



*THE PROCESS OF EDUCATION POLICY FORMATION IN AFRICA*

## The Case of Mauritius



*by Percy Selwyn*

**DAE 1995 Biennial**

Tours, France, 18-22 October 1995

The views and opinions expressed in this volume are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the DAE, to its members or affiliated organizations or to any individual acting on behalf of the DAE.

Extensive financial and administrative support was provided from USAID for the preparation of the African case studies and from the DAE for the organization of the authors' workshops. Financial support for the DAE is contributed by the following organizations: Canadian International Development Agency; Danish International Development Agency; Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs; French Ministry of Cooperation; International Development Research Centre; International Institute for Educational Planning; Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation; Overseas Development Administration; Rockefeller Foundation; Swedish International Development Authority; Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; United Nations Children's Fund; United States Agency for International Development; and, the World Bank.

© Association for the Development of African Education 1995

Association for the Development of African Education  
c/o UNESCO: International Institute for Educational Planning  
7-9 rue Eugène-Delacroix, 75116 Paris

---

## CONTENTS

---

<b>1 - CONTEXT</b> .....	2
<b>2 - BEFORE THE MASTER PLAN</b> .....	4
The education context .....	4
Planning activities preceding the Master Plan .....	5
<b>3 - INITIATIVES FOR THE MASTER PLAN</b> .....	7
<b>4 - OBJECTIVES AND STRUCTURE</b> .....	8
<b>5 - PLANNING STAGES</b> .....	10
Identification of a problem .....	10
Analysis of data .....	10
Formulation of proposals .....	11
Incorporation of solutions .....	12
Conclusions .....	12
<b>6 - THE PLANNING PROCESS</b> .....	14
Institutional and political support .....	14
Other sources of input .....	15
Coordination and leadership .....	16
International cooperation .....	17
<b>7 - CONSULTATION AND COMPROMISE</b> .....	19
<b>8 - TWO PROBLEM AREAS</b> .....	20
Teachers .....	20
Budgetary impact .....	20
<b>9 - IMPLEMENTATION</b> .....	22
<b>10 - CONCLUDING THOUGHTS</b> .....	25

---

## 1 - CONTEXT

---

1.1 Changes in the Mauritian economic and social structure over recent decades have been summarized as follows:

The economy and society of Mauritius were until recently determined by three principal factors — its size, its isolation and the colonial system. Because it was small, with a limited local market and a narrow range of resources, its economy was both specialised and heavily dependent on exports and imports. Because of its isolation — especially before the days of mass air travel — it lay out of the main stream of new ideas. The colonial powers promoted the cultivation of sugar, and brought in slaves — and later Indian indentured labours — to work in the cane fields. They also worked in close association with, and helped protect, a small plantocracy, which controlled most of the economy. Thus, at the time of independence, Mauritius possessed a more or less static, monocrop economy. Many occupations were distributed on communal lines; progress from generation to generation was slow and irregular.

The economic and social structures have changed radically since then. The relative importance of sugar has declined steeply. In September 1967, 41 percent of those employed in “large enterprises” were in the sugar industry; in 1992, the proportion had fallen to 13.9 percent. Over the same period, the proportion employed in manufacturing increased from 5 percent to 38.7 percent. In 1967, sugar and molasses accounted for over 96 percent of total exports, and tea for a further 2.8 percent. Exports of manufactures were negligible. In 1992, sugar accounted for 29 percent of domestic exports, while exports from the Exports Processing Zone (mainly clothing) accounted for 67 percent of total exports.<sup>1</sup>

1.2 Thus, the Mauritian economy has become more diversified and more productive over the past decades. During the 1990s, real GDP has increased by more than 5 percent per annum. There is full employment. Service industries — especially tourism and financial services—have appeared. Beyond economic growth, Mauritius has experienced major social change. In particular, the demographic picture has changed beyond recognition. Whereas the crude birth rate averaged 38.8 per thousand during the five years between 1961 and 1965, it had fallen to 20 per thousand during the five years between 1986 and 1990. The annual rate of natural increase fell from nearly 3 percent to 1.3 percent over the same period.

1.3 The Master Plan for Education sums up these social changes as follows:

Mauritian society is far more mobile than it was twenty years ago. Parents have enlarged their ambitions for their children. Economic development has brought about a wider range of occupations. New and expanding enterprises have been less concerned with ethnic origin in their hiring policies, and more concerned with academic or other qualifications. All this has made it reasonable for many young people to entertain wider expectations than their parents could. Thus, Mauritius is rapidly becoming a western-style competitive society.

1.4 The changes have taken place within the context of a highly democratic political structure. Since Independence in 1968, free elections have been held against the background of a Constitution that guarantees freedom of speech.

1.5 Three elements of the Mauritian context have remained unchanged—its smallness, its multi-ethnicity, and the openness of its economy to outside influence.

1.6 With a population of 1.1 million inhabiting an area of 186 thousand hectares, Mauritius is small in size and in population. Small countries tend to have “open” economies.

Countries with a narrow range of resources, a small domestic market and a small population will tend to have a narrow range of activities. Because they are specialised, they will depend on exchanges with the world outside their border. A high proportion of local income will be generated by the export of goods and services; a high proportion of expenditure will be on the import of goods and services...The counterpart of...openness is that the internal economies of many small countries are weakly integrated. Internal supply is not closely geared to internal demand; both are more closely linked to markets outside the country's own borders.<sup>2</sup>

---

## 2 - BEFORE THE MASTER PLAN

---

### The education context

2.1 Mauritius now has a Master Plan for Education, which states that the history of education in Mauritius is one of the gradual extension of provision from serving a privileged group to a system covering all children without distinction of class, sex or ethnic origin.

2.2 Until the 1940s, there was little education provided for the children of the poor. The turning event was the Constitution of 1948, which accorded the vote to everyone who was literate in any of the languages spoken in the country. "Education for all" thus became a slogan with strong political overtones. This gave a powerful incentive for those opposed to the existing plantocracy and colonial system to press for universal access to basic education. Thus, by the time of Independence in 1968, Mauritius had achieved virtually universal primary schooling.

2.3 The expansion of primary education, which was largely in the public sector, was accompanied by a mushrooming of private secondary schools. This resulted from decision by government in 1977 to pay fees for all students in secondary schools. In 1988, courses at the University of Mauritius were offered free of cost to students. Thus, the whole system from primary to university benefited from state funds.

2.4 By 1990, the Mauritian education system had the following profile:

- (a) Some 80 percent of children attended pre-primary schools. These were financed principally by fees. Government helped with teacher training, teaching materials, and some buildings.
- (b) Nearly all primary schools had six grades leading to a Certificate of Primary Education (CPE). The portion of children who failed the CPE after two attempts and dropped out of the formal education system reached 25–30 percent.
- (c) Admission to secondary education depended on passing the CPE; admission to a good secondary school depended on the student's ranking in the CPE. There were seven years of secondary education, including five years leading to the School Certificate and an additional two years leading to Higher School Certificate (university entrance qualification). Some 80 percent of pupils attended private secondary schools (including confessional schools). The state schools were generally regarded as higher quality than private schools, and parents applied strong pressure on officials to admit their children to the more prestigious government schools. The private schools were almost entirely financed by government, operating through a parastatal organisation, the Private Secondary Schools Authority.

