

Introduction

This book is mainly intended for:

- senior and middle-level administrators in ministries and departments of education in small states, and
- trainers of educational administrators for small states.

The trainers may be actually in small states; or they may be in the institutions of larger states that serve smaller ones.

The book aims to stimulate thinking by presenting and discussing the administrative models and experiences of a range of countries. It can be read by individuals independently; it can be discussed at staff meetings and internal 'brainstorming' sessions; and it can be used as reference material in training workshops and courses.

1. Focus

Many of the bureaucratic models used in small states were originally designed for much larger states, and do not always operate very well in small systems. It is often desirable at least to modify basic models and perhaps even to create new ones. Ministries commonly undertake reviews of their structures and procedures, but the officers in charge of these reviews do not always have good comparative material on which to base their decisions. This book reduces that problem. Whereas most literature is based on medium-sized and large states, this book specifically focuses on small ones.

The book cannot present rules which are universally applicable. Each country faces different circumstances, and structures and procedures must be adapted to fit the goals, cultures and resources of individual societies. However, much can be learned from different systems. Sometimes the lessons are what to avoid rather than what to imitate, but both types of lesson are valuable.

The book has seven chapters:

- *Chapter 1* notes the range and diversity of small states, but also identifies common features in small-state economies, societies and politics. This sets the context for subsequent chapters.
- *Chapter 2* focuses on the framework of public administration in small states, noting ways in which structures and practices differ in small states from those in larger states. It highlights personal relationships, government pervasiveness and links between politicians and bureaucrats in small states.
- *Chapter 3* turns to the formal organisation of Ministries of Education. It presents a variety of examples, commenting on their advantages and disadvantages. For example, while some ministries have specialist units for planning, curriculum development and research, others require officers to be multi-functional. In the latter case it is instructive to note which functions are grouped together and how. The chapter also notes priorities, and identifies tasks which in some ministries are not undertaken at all.
- *Chapter 4* turns to the management aspects. It begins with the management implications of situations in which everybody seems to know everybody else, not only in the office but also outside. The chapter also discusses decision-making styles, dissemination of information, ways to allow for staff absences, the building of teams, and management of inter-ministry links.
- *Chapter 5* expands on personnel matters. Among the first problems encountered in small states is job definition in situations where staff are expected to be multi-functional and flexible. The chapter also looks at sources of personnel in small states, and at career paths in what is often a very restricted hierarchy. From this, the chapter turns to appraisal systems, training plans and training strategies.
- *Chapter 6* focuses on international linkages. To some extent such linkages pervade discussion in all parts of the book, but they are sufficiently important to deserve a specific chapter. Most small states are members of at least some regional bodies as well as of broader international organisations. The chapter examines the implications of work with these organisations from the viewpoint of the small Ministry of Education. It also highlights the administrative implications of the foreign aid programmes found in many small states.
- *Chapter 7* completes the book with a summary of experiences and models and a final overview. Models cannot always be

transferred from one context to another, but small states can still learn a lot from each other.

2. Concepts and Definitions

A book on small states should always indicate at the beginning what it means by 'small', for the term is of course relative. Most analysts use population as the main criterion, though common alternative or supplementary indicators are area and size of economy.

Following a pattern common among analysts, for this book population has been made the main criterion. Small states are defined as ones with populations below 1.5 million. However this cut-off point is entirely arbitrary, and it is often more appropriate to examine issues along a continuum of size. It is also important to observe differences between states which have similar population sizes but very different areas and economies.

A second question in a book on small states is what is meant by a 'state'. In this book, the concept is not restricted by sovereignty. Many non-sovereign territories have strong autonomy, and much of the material in this book is as applicable to them as to sovereign states. For example, Montserrat and Anguilla are two Caribbean territories which have opted to remain colonies of the United Kingdom. They both have a high degree of self-government, and the issues facing their Ministries of Education are comparable to those in such neighbouring independent territories as Dominica and Antigua & Barbuda.

The final point concerns the definition of 'ministry'. In some countries the Ministry of Education is a very small unit, chiefly comprising the minister and a personal assistant. The main bureaucratic body is then called a department of education. Other countries do not make this terminological distinction, instead using the term ministry to cover the whole structure from the minister downwards. In this book the word department is used when referring to organisations in specific countries which employ that term. In general, however, the book uses the word ministry to cover both the office of the minister and the operational bureaucracy.

3. Preparation of the Book

The origins of this book were mentioned in the Foreword. Preparation occurred in three distinct phases. The first was the February 1989 meeting in Malta mentioned in the Foreword. Participants included

officers from:

- the Ministries of Education in Bahamas, Cook Islands, The Gambia, Maldives, Malta, St. Lucia, Seychelles and Tonga;
- the Universities of Malta, the South Pacific and the West Indies;
- the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration (CCEA);
- the Division of Educational Policies & Planning at Unesco headquarters;
- Unesco's Caribbean Network of Educational Innovation for Development (CARNEID); and
- the Commonwealth Secretariat (both its Education and Management Development Programmes).

Following the Malta meeting, the Commonwealth Secretariat commissioned detailed case studies. Most authors were officers actually working in the ministries about which they wrote. In some cases these individuals were paired with outsiders, who helped to strengthen objectivity and stimulate ideas. The case studies covered the Ministries of Education in Barbados, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Dominica, The Gambia, Guyana, Jersey, Kiribati, Maldives, Malta, Montserrat, St. Lucia, Seychelles, Solomon Islands and Tonga.

The third phase, leading to direct preparation of the book, commenced after completion of the case studies. Mark Bray was commissioned to do the basic drafting, but his work was guided by Hubert Charles, Charles Farrugia, Steve Packer and Jakes Swartland. Once the first draft of the manuscript had been prepared, in 1990 the team met in Jersey to provide detailed criticism and to help in improvement. The final product was prepared by Mark Bray in the light of inputs from the other team members.

It cannot be pretended that this process was either easy or inexpensive, but it was very worthwhile. This book is the product of wide ranging inputs, including:

- the papers and discussions of the Malta meeting,
- the materials in the case studies, and
- the existing literature on public administration and other features of small countries.

This represents a wide base of material. The Malta meeting and the subsequent case studies brought material from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, the Indian Ocean and the South Pacific. The members of the editorial team also had diverse professional experience.

It will further be noted that the countries covered embrace a range of types. Some are rich while others are poor; some are island states while others are coastal or inland states; some have populations below 20,000, while others have populations over a million. To some extent the diversity of these features is problematic since it makes comparison more difficult. However, it is hoped that readers will also see the strongly beneficial side of the diversity, for it has generated valuable contrasts. And underlying all the diversity is a significant base of commonality from which all small states can learn.