

CHAPTER 3

DATA REPRESENTATION AND AN ANALYSIS OF THE AVES AND THE AVES CURRICULUM IN THE CASCARIAN CONTEXT

Learning has forever been fundamental to human progress. All around the world, learning is linked to higher wages, personal fulfilment, better health, and longer lives. Those with higher levels of education earn more, work in more pleasant jobs, and are more productive (Hutton & Schneider, 2008).

... the benefits of learning are not just individual, but societal. Learning creates wealth, builds resilience to economic shocks and technological change, reduces crime, and lowers welfare expenditure (Wolfe & Haveman, 2002).

The establishment of the AVES by the AID and the Cascara Government demonstrated a commitment to improving the personal and professional lives of the people of Cascara. Improvements such as those noted by Wolfe & Haveman (2002) will not only benefit the public and private sectors, but the gains have the potential to permeate to all levels of society.

3.1. INTRODUCTION

While I was undertaking my fieldwork in 2009, the AID announced that given the current world economic situation, the airport project on Cascara would be placed on 'pause'. The Director of the Cascara Development Bureau explained that, initially '[the AID] acknowledged that when the airport project was approved in 2005, the cost to government far exceeded any other alternatives, but that the passage of time would justify this large investment'. In June 2009 the AID announced that they could no longer support an investment of just over US\$400 million in the construction of the airport on Cascara. Thus, a 'pause' was declared pending the improvement of the world economic situation and future consultations with stakeholders both locally, and in the metropole. Whilst conducting my research it was evident that a substantial number of Cascarians were very disappointed as many publically expressed their anger with the AID through the local media.

In July 2009 the AID conducted a consultation processes with the people of Cascara to identify which of their proposed alternatives would be most widely accepted. Stevenson²⁵ (2009: 3) explains that the AID proposed the following alternatives:

- a) Go ahead with the airport now ('Option A')
- b) Decide now not to build the airport and commission a new ship ('Option B')
- c) Defer a decision for a period of up to five years. ('Option C')

The Chair of the Education Committee explained that the consultation also aimed to encourage further suggestions or proposals that the AID should take into account before reaching a final decision. This, Stevenson (*ibid*) explains, was not of a much solace, because many Cascarians said that:

... they felt disillusioned, and a sense of disbelief, distrust or betrayal when the 'pause' was announced. A number of individuals expressed frustration at being asked their views again, and some said they doubted they would be listened to, whatever they said. Morale on [Cascara] is very low, a point made both in discussions on [Cascara] Island with business, government and private individuals and in written responses.

The announcement of the 'pause' had implications for both the findings and recommendations of my study because the AVES Strategy was designed with the airport and its related economic activities in mind. The Chair of the Cascara Development Bureau explained that the Cascarian Government was of the view that 'island business and activities should go on as before because they are hopeful that [the AID] will ultimately provide the island with an airport'. The Chair of the Cascara Chamber of Commerce indicated that this was not so easy in practice as it was difficult for local businesses to plan ahead without a clear decision about air access. In September 2010 (at the time of the general elections in the metropole), the 'pause' decision was reversed. Later, in December 2010, the Government of metropole and the Cascarian Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in respect of air access. This MOU laid down what the AID expected from the Cascarian Government for the

²⁵ This is a pseudonym.

final approval of the air access project. Failure of the Cascarian Government to meet these deliverables would result in the government of the metropole withdrawing the financial aid committed to this cause. At the time of finalising this thesis in September 2011, the Cascarian Government had met most of the deliverables within the prescribed timeframes. In downloading the independent newspaper from the Internet, I was able to ascertain that the Cascarian Government had applied to the AID for an extension in respect of some of the deliverables.

Although, government agencies such as the AVES were instructed to continue as before until a final decision had been made, the announcement of the 'pause' was clearly an emotional one for Cascarians. As such, my research findings are influenced by the sentiments of my research participants at the time that the pause was announced.

In analysing my data, the literature reviewed served as a benchmark from which, I made comparisons, tested the literature, identified gaps, looked for differences and recognised similarities. My data representation and analysis in this chapter is therefore presented in three sections:

- Change and the AVES as a State Apparatus
- Reviewing the AVES Curriculum
- Risks to the AVES and its supporting Curriculum

3.2. CHANGE AND THE AVES AS A STATE APPARATUS

My research was centred on the AVES, the AVES Strategy, the AVES Curriculum and how these came into being given the aims of the Cascarian Government to widen economic activity on the island. It was therefore inevitable that my analysis would highlight the AVES and its role as a state apparatus. Much of this analysis centres on the topic of air access as it was this anticipated change event that facilitated the creation of the AVES. During the semi-structured interview held with the AID Education Adviser in May 2009, he explained that:

... the AVES and its subsequent Strategy were developed and came about as a response to impending island change that would be brought about by air access. It was felt that an island-wide training approach was crucial to support the change so as to overcome barriers to implementation that might include cost, shortage in human resource and acceptance and co-operation by different island stakeholders.

The AID AVES Consultant indicated that to do this, the island's training service should be centralised under the Education Department. This, he explained, facilitated the need for a centralised training budget and 'the creation of genuine working partnerships across all sectors'. The Executive Human Resources Officer suggested that the greatest advantage of the establishment of a centralised training service was the opportunity for a co-ordinated management approach to training delivery. Another respondent indicated support for this view but indicated that it has been difficult to achieve this co-ordinated approach under a new Service as 'it is fraught with difficulties that often seem to have their roots in personal agendas'.

The AID AVES Consultant explained that at the time that the AVES was being conceptualised and the AVES Strategy was being developed, a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) was conducted across the island and the findings of this were used to inform the contents of the original AVES Curriculum. The TNA report concluded that there were a wide variety of skills gaps on the island. These gaps informed the design of the AVES Curriculum and are discussed in the analysis of the curriculum in 3.3.1. During a semi-structured interview, one of the AVES Co-ordinators noted that in supporting economic development on the island, 'it was agreed that the training on offer under the AVES needed to be diverse so as to meet the needs of individuals, the government and private sector employers'.

The AID Education Adviser noted that in aiming to meet the needs and the wants of the government and people of Cascara, it was decided that the AVES would provide a flexible approach to learning across a wide range of content and learning levels. The provision of vocational learning would therefore include: improving specific work-related skills; undertaking basic skills courses; participating in sports and cultural programmes and offer; as captioned by the

Chair of the Education Committee – the option for ‘learning for the sake of learning’. While the AVES Strategy purports that the AVES aims to address learning that will benefit both individuals and the economy, the current curriculum focuses primarily on learning to aid economic efficiency. The data revealed that many of the opportunities published in the curriculum (shown in Appendix 1) were not all offered at the time of my study.

The Executive Development Officer noted that the introduction of the AVES AID Development Aid Project and its very generous funding streams demonstrated the government’s support for the development of skills for air access and its associated economic activities. The Logical Framework of the AID Development Aid Project forwards that, in it the implementation of the project, the AVES was to “improve the standard of education for the people of [Cascara], in order to meet the future demands arising from air access and associated developments” (AID AVES Logical Framework, 2007: 1). The Logical Framework further indicates that the goal would be measured by three “objectively verifiable indicators” (*ibid*). These indicators are economic, social and curricular in nature:

1. a 50% increase in the proportion of the qualified workforce [economic indicator];
2. a reduction in unemployment [social indicator]; and
3. an increasing trend in post-16 education [curricular indicator] (*ibid*).

As part of my data collection process, I attempted to analyse these indicators to ascertain the progress made to date. The data indicated that the first of these Objectively Verifiable Indicators is not measurable as the statement: “a 50% increase in the proportion of the qualified workforce”, (*ibid*) is ambiguous in that it is not possible to ascertain a starting point or baseline of the ‘proportion’ to be measured against. In contemplating the second indicator, information obtained from the statistics office indicates that a reduction in unemployment has not yet been reached. Unemployment figures are as follows:

Year ending	Number of registered unemployed people
2006	36
2007	31
2008	32
2009	37

Table 10: Unemployment figures for the period 2006 – 2009²⁶

The backdrop of outward migration and the downsizing of government departments may account for the increase in the unemployment figures for 2009. In respect of the third indicator, statistics obtained from Cascara Community High School (CCHS) indicate that post-16 enrolments have been as follows:

Academic Year	Number of post-16 enrolments
2006	96
2007	96
2008	107
2009	102

Table 11: Number of post-16 enrolments for the period 2006 – 2009

While the employment trend appears to decline in 2009, again the impact of outward migration and a declining school population need to be considered as these distort the statistics. Although the numbers have dropped, the percentage of students staying on to engage in post-16 education has increased. This suggests that this indicator is therefore being achieved at present.

Althusser (2008; 1979: 99) draws attention to how governments use agencies such as the AVES as “powerful state apparatus[es]”. He suggests that governments aim to produce learners with specific skills that will contribute to the current plans and programmes of the state. A review of the AVES Curriculum and the AVES AID Development Aid Project show that they are specifically designed to support the immediate needs and plans of the Cascarian Government, particularly in respect of air access. The Deputy Head for Curriculum at Cascara Community High School (CCHS) also drew attention to

²⁶ Statistics obtained from the Senior Statistician in the Statistics Office, by email on 02.09.2011.

this function of the AVES, when she stated that ‘the AVES itself was established as a vehicle to support the social and economic aims of the [Cascara] Government’. The Director of the Cascara Development Bureau supported the learning opportunities made available by the AVES AID Development Aid Project, stating that ‘air access is the essential ingredient for the island to develop a sustainable economy and social cohesion’. She further highlighted that the right training and development opportunities would aid the advancement of the private sector particularly in the areas of construction and hospitality. The Executive Education Officer (EEO) and the Chair of the Education Committee, both expressed concerns that the ‘pause’ in the construction of the airport may ultimately impact on the aims, objectives and mission of the AVES. In this regard, the EEO stated that ‘at this time, the AVES is still aiming to work towards the implementation of strategic plans that support air access activities such as construction and hospitality’. The concerns raised by these stakeholders in respect of the air access decision highlight the difficulties experienced by the AVES in trying to implement a government initiated strategy, while at the same time needing to appease clients who are disillusioned with the uncertainty.

Reflecting on the data, it is evident that the AVES Strategy has attempted to provide a framework that will support a curriculum that finds synergy with Slattery’s (1998) reconceptualised view of education – where needs are regularly assessed and the curriculum continually adapted to meet these needs. In support of a curricular view such as that of Slattery’s, the implementation of adult and vocational learning under the AVES on Cascara is an ongoing process in which the outcomes appear to be continually updated and reassessed. The AVES Co-ordinators confirmed that the AVES curriculum was periodically under review and that ongoing partnership working with other government departments and the Cascara Development Bureau ensures that new and relevant training is made available to both sectors. In further supporting the notion of a reconceptualised curriculum, the AVES curriculum has clearly taken into account the social, political and economic implications of the past, the present and the future in attempting to provide a curriculum that will serve the current and evolving needs of the island. An affirmation of Slattery’s suggestion that the curriculum is a ‘political text’ can be found in the fact that the primary focus of the

AVES curriculum is rooted in training activities that relate to air access and its associated activities.

A reconceptualised curriculum strives to acknowledge that there needs to be a relationship between the provision of education and the needs of the labour market. The development of the AVES Strategy supports this reconceptualised view of curriculum. If the AVES Curriculum is to maintain support for a reconceptualised rationale, it needs to continue to respond to the changing political and socio-economic landscape. The air access outcome is a major factor in this regard.

I now extend my analysis to:

- Responses in relation to socio-economic change
- Responses in relation to curricular change

3.2.1. Responses in relation to Socio-Economic Change

One of the biggest challenges for me in undertaking this study was in understanding how a relevant and sustainable adult and vocational education curriculum could effectively serve the economic needs of the island, while at the same time respecting the unique social relationships that exist in the insular Cascarian context. I also endeavoured to understand the social context in which the AVES curriculum was being implemented with its ultimate aim of serving the economic needs of the island.

Private sector representatives in my research sample were unanimous in their suggestion that the airport 'pause' would have a significant effect on both the social and economic development of the island, with one client respondent suggesting that 'there [would] be no social advancement or development on [Cascara] until the economy is turned around'. More generally, the data infers that the general sentiment of the private sector representatives in my sample feel that the 'pause' will unnecessarily heighten the social cost of delayed or no economic growth. This 'social cost' implies the impact that lost income generation will have on the personal lives of the people of Cascara. In the extract

that follows, the Cascara Development Bureau reinforces the AID's acknowledgment that air access is the only way forward for Cascara:

Air access is an essential ingredient for the island to develop a sustainable economy and social cohesion. Our local development experience backs up the conclusion in [the AID] commissioned feasibility study in 2004 that "only the introduction of air access has the potential to stem further economic population decline" (Cascara Development Bureau, 2009: 11).