2.5 The University of Mauritius had five faculties: engineering, science, law and management, social studies and humanities, and agriculture. It was supplemented by the Mauritius Institute of Education (mainly for teacher training), the Mahatma Gandhi Institute (the arts) and the Mauritius College of the Air (use of the media in education). Many young people went abroad for university education.

2.6 Those preparing the Master Plan estimated that for every 1,000 children entering grade 1 in primary school, 734 entered secondary school, 445 reached grade 11, of whom 276 passed the School Certificate. Of these, 75 passed the Higher School Certificate. The proportion of youth of the relevant age attending full-time tertiary education in Mauritius was less than one in a thousand; even allowing for part-time courses, enrollment was only 1.3 per thousand.

1.7 As internal communications are inexpensive, decision-makers and consumers of education services can be well informed without difficulty. Yet, in formulating policy, it has been argued that

the relatively small numbers of people involved in formulating policies in the system leads to a much closer identification of ideas with particular individuals. As a result, policies can become personalised to an extent which is unlikely to apply in a larger system. This can be a force of enormous benefit if the person to whom the policy is attached has high status and is respected .... There is no real escape from the very personal nature of the small system.<sup>3</sup>

1.8 Another effect of small scale and an open economic system is the difficulty in making forecasts. In such a country, where important policy decisions and events occur abroad, it is even more difficult to forecast than it is in larger, more populated countries. Two examples illustrate this phenomenon:

- (a) In the 1940s and 1950s, Mauritius was under great pressure to institute universal primary education—a pressure to which Government responded by building more primary schools. This policy was criticised at the time. It was argued that greater proportional effort should be put into secondary and technical education. A sufficient demand for people with primary school leaving qualifications was unlikely. Twenty years later, a critical factor in the success of Mauritius's industrial development was the existence of a substantial body of literate workers.
- (b) In the early 1980s, Mauritius was in the depths of a depression, with high levels of unemployment and severe balance of payments problems. Nobody forecast that, by the end of the decade, Mauritius would have full employment with an annual growth rate of over 5 percent and a substantial balance of payments surplus. This change came about largely because of market and manufacturing decisions taken outside of Mauritius.

This unpredictability of critical events in small, open economic systems puts a major constraint on the planning process.

2.7 Thus, while Mauritius's record in basic education was among the best in Africa, the system had not caught up with the needs imposed by industrial growth. This was one of the central themes running throughout work on the Master Plan. These statistics reveal that the problems facing the system, which were identified in the Master Plan, merited attention:

- (a) Some 10 to 20 percent of children did not attend pre-primary schools.
- (b) About 25 percent of all children failed the CPE examination and dropped out of the system at the age of 12 or 13.
- (c) At the secondary level, 24 percent of students fell out after grade 10, while two thirds dropped out after grade 11.
- (d) Repetition rates were high.
- (e) The gap between the best and the worst was wide.
- (f) The system was highly competitive; it relied heavily on private tuition to improve performance in examinations.
- (g) There had been under-investment in certain areas, especially in private secondary schools and the university.
- (h) The system had not caught up with the changing needs of the economy. Instruction in scientific and technical areas did not meet the nation's needs.

### **Planning activities preceding the Master Plan**

2.8 Mauritius has a long history of planning activities preceding the Master Plan, which appeared in 1991. There were studies and reports covering elements of a plan but nothing like what might reasonably be regarded as an education plan. Those characteristics that might be regarded as essential to a plan are:

- (a) Reasonable comprehensiveness and internal consistency;
- (b) Evidence of being informed by some overall social view;
- (c) Commitment by government toward its implementation;
- (d) Likelihood that the resources needed for its implementation can be found.

2.9 The literature available prior to the Master Plan covers a wide range. There are studies of the education system as a whole (such as the Glover Report of 1982–83,<sup>4</sup> and the Report of the International Symposium on Education of 1989). There are statements of government policy on education (such as the Jagatsingh Report of 1979<sup>5</sup> and the White Paper on Education of 1984). There are studies on particular education issues, such as the University of Mauritius study of the private costs of education,<sup>6</sup> and the Report of the Workshop on Low-Achieving Schools (1987). Finally, there are studies of education in the context of the overall economic and social structure of the country (such as the Meade Report of 1961),<sup>7</sup> but none of these had all the necessary characteristics of a plan.

## **The process of education policy formation in Africa**

2.10 Although the Master Plan was the first comprehensive plan for education, the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development had already produced a series of three-year plans concerning the economy as a whole. The National Development Plan for 1988–90 covered the principal economic and social sectors, including education, and provided the analytical background for much of the Master Plan for Education, in particular, its view of the future development of the labour market. The National Plan emphasized the need to upgrade the skills level of the labour force—a need reflected in the objectives of the Master Plan. It also emphasized the difficulties in forecasting:

The preparation of employment projections is a hazardous exercise even in times of economic stability. It is particularly fraught with difficulties when future growth depends as much on exogenous factors as on local variables. Employment creation is largely a function of development in the export oriented industrial sector. The role of public policy is basically one of creating conditions which are favorable to private investment and to the growth of export-oriented manufacturing. Mauritius has not done, and in fact cannot do, the type of industrial planning which can translate growth into firm demand projections.

2.11 Thus, the colonial and post-colonial periods saw a continuing stream of reports and specialised studies, with a continuity of argument running from the Ward Report, issued in 1941, through the Master Plan (1991). But the Master Plan can be readily distinguished from preceding studies:

- (a) Only the Jagatsingh Report (1979) and the White Paper on Education (1984) committed government to a particular body of policies; virtually all the other studies were advisory rather than executive.
- (b) Only the Meade Report placed education in a social and economic context.
- (c) None of the drafters of earlier reports pursued public consultation activities to the extent that drafters of the Master Plan did.
- (d) Most of the earlier reports were concerned with a particular sector or problems—primary education, secondary education, tertiary education, or low-achieving schools. The Master Plan tried to present a comprehensive picture and was concerned with everyone involved in education—teachers, students, families, communities, and voluntary organisations.

2.12 The production of *ad hoc* studies and reports became increasingly unsatisfactory as a means of giving direction to the education sector. As recognised in the Master Plan itself, times of rapid economic and social change tend to result in a growing disparity between education provision and economic and social needs.

Education systems are slow to change. In Mauritius and Rodrigues, we have nearly 400 schools with some 9,000 teachers. Each school has its own history, its own ethos and expectations, its own strengths and weaknesses, habits and preconceptions. What happens in a school is principally determined by what happened last year and the year before. Change tends to be gradual and incremental. Established custom is not easily broken.

2.13 The growing gap between advances in economic and social conditions and perceived needs for changes in the education system may have helped create a demand for a comprehensive plan.

---

### 3 - INITIATIVES FOR THE MASTER PLAN

---

3.1 Several events in 1990 gave impetus to the preparation of a comprehensive education plan. Two in particular provided the initiative for the project: First, the impact of the Jomtien Declaration on Education for All, to which Mauritius had adhered, and, second, a donors' meeting on Mauritius's Human Resources Development Programme (HRDP) for 1990–93, which took place only a few days after the Jomtien Conference.

