

## Chapter 10: St. Lucia

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*Population (1987): 142,000*

*Population Growth Rate (1980-87): 2.3% per annum*

*Land Area: 616 square kilometres*

*Capital: Castries*

*GDP per Capita (1987): US\$1,160*

*Year of Independence: 1979*

*Primary School Enrolment Rate (1990): 100%*

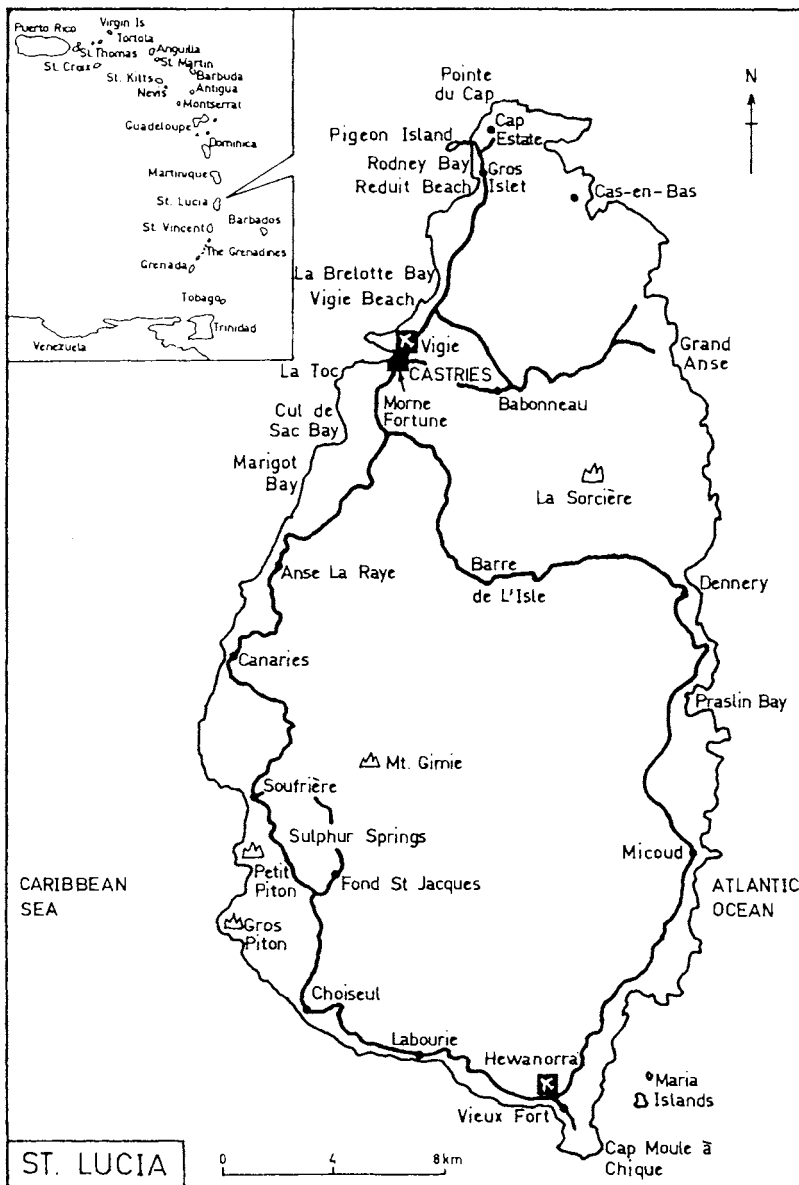
*Human Development Index (1987): 0.789*

The island of St. Lucia is 43 kilometres long and 22 kilometres wide. It has a mountainous terrain with intervening valleys. In the pre-colonial period the island was inhabited by Caribs and Arawaks, two tribes of Amerindians akin to those of mainland South America. The warlike Caribs eventually supplanted the more gentle Arawaks. The arrival of Europeans in the 15th century resulted in aggressive exchanges with the Caribs, who were virtually eliminated.

The early colonisers were English and French, who fought many battles for what was perceived as a perfect fortress from which to maintain regional control. The island changed hands between these two nations 14 times. Each time, the colonial power left its stamp in the form of place names, religion, style of government, system of education, and general culture.

St. Lucia was finally ceded to the British by the Treaty of Paris in 1814. From 1838 the island was governed as part of the Windward Islands, with the early governors residing in Barbados and their successors in Grenada. In 1967 St. Lucia gained full internal self-government, becoming a state in voluntary association with the United Kingdom. The country gained full independence in 1979.

The early colonial economy depended on sugar cane plantations in which African slave labour provided the bulk of the workforce. Slavery was abolished in the 1830s, but to meet the continued need for cheap



labour East Indians were brought to the island as indentured servants. Although today's population is predominantly black, these historical forces have created a rich racial and cultural heritage.

The economy is primarily dependent on agriculture, manufacturing, construction and tourism. The rate of economic growth improved from -0.8 per cent in 1980 to 6.8 per cent in 1988. In recent years the Ministry of Education & Culture has been allocated about 23 per cent of the recurrent budget and about 8 per cent of the capital budget. Education consumes about 8 per cent of GDP, which is a higher proportion than that in most comparable countries.

### **1. The Structure of Government**

St. Lucia is a monarchy, headed by the British sovereign who is represented locally by a Governor General. The government operates according to the Westminster model, with a House of Assembly and a Senate.

The Head of Government is the Prime Minister, who has the authority to choose a Cabinet of Ministers, usually from elected government representatives. Each Minister normally has responsibilities to Parliament for the operations of a particular Ministry. Ministerial portfolios are assigned by the Governor General on the advice of the Prime Minister, and are subject to change from time to time.

It is difficult to indicate what considerations determine the nature and number of Ministries which exist at a particular time. Such considerations, however, usually include the need to provide a full range of government services, financial constraints, the availability of suitably qualified elected representatives to serve as Ministers, and the personal preferences of those involved. In 1989 the government had the following Ministries:

1. Prime Minister, Cabinet, Home Affairs,
2. Legal Affairs,
3. Finance, Statistics & Negotiating,
4. Trade, Industry & Tourism
5. Foreign Affairs
6. Education & Culture
7. Health, Housing & Labour
8. Youth, Community Development, Social Affairs & Sport
9. Communications, Works & Transport,
10. Agriculture, Lands, Fisheries & Cooperatives, and
11. Planning, Personnel, Establishment & Training.

