

Chapter 5:

Personnel and Training

Of course discussion of personnel issues could have been, and to some extent was, contained in the two preceding chapters on organisation and management. However, the topic requires more detailed treatment, and as such deserves a separate chapter.

Discussion here begins by addressing questions of job definition. In small states it is often difficult to define jobs, particularly because individuals have to be multi-functional, and because job requirements may constantly change.

Once needs have been defined, it is necessary to find people to perform the work. This matter is the focus of the second section, which comments on sources of personnel for both long and short-term assignments.

The third section turns to career paths. In many small ministries problems arise from the limited number of promotion posts. Administrators have to seek ways to secure some job mobility and to find ways to motivate staff in what may otherwise be a stagnant environment.

The focus on career paths overlaps with that on appraisal systems, discussed in the fourth section. In many small states it is difficult to appraise the work of specialists, especially when the postholders are the only people in the country with full understanding of what needs to be appraised. Also, appraisal systems have to be adjusted to allow for the highly personalised frameworks of small states in which many people are inter-related or have other out-of-work connections.

The fifth section turns to the planning of training. Because of staffing constraints small states may find it difficult to find people and time to draw up training plans; but the cost of failing to produce plans is so high that it deserves to become a priority.

Finally, the chapter moves from training plans to training strategies. It notes five main ways in which small states may secure training. These include in-house training, overseas courses, and distance education.

1. Job Definition

In all ministries, and indeed in all bureaucracies, it is essential to have at least some definition of individual jobs. Usually this is done through job descriptions or duty statements that are attached to specific posts. A job description guides the individual and others about what that individual is supposed to do, and provides a basis for evaluation of performance. However, in small ministries job definitions may need to be more flexible than in large ministries.

Among problems of job definition highlighted in the Commonwealth case studies were:

- a) *Multi-functionalism.* Many officers in small ministries have to undertake multiple functions. The work they actually do is often determined not so much by a professional master-plan but by the skills they happen to possess and the gaps in the skills of their colleagues. It is for such reasons that in Seychelles, for example, the financial controller also works as an assistant accountant, the Director of Educational Planning & Development also teaches, the Director of Administration also works as a computer operator, and curriculum development staff also take responsibilities for school supervision and examinations. Rarely are such disparate roles actually built into the individuals' duty statements.
- b) *Flexibility.* It cannot be assumed that individuals who perform multi-functional roles at particular points in time will always undertake those particular tasks. Much depends on what is needed and who else is available to do it. Officers in small ministries often have to cover for colleagues who are absent. Sometimes these duties take them outside their ministries altogether. For example an officer of the Ministry of Education might be needed periodically as an interpreter for visiting foreign delegations, or as an enumerator in the census.
- c) *Changing priorities.* In all bureaucracies it is necessary from time to time to review and revise job descriptions. The extent to which officers' roles change may be particularly marked in small bureaucracies. For example the existence of short-term aid projects may sharply alter activities. In one year aid projects might focus on adult literacy, but in another year they might focus on primary school curriculum. It may not be easy to predict these changes.
- d) *Lack of specialists to draw up specialist job descriptions.* Small states, almost by definition, have few personnel in individual

Maximising Use of Expertise

In small ministries it is essential to maximise use of all available expertise, even if the current official duty statements of specific officers are unrelated to particular tasks at hand.

This point was emphasised in the case study on Botswana, where most department heads have had varied careers within and sometimes also outside the education system. The Chief Education Officer in charge of primary education and teacher training, for example, might have some knowledge of secondary education through previous experience as a Senior Education Officer in that sector.

Recognising this, the top managers in Botswana harness experience through committees. For instance, the working committee on Improving Access to Secondary Education incorporates the CEO (Nonformal Education), the Director (Unified Teaching Service), and the CEO (Primary & Teacher Training) as well as the CEO (Secondary). Although the present jobs of these individuals may be unrelated to the task at hand, their previous experiences are too valuable to be wasted.

An additional benefit of this arrangement arises from the involvement of officers from a wide range of units. This helps those officers to gain an overview of the direction of change in the system as a whole, which in turn may help them to do their own jobs more effectively. This may be another aspect in which 'small is beautiful'.

specialisms. When a new post is created, e.g. for a public relations officer or a school nutritionist, there may not be anyone with sufficient expertise to draw up a proper job description. Sometimes specialists are recruited on very vague criteria and are left to determine their own duties as they see fit.

