

Chapter 3: Seychelles

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Population (1989): 67,000

Population Growth Rate (1985-89): 0.7% per annum

Total Land Area: 455 square kilometres

Land Area of Mahé Island: 148 square kilometres

Exclusive Economic Maritime Zone: 1,000,000 square kilometres

Capital: Victoria

GNP per Capita (1988): US\$3,500

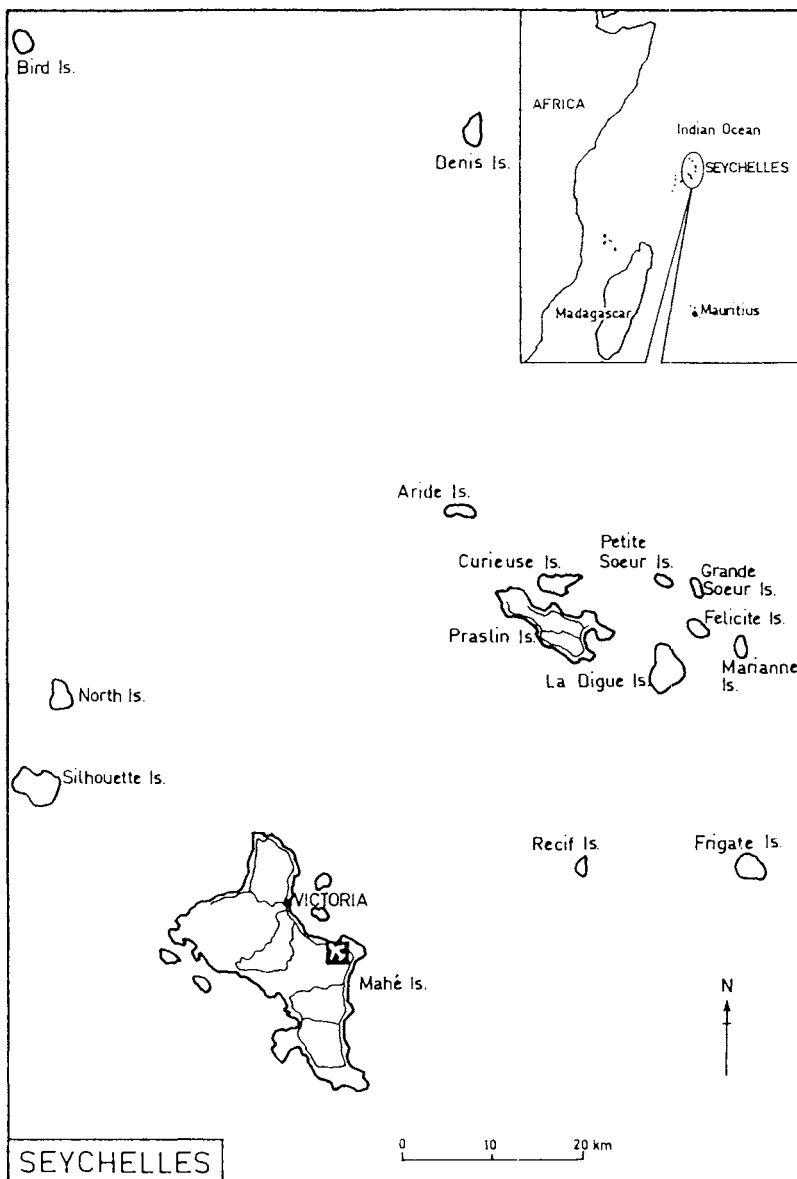
Year of Independence: 1976

Primary School Enrolment Rate (1989): 94%

Human Development Index (1987): 0.817

The Republic of Seychelles is an archipelago of 115 islands. Geographically, the islands are clustered into the Mahé group, the Amirante group and the Aldabra group. The largest island, which comprises one third of the total land area and supports nearly 90 per cent of the population, is called Mahé. The bulk of the rest of the population lives on islands called Praslin, La Digue and Silhouette.

The first recorded visit to the islands was by Portuguese travellers in the 15th century. They were followed by British navigators in the 16th century and French ones in the 17th century. France took possession of the islands in 1756, but the first group to settle, comprising 15 Frenchmen, five Indians, one African and seven slaves, did not arrive until 1770. In 1814 the islands came under British rule as a dependency of Mauritius. An influx of slaves and merchants swelled the population, and the blend of European, African, Indian and Chinese peoples formed the basis of Seychellois society which has persisted to this day. The Kreol language which is spoken throughout Seychelles also reflects the nation's colonial past, and particularly the French influence. In 1903, Seychelles became a colony under direct British control rather than a dependency of Mauritius. The nation became independent in 1976.



Until the opening of the international airport in 1971, the export economy depended mainly on copra and cinnamon. In more recent years tourism and fishing have become the main sources of income, and at US\$3,500 the per capita income is among the highest in Africa. Prosperity and universal secondary education, combined with emigration, have contributed in recent years to a sharp reduction in the population growth rate.

1. National Priorities and Educational Development

A coup d'état in 1977 brought the then Prime Minister, France Albert René, to power as President. Thus came into being the new nation of today and a commitment to building a socialist state with five major goals:

1. equality of opportunity in all spheres of life,
2. self-reliance at the levels of the nation, communities and individuals,
3. work by and for everyone, and exploitation by no one,
4. a fully developed and progressive society, and
5. continued self-determination as a nation.