Recent years have brought some re-arrangements in portfolios. Education used to be administered jointly with Health, but was split from it in the mid-1970s. Then in 1980 the Ministry of Education was aggregated with cultural affairs to become the Ministry of Education & Culture.

## **2. The Education System**

### *(a) Structure and Priorities*

St. Lucia's education system is essentially based on British patterns. However, opportunities at the primary and secondary levels were expanded largely through a French-based order of Roman Catholic priests, and features from North America have also found their way into the education system. The establishment of certain regional bodies, particularly the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) and the University of the West Indies (UWI), has fuelled a quest for greater relevance in national education systems; and St. Lucia, like some other Caribbean countries, is making a fervent effort towards indigenisation of the school curriculum.

School attendance is compulsory between the ages of 5 and 15. In the pre-compulsory stage, 125 pre-schools cater for about 5,400 children aged three to five. At the primary level 83 government and assisted primary schools cater for about 36,600 pupils, and a further 400 pupils attend four private primary schools.

Secondary schools are classified as junior secondary, senior secondary and comprehensive. The junior secondary schools limit instruction to the first three forms, and cater for children aged 12 to 15. The senior secondary schools provide grammar-type education in Forms 1 to 5. Comprehensive schools also span Forms 1 to 5, but pay much attention to technical and vocational education. In 1988/89 there were 12 government and assisted secondary schools (including three junior secondary schools) with 6,400 students. Another 1,080 students attended the two private secondary schools.

In the post-compulsory stage, enrolment rates are relatively low. This constitutes the most pressing problem faced by the Ministry of Education & Culture. Only about 30 per cent of the age group is admitted to Form 4. This shortcoming is now being addressed through expansion of existing institutions, upgrading of junior secondary schools, conversion of primary school buildings, and construction of new schools. The Ministry's two other priorities in the education sector are improving relevance in education through greater incorporation of technical/

vocational education at all levels, and reducing the shortage of trained teachers.

*(b) Policies and Plans*

The official Policy Statement for the years 1987-92 sets the overall goal of broadening opportunities and modernising education. This will be achieved through both formal and nonformal education. Some specific aspects of the policy are worth emphasising because they have implications for the organisation of the Ministry of Education & Culture. For example the extensive programme of school construction has already required the Ministry to open a small Building Maintenance Unit. The Ministry also hopes to expand its pre-school unit and to establish a training centre for pre-school operators and their staffs; and plans to increase the emphasis on technical/vocational education will have implications for the curriculum unit, which will have to prepare new syllabuses and curricula.

The policy document also recognises needs in higher education. It notes that development in this technological era depends on the availability of trained technicians, middle managers and qualified professionals. In order to meet these needs the government has established the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College, which will pave the way for first-year and eventually for full university degree programmes. The College is scheduled for significant expansion during the next few years.

New initiatives also have implications for textbook production. If children are to be properly moulded and sensitive to social issues related to national identity and development, the government must have control of the curriculum and textbooks used in schools. Accordingly the Ministry will continue to support the Curriculum and Materials Development Unit (CAMDU), which has spearheaded the development of teaching materials and textbooks.

### **3. The Ministry of Education & Culture**

*(a) Organisation*

The organisation chart of the Ministry of Education & Culture is shown in Figure 10.1. At the apex are the Minister and the Permanent Secretary (PS), with their support staff. The Minister establishes policy. The PS is the administrative head of the ministry, and is responsible to the Minister for the administration of policy. Below the Minister and

the PS are the Department of Education, the Department of Culture, Library Services, and the Unesco National Commission.

Figure 10.1: The Ministry of Education & Culture, St. Lucia (1991)

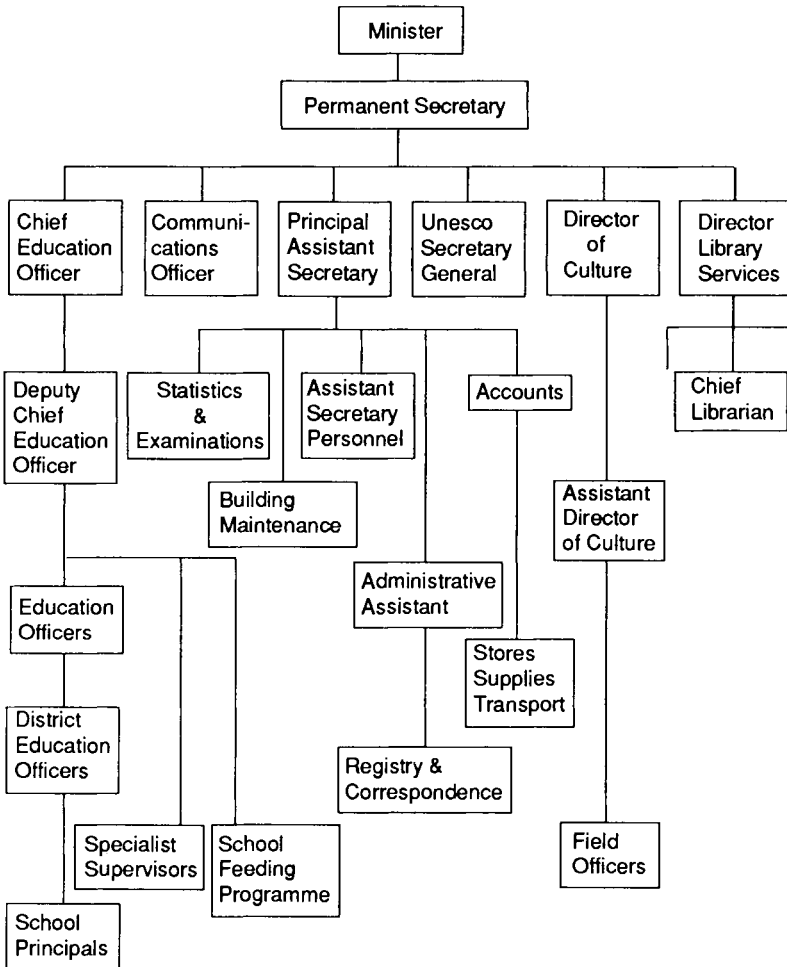


Table 10.1 shows that the Department of Education is the largest component. Indeed the Ministry is commonly referred to just as the Ministry of Education rather than by its full title. The Department of