- e) *Job descriptions made to fit individuals.* Chapter 3 pointed out that small states have to maximise use of the expertise that is available to them. Sometimes this means that posts are created with specific individuals in mind. The case study from Kiribati, for example, indicated that this was true of the Chief Education

Officer post. But when that individual retires, resigns or is promoted, the job description has to be rewritten. Often this makes it also necessary to rewrite the job descriptions of several other people, to ensure that all essential areas are covered.

These points underline the need for job descriptions which are neither too vague nor too detailed. Job descriptions that are too vague lead to misinterpretations and disputes; but ones which are too detailed place the public service and the individual in a strait-jacket which restricts the flexibility and improvisation necessary in the limited labour environment of small states. As in all organisations, but perhaps especially in small ministries which are organisationally fluid, it is also necessary to review job statements from time to time.

2. Sources of Personnel

Once needs have been identified, administrators have to find people to undertake the work. This section focuses on recruitment first for permanent posts, and then for short-term assignments.

(a) Permanent Posts

The main source of personnel in small states is of course comparable to that in medium-sized and large states, i.e. the local labour market. However, states with small populations have small pools of professional personnel. This is particularly true of states with young education systems. The question then is how the pool can be enlarged.

Two major ways may be presented here. The first is to encourage nationals who have emigrated to other countries to come back home. This has been a strong policy in Barbados and other countries of the English-speaking Caribbean which advertise senior posts overseas as well as locally. To make conditions more attractive, contracts often include gratuities and passages for the officers and their families.

The second strategy is to employ expatriates. This has been particularly prominent in the less developed countries of Africa and the South Pacific. For instance at the time of writing the Solomon Islands case study the Principal Examinations Officer, the acting CEO (Planning), the acting SEO (Nonformal), and the adviser to the Implementation and Planning Unit were all expatriates. External recruitment may also be prominent in Jersey, where even the Director of Education is an expatriate.

Both these strategies, it must be recognised, have attendant problems:

- It may be difficult to locate suitably qualified nationals who are abroad and who are willing to return home, and the advertising and interviewing process may be both costly and time consuming. Also, external recruitment may cause resentment at home. The Barbados case study indicated that "the policy is sometimes criticised by those who have laboured locally only to see Barbadian nationals return from abroad to fill coveted posts".
- Employment of expatriates tends to be even more costly, and may arouse even stronger opposition. It does nothing to reduce unemployment at home, and it is not always easy to find expatriates who have both the required professional skills and desirable social and political attitudes. The Maldives case study noted a further problem arising from the lack of diplomatic missions abroad. To reduce this problem the authorities envisage use of commercial firms and Ministries of Education in friendly countries; but this solution is not completely satisfactory.

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* **Enlarging the Pool of Expertise** *

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* *Ministries in small countries may be handicapped by the size* *
* *of the pool from which they can draw expertise. Some* *
* *Ministries of Education make this problem worse by recruiting* *
* *the majority or even all their staff from among teachers and* *
* *school principals. This practice has been noted in countries* *
* *far apart as Botswana and Solomon Islands.* *

* *While it is of course important for Ministry of Education* *
* *staff to understand the realities of classroom and school life,* *
* *limitation of recruitment to this pool imposes an undesirable* *
* *restriction. For many Ministry of Education jobs, direct* *
* *teaching experience is not essential. Such jobs include* *
* *manpower planning, accounting, and distribution of materials.* *
* *Indeed the work of the ministry may be enhanced by the per-* *
* *spectives of individuals who have worked in other sectors, to* *
* *to complement those who have worked in the school system.* *

Because of these factors even the richest governments, such as that of Brunei Darussalam, have to give first priority to the domestic supply of labour. Nevertheless, it is widely agreed that total reliance on the domestic pool of labour causes more problems than it solves. The Barbados case study suggests that "the alternative [to external recruitment] is inbreeding, with resulting problems which are perhaps worse". Many small states send high-level missions abroad to secure recruitment of appropriate people.

(b) Short-Term Work

Small states with flexible employment terms of service can often secure the services of good people for short-term assignments by giving them specific contracts. Such arrangements are particularly useful for people who have retired, or who have left the service for other reasons (e.g. in the case of women who want more time for their families). Through this mechanism people who have left recently can be brought back to work on specific and well-defined tasks in operational positions. Part-time and flexi-time arrangements also help improve access to people of this type.

Some ministries, especially in the Caribbean, also keep directories of nationals who are resident abroad but who may be available for short-term assignments. Such assignments might include preparation of architectural drawings, artwork, book designs, etc.. Sometimes the work can be done in the specialist's place of residence rather than actually in-country.

