

The circumstances in small states

Characteristics

There are a large number of small states. One recent study lists 79 states and territories with populations below 1.5 million (Bray and Packer, 1993, p. xxii). The geographical distribution of these states is shown in Figure 1 which highlights the concentration of small countries in the Caribbean and the Pacific.

Of the 79 states listed in Figure 1, 64 have a population below 500,000 and 35 have a population under 100,000; 59 of the 79 are island states and territories, of which 38 are multi-island countries. Though characterised by smallness of population and, in most cases, land area (35 of the 79 have a land area under 500 square kilometres) small states show great diversity in respect of wealth, language, political systems and regional affiliations. However, one important common factor is that average aid per capita is high in relation to other developing countries. In 1988, for a sample of 54 small states, average aid per capita was US\$463 compared with US\$12 for all developing countries.

Education systems

Another common characteristic of all small states is the existence of a national education system. This is true in the smallest of states and in territories which are not fully independent. The main features of Vanuatu's education system are itemised in Figure 2. By international standards, the number of institutions is small. It is a system which is truncated at its upper end; a situation resolved in part by membership of a regional university and by overseas scholarships. For most small states, it is not possible to provide a broad range of post-secondary opportunities in-country. The demand for any one course is small and variable, and economies of scale cannot be realised. In Vanuatu's case, its unique language inheritance and multi-island geography pose particular challenges for the development of an effective education system.

And yet, however small the state, the essentials of any education system have to be met: trained teachers, curricula, examinations, schools, scholarships, books and other materials. The infrastructure and the expertise to ensure that a system is up and running has to be in place. In small states this is achieved through a central ministry of education, although in some countries (for

Figure 1 The dimensions of scale: 79 States with populations below 1.5 million (by region)

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|----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Africa (8) | Asia (8) | Atlantic (8) | Caribbean (20) |
| Botswana | Bahrain | Bermuda | Anguilla |
| Djibouti | Bhutan | Cape Verde | Antigua & Barbuda |
| Equatorial Guinea | Brunei Darussalam | Falkland Islands | Aruba |
| Gabon | Macau | Faeroe Islands | Bahamas |
| The Gambia | Oman | Greenland | Barbados |
| Guinea Bissau | Qatar | Iceland | Belize |
| Mauritania | United Arab Emirates | St. Helena | British Virgin Is. |
| Namibia | | Sao Tome & Principe | Cayman Islands |
| | | | Dominica |
| | | | Grenada |
| | | | Montserrat |
| | | | Netherlands Antilles |
| | | | St Kitts-Nevis |
| | | | St Lucia |
| | | | St. Vincent & the Grenadines |
| | | | Surinam |
| | | | Trinidad & Tobago |
| | | | Turks & Caicos Is. |
| | | | US Virgin Islands |
| Europe (9) | Indian Ocean (4) | Mediterranean (2) | Pacific (20) |
| Andorra | Comoros | Cyprus | American Samoa |
| Gibraltar | Maldives | Malta | Palau |
| Guernsey | Mauritius | | Cook Islands |
| Isle of Man | Seychelles | | Federated States of Micronesia |
| Jersey | | | Fiji |
| Liechtenstein | | | French Polynesia |
| Luxembourg | | | Guam |
| Monaco | | | Kiribati |
| San Marino | | | Marshall Islands |
| | | | Nauru |
| | | | New Caledonia |
| | | | Niue |
| | | | Northern Marianas |
| | | | Solomon Islands |
| | | | Tokelau |
| | | | Tonga |
| | | | Tuvalu |
| | | | Vanuatu |
| | | | Wallis & Futuna |
| | | | Western Samoa |

Source: Mark Bray and Steve Packer *Education in Small States: Concepts, Challenges and Strategies*, Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1993

Figure 2 Vanuatu's education system

| | |
|---|---|
| Vanuatu: population 157,000 (1990); an archipelago of over 80 islands; Melanesian; 200 distinct local languages | |
| Educational institutions | Key facts and statistics |
| Primary schools (1990) | 267 primary schools (grades 1–6; 24,952 students) 166 English language (15,552 students) 49 French language (3,835 students) 39 Catholic (4,993 students) 13 Protestant (572 students) 830 primary teachers Multi-class teaching in 20–30 per cent of schools |
| Secondary schools | 18 secondary schools (15 junior secondary, 3 senior secondary) Total enrolment: 3,799 (351 senior secondary) |
| Vanuatu Teachers College | Primary enrolment: 94 Secondary enrolment: 43 |
| National Institute of Technology | Total enrolment: 456 |
| University of the South Pacific | Vanuatu is a member country of the regional university Equivalent full time student enrolments: 46 USP has complex in Port Vila, the Vanuatu capital |