The AID Education Adviser noted that 'out-migration and a demographic imbalance' on Cascara are the fundamental social issues for the island. He further explained that between 1998 and 2008, the resident population of the island dropped by at least 1000 people; this is also compounded by a falling birth rate. On this matter, the Director of the Cascara Development Bureau (CDB) indicated that:

Irrespective of the total population in the years after 2008, if the number of the working age population does not increase because of a lack of economic growth then the number of births will continue to decline [further]. If the number of people over 60 years increases through natural retirement from working on island and by the return of [Cascarians] working off-shore then this will increase the non-economically active proportion of the population.

The situation described by the Director of the CDB suggests a substantial social impact as a result of no economic reform or opportunity. The Executive Human Resources Officer provided some optimism when she suggested that while the decision on airport access was under review, Cascarians should appreciate the advantageous position in which they find themselves:

In the [metropole] many people are being retrenched from their places of work and they face uncertain futures. Here on [Cascara] we [can] enjoy the security of knowing that the public sector will not be paying off any employees and all government personnel can still expect to receive their annual increments and the cost of living increase [which was 4% in April 2010]. ... While we are all disappointed about the air access announcement, we really should see the bright side in knowing that we all still have our jobs and that local businesses can

continue to operate despite what is happening in the [metropole] and other countries.

The AID AVES Consultant explained that it was hoped that the introduction of trade apprenticeships under the AVES AID Development Aid Project would provide young entrepreneurs with the opportunity to gain skills and work towards being business owners with internationally recognised qualifications. The Director of the Cascara Development Bureau explained that her organisation had recently set aside funding to specifically encourage entrepreneurs to start their own businesses. The government's outsourcing programme is also intended to aid this process but, as stated by the Executive Human Resources Officer to date there have been 'no successful outsourcing tales to be told of government services being handed over to local businesses'. Zahra *et al.* (2009: 520) suggest that an entrepreneur is a person who possesses a distinctive personality, who was motivated in different ways and who has a command over resources in order to reach his/her own goal(s). In the unique isolated and colonial Cascarian context, Zahra *et al.*'s description of an entrepreneur is not easily achieved. Limited opportunity for young people on the island can make it difficult for entrepreneurs to launch themselves into business.

It would, however, seem that a shift is taking place in respect of private sector and entrepreneurial development. One client responded that: 'because of [the] AVES we have a better qualified private sector and more educated people ... more businesses are taking off'. Whilst these comments are encouraging, they do not concur with the comments of the Executive Human Resources Officer in respect of outsourcing government functions to the private sector. Although, for the most part positive, some Cascarians feel that the AVES needed to accelerate the provision of learning so as to improve the economic prospects of the people of the island. This view was succinctly endorsed by another AVES client questionnaire respondent:

My personal view is that [the] AVES is slowly providing training courses to enhance peoples' qualifications that could enable a person to carry out various job opportunities. Although, if [Cascara] was to become more self sufficient as an island, more aspects [of training] need to be provided more frequently.

To fully engage the public – across all sectors – it is evident that the AVES needs to take heed of public sentiment so that it can support the prospect of economic advantage during the change period. Whether or not the construction of the airport does take place on Cascara, the change process has already begun. This change is essentially political in nature and as Stenhouse (1975b) contends there is a distinct link between politics and curricular development. He suggests that an educational movement, (usually associated with a larger social movement) has its own doctrine and it strives to satisfy the beliefs contained therein.

The data also foregrounded the issue of the need to develop the public and private sectors in equal measure. Bassi *et al.* (1997) argue that organisations need to see staff development and training as an investment if they are to remain competitive. Although employers on the island identify the need and, for the most part, fully subscribe to the professional development of their employees – a gap still exists in them seeing the development opportunities as an investment in their businesses. The Executive Education Officer noted that there is still no will for employers to take financial responsibility for the skills development of their staff. Becker (1993) proposed that it should be the responsibility of employees to cover costs associated with their development and training. The data showed that on Cascara, both employers and employees see the responsibility for costs associated with training and development as the government's. This is not a view shared by the AID, who have been placing pressure on the Cascarian Government to increase revenue collection. Differing and sometimes contentious views, such as those highlighted in this example, are all part of the change process.

Porta & Diani (2005) point out that social movements are usually associated with emotion and can often result in conflict. Although not extreme, these two elements seem to be present in the Cascarian context, with 28% of the population not in favour of the construction of an airport and many of the remaining 72% being angered at the announcement of the airport 'pause'. Nearly all of the participants in my research sample expressed support for the construction of an airport on Cascara and many indicated that they supported the establishment of the AVES as a centralised training agency for the island. Social

movements are also rooted in activism and what was interesting in the data, discounting the 28% of the population opposed to the airport, the ‘activists’ were both internal (the people of Cascara Island) and external (the AID). Given this scenario the move towards the adoption of change should be facilitated with considerable ease. As detailed by the Executive Human Resources Officer, what is of concern is how the airport ‘pause’ will maintain the current *status-quo* in respect of the island’s dependency on the metropole. This affirms Shujaa’s (1996) contention that dependency retards the development of a free and autonomous national identity because without autonomy, the people of Cascara remain citizens of the government of the metropole.

When autonomy begins to be realised, personal motivations are what drive individuals to promote the social change process that can present innovative possibilities and pave the way for new social policy. A review of the current AVES Curriculum, and the comments made by the AID AVES Consultant show that the aims of the AVES are very closely aligned to those of the construction of the airport in that the AVES aims to support the development of human capacity to aid airport construction and to serve post construction activities. The AID Education Adviser addressed the area of sustainability, stating that it would be necessary for ‘local government to put a development plan in place to ensure that the AVES could be locally operated and managed’. The Executive Education Officer explained during the stakeholder workshop that ‘sustainable planning was not an easy task when there was still uncertainty around the air access decision’. The negative public sentiment in relation to the announcement of the airport ‘pause’ impacted on my study. For example, the advert that I placed in the paper asking for perceptions and suggestions in respect of AVES learning provision did not generate any responses. Conversely, all AVES client respondents were, for the most part, positive about the establishment of the AVES and the service it provides. While most stakeholders identified the personal and economic advantages of the learning on offer under the AVES – these advantages all form part of the greater social change process. Comments received in the client questionnaires include some of the benefits stated below. Although they all contribute to the idea of wider social change, I have listed them as either personal or economic benefits:

Personal Benefits:

- I now have the opportunity to broaden my horizons and further my education.
- Being able to complete internationally accredited courses now opens more possibilities.
- I can now learn in my own time, outside of work.

Economic Benefits:

- People who missed out on school can now get a better education and better jobs.
- Air access will require extra senior posts and AVES can help with training people to fill these.
- The island's workforce will be more skilled and open minded towards any change that may come about.

One respondent indicated that she would like to be able to participate in learning opportunities that would address her fear of the 'outside unknown'. Many Cascarians have never left the shores of the island and as such, the change that the airport project will bring to the island threatens the comfort and security of their existence. Fears such as these are understandable and form part of the "ideological and material conflicts" (Porta & Diani, 2005) associated with political, social and economic change. Bourdieu (2010; 1998: 20) alludes to such concerns when he reminds us that liberation, through a "series of selected operations, separates holders of inherited capital from those who lack it". This is very relevant to the dependent state of Cascara and illuminates the degree of emancipation that air access might bring to the island. It also highlights the fears associated with facing and engaging in a change process. Bourdieu's (*ibid*) comments also present exciting possibilities for Cascara in respect of moving towards self-governance. These sentiments accord with Giroux's (2010; 1992: 99) suggestion that cultural capital is "an object of unquestioning reverence" and given the right circumstances, it can present a "set of lived experiences and social practices developed within symmetrical relations of power" (*ibid*). In the Cascarian context, Giroux comments imply that Cascarians need to embrace their strong culture and island identity as they move forward into the unknown. This unknown, as daunting as it may seem, is laden with new and exciting opportunities. For the meantime, these potentials cannot be fully realised until there is clarity by the government of the metropole on the air access decision.

Regardless of the final air access decision, the change process has begun and Cascarians need to be ready to navigate this change.

Schein (2010: 40) contends that change not only requires us to learn new things, but it also requires us to 'unlearn' other things. He further suggests that the change process involves the integration of new attitudes, perceptions and behaviours. In the Cascarian context, this has the potential of being a complex and intricate process as it also involves a move away from dependency towards political, social and economic emancipation. The literature emphasises that human agency is central to manifesting social and cultural change (Harper & Leicht, 2010); but it is the task of decision-makers and leaders to make the transition as smooth as possible by preparing stakeholders for the change (Conley, 2003). The Director of the Cascara Development Bureau noted that it is important that this change is 'incrementally instituted over time'. These concerns accord with Higdon's (2003) contention that cultural change takes place over an extended period of time and that placing unreasonable timeframes on the change process is counter-productive. This accentuates that change in the Cascarian context is going to take time.

3.2.2. Responses in relation to Curricular Change

The data showed that effective curriculum planning and implementation that leads to institutionalisation is rooted in effectively engaging stakeholders at all levels. Active consultation with these stakeholders will aid in determining financial, physical and human resource needed to deliver the planned intervention. This accorded with Print's (2003) contention that the institutionalisation of a curricular change is determined by support in respect of finance and skilled human resource. Print (*ibid*: 231) further noted that "above all planning must consider ... what readiness conditions might be essential prior to commencing" the curricular change implementation.

The overall response to the Strategy in relation to curriculum change was positive. This might be because the curriculum directly aims to serve the economic change that air access is anticipated to bring to the island. Further to this, the curriculum also aims, to some extent, to serve social change.

It is worth reconsidering Fullan's (1991: 51) contention that curricular change is "often contested, complex, time-consuming, uneven and energy-intensive". In my study, it emerged that the adoption of the AVES Strategy and the implementation of its subsequent curriculum have not been without resistance, but as explained by the Executive Education Officer:

... the transition [the centralisation of government training and the establishment of the AVES] has been relatively smooth. One of the greatest challenges, and where we have learnt our biggest lesson, has been in the area of the actual curriculum – what we offer, who delivers it, how we deliver it and whether it is accredited it or not.

Although the AVES was formalised through a consultative process, it is only in the implementation that the change becomes tangible for the users. It is during this implementation that the change is at its biggest risk of failure (Berman & McLaughlin, 1977). It is also important that the scope of the intervention is focussed and well managed as this will ensure the impact of greater success.

The construction of an airport on Cascara is not within the remit of the AVES but the Service can support skills development to aid the construction of it. If a shortage of trainable human resource exists on Cascara, then the AVES cannot achieve what it was tasked to do. Therefore, it is imperative that the right education skills policies exist so that a real difference can be made. The AID AVES Consultant, who developed the AVES Strategy, stated that:

... [the AVES Strategy] was designed on the premise that many [Cascarians] would return to the island to participate in AVES courses and in so doing take part in the economic activities that might arise out of airport construction ... when I developed the Strategy, politicians on the island led me to believe that the successful contractor [for the construction of the airport] would arrive on the island with their workforce who would also take part in AVES training activities alongside [Cascarians].

The landscape has changed somewhat. The airport 'pause' and the subsequent signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Cascarian Government and the government of the metropole have made it clear that up-to-date and

appropriate skills and education policies need to be put in place. This, as many of the research participants suggested, will ensure the faith of the general public in the AVES. A revision of the Service and its curriculum might help at making a real difference by giving hope and opportunity to the people of Cascara and for ensuring that the full scope of the population is prepared for the social and economic changes that may occur on the island, regardless of any immediate decision in relation to air access. The precise nature and extent of such changes will be affected by the air access developments in due course.

The construction of an airport on Cascara would surely have a significant impact on the scale and impact of the Island's skills development strategy. By attracting Cascarians back to the island and by welcoming immigrants to Cascara, a growing economy should provide the capacity to finance such a strategy. Without an airport however, the fundamentals remain unchanged: Cascara needs to develop its limited population to the maximum of its capacities. The AVES Community Learning Co-ordinator summarised this point succinctly when she stated:

Our Strategy has been designed not only to equip staff to meet today's demands on the island, but also to look ahead and anticipate what employers and learners will want from the sector over the coming years. The decision on an airport is not clear, but we need to continue to provide learning opportunities to [Cascarians] regardless of the decision. ... AVES needs to be able to respond to the many economic and social challenges that the island is going to face. The Strategy needs to build on the existing strengths of the workforce, and to enhance the development of a highly professional workforce for the future.