Education is headed by the Chief Education Officer (CEO). Positions exist for a Deputy CEO and two Senior Education Officers (SEOs), though at the time of writing these positions were vacant. The CEO oversees the work of six Education Officers (EOs) responsible for pre-schools, primary schools, secondary schools, adult education, planning and curriculum. The CEO also supervises five District Education Officers (DEOs) and up to 14 Specialist Supervisors.

*Table 10.1: Components of the Ministry of Education & Culture, St. Lucia*

	Establishment Posts Dec. 1989	Occupied Posts Dec. 1989	Recurrent Budget (EC\$) 1989/90	Capital Budget (EC\$) 1989/90
General Administration	47	38	3,580,450	0
Department of Education	52*	38	45,355,024	14,819,000
Department of Culture	9	7	580,535	20
Library Services	36	29	431,239	265,000
Unesco National Commission	5	2	93,339	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>149#</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>50,040,587</b>	<b>15,084,020</b>

\* This is the number of staff employed in the Ministry headquarters and in the administration of the districts. It excludes teachers. Teachers and schools are, however, included in the budget estimates.

# An additional nine staff members are attached to the Ministry on wages. They include the handyman, two drivers, a customs broker and a temporary clerk.

The General Administration Branch serves all departments. It is supervised by a Principal Assistant Secretary (PAS) on behalf of the PS. Within this branch are units for Statistics & Examinations, Personnel, Registry & Correspondence, Accounts, and Stores, Supplies & Transport. The General Administration branch has almost the same number of officers as the Department of Education.

Within the Department of Education, a separate unit is responsible for the school feeding programme. The World Food Programme (WFP) of the United Nations has been providing food aid to certain target groups in the island since about 1979. One group comprises pregnant mothers, lactating mothers and hospital patients. Another group comprises agricultural workers; a third group consists of children in day-care centres; and a fourth group are children aged five to seven.

An additional School Snack Programme was launched in 1984 in three schools. At that time, the WFP project was administered from the Ministry of Health, with an inter-ministerial coordinating committee.

The programme was later expanded to 50 schools, and transferred to the Ministry of Education. It is not usual for such projects to be established special units. Rather, they are normally made to fit within established functional units so that their activities may be streamlined within normal departmental operations. However, in this case the size and longevity of the project were considered a justification for a separate unit. The unit remains an example of inter-ministry cooperation, for it continues to service needs in health and agriculture as well as education.

The Department of Culture forms another branch. This reflects its history, for when Culture was brought into the ministry it was retained as a separate wing rather than being integrated into the existing organisation. The Department of Culture has only nine officers, comprising a Director, two Assistant Directors (though these two posts were vacant at the time of writing), four field officers, one secretary, and one clerk-typist.

The Library Services branch has recently been reorganised and expanded. The newly-appointed Director of Library Services coordinates the work of the Chief Librarian, the College Librarian, the Government Documentalist, and the Government Archivist. The Chief Librarian is responsible for the Central Library and for district and rural libraries. The Government Documentalist takes charge of the documentation centres in the various Ministries, and for convenience is located in the Ministry of Planning.

The Unesco National Commission, which was created after St. Lucia joined Unesco in 1980, has also remained a separate unit. St. Lucia has taken its Unesco membership very seriously, and has both contributed to and benefitted from a number of Unesco projects. The five posts in the National Commission comprise the Secretary General, a secretary, a documentalist-librarian, an audio-visual aids technician, and an executive officer. At the time of writing, however, only the first two posts were filled.

The shape and size of the National Commission partly reflects the views and background of the present Secretary General. He has been a senior educator, a member of the legislature, and a spokesman on many issues. It was therefore necessary to create a structure which would provide job satisfaction to the individual. Several adaptations have been made to ensure that he can exercise some authority. For instance, the Unesco documentation centre has become a repository for the ministry's library acquisitions. Secondly, the documentation centre provides reprographic and audio-visual facilities required by the Communications Officer. Thirdly, the Secretary General chairs the Conference Organising Committee, and is the ministry's main liaison

person in matters of protocol.

Although the organisation chart seems to imply that all officers in the below the PS are equal in rank, this is not actually the case. The CEO has a higher rank than the Principal Assistant Secretary, the Director of Culture and the Communications Officer. In turn, these officers rank higher than the Director of Library Services, who is senior to the Unesco Secretary General. The level of remuneration reflects the size of the departments and, implicitly, the officers' workloads.

A comment is needed on the Communications Officer post, as it reflects the ministry's efforts to achieve flexibility and adaptability. The post is substantially that of a Specialist Supervisor in the Education Department, and in fact the officer who first held the post in 1983 was appointed at that level. Following his transfer the post remained vacant for five years, and was filled only in 1991. Because of the previous high position held by the incumbent, the overall role of the officer in communications with all departments, his public relations role at the policy level, and the potential of his unit for growth, direct links have been established between the Communications Unit and the office of the Permanent Secretary.

Finally, Table 10.1 shows that at the date to which the table refers nearly a quarter of the establishment posts were vacant. Typically, the establishment of each unit reflects the ideal conceived by the ministry. The ideal may not be realised, however, in part because of inadequate funding and/or inability to recruit suitable people. To some extent, the difference between the establishment and the actual staffing reflects the constraints imposed by small-state realities.

### *(b) Centralisation/Decentralisation*

The country has traditionally been divided into 10 parishes. The major divisions now are Castries, Vieux Fort, Soufrière and Gros Islet, while subsidiary ones are Micoud, Dennery, Laborie, Choiseul, Anse-la-Raye and Canaries.