Much short-term consultancy work is also conducted by expatriates. Appropriate people may be recruited regionally as well as from more distant countries. They can provide:

- expertise which is not readily available within the country,
- fresh perspectives based on the experiences of other countries,
- neutrality in the context of local rivalries and pressures, and
- time.

With regard to the last point, the Barbados case study noted that although senior ministry personnel do have considerable expertise, they are so busy with the multitude of daily tasks requiring attention in small countries that they do not have the time for certain types of detailed professional work. Recruitment of external consultants helps tackle this problem. An additional benefit noted by the Barbados study is that "formal and informal discussions with visitors provide the intellectual

stimulus that is often lacking in small countries".

However, it must also be recognised that use of consultants encounters difficulties. Most obviously:

- the consultants may not have appropriate cultural understanding of the countries in which they work;
- the consultants' previous experience may be in medium-sized and large countries, and their recommendations may be inappropriate to small countries;
- the external consultants do not know the detailed intricacy of the small society and the personalities involved;
- consultants usually work on specific assignments only for short periods of time, and
- external consultants are usually expensive.

* Sources of Consultancy Expertise: The TOKTEN Programme *

* *Small states have many sources of consultancy expertise. They can make direct arrangements, or they can go through international organisations and donor agencies.* *

* *One useful source is the Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) programme of the United Nations. The programme enables governments to use the expertise of nationals who are no longer locally resident but who have good understanding of local conditions. The programme may be particularly valuable to small states with high emigration rates.* *

* *In 1988 and 1989, the programme enabled the Ministry of Education in Guyana to recruit eight overseas Guyanese. The consultants came for periods ranging from two weeks to three months, and assisted in:* *

* - *development of the medium-term education plan,* *

* - *editing of skill-reinforcement guides for primary teachers,* *

* - *training of science, guidance and remedial-reading teachers,* *

* *and* *

* - *training of teacher educators.* *

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Nevertheless, awareness of these difficulties is the first step towards avoiding them. Small states may be assisted to find appropriate consultants by international organisations, some of which have the interests of small states specifically at heart. The Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation is among these.* Also, it is often possible to secure consultant services free of charge through foreign aid programmes.

3. Career Paths

Small ministries may face major problems in achieving smooth career paths. These problems particularly arise from the small number of senior posts allocated to the ministry.

- On the one hand, movement of one or two people may trigger mobility for almost everybody else further down the system.
- But on the other hand if people at the top do not move, the advancement of all those below them may be permanently blocked.

Although the former case was cited in the case study from The Gambia, the latter case seems more common. It was given particular attention in Botswana, Jersey and St. Lucia. In such a framework individuals who are lucky may find themselves in senior posts at very young ages; but those who are unlucky may find themselves almost permanently blocked simply because their seniors are just a few years older.

One result of this type of situation in Botswana has been the tendency for individuals to try to upgrade their posts by inflating the breadth and levels of their responsibility. This is one reason why the Botswana ministry has five individuals titled Chief Education Officer. The need for mobility has also led to a reclassification of posts in St. Lucia.

The government of Montserrat reduces the problem of stagnation by requiring retirement at the age of 55. However this creates a new difficulty, for it excludes from the system individuals with valuable skills and experience. The loss of such expertise at an age when most people are still active may be felt particularly acutely in a small system.

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[Fax: 071 930 0827].

Seychelles, by contrast, has a slightly different problem. Unlike the bottom-heavy administrative pyramids of many larger countries, Seychelles has a top-heavy structure. Whereas in bottom-heavy systems individuals may feel frustrated because they see little chance of moving to the top, in Seychelles they are likely to be frustrated because individuals fresh from professional training start somewhere near the top and then find that there are few more steps to go.

The irony here is that both types of situation lead to a drain of qualified manpower to countries where greater opportunities are available. One method employed in Seychelles to overcome the problem is the switching of personnel from one ministry to another in the hope that new environments and responsibilities will boost motivation. This strategy also promotes multi-functionalism. However, in Seychelles implementation has not yet been entirely satisfactory, and usually the approach is only possible with personnel who are not over-specialised or who have retrained in different fields. Compulsory transfer has also been discussed in Jersey, but has not yet been implemented there because it has been widely seen as threatening and disruptive.

The stronger promotion prospects of generalists were mentioned in several case studies. In Barbados, for example:

Promotion of Ministry staff is principally based on merit, but generalists who have administrative and other experience in more than one section/role tend to have the edge.

