

Part III: Caribbean

Chapter 6: Barbados

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Population (1989): 255,000

Population Growth Rate (1980-88): 0.3%

Land Area: 431 square kilometres

Capital: Bridgetown

GNP per Capita (1988): US\$5,990

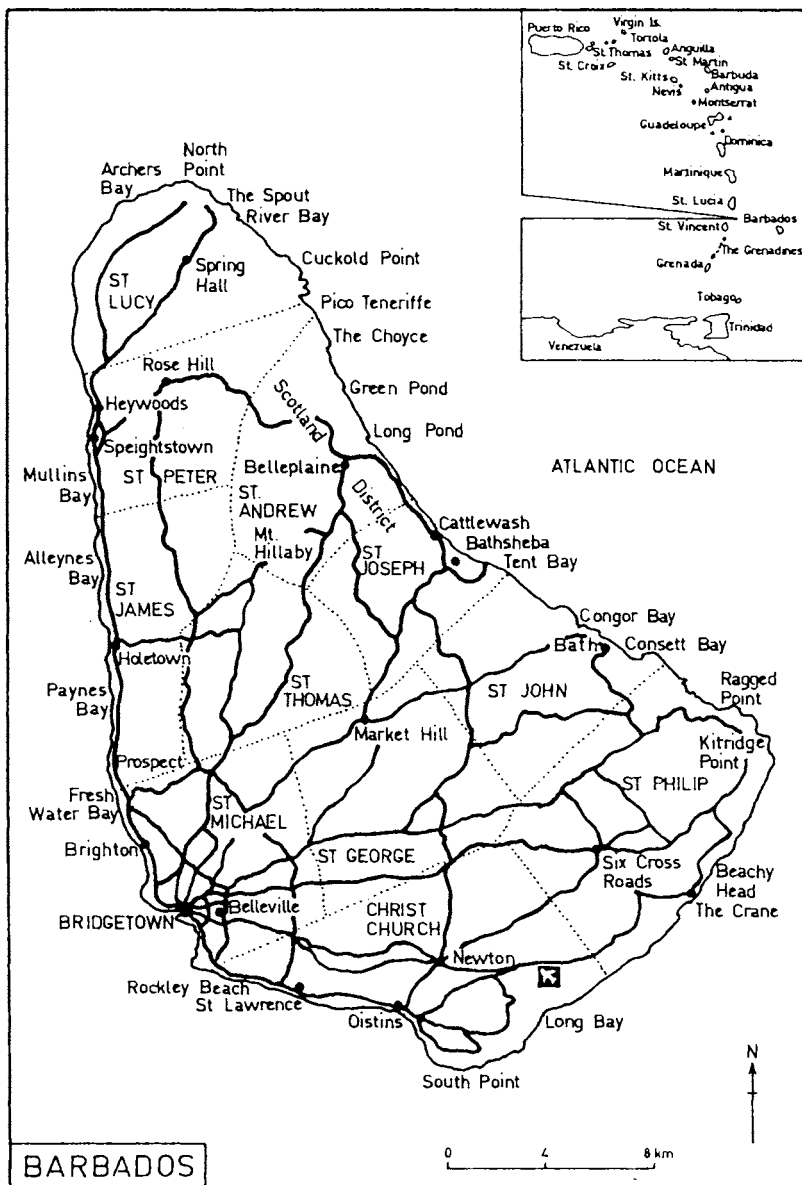
Year of Independence: 1966

Primary School Enrolment Rate (1989): 93.8%

Human Development Index (1987): 0.925

Barbados is the most easterly of the Caribbean islands. It is 34 kilometres long and 22 kilometres wide, and despite the small total number of inhabitants is densely populated. The island was settled (but not 'discovered') by the British in 1627, and because it was difficult to attack from the sea it never changed hands in the colonial wars of the 17th and 18th centuries. As a result, there is little French, Spanish or Dutch influence in the language and culture. Many contemporary Barbadians stress their Afro-Caribbean heritage, together with aspects of the culture which are distinctively 'Bajan'.