A new constitution made Seychelles a single-party state, and in the first general election René was confirmed as President. The first National Development Plan launched by his government gave education the highest priority. Particularly prominent was the goal of nine years' free and compulsory education. The plan also aimed at equality of educational opportunity and at rationalisation of the system. School zones were created for administrative purposes and to reduce inequalities, and parent-teachers' associations were established to encourage community interest in education. Each school was given a library and facilities for teaching science, handicrafts and home economics. Pupils were given free tuition, free mid-day meals, and subsidised school uniforms. Thus the quality of education and accessibility that before Independence had been available only in the few fee-paying schools were extended to all schools in the country.

The second phase of this policy brought two years of universal and free first-level secondary education. This was part of an innovative programme designed to train young Seychellois to become better citizens of the New Society. This programme was called the National Youth Service (NYS), and was seen as both a continuation of formal education and a scheme for pre-training in vocational and community

fields. Students graduating from the NYS were expected to serve as models for the rest of society, concerned about and involved in what was happening around them. Since this was an urgent need for the envisaged New Society, the NYS was called a Service rather than a school.

The NYS has been a sustained initiative, which pupils can opt to join after nine years of primary education. In the NYS programme pupils reside on campuses called villages. Their dormitories are built in clusters of four units, with 14 students in each unit. Separate dormitories are provided for boys and girls in the same village. Pupils are given free tuition, food and educational materials. Each village is a self-contained unit with a playground, agricultural plots, fishing facilities, a health centre, a medical doctor, nurses, and a study centre with laboratories, workshops and a library. Until 1990 the NYS programme lasted for two years post-primary, though in that year it was reduced to one year.

At the beginning, the NYS was directed by a board chaired by the President of the Republic. The programme was run by a Coordinator appointed by the board. The original administrative structure was placed directly under the President partly in order to cut the bureaucratic lag that usually accompanies such experiments. However, once the full complement of four villages had been established, and both the Formal Education and the Life Skills components of the curriculum had been stabilised, the administration was transferred to the Ministry of Education.

Another initiative during this period focused on the language of instruction. In 1981 it was decided after much debate that Kreol would be introduced in schools and used as a medium in the initial stages. English would become the second language and the subsequent medium of instruction, and French would be learned as a subject at a later stage and would form a support language. A National Institute of Pedagogy was established to improve the quality of education and to prepare Kreol-language materials. The Institute was also responsible for implementation of the curriculum. This Institute, which was essentially a curriculum development division, was later enlarged with addition of an examination unit and an audio-visual unit to form the Educational Planning & Development Division.

The third phase of the reform was the development of second-level secondary education with emphasis on provision of skilled manpower. This was provided by the opening of the polytechnic by grouping together all post-NYS academic, vocational and technical training courses, and adding to them a continuing education sector. Polytechnic education was provided free for those who showed the ability to follow

the different courses that were provided.

While the first three phases concentrated on infrastructural needs, the present emphasis is on consolidation of the creche, primary, first-level secondary and second-level secondary stages. In addition, to complete the programme of accessibility for all the government has established a school for the exceptional child. As a result of these investments, enrolments soared from 14,000 immediately before Independence to 21,500 in 1989. In 1990 education consumed 30 per cent of the government budget.

2. Administration of Education

During these periods of changing priorities, different arrangements were made for the administration of education. During the immediate pre-Independence period, education was a relatively small enterprise consuming less than 6 per cent of the recurrent budget. Education was administered by the Ministry of Education, Labour & Social Services, which was one of the smallest of the eight ministries then existing.

With the educational expansion in the post-Independence era, new arrangements became necessary. The government formed a Ministry of Education & Information, within which education was by far the more significant of the two functions. However, in the early years the President's office took responsibility for both the NYS and crèches. The Ministry of Education & Information (which also covered Culture) at this time consumed about 14 per cent of the recurrent budget. The Division of Education was responsible for primary education and vocational training schools.

In the next administrative reorganisation, responsibility for creches was moved from the President's office to the Ministry of Education & Information. This was a period in which improvised crèches in parish halls, clubs and hired buildings were being replaced by purpose-built facilities able to provide two-years of universal pre-school education. The Division of Education was therefore responsible for the primary schools and crèches and for the newly-formed polytechnic. By this time, expenditure on education, including the NYS, amounted to about 27 per cent of the recurrent total.

In 1986 the NYS was brought under the now expanded Ministry of Education, Information & Youth. The Ministry had five Divisions, covering Education, Information, Culture, Youth, and Sports. The Division of Education continued to manage the same institutions as earlier, and the NYS was managed by the Division of Youth. The Ministry's expenditure remained about 27 per cent of the recurrent total.