3.2 These two events were complementary: the emphasis of Jomtien was on basic education; that of the HRDP meeting was on technical education and training, but they were also closely linked. The HRDP meeting emphasized the need for “an effective education system responding to the needs of Mauritius in the medium- or long-term perspective,” and the Mauritian delegation to Jomtien announced its intention to prepare an overall plan for education.

3.3 Other events and circumstances contributed as well. First, there was the general economic climate. Although the early 1980s had been a period of economic and financial stress, the Mauritian economy had since experienced a remarkable upturn. By the late 1980s, the economy was growing at a rate of 5 to 6 percent per year, and unemployment had been virtually eliminated. The contrast between the beginning and end of the decade appears when we compare the 1984 White Paper on Education with statements at the 1990 HRDP meeting. The 1984 White Paper said:

We are necessarily governed by financial and economic constraints. In the present budgetary situation, any expansion in the system or any improvements in quality must be paid for either by finding savings elsewhere or by drawing on resources from outside government. Moreover, we will be highly selective in our capital spending; no major capital expenditure is envisaged over the next two years, and no projects involving heavy recurrent spending will be undertaken. These financial constraints will necessarily be reflected throughout our programme.

Compare this to the statement of the Minister of Education at the 1990 HRDP meeting:

In the context of the HRDP, I am confident that government will release some additional resources to enable the formal education sector to play its full role.

This is hardly a blank cheque; but the change is striking.

3.4 Political factors played an important role. The current government had been brought into power under the slogan of change. Education is probably that area of government activity with most impact on the Mauritian family. In the democratic Mauritian system, this impact is readily translated into pressure for political action. No Mauritian government could afford to ignore public concern in such a sensitive area.

3.5 The policies of the international agencies were influential as well. These organisations were concerned that projects for which assistance was requested form part of a total plan, reflecting national objectives, needs, and priorities.

3.6 Lastly, pressure came from the success of the Mauritian economy, which had earlier depended on a supply of literate, semi-skilled labour. Future development was seen to depend on skill-intensive activities, depending in their turn on a more highly educated work force. Thus, there was a body of support for a radical look at the whole education system and, in particular, for more emphasis on science and technology.

---

## 4 - OBJECTIVES AND STRUCTURE

---

4.1 The Master Plan was a compromise. The statement of objectives represents a compromise between the Jomtien principles and considerations of external efficiency, between education as something with inherent value and something that leads to other objectives, particularly industrial growth. The compromise is also reflected in broad statements of principle:

Education is not only a means to an end; it is also an end to itself. It is better for people to be literate than illiterate. It is right that they should acquire a range of interests and knowledge beyond their immediate experience and concerns....

With the weakening of family influence in the transmission of values, more responsibility falls on the schools. The teacher's job is not merely to teach facts and skills; it is also to influence attitudes and conduct.

4.2 The plan reflects the complex aims of the education system as a whole, which is intended to give future citizens (i) the knowledge, skills, and awareness of the environment they need to function effectively in society; (ii) a degree of social mobility; (iii) opportunities to develop their individual skills and abilities — both mental and physical; (iv) and awareness of cultural roots and appreciation of the cultures of other communities (and thus stimulus to help build the nation. From the perspective of the economy as a whole, the system is intended to help to provide the manpower needed for future development.

4.3 The plan has six concrete objectives:

- (a) Every child should reach an agreed-upon standard of basic education;
- (b) The quality of education should be improved at all levels;
- (c) Differences in lifetime opportunities resulting from inequalities in the education system should be reduced by improving standards in low-achieving schools;
- (d) The education system should contribute to the continued economic and social development of the country;
- (e) The abilities and aptitudes of each individual passing through the system should be developed to the fullest practical extent;
- (f) The management and structure of the education system should promote the most effective use of resources.

These objectives have been summarised as access, efficiency, equity, relevance and quality.

4.4 They reflect the range of concerns held by different people and groups and the wide range of consultations held in the course of plan preparation. The simple, direct, non-technical style, in which the plan is written demonstrates the interest of those who drafted it in reflecting this range of concerns.

4.5 The organisation of the Master Plan responds to the needs of the groups of people whom the plan's authors wanted to address. A plan can be organised in one of two ways—by objectives or by subsector programmes. The advantage of organisation by objectives is that the plan's proposals for programmes have a built-in justification, while a plan organised by subsector may effectively become two documents—a statement of objectives and a list of proposals for programmes; and the two may have little connection. But

organising a plan by objectives also creates problems. It implies a one-to-one relationship between objectives and proposed programmes, while, in fact, any particular programme may meet a number of objectives.

4.6 In this case, the Master Plan was organised by subsectors—a decision justified on grounds of utility.

The Master Plan has been designed to be user-friendly. It has been arranged in such a way that those with particular concerns can readily find those sections of the Plan in which they are most interested.

4.7 The distinguishing feature of the Master Plan is its comprehensiveness. It has over three hundred specific proposals. Comprehensiveness, however, is both a strength and a weakness. Its strength is that it provides a framework for the system as a whole. This is particularly useful to participants in the education system who normally do their job out of habit. What is done this year will reflect what was done last year. The plan offers an incentive to think about what we are doing and how we might do it better. It provides a framework for looking forward, for a positively critical regard to what is happening in all parts of the system. The weakness of its comprehensiveness, on the other hand, is that the plan gives insufficient indication of relative priorities, and activities are not well matched with resources.

---

## **5 - PLANNING STAGES**

---

5.1 The principal element of the Master Plan is the proposal for a minimum of nine years of schooling for all children. This element, in its complexity and importance, offers a good example of how the plan emerged through stages:

- (a) Identification of a problem;
- (b) Analysis of potential solutions in the context of the plan's objectives;
- (c) Formulation of proposals at official and technical levels;
- (d) The acceptance of solutions at the political level and their incorporation in the plan.

We will describe each of these stages.

### **Identification of a problem**

5.2 Inequalities in the school system have long been recognised. These inequalities may be seen at the level of the child and at that of the school. The most visible sign of inequality in the Mauritian system is the failure rate of children at the end of the primary cycle. Some 30 percent of all children fail the CPE examination after two attempts and drop out of the formal schooling system. Some 8 percent of those who leave primary school are believed to be unable to read or write in any language. Though this proportion is low by international standards, educators in Mauritius still saw it as a challenge.

5.3 During the 1980s, studies on school profiles not only confirmed that some children do better than others in school but also revealed that some schools had consistently better results than did others. While in certain schools more than three-quarters of the children passed the CPE each year, in other schools the pass rate was regularly below 30 percent. A system in which one-quarter to one-third of children failed was seen as wasteful, inequitable, and failing to meet the needs of the country. Moreover, the education system rejected a mass of children at the age of 12 or 13 while the social-economic system did not permit them to be employed until they were 15, thus creating the environment for illegal jobs and exploitation of young people.