Moreover:

Where specialists are promoted to senior and essentially administrative posts, they have to give up their specialist functions e.g. in science, mathematics or language arts.

This type of framework is common but wasteful. Small states can ill-afford to underutilise the specialist expertise of available people. One solution proposed in Barbados, though not yet implemented, is to give posts different levels according to the incumbents rather than according to the tasks. This is a common principle in universities, where a course on philosophy of education, for example, might be taught by a lecturer, a senior lecturer or a full professor. In the university world, individuals who commence as lecturers but who wish to be promoted do not normally have to sacrifice their professional expertise. This sort of model could be useful in large ministries as well as small ones; but it is perhaps especially desirable in small states, which face a stronger necessity to use limited human resources effectively.

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* **The Problems of Blocked Promotion: An Example from** *
* **Kiribati** *
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* *In 1989, the average age of all officers in the top three tiers* *
* *the Kiribati Ministry of Education was just 37. The* *
* *compulsory retirement age was 50. Many staff at lower* *
* *levels realised that their chances of promotion were very* *
* *poor, and therefore left the Ministry to seek brighter prospects* *
* *elsewhere.* *
* *Those at the top of the structure might consider themselves* *
* *fortunate to have been promoted at such a young age. But* *
* *the age structure also caused difficulties. What could be done* *
* *in this type of situation to alleviate the problem?* *
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4. Staff Appraisal

Effective staff development must rely on a good appraisal system. Some type of appraisal is highly desirable in all ministries, both large and small. Appraisal schemes assist senior officials in identifying the strong and the weak members of their staffs, and thus facilitating decisions on promotion and further training. In ideal circumstances, appraisal is closely linked to counselling.

Most basic principles of appraisal and counselling are applicable in all organisations, and do not require detailed examination here. Readers who wish to examine these basic principles are referred to the 'Further Reading' section at the end of the chapter. However, it is relevant to note the specific features of appraisal and counselling in small ministries.

(a) Some Problems

Whereas in large ministries the functions of appraisal and counselling can be undertaken by separate individuals, in small ministries the tasks are usually undertaken jointly by single individuals. In many respects this is advantageous, for it promotes linkages. However, in small and sensitive communities the task of giving positive guidance to weak individuals may be very challenging. Special training may be needed.

It may also be advantageous to share these crucial responsibilities with super-ministerial entities, such as the Establishment and Training Divisions.

Second, small ministries find it difficult to appraise specialists. For instance the Barbados case study indicated that there was only one educational psychologist in the whole country, and nobody else had a sufficiently strong professional base to appraise what that educational psychologist did. The Seychelles case study made a similar observation:

For example if an officer is made responsible for development of a subject curriculum, it is simply assumed that the officer will perform well. If performance is poor, top decision-makers are unlikely to know about it unless they are themselves specialists in that area.

The third point is again linked to the sociological features of small states. Even in large societies it is not uncommon for supervisors to grade almost all staff as 'average'. They do this partly because it seems easier, and partly because it avoids confrontation with subordinates who deserve negative rankings. As stressed in the Kiribati case study, in small and highly personalised societies the need to avoid confrontation is very strong, for supervisors who give negative rankings are still likely to meet their subordinates regularly in a wide range of social settings. Yet the pressure to grade most people as average reduces the value of the whole appraisal exercise.

(b) Some Solutions

One solution, employed in such states as Jersey and Solomon Islands, is to develop schemes for self-appraisal. Such schemes are widely used in jobs of all sorts and countries of all sizes, but they may be particularly valuable in small states. Self-appraisal schemes may be directed more towards job satisfaction than to pay and promotion. As such, they also help tackle the problems of stagnation in a restricted hierarchy.

A second strategy, used for example in Dominica, is to use a Management by Objectives approach to appraisal. This approach reduces the difficulties in appraising specialists. Instead of expecting one person, usually the immediate superior, to appraise the work of specialists, a wider range of people with whom the specialists have worked are invited to comment. In this strategy, appraisal becomes more of a collaborative exercise. It has to be conducted carefully and sensitively to avoid severe interpersonal tensions, but when the atmos-

there is right this type of system can work well. Perhaps one key is to avoid specific ratings, for these are typically the greatest source of conflict, and are not always needed.

A third solution, noted in the Barbados case study, is to invite overseas consultants to assist in appraisal. However, this strategy may be expensive, could require a lot of organisation, and could cause serious interpersonal tension. Because of these factors the strategy is not used very often, except perhaps in an indirect way when overseas visitors are asked to evaluate projects and therefore by implication those responsible for the projects.