Barbados is now officially a 'middle income' country, with a higher per capita GNP than such European nations as Ireland, Spain or Greece. The country has few natural resources, but derives substantial income from sugar, some export-oriented manufacturing and a growing offshore financial sector. Over half the households own a car, and almost all have a piped water supply and a telephone. Tourism is now by far the main foreign exchange earner. In 1988 the number of tourists, most of whom came from the USA, exceeded 450,000.



1. The Structure of Government

Barbados has a strong democratic tradition. In 1989 it celebrated the 350th anniversary of its parliament, which is said to be the second oldest in the Commonwealth. The British monarch is the Head of State, represented by a Governor General. Twenty one senators are appointed by the Governor General, of whom 12 are on the advice of the Prime Minister, two on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, and seven at his own discretion to reflect religious, economic and social interests. A speaker and 26 members of the House of Assembly are elected from 27 single-member constituencies.

The government has 13 ministries. This number is determined by political considerations. The ministries cover:

- Agriculture, Food & Fisheries,
- the Civil Service,
- Education & Culture,
- Employment, Labour Relations & Community Development,
- Finance & Economic Affairs,
- Health,
- Housing & Lands,
- International Transport, Telecommunications & Immigration,
- Legal Affairs,
- Tourism & Sports,
- Trade, Industry & Commerce, and
- Transport & Works.

Although the fact is not reflected in its title, the Ministry of Education & Culture is also responsible for ecclesiastical affairs. One possible rationale for including this responsibility is that education is usually charged with passing on the culture of a society from one generation to the next, and religion is an important component of culture. From another viewpoint the church plays a key role particularly in religious and moral education.

Within the Ministry of Education & Culture, the budget and the number of personnel are heavily weighted in favour of education. Only five staff out of 161 at the Ministry's headquarters work in the Cultural section. A Parliamentary Secretary (Junior Minister) deals with Culture and Ecclesiastical Affairs, while a Minister deals with Education. The National Cultural Foundation, a statutory body with approximately 45 staff, also has responsibility for cultural matters.

2. Formal Organisation of the Ministry of Education & Culture

(a) Organisation Chart

Figure 6.1 shows the organisation chart of the Ministry of Education & Culture. The Ministry has five main Divisions, responsible for Schools, Planning & Development, Personnel Management & Services, Finance, and Culture. The Finance and Culture Divisions report directly to the Permanent Secretary (PS). The Personnel Management & Services Division and the Planning & Development Division report to the Permanent Secretary through the Deputy Permanent Secretary. The Planning & Development Division also reports to the Chief Education Officer (CEO), while the Schools Division reports solely to the CEO.

At the time of the introduction of Ministerial government, the structure of the Ministry was reformed so that technical/professional officers would work side by side with administrative officers. The CEO is the Chief Technical Adviser to the Minister, and the PS is the Chief Administrative Officer, Finance Officer and Head of the Ministry.

The structure has been reviewed at various times, the most recent occasion being in 1985 when, among other changes, the Examinations Section was given administrative support. This has permitted the technical staff there to do more professional work.

Despite periodic reviews, the structure seems to encourage the tendency to 'pass matters upwards'. This results in particular bottlenecks at the levels of CEO and PS.

(b) Centralisation/Decentralisation

The island is perhaps too small to need separate provincial or district governments with attendant education personnel. District Education Officers do exist, but they are all appointed by the Public Service Commission and operate from Ministry Headquarters.

However, some of the responsibilities of the central administration have been devolved to the Boards of Management of secondary schools and tertiary institutions. A similar devolution has been proposed to the School Committees of primary schools. The devolved powers are in such spheres as budgeting and finance, permission to use buildings, etc.. Advantages of devolution include speeding up of action and reduction of strain on the central administration. Disadvantages relate to problems of information flow, and of supervision and control.