### **Analysis of data**

5.4 This growing awareness of the problem stimulated two sets of studies: one qualitative, concerned with low-achieving schools, and one quantitative, concerned with low-achieving children. First, a widely representative workshop on Programmes for Low-Achieving Schools was held in 1987. It identified a range of possible causes of poor performance:

- (a) Parents may lack interest in what the children are doing at school or have low aspirations and few expectations for their children. They may place insufficient pressure on the school;
- (b) Living conditions may be poor; [families'] houses may lack books;
- (c) Children may be poorly fed. The school may lack the human and physical resources for effective teaching;

- (d) The curriculum may not suit the needs of the child;
- (e) The examinations may use language which the children cannot understand;
- (f) Teachers may lack knowledge and the ability to teach classes of low achievers;
- (g) The pupils may have little motivation.

5.5 Secondly, the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate carried out a study based on a sample of 800 children from 40 schools. The most important predictors of success at the CPE were found to be the general intelligence of the child, available extra-educational facilities (including private tuition and extra reading materials), and the socio-economic status of parents.

5.6 Neither of these reports suggested that six years was too short a period for many children to acquire a basic education. That notion emerged as one among many at an International Symposium on Education held in Mauritius in 1989: "In a developing country like Mauritius, children will need more education than they can acquire in six years. There may be a need to extend the quantum and level of education, with special consideration being given to quality and equity."

5.7 The first comprehensive study of the notion of nine-year schooling was undertaken by a High-Level Committee.<sup>8</sup> The committee did not specifically recommend a nine-year schooling structure, but it estimated the resources required under several possible arrangements, and it listed certain basic considerations. These included the principles stated in the *World Declaration on Education for All* (the Jomtien declaration), the need to eliminate illiteracy and innumeracy, the democratisation of education, the use of positive discrimination for promoting equality of education, and the need to take account of the legal age of employment.

### **Formulation of proposals**

5.8 The High-Level Committee reported in May 1990, shortly after the establishment of the committee structure for the Master Plan. The report was discussed by the Master Plan's Steering Committee and the Working Group. A special committee was set up to clarify the proposal. Following the work of these committees, a broad structure was agreed for nine-year schooling.

5.9 Two sets of measures were proposed: measures designed to improve pupils' performance up to the sixth grade and measures to increase access at the post-primary level. The former included a system of continuous assessment, remedial teaching for slow learners, and revising the CPE examination to measure the acquisition of essential learning competencies. The latter included establishment of "basic secondary schools" for pupils who had not reached an acceptable standard by grade 6. The main function of these schools would be the attainment of a minimum level of basic education, but they would also emphasize practical subjects.

5.10 The proposed project involved an extensive range of activities. At the primary level, a workable and acceptable system of assessment had to be developed, and teachers had to be persuaded to use it. Teachers had to be trained in remedial work. The CPE had to be adapted so as to provide a better picture of the child's abilities. New basic secondary schools had to be planned and constructed and their curriculum developed. And all these activities had to be implemented with some degree of synchronisation.

## **Incorporation of solutions**

5.11 The project was submitted to Cabinet in December 1990 and approved for inclusion in the Master Plan, but incorporation of the project in the Plan was not final. After its original submission, several changes were made. Aside from some minor changes, which were eventually discarded, the broad purpose of the project—that all children benefit from nine years of schooling—remained unchanged. In 1992, a blue-print was prepared for the nine-year schooling project. This included information beyond that presented in the Master Plan. In particular, it spelled out in greater detail the impact of the nine-year schooling system on the education structure as a whole.

## **Conclusions**

5.12 These stages—identification of problems, analysis of data, formulation of proposals, and incorporation of solutions into a programme—apply to individual projects but not necessarily to a comprehensive education plan. A previous Minister of Education expressed it thus:

The process of educational development is a continuous one....Efforts in our field are never ending and continuous....Purposive change brings in its trail other changes with have not necessarily been forecast.<sup>9</sup>

5.13 At any one time, there are a number of projects or proposals at different stages. Some relate to problems which have just been recognised, others are at various stages of formulation, and still others at various stages of implementation. This flow of projects is influenced by the presence or absence of a master plan and of the resources available at the time. But many important decisions will be taken without regard to an overall plan. Some of the most far-reaching decisions in the history of education in Mauritius were taken without any analysis. The policy of universal primary education in the 1950s and that of free secondary education in 1977 responded to perceived needs—partly political, partly social. Each policy has had a major impact stretching over decades and, as Jagatsingh points out, with effects not foreseen at the time.

5.14 These examples of how particular policies were adopted shed light on the general process of how the larger Master Plan was developed:

- (a) There was an element of chance in the identification and timing of important issues developed in the plan. Thus, the Jomtien Conference was a major influence on the structure and content of the Plan.
- (b) Several factors lay behind the ready acceptance of the nine-year schooling project. Few people recognised the complexity of the project or how difficult it would be to implement. Indeed, its apparent simplicity and the way it was seen as an extension of the existing system made it appear natural and inevitable.
- (c) Projects incorporated in the plan are statements of broad intention; their incorporation in the published plan marked one stage in a continuing process. The main significance of including a proposed project in a published plan is to demonstrate a commitment by government—not necessarily in detail but in broad outline. The detailed proposals normally emerge in the course of implementation.
- (d) A major proposal for a project will normally meet a range of objectives. Thus, the nine-year schooling project was designed to reduce waste, to improve the quality of the labour force, and to lessen inequality. Because of this range of purposes, it appealed to a broad constituency. Business welcomed a project which might increase labour productivity. Many teachers welcomed reductions

in rates of failure. The question facing planners is whether the range of support will be sufficient to maintain the momentum of the project if it proves more difficult to implement than had been anticipated.

---

## 6 - THE PLANNING PROCESS

---

6.1 The Mauritius Master Plan was the fruit of consultation and compromise. In the course of its preparation, a wide range of people and groups were consulted. At the outset, the planners placed advertisements in the press, requesting views on the problems in the education system, what should be its long-term objectives, and what measures should be taken as a matter of urgency. Schools were asked for suggestions; they proposed over 200 measures. As we have seen, seminars were held: one in Rodrigues, to consider the specific education problems of that island, one on teachers' conditions of work, and a national seminar to consider the draft plan as whole. Separate meetings were held with head teachers, teachers, school managers and students.

6.2 The preface to the Master Plan describes the process of its preparation:

Many people have helped in the preparation of the Master Plan. Work started in 1990 with a Workshop which raised the broad issues with which we were concerned. A high level Steering Committee was set up under the Chairmanship of the Minister of Education .... A Master Plan Working Group was also established. Following the Workshop, sectoral sub-committees were set up to draft papers on particular areas of concern. These papers were discussed at meetings of the Working Group.

It soon became evident that, before we could proceed, basic decisions would have to be taken on proposals which had been made for changing the structure of the schools system. These proposals were discussed in the Working Group and the Steering Committee. Following these discussions, we proposed the introduction of a universal nine-year schooling system. These proposals were submitted to and agreed by the Council of Ministers. They were published as a "Green Paper" in December 1990.