Finally and perhaps most commonly, ministry officers may use informal methods for appraisal. The Solomon Islands case study indicated that:

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* **Appraisal Procedures: The Seychelles Pattern** *
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* *According to the Seychelles case study, staff appraisal in that* *
* *country is achieved by such processes as:* *
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* - *observing the quality of the end-products,* *
* - *observing the techniques used in the execution of duties,* *
* - *studying interpersonal relationships,* *
* - *soliciting information from co-workers in a casual way,* *
* - *visiting the work place and talking to the people* *
* *concerned, and* *
* - *noting the remarks of those who are affected by the* *
* *person concerned.* *
*
* *"Official appraisal forms are completed jointly by employees* *
* *and employers, and occasional inspections are carried out by* *
* *superiors or their representatives. However, informal* *
* *monitoring permits 'in-course' correction, which is essential* *
* *in a state with many inexperienced administrators. Further,* *
* *when working with a small pool of people, the emphasis of* *
* *appraisal is mainly on training and increased efficiency.* *
* *These objectives and processes seem more appropriate to a* *
* *small and young nation trying to develop its civil service."* *
*

In practice, assessments tend to be based on guesstimates.... In essence, a lot of 'weighing' is practised, even in the only staff confidential report which is made out annually.

Similar comments were made in the Maldives case study:

Individuals are often put through a subtle process of weighing up, a process known locally as 'vakaru jehun'.

The case study authors pointed out that this informal appraisal encountered problems of subjectivity and unreliability. In small systems it is not always realistic to expect complex and time-consuming formal procedures; but there does seem to be a case for at least some formalisation.

5. Training Plans

The case studies of Solomon Islands, Dominica, Montserrat and Maldives lamented the absence of overall training plans to guide decision-making and facilitate rational use of resources. For these countries many training opportunities are available through external aid projects, but in Solomon Islands "because no proper analysis has yet been carried out on national requirements, most training is only loosely tied to the country's needs". One result of the lack of a training plan in Dominica is that individuals who have acquired specialist skills abroad are often discontented on their return because they find little opportunity to use these skills. And in Montserrat there is a tendency for officers "to serve before they are trained and then either to leave after training or to be promoted out of particular positions."

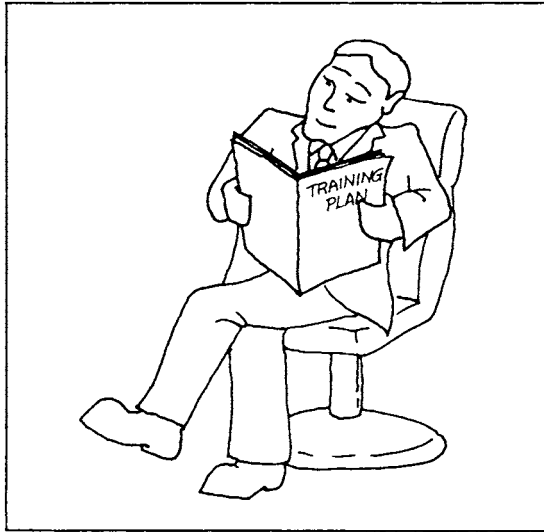
The Seychelles case study emphasised the value of experience as well as of formal qualifications:

Education by its very nature needs highly qualified staff. Apart from some personnel in the Administration Division and the support staff of other divisions, all officers within the headquarters need academic qualifications plus, in certain cases, additional qualifications in educational administration. However, education is one field in which no amount of qualification can compensate for lack of experience....

Yet provision of experience also needs to be planned. Efficient use of resources can only occur when senior administrators know what

experience and training they want for their officers, and then identify ways to get it.

Of course production of training plans is more easily recommended than achieved, especially in small states which are short of manpower. However, the cost of not preparing good plans may be high, for small states may fail to use efficiently the limited manpower resources which they do have.



Efficient use of resources requires a training plan. Small states may feel that they lack the manpower to draw up such plans; but the high long-run costs of failing to prepare plans require such preparation to be a priority.

From the small-state viewpoint, the background factors to be considered during preparation of training plans will include:

- *The need for multi-functional administrators.* This need has been mentioned frequently in this book. In the words of the Jersey case study, training of multi-functional administrators "is a basic necessity for survival, not a mere theoretical interest".

But it is easier to advocate than to achieve such multi-functional training. Small states do not want 'Jacks of all trades and masters of none'; rather they need 'Jacks of at least several trades, and masters of all of them'.

