organisations. The main ones affecting education are:

- * *The Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC)*, which organises examinations, develops syllabuses, and trains teachers for the

- implementation of programmes;
- * *The Caribbean Development Bank (CDB)*, which provides project funding e.g. for the technical-vocational education project and for student loans;
- * *The Caribbean Community (CARICOM)*, which organises a standing conference of Ministers of Education, and which helps seek funds for projects;
- * *The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)*, which carries out a similar function to CARICOM but with a smaller (and overlapping) membership;
- * *The University of the West Indies (UWI)*, which provides degree and diploma courses, and is also a source of consultancy expertise;
- * *The University of the West Indies Distance Teaching Experiment (UWIDITE)*, which has a special component for teacher training; and
- * *The Caribbean Association of Technical and Vocational Education & Training (CATVET)*, which disseminates information, provides advice, and offers training in technical and vocational education.

Liaison with these bodies can take a great deal of the time of individual officers. For example, the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) requires that a specific officer use 80 per cent of the time for the Technical-Vocational Project. Also, the SEO (Secondary) spends about 80 per cent of the time dealing with the CXC and other external examination bodies. Certainly these regional bodies can usually perform their functions more effectively than the Ministry could by itself, and they do widen the horizons of officers who work with them. The need for coordination and liaison makes heavy demands, however, and the regional bodies are sometimes rather inflexible.

(c) Absence of Individuals

International commitments frequently take individuals away from their desks, sometimes for extended periods. Official policy provides replacements only when staff are absent for periods exceeding 28 days. Although team work would be a logical way to reduce the problems caused by such absence, efforts to promote team work have not been given much attention in Dominica. It seems that lip service has been paid to the concept, but that few practical steps have been taken to achieve the goal. Thus when for example the Chief Education Officer

is away, no one is empowered to do his job.

Problems caused by the absence of officers could also be reduced by improvement of the record-keeping system. Records are still maintained manually, which is slow and inefficient. Recently, computers were acquired for the Accounts Clerk and the Statistics Officer, and it would be desirable to acquire more computers not only for headquarters but also for various institutions. However it must also be recognised that computers require special skills, and that although they permit operations to be carried out more efficiently they may also make absence of key individuals even more problematic than is the case with a manual system.

For efficient organisation it is important to promote team work. Much progress in this was achieved during preparation of the 1989-94 Education Plan. It is to be hoped that this progress will be maintained and extended in the future.

5. The Culture of the Ministry

As in other small states, the Ministry in Dominica is a very personal organisation in which everybody knows everybody else. Some advantages and disadvantages of this are summarised in Table 7.2.

Ways to maximise the advantages and minimise the disadvantages include heavy emphasis on professional behaviour though staff development activities, combined with specific provision for objective appraisal of performance. The authorities may also introduce procedures to discourage breach of confidentiality, while at the same time ensuring that everyone is familiar with the specific policies, rules, regulations and procedures governing the operation of the Ministry. Two final worthwhile policies would encourage individuals to be critical and creative, and would provide incentives for outstanding performance.

Contrary to the suggestion that small Ministries are more likely to operate through consensus in decision-making, it seems that in Dominica decisions are made at the top and that implementation follows the hierarchical process. On some issues there is consultation, but the final decision is still made at the top. Thus, the Permanent Secretary takes decisions to be followed by the Chief Education Officer, who takes decisions to be implemented by the Education Officers, and so on.

There is broad agreement in the Ministry that latitude should be given to individual workers, but that it should be subject to some controls. One example that has been cited was the principal of a particular school who arranged for a fence to be erected around his school. Few financial or labour inputs were required from the Ministry,

Table 7.2: Advantages and Disadvantages of Close Interpersonal Relationships

<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages</i>
Working relationships are generally friendly	Consensus is over-emphasised
Individuals are easily reached	Individuals are not sufficiently critical of the ideas of others
Red tape is minimised	Favouritism may be developed
Responsibilities are easily delegated	There is a danger of some individuals being overworked
Potential for productivity is increased	Respect for protocol may be lost
Monitoring and evaluation are facilitated	Objectivity is reduced in evaluation of individual performance
Individuals can more easily gain a broad knowledge and understanding of the workings of the Ministry.	Confidentiality is reduced; increased potential for personality clash and confrontation.

and in this respect the principal was to be applauded. However, the same principal took matters into his own hands to defy a policy governing the conduct of a school-leaving examination.

In another case, the principal of a secondary school was flexible in transferring students to and from academic and technical-vocational streams based on their level of performance. When the principal left, however, there was a reversal of the old practice of specific demarcation streams. This created confusion among both students and teachers.

6. Summary

Although officially the Ministry covers Sports as well as Education, the latter is by far the greater of the two functions. Because of this, the organisation is often referred to simply as the Ministry of Education

rather than by its longer title.

Until 1985, Education was also administered with Health. The functions were separated because each sector was growing rapidly. The new structure enabled both ministries to focus more clearly on their specialist responsibilities.

However, there has remained a feeling of inadequacy in some respects. The 1989-94 plan suggested (p.15) that the Ministry of Education & Sports:

has been unable to meet the demands of educational reform and of an expanding school system. The results have been inadequate supervision and less than optimal efficiency because reform programmes have had to be conceived hastily by overworked personnel and because no system existed for monitoring the implementation of reform proposals.

Following analysis of the situation, the plan proposed a new structure. The CEO, it suggested, should be assisted by a deputy; the post of an extra district Education Officer should be created; enlarged and better mechanisms for curriculum development should be established; and the functions of planning and identification of training needs should be carried out more systematically.

It remains to be seen how far this proposal will be implemented and how well it will work. Certainly the proposal has many features to commend it. However, the structure will remain constrained by the small size of the bureaucracy, and it is difficult to afford expansion in such a small system. The posts of Planning Officer and CEO have had to be combined in one individual; and the curriculum development unit will be unable to devote detailed and specialist attention to every subject at every level.

At the same time the chapter has stressed some advantages of small size. Among them are close interpersonal working relationships which facilitate monitoring and evaluation, and which reduce the problems of red tape. Officers in the Ministry of Education may also have close connections with colleagues in other ministries.

Finally, the chapter has highlighted several regional and other external initiatives which help reduce the problems which Dominica would otherwise face. Regional bodies include the Caribbean Examinations Council, the Caribbean Development Bank, the OECS, and the University of the West Indies. Regional projects do sometimes create problems of their own; but they do give Dominica access to expertise and other resources which it would otherwise lack. Dominica has also benefitted from some valuable external aid programmes.