In 1985 the government decided to decentralise operations, announcing that the island would be divided into eight regions. Each region would have a Regional Council, a broadly-based committee with local and central government representatives. Implementation of the decentralisation plan was assigned to the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Although implementation has been slow, a major step was the establishment in Vieux Fort of an office complex to accommodate sub-offices of the various ministries, including the Ministry of Education & Culture. The Ministry has sought to adhere closely to the government's

decentralisation plan. However, the process is complex and still incomplete.

Prior to the government's announcement of its plan, the Ministry had three education districts. As a result of the government's proposals the office at Vieux Fort was assimilated within the government office building. The number of DEOs has increased to five and will ultimately increase to eight. Ministry sub-offices may in the long term be opened in other Regions. There has been no parallel decentralisation of cultural services. The Department of Culture remains entirely in Castries, from which the field officers move out as necessary.

The DEOs supervise the schools in their districts, ensuring adherence to rules and regulations, and assisting principals with day-to-day problems. They take decisions relating to class arrangements, grant 'time off' to teachers, and collect statistical data. They also communicate necessary information to the central administration in Castries. In executing their responsibilities they may receive general advice and suggestions from members of their Regional Councils. The DEOs are usually the Ministry representatives on the Councils.

Nevertheless, major decisions are taken by the central Ministry of Education. The DEOs have no authority to appoint staff to their sub-offices as all appointments to the Teaching Service are made by the Teaching Service Commission upon the recommendation of the PS Education & Culture, and most civil servants are appointed by the Public Service Commission (PSC), normally on the recommendation of the PS Education & Culture through the PS Personnel.

A slight disadvantage of decentralisation is that away from central control the region could possibly act in a manner which is not in keeping with central government policy. It is also possible that, in cases where the decentralised system is working, the Heads of Department and chief administrators are less likely to take a personal interest in the affairs of the regions, thus making them more remote.

However the advantages of decentralisation perhaps outweigh the disadvantages. The main advantage is that the autonomy, albeit limited, enables decisions to be taken more quickly, thus making the system more effective. Secondly, it reduces the burdens of the central administration since certain problems can be dealt with locally; and thirdly, it promotes leadership at the local level.

Finally, the Department of Culture has been unable to decentralise because it is too small. However, ways could be found to meet some of the objectives within the existing structure. For example, deployment of a Cultural Officer from the out-districts could be enhanced by allowing him to take up office in a region closer to his place of abode.

(c) *Specialisation/Generalisation*

The Ministry of Education & Culture has had to address problems relating to emerging needs. These needs include coordination of matters such as Annual Reports, school transport, Independence Day celebrations, carnival celebrations, Windward Islands school tournaments, and activities to generate social responsibility and discipline.

These functional areas are slightly problematic for three reasons. First, some of them have not been anticipated, and therefore have not been allocated to specific incumbents in the structure. Second, while seeming to be of an educational nature, some of these functions require inter-departmental coordination within the Ministry; and third, they may require substantial inputs from other Ministries and from the community.

Such cases usually require the intervention of the Permanent Secretary. But although the PS is well placed to mobilise the necessary support from the various departments, he is usually too busy to co-ordinate the details himself. Such duties are therefore often assigned to another officer, usually the PAS.

Emerging needs are also addressed by special committees. These have been established for the coordination of conferences, the granting of bursaries to needy students, the nomination of teachers and other candidates for training awards, and the identification of drivers to be contracted for providing subsidised transport to students. Many of these committees are *ad hoc*, but some have become standing committees.

In addition to the PAS, several officers have had to take extra tasks because of the smallness of the Ministry and the constraints on specialisation. For instance the officer in charge of the Statistics & Examinations Unit is both the Statistical Officer and the Examinations Officer. The major problem associated with these job groupings is that the incumbents may be overwhelmed by a diversity of expectations. To tackle this difficulty they are sometimes given assistants and support staff.

On the other hand, most jobs remain specialised. These include the Education Officers who have specialised roles as supervisors of pre-schools, primary schools, secondary schools, adult education, etc.. They also include the Specialist Supervisors, who supervise curriculum implementation in such subjects as language arts, mathematics, agriculture, home economics, music, art, and physical education. In the general administrative section, the post of Accountant remains specialised, while the Assistant Secretary has special responsibility for personnel and training. The Building Maintenance Unit also has specialist officers.

One strategy through which the ministry secures specialist expertise

when it only needs such expertise for limited periods is through the system of special assignments. One example is a computer programmer who was recruited from the classroom. He remained on that establishment list even though he was temporarily engaged in non-classroom duties. Another example is the counterpart to the consultant in labour market studies required under a CDB/World Bank/OPEC technical-vocational education project. Like the computer programmer, the counterpart was a teacher who remained on his school's establishment during the duration of the project. He had previously been on special assignment in the Curriculum Materials and Development Unit.

Nevertheless it remains true that certain staff members could be better deployed. For instance, plans are afoot to make Specialist Supervisors serve as both curriculum developers and implementers rather than mere supervisors of teachers. Also, the work of the DEOs is to be reorganised so that they supervise secondary as well as primary schools. However, there is no serious underemployment at the Ministry. On the contrary, the central administrative arm in particular seems over-burdened.

Finally, it is useful to look at the evolution of responsibility for planning, statistics and examinations, for it exemplifies the ways that small states may need to have flexible structures both to get essential tasks done and to make the best use of scarce expertise. Until 1986, the ministry had a Planning & Statistics Unit headed by an Education Officer (Planning). There was no clearly-defined examinations unit. The Testing, Measurement & Evaluation Officer almost single-handedly undertook administration of the Common Entrance Examination, while other examinations were supervised by a range of other officers.

The Testing, Measurement & Evaluation Officer was subsequently promoted to Principal Assistant Secretary in the administrative section. The search for a replacement led to identification of a professional with a statistical background. He was an educator whose personal qualities were expected to enhance communications with the many school personnel involved in examinations, and he was therefore placed in charge of both statistics and examinations. As a result, the ministry now has a Planning Unit and a separate Statistics & Examinations unit.