The advice of a senior administrator in Tonga is to allow individuals to begin by specialising, so that they can at least become masters of limited fields and can build up their self-confidence. Experience suggests that such people will then be able to diversify and to acquire additional specialisms.

- *Expertise in training.* States with small populations rarely have trainers in all the required specialisms. Good trainers must have (i) knowledge of their subject, and (ii) skills in communication and teaching. Individuals who have both these attributes may be scarce. For in-country training, small states often have to recruit trainers from abroad.
- *High direct costs.* Recruitment of foreign trainers requires payment of fees, travel and accommodation. Unit costs are increased by the low numbers attending courses in small states. One solution is to send trainees abroad, but that may also be expensive.
- *High opportunity costs.* In small states it may be particularly difficult to release staff for training. In a small ministry, the absence of three or four people is felt much more seriously than in a large ministry.

The other side of this coin, though, is that small ministries are less able afford *not* to send people for training. When human resources are scarce, it becomes even more important to maximise efficiency and effectiveness.

- *Formation of larger groups.* Education personnel may sometimes be grouped with officers from other ministries to form groups of sufficient size to justify training programmes. This may create difficulties in meeting the specialist needs of each officer, but it can have the additional benefit of promoting linkages across the public service.

6. Training Strategies

Bearing in mind the above points, it is useful to note five main categories of training strategy.

(a) In-House Training

To some extent, in-house training comes naturally. Individuals learn how to do jobs simply through experience. This happens in organisations of all types, and in countries of all sizes. But it is often desirable to

structure in-house and on-the-job training in order to maximise efficiency. A particular advantage for small ministries is that staff can gain training without having to leave their posts.

Some types of in-house training can be achieved entirely with internal resources. There is great potential benefit in a structure which makes senior managers trainers and mentors to more junior staff. Ideally, the Permanent Secretary should take a direct interest in professional staff development, ensuring that officers are given a range of experiences in different functions.

Other types of in-house training may be undertaken with resources from elsewhere in the country. In all countries, much help with in-service training may be gained from other ministries in the public service. Many the countries also have institutions of higher education with appropriate expertise.

Some governments also harness external resources for in-house training. Seychelles, for example, has made considerable use of foreign consultants. Sometimes the consultants are recruited specifically for training. On other occasions the consultants are employed for such tasks as design of laboratories, help with manpower plans, or establishment of computer systems, but are asked to undertake training as well.

Yet even if consultants are not specifically asked to undertake training, one would hope that the comment made in the Montserrat case study would also apply in other contexts. According to the authors, "it is difficult for sensitive officers not to glean from external consultants some knowledge of what obtains elsewhere". As they pointed out, this fact helps to enhance the general awareness and the 'critical climate' of the Ministry.

(b) Domestic Institutions

Despite the constraints of small size, many small states do have impressive local institutions. The University of Malta, for example, is a respected institution with a history exceeding 400 years. Other small states with universities include Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Guyana, Mauritius and Western Samoa. These institutions provide both conceptual and skills training in a wide range of subjects.

Other small states feel it inappropriate to try to operate full universities, but do nevertheless have important lower-level institutions. Table 6 lists some post-secondary colleges in Commonwealth small states. A significant number were established quite recently. They cannot meet all needs, but they can certainly assist in some areas.

Table 6: Multi-Faceted Post-Secondary Colleges in Selected Commonwealth States

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Year of Foundation</i>
Barbados Community College	1968
College of the Bahamas	1974
Antigua State College	1977
The Gambia College	1979
Clifton Dupigny Community College (Dominica)	1982
Seychelles Polytechnic	1983
Solomon Islands College of Higher Education	1985
Sir Arthur Lewis Community College (St. Lucia)	1986
St. Kitts & Nevis College of Further Education	1988
Tonga Community Development & Training Centre	1988
Grenada National College	1988

(c) Regional Cooperation

Among the best-known regional training institutions are the University of the West Indies (UWI) and the University of the South Pacific (USP). UWI opened in 1948 and serves 14 countries; and USP opened 1968 and serves 11 countries. The two institutions have had a major impact on the development of their regions. Both universities offer training in educational administration as well as in other skills essential to ministries of education.