The Executive Education Officer cautioned that when he said that there needs to be absolute clarity between the actual and the perceived needs of the island. To meet this end, the ultimate goal is for Cascara to become self-sufficient if underpinning services, across the public and private sectors are to be nurtured and sustained in the development of the island's economy. It would seem that the only way to do this is by equipping a significant proportion of the working population with a range of high level professional skills. Castells (2001: 73) highlights the need for multi-skilled employees, arguing that value is added to the labour market by "labour which has the built-in capacity to generate value

through innovation and information”, and that has “the ability to reconstruct itself throughout the occupational career”. In their separate interviews, the Deputy Head for Curriculum at Cascara Community High School, the Executive Development Officer, the Executive Human Resources Officer, the External Verifier for City and Guilds and the Chair of the Cascara Chamber of Commerce all made reference to the need for a multi-skilled workforce to move the economy of Cascara forward. This is something that the AVES will need to consider in any revised Strategy or approach.

From this analysis, it emerged that although there have been some criticisms towards the AVES and the curriculum that it offers, the response by the public at large to the AVES curriculum has been positive. All of my research participants acknowledged the positive impact that the AVES curriculum was having given the social and economic changes that were imminent.

The data highlighted that the change that an airport might bring to Cascara will take place at many levels and the curriculum itself is intertwined with issues that are social and economic in nature. Bush (2010) and Fullan & Stiegelbauer (1991) support the need for a multi-levelled approach to change when they suggest that it is important for decision-makers to ensure that a planned change is compatible with the local culture and the availability of human, physical and financial resources.

3.3. REVIEWING THE AVES CURRICULUM

My study illuminated that the concept of *curriculum* is broad and it has come to mean different things to different people. Kelly (1999: 21) defined curriculum as “all the learning which is planned and guided by the school, whether it is carried on in groups or individually, inside or outside the school”. Kelly’s definition implies that our current appreciation of curriculum theory and practice emerged from schools and school-related ideas. This was pertinent to my study, because although the concept of *curriculum* is rooted in pedagogical practice, the needs of adult learners are very different to those of children.

In this section, I review the AVES Curriculum as follows:

- Content and Gaps in the AVES Curriculum
- The Effectiveness and Sustainability of the AVES Curriculum
- Andragogical Experiences and Expectations of AVES Learners

3.3.1. Content and Gaps in the AVES Curriculum

The AVES Curriculum embraces more than just the content of what is currently on offer. It also incorporates the stakeholders of the AVES who take part in the learning opportunities on offer; those who determine curriculum provision; and the additional resources that support the learning process. (The stakeholders were discussed in 2.4.1. and are summarised in Organogram 1 – also in 2.4.1).

Central to the provision of adult learning on Cascara Island are the AVES clients which includes AVES learners, potential or prospective learners and, where relevant, their employees. In effect, this stakeholder group includes all Cascarians – those on the island and those living abroad with intentions of returning home. Without clients to whom a service can be provided, the AVES would not exist. This is why, the AID AVES Consultant in his telephonic interview stated that, it is of the utmost importance that the AVES Curriculum remains relevant, up-to-date and complementary to the personal, social and economic developments and enhancements of the island and its people.

In this section of my analysis, I present my findings as follows:

- An overview of the analysis of the contents of the AVES Curriculum
- Current curricular content
- Gaps in current curricular provision

3.3.1.1. An overview of the analysis of the contents of the AVES Curriculum

Although the AVES publishes its Curriculum as shown in Appendix 1, the data that I collected did not find complete synergy with what is advertised and what is actually on offer. In the analysis that follows, I have grouped learning

opportunities into different categories, so as to demonstrate what curriculum focus areas are actually on offer and which the data suggested also need to be included in the AVES Curriculum. The data showed that the following categories of learning are currently on offer:

- i. Continuing and Further Education Opportunities
- ii. Training in Local Crafts and Culture
- iii. Training in Tourism and Customer Care
- iv. Training and Retraining to aid Work-Based Efficiency
- v. Sports and Leisure Learning Opportunities and Activities
- vi. Access to IT Training and Distance Learning Opportunities
- vii. Foundational Vocational Training at Cascara Community High School (CCHS)
- viii. Work-Based Assessment through NVQs

The data also suggested that the following areas need to be included in a future AVES curricular framework, as they represent gaps in current needs and provisioning:

- ix. Training related to Natural Resources: Agriculture, Farming, Fishing and Conservation
- x. Local Trades Training
- xi. Work Experience and Youth Training Scheme
- xii. Learning Focused on Personal Interests

The process of developing this list proved quite difficult as it became evident that I was often dealing with both content and the methodological approach required to teach the content and skills. Thus, it is worth noting that the list that follows is not mutually exclusive. Some learning opportunities might be classifiable into two or more of the curriculum categories that I identified, but what I have endeavoured to do is present a list that might be used as the basis for the curricular aims of a revised and revamped AVES Strategy. This list reflects what the research participants and numerous of the official documents indicated is expected politically, socially and economically of the AVES as the central training organisation on the island. In effect, what this list does is identify current

curricular provision and the gaps that exist in this provision. The list essentially represents the needs of the island and incorporates areas of learning provision noted by influential stakeholders, decision-makers and politicians. By effectively engaging these stakeholders, there is more chance that resources will continually be allocated to the AVES so as to ensure sustainable learning through the AVES the curriculum. The buy-in of decision-making stakeholders supports Print's (2003) contention that the institutionalisation of a curricular change is determined by support in respect of finance and skilled and administrative human resource.

3.3.1.2. Current Curricular Content

For the most part, the curricular areas identified as being evident in the current AVES curriculum are not restricted solely to just one of the curriculum development models outlined in the literature review in Chapter 1: essentialism; encyclopaedism; polytechnicalism; and pragmatism. This is because the curriculum requires constant review and revision to keep it relevant and progressive. Instead, the curricular areas identified incorporate a blend of principles associated with each model. They accord with Slattery's (1998) reconceptualised view of curriculum and education which contends that curriculum is an infinite process in which the outcomes need to be continually reassessed and updated.

i. Continuing and Further Education Opportunities

As described by the AVES Community Learning Co-ordinators in their focus group interview, the aim of this area of learning, is to provide Cascarians with the opportunity to gain Entry Level Qualifications, GSEs, A-levels and local certificates in areas that traditionally fall within the formal schooling sector. AVES statistics retrieved from the learner database indicated that this area of curricular provision was one of the first to be offered under the AVES; and learner results through overseas awarding bodies have been good to date. In their respective interviews, the Executive Education Officer and the AVES Community Learning Co-ordinator accredited two of the tutors in this area – both retired school head teachers for the learners' success. Dewey (1902) contented that there are many

advantages of learning through various learner-centred activities rather than traditional teacher-centred pedagogy. The AVES Community Learning Co-ordinator noted that there was a ‘brilliant link’ between what these tutors covered in class and what work the learners were doing in their places of employment. This illustrates that andragogy is further enhanced when learners see a direct link between what they learning and how this will benefit them in the workplace.

Various data sources showed that the category of Continuing and Further Education currently includes opportunities in Basic Literacy and Numeracy through the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) at Entry Levels 1, 2 & 3;²⁷ and Levels 1 & 2. Opportunities to complete GCSEs are offered through AQA in English, Mathematics, Human Biology and Child Development. A review of the recent Training Needs Analysis (TNA) indicates that it would be useful to offer an A-level in Business Studies, which is also available through AQA. The TNA also suggests that a locally offered IT course for beginners should also be reinstated under this curricular area. The Executive Human Resources Officer identified the need for basic IT training across the public sector, stating that IT development was the only way to ‘bring [Cascara] closer to the world’. Despite the isolation of Cascara, Internet connections are good (although expensive) and provide a means of overcoming the “marine barrier” (Cross & Nutley, 1999: 317) in respect of accessing learning provision. Training in basic IT would certainly aid in reducing this “marine barrier”.

During a focus group interview, the AVES NVQ & Quality Assurance Co-ordinator also noted that with the introduction of the Qualifications Credit Framework (QCF) in the metropole, it would be prudent to include Functional Skills (as defined by the QCF) at Level 1. The Executive Development Officer (EDO) stated, during the semi-structured interview, that:

... the opportunity to participate in overseas accredited learning is relatively new to the island. In the past, many young people did not have the opportunities that are available today. When I was teaching at [Cascara] Community High School students sat a local equivalent of exams being written in the [metropole]. These

²⁷ See positioning on Cascara National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in Appendix 2.

further education classes give people the chance to gain qualifications that are recognised beyond [Cascara].

The sentiments of the EDO suggest support for the polytechnic approach (Holmes & McLean, 1992) in that learners should be encouraged to participate in courses that assist them in the workplace. As with much of the curriculum on offer under the AVES, the provision of continuing and further education opportunities implies the polytechnic approach to learning where it is imperative that the content of the curriculum should relate directly to the life of the learner.

The Executive Education Officer also foregrounded the need for equal access to learning, saying that these 'core learning opportunities' should be aimed at candidates across all ages. The AVES Community Learning Co-ordinator echoed these sentiments when she suggested that 'GCSEs and A-level courses are very beneficial for the personal and professional development of people of all ages'.

ii. Training in Local Crafts and Culture

At least three quarters of the research participants identified the need for training and development in the area of local crafts and culture. The Director of the Cascara Development Bureau, the AVES Community Learning Co-ordinator and the Deputy Head for Curriculum (who also has an out-of-work interest in culture and crafts) all expressed their concerns at the lack of provision in respect of traditional crafts and culture. Although these research participants acknowledged that opportunities do currently exist in lacework, embroidery and tailoring, concern was expressed that other traditional crafts such as wood inlay, aloe work and cabinet making were being lost. The AVES Community Learning Co-ordinator described her difficulty in not being able to source tutors and trainers in these areas. Another matter mentioned was that of securing sufficient learner numbers to make the courses viable. This might suggest that traditional and cultural crafts are not as valued by Cascarians in these changing times. It also became evident through the data that the island's culture in respect of arts and craft is being lost as engagement in them dwindles over time. The Executive Education Officer commented that:

When I was young we used to be sent out to pick aloe on the hills. When we got home we had to strip it and dry it out. After this we helped our parents dye the fibres different colours and my mother made all sorts of things ... bags, purses, hats, even table mats. ... When cruise ships visited, we used to help sell these crafts to the visiting tourists. [Cascarians] are all over the world – we have an international market – just in our own people. [Cascarians] far away from home would love to buy crafts that make them feel closer to home. ... What's more is that as craft production dies, our culture dies.

Training in local arts and crafts highlights the theme of culture very well. Deal (1987) notes that culture has an important role to play in embracing a curricular change. The excerpt above suggests that Cascarians are losing some of their cultural identity, with only a few voices championing the continued investment in crafts and culture. On a societal level, and within the framework of social change, the loss of cultural practices “affects those inside the culture as well as those outside” (*ibid*). This was an interesting and ironic dynamic on Cascara. On the one hand, Cascarians are ready for change and a detachment from the colonial control of the metropole, but on the other hand, their cultural attachments – what defines them as a people – are closely modelled on those that exist in the metropole.

The AID AVES Consultant also reflected on how political pressure was placed on him during the development of the AVES Strategy to make craft training a priority. In the interview conducted with her, the Director of the Cascara Development Bureau noted that “teaching [Cascarians] traditional Arts and Crafts not only respects and restores their culture and heritage but it creates entrepreneurial possibilities that are limitless”. The inclusion of training in Arts and Crafts in the AVES Curriculum presents an example of what curriculum becomes in *practice*.

Another income generator for Cascarians is in aloe work and macramé, but previous efforts to revive courses in these areas have not been successful. The AVES Community Learning Co-ordinator indicated that a marketing drive is currently underway to try to trigger interest in traditional courses such as these. AVES clients who responded to my questionnaire also identified the desire for training in Local Music, Cabinet Making, Wood Inlay and Cascarian Cooking.

In addition to these practical courses in arts and crafts, the data showed that the AVES should also include learning and training opportunities in soft skills such as citizenship education, nation-building and democracy. The inclusion of these in the curriculum might assist the changes and transitions imminent to the island.