#### **4. Responsibilities Shared or not Undertaken**

The Ministry shares several responsibilities with other government ministries and agencies. The following nine areas are particularly worth highlighting.

- a) *Early childhood education* is shared with the Ministry of Youth, Community Development, Social Affairs & Sport, which is responsible for day nurseries catering for children up to the age of three. The Ministry of Education & Culture oversees schools for children aged three to five. However, the 125 pre-schools are owned privately.
- b) *Primary schools* may be classified as Government, Assisted, or Private. Of the 87 schools, 32 are Government, 51 are Assisted, and four are Private. All the Assisted Schools are denominational, 45 being Roman Catholic and the remainder Anglican or Methodist. The government pays staff salaries for Assisted Schools, provides equipment, and controls the curriculum. The denominational boards own the school premises, and receive from the government grants for maintenance and capital works. Three of the private primary schools are owned by the Seventh-day Adventist church, which for religious reasons has desired autonomy in school management. The other private primary school caters mainly for expatriate children.
- c) *Secondary schools* fit into the same ownership classification. In this sector, however, most schools are owned by the government. Of the 14 secondary schools, 10 are Government, two are Assisted (Roman Catholic), and two are Private. The arrangement for the Assisted schools is comparable to that in the primary sector. The government pays salaries and controls the curriculum, though provides a per capita student grant for maintenance and other costs.
- d) *Special Education* is supported by external donors and voluntary agencies such as the St. Lucia Blind Welfare Association and the Lions Club. The National Council for the Disabled oversees the operations of the special schools, which cater for the blind, the deaf and the mentally retarded. A Ministry subvention pays for staff salaries.
- e) *School Health Services* are provided jointly by the Ministry of Education & Culture and the Ministry of Health, Housing & Labour. The latter is responsible for vaccinations, dental services and eye care.
- f) *Textbooks* in mathematics and language arts for primary schools are produced by the Ministry of Education & Culture with assistance from the private sector. Originally the Ministry duplicated and sold the materials itself. However assistance is now sought from local printers, and the books are sold through commercial outlets. In addition, some textbooks are now published on behalf of the Ministry by overseas companies.

- g) *Scholarships* for overseas studies are granted according to procedures established by the Ministry. The final recommendations are usually made by the Training Committee, which comprises the PSs from the various Ministries and representatives of the major staff associations. The PS Personnel is the Chairman, and his Ministry supplies support staff.
- h) *Teachers' salaries* are paid by the Treasury through the commercial banks. The necessary documentation is prepared by the Accounting Unit of the Ministry of Education & Culture.
- i) *Budgeting procedures* are set out for each Ministry along established guidelines, but the Ministry of Finance puts together the final version of the budget. While functions such as accounting, budgeting and auditing are executed internally, external controls are imposed by the Ministry of Finance, the Treasury, and the Auditing Department.

In other cases, problems are experienced in undertaking certain tasks. It is difficult to identify cases where necessary work has never been attempted by the Ministry, but several tasks are either done inadequately or are attempted only sporadically because of limitations in manpower. They include:

- the updating of education development plans,
- public relations,
- educational broadcasting,
- provision of a resource centre for teachers,
- continuous work on the preparation of annual reports,
- updating of personnel records,
- computerisation of the record-keeping system,
- analysis of the results of the Common Entrance Examination (CEE) for the diagnosis of problems affecting the teaching-learning process, and
- quantitative research on educational effectiveness.

Finally, the ministry has no school psychologist. In 1987 one secondary school had provision for a Guidance Counsellor. As a way to make effective use of scarce resources in a small system the individual was assigned to the ministry so that she could better serve the entire system. However, she subsequently resigned.

On the other hand, the ministry did recently appoint a Curriculum Officer responsible for Family Life and Guidance Counselling in schools. The need for such programmes at both primary and secondary levels is acute in view of recent problems of drug abuse, delinquency,

teenage pregnancy and general indiscipline. Full programmes have been developed, and the officer is training counterparts for effective implementation.

## **5. Personnel**

### *(a) Expertise*

It is not acutely difficult to identify and recruit suitable staff for the Ministry, though bureaucratic hurdles sometimes complicate recruitment. In general emigration does not significantly reduce the availability of suitable people, though difficulties are occasionally experienced in certain specialisms.

Within the Ministry itself, in recent years expatriates have seldom been employed on a steady basis. Expatriate teachers are nevertheless recruited for the schools. The Ministry has ongoing links with Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) from the United Kingdom, CUSO from Canada, Peace Corps from the USA, and Linguistic Attachés from France and Venezuela. Up to four teachers from each of these sources are recruited each year. At the secondary and tertiary levels the system has benefitted from recruitment of Guyanese and, more recently, Trinidadians. Also, the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College has an institutional development project under which staff exchanges take place with St. Lawrence College in Canada.

Within the school system the recruitment of expatriate teachers has caused little disruption. The Ministry continues to value the services of expatriates, though regulates the terms under which they are employed. The Ministry also pays attention to the balance between expatriates and locals in specific institutions.

### *(b) Job Definition and Appraisal*

Most jobs are reasonably well defined before appointments are made. This is chiefly because some justification must be given to the relevant authorities for creating new posts. Also, vacant posts are often advertised, and the job descriptions are usually included in the advertisements and/or further particulars. Moreover, when applicants are interviewed the job description is frequently the launching pad for questioning.

However, many jobs evolve over time. For example in recent years close attention has been given to the officers in the Accounting Unit,

for whom new job classifications have been proposed. Also, the post of Principal Assistant Secretary was created about six years ago to provide assistance to the PS. The role of the Assistant Secretary has also been redefined to incorporate responsibility for staffing and training.

A new format has recently been prepared for staff appraisal. Because standard appraisal forms are used throughout the public service, the criteria for assessment do not always match the jobs that individuals are doing. However, the Teaching Service has separate forms for teachers and principals. It is perhaps at the very top of the hierarchy that it is most difficult to appraise performance. The PS has sometimes completed formal appraisals of the Heads of Department, but no systematic appraisal has been made of the PS.