It must be recognised that regional cooperation is often fragile. UWI and USP have so far survived the tensions of member states pulling in different directions, but the University of Botswana, Lesotho & Swaziland collapsed in the mid-1970s. Also, some member countries have found UWI and USP unresponsive to their specific needs. For example the Solomon Islands case study indicated that:

some USP courses much needed by this country have recently been abolished. Among them have been the B.Ed. and Diploma courses, which were cut simply because only Solomon Islands and a few other smaller countries still needed them.

Another strategy which is much less structured but which still has great value uses networks of professionals. For example the Caribbean Network of Educational Innovation for Development (CARNEID) has organised training programmes in school administration, educational

planning, book development, and reading. Such networks are of course open to large states as well as small ones. However, they are particularly important to small states because they emphasise regional or group implementation of programmes, thus permitting sharing of scarce expertise and financial resources.

Of course the whole notion of regional cooperation depends on the existence of other countries with which to cooperate. Some small states are geographically isolated, with few neighbours who face comparable circumstances. Seychelles, for example, is over 1,500 kilometres from the African continent, with which in any case it shares few cultural bonds. Brunei Darussalam and The Gambia are less isolated, but their neighbours are large and are not interested in the sort of cooperation found in the Caribbean and the South Pacific.

Nevertheless, it must be repeated that in many cases regional cooperation is both possible and highly beneficial. It is an important way through which many small states meet at least some training needs.

(d) Foreign Institutions

Another alternative is for small states to send their personnel for training outside the region. There are several advantages in this practice, especially when:

- the limited number of officials requiring training, or the total costs involved, do not justify a local or regional course;
- the required staff and facilities are not available in the small state;
- the variety of expertise, the academic level and innovative content of the course offered abroad are much higher in quality than anything the small state or region can offer;
- the costs of training, travel and accommodation are met by a donor agency or by the host government; and
- the small states desire flexibility which they would lose if they established their own institutions.

On the negative side there is a danger of irrelevance if courses are dominated by the perspectives of the host country. But, as noted by the Dominica case study, this may be balanced by the widening of perspectives which trainees can achieve. Trainees can be exposed to administrative practices, academic ideas and general educational orientations which may enrich their personal and professional perspectives. Encounters with professionals from the host country and from other states

Identifying Appropriate Courses in Foreign Institutions

When selecting overseas courses for training, small states may feel handicapped by a lack of information about what is available. This need may be reduced through personal contacts, e.g. with visiting consultants and with staff of institutions in which Ministry officers have already received training. However, several publications might provide more might provide more systematic information. Perhaps the most useful are:

- *a Unesco publication entitled Study Abroad. It is updated every three years, and is available from: Unesco, 7 place de Fontenoy, 75700, Paris, France. As well as a list of courses, it includes a directory of scholarships.*
- *The Commonwealth Universities Yearbook, published annually by the Association of Commonwealth Universities, 36 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PF, UK. The Yearbook does not include information on courses, but it does list addresses, staff and departments in Commonwealth Universities.*

Additional publications available through commercial outlets include:

- *Commission of the European Communities, Higher Education in the European Community: A Directory of Courses and Institutions in 12 Countries, Kogan Page, London. [revised every few years]*
- *The World of Learning, Europa Publications, London. [revised every two years; contains addresses of institutions, but no information on courses]*

The Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration also helps with information. Write to the CCEA Secretariat, University of New England, Armidale, NSW 2351, Australia; Fax: 067 73 3122.

give trainees opportunities to exchange views, test techniques and share experiences which eventually can be considered for possible adoption at home.

Moreover, trainees may gain friends and professional contacts who may be invaluable resource people and who may greatly assist the operation of the Ministry of Education after the trainees have returned home. This type of international interaction helps small states to overcome the danger of isolation. Also, trainees may return with a degree of enthusiasm which, if well channelled, spreads to colleagues.

Some small states seek the best combination of expertise, flexibility and relevance by linking up with specific institutions, often with formal contracts. For example,

- Seychelles has a formal contract with the University of Sussex (UK),
- Gibraltar and the British Virgin Islands have had a similar arrangement with the University of Hull (UK),
- Jersey has a special relationship with the Universities of Exeter and Southampton, and with Portsmouth Polytechnic (UK),
- Guyana has formal ties with the Universities of Manchester (UK) and Ohio (USA), and
- Solomon Islands has had particular links with the University of Sydney (Australia).

These special relationships may tie the small states to individual institutions more than is always desirable, but they do mean that a body of staff in each institution develops understanding of the specific circumstances of the small states.