In the light of this decision, the papers were further revised. A drafting group was set up to edit them and bring them into a coherent whole. In so doing, earlier reports have been heavily drawn on, and we have been greatly helped by technical papers prepared by experts provided by UNESCO, the World Bank, UNDP and ILO.

Throughout the course of the preparation of the Master Plan, there has been wide public consultation. The Minister of Education has held discussions with teachers, managers, principals, students and others. At an early stage, we invited comments and suggestions from the public. The ILO helped in the organisation of a seminar on the status of teachers. A seminar was organised in Rodrigues to consider the specific problems of education in the Island. Many of the recommendations of both these seminars have been incorporated in the Master Plan. Some members of the Working Group participated in a UNESCO Workshop on the use of models in education sector analysis and implications assessment. After the publication of the first complete draft of the Master Plan, a national seminar was held to discuss its proposals. The seminar was attended by teachers, heads of schools, school managers, educational administrators, representatives of tertiary institutions, PTAs, trade unions, educational authorities, employers' and non-governmental organisations, as well as others with a concern for the education system. The draft Plan was amended in the light of proposals made in the Seminar.

### **Institutional and political support**

6.3 Thus, a wide range of participants made input into the planning process. The organisation of the Plan itself reflected the organisation of those participants. As in much public sector activity, it incorporated a hierarchy of committees. At the centre was the Cabinet (Council of Ministers), responsible for broad policy and decisions on major issues. It is not possible to estimate the impact of the Cabinet on the content or structure of the Master Plan or the extent to which it responded to pressures from constituents and others. As far as can be judged, the Cabinet played a generally supportive role. Major elements of the plan were submitted to Cabinet as they were approved by the committee structure.

6.4 By the time the complete draft of the plan was submitted to Cabinet, it had already approved seven major elements. These included:

- (a) The Nine-Year Schooling Project;
- (b) The review of the primary examination system;
- (c) The setting up of a national curriculum development and research centre and a national curriculum development board;
- (d) A review of the administrative structure of the Ministry of Education (including the establishment of a National Inspectorate);
- (e) The establishment of a Teachers' Council; and
- (f) Measures to improve teachers' conditions of work.

Thus, while Cabinet had theoretical responsibility for the total structure of education development policy, in practice, decisions appear to have been taken on an incremental basis. This had the practical advantage of speeding up the process of decision-making at Cabinet level.

6.5 An official Steering Committee was established at the central level. The committee was designed to bring together all the principal decision-makers in the education sector. It comprised the senior administrative and technical staff of the ministry, the heads of educational parastatal bodies, the Vice-Chancellor of the university, experts from the Ministry of Economic Planning, Ministry of Finance, and the Resident Representative of the UNDP. It was chaired by the Minister of Education. It was a large committee; it therefore met seldom. Day-to-day operations were carried out by a Working Group, chaired by a coordinator. The Working Group, in principle, reported to the Steering Committee, which in turn reported to the minister. In practice, hierarchy was by-passed. The minister himself chaired many of the meetings of the Working Group. Actual drafting took place in the technical subcommittees and in the Working Group.

6.6 This picture of the planning structure is somewhat misleading. Drafting is normally an activity of individuals; committee discussions concentrated on marginal issues. Drafts that emerge from the committee may well reflect the views of the person who prepared the original draft. Some issues were seriously debated at all levels, but some important questions were little discussed. Thus, the statement of objectives was the work of very few people and was approved after little debate.

### **Other sources of input**

6.7 In addition to committee members, there were other streams of inputs into the plan. Local technicians made contributions and actually drafted much of the plan. The value of their contribution lay in their knowledge of the education scene and their judgment of what was and was not possible. The planners did not start from a *tabula rasa*; many of the issues raised had been discussed for years. Local technicians were the repository of what was known, but they had little experience in educational planning. Their contributions were thoughtful, well informed, and imaginative but tended at times to be wordy with little content.

6.8 One problem faced by planners was that data on the education system were available but geared for administration rather than for planning. Data informed planners of the number of schools and of pupils, but they did not specify the efficiency with which resources were used or how far the system met the needs of the labour market or other community requirements.

6.9 The other major source of input from within the Ministry of Education was the administration. The distinction between technicians and administrators is not always clear; many technicians perform

administrative jobs, while many administrators posted to the Ministry of Education absorb a great deal of knowledge about education. Indeed, two chapters in the Master Plan—and these not the least important—were drafted by members of the administrative cadre. But administrators *qua* administrators also played an essential part in the planning process. They ensured that papers were prepared in time, adequate records kept, and follow-up actions taken on decisions. Indeed, without a competent administration, the planning process can last indefinitely and lead to no useful result.

6.10 Other parts of government also made inputs. The section on economic background was drafted by the Ministry of Economic Planning. Other ministries commented on sections within their areas of competence.

6.11 Another input into the planning process was time. In June 1990, a provisional timetable proposed by one of the international agencies scheduled completion of the Master Plan by December 1990, but the Plan was not completed until August 1991. Thus, it took more than twice as long to prepare as was originally estimated. There were several reasons for this slippage. First, many of the proposals were interconnected. A delay in agreement on one proposal could have impact throughout the plan. This was clearly the case with the Nine-Year Schooling Project. Second, some proposals brought before the Working Group were controversial. Any proposal which might affect vested interests—even indirectly—would delay the process of arriving at a consensus. The main reason for slippage was the unrealistic timetable itself, which reflected the lack of experience of nearly everyone involved. Though producing a timetable invites skepticism, it is still needed. Though it may be misleading, it provides at least a list activities to be undertaken in preparation of the Plan. It just cannot be imposed too rigidly.

### **Coordination and leadership**

6.12 The final—and in many ways the most critical—Mauritian input into the planning process was leadership. Good leadership comprises the ability to identify goals, mobilise the resources needed to achieve these goals, persist in the face of difficulties and discouragement, and encourage others to share in one's commitment. Drafting the plan requires a coordinator, whose job is complex. The coordinator must act as intermediary between the executive and political aspects of plan preparation, propose structures for the plan, be aware of the social needs the plan is to meet, become aware relevant data, and be ready to produce drafts single-handed, if necessary. Finally, the coordinator must have a view of the plan as a whole—not merely as a sum of its individual parts.

6.13 In the case of the Mauritius Master Plan, the Minister of Education provided the leadership; without him, many of the other inputs into the process would have been nugatory.

6.14 As we have pointed out, studies of policy formulation in small countries cannot ignore personal factors. For that reason, the lessons learned from such studies may have limited applicability to other countries. The attempt to depersonalise the experience may well be self-defeating. In the Mauritian case, the minister initiated the exercise; he selected the principal actors in the project; he monitored progress; he helped to raise morale when this was flagging; he reconciled warring participants; he mobilised support from fellow ministers; he took the initiative in approaching potential donors; he initiated and carried through wide popular consultation in the preparation of the plan.

6.15 Several of his achievements and professional characteristics assisted him in his role:

- (a) At the time of the preparation of the plan, he had been Minister of Education for seven or eight years. This unusual longevity in office provided a background of knowledge and command of a mass of detail. It has been said of him that he knows his files.