(c) Specialisation/Generalisation

District Education Officers, who have broad administrative responsibility for schools in their areas, tend to be generalists. Other Education Officers operate as specialists, e.g. in science, mathematics, language arts, technical studies, art & craft, home economics, and guidance & counselling. As each specialisation has only one officer (except science, which has two), there is usually great overload. Officers in the Buildings and the Accounts Sections also operate as specialists.

Some subject areas are on the official school curriculum and therefore require supervision and evaluation by Ministry staff. These subjects include music, religious & moral education, business studies, physical education, and computer studies. However, the Ministry has insufficient specialist staff. A proposal is being prepared to address this problem. Meanwhile the Education Officer (Art & Craft) assists with music, and two officers (one a District Education Officer and the other a specialist) assist with physical education.

Problems may also occur when officers try to double as inspectors and specialist advisers. These two functions do not always coexist very happily because one has a censoring and the other has a support role.

(d) Work not Undertaken

Because of manpower and other constraints, the Ministry has not been able to undertake all the work it would have liked to. Gradually, however, plans are being developed for:

- computerisation of aspects of ministry work, including personnel records, the Textbook Loan Scheme, finances, and examination statistics;
- a well-staffed and equipped planning unit;
- a well-staffed and equipped Testing & Evaluation Unit; and
- a well-staffed and equipped School Welfare Department which would bring together School Attendance Officers, Guidance Counsellors and Psychologists.

3. Ministry Personnel*(a) Numbers*

In 1989, 161 persons were employed in the Central Administration of

the Ministry of Education & Culture. Although the workload of many officers is excessive, the ratio of staff to population and/or school enrolments is more favourable than in many other developing countries.

Table 6.1 shows the breakdown of staff in 1989. The administrators outnumbered the technical/professional staff by almost three to one.

Table 6.1: Staff of the Ministry of Education & Culture, Barbados, 1989

Administrative		Technical/Professional	
Permanent Secretary	1	Chief Education Officer	1
Deputy Permanent Secretary	1	Deputy Chief Education Officer	2
Senior Admin. Officer	2	Senior Education Officer	6
Finance Officer	1	Education Officer	20
Administrative Officer I	5	Buildings Officer	1
Senior Personnel Officer	1	Psychologist	1
Senior Executive Officer	1	Senior Draughtsman	1
Senior Accountant	1	Draughtsman	2
Administrative Officer II	8	Buildings & Maintenance	
Personnel Officer	2	Supervisor	3
Assistant Personnel Officer	1	Senior School Attendance	
Economist	1	Officer	1
Accountant	1	School Attendance Officer	3
Assistant Accountant	4		
Executive Officer	3	TOTAL	41
Senior Clerk	5		
Clerical Officer	47		
Executive Secretary/Secretary	3		
Stenographer/Typist	12		
Clerk/Typist	12		
Telephone Operator	2		
Driver/Messenger	1		
Messengers	2		
Machine Supervisor	1		
Equipment Operator	1		
Statistical Assistant	1		
TOTAL	120		

(b) Expertise

The problem of having to recruit from a small pool, which is aggravated by the 'brain drain', is a real one for Barbados. However, successive governments have adopted a policy of recruiting Barbadian nationals as first choice, nationals of other Commonwealth Caribbean countries as second choice, and nationals of other countries only as a last resort. Posts are commonly advertised overseas as well as locally, in an attempt

to attract Barbadian nationals home. To make conditions more attractive, contracts often include gratuities and passages for the officers and their families. However, the policy is sometimes criticised by those who have laboured locally only to see Barbadian nationals return from abroad to fill coveted posts. Making a Biblical analogy, the locals sometimes share the bitterness of the brother of the prodigal son. But the alternative is inbreeding, with resulting problems which are perhaps worse.

Recruitment to the Public Service is the responsibility of the Public Service Commission (PSC), membership of which includes politically neutral persons of high integrity. Posts are advertised publicly, and following submissions of applications the PSC conducts in-depth interviews using agreed criteria and procedures. The PSC is usually assisted by a Ministry representative when appointing to Ministry posts.