*(c) The Hierarchy*

Like comparable organisations in other small states, the Ministry of Education & Culture has a short pyramid. However, efforts were made in the early 1980s to make the hierarchy taller. The need to provide greater opportunities for individual mobility was the major motivation for the reclassification of posts in the accounting stream of the public service, which included the accountants in the Ministry of Education & Culture.

A broader reclassification exercise has just been concluded involving the representatives of the Ministry of Education & Culture, the Ministry of Personnel and the Teachers' Union. The exercise aims to encourage mobility within the teaching service and to equate terms and conditions with those of the civil service. The proposals await Cabinet approval. The government has also set up a special committee under the chairmanship of the PS Personnel to propose reclassification of positions in the civil service in order to improve opportunities for individual advancement.

One obstacle to movement in this small system arises when senior positions are occupied by relatively young persons. To tackle this difficulty arrangements are sometimes made for secondment to other organisations, especially for senior officers.

Within the individual departments of the Ministry of Education & Culture, particularly the Department of Education and Library Services, opportunities for advancement are reasonable. However, officers who wish to advance to the highest level must be prepared to abandon their specialisms.

*(d) Work for External Bodies*

It is difficult to identify all the roles undertaken by staff of the Ministry of Education & Culture in other Ministries and in private organisations.

*Table 10.2: Officers' Involvement in Other Government Bodies, Ministry of Education & Culture, St. Lucia*

**Permanent Secretary**

- Vice Chairman, St. Lucia Development Bank Student Loans Scheme
- Chairman, National Task Force for Discipline
- Member of several Cabinet-appointed committees, including
  - Training Committee
  - Housing Committee
  - Reclassification Committee
  - Government Tenders Board
- Member, Sir Arthur Lewis Community College Board of Governors
- Member, Independence Day Celebrations Committee

**Principal Assistant Secretary**

- Chairman, Education Subcommittee, National Disaster Amelioration Committee
- Chairman, Windward Islands School Tournament Local Committee

**Senior Accountant**

- Member, National Carnival Development Committee

**Statistician**

- Member, National Population Council

**Chief Education Officer**

- Member, Government Salary Negotiating Team
- Member, Central Emergency Organisation
- Member, Sir Arthur Lewis Community College Board of Governors

**Education Officer (Curriculum)/Acting Deputy CEO**

- Board Member, Radio St. Lucia

**Education Officer (Pre-Schools)**

- Member, National Council for the Disabled

**Labour Market Information Counterpart**

- Member, Road Safety Board

**District Education Officer (Area 1)**

- Member, Independence Day Celebrations Committee

**Specialist Supervisor (Art)**

- Member, Independence Day Celebrations Committee

**Director of Culture**

- Member, Independence Day Celebrations Committee
- Member, National Carnival Development Committee

Nevertheless, Table 10.2 presents some of the linkages with Cabinet committees and quasi-government bodies. These linkages can be numerous, especially for the Permanent Secretary.

Involvement with other bodies can be very useful. The officers gain experience which they can use in their own work, and they expand their circle of contacts. Also, the skill that individuals display in work with external bodies enhances their reputations and, as a result, the image of the Ministry. Finally, external contacts add interest and help to circumvent boredom.

However, work for external bodies may also create problems. First the demands of the external bodies may be onerous and draining. Officers may also find themselves enmeshed in conflicts of interest.

## **6. International Linkages**

### *(a) Regional Organisations*

Among the major regional organisations that are important to the Ministry are the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC), and the University of the West Indies (UWI).

The CDB is primarily concerned with economic development and until recently had few education projects. One important project, however, is a loans scheme for tertiary education. Funds are made available to the St. Lucia Development Bank, which has appointed a Student Loans Committee to administer them. The Ministry of Education & Culture is represented on the Committee.

The CDB has also worked with the Ministry in two other projects. One was a school construction/rehabilitation project for which the CDB in the early 1980s undertook responsibility for implementation with funds from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The other is an ongoing sub-regional technical/vocational education project co-financed by the World Bank, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the CDB itself, and the participating governments.

The CXC was established to prepare syllabuses for the various subjects in secondary schools and to set and mark examinations based on these syllabuses. The CXC promotes increasing relevance of education, for example through the indigenisation of syllabuses and the impetus given to technical/vocational education.

The UWI provides tertiary education for its member countries. It also provides consulting services as needed. The School of Education

in Barbados has had a major outreach function which has included St. Lucia. Teacher education has been among its foci. The Office of University Services, based in Barbados, has made particular efforts to ensure that the needs of non-campus countries are addressed by the University administration.

*(b) International Aid*

St. Lucia, like most developing countries, gains aid from external donors. For example several donors have contributed to the Ministry's capital projects, especially in school construction. External agencies have included USAID, the British government, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the French government, and the Federal Republic of Germany. Assistance has also been received from Hess Oils Ltd., an American company with major interests in the US Virgin Islands which established an oil trans-shipment centre in Castries.

Donors have also assisted with special projects. They have included two major curriculum projects funded by USAID through UWI and CXC. One of the projects facilitated the development of curricula for core subjects at the primary level, while the other helped to develop secondary school syllabuses and curricula in several subjects.

Other special projects have included:

- \* assistance from the Association of Community Colleges of Canada for the training of senior staff in the technical college;
- \* funds from the Canadian High Commission for technical/vocational equipment and for several other small projects;
- \* donation of typewriters, exercise books and other supplies from the Canadian Organization for Development in Education (CODE);
- \* books from the British High Commission;
- \* science equipment from the Federal Republic of Germany;
- \* science and business education equipment from the French government;
- \* Special Development Assistance grants from USAID;
- \* finance from Unicef for equipping pre-schools;
- \* food from the United Nations World Food Programme for the School Snack Programme;
- \* financial and technical assistance from Unesco for developing curricula in prevocational education and for equipping schools;
- \* assistance from the Organization of American States (OAS) in adult education, special education and sports; and

\* assistance from various agencies for purchase of photocopiers and computers.