The courses on offer in this category are currently targeted at candidates of all ages who would like to contribute towards sustaining the island's cultural heritage.

iii. Training in Tourism and Customer Care

There is no doubt that the hopes of improved tourism, whether access is by air or by increased shipping facilities, will boost the tourist trade on Cascara significantly. It for this reason that the Executive Human Resources Officer deemed it necessary to single out a curricular area that aims to provide individuals on Cascara with the opportunity of offering best practice in Tourism and Customer Care. This was supported by the Executive Development Officer who also stated that 'practical education in tourism and customer care is what we need right now if we are to cope with the projected increase in visiting tourists'.

During the focus group interview, the AVES Community Learning Co-ordinator recounted that a Tourism Trainer had recently visited the island from the metropole. The result of the visit was that five Cascarians are now certified trainers in four levels of Customer Service Training and are able to redeliver this metropole accredited training locally. The training can be redelivered under an 18-month license after which it needs to be renewed. The training of five local people to redeliver this training demonstrates support for Fullan's (2005) contention that building capacity is reliant on collaborative working. In this case the Education Department, the Tourism Department and the AID partnered; the product of which was as a collaboration that showed the importance of sustainable approaches to curriculum change. Venetoulis (2001: 186) presents two models of sustainability: weak sustainability, which promotes an "average stock of capital"; and strong sustainability, which promotes a higher vision for self-reliance and aims to pass on to future generations resources and practices

more superior to the present. Whilst training programmes such as the Tourism Training, may promote ‘strong sustainability’, the intervention is ultimately entirely dependent on the capabilities and competencies of the locally trained counterparts. The other factor is that of cost as the current license has a life of 18-months, after which additional financing will be required. Venetoulis does not explicitly state that the strength of the sustainability is directly linked to cost. A poorly presented training initiative might be very expensive and still result in weak sustainability. Conversely, strong sustainability might be achieved with the right approach and a relatively low budget.

As a result of the Tourism Training sustainability exercise, the curricular areas within this category comprise: Basic Customer Care Training; Advanced Customer Care Training; Management Customer Care; and International Customer Care. The Executive Human Resources Officer (EHRO) commended these courses, stating that they should continue to be offered to candidates from government departments and businesses who engage with customers and tourists. The AVES Community Learning Co-ordinator expressed sentiments that supported those of the EHRO, but noted that securing participation from the private sector was not always easy because private sector employers were often reluctant to release their employees for training.

The training of trainers also demonstrates curriculum reconceptualisation in practice as it is based on the needs of the present and it is what amounts to “political text” (Slattery, 1988: 58). The investment by the AVES and the approval by local government to conduct the training are all of a political nature. Local Government has identified Tourism as a key area to promote the sustainable development of the island. The AID AVES Education Adviser highlighted that Tourism and Construction have been earmarked by local leaders and the AID as priority training areas. The need for training in the areas of Tourism and Construction was supported by all of the stakeholders in the private sector and government departmental heads in this research sample. The Director of the Cascara Development Bureau was clear in her suggestion that:

Tourism is what will give the economy of this island the boost that it so desperately needs. ... In effect the private sector does not exist on this island and

the economy is controlled by the government of the [metropole]. The local client base is too small to sustain a competitive and healthy private sector. ... Tourism and the activities that it brings will be good for the growth of the island. ... We just need to make sure that we are ready for an increased volume in international tourists.

These comments argue the case for the ongoing provision of training in Tourism and Customer Care. The Chair of the Education Committee also supported the provision of learning in this curricular area by stating that ‘given the backdrop of improved access to the island – whether by air or sea – it is important to offer training in Tourism’.

iv. Training and Retraining to aid Work-Based Efficiency

Training and retraining, as was suggested by the Executive Human Resources Officer, during her personal interview, is a vital area in the local curriculum. The AVES Community Learning Co-ordinator suggested that the aim of this branch of the curriculum should be to provide the opportunity for the private and public sector workforce to be “developed and up-skilled through training and retraining interventions, so as to assist in meeting the aims and objectives of organisational strategic plans”.

The AVES Community Learning Co-ordinator supported responses in the AVES Client questionnaires which suggested that the business training programme is quite extensive. The AVES course records showed that in the area of business related training, training and retraining opportunities are currently extensively offered. Interventions that last between 3 hours and 3 days include *inter alia*: Book Keeping, Basic Marketing, Building Winning Teams, Managing Change, Coaching Skills, Retail Skills, Business Writing and HR Management for Small Businesses.

At least 70% of the research sample expressed concerns about the ‘lack of structure’ and ‘the questionable content’, mostly in relation to the general business courses on offer. The main criticism related to the courses having no external quality control or accreditation to endorse skills and content learnt or

acquired. Thus, concerns related to course content and how acquired knowledge and competencies were assessed. During the focus group interview, the AVES Co-ordinators suggested that the way to address this might in the first instance be to bundle the current provision into ‘four certificates’, diplomas or qualifications. After a lengthy discussion during the AVES Co-ordinator focus group interview and a follow up brain storming session the AVES Co-ordinators suggested the following four course bundles for business related training:

- Personal Effectiveness at work
- Effective Management
- Effective Business Writing
- Coaching and Performance

The co-ordinators further suggested that these four courses should be assessment-based, and that work should be done to explore how they might be accredited through an appropriate overseas external awarding body. The concern in respect of external quality assurance was also noted by the AVES Tutors, Assessors and Verifiers during their focus group interview. They expressed a commitment to quality in learning by acknowledging the ‘worthwhile’ and ‘rigorous’ quality assurance requirements of the NVQ awarding bodies.

Three respondents to the AVES Client questionnaire also noted the need for more variety in the business courses on offer:

- I would like to do be able to attend courses on typing and word processing
- There are not enough [training] choices available for people who want to improve their business skills
- The courses that [the] AVES offers are not at suitable for the work that I do.

Comments such as these, are a reminder to the AVES that the needs of the island are forever changing, as are those of AVES learners and learning provision needs to take cognisance of this. Grundy (1987: 115) argues that “planning, acting and evaluating are all reciprocally related in the [curricular]

process”. Thus, the curriculum needs to be evaluated and amended, as might be necessary, on an ongoing basis.

Responses from the AVES Client questionnaires and the focus group interview with the AVES Co-ordinators confirmed that in addition to business-related training, many other training and retraining opportunities exist in the form of short courses. These short courses included: Emergency First Response, Money Laundering, Leadership Skills, Interviewing Skills and Recruitment and Selection. AVES clients, through the questionnaire, indicated that there is also a need for the following training on the island: Fire Safety, Silver Service and Rope Training (working at altitude). The Director of the Cascara Development Bureau elaborated that ‘training needs are dependent on the skills gaps that emerge on an ongoing basis’. The Training Needs Analysis conducted in 2009/10 identified the following training needs from which both the public and private sectors could benefit: Wind Turbine Operations, Mapping Skills, Bubble Jet Fumigation, Rope Access and Veterinary Nursing. Courses on offer under this category should, as suggested by the Executive Human Resources Officer in the semi-structured interview, ‘be aimed at candidates across all levels of government and in the private sector’. She further stated that:

... the aim of government is to ultimately reduce its ‘footprint’ so as to shift control away from government towards the private sector. The [Cascara] Government has in place a solid outsourcing policy that aims to support this process. ... The only way to fully develop the private sector is to offer training that can aid this process.

The EHRO stated that the difficulty with training provision in an area as broad as ‘training and retraining’ is that training interventions should be determined by the ever-changing needs and requirements of government departments. The provision of training and retraining to support work-based skills across all levels of government and the private sector, will aid economic development on the island.

v. Sports and Leisure Learning Opportunities and Activities

The AVES Community Learning Co-ordinator suggested that this area was a vital part of the curriculum as it is the only area that provides any form of physical activity. During the semi-structured interview, the Executive Education Officer questioned the inclusion of sports and leisure in the AVES Strategy, stating that:

... our [the Education Department's] focus is on skills development and should not be on organising sports games and preparing sports fields. A function such as this would be better placed with the island's Youth Service. ... Office and training space is at a premium and we have had to sacrifice two training venues to accommodate the gym equipment which is actually owned by the Youth Service.

However, there was overwhelming support for the inclusion of sports and leisure opportunities and activities from other research participants. In the semi-structured interview, the Chair of the Education Committee, pledged support for the inclusion of a Sports and Leisure component in the AVES Curriculum stating that 'we need to, as far as possible, serve the mental, physical and spiritual needs of the people of [Cascara]'. To this end, he advocated that opportunities in Yoga and *Tai Kwon Do* be added to the AVES curriculum. He further suggested the need for formal learning opportunities in sports related disciplines that might provide learners with the opportunity to develop their skills through more academic further study options. The AVES Co-ordinators confirmed that the opportunity for AVES learners to participate in formal study programmes associated with Sports and Leisure are not currently available. The AVES Co-ordinators argued that such opportunities could include more formal learning relating to coaching, dealing with sports injuries or even participating in distance learning degrees or diplomas. They further noted that opportunities in this area should be aimed at candidates of 15 years of age and over.

The AVES Community Learning Co-ordinator identified that the following Sports and Leisure learning opportunities and activities are currently offered through the AVES: Badminton, Indoor Football, Volley Ball, Table Tennis, Cricket, Multi-gym activities and Fitness Training. Four participants also identified the need for Indoor Cricket to be offered as a Sports and Leisure Opportunity. The AVES

Community Learning Co-ordinator highlighted the importance of offering a full, holistic and balanced curriculum that offers sports and leisure opportunities for relaxation and enjoyment.

vi. Access to IT Training and Distance Learning Opportunities

The Education decision-maker cohort identified the need for improved provision in the area of IT and Distance Learning. The Executive Education Officer (EEO) stated that ‘the AVES and the [Cascara] Community High School need to work together to offer courses that develop the skills of learners in IT applications’. This sentiment was echoed by the AVES IT Co-ordinator, who acknowledged that not all distance learning was IT-based, but suggested that given the geographic location of the island, it was ‘advisable that AVES learners are encouraged to embark on distance learning programmes that can be done online’.

The AVES IT Co-ordinator confirmed that current local opportunities in basic IT courses include: Introduction to Information Technology, Word Processing, Spreadsheets, Presentations, Databases, Emailing and Internet. These are offered at beginner, intermediate and advanced levels.

The AVES IT Co-ordinator further confirmed that, in addition, to these local learning opportunities, accredited IT training is provided through the European Computer Driving License (ECDL) which is also offered as a Further Education Course. The opportunity for PearsonVue Testing is also available to AVES learners and clients who wish to study through distance learning and require an approved test centre to sit their examinations. The Executive Education Officer commended the work already underway at the AVES in this area and emphasised the need to ‘extend the variety of subjects on offer through distance learning institutions and video-conferencing under the AVES’. He further noted that the AID has recently made additional funding available to the AVES that will provide the infrastructure for increased bandwidth so as to allow for increased distance learning provision. The EEO stated that overtime this should open new possibilities to local people. The possibilities should, in turn, aid in reducing dependency on the metropole and it will bring Cascara closer to the outside

world. Cross & Nutley (1999: 318) argue the “vital importance of external communications” in reducing dependency and this is something that it is hoped the increased bandwidth will aid in achieving.

The capitalist nature of the economy on Cascara Island provides an excellent platform for IT entrepreneurs to exercise their freedom of enterprise in using IT media to establish their own businesses. Capitalist theorist, Malthus (1989) argued that growth in the economy could also cause an increase in the population and that the increased population had the potential to overtake the increases in production. The support by research participants for more curricular provision through distance and e-learning may hold the answer for providing additional impetus to the economy of Cascara. IT might just be the vehicle to achieving an increased population as well as increased productivity on Cascara. As Malthus, does not provide special consideration to markets that are predominantly public sector owned and driven, the degree to which this might be achieved on Cascara is not immediately evident.

vii. Foundational Vocational Training at Cascara Community High School (CCHS)

The AVES NVQ & Quality Assurance Co-ordinator, who oversees the quality function associated with Vocationally Related Qualifications (VRQs), explained that this curricular area provides an introductory route to work-related subjects. This is achieved through a mix of classroom and experiential learning, which leads to accredited VRQs. These opportunities are offered at Cascara Community High School (CCHS) under the AVES umbrella.

The AVES NVQ & Quality Assurance Co-ordinator and the Deputy Head for CCHS both confirmed that VRQs are currently available at CCHS in: Food Studies - Entry Levels 1 and 2; Hospitality & Catering - Entry Level 3; Hospitality and Catering - Levels 1 and 2; and Automotive Vehicle Maintenance and Repair - Levels 1 and 2. The consensus from the majority of the stakeholders is that these opportunities can make a valuable contribution to personal and economic development on the island. Both the Deputy Head for Curriculum at CCHS and the Director of the CDB suggested the need for a VRQ in Construction.