(c) Job Definition and Appraisal

The Ministry has developed an operational manual which provides details on specific jobs, and which is used for job definition and appraisal. The manual is very useful for both training and evaluation. It has greatly helped improve efficiency.

In the case of new posts, job definition and appraisal of performance depends strongly on the courses charted by the officers holding the posts. This is because there are no examples to follow. The case of the psychologist in the Ministry may be cited as a real example. No other officers in the Ministry had the specialist qualifications to evaluate the work of the psychologist. In such instances expertise from outside the Ministry or the country can be called upon, though in this particular case it was not.

(d) Professional Development

Generally speaking, the post-secondary education of technical officers in the Ministry relates more to their functions as teachers and school administrators than as Ministry staff. Most technical officers have completed a two-year course at the local teacher-training college, followed by a three-year first degree in Arts & General Studies or Science/Mathematics at the University of the West Indies (UWI). The majority have pursued their studies at the local Cave Hill campus of the UWI. Others have completed a first degree followed by a UWI Diploma in Education. Many hold Masters' degrees, and two are currently on

leave in the USA and Canada for Ph.D. studies. An additional officer is registered on the doctoral programme at Cave Hill, and a fourth is due to go abroad soon.

Few education and training programmes specifically address the needs of Ministry staff. As in the case of a good teacher becoming Head of Department, or a good Head of Department becoming Deputy Headteacher, officers are more commonly recruited on the basis of their last posts than on their preparation for new posts. Most Ministry officers are recruited from the school system.

A partial exception to the comments on the lack of specific relevance of training is the UWI one-year, in-service Certificate in Educational Management & Administration course. This programme does address some specific needs, though even it caters more for school managers and administrators than for ministry ones.

Implied in the foregoing are some possible strategies for making training and staff development more relevant. Precise, comprehensive training needs should be identified and put in writing both by the officers themselves and by their immediate and other supervisors. A training profile for each staff member should also be developed, put in writing and systematically monitored, bearing in mind the overall needs of the Ministry, the education system and the country.

Tailor-made, in-service training programmes could be developed and mounted locally to meet these needs. Some regional and overseas training would help widen the perspective of the officers. External consultants could also assist with this task.

(e) The Hierarchy

The administrative pyramid in the Ministry is rather flat. However, with nine senior posts available to 20 education officers, promotional opportunities at least for technical/professional personnel are not too remote.

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. 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. Creation of posts for Senior Specialist Officers at the same salary level as other senior (mainly administrative) posts could help avoid this, though it would obviously have financial and other implications.

(f) Work for External Bodies

Many officers, particularly technical staff, sit on the boards and committees of other ministries and of statutory bodies. The psychologist, for example, sits on the police Committee of the Juvenile Liaison Scheme and on the Ministry of Health Committee on Drug Abuse and Committee on AIDS.

Membership of these committees provides useful contacts with other ministries and agencies, and encourages cross-fertilisation of ideas. The personal contacts also help cut red tape, and speed up inter-Ministry/agency action. However, meetings often take too much of the officers' time, which is also needed for important tasks in the 'home' Ministry.

4. International Linkages*(a) Aid*

Mainly because of its comparatively high per capita income and standard of living, Barbados does not qualify for as much aid as some other developing countries. Loans from the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank are more common. But as with aid, these loans bring the problems of 'strings' and of the sometimes not-so-well-hidden agendas of the agencies. The agencies' agendas do not always match the official agendas of the countries being offered 'assistance'.

Sometimes donor or lending agencies insist that countries do the opposite of what obtains in their own countries. For instance in one project, libraries in primary schools and assembly halls in secondary schools were ruled out by the lending agency despite objections. On the other hand, the idea of 'floating classes' was promoted by the agency in the interests of maximum utilisation of space, despite the disruption and other problems caused when floating classes have to return indoors because of heavy rain.