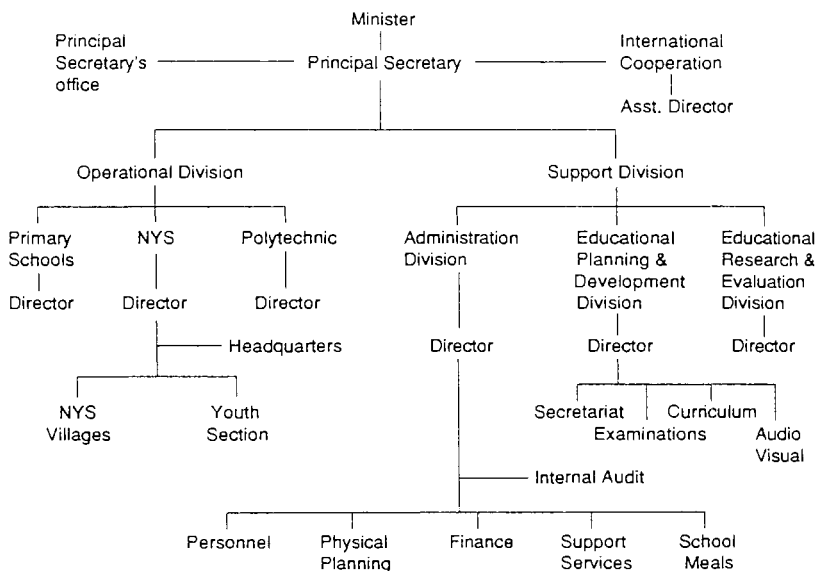
In 1989, the administrative framework was again restructured. This time Education became a Ministry in itself, rather than merely a Division in a larger ministry, and all formal education institutions, including the NYS, were brought under its direction. The remainder of this chapter is chiefly concerned with the organisation and management of what since 1989 has simply been called the Ministry of Education.

Despite the existence of many islands and large distances, the Ministry has no decentralised offices. The secretariat for administration of the polytechnic is on the polytechnic campus, but the secretariats for administration of primary schools and the NYS are at the Ministry headquarters.

3. Formal Organisation of the Ministry of Education

The government's priorities in educational development are reflected in the organisation of the Ministry of Education. The organisation chart in Figure 3.1 shows separate sections for the NYS and the polytechnic,

Figure 3.1: The Ministry of Education, Seychelles (1990)

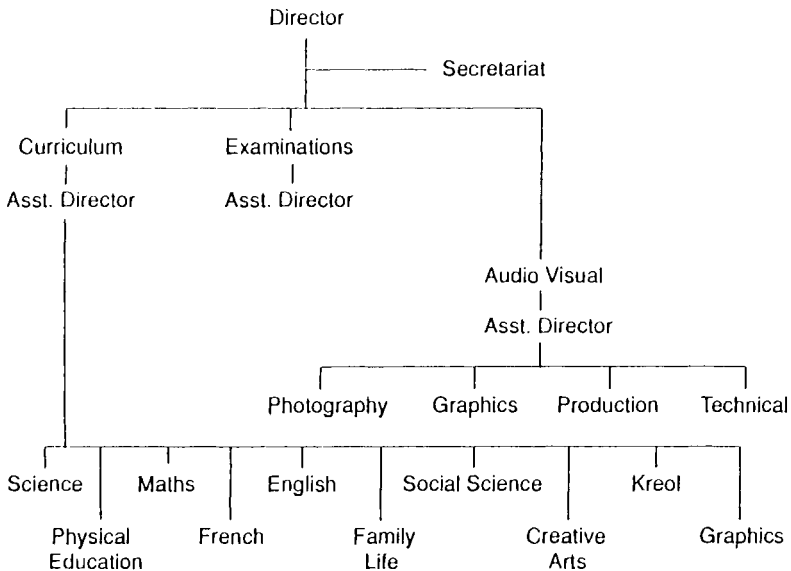


as well as for planning, research, etc.. Because the NYS is an innovative programme which also has residential campuses, its secretariat is larger than those for the primary schools or polytechnic. The NYS secretariat has an establishment of 31 posts compared with only four for primary schools and 14 for the polytechnic.

Figure 3.1 also shows that the Ministry of Education has separate wings for operations and for support. Each wing has three divisions. In the operational wing the divisions are for primary schools, the NYS, and the polytechnic. In the support wing the divisions are for administration, educational planning & development, and educational research & evaluation. Although the Ministry is small, its organisational structure is somewhat akin to those of ministries of education in much larger countries.

The Educational Research & Evaluation Division was created only in 1990. Its principal roles are to monitor and control educational output, and to ensure that an element of educational management and auditing is distinctly built into the system. An underlying motive for creating the unit was to improve the cost-effectiveness of operations.

Figure 3.2: The Educational Planning & Development Division, Ministry of Education, Seychelles (1990)



Space constraints prevent discussion here of the structure of each division. However, a more detailed organisation chart of the Educational Planning & Development Division is presented in Figure 3.2. This division was formed by enlarging and reshaping the National Institute of Pedagogy. The curriculum unit has 10 sub-sections covering nine subjects, and the audio-visual unit has four sub-sections responsible for graphics, photography, production and technical matters.

The Ministry has two graphics units. One is attached to the curriculum development unit and handles the demands of the nine sections of that unit. The other is attached to the audio-visual unit and handles the production of materials not only for the different curriculum units but also for the educational television, the health education programme of the Ministry of Health, and the environment education programme of the Ministry of National Development.