VRQS are made available to students in years 10, 11 and 12 at CCHS and the curriculum is based on prescribed materials that are systematically worked through. This indicates support for the transmission approach to curriculum in that a curriculum is set and the delivery is based on what Curzon (2003: 22) calls the “textbook approach”.

The NVQ & Quality Assurance Co-ordinator explained that VRQs also comprise a practical component. This aspect to some extent supports the curriculum development theory of polytechnicalism in that the practical elements of the learning relate to everyday needs and “worthwhile knowledge” (Holmes & McLean, 1992: 13). The comments of the Deputy Head for Curriculum at CCHS demonstrate support for the polytechnicalist view when she stated that ‘practical experience was very important’ and it was not always easy finding a balance between theory and practice.

viii. Work-Based Assessment through National Vocational Qualifications

The comments made by the Education decision-makers, Government Department Heads and Private Sector Representatives cohorts all implied that the provision of NVQ work-based assessment on Cascara is well regarded, beneficial and should remain one of the key curricular areas under the AVES. Nearly all of the respondents to the AVES Client questionnaire aspired to completing a NVQ. The NVQ and Quality Assurance Co-ordinator stated that the aim of NVQs are to provide individuals with work based assessment against national occupational standards of competence, leading to accredited work based qualifications (NVQs).

In the semi-structured interview with the AVES NVQ & Quality Assurance Co-ordinator, and in the focus group interview held with the Tutors, Assessors and Verifiers, it was ascertained that the following NVQ courses are offered at the following levels:

- Land Based Operations: Level 1
- Agriculture (various routes): Level 2

- Business Administration: Levels 1, 2 & 3
- Customer Service: Levels 2 & 3
- Health and Social Care: Levels 2 & 3
- Health: Levels 3
- Hospitality: Levels 1 & 2
- Automotive Repair and Maintenance: Level 2
- NVQ Assessor Qualification (A1): Level 3
- NVQ Internal Verifier Qualification (V1): Level 4

NVQ provision accords with the curriculum development model of pragmatism in that it aims to facilitate learning both for and beyond the knowledge society. Learners are free to choose the learning path they see most appropriate to satisfy their personal needs and interests. The NVQ & Quality Assurance Co-ordinator stated that on Cascara NVQs are available to employees, apprentices, trainees, or volunteers wishing to achieve a qualification that demonstrates their competence in the workplace.

NVQs also provide an excellent means for collaboration between public and private sector partnerships. Welch & Welch (2010) outline the importance of such relationships, citing the advantages as being “an individual who is adaptable, productive and a contributor to the tax base”. To this end, they argue that both society and the individual mutually benefit. NVQs and related apprenticeships provide a vehicle for young people to gain employment, learn skills and then have these skills formally recognised.

The EHRO explained that on Cascara, employers generally reward employees monetarily for completing qualifications such as NVQs. The size of the Cascarian economy and the limited client base also make it necessary for employees to be able to multi-task – this is something that public and private sector employers will often look for when appointing new staff. My data, therefore, does not find complete synergy with Sultana’s (1997) description of what employers want of lower skilled workers. Sultana argues that in Malta – a “post colonial state” (*ibid*: 40) employers do not require technically advanced abilities from their workers. On Cascara, there is a shortage of technical skills and given the limited

population, there is a need for Cascarians to be able to perform a range of technical skills.

3.3.1.3. Gaps in Current Curricular Provision

In addition to the curricular areas currently on offer under the AVES, my data showed the need for additional training in other areas. The additional curricular categories identified by the data are presented so as to reflect the social, political and economic needs of Cascara Island and its people.

These curricular categories take cognisance of the uncertainty around the airport construction and are important irrespective of the final air access decision.

ix. Training related to Natural Resources: Agriculture, Farming, Fishing and Conservation

Cascara, in its isolation, is largely self-dependent and for this reason it needs to preserve its natural resources. The Director of the Cascara Development Bureau pointed out that fishing (mostly tuna) and coffee are the two main exports of Cascara but no training has previously been provided under the AVES in these areas. This sentiment was shared by the Chair of the Cascara Chamber of Commerce while the AVES Community Learning Co-ordinator also identified the need for training in basic agriculture. The Executive Education Officer also drew attention to the need for more training in this area when he stated:

We shouldn't have to buy many of our products and produces offshore ... we have the capability, the capacity and the resources to be providing on a much bigger scale for ourselves. In before days [a Cascarian expression] this island provided fresh produce – fruit, vegetables, meat and milk to 1000 ships that visited the island each year. ... There is no reason why we can't, at the very least, provide for the 4000 people who are on the island.

The arguments of all of these stakeholders point to the need for Cascarians to be more entrepreneurial. It is evident that there is a niche market waiting to be harnessed and what is needed are distinctive personalities who are motivated to reach their own goals, (Zahra et.al, 2009). Training in natural resources,

combined with business skills training might aid in developing new entrepreneurs who will play critical roles in the establishment of new businesses on the island (Backman, 1983). The only potential stumbling block in the creation of new entrepreneurs on Cascara, might be the resources needed to support the new ventures. Hisrich & Peters (1998) foreground the relationship between physical and financial resources in the context of entrepreneurship. Physical resources on Cascara are not within the means of most people who tend to have worked mostly in the public sector.

The NVQ and Quality Assurance Co-ordinator noted the she had received interest from various people who wanted to undertake studies in Conservation. This would seem like a natural progression for the work already underway in respect of the NVQ in Land-Based Operations. This learning category might aim to provide the people of Cascara with the opportunity to gain knowledge and develop skills in the Agriculture, Farming, Fishing and Conservation fields. Areas identified by the Director of the Cascara Development Bureau and the Chair of the Cascara Chamber of Commerce, include local training in fishing, arable farming (in areas such a fruit tree propagation and covered cultivation methods), pastoral farming (and the rearing of livestock) as well as farming in banana and coffee plantations. The Executive Education Officer suggested that these opportunities should, in the first instance, be offered to young school leavers and possibly incorporated into the formal schooling curriculum at Cascara Community High School. The Executive Human Resources Officer further noted that training in this area might be a viable means to productively engage the long-term unemployed. Further to this, all of these areas identified have the potential to grow entrepreneurship, and further down the line the newly established businesses might also encourage competitive industry clusters. Given the small geographic area of the island, businesses are situated near to one another. The close proximity of these new businesses would strengthen them and also encourage healthy competition which would benefit business owners as well as consumers (Harrison, 1994).

x. Local Trades Training

With the prospect of large scale construction opportunities becoming available on Cascara, the data highlighted trades training as an area to be included more fully in the curriculum. The aim of this curricular area is to provide Cascarians with the opportunity to gain knowledge and develop their skills through local apprenticeships and trades training. While the implementation of local apprenticeships has proven difficult, the offering of shorter trades-related courses has been successful. A successful example of this training was highlighted by the AVES Community Learning Co-ordinator in respect of scaffolding training that was recently conducted on island by two visiting trainers. She explained that this training was very practical in nature and that it was implemented at three levels: beginners to scaffolding; those who currently work with scaffolding; and site managers. On completion of the training, some of the younger beginners were offered the opportunity to work with some of the local contractors. Whilst this was positive in many ways, the Director of the Cascara Development Bureau and the Chair of the Cascara Chamber of Commerce both noted that the lack of a formal and structured training programme in the months that followed did not work to the benefit of the learners. These two participants argued that learners would have gained more from the training if a structured programme of follow-up support was provided both at a theoretical level as well as at a practical, work-based level. This view was shared by the AVES Co-ordinators who expressed the need for additional quality in the learning that is offered on island. The AID AVES Consultant, in his telephonic interview, also noted the need for more structure in initiatives such as this but argued that:

... at least the process has begun ... what we need to do now is offer more training that is industry specific – those that will grow and invigorate the local construction industry: carpentry, masonry, plumbing, electrical installations and decorating.

Since the closing of the Trade School on Cascara in the 1980s, there have not been many learning opportunities offered on the island in respect of trades-related skills. The Deputy Head of Cascara Community High School (CCHS) recalled an attempt in 2007 to run evening classes in automotive maintenance

and construction at CCHS for adults. These courses were initially well attended but attendance waned as the courses progressed. This decline in attendance was attributed to learners finding it too demanding to attend work all day and then attend classes in the evening.

The AVES Training Needs Analysis conducted in 2009 identified the following as priority areas for trades-related training: plumbing, welding, carpentry, construction and masonry, automotive, and electronics/training for electricians. While some of these areas are covered in the underpinning knowledge sessions associated with NVQ provision, the Executive Education Officer highlighted the need for focussing on improving trade-related skills on the island through short courses and practical training opportunities. These, he suggested, could be developed to take the form of 'local apprenticeships whereby key and functional skills also become part of the learning package'. During the focus group interview, the AVES Co-ordinators stated that learners who attend these trades courses should not necessarily have to be employed in a related field. This finds synergy with the pragmatist development model of curriculum in that these vocational courses would serve a very practical function given the changing economic landscape of the island. The proposed apprenticeships would certainly provide learners with the skills necessary to tackle present and future problems related to the workplace (Dewey, 1902; 1916; 1938). Such an approach supports the capitalist model, in that it presents a mechanism for providing learners with skills that are income generating. The AVES NVQ and Quality Assurance Co-ordinator explained that local apprenticeships would encompass academic and vocational skills. This approach supports aspects of the pragmatist model which does not make clear distinctions between general and vocational training. The data gathered in respect of training in the local trades accords well with the assertions of Welch & Welch (2010) when they argue for an increase in vocationally related learning opportunities to drive economic improvements. They maintain that economic success is ultimately determined by education and training.

The AVES Co-ordinators felt that learning opportunities in this category could be aimed at school leavers or young people between the ages of 16 to 25. The short local trades courses could be aimed at candidates of all ages.

xi. Work Experience and Youth Training Scheme

Work experience and youth training schemes were also identified as gaps in the provision of adult and vocational education. The Executive Education Officer (EEO) and the Chair of the Education Committee both explained the necessity of providing the youth of Cascara with the opportunity to engage in meaningful work experience opportunities or youth training schemes that would enable them to develop their knowledge and skills within their chosen field of work.

The EEO further noted the difficulties associated with the current co-ordination of the Work Experience and Youth Training Scheme. He explained how the co-ordination of these schemes had traditionally been overseen by the Department for Employment and Social Security as well as by the Human Resources Department. Over time the AVES has become involved in these programmes from a training perspective and in some instances it has been assumed that the AVES will confirm work-placements. It emerged during the data collection process that the co-ordination of these schemes has become murky and the Chair of the Education Committee, the EEO and the AID AVES Consultant all proposed that these schemes should be transferred to the AVES who should assume overall responsibility. The Executive Human Resources Officer (EHRO) expressed that she would 'have to think carefully, before relinquishing this shared responsibility from her department'. Both the EEO and EHRO cautioned that the transfer of this function would need to be approached sensitively as it would effectively mean the transfer of an employee from the Department for Employment and Social Security to the Education Department.

The EHRO also noted that opportunities for work and youth scheme placements should be offered across all areas in the public and private sectors. In addition to this, the AVES NVQ and Quality Assurance Co-ordinator stated that candidates on these schemes should be provided with the opportunity to enrol in classroom-based courses. This view was reinforced by the Deputy Head for Curriculum at Cascara Community School who stated 'we need to move towards accredited learning ... this will require theoretical and practical inputs in line with awarding body requirements'.

The AVES Co-ordinators recommended that the work and youth schemes should include life skill related areas such as Economic Sciences, Life Orientation, other Functional Skills courses as well as learning opportunities appropriate to work placement. The NVQ Co-ordinator noted that wherever possible, these work-related courses should be offered through an accredited distance learning organisation. The EHRO advised that regardless of which department the schemes were placed under, this learning route should continue to be aimed at school leavers between the ages of 16 and 18 years.

Programmes such as these centre on praxis, which involves informed committed action which is subject to continual evaluation and reflection. This constant evaluation and reflection will ensure that the opportunities on offer under this curricular area remain relevant and continue to meet the needs of the island.

xii. Learning Focussed on Personal Interests

The Chair of the Education Committee stated the need for a curricular area in which Cascarians could participate in opportunities to learn more about subjects of general and personal interest, i.e. any learning opportunity not covered in other areas of the AVES curriculum. This he called: 'learning for the sake of learning'. Such opportunities, he advocated might include Astronomy, Environmental Issues, Personal Finance, etc. Such an approach supports the praxis approach to curriculum in that it supports both the learning process and the "collective human well-being [that moves towards] the emancipation of the human spirit" (Smith, 2002: 2).