Many agencies also build into their programmes the use of consultants and equipment from developed countries. These eat up project funds, which often could be better utilised in other areas.

Part of the solution must be for countries to have clearly thought-out plans and programmes before assistance is sought. In turn Ministries need training and development of their own people, and they should insist that at least some consultants are local or regional.

(b) Regional Organisations

The main regional organisations important to the work of the Ministry are the University of the West Indies (UWI), the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC), and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

The UWI has campuses in Jamaica, Trinidad and Barbados. It provides education at undergraduate and graduate levels for Ministry employees both in central administration and in the schools and colleges. The Faculty of Education at Cave Hill, in particular, provides programmes which meet Ministry needs very effectively. The In-service Diploma in Education programme is totally funded by the Barbados government, and the Director and staff maintain a close and cordial relationship with the Ministry.

The CXC was established by 14 Caribbean governments in 1972 to organise regional examinations at the secondary level. It has successfully undertaken this assignment, and has also done much work in curriculum development and teacher training. The CXC has involved classroom teachers in the setting of papers and marking of scripts, and has organised workshops and seminars.

CARICOM provides a regional forum for education personnel to discuss common problems and to seek workable solutions. A current case is its work in technical-vocational education. Surveys have been made of institutions in the region, and a draft action plan has been drawn up. Also, meetings have been organised for relevant officers to amend the document before final production.

These regional bodies provide a forum for discussion by education personnel across the region, thus assisting cross-fertilisation of ideas. The bodies also provide direct or indirect training in key areas, and help develop a regional identity.

However, the regional bodies also have problematic features. Because proposals have to be endorsed, often individually, by the many territories involved, the work of the bodies is often slow. A case in point concerns the legal status of the CXC. Proper legislation is not yet in place in most territories despite the fact that the CXC was established in 1972. Also, the necessity to take into consideration the needs of the whole region sometimes precludes or retards action on the pressing needs of individual countries. For instance, the CXC has not yet developed syllabuses or examinations in religious education, partly because of sensitivity caused by the large number of religious denominations in the region.

Responsibility for dealing with operational matters relating to the three regional bodies is spread though three sections of the Ministry. The Tertiary Education Unit deals with the UWI; the Examinations,

Administration & Supervision Unit deals with the CXC; and the Planning & Research Unit deals with CARICOM. Considerable time is spent in dealing with the regional bodies, but particularly in the cases of the UWI and CXC this is considered an integral part of the work of the respective units. CARICOM matters, however, have to be handled by a very small section along with other non-educational regional and international bodies.

(c) Visitors

External visitors to the Ministry recently included a British Council team. The British Council holds a contract with the government for administration of the Human Resources Development component of a major education and training project. The team of four spent nine days preparing a mid-term review of the project, collecting feedback on the training and consultancy provision, and planning the remaining technical assistance inputs. The team achieved its objective through interviews and meetings with relevant people, visiting institutions and writing a draft report which was discussed and agreed to in principle before the team's departure.

This type of procedure can permit the Ministry to gain objective analysis and independent advice. Such visitors also help the Ministry to overcome time constraints. The Ministry may have officers with the necessary expertise, but such personnel often lack sufficient time to do the work undertaken by the visitors. In addition, formal and informal discussions with visitors provide the intellectual stimulus that is often lacking in small countries. Discussions about developments or approaches in other countries help to widen perspectives. The visitors may also provide useful personal and professional contacts.

Generally, the Ministry relies more heavily on advisers from the UWI than on personnel from outside the region. When launching a new Guidance & Counselling programme in the secondary schools, however, the Ministry drew on the expertise of a professor from the University of South Carolina, USA.

Comments made above about aid also apply here. The Ministry must have clear, written plans and proposals, and must seek assistance with specific, clearly identified problems and programmes. Also, close monitoring and evaluation must take place to ensure that the objectives are achieved.