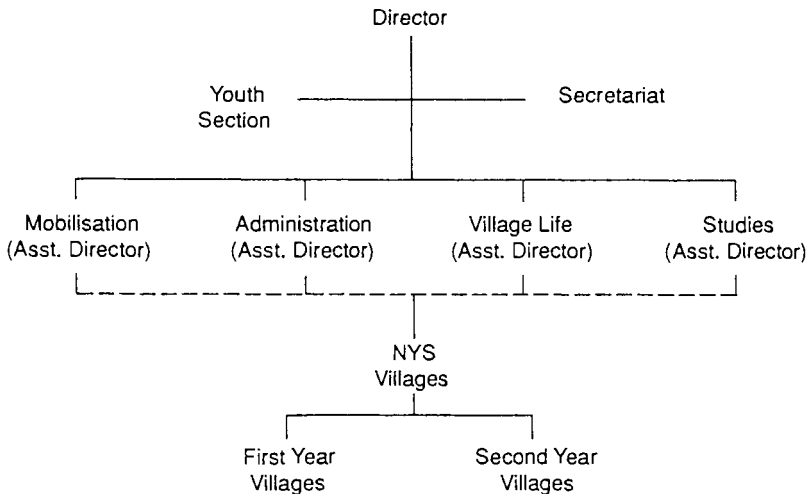
The curriculum development unit at present concentrates on the nine subjects that form the core in both primary and secondary education. The science unit has responsibility for combined science, physics, biology, chemistry and agriculture, and thus is quite large. In contrast the units for French, and for social science are quite small. A few more units are planned to keep up with expansion in curriculum, especially in the vocational areas. The cost of curriculum development is one example where small states have to incur heavy expenses, especially when they stress a curriculum suited to the socioeconomic needs of the country. Although in small countries the materials are used by a small number of schools, the Ministry needs the same amount of curriculum development expertise as would be needed by a large country.

The basic planning functions are carried out in several places. Despite its broad title, the Educational Planning & Development Division is mainly confined to curriculum planning. Other types of planning are mostly done in the Administration Division, which has units both for physical planning and for finance. Statistics are processed by the unit for physical planning, which also oversees matters of construction and maintenance. An Educational Planning Development Committee coordinates operations and facilitates inputs both from other parts of the Ministry and from outside the Ministry. In addition, the secretariat for the Principal Secretary has a technical adviser who may be called on to prepare briefing papers, 'think pieces' and projections.

It is also instructive to note the organisation chart of the NYS Division, shown in Figure 3.3. The NYS Villages section is separate from the youth section, and is itself divided into First-Year Villages and Second-Year Villages. Within the secretariat, separate sub-sections are responsible for mobilisation, administration, village life, and studies.

This is because NYS in addition to being a residential programme provides two other types of education. One is a fully developed academic and pre-vocational education during school hours, and the other is education for life and community, which is programmed to go on after school hours and at week ends.

Figure 3.3: The NYS Division of the Ministry of Education, Seychelles (1990)



4. Shared Responsibilities and Work not Undertaken

The smallness of the system, combined with manpower constraints and the need for cost-effectiveness, requires many facilities to be shared with or run by other bodies. For example, the Ministry of Education has allowed two schools catering for children of expatriate personnel to be managed privately. One of these schools operates in English, while the other operates in French.

Other areas in which the Ministry either shares responsibilities or else leaves the work to other bodies include:

- most major building work, which is done by external contractors;
- printing of question papers, text books and other publications, which is handled by a parastatal organisation;
- computer maintenance, which is handled by another parastatal organisation called Computer Services Limited;
- external examinations, which are conducted by the University

- of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, the City & Guilds of London Institute, and the Royal Society of Arts;
- health clinics in the NYS villages, which have been handed over to be run by the Ministry of Health;
- sports activities, responsibility for which is shared with the Sports Council; and
- the Institute of Management, which was formerly run by the Department of Finance, but is now run by the Ministry of Administration & Manpower.

One benefit from the arrangement for operating the Institute of Management is that the Ministry of Administration & Manpower is able to use its regular staff as trainers.

At present no Ministry of Education staff work for other bodies, and no staff from other Ministries work in the Ministry of Education. However, both patterns would benefit individuals and the Ministry as a whole. It is good to lend expertise to other institutions, and outside work would broaden the individuals' outlooks. For example the financial controller, the engineer and the architect could offer their services to other institutions and gain both monetary and motivational reward. In the same way the short-staffed curriculum division could gain help from the Department of Environment, the Technological Support Services Division, the Agricultural Research Division and other bodies.

Because of manpower shortages and the smallness of the system, certain areas of work are not undertaken at all. Among the services which would be found in a larger system but which are not found in Seychelles are out-of-school education, tertiary education, and educational publishing.

5. Ministry Personnel

(a) Number of Posts

The number of establishment posts is shown in Table 3.1, which covers everyone from the Directorate to the cleaners. Including teachers, the Ministry of Education employs nearly 2,300 people out of the 8,100 in the public sector. This represents 11 per cent of the total number of formally-employed people in all sectors (public, private and parastatal). The Ministry of Education is the largest single employer in the country.

Table 3.1: Establishment Posts in the Ministry of Education, Seychelles

	Head- quarters	Primary Schools	NYS	Poly- technic	School for the Exceptional Child
Total Posts	519	1,655	688	426	46
Posts Filled	306	1,167	490	285	26
Vacancies	213	488	198	141	20

The number of posts available has been increased by about 10 to 20 per cent as a buffer varying in percentage for different sections. The buffer is higher in places where there are more professionals and specialist workers, because these categories experience frequent personnel movement either for further training or for better jobs. This buffer provides substitutes to allow for movement. Because of this, the real establishment for the headquarters should be computed on a figure lower than 519.