- (b) He had the continuing support of the Prime Minister. When the Prime Minister reshuffled his Cabinet, the Minister of Education was one of the few ministers left in place.
- (c) Many ministers have been professionals, often doctors or lawyers, but the Minister of Education had been a secondary school teacher. It is possible that ministers with an independent profession are less committed to their ministries than those without such a profession.
- (d) The minister's style was relaxed, open, and not dictatorial. Freedom of speech was taken for granted in plan discussions. This may have helped ensure that all relevant views had the opportunity for expression.
- (e) Lastly, like any successful leader in a democracy, he had a strong political sense. He knew how to identify and recruit potential allies, consult those with concerns in his policy area, maintain contact with parents, teachers, students, trade unions, employers, religious groups, and non-governmental organisations, and appreciate their concerns. Yet he also had his own agenda. His political sense enabled him to reconcile his own vision with the demands of those with a direct or indirect involvement in the system.

6.16 Over the years he has had to compromise. Thus, government proposed that teachers in aided schools (such as Catholic schools) be recruited without regard to race or religion. The Catholic church, however, wished to apply its own criteria for the recruitment of teachers—an arrangement government considered inappropriate, since Catholic schools admitted children of all religions. Eventually, however, in order to avoid a damaging conflict, government agreed to a compromise. The experience of this potential conflict undoubtedly added to the minister's political understanding and helped him to face the problems of the plan.

### **International cooperation**

6.17 A gap in resources was brought to the minister's attention in May 1990 in a letter from UNESCO:

[UNESCO and the World Bank] believe that the preparation of the Plan and subsequent action programmes require competent and experienced international inputs, and that UNESCO and the World Bank joining their forces and working together under your leadership might be a good way of providing such inputs.

6.18 International agencies played a prominent part in the planning exercise and made important contributions. The international agencies identified and sent experts, but the Mauritian team would know little about their competence or their willingness to work as part of a Mauritian team until they had actually arrived. And their quality varied. At one extreme were experts who met a genuine gap in the country's resources, due to either their technical knowledge or their relevant experience. At the other extreme was the expert who produced a study that might well have been done with Mauritius's own resources. And in one embarrassing moment one expert accused another of incompetence. Perhaps their principal contribution was their ability lacking among the Mauritians to use data effectively.

6.19 There were also weaknesses on the Mauritian side in the use of international experts, who can make two kinds of contributions. They can provide technical input directly, or they can strengthen the capacity of the administration to do the technical work. While international experts undoubtedly contributed directly to the analyses employed in the plan, their continuing contribution was limited. This partly reflected the failure of the Mauritius government to appoint counterparts to carry on the work of the experts. The preparation of the plan was looked on as a self-contained activity terminating in a published document rather than as part of a continuing planning process. Thus, UNESCO experts had provided guidance on the use of models in education sector analysis and implications assessment. A model was prepared for the Mauritian education

## ***The process of education policy formation in Africa***

system—a model requiring regular up-dating. Once the plan had been prepared, the model was little used, and demand from within the administration for such analyses was infrequent. Without demand, such analytical work will not be carried out.

6.20 The main risk in the use of foreign experts is that they take over the whole of the preparation of the plan. This danger arises from the lack of local expertise and commitment: In disagreements, the views of the foreign expert are likely to prevail. The plan thus becomes a UNESCO plan or a World Bank plan rather than a national plan. The weaker the local team and the less clearly the local administration has formulated its objectives, the more likely is this to happen.

6.21 In the course of preparing the Master Plan, tensions did develop, but they were kept within bounds. One year before the work on the plan commenced, an International Symposium on Education had been held in Mauritius, which had encouraged Mauritians to consider many of the issues later covered in the plan. Also, elements of the education system had been studied earlier, and there was broad agreement on national priorities. It was thus possible for the Mauritian team to determine the structure and content of the plan and not depend on foreign experts for the broad lines. Without underestimating the contribution of international agencies, it is fair to say that Mauritians had a sense of ownership in the plan.

6.22 The international agencies played a broader role than simply providing technical experts. They were closely involved in the production of the plan. The Resident Representative of UNDP was a member of the Steering Committee and participated in other committees. Officers of the World Bank and UNESCO made periodic visits to note progress and discuss particular issues. They applied pressure on the Mauritian team for timely completion of the plan. Thus, they were more or less committed to much of the Plan by the time it was completed. Upon the plan's completion, UNESCO organised and hosted a meeting of potential donors. It seems likely that the plan received more international support than it would have without the active participation of UNESCO and the World Bank. But as with the technical experts, there was inevitably a risk that the agencies would take over the operation. This did not happen, although there were occasional tensions.

---

## 7 - CONSULTATION AND COMPROMISE

---

7.1 The wide range of consultation described earlier was part of a search for consensus, reflecting a deeply embedded element in Mauritian culture. Avoiding conflict has a positive value in a small, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious society, in which compromise is a valued procedure. It had its effect on the plan. Its most visible sign was the avoidance of controversy.

7.2 This avoidance of controversy is illustrated by how the issue of language policy was resolved in the Master Plan. The language of instruction in primary schools has long been a matter of dispute—partly along ethnic lines. Mauritius had no indigenous people. Its people come from voluntary or involuntary immigration since the 18th century. The majority of the present population is of Indian origin, but substantial groups are of African and European origin, and the Chinese have a community. Those of Indian origin are mainly Hindus or Muslims; most of those of African and European origin as well as most of the Chinese are Christian, and of these, most are Catholic. The most commonly spoken languages are Creole and Bhojpuri; the language of instruction and of government is English; the most commonly written language is French, and Asian languages are taught in the schools to children who wish to learn them. In these circumstances, language policy tends to become a communal issue.

7.3 Bunwaree has listed specific objections to language policies in schools:

The fact that most children study three languages in schools (none of them the vernacular) is responsible for the number of children who leave schools without having obtained functional literacy in any language....In spite of the fact that Creole acts as a unifying function... it remains an unacceptable academic language for reasons of status and sophistication.<sup>10</sup>

7.4 Language policy was raised in the Working Group as an issue, but the proposal came under strong opposition. It was argued that language policies had been discussed *ad nauseam* for decades with no conclusion and consensus in the plan was unlikely. In the event, the Master Plan did not discuss language policy. The issue was covered by an anodyne paragraph.

Mauritius has the advantage of being a multi-lingual society. All pupils study English and French, both international languages. Some 70 percent of children also study an Asian language. Therefore, the teaching of languages in schools is a matter of major importance. A study on the teaching of languages in primary schools will be put in hand. Special attention will be paid to the teaching of English and sustained efforts will continue for the effective teaching of French and Asian languages. Research will also be undertaken in the teaching of reading in a multi-lingual society.

7.5 The search for consensus thus took precedence over pedagogic and social considerations. The result was a failure to act. It is of course possible that this was a desirable outcome: Any change in existing arrangements could have been dangerously divisive; pedagogic advantages might have been far outweighed by its disruptive consequences. This likelihood was confirmed by later events. In 1994, a Parliamentary Select Committee proposed that performance in an Asian Language at the CPE should count toward "ranking" on the CPE examination. Pupils with high ranking can gain entry into the best secondary schools. The reaction to this proposal was mainly along communal lines. Opposition came primarily from those of African and European origin (most of whom do not study Asian Languages), and support came from those of Indian origin. What might ideally have been regarded as an issue for rational debate became a matter for communal division. The failure of the authors of the Master Plan to say anything about language policy is therefore defensible in pragmatic terms; the acceptance of the "second-best" is sometimes necessary as a strategy in plan formation.