When I presented this proposition to the Executive Education Officer, he offered his support for the inclusion of opportunities outside of those geared towards the economy but cautioned against budgetary constraints. The AVES Co-ordinators also suggested that the curricular content should be guided by requests from the local community and that the budget implications of each request would need to be carefully considered.

The identification of curricular gaps by the research participants indicates that Cascarians are aware of many of the goals and economic opportunities that they

wish to achieve. The insightful contributions of many of the research cohort also signifies the readiness that many Cascarians have for change; as well as how they acknowledge that a skilled and qualified workforce can support sustainable development on the island.

Summary

Kenway (2008) contends that the main factor of production in today's economy is knowledge. For economic, social, cultural and personal development to take place there needs to be an investment in skills training and education. The curriculum on offer under the AVES clearly supports the mission of the Service, in that skills training opportunities aim to support the economic development of the island. Although not specifically mentioned in the Strategy, the AVES and its associated curriculum also make provision for personal, social and cultural development and preservation. It is therefore evident that the AVES Curriculum supports Slattery's (1998) view of a reconceptualised curriculum. Slattery (*ibid*) suggests that the reconceptualised curriculum is never completely clear in its aims regarding specific purposes relating to knowledge as its purposes and outcomes are ever-changing. The views shared by research participants on the positioning of the AVES Curriculum, show the curriculum's constant fluidity and the need for it to continue to evolve so as to meet the ever changing needs of the island.

3.3.2. The Effectiveness and Sustainability of the AVES Curriculum

The vision for the Adult and Vocational Education Service on Cascara is comprehensive in that it makes provision for training, skills development and education for all young people and adults. It is now important to ascertain the effectiveness and sustainability of some key areas of the curriculum on offer under so that long-term sustainable learning becomes a viable possibility for the AVES.

Grundy (2002) noted that systemic curricular change is always subject to the practical outside world, where stakeholders have the need to see measurable progress. In relation to the AVES in the Cascarian context, this is relevant

because the fledgling service may need more time to show measurable progress.

I have elected to present the effectiveness and sustainability of the AVES Curriculum under the following categories as they emerged through the data.

- Accredited Learning Provision
- Local Unaccredited Learning Opportunities
- The AVES AID Development AID Project
- Establishing e-learning and International links

3.3.2.1. Accredited Learning Provision

My data showed that the AVES offers accredited learning in numerous areas. Some of these opportunities are easily sustainable, while others present more complex problems. Much of this analysis in this section is dedicated to the provision of Vocationally Related Qualifications (VRQs), National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and other accredited courses as these are the most significant accredited learning opportunities under the AVES. The data foregrounded the aspirations of Cascarians to participate in accredited learning opportunities which would make them more marketable in the global workplace. These aspirations support Mezirow's (2000) contention that adults are the key drivers in transforming their lives. The data also highlighted that adults engaged in self-directed learning also want to receive credible recognition for their efforts. From a neo/post-colonial perspective, this asserts the will of Cascarians to independently define themselves and their achievements. This reinforces Mezirow's (*ibid*) and Mezirow's & Taylor's (2009) suggestion that the goal of transformative learning is to become socially responsible and empowered to make informed choices through dialogue and reflection.

VRQ Provision

This analysis explores AVES related learning that is made available to students in the 14 – 18 year old category whilst in attendance at the Cascara Community High School (CCHS). Students of formal school going age (14 – 16 year olds)

are mostly engaged in VRQs, while those between 16 and 18 years are engaged in NVQs. During the semi-structured interview, the Deputy Head for Curriculum highlighted the advantages of VRQs in motivating 14 – 16 year olds who were not well suited to a curriculum fully based on GCSEs. The AID AVES Consultant also noted the value in VRQS as ‘the underpinning for a system of apprenticeships for young people’ on Cascara.

VRQS were only introduced to CCHS in 2007. During the semi-structured interview with the Deputy Head for Curriculum at CCHS, I obtained a detailed account of the trajectory of VRQs at CCHS on Cascara since 2007. Table 12 shows these statistics and demonstrates the progress in VRQs, by sector, between 2007 and 2009.

Qualification and sector	Level	2007	2008	2009	Certificates gained to date	
					No.	% Success rate ²⁸
Food Studies VRQ	Entry L1	12	5	4	10	77%
	Entry L2		13	10	-	- ²⁹
Hospitality VRQ	Entry L3		9	11	8	89%
Automotive VRQ	L1	17	25	31	5	83%
Construction VRQ/IVQ ³⁰			43	25	3	43%
Total VRQs		29	95	81	26	

Table 12: Progress in VRQs – by sector for the period 2004 - 2009

Participation in VRQs increased substantially between 2007 and 2008 with the introduction of Food Studies Entry Levels 2 and 3 and Construction in 2008. The Deputy Head for Curriculum at CCHS indicated that what is of major importance now is that candidates complete their courses. VRQs place candidates in a strong position for taking up further vocational courses.

²⁸ Excludes from denominator those still actively registered.

²⁹ Learners who commenced in 2008 had not yet completed the course at the time that my fieldwork was undertaken.

³⁰ International Vocational Qualification.

Year	Construction	Automotive Vehicle Maintenance	Electrical	Catering	Total Registrations	Overall % completion rate
2000	7 (5)	0	0	7 (2)	14	50%
2001	7 (3)	0	6 (4)	8 (2)	21	43%
2002	9 (4)	7 (3)	0	4 (2)	20	45%
2003	7 (5)	4 (1)	0	4 (1)	15	47%
2004	4 (4)	7 (5)	0	6 (0)	17	53%
2005	10 (7)	6 (6)	0	8 (2)	24	63%
2006	1 (0)	7 (5)	0	6 (2)	14	50%
2007	4 (3)	4 (2)	-	6 (4)	14	64%
2008	7 (6*)	5 (4*)	-	2 (0*)	14	71%**

Table 13: Uptake of CCHS Year 12 Students on Vocational Courses 2000 - 2008

The Executive Education Officer provided me with the information presented in Table 13. This table summarises the uptake of vocational courses by Year 12 students at CCHS since 2000. Those listed before 2007 were offered as locally accredited courses, while those offered from 2007 onwards have been accredited VRQs and NVQs through City & Guilds.

Whilst the statistics contained in Table 13 differ slightly to those presented in Table 12, completion rates on vocational courses have increased since 2001 and they have continued to do so after the establishment of the AVES. The numbers in brackets show the actual number of students who completed the courses. The numbers for 2008 denote students who were still on the course during 2009.

The levels of the VRQs are generally low and fall mostly within the Entry Level of the Cascara Qualifications Framework (See Appendix 2). During the unstructured interview, the AID AVES Consultant suggested that the levels of most of the VRQ courses are well below the level expected of students in this age category in the metropole. He advised that it may be sensible for the AVES, in conjunction with the Deputy Head for Curriculum at CCHS, to reconsider the level at which these courses are pitched. This echoed the concerns of the Director of the Cascara Development Bureau about the competencies demonstrated by school leavers in the area of Construction. The Deputy Head for Curriculum felt that the level offered at present was appropriate and that students were coping well. The results show high rates of success, except in

Construction, which might imply that on the whole; students find the courses motivating and appropriate for them. It might also suggest that learners are not being sufficiently challenged, except in Construction where, the AVES NVQ and Quality Assurance Co-ordinator, proposed ‘the course work might be a little too difficult’. The Deputy Head further expressed her concerns about the ‘theoretical approach’ of the VRQs.

Cornbleth (2000) cautions against such transmission approaches to curriculum where there is too much theoretical input and insufficient practical application. Cornbleth (*ibid*: 114) argues that “theoretical transmission” results in a product which is disseminated for implantation by those who “work on the ground”. Whilst there is value in this argument, the counter-argument is that these secondary school learners need to gain theoretical underpinnings before they can apply new knowledge practically. For example the VRQ course in automotive vehicle maintenance requires learners to understand the underlying theoretical principles first, so that they are in a better position to put the knowledge into practice. This is what Grundy (1987) describes as the actions becoming the ends and the processes becoming the product.

During 2009, the 16-year old cohort on Cascara constituted 60 people. This number is set to decline over the coming years, with the Executive Education Officer suggesting that the cohort will be reduced by half – to 30 in the next five years due to out-migration. The AVES AID Adviser pointed out that this has serious implications for the provision of learning to young people on the island. The knock-on effect of this is the deficit that this will create in the labour force and the subsequent impact that this will have on the economy. Without an adequate skilled workforce, there is not much hope for economic development on Cascara. Moffett (2003) highlights numerous factors that can hinder capacity building towards economic growth, namely building projects, staff turnovers, changes to administration and budget cuts. The literature does not acknowledge that in contexts such as Cascara, the most significant factor is that of a declining population and therefore the lack of human resource to aid economic growth.

The AVES NVQ & Quality Assurance Co-ordinator explained that since 2007, CCHS students enrolled on vocational courses have been able to register to

complete an NVQ at Level 1 in their respective fields of study – this being dependent on a work-placement being secured. Although, under normal circumstances, NVQs are aimed at candidates in employment who receive support from their employer and a work-based mentor assessor, the Deputy Head for Curriculum at CCHS explained that City & Guilds have been flexible enough to allow the arrangement whereby students attend work placements between 2 and 4 times a week. NVQs are therefore being used on Cascara to offer vocational learning opportunities to fulltime students at the CCHS. The registration of 14 such students in 2008 accords with the statistics that 14 of the 61 students registered for NVQS in 2008/09 are classified as under 25 years of age³¹. The creative solution agreed upon between Cascara Community High School, the AVES and the awarding body based in the metropole illustrates the need for organisations to develop their employees (and in this case future employees) as this, in turn, will impact positively on their development. This is a view supported by Bassi *et al.* (1997) who suggest that in order to remain competitive businesses must see professional development in the form of education training and upskilling as an investment.

The NVQ and Quality Assurance Co-ordinator explained that VRQs are more sustainable in the context of Cascara, as they are not subject to the rigorous external verification requirements, nor do they require frequent verification visits. VRQs lay down quality management requirements and these stipulate that certain policies and procedures are in place and that quality assessment can also be done remotely. Candidates complete portfolios and online assessments. The usual progression is that candidates will complete a VRQ and then enrol to complete a NVQ once they enter the world of work. The Deputy Head of Curriculum at CCHS also explained that although VRQs were working well within the school, there was no infrastructure in place or sufficient resources available to offer VRQ graduates an NVQ placement within any given workplace.

The AVES VRQ statistics indicate that the AVES has impacted positively on the provision of vocational learning to young people within the formal schooling sector. It statistics show that the AVES has had some influence on post-16

³¹ Cascara Social Policy Plan 2009/10 to 2014/15: Situational Analysis Table 2:14.

participation, as well as on completion rates of learners. The AVES Co-ordinators, the EEO, the NVQ Assessors (who work as teachers at CCHS) and the Deputy Head for Curriculum at CCHS all indicated that they are hopeful that more vocational provision (particularly VRQS in other disciplines) will become available to the 14 to 16 year old students at the school. The Deputy Head for Curriculum further noted that the most concerning feature of all is that from the age of 16, and sometimes before, a significant proportion of the young people aim to leave the island to work and study abroad. The Director of the Cascara Development Bureau suggested that this is largely due to the lack of learning and work opportunities available on the island. To circumvent this, the AID AVES Consultant stated that:

The AVES needs to continue to work closely with [Cascara] Community High School to make sure that appropriate learning opportunities are available to young [Cascarians] within the 14 to 18 year age category. VRQs in particular are the area of the curriculum in which provision needs to be broadened. ... These Vocationally Related Qualifications provide a good balance of practical [experience] and desk-based chalk and talk. ... They provide a good foundation to students wanting to do a NVQ and they have international currency.

The Executive Education Officer echoed these sentiments, stating that 'the [Education] Department needs to make meaningful learning available from the cradle to the grave'. This confirms the Education Department's senior management commitment to the notion of lifelong learning and to the overall investment of the development of the island and its people. Maoz & Maov (1999) argue that human capital investment in the context of education and learning, requires a shift away from the notion of training, education and health benefits towards the ideal of improved jobs. This is precisely what the AVES is aiming to achieve in providing young people with skills that will provide work-based opportunities. The contention of Maoz & Maov (*ibid*) was somewhat supported by my data, but what the analysis showed was that Cascarians see the skills and training programmes available through the AVES as a vehicle through which they can gain improved jobs.