The distribution of posts and of personnel actually in posts within the Ministry headquarters is shown in Table 3.2. The number of people in the headquarters is about 15 per cent of the expected total workforce of the Ministry. The largest gaps between the number of posts and the number of officers actually on the staff are in the Educational Planning & Development Division. For example the Secretariat has 60 posts but actually only 22 staff. Under the secretariat comes the supporting staff of each of the nine subject units, including the keyboard operators, secretaries, drivers and cleaners. The shortage is mainly in among the skilled keyboard operators and the secretaries.

The curriculum and the audio-visual units are also seriously short of staff, which, as noted above, they need in the same numbers as they would even if they served larger countries. To take one example, the science unit, which has to develop six different subjects, produces teaching materials, monitors implementation, helps in examinations, advises on procurement and supply of equipment, advises on maintenance of laboratories, and supervises teaching. Yet for all these tasks it has only five staff including two technicians. This is how one finds that only 38 of the 96 posts in the curriculum unit, and that only 12 of the 58 posts in the audio-visual unit have been filled.

(b) Expertise

Education by its very nature needs highly qualified staff. Apart from

Table 3.2: Total Posts and Actual Staff in the Ministry of Education Headquarters (1990)

	Total Posts	Actual Staff
Principal Secretary's Office	9	8
International Cooperation	8	7
Operational Divisions		
Primary	4	3
NYS	31	24
Polytechnic	14	7
Support Divisions		
Administration Division		
Internal Audit	7	2
Finance & Stores	37	33
Personnel & Support Services	82	65
School Meals	58	53
Physical Planning & Maintenance	51	29
Educ. Planning & Development Division		
Secretariat	60	22
Curriculum	96	38
Examinations	9	3
Audio-Visual	53	12

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. Necessary experience includes a reasonable number of years of contact with pupils. This is often ignored in newly-independent countries that have a tradition of administration by generalist civil servants. Experience is also needed in specialised fields, such as curriculum development, evaluation, secondary education, special education, and school administration.

Expatriate administrators should also have appropriate experience at least of other countries with similar socio-economic conditions. Education cannot be simply transplanted from one country to another, but must be set in specific socio-economic and cultural contexts. Many newly independent countries use foreign experts to advise on innovative programmes designed for rapid development, but in some cases the advice has been counter-productive and has led to retardation and even failure. Examples can be seen in many countries, both large and small.

In Seychelles, five positive aspects of staffing and expertise are particularly worth highlighting.

- * Because Seychelles was a small state it did not get an influx of colonial civil servants who would have left behind conservative traditions. Some larger countries are still unable to clear themselves of the influence of this type of personnel.
- * Post-primary education was not fully developed until after Liberation, and so did not produce indigenous civil servants who would have perpetuated the old system.
- * Seychellois society is relatively prosperous. It can produce forward-looking administrators who also have resources to introduce innovations.
- * The Ministry of Education headquarters has very few expatriates. The number is around 15, of whom over half are in the curriculum unit. The others include a senior director, a financial controller, an assistant director, an engineer, an architect and an audio-visual technician. This number is small compared with the 300 expatriate educators employed in the nation's schools.
- * Emigration has not appreciably affected the Ministry of Education.

Yet despite the small impact of emigration, the country as a whole, including the Ministry of Education, suffers from a severe shortage of both professional and support staff. The situation partly reflects the late expansion of secondary education. Not only are many posts vacant, but some of the people who do hold posts lack appropriate qualifications or experience. Particularly notable is the lack of classroom experience among planners and curriculum developers.

(c) Job Definition and Appraisal

The inevitable outcome of this manpower shortage is that some people have to undertake multiple functions. 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 take responsibilities for school supervision and examinations. This may make it impossible for any single function to be done efficiently, and at times leads to frustration.

Yet even without a manpower shortage it is obvious that a country

like Seychelles, with only 42 formal education institutions including the 12 schools of the polytechnic, cannot have posts purely reserved for specialists. In the few cases where posts are reserved, e.g. the architect and the engineer, there is a certain degree of underemployment.

The fact that many staff undertake multiple roles because of staff shortages often makes it difficult to draw up job definitions. However when the number of vacancies is reduced, jobs can be defined more precisely. It would not be correct to say that jobs are defined after people are appointed, but because of the large number of vacancies officers cannot always confine themselves to the posts to which they were appointed.

Appraisal of work is achieved by such processes as:

- observing the quality of the end-products,
- observing the techniques used in the execution of the duties,
- studying interpersonal relationships,
- visiting the work place and talking to the people concerned,
- soliciting information from co-workers in a casual way, 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 on increasing efficiency. These objectives and processes seem more appropriate to a small and young nation trying to develop its civil service.

Informal appraisal is assisted by the nature of the socialist society. It is not uncommon to see a Principal Secretary or Director-General socialising with low-level employees. Class and economic barriers have diminished since Liberation, and outside the office people meet as equals. Moreover most people live on the island of Mahé, which is only 27 kilometres long. Close physical proximity encourages an informal flow of information which helps decision-makers to appraise their subordinates.