---

## 8 - TWO PROBLEM AREAS

---

### Teachers

8.1 Education is a labour-intensive activity. An essential element in any education plan is an estimate of the number and qualifications of the teachers required. The Master Plan, however, went further: It also recognised the importance of the cooperation of the teaching profession:

The Master Plan places additional responsibilities on teachers. They will be expected to play a more active role in assessment and remedial work. They will be encouraged to take more initiatives in the adaptation of curricula to the needs of their own pupils as well as in curriculum development generally. Head Teachers will be expected to take on further responsibilities in the management of their schools. The teaching force in general will be expected to adhere to the highest professional standards. But if more is to be expected from teachers, they, in return, will reasonably wish to see improvements in their conditions of work, in their access to training and upgrading and in their career prospects. A teaching force with a higher level of commitment is central to any programme for educational improvement....

Thus, the Master Plan saw the improvement of the teaching force not merely in terms of numbers and qualifications but also of morale and commitment.

8.2 For many teachers, the central question was that of teachers' pay. Teachers—in particular primary school teachers—have long considered themselves underpaid. Many of them saw the planning exercise as an opportunity to press for higher salaries. This placed the drafting group in some difficulty. Public service pay is determined by a Pay Research Board, whose remit covers all state employees except the police. The pay of one group is not treated in isolation; it is determined in relation to the pay of other comparable groups. To overcome this difficulty, a seminar proposed the establishment of a special pay review body for teachers. Such a body could not have treated the pay of such a large group in isolation from other comparable groups. In the event, the question of teachers' pay was approached indirectly: Many deputy head teachers—a promotion post—were appointed. Also, a major programme of in-service training for primary school teachers was initiated, successful completion of which entitled a teacher to a salary increment.

8.3 As we have seen, one of the central objectives of the Master Plan was the improvement in the quality of teaching. Such improvements were identified with training courses. As proposed in the plan, virtually every primary school teacher was to follow an advanced course. Yet no evidence was available of the impact of such a course on classroom performance. Although the Master Plan proposed that the impact of specific training courses on teaching be studied, such studies have not yet been carried out.

8.4 This suggests an important weakness in the planning structure, an undue reliance on the views of professionals. Teacher training was the job of the Mauritius Institute of Education; it was inevitable that its representatives would be biased toward teacher training and not unduly critical of specific courses. Because those drafting the plan were under pressure of time, taking issue with the views of the professionals would have delayed completion of the plan—perhaps indefinitely. This is another example of the application of “second-best” criteria. In an ideal world, it would be possible to find ideal solutions; in the real world where decisions have to be taken, there are necessarily many compromises with perfection.

### Budgetary impact

8.5 The most serious gap in the Master Plan is the absence of any estimate of its budgetary impact. The cost of projects were estimated (projects were activities to be carried out over a definite period of time). But

most projects involve recurrent costs. A new school employs teachers; it has to be maintained; it will create a demand for consumables. A teacher training course may imply higher pay for those whose qualifications are improved. A university or a polytechnic will require special equipment that has to be maintained. And these costs continue indefinitely: there is no cut-off point. Those preparing an education plan must ask the question: Is it reasonable to expect the budget to carry all the recurrent costs likely to be generated? Or will the plan place a burden on the recurrent budget that is difficult or impossible to bear? Thus, schools are built and left empty, or sophisticated equipment is acquired but without funds for its use. An education plan therefore requires a budgetary plan.

8.6 The drafters of the Master Plan recognised this. Estimates were made of the residual recurrent expenditure generated by the plan. Anticipated growth in the education budget was set against various alternative estimates of the growth of GNP. The exercise suggested that, on moderate assumptions concerning the growth of the economy, it was reasonable to conclude that the education budget would not impose an excessive burden on the national budget.

8.7 These estimates were not included in the published plan. There may have been various objections to their publication. A ministries of finance may view published projections of budgetary spending as equivalent to a commitment on future budgets, and such commitments are unwelcome. It may have been considered that the assumptions underlying these projections were too uncertain to be worth publicising. Suggestions that the budgetary position is manageable may encourage spending departments to loosen financial discipline. Whatever the cause, the sole reference to the budgetary issue is the following:

The greater part of the recurrent expenditure generated by the Plan will be met from the Recurrent Budget. But savings can be effected within the Budget. A committee has already been set up to examine means of improving cost-effectiveness within the education system — and in particular in the management of assets... Any savings will be used to finance part of the additional budgetary spending arising from the Plan.

---

## 9 - IMPLEMENTATION

---

9.1 The Master Plan suggested in broad terms the arrangements for its implementation:

The Master Plan is a highly complex set of proposals; it will involve action by several ministries, departments, parastatal organisations and non-governmental bodies. It will give rise to major problems of coordination; it will require serious commitment by all partners in the education system as well as arrangements for minimising conflict and inconsistency.

9.2 The main proposal for implementation was the establishment of a Master Plan Implementation and Coordination Unit (MPICU) to be set up in the Ministry of Education, with overall responsibility for initiating and carrying through action on all the proposals in the plan. Its initial functions would be:

- (a) To analyse all the proposals in the plan and identify the division, parastatal body, or other organisation to be immediately responsible for relevant action;
- (b) To request those concerned to work out phased programmes for the implementation of that section of the plan for which they were responsible, specifying actions to be taken, resources required, and expected achievements at different times;
- (c) On the basis of these submissions, to prepare a coordinated programme of work on the Master Plan, together with estimates of resources required at different stages, and expected outcomes.

9.3 Some of the proposals in the plan were too complex to be treated in this way. As we have pointed out, the Nine-Year Schooling Project involved action by several institutions; it was not practical to identify one implementing agency for the whole complex of activities involved. The MPICU was to identify any such complex proposals and take responsibility for them.

9.4 The broad lines of these proposals were followed, with certain significant exceptions. The notion of a central implementation body was found to be impractical; responsibility for implementation had to lie with the implementing agencies themselves. The central body was accordingly renamed the Master Plan Coordination Unit (MPCU).

9.5 Second, a special coordinating unit for nine-year schooling was never established, although a blueprint for the Nine-Year Schooling System was produced in 1992. This listed the activities required and resources needed over a wide range of relevant activities.

9.6 The MPCU identified implementing agencies for the greater part of the plan. These agencies were required to prepare action plans for their sectors. The results were uneven. Those programmes for which there was relevant experience or where the implementing agency was a professional body were usually translated into action plans and implemented. Thus, the ministry had experience in the building of schools; projects involving new buildings were implemented without unreasonable delays. The Mauritius Examinations Syndicate (MES) had responsibility for the revision of the CPE examination. The MES is a professional body with experience in the field; it was involved in both the formulation of the programme for revising the CPE and in its implementation.