NVQ Provision

The Executive Human Resources Officer and the Director of the Cascara Development Bureau (CDB), as the key representatives of the public and private sectors, respectively, both identified NVQs as an appropriate means to skills development on Cascara Island. The Director of the CDB also stated that work-related skills development is incredibly important to the island. This view supports the need for apprenticeship type, work-based learning programmes. The NVQ and Quality Assurance Co-ordinator indicated that taught courses are only feasible in certain fields, and should be reserved for areas such as: introductory workshops; generic training; principles of IT, basic skills and management. The NVQ and Quality Assurance Co-ordinator further explained that more specialist vocational knowledge should be transmitted on an individual basis where necessary.

The Chair of the Cascara Chamber of Commerce indicated that it was advantageous to draw on the experience and expertise of local 'experts', given the uniqueness of the Cascarian context, but he also reiterated the need for internationally accredited recognition of skills learnt. The AVES Co-ordinators affirmed that NVQs afford a good framework for such an approach provided that there are assessors at the core of the process to drive it forward. It emerged in the focus group interview with the Tutors, Assessors and Verifiers cohort of my sample, that assessors stressed the need to see themselves as mentors and trainers for the process to be worthwhile and sustainable. The general view was that well trained and assessed candidates could themselves become assessors, and then verifiers could provide the structure with more rigidity over time. The External Verifier for National Tests Proficiency Council explained that he saw the role of the assessor as not simply to assess and score competencies, but rather to 'complement an island-wide approach of improving and sharing technical, work-based skills'. This view emphasises the importance of investment in human capital and shows the need to recognise people as a predominant resource for economic potential and capacity building (Maoz & Maov, 1999). Learners taking part in NVQ opportunities also draw attention to the need for people to invest in themselves as they aim to become better at what they do – this is itself an

investment in human capital (Mansfield *et al.*, 2004). One of the AVES NVQ Assessors suggested that the curricular approach of NVQs is:

... a healthy mixture of process and product in which learners have to demonstrate that they can complete occupational processes and procedures. In doing this, they need to show that they can practically perform the assessment standards that form part of the qualification while they are in their place of work.

The NVQ and Quality Assurance Co-ordinator cited the main advantage of NVQs as 'promoting a training culture in the workplace'. This, she further noted, should ultimately extend to all managers, who should see themselves as having a responsibility towards coaching an employee who falls under their direct or indirect line supervision. The External Verifier from Construction Skills (CSkills) explained that in mainland contexts, it is relatively straight forward to set up NVQ quality management systems within any given workplace. The unique geographical positioning of Cascara makes this process a little more complex and the provision of NVQs on Cascara remains fragile. The fragility of the provision of NVQs, as detailed by the Executive Education Officer, arises out of difficulties associated with staffing and the costs associated with the delivery of these awards. Until the time of my data collection, the AVES still did not have a locally appointed NVQ and Quality Assurance Co-ordinator. This post is held by an expatriate employee who is contracted through the AID at a salary four times more than that which a local counterpart might expect. The expatriate appointee explained that a local counterpart will be appointed 'fairly soon' and that a programme of in-service training will be provided to this counterpart.

The Executive Education Officer pointed out that the NVQ and Quality Assurance Co-ordinator, along with the core staff employed at the AVES can continue to lead and develop the NVQ system but the effectiveness and stability of the system depends on a network of front-line staff who actually implement and facilitate the NVQ assessment process. These include the assessors and internal verifiers in each workplace, under each of the different sectors in which NVQs are currently offered under the AVES. Due to outward migration and the declining local population, there is no sector on the island that has an excess of

qualified staff and the Cascarian Government's vacant posts fluctuate between 6% and 11% on an ongoing basis³².

The Executive Human Resources Officer indicated that due to vacant positions across government departments, government employees tend to be in positions where their responsibilities extended beyond the duties detailed in their job profiles. Three of the research participants in the Assessor, Verifier and Tutor cohort indicated that they had little time to dedicate to NVQ-related activities. The NVQ and Quality Assurance Co-ordinator explained that the sectors in which NVQ provision tends to be more successful are those that are larger in size and in which there is more human resource to drive the process forward. Bowman *et al.* (2001: 262) propose that stakeholders are among the most important factors when determining the sustainable success of any intervention. It is also important that the methodological approach to instruction is relevant to the learner target group. If there is a mismatch in this regard, the intervention is certain to fail (*ibid*). Whilst Brockett & Hiemstra (1998) and Merriam & Brockett (2007) describe transformational learning as a process that involves the responsibility of the learner to plan, implement, and evaluate their own learning; it is also important that a good learning strategy scaffolds the design, use, and evaluation of learning contracts to manage and organise instruction (Kasworm, 1983). The NVQ and Quality Assurance Co-ordinator also drew attention to the difficulties associated with the lack of progress in the Construction NVQ; but also noted that larger departments where NVQs have been successful include the Education Department, the Public Health and Social Services Department and the Agriculture and Natural Resources Department. Table 14 summarises the information received from the AVES database and shows the progress made in NVQs, by sector, between 2004 and 2009.

³² 2009/10 Statistics received from the Financial Planning Manager by email on 04.03.2010.

Qualification and Sector	Level	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Certificates gained to date	
								No .	% Success rate ³³
Health & Social Care	2	7	11	21	13	9	7	43	78%
	3	2	1		6	3	7	1	11%
Agriculture	1					3		-	- ³⁴
	2			4		2	6	4	100%
Business Admin. and Customer Care	2				14	14	5	20	87%
	3				3	7	9	8	89%
Hospitality*	1					7	8	-	-
Automotive Maintenance*	2					8	4	-	-
Construction*	1					4	4	-	-
	2					7		-	-
Total NVQs		9	12	25	36	61	50	76	

Table 14: Progress in NVQs by sector for the period 2004 – 2009

Table 14 demonstrates that NVQ provision has increased substantially since 2004, particularly since the establishment of the AVES. The Executive Education Officer and the Executive Development Officer both commended the introduction of the AVES AID Development Aid Project as contributing significantly to the increased NVQ provision on the island. The NVQ & Quality Assurance Co-ordinator stated that although NVQs are expensive to implement, particularly given the isolation of Cascara, the additional resources contributed by the AID have made increased provision possible. The biggest expense in respect of NVQs relates to the cost of human resource and the problem on Cascara is that of the very limited pool from which to recruit this resource. This is due to the small population of the island. Many Cascarians moonlight and work across industries, therefore needing to demonstrate the ability to multi-task in different disciplines. This is something that Sultana (1997) also concluded in his study of Malta. Both Malta and Cascara are neo-colonial island states – the main differences being that Malta has a larger population and it has completely severed ties with its coloniser.

The Chair of the Education Committee noted that many of the targeted NVQs were intended to aid activities associated with airport access and the construction of an airport. The AID AVES Consultant explained that as a result of

³³ Excludes from denominator those still actively registered.

³⁴ Dashes: Candidates in these areas only enrolled late in 2008 and at the time of my research they had not yet been certificated.

this, the AVES had experienced drop outs in NVQ areas associated with areas like Construction and Hospitality and Catering. It is worthwhile noting that NVQs support Wiles & Boni's (1993) view of Vocational Education and Training in that they aim to produce self-employable and employable individuals who can make a contribution to the economy. The research participants who represented the private sector – namely, the Director of the Cascara Development Bureau and the Chair of the Cascara Chamber of Commerce – both implied that there was a need to motivate the private sector to want to improve work-based skills whether or not the island receives an airport in the foreseeable future. The concern with poor uptake in these areas is that a sustainable model cannot be achieved if there are insufficient candidates to train as assessors and verifiers.

The External Verifier from City and Guilds highlighted that the small scale activity in any given NVQ within any given sector on Cascara means that the infrastructure is fragile and this raises concerns with the awarding body. City and Guilds, the awarding body through which most of the island's NVQs are offered, has been accommodating and flexible, in so much that some rules which would apply in the metropole have been relaxed. This flexibility, the External Verifier explained, has limits as the awards need to adhere to the stringent quality control measures set out by the awarding bodies. She explained:

I have had to place sanctions on the [the AVES NVQ] centre. These sanctions apply to certain functions, the most significant being that the centre cannot certificate any candidate without my approval and endorsement of the candidate portfolios. ... Another function that the centre will not be able to do is register anymore candidates in the area of food and hospitality until the current assessor has gained her V1 [verifier qualification].

The External Verifier further explained that the current sanctions require that she visit the island twice a year to ensure that sufficient quality assurance processes and procedures are in place; and that most importantly a strong and viable succession plan is put in place for the future sustainable provision. The sentiments of the External Verifier support the argument of Massell (2000: 1) who describes capacity building as the “need to translate high standards and incentives into effective construction”. Without strong local capacity to maintain and continually improve provision, sustainable delivery will not be achievable.

Foley (2001) also warns that when there is a lack of capacity for a planned change the intervention has less chance of succeeding.

The overarching theme in relation to the sustainability of accredited awards such as NVQs was that of access to the island. The AID Education Adviser explained that it is both expensive and time consuming for representatives of the awarding bodies to visit the island and the budgetary implications of this mean that growth in the provision of NVQs will continue to be restricted. This has economic implications and impacts on curriculum sustainability because the AVES has a limited budget. Such challenges are caused by what Cross & Nutley (1999: 317) term the “marine barrier” and imply that the physical separation of islands such as Cascara from the mainland have budgetary implications. In addition to this, the sustainability of NVQs is highly dependent on qualified verifiers and assessors who undertake this role alongside full time employment. The AVES NVQ and Quality Assurance Co-ordinator affirmed that in mainland contexts, assessors and verifiers would be appointed to carry out these particular roles in a full time capacity. All three of the external verifiers from the awarding bodies that formed part of the research sample identified the need for peripatetic assessor and verifier support to maintain the long term sustainability of the NVQ awards. Experienced local assessors and verifiers will support the sustainability of NVQs in that they will reduce the frequency of external verification visits.

Other Accredited Courses

The AVES also offers many other accredited courses. Accredited courses are courses that are validated or issued by an awarding body in another country. The Chair of the Education Committee suggested that the provision of other accredited courses remains fragile because they are dependent on the skills and expertise of, in some instances, just one local person. These courses also incur recurrent costs in the form of annual licenses, registrations, examinations and certifications. Such courses are also often dependent on trainers visiting the island at substantial expense. The Executive Human Resources Officer indicated that the AVES should only offer specific learning opportunities periodically. Some of the learning opportunities that she used to illustrate this point included areas in which overseas trainers have been brought to the island for short inputs. Such

areas include: training in scaffolding erection, training in shot-firing, training in web design and a generic train-the-trainer course.

The Executive Education Officer explained that expatriate staff had been appointed to aid with building local capacity and to expand the offerings of the AVES Curriculum. This commitment to building additional capacity in areas that might provide Cascarians the means to develop themselves economically, demonstrates a shift of the government away from “Eurocentric marginalisation” (Spivak, 2008: 58). This is encouraging as it shows a shift away from colonial attitudes towards economic emancipation. What needs to be cautioned against is the trend in ‘neo-colonisation’ wherein the power shifts from the centre to the margin, with the margin merely reproducing the colonial model and its related systems (*ibid*). Cascarian business is currently predominantly run by four families – and there is the potential for these major players to become the new ‘colonisers’, thus hampering the decolonisation process.

Accredited Course	Number of participants
GCSE English Literature	11
GCSE English Language	11
GCSE Maths	7
Emergency First Response	106
Basic Skills - Literacy	27
Basic Skills – Numeracy	18
European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL)	12
Scaffolding	33
Safe Removal of Asbestos	30
Shot Firing	33
Total Accredited Courses	288

Table 15: Attendance of AVES Learners in Accredited Courses for the period 2008/09

Table 15 summarises the accredited courses offered through the AVES during the 2008/09 financial year. The statistics, obtained from the AVES Community Learning Co-ordinator, also indicate participant numbers for each of the courses on offer.

When the 61 NVQ registrations for 2008 are considered alongside the total accredited courses for 2008, the AVES can claim to have attracted at least 350

post-16 year olds to take courses of a vocational nature. This represents an equivalent of 15% of the working population which the Statistic Department reported was 2224 in 2008. Overall, the statistics show that the AVES has made good progress in respect of the delivery of accredited learning courses.

3.3.2.2. Local Unaccredited Learning Opportunities

Local unaccredited courses are courses arranged on island by the AVES and presented by AVES tutors or local training providers. These courses are more sustainable given that they are less expensive to run, but they are not awarded with accreditation or validity away from the shores of the island. It is also not always easy to source suitably qualified and experienced trainers.

Given the small population of the island, the total number of learners undertaking unaccredited courses is impressive. Table 16 shows the unaccredited courses that the AVES offered during 2008/09.