However, the disadvantage of this situation is that rumours circulate easily, causing problems for the officers concerned. And in such a small system it is difficult for individuals whose reputations have been justifiably or unjustifiably tarnished to work under a different boss or in a more distant place.

(d) Recruitment and Promotion

In a population so small that people are well known to each other, it is sometimes difficult to preserve neutral recruitment procedures. However, in one respect the shortage of manpower reduces this problem. When so few qualified staff are available for posts, there is no choice but to give the posts to the few people who are qualified. In fact in Seychelles the appointment of inexperienced and sometimes irrelevantly qualified people is not usually due to favouritism or nepotism but more commonly to the absence of suitably qualified local personnel. For instance, new graduates without the necessary experience and specialised skills are sometimes used for curriculum development.

For appointment to posts where specialised qualifications are not required, as in administration, heavy weight is placed on the applicants' attitudes and commitment. In these instances the pragmatic outlook of the society and the administration is evident.

Promotions within the Ministry are normally done not by advertisement and interviews but by selecting suitable people. In most cases personal files are only consulted for confirmation of appointments. The small size of the system also facilitates transfers. For instance a headteacher who does not perform well may be tried in a different post without the time lag that accompanies such changes in larger systems. This is a strong advantage, for the small system which is also faced by manpower constraints can ill afford inefficiency or 'square pegs in round holes'.

(e) Professional Development

Although many staff need in-service training, Seychelles has no tertiary education institutions. Officers cannot easily be sent abroad because the Ministry is so short of staff, yet few trainers for in-service work are available within the country. To reduce these problems, overseas specialists are sometimes invited to conduct workshops, and expatriates already working in such areas as curriculum development are asked also to provide training. However, a great deal more is needed.

Within the operational wing of the Ministry, the greatest need for training is in the NYS secretariat. Requirements are especially urgent since it is an innovative section. A few Unesco advisers assisted in the early years, but they left without training more than a handful of people. Further in-service training is needed from Unesco, which has the expertise to handle NYS-type institutions. The polytechnic and primary sectors also need in-service training.

The Institute of Management run by the Ministry of Administration & Manpower operates sandwich courses and seminars in management techniques, but its preoccupation has been mostly with other ministries and with parastatal organisations. Educational administrators have not taken part in many Institute of Management seminars. However, weaknesses have been reduced by workshops run by visiting experts on school management. One notable example takes the form of long-term training in administration for the primary sector, operated in collaboration with the Canadian government.

In contrast to the bottom-heavy administrative pyramids of larger countries, Seychelles has a top-heavy structure. In larger countries the chances of an individual moving from the bottom to the top are remote, which causes frustration. A similar situation exists in smaller states like Seychelles for a different reason. An individual fresh from basic professional training will start somewhere near the top and then find that there are few more steps to go.

The irony 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 this problem is to switch personnel from one ministry to another in the hope that new environments and new responsibilities will boost motivation. This strategy is not entirely satisfactory, however, and can only be done with personnel who are not over-specialised or who have undergone retraining in different fields.

Thus over-specialisation tends to limit the chances of climbing up the ladder; but on the other hand units like audio-visual, finance, curriculum, and building design need highly specialised staff. This tension is not distinctive to small states, but may be more obvious. One strategy for tackling it is to retrain staff in allied or even different fields. For example a specialist in curriculum may undertake training in management and then go up the ladder by a different path. Versatility in skills is a necessity in small states for rising higher in the administrative ladder or even for changing jobs when there is no possibility of rising higher in the same field. To get the best out of each officer, individuals are placed in different roles and tried until they fit into suitable ones.

6. International Linkages

(a) Foreign Aid

Seychelles relies heavily on international linkages to reduce its isolation

and assist with development. The Ministry of Education has a separate International Cooperation Unit headed by an Assistant Director directly under the Principal Secretary (Figure 3.1). This division deals with routine correspondence, maintains records, keeps track of requests from foreign organisations, responds to annual offers of aid within the stipulated times, coordinates the needs of the various divisions of the Ministry, and channels scholarships according to national priorities.

Because Seychelles has a relatively high per capita GNP, it is not eligible for concessional aid from donors and international agencies. However, Seychelles has a low level of human resource development. The country has to import many professionals, and the lack of a tertiary education institution imposes high training costs for local personnel. These factors require the little aid that flows in to be efficiently harnessed. This is the chief reason for establishment of the International Cooperation Unit. Many large countries handle foreign aid inefficiently. Because in Seychelles aid is vital, management has been placed directly under the Principal Secretary in a special division. One advantage of this arrangement is that it reduces bureaucratic procedures. The Unit is headed by an Assistant Director who under normal circumstances would only report to the Principal Secretary via a Director. By creating a direct reporting link, the Unit is able to function with one less bureaucratic layer.

Foreign assistance comes in three main forms. First, technologically more advanced countries offer bilateral aid. These countries include Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, Cuba, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, India, Japan, Malaysia, Netherlands, Nigeria, North Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the USA, and the USSR.

Second, Seychelles gains assistance from international and regional bodies. These include the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC), Unesco, the World Health Organisation (WHO), the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Unicef, and the Commonwealth Youth Programme.