Figure 3 Dominica: Regional organisations

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|---|
| <p>The Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States</p> <p>The University of the West Indies</p> <p>The Caribbean Examinations Council</p> <p>The Caribbean Development Bank</p> <p>CARICOM (The Caribbean Community)</p> <p>The Association of Caribbean Tertiary Institutions (ACTI)</p> <p>The Caribbean Association of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (CATVET)</p> |
|---|

Figure 4 Seychelles: Aid relationships in support of education

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|--|
| Bilateral assistance |
| Australia Belgium Canada China Cuba France Germany India Japan Malaysia Netherlands Nigeria North Korea Sweden Switzerland UK USA and USSR |
| International organisations |
| WHO CFTC UNESCO UNFPA UNDP Commonwealth Youth Programme |
| Institutional linkages |
| The University of Quebec (Canada) |
| The University of Sussex (UK) |

example, in Tonga) the church is an important provider.

Most small states also have to lock into regional and international systems of aid and educational services to supplement and support national provision. Regional universities in the Caribbean and the South Pacific are one aspect of this. Figure 3 illustrates, through the example of Dominica in the Caribbean, the types of regional relationships which have to be maintained.

Aid and its attendant linkages form another important component of the support for the national education system in many small states. Figure 4 indicates the situation in Seychelles in the late 1980s. However, obtaining and sustaining these linkages requires time and expertise. Seychelles is also a country which retains a heavy dependence on expatriate personnel: in 1988, 15 in the Ministry of Education; 300 in the nation's schools.

So, on the one hand, small state systems of education are relatively easy to comprehend in terms of numbers and internal structures. On the other, the maintenance and development of systems necessitates a complex set of arrangements to ensure that professional knowledge and expertise are available.

Sources of expertise

Small states have a relatively small pool of human resources on which to draw in order to fulfil their high level manpower requirements in all sectors of the economy. Education is no exception. In some countries this situation is exacerbated by migration. For example, in the Polynesian countries Tonga and Western Samoa, it is estimated that up to 70 per cent of all post-secondary graduates have emigrated. The employment of expatriates, with all its attendant difficulties, may be one alternative.

Faced with the need to develop and sustain educational services, ministries of education in small states draw professional expertise for advisory/consultancy services from the following main sources:

- government service
- national institutions of higher education
- the wider national community
- regional institutions of higher education
- aid agencies
- international organisations
- metropolitan consultants.

Figure 5 summarises some of the characteristics of these sources of expertise as discussed at the Vanuatu Workshop. Governments and their ministries of education have to obtain expertise from these national, regional and international sources and make choices, if choices are not foisted upon them, as to which is the most appropriate. In establishing new services, new institutions, new curricula, new examinations and the like, expertise from beyond national frontiers is invariably required. In training in new skills, outside support is a probability in systems with a limited internal training capacity.

Factors determining choice

From the standpoint of governments and their ministries of education in small

Figure 5 Characteristics of sources of expertise

| Source | Comments |
|---|--|
| Government services | Ministries of education are the main source Few small state ministries can provide expertise across the spectrum of educational services |
| National institutions of higher education | Few small states have national universities (Malta, Cyprus and Mauritius are exceptions) The majority of developing small states have a single post-secondary institution with a limited capacity to advise ministries |
| The wider national community | There is development of private educational consultancy firms in some small states (notably in the Caribbean) Church education systems and institutions provide a source of expertise NGOs are active in technical training and literacy |
| Regional institutions of higher education | Universities are developing a consultancy capacity through institutes/schools of education or as part of a university consultancy company Universities offer regional (UWI, USP) or national expertise A service on call |
| Aid agencies | Consultancy is often part of an aid package Bilateral agencies often subcontract consultancy work within their home countries Consultants are answerable to the agencies Consultants may or may not know the country |
| International organisations | A mix of using their own staff, contracting staff or supporting local consultants Regionally-based organisations are more likely to tap national /regional expertise |
| Metropolitan consultants | Growth of western university-based consultancy services Metropolitan consultants are often contracted by aid agencies Metropolitan consultants market their wares direct to governments |

states, there is first a determination to build up national capacity within their own ministries. However, as Figure 6 shows, it may be difficult to establish a sustained in-house capacity in all areas.

In going beyond the ministry (nationally, regionally or internationally) a range of factors comes into play. There are financial, political, professional and managerial considerations.

The Vanuatu Workshop highlighted a range of situations. Governments may be ambivalent about where best to tap expertise. The attractions for governments and their ministries of education in using national or regional capacity include:

- Expertise is relatively close at hand and known.
- Consultants are likely to be familiar with national contexts.
- Charges may be low or non-existent.
- There is the likelihood of on-going links and relationships.
- Institutions in which governments have a stake can be used.