9.7 Other parts of the plan encountered problems in implementation.

- (a) There was at the outset an insufficient appreciation of the need for synchronisation among different elements of complex programmes or for the creation of appropriate networks. The lack of any clear responsibility for coordinating such projects involved delays and confusion.
- (b) Like public services everywhere, the organisation of the Ministry of Education is hierarchical. The MPCU lacked the authority needed to instruct other branches of the administration in what they should do and how they should do it.
- (c) Most of the implementing agencies were divisions of the administration. Some of the officials concerned had not been involved in the preparation of the plan and felt no sense of ownership in its proposals. It was hardly surprising that they should give priority in their work to day-to-day issues rather than what may well have appeared to be additional and burdensome tasks.
- (d) There was no machinery for the clear establishment of priorities. Action plans were prepared for individual sectors, but no overall picture emerges. Arrangements were made for regular monitoring of progress on the plan, but these reports lacked any sense of relative importance. This partly reflects the plan's lack a statement of priorities, although in each sector it distinguishes between short-term measures and long-term objectives.

9.8 If we can judge from the Mauritian experience there are several conditions for successful implementation.

- (a) A project involving action by one small group is more likely to succeed than one involving coordination between a number of agencies performing a wide range of activities. Thus, as we have seen, school building programmes are more likely to be successfully implemented than proposals involving a wide range of disparate activities.
- (b) A programme is more likely to succeed if the implementing agency has relevant experience or professional skills. Thus, as we have seen, the revision of the CPE depended on the professional skills of the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate.
- (c) A project that has a strong body of support will be easier to implement than one lacking such support. This support can be of several kinds. In a democratic system such as Mauritius's, it can be translated into votes. Thus, free secondary education was introduced in 1977 following promises made at a general election. Again, building new primary schools is popular. Questions are frequently asked in Parliament about progress in school construction or improvement.
- (d) A project that is a continuation of an existing programme has a greater chance of success than one that involves a new departure in education policy.
- (e) Projects that threaten the jobs, promotion prospects, convenience, or even habits of a substantial number of people are likely to prove difficult to implement. Thus, the proposal to establish a National Inspectorate has faced problems because of its possible effect on existing inspectors. A proposal for the introduction of continuous comprehensive evaluation in primary schools is proving difficult to implement, perhaps because of the additional burden expected to fall on the teachers.
- (f) A free flow of information is an essential element for success. For radical changes to be accepted, they must be understood. Those principally affected—teachers, parents and others—should understand what is intended and why, and what is expected of them. One of the weaknesses of the Nine-Year Schooling Programme is that few people appear to be informed about it or understand it. In these circumstances, knowledge is replaced by gossip, rumour, and prejudice.

9.9 The Master Plan made provision for a major review of progress after three years of operation. This review took place in April 1995, three and-a-half years after the completion of the plan. It provided an opportunity for a critical examination of successes and weaknesses. The conclusions of the review are being analyzed.

---

## 10 - CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

---

10.1 Many people have called the Mauritian Plan as a success. They probably judge it successful for several reasons:

- (a) It addressed itself to important issues;
- (b) Its proposals were relevant and realistic;
- (c) It attracted a reasonable level of support, both domestically and internationally;
- (d) It led to a succession of decisions and events that would not have occurred without it.

10.2 Reading the Master Plan three years after its completion, one is aware of both its strengths and its weaknesses. Undoubtedly, it identified important issues. Many of its proposals have commanded general support, including financial support from international agencies. Many of its proposals have been implemented. It is still a matter for controversy; but it has not been allowed to gather dust on a shelf. As we have noted, however, there were deficiencies. Its comprehensiveness implied a failure to establish priorities. In many of its proposals, it is unclear how resources were to be found.

10.3 Judging success or failure is a matter for the long run. It requires knowledge of an uncertain future. Today's students may be tomorrow's industrial leaders or tomorrow's unemployed. Planning for the future involves an act of faith. Equally, the decision-making processes through which the plan emerges must allow for compromise, for the acceptance of uncertainty and of the second-best.

10.4 How can the Mauritian experience help educational planners elsewhere, that is, to what extent is the Mauritian experience specific and to what extent able to be generalized? Governments differ in their objectives, values, present and future resources, and political structure. Situations differ. A country with 50 percent illiteracy or under severe financial and balance of payments difficulties may find the consultative processes used in Mauritius as an unnecessary luxury. The open style adopted by Mauritius may have little relevance elsewhere.

10.5 There is also the difference of values. The Mauritius Plan laid emphasis on equity; it had an egalitarian element, reflecting one strand in Mauritian social attitudes. The conflict between egalitarianism and elitism is not fully resolved in the Master Plan, though reducing the disparity between different standards of education provision is an important element in the programme. Other administrations will have different priorities, reflecting contrasting values. Such values will suggest different procedures.

10.6 Perhaps the main contribution of the Mauritian experience is as an encouragement of thought—a source of questions about a plan rather than answers. Have the main issues been identified? To whom is the plan primarily directed, and how appropriate is the style and approach to such groups? How far is pragmatism a sufficient guide to action? How far and in which circumstances is pragmatism preferable to scientific rigour in analyses? And how, and in which circumstances, do we have to accept the second-best? These are questions toward which the Mauritian Plan does not provide clear answers. Each participant in the Mauritian Plan, as well as planners elsewhere, will provide his or her own answers, based on background, experience and values.

## ***The process of education policy formation in Africa***

1. International Seminar on Education, Mauritius, April 1989, *Country Paper on Mauritius*. The figures have been up-dated.
2. Percy Selwyn, "Some Economic policy issues in small countries," in *Educational Development for the Small States of the Commonwealth*. Pan-Commonwealth Experts Meeting, Commonwealth Secretariat 1985.
3. Commonwealth Secretariat (1984), "The Challenge of Scale", *Educational Development in Small States of the Commonwealth*.
4. *We have all been children*, Report of the Commission of Enquiry on Education, Chairman Victor Glover.
5. Hon. Kher Jagatsingh *The Future in our Hands*, Mauritian Education for Today and Tomorrow.
6. University of Mauritius, *The Private Costs of Education*, January 1988.
7. J.E. Meade and Others, *The Economic and Social Structure of Mauritius*, 1961.
8. *Proposal for Structural Reform. Report of the High Level Committee on a Proposed Nine Year Schooling System*, May 1990. The Chairman of the Committee had been a member of the Mauritian delegation to the Jomtien Conference.
9. Kher Jagatsingh, *The Future in our Hands*, Mauritian Education For Today and Tomorrow (1979).
10. Sheila S. Bunwaree (1994), *Mauritian Education in a Global Economy* (Editions de L'Océan Indien).

*The formation of an effective national education policy is central in the approach adopted by many African countries to reform the education sector.*

*The DAE, in close cooperation with the U.S. Agency for International Development, has supported six case studies on the process of education policy formation in Africa.*

*The case studies, written by African researchers, reflect a variety of experiences in the cycle of policy formation, articulation, dissemination, and implementation in the following countries: Benin, Ghana, Guinea, Mauritius, Mozambique, and Uganda.*