(d) Management of Information

Requests for information often take the form of questionnaires and surveys from regional and international bodies. The requests make heavy demands on the time and energy of staff who are already over-worked. These problems are made more acute by the fact that desired information is not always available in the Ministry in a form which fits readily into the desired formats. Sometimes the information requested is not a priority of the Ministry, and may not have been collected at all. Statistics on special educational provision for females provide an example. In Barbados co-education is the norm, and such statistics are not usually collected.

The external organisations also supply information in the shape of reports and books. Much of this documentation is voluminous and complicated. Officers who make time to deal with it often have no remaining time to deal with the priorities of the Ministry.

A move towards internationally accepted and simplified and shortened formats for questionnaires would reduce these problems. Also, ideally relevant sections of reports should be drawn to the attention of officers whose areas of responsibility, e.g. in supervision, science or technical education, would stand to benefit from the information. Regrettably, pressures to deal with daily system maintenance mean that there is not the time, energy or inclination to read reports of less immediacy. If at all, such reports usually have to be read after work or at weekends.

(e) Absence of Individuals

Individual officers carry many responsibilities. Because of the shortage of staff, this is true at junior as well as senior levels. Difficulties may arise when staff are absent, and especially when they are abroad and thus less easily consulted.

Fortunately the PS has a deputy, and the CEO has two. Problems are also reduced by encouraging team work and good record systems. Senior professional staff hold structured meetings with agendas and minutes once a month. The agendas routinely include a one-page report from each section outlining (i) significant matters from the previous month, (ii) current activities and projects, and (iii) projects for the following month. These reports help to keep all officers informed of the work of other sections. Senior officers usually meet their own personnel soon after these meetings to discuss relevant matters. Full staff meetings are also held.

Systematic use of the official diary is also encouraged. Officers are urged to make an entry in the diary about each important event. It is stressed that the diary is not to be taken away, but should be left at the desk relating to the particular post.

The emphasis on clear record-keeping extends to the filing and minuting systems; and supervisors are urged to ensure that when they or those they supervise are away from their desks, careful notes are made on matters to be followed up during the period of absence. Notes should be put on file, and should indicate relevant file references, deadlines, contact persons, etc..

Sometimes, of course, officers have to leave suddenly and are unable to provide systematic briefing for the officers who will act in their place. However, the authorities place great stress on the need for briefing. Written notes become doubly necessary when officers who are being transferred leave their posts before their successors arrive.

5. The Culture of the Ministry

(a) Interpersonal Relations

The Ministry is indeed a very personal organisation, in which every officer is known by every other officer. In some cases staff are related. The esteem in which individual officers are held is of considerable importance to the day to day operation of the organisation. An officer who is highly regarded and popular often finds it easier to get things done. On the other hand, unpopular officers may encounter difficulties.

Personal knowledge also helps to short-circuit suspicion and distrust. Again, though, this depends on the image of individual people. It is useful for the senior officers to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their subordinates. For example, an officer who is active in sports could be a useful resource when a decision has to be taken in this area. Systematically getting to know each officer on a one-to-one basis helps senior staff to maximise the advantages of a small organisation. This would be impossible in a large ministry, but can be easily achieved in a small one. The author has already embarked on this task with gratifying results.

Nevertheless, the Ministry insists that the organisation is bigger than the individual officer. Sometimes it is necessary to approach people formally, in writing.

(b) Personal Impact and Decision-Making

There is much scope for personal impact in the Ministry. Indeed even the most junior officer is encouraged to submit ideas for discussion and decision. A Social Club at which all officers meet and mix while discussing matters related to the Ministry also helps promote easy relationships, self-confidence and the climate necessary for successful change.

The obvious dangers of undesirable change are limited through controls and set procedures which are known and generally followed. Proposals for change have to be submitted through heads of sections. Ideas which have policy implications have to be approved by the Minister. In some cases a decision of Cabinet or even Parliament is required.

Great emphasis is put on arriving at decisions through a process of discussion and consensus. Although the Minister has the main power, in practice he shares it, particularly with the senior staff. The Minister chairs an Educational Planning & Development Committee (EPADEC), which discusses policy matters. The fact that individuals make joint decisions also helps to ensure that information is shared, and facilitates decision-making when some staff members are away from office.