Aid projects may take many forms. Among them are:

- general scholarships, the duration of which is decided by the government of Seychelles;
- specific scholarships in areas that are needed for manpower development, e.g. in management (British Council), computer training and accountancy (USA), fine arts and sports (USSR), and tourism, trade and commerce (India);
- teachers for the NYS and the polytechnic;

- professionals for the Ministry headquarters, mainly in educational planning and the NYS;
- programmes of professional development, organised for example through Réunion Regional Cooperation and the University of Quebec;
- training of personnel to develop skills e.g. in computer technology, fisheries, music and management;
- links with agencies to develop special areas such as special education (Canada), science, mathematics and English (UK), and family-life education (UNFPA); and
- material aid e.g. in the form of sports equipment (China, USSR), electronic equipment for the polytechnic (Switzerland), and audio-visual materials (France).

The third category of aid includes certain institutions contracted by the Ministry to support its activities. They include the University of Sussex (UK), which admits groups of about 25 students who have begun B.Ed. courses at the Seychelles Polytechnic and who complete their courses in England. The University of Sussex was selected after a careful tendering process in which three other UK institutions were also invited to make bids. The Ministry also has a contract with the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, which conducts first- and second-level secondary examinations and advises on evaluation techniques.

The largest foreign aid inputs are for tertiary education scholarships. About 100 long-term and about 50 short-term scholarships become available each year. This means that roughly six of every 100 students who enter the secondary education system have the chance of foreign professional, vocational or tertiary education.

(b) Expatriate Personnel

The experts who come to advise on specialist fields are comparatively few. This is partly because of the high percentage of expatriate teachers, who represent one in every three teachers in the whole system. These expatriates come from many countries, including the UK, France, Belgium, Australia, India, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Malaysia, Cuba, Yugoslavia, Madagascar and Ireland.

In addition, as noted above, 15 expatriates are employed in the Ministry of Education headquarters. The presence of these highly qualified and experienced personnel reduces the need for expertise in assessment and for independent advice. They help create a critical

climate within the system, and provide information on the ways that problems are tackled in other countries.

However, the diversity of nationalities and cultures has its drawbacks. For instance because the teachers come from markedly different school systems, they tend to have divergent views on appropriate directions for change. Teachers from India, for example, come from a system where education is different in different states, but in which all states follow a national policy on curriculum. On the other hand, teachers from Sri Lanka are used to a highly centralised system in which education from grade 1 to upper secondary is provided for each district on a model very similar to that in Seychelles. Teachers from Mauritius and Malaysia come from systems in which private schools play a much stronger role.

With this diversity it is not surprising that advice is not always in harmony, and that experimentation has sometimes had to be abandoned or modified at the cost of lost manpower for the much-needed development processes of the country. The handful of experienced Seychellois at the top levels of the Ministry have to exercise their judgement over the appropriateness of advice and experimentation.

(c) Management of Information

International links are associated with considerable flows of information. Even before projects begin, someone knowledgeable in the subject area has to study the nature of potential assistance, the conditions on which it is offered, and the suitability of proposals to the Seychelles situation. This invariably requires information to pass through more than one division. The International Cooperation Unit takes main responsibility, but its staff have to chase officers in other departments and undertake what can be a time-consuming and difficult task.

Regular reports must be written on every foreign project. These have to go to the donors in time for them to evaluate requests and finalise their commitments each year. Most organisations also require project-completion reports of various kinds. These reports are vital, for they give the donors an idea of how the assistance was used and to what extent it really helped the country. Future flows of aid depend to a large extent on timely provision of detailed reports. This is among the tasks of the International Cooperation Unit. The fact that there is a specialist division for this work helps overcome the shortage of personnel. But at times even this system fails, and reports sometimes get stuck in the pipeline.

Another type of report is requested by such international bodies as

Unesco, Unicef, UNFPA and the Commonwealth Secretariat. These reports are mainly for updating information on the progress of education and on the utilisation of foreign assistance.

Although the International Cooperation Unit coordinates these activities, it has to rely on staff in many other divisions, including the NYS and the polytechnic. A particularly large number of requests is sent to the Educational Planning & Development Division, which is already understaffed and which must delay other important work. Recently, the authorities have tried to reduce difficulties by seeking the assistance of experienced and qualified expatriates in such units as the NYS and the polytechnic.

Matters of information retrieval are also receiving attention. There have been serious problems in this, partly because of the inadequate nature of records. To help address this problem, a separate archive was recently created for the Ministry of Education. The archive is striving to extract information from various sources, though is finding the process slow. Documentation difficulties are also reflected in the fact that there have been no annual reports on education since Independence.

Some attempt is being made in the NYS and administration divisions to computerise information. This process is only in its initial stages and progress so far has been slow because of the lack of specialist personnel. This start is in the right direction, however, and it will bring Seychelles into the modern era of communication. It will help the people who have to prepare reports to gain rapid access to information.

7. The Culture of the Ministry

This part of the chapter is chiefly concerned with the professionals and the secretaries who form about 60 per cent of headquarters personnel. The cleaners, drivers and other personnel influence the culture only marginally. The 60 per cent represent 8 per cent of the personnel employed by the Ministry in the country as a whole. The culture of the Ministry is partly shaped by the small size of the organisation, though it is also influenced by the rate of staff turnover, the extent of centralisation, management and decision-making styles, and the nature of officers' training and experience.