It must also be recognised, however, that international aid can have a negative side. There is a danger of excessive dependence on external funds for development projects. Agreements with external donors may bring 'strings', and may require counterpart arrangements with overburdening staff-support stipulations. Moreover, the processes of project identification, development, implementation and monitoring may consume an inordinate amount of officials' time. Finally, the departure of a highly competent overseas specialist may cause a void if a local has not been trained to replace him.

The Ministry generally assigns a middle-level or senior staff member, usually on a part-time basis, to all major projects funded by external donors. In this way the Ministry tries to provide logistical support for visits of the representatives of the external bodies and for project monitoring. Unicef projects, for example, are coordinated by the EO (Pre-Schools). OAS projects in adult education are coordinated by the EO (Adult Education), and the CEO serves as the National Co-ordinator for the Unesco programme called CARNEID (Caribbean Network of Educational Innovation for Development).

Full-time appointments for aid projects are rare, but do include three instances. One is the Secretary General of the Unesco National Commission; a second is the School Feeding Coordinator who monitors the school snack programme; and the third is the full-time Project Manager of the CDB/World Bank/OPEC Technical-Vocational Education Project.

Because of the variety of projects, the Research Officer based in the Ministry's Planning Unit has also been designated the Project Officer. His desk acts as a clearing house for information on all ongoing projects at the Ministry.

### *(c) Visitors*

Although the policy of the Ministry is to promote the development of local expertise as much as possible, it has an open door to visitors. The Ministry may also make specific requests to external organisations to send visitors for various types of consultation. For example, CDB personnel come to monitor and implement the project in technical education; and two consultants financed by CIDA carried out a needs assessment with a view to upgrading of the education planning unit.

Since the mid-1970s, the Ministry has also had links with the

Organization for Cooperation in Overseas Development (OCOD). This is a Canadian body which has helped run workshops for specialist teachers in primary and secondary schools. The workshops usually last for three weeks, and are preceded by preparatory visits of local educators to Canada. Eight Canadian tutors and administrative staff spent about 120 person-days in the country in 1989 in connection with these workshops.

In addition, a comprehensive teacher education project financed by CIDA and implemented by OCOD has just been initiated to upgrade unqualified teachers in four Eastern Caribbean Islands (including St. Lucia) through distance education. In order to facilitate local implementation, OCOD has set up a local office to which two Canadian staff have been posted.

The Ministry of Education & Culture has also established a National Task Force on Discipline. The Task Force identified the '4-H' movement as one creative outlet for the energies of young people. A consultant was invited from Florida State University to advise on the resuscitation of 4-H clubs.

The fact that most external visitors wish to hold discussions with senior Ministry officials can make major demands on the time of the latter. To keep this from getting out of hand, Heads of Department are encouraged to represent the Ministry and only to call the Permanent Secretary when it is really necessary. The Heads of Department also organise briefing and debriefing sessions to ensure that the goals and strategies proposed by external agencies fit those of the Ministry. Major conferences and seminars requested by overseas organisations are overseen by an interdepartmental conference organising committee.

#### *(d) Management of Information*

Ministries of Education in small countries are sometimes overwhelmed by requests by external organisations for information. This Ministry routinely receives lengthy reports from the CXC, OAS, UWI and Unesco, some of which request responses. When an agency considers a response to be crucial, it sometimes needs to send repeated reminders or even to send a representative in person. The reason for inaction usually lies in the fact that the senior management is too busy to deal with these reports, and is unable to find a subordinate officer who is both qualified and available to do the task.

Among the agencies, Unesco sends perhaps the greatest amount of documentation. It was partly because of the bulk of Unesco documentation that it became necessary to establish a special office to deal

with it. This documentation centre has now been broadened to include other acquisitions.

The need to respond to these demands has forced the Ministry to identify a number of persons to assist. One of them is the Research Officer/Projects Officer in the Planning Unit, who is frequently called upon to draft background papers. The EO (Planning) is also often asked to help.

It is difficult to estimate the amount of time spent by the Permanent Secretary and the Heads of Department dealing with information requests from external bodies. A crude estimate would be about 15 per cent of the time of each officer, despite the fact that not all requests are met.

Nevertheless, it must be stressed that much of the information received from the external agencies is useful. Reports from these agencies have been used to help review policies at the Ministry. For example, much Unicef documentation has been used by the EO (Pre-Primary) and the EO (Adult Education).

#### *(e) Absence of Individuals*

The absence of individuals for overseas meetings or on long leave can seriously affect the work of the Ministry. However, methods of coping with absence have to some extent been worked out. First, each Department Head works closely with a deputy. The Deputy CEO deals with the routine correspondence addressed to the CEO, the correspondence to the Unesco Secretary General goes through her personal secretary, and the correspondence for the PS goes through the PAS. This means that in the absence of the senior officer the deputy is likely at least to understand the main issues and the state of play.

Second, there has been in operation a system in which much of the outgoing correspondence of interest to the general administration and to specific departments is circulated to the Heads before signatures are appended. The PS has an opportunity to view correspondence signed by the CEO before it is dispatched; and copies of outgoing correspondence are circulated amongst top officials before being filed. Accordingly, in the absence of any one of them someone else is likely to have some knowledge of the matter at hand.

However, matters of a highly confidential matter are not circulated. For example the PS may have access to information which he will not necessarily divulge to his deputy or to the Heads of Department. Should the PS be absent, it is difficult for his deputy to act on such matters. But when the PS knows that he will be away for a prolonged

period, he uses his judgement on whether it would be proper to release such information.

The record-keeping system also facilitates continuity. With the exception of confidential matters, all documentation is handled by the Correspondence Section, which does the appropriate filing and makes the information accessible to authorised officers in the Ministry.

One other way in which disruption is minimised is by contact between Heads and their deputies by telephone or other means in the case of long absences. When Heads travel overseas, they tell their secretaries and deputies how they can be contacted. And when they are at home on leave they leave their doors open for communication. Senior officials may also report to their offices from time to time to deal with emergencies.

## **7. The Culture of the Ministry**

### *(a) Lack of Neutrality*

In a small state, friendship and family relationships may significantly influence administration. This can be both a problem and an asset.