The fact that small states can be in quite a strong bargaining position is illustrated by the fact that the Seychelles arrangement with the University of Sussex was only formalised after the Seychelles government had also asked for, and received, tenders from three other institutions in the UK. The Seychelles government also invested in quality control by sending a delegation to visit the institutions before making the final decision. The exercise can require a lot of time and money, but such initial investment is likely to pay off.

(e) Distance Education

Distance education provides a final noteworthy strategy through which individuals in small states may gain education and training. It is a key mechanism through which UWI and USP serve their small member

countries. By using satellites and other forms of technology, the institutions are able to link students in different countries for interactive tutorial work. Distance education programmes also use printed materials and correspondence. The USP has operated a special distance education course in educational administration for Solomon Islands and Cook Islands.

In other cases, small states use the institutions of larger countries. For example, several Mauritians are enrolled on the courses of the UK Open University, and Massey University in New Zealand runs distance education programmes in which South Pacific students have participated.

Of particular significance, at least for Commonwealth countries, is a new institution which makes a wide array of distance-teaching programmes available throughout the Commonwealth. While not specifically focused on the needs of small states, the 'Commonwealth of Learning' could nevertheless be of considerable assistance. Brunei Darussalam has been a major contributor to the Commonwealth of Learning, and is now paying particular attention to the ways in which

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* **Distance Education and the Commonwealth of Learning** *
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* *The Commonwealth of Learning was established in 1988* *
* *with its headquarters in Vancouver, Canada. It promotes* *
* *Cooperation in distance education within the Commonwealth.* *
* *Although not set up specifically to help small states, the* *
* *Commonwealth of Learning may be of great benefit to them.* *
* *It helps promote education and training in countries which* *
* *would otherwise be disadvantaged.* *
* *The Commonwealth of Learning does not itself enrol* *
* *students. Rather, it facilitates enrolment in existing colleges* *
* *and universities. Its main thrusts are to:* *
*
* - *promote development and encourage the sharing of* *
* *distance-teaching materials,* *
* - *help with staff training and programme evaluation, and* *
* - *facilitate the exchange of credit between institutions.* *
*
* *Write to: COL, 1700-777 Dunsmuir Street, Box 10428,* *
* *Vancouver, Canada V7Y 1K4. Fax: 604-660-7472.* *
*

distance learning can meet its training needs.

Again, however, it is necessary to sound a note of caution. Effective distance education requires considerable infrastructure to support students in what otherwise becomes a dispiriting, lonely and difficult activity. Moreover, the fact that few students in individual small states are likely to take specific courses militates against production of materials which are completely relevant to those students' needs.

7. Summary

Focusing on personnel matters, this chapter began by noting the complexities of defining jobs in small states. The first section stressed the need for job definitions which are neither too vague nor too detailed. In all organisations, but perhaps especially in small ministries which are organisationally fluid, it is also necessary to review job definitions from time to time.

The second section turned to sources of personnel for Ministries of Education in small states. Of course the main source will be the local labour force; but some governments expand this pool by enticing home nationals who have emigrated to other countries, and by recruiting expatriates. The chapter also discussed the uses of consultants in small systems. Ministries can recruit consultants through their own networks, or they may use international organisations and aid agencies.

Thirdly, the chapter focused on career paths. The restricted number of people in senior posts in small ministries means either that movement of a few individuals at the top causes great mobility all the way down or, more commonly, that lack of movement of people at the top causes stagnation for the whole organisation. Ways to tackle the problems of limited career paths and stagnation in small states include:

- encouraging job rotation within the ministry (perhaps accompanied by retraining),
- encouraging mobility between ministries (perhaps also accompanied by retraining),
- creating a structure which can allow individuals to be promoted without abandoning their specialisms, and
- setting a low compulsory retirement age.

None of these methods is entirely straightforward, but each has its own merits.

Schemes for staff appraisal may also be shaped to fit the reality of restricted career prospects. Partly for this reason, the schemes in some

small states focus more on self-appraisal and job satisfaction than on promotion within the hierarchy. Discussion in Section 4 noted that emphasis on self-appraisal also avoids some of the problems arising from the close interpersonal relationships of small states.

Section 5 turned to training, and began by stressing the need for training plans. Of course such plans are needed in all ministries, both large and small; but they may be especially necessary in small ministries because human resources are too scarce to be used inefficiently. Some small states devote attention to other priorities and neglect training plans. That is understandable, but it cannot be recommended.

Finally, the chapter outlined some strategies for training. These are of course numerous and varied. They include in-house training, use of local, regional and foreign institutions, and distance education. Each strategy may be useful in particular circumstances, and small states may seek appropriate combinations.

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