Unaccredited Course	Number of participants
Miscellaneous Management	282
Miscellaneous Personal Skills, Job Seeking, etc.	125
Peer Educators and Lay Counselling	72
Miscellaneous Information Technology	102
Human Rights Counselling	19
Lace and Embroidery	19
Total Unaccredited Courses	619

Table 16: Attendance of AVES Learners in Unaccredited Courses 2008/09

The number of learners who attended unaccredited courses would appear high at 619. However, closer analysis of the statistics showed that in some instances one participant may have attended up to 3 or 4 learning opportunities and has been counted for each attendance. This is particularly the case in the Miscellaneous Management courses that the AVES offered. The 619 participants who attended unaccredited courses represent over a quarter of the working population. Even in a larger society these would, none-the-less, be regarded as high levels of penetration.

One area of major concern emerging from the data related to the quality of the unaccredited courses. Certification for these courses is usually based on attendance rather than on assessment criteria or demonstrated competencies. This practice of certificating against attendance is not favourably seen by employers across the public and private sectors on the island. The AVES Community Learning Co-ordinator described how the AVES has seen a decline in registrations on certain local courses over time. More than 50% of the responses received from the AVES Clients stated that accredited learning opportunities were favoured over locally offered and certificated courses. The suggestion of the AID Education Consultant that the AVES ‘hands out certificates for breathing’ does not bode well for the credibility of the Service or for the sustainability of the curriculum on offer by the AVES. As was indicated by the Chair of the Education Committee, there is a delicate balance that needs to be reached in the provision of accredited and unaccredited learning. On the one hand, the island has a responsibility to provide learning opportunities that are portable and transferable as these will provide Cascarians with employment and development opportunities beyond the boundaries of the isolated island. On the other hand, the island needs to aim to keep skilled workers on the island. It would seem that, as stated by the Chair of the Cascara Chamber of Commerce, the only solution to this problem is that of paying Cascarians a higher wage so that they do not need to seek better remunerated employment beyond the shores of Cascara.

The majority of courses on offer under the AVES are local and unaccredited. A significant proportion of these courses are in management related fields that include: People Management, Retail Management, Change Management, Writing Business Plans, Marketing and Conflict Management. The courses on offer have attracted a significant number of employees from the public sector. In the AVES Co-ordinator Focus group interview, it was put forward that the higher proportion of attendance by the public sector in unaccredited AVES training is largely due to the fact that line managers and departmental heads encourage attendance at the courses which are free to government departments.

At least 60% of the client questionnaire respondents indicated that they felt that the courses on offer were meeting their needs but stakeholders have mixed

views about the value of some of the courses. The general criticism is that the courses on offer are not deep enough in scope and therefore it is often difficult to observe, quantify or assess skills learnt once candidates are back in the workplace. In the focus group interview held with the AVES Co-ordinators, it was suggested that the Service needs to start exploring options for developing the units in unaccredited courses. Such units would clearly state aims and assessment standards at the outset; they would also contribute to a larger a qualification, thus giving the learning programme more local credibility.

The AID AVES Consultant argued that locally accredited courses can have benefit as long as they are subject to quality control, and he advised that this is an area that the AVES needed to 'act on'. It emerged, through the data, that no quality control mechanisms are currently in place but during my interview with the Executive Education Officer and during the AVES Co-ordinator's focus group meeting, it transpired that exploratory work has begun in the area of quality assurance associated with locally offered courses. Initial indications are that courses will be assessed and graded against predetermined criteria and then positioned on the Cascarian National Qualifications Framework (NQF). When I proposed this idea to the awarding body cohort of my research sample, two of the three participants expressed that local trainers also need to be subject to quality assurance measures in relation to the areas and topics in which they provided training under the AVES.

What is of overall importance, and noted by both the Director of Cascara Development Bureau and the Executive Human Resources Officer, is that the AVES – as a centre for post-secondary and further education on Cascara – is contributing to local economic growth. In the context of economic theory, the AVES as an organisation providing opportunities in further and higher education, has contributed to the economy of the island in that it has prepared students entering the workforce; improved literacy rates; and offered courses in specific business (Falcone, 1994). These contributions are particularly important, given the history of the island where very limited learning opportunities were made available to school leavers and citizens working across the public and private sectors. However, the AVES falls short of full support for economic growth in that it does not, as was raised as a major concern by the EHRO and Deputy Head for

Curriculum at CCHS, presently offer advice, information and guidance on any level, nor does it provide pre-screening services for employment. The EEO indicated that this service would be best placed with the department dealing with work placements and youth trainee schemes.

3.3.2.3. The AVES AID Development Aid Project

The difficulties associated with both accredited and non-accredited or locally accredited learning courses also impact on the implementation of the AVES AID Development Aid Project. The Executive Development Officer (EDO), the Executive Education Officer (EEO) and the three AVES Co-ordinators all indicated that the specific outputs associated with the aid project have not been achievable and therefore impact directly on sustainable learning. The EEO, who was not in post at the time that the project was finalised, stated that the 'project should never have been approved', citing 'lack of thought for sustainability' as the main problem. The EDO, who is the head of the department that would have approved the project, expressed that when it was conceived, the project components were thought to be sustainable but that 'unexpected local developments' had impacted on the sustainable delivery of the project components. When I probed the NVQ and Quality Assurance Co-ordinator on the components of the AVES AID Development Aid Project, she said that:

... the apprenticeships [component 1], the construction card scheme [component 2] and the NVQ in business and admin [component 4] have not been clearly thought through. ... We are struggling to stabilise the current NVQs on offer, let alone broaden these into full apprenticeships. ... There is just no chance that we can implement full apprenticeships at this stage.

I now present my findings in respect of the components of the AVES AID Development Aid project, with a particular focus on the sustainability of each of them. The four project components are: Apprenticeships; Construction Skills; Instructional Techniques; and a NVQ in Business and Administration at Level 4.

Component 1: The introduction of accredited training programmes equivalent to Apprenticeship Awards through City & Guilds (C & G)

It is clear that the training programmes under this component aim to support infrastructure development during and post the airport construction. The apprenticeships offered are in the following areas: Motor Vehicle Maintenance, Construction & Masonry, Catering & Hospitality and Travel & Tourism.

The AID AVES Consultant described how in the metropole, there are four elements to a full apprenticeship. These comprise a technical certificate/ Vocationally Related Qualification; a National Vocational Qualification; work experience or employment in the related sector; and generic key or functional skills. While the AID AVES Consultant argued that the implementation of these apprenticeships was achievable on Cascara, the Executive Education Officer (EEO) and the three AVES Co-ordinators all affirmed that the scope to offer these four elements concurrently has not yet been developed for any sector on Cascara as yet. The AVES NVQ and Quality Assurance co-ordinator also mentioned that 'no single formal apprentice has as yet been engaged on the island as yet'. The EEO explained that there are various sustainability issues associated with these proposed apprenticeships: Firstly, Cascara Community High School (CCHS) can, in principle, deliver the taught parts of the apprenticeship for the planned sectors, but it lacks available staffing expertise in Travel and Tourism and, as noted by the Deputy Head of CCHS, the school has not yet introduced the required key skills courses. The AVES NVQ and Quality Assurance Co-ordinator explained that NVQs, which are central to any apprenticeship, are still under development and the biggest challenge is finding work placements for candidates. The Deputy Head for Curriculum at CCHS also noted that the Cascara Government does have a system in place for the admission of youth trainees into the service but that her experience was that departments are often reluctant to take on these trainees. Conflicting views emerged from my data in this regard when the Executive Human Resources Officer and the Chair of the Education Committee stated that the youth trainee placements were readily available within the government departments and that interest in taking up these placements was low. The Deputy Head for Curriculum at CCHS stated that she has on numerous occasions requested for youth work-

placements through the Human Resources Department and that she is repeatedly told that there are no current vacancies. The AVES Co-ordinators echoed the sentiments of the Deputy Head during my focus group interview with them. In economic terms, this demonstrates the necessity of the AVES to develop learning partnerships with the local business through initiatives such as contract training and small business development. These initiatives will contribute to the development and success of the local economy (Welch & Welch, 2010; Daugherty & Bakia, 1999).

The AVES NVQ and Quality Assurance Co-ordinator noted that the private sector on Cascara is relatively small and are often not willing to take on trainees and the responsibility that comes with them. The Chairperson of the Chamber of Commerce and the Director of the Cascara Development Bureau both suggested that the private sector could be subsidised to fill this gap in the key target sectors of motor vehicle maintenance and construction. The Executive Education Officer (EEO) suggested that the AVES budget was 'already stretched' and would therefore not be able to take on any new activities, unless the youth trainee management was 'handed over to Education'. My analysis of the AVES budget, however suggests that it could justifiably be manipulated to accommodate the subsidy of a limited programme of youth employment on Cascara, but as noted by the NVQ and Quality Assurance Co-ordinator, the lack of mentors and NVQ assessors and verifiers in the relevant private sector workplaces would still remain a barrier. Whilst theorists such as Seaman (1989) and Ross-Gordon (2002) argue that the primary role of a good tutor is to actively encourage learners to participate in the learning process, learning areas such as automotive vehicle maintenance and construction require tutors who are skilled artisans themselves.

Component 2: The establishment of the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) or an international equivalent and the introduction of a NVQ in Construction

This component concerns itself with two foci:

- establishing the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) on the island; and
- the introduction of a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in Construction.

All of the management stakeholders in my research sample noted that a substantial amount of time and money have been invested into the area of construction and its related NVQ developments. In respect of the NVQ in construction, the NVQ and Quality Assurance Co-ordinator explained that five prospective construction assessors were sent to the metropole to undergo five weeks of intensive assessor training late in 2008, but that these candidates have made limited progress since their return even though they have received 'more than adequate support'. She further explained that they had not yet started assessing candidates or developing the required portfolios of evidence. The Executive Education Officer also made reference to his frustration in his efforts to encourage these candidates to make progress. Unfortunately, none of these candidates were part of my research sample, so I was unable to probe issues from their personal perspectives. However, the insights received from other candidates clarify that while people invest in themselves and aim to become better at what they do (Mansfield *et al.*, 2004); this is not always possible if there are limited resources and an inadequate support system.

This component of the project also aimed to make construction safety cards available to workers in the sector. These cards, issued at various levels, are recognised in the metropole and are a legal requirement for people working on construction sites. The NVQ and Quality Assurance Co-ordinator explained that to date, the awarding body has only been willing to offer an Overseas Territory card for an on-line Health and Safety Test. Such a card would have no formal validity outside of Cascara. The NVQ Assessors and Verifiers explained that both they and their NVQ candidates in the construction sector see the offer of an 'overseas territories card' as inferior because the cards would not hold any validity beyond the shores of the island. This view was not completely supported by three of the research participants from the Private Sector Representatives and Governmental Departmental Heads cohort who suggested that although the proposed card scheme may not be internationally accredited, the system would

still aid improved and standardised Health and Safety practice on the island. At the time that my research was conducted assessors who attended the training in the metropole had all stated in writing that they did not wish to continue with the implementation of the construction award and its associated card scheme as they questioned the validity of the certification. This highlights the aspiration of Cascarians to gain accredited learning skills that hold validity and currency abroad. The NVQ and Quality Assurance Co-ordinator suggested that the 'CSCS card debacle is directly responsible for the collapse of the NVQ in Construction'. This does not bode well for the sustainability of this component of the AVES AID Development Aid Project.

Component 3: The development of a bank of part-time, trained work skills and craft skills instructors through the delivery of a series of instructional technique programmes

This component concerned itself with developing a number of suitably trained instructors or tutors in a variety of disciplines. Essentially, the focus in this area has been on training NVQ Assessors and Verifiers as well as tutors who can deliver other areas of the AVES Curriculum. The AVES has applied a range of approaches to meeting this core requirement. AVES Statistics show that eight candidates have achieved the Internal Verifier, Level 4 award since 2006. Twenty-four of the forty-three candidates registered for the Level 3 assessor award have gained their certificates. Seven of these candidates are still actively registered and working towards the completion of their awards.

The AVES Community Learning Co-ordinator also highlighted that learning opportunities have been offered in short-term face-to-face train-the-trainer interventions. To date, opportunities have been delivered in: web design, food hygiene, scaffolding, shot-firing, tourism/customer care and generic train-the-trainer.

The AVES Co-ordinators and the Chair of the Cascara Chamber of Commerce commented that these 'imported' training opportunities are usually planned collaboratively between the AVES and the Cascara Development Bureau and it

is actively