The problem arises when officers experience difficulty in adjusting from family and previous collegial relationships to ones involving superordinate/subordinate relationships. There is also a greater danger of inconsistent behaviour in which administrators favour their friends and relatives. These factors may reduce productivity and overall efficiency.

On the other hand, there are advantages in having close personal relationships. Loyalty to the organisation may be greater because the employees may have a personal commitment to the leader and a vested interest in his continued leadership. Also, rules may be exercised with greater moderation and humanity because administrators are reluctant to inflict extreme punishment on their friends and relatives. In such circumstances, even autocratic leaders are more likely to be benevolent. These factors contribute to greater stability for the organisation, and protect it from the disruptions of outside forces.

The question then arising is how the authorities can maximise the advantages and minimise the disadvantages. First, it may be suggested, they should pay attention to qualifications and seniority in placement of individuals. These are more neutral criteria, which can reduce personalisation.

Officials may also be advised to adhere closely to formal procedures in other respects. For example the Financial & General Stores

Rules serve as a guide for financial and stores procedures; the Staff Orders provide guidance for civil service personnel matters; and the Teaching Service Commission Regulations provide a code for regulating the conduct of teachers. Decisions can be taken 'according to the book', and thus need not be personalised.

Authorities may also relegate decisions to committees. In St. Lucia several standing committees have been established to review special cases and requests. These include the Honorarium Committee, the Housing Committee, the Staffing & Structures Committee, the Travel & Subsistence Committee, and the Tenders Board. A Permanent Secretary may refer special cases to these committees as the need arises, thus insulating himself from the effects of decision-making.

It is also important that final decisions relating to the appointment, discipline and dismissal of teachers and civil servants are made by the Teaching Service Commission and the Public Service Commission, both of which are appointed by the Governor General. Because of the manner in which recommendations for appointments, transfers and promotions are made, Ministry officials are protected from accusations of nepotism and from the consequences of direct decision-making.

Finally, one way to circumvent the problem of sanctions in a highly personalised society is to ensure that the organisation sets appropriate structures within which groups can themselves establish standards of performance. Systems of appraisal can then be based on the standards which have been set by the individual groups.

### *(b) Personal Impact*

Another feature of small Ministries concerns the personal impact of leaders. Again this has both advantages and disadvantages, depending on the quality of the leaders. Where the leader is capable, the general performance of the Ministry improves; but where he has significant shortcomings, much damage may be done.

One positive example of personal impact was the decision to centralise the tertiary level institutions at a location on Morne Fortune. This decision paved the way for the 1985 integration of these separate institutions into a single tertiary-level college, the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College.

By contrast, a negative example was the decision to establish junior secondary schools in the early 1970s. This innovation sought to expand secondary education opportunities and to raise the general educational level of the population. However, dissatisfaction mounted because better students were 'creamed off' into the regular secondary schools,

leaving only the less capable students for the junior secondary schools. Also, there was no automatic provision for the continuation of the pupil's secondary education at established secondary schools; and school leavers had neither the educational background nor the required skills to face the open society. Because of these shortcomings, the junior secondary schools are now being phased out through a process of upgrading.

In order to maximise the scope for desirable change, one would recommend the establishment of consultative committees in order to obtain beneficial ideas and weed out undesirable ones. Such committees could comprise relevant Ministry officials, other persons with expertise from other Ministries, statutory bodies, or the general public as necessary. The reports of these consultative committees should be seriously reviewed by senior administration and the political leaders.

Further, to limit the dangers of undesirable change one would recommend that there be clearly defined laws, regulations, rules and procedures for administering the system. These may protect the system from unwarranted and excessively sudden changes.

### *(c) Information Flows*

The 'grapevine' is undoubtedly a powerful agent for spreading information in the Ministry. Human interest information (for example, that relating to transfers and promotion) tends to flow particularly rapidly within this informal network.

Formal communication, however, tend to be relatively slow, and the word of a meeting to be convened certainly does not spread as quickly. Indeed the administrator must ensure that the information is delivered to the individuals concerned, preferably in writing, as they tend to complain that they misunderstand the dates, times or venues of meetings. Formal communication therefore requires a considerable amount of effort involving memoranda, circulars and telephone messages.

Frequently, important events at the Ministry are not known to the rank and file. Examples are decisions to construct new schools in particular locations, or the proposed staging of major cultural events. The Ministry's records are replete with cases where important meetings have been aborted or have been poorly attended because the organisers misjudged the amount of time that the notices would take to reach the targetted persons. There have also been unfortunate instances where senior officials have failed to be represented at important functions because they miscalculated the time it would take to communicate to

another official a request to deputise. It is partly in an endeavour to exchange information that department staff meetings are organised.

## **8. Conclusions**

The Ministry of Education & Culture in St. Lucia shares many features with ministries in other small states. This chapter has highlighted issues of specialisation/generalisation, shared responsibilities, job definition, training, inter-personal culture, and so on.

The chapter has also, of course, highlighted features which are distinctive to St. Lucia. For example, although the island is small in area, the authorities have been keen to decentralise administration. Structures contrast markedly with those of Barbados and Montserrat, for instance.

To some extent, the chapter has indicated divergence between ideals and reality. Although the total establishment of the ministry has nearly 150 posts, only three quarters of the positions are filled. This reflects financial and manpower constraints. Likewise, while it is difficult to identify areas in which necessary work has never been attempted by the ministry, some tasks are either done inadequately or are attempted only sporadically. They include the updating of education plans, public relations, educational broadcasting, and provision of resources for teachers.

However, within the limitations of resources the ministry does achieve a great deal. School attendance is compulsory between the ages of 5 and 15, and many children also attend pre-school. St. Lucia also has valuable post-secondary provision, through both UWI and the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College. The Department of Culture is much smaller than the Department of Education, but has significant impact even with an establishment of only nine posts.

Finally, the chapter has stressed the importance to St. Lucia of international connections. The government takes membership of Unesco very seriously, and like other countries in the Caribbean St. Lucia both contributes to and benefits from the CDB, CXC and UWI. The country also benefits substantially from external aid, though is trying to avoid excessive dependence.