The EPADEC is a very important body of which we in the Ministry are very proud. So far as we know it is not common, if it exists at all, in other ministries in Barbados or in other Caribbean countries. Membership of the EPADEC covers the senior staff of all sections of the Ministry, including the Parliamentary Secretary, the Permanent Secretary and the Chief Education Officer. Written notices, minutes and agendas are sent by the Secretary of the Committee in good time before each meeting. Papers relating to policy-decisions are also circulated in advance. Such papers may be prepared by any officer, but are most commonly prepared by professional/technical personnel.

The papers are meaningfully discussed, and usually the opinions of all those present are actively solicited by the Chairman (Minister). Sometimes the Chairman's views are attacked, and he concedes when the opposing arguments are stronger. In the end a consensus is reached. The decisions of the meeting are carefully minuted, and they then form the basis for a Cabinet paper at which level a policy decision is taken. Successive Ministers have used the EPADEC in this highly democratic, creative and mature way.

Decisions of lesser weight are usually taken after discussion at the section level. Sometimes the Permanent Secretary and the Chief Education Officer discuss matters in order to reach a decision. Sometimes these two and the Minister knock heads to decide. Genuine discussion

takes place. However, one persistent and complex problem relates to decisions about essentially professional matters contrary to the advice of the technical staff after in-depth discussion by them.

(c) Flow of Information

Despite the small size of the Ministry, information does not always flow well. Senior staff are usually well informed by reading all the incoming mail and the 'float files' which contain a copy of each item of correspondence issued by the Ministry. (This system also has its drawbacks!)

One problem arises when senior staff do not pass on information to their sections in good time or at all, due usually to pressure of time. Moreover, frequent meetings and other commitments often take away officers without deputies from their desks, and files sometimes get 'stuck'. Suggested solutions include procedures for moving these files in such situations, and serious reorganisation of staffing which would see senior staff having assistance at the level which would permit information to flow when officers are otherwise engaged.

Problems of information flow may be exemplified by the recent case of planning in another ministry for a historical pageant involving schools. The public was informed before the Ministry of Education & Culture about certain important matters. It was assumed that the Ministry of Education & Culture had been informed because a representative had attended the planning meetings, but in fact the individual had failed to pass on information.

6. Conclusions

Implied in the foregoing is the need for in-depth, systematic review of the organisation and management of the ministry with a view to making it more readily responsive to the present needs of a small developing country now politically independent. This is one area in which consultants from outside the country could play a key role. They could bring a freshness of approach and objectivity to their tasks, and should have no particular axe to grind.

Meanwhile, this chapter has highlighted both the constraints of small size and the extent to which the ministry does nevertheless succeed in meeting a wide range of needs. On the negative side, the ministry has not yet managed to create a well staffed and equipped planning unit or a school welfare department to bring together school

attendance officers, guidance counsellors and psychologists. Yet on the positive side, the ministry does have specialist officers in the main curriculum subjects. It also has a special textbook loan unit, an examinations unit, and specialists in infant methods.

At the post-secondary level, Barbados benefits from hosting a regional campus of the University of the West Indies. This campus includes a Faculty of Education, the staff of which play a valuable consultancy role in addition to their basic training functions. Barbados is also an active member of the Caribbean Examinations Council and the Caribbean Community.

Like many other small organisations, the ministry does suffer from a rather flat administrative pyramid. Also, the authorities are anxious to avoid stagnation and in-breeding, and advertise all major posts abroad as well as at home in order to attract applications from Barbadians overseas. Nevertheless, promotional opportunities, at least for the technical/professional personnel, are not too remote.

Finally, the chapter has commented on interpersonal relations within the small organisation. Of course the highly personalised atmosphere may sometimes create problems. However, there is much scope for individual impact, and personal knowledge helps to short-circuit suspicion and distrust.