(a) Interpersonal Relations and Personal Impact

The fact that officers in the Directorate know personally not only those

in the headquarters but also many staff in the schools greatly assists operation of the system. For example it helps senior officers to know where to turn when needing help with data processing or curriculum development. The fact that the work of individuals may easily be recognised may be advantageous both to those individuals and to the system as a whole.

However dynamism can also breed resentment among co-workers, and this may create problems for enterprising officers. Such resentment is particularly likely to arise when enthusiasts overstep the natural pace of society. Seychellois society is generally slow-moving, and people attend to their activities in an unruffled manner. Individuals who try to move too fast may be considered disruptive.

Growth in such a small system is retarded by the lack of interplay of diverse talents. Many things are taken for granted in this homely small system, including the potential of individuals and the need to follow up. For example if an officer is made responsible for development of a subject curriculum, it is simply assumed that that officer will perform well. If performance is poor, top decisions-makers are unlikely to know about it unless they are themselves specialists in that area. The quality of output of work in curriculum development, financial planning etc. cannot be gauged from the standard appraisal form that is filled out by superiors, for in many cases the superiors themselves are inexperienced and may not be conversant in these specialist fields.

Small systems like that in Seychelles can maximise the advantages of small size in several ways. In particular, officers should make the effort to get to know everyone in the Ministry from top to bottom. One way to do this is to organise periods in which Ministry staff live together for two or more days and devote 'brain storming' sessions to identification of problems and bottlenecks. Solutions can be formulated in small groups that have an informal atmosphere of frank and quiet reflection. These small groups should be composed of staff from different sections and ranks. This living together can facilitate understanding of human behaviour, and can promote interaction among co-workers. It can also permit senior staff to identify new talents, re-examine existing impressions, and monitor the performance of young officers.

(b) Styles of Decision-Making

While some decisions are made at the top of the system and handed down, a great deal of decision-making is by consensus achieved at committee meetings. The fact that many division heads are inexperi-

enced perhaps makes this style of decision-making especially important. Each division has a Steering Committee which meets at regular intervals and makes decisions on day-to-day matters. Membership of these Steering Committees includes officers from peripheral units as well as from headquarters.

Major policy decisions are considered by the Central Management Committee which consists of the Minister, the Principal Secretary and the division heads. Although consensus is the rule, the views of the Minister carry greater weight, especially in political issues. Similarly the Principal Secretary has a greater say both in the Central Management Committee and in the Steering Committees.

Considerable influence is also exercised by the professionals who sit on various committees. Such professionals often prepare working documents to explain their views. It is advantageous for professional educationists to be able to influence procedures in this way, though the problem in Seychelles is that many of these people have little experience and sometimes advance proposals of doubtful soundness.

The committee structure also helps disseminate information. Whereas in larger organisations information flows through circulars and bulletins, in Seychelles greater reliance is placed on face-to-face dissemination at meetings. For example the weekly Steering Committee meeting of NYS decides the dates and details of quiz competitions. This is passed on to NYS village officials by the Village Coordinator, who is both a member of the Steering Committee and chairman of the Village Coordinating Committee. Sometimes the Village Coordinator either forgets to transmit the interpretation or does so wrongly. This can of course create major problems, but the impact is usually mitigated by the 'backup' network of informal contacts.

8. Conclusions

With only 67,000 people, Seychelles certainly has a small population. The country is also composed of many islands scattered over a vast area. However, administration is made easier by the fact that the bulk of the population is concentrated on the island of Mahé.

In the post-Independence era the government has placed the highest priority on education. It has also promoted a great deal of innovation, of which the most prominent aspect is the National Youth Service. Whereas before Independence education was a relatively small enterprise within the Ministry of Education, Labour & Social Services, by 1989 it was considered sufficiently important to deserve a Ministry in its own right.

To some extent the structure of the Ministry reflects the specific nature of the Seychelles system. One obvious example is the framework for administration of the NYS. Another example is the existence of the International Cooperation Unit and the special place it has in the organisation. Yet the Ministry also bears a strong resemblance to other Ministries of Education in much larger countries. It operates as a self-contained body, and with 519 establishment posts is certainly not insignificant in size.

However, it has been pointed out in this chapter that many establishment posts are unfilled. This partly reflects a scarcity of qualified manpower within the country. Moreover the full establishment should not necessarily be taken as an indication of the actual needs of the Ministry because the total number of posts has been increased by 10 to 20 per cent as a buffer against the frequent turnover of posts. It is not the intention to fill all these posts but instead to hold them to permit flexibility and paid training.

The chapter has pointed out that to some extent underemployment may be found, especially in areas requiring highly specialised personnel. Greater sharing of such staff as the engineer and architect across ministries would be a highly desirable step in a situation like this. Similarly, use of personnel from other ministries would help alleviate shortages in the Ministry of Education. On the other hand, generalists and those who have versatile specialities are often overworked because of manpower shortages and frequent vacancies. It is sometimes difficult in a small country to find the right balance.

The facts that most people live on the small island of Mahé and that they are relatively modern with few in-built traditions makes innovation easy. This is also conducive to a 'rolling' type of administration according to the new priorities and demands. Two important additional features are that the government has achieved a great deal in its goal of a classless society, and that the general pace of life is slow. This has permitted good interaction, and has allowed informal channels to operate both for the flow of information and for the appraisal of the work of subordinates.