The reasons for not using national or regional expertise include:

- An unwillingness to trust institutions or individuals which lack a proven consultancy track record.
- Local consultants are less likely to have access to aid/development funds.
- A belief that metropolitan countries offer the 'best' expertise.
- An unwillingness to pay for consultancy services from institutions which countries feel that they are already supporting financially.

In many circumstances, small states have little choice over who consultants should be. This is especially the case when agencies require consultancy work to be undertaken in preparation for an aid programme. A half-way house may be achieved if the agency is willing, for example, to involve a regional university, as a part of a consultancy team. It has been a source of aggravation to national and regional universities that they have been by-passed, although there is some evidence to show that there is a growing willingness to consider partnerships of this sort.

Ministries in small states may be swayed by other considerations. They may be persuaded by the marketing blandishments of overseas consulting institutions; by the personal links which individuals in ministries may have with metropolitan institutions; or by an assessment of the management implications for the ministry which may arise. Some ministries (those, for example, of The Gambia and Seychelles) have established units within ministries of education which have responsibility for the management of overseas projects including consultancy work. Relative to the many demands placed on ministries by agencies and by individual consultants, this is time-consuming work.

Another consideration is the capacity within ministries in small states to make rational judgements on the quality of professional advice, either in terms of choosing the most suitable source of expertise or in assessing the product of a consultant's work.

From the standpoint of institutions of higher education in small states, all these factors come into play in the effort to become a significant source of advice and expertise in support of the national system of education. The professionalism of teaching and research is not all that consultancy work requires, as this manual seeks to demonstrate. The politics and the management of

Figure 6 Specialised units/posts in selected Commonwealth ministries of education

| Country | Plan-ning | Inspect-ions | Guid-ance | Curric-ulum | Exams | Tchr Trng | Tech. Educ. | Adult Educ. | Pre-School | Research/Evaluat'n | Broad-casts | Libraries | Int. Aid unit | Special Educ. | Bldg |
|-----------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|-------------|-------|-----------|-------------|-------------|------------|--------------------|-------------|-----------|---------------|---------------|------|
| Montserrat | yes | no | no | yes | no | no | yes | no | yes | no | no | no | no | no | yes |
| Cook Islands | no | yes | no | yes | no | yes | no | no | no | yes | no | no | no | no | yes |
| Kiribati | no | no | no | yes | no | yes | yes | no | no | no | yes | yes | no | no | no |
| Seychelles | yes | no | no | yes | yes | no | yes | no | no | yes | no | no | yes | no | yes |
| Dominica | no | no | no | yes | no | yes | yes | yes | no | no | no | yes | no | no | no |
| Jersey | no | yes | yes | no | no | no | no | no | yes | no | no | yes | no | yes | no |
| Tonga | yes | yes | no | yes | yes | yes | yes | no | no | no | no | no | no | no | no |
| St Lucia | yes | no | no | yes | yes | no | no | yes | yes | yes | no | yes | no | no | yes |
| Western Samoa | no | yes | no | yes | yes | yes | no | no | no | yes | yes | yes | no | no | no |
| Maldives | yes | yes | no | yes | yes | yes | no | yes | no | no | no | no | yes | no | yes |
| Brunei Dsm | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | no | no | yes | no | no | no | no | no |
| Barbados | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | no | no | no | yes | yes | no | yes | no | no | yes |
| Solomon Islands | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | no | no | no | no | no | no | yes | no | no | no |
| Malta | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | no | yes | yes | yes | no | yes | yes | no | yes | no |
| The Gambia | yes | yes | yes | yes | no | yes | yes | yes | no | no | no | yes | no | no | yes |
| Guyana | yes | yes | no | yes | yes | yes | yes | no | yes | yes | yes | yes | no | no | yes |
| Botswana | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes | no | no | yes | no | no | no | yes |

Notes: 1. The countries have been ranked in ascending order of population size.

2. Functions have been indicated only according to whether they are specifically named in the title of a job or unit. Some functions, of course, are still carried out even though they are not identified in the title.

Source: Mark Bray *Making small practical: The organisation and management of ministries of education in small states*, Commonwealth Secretariat Publications, 1991

consultancy to meet the needs of governments which have a strong controlling hand in institutions of higher education, require a clearly articulated position; the consultancy function cannot be an add-on, to be undertaken as and when time allows.

The higher education institutions have to develop close professional relationships with aid agencies and international organisations; demonstrate ability to provide specialist knowledge; and understand the processes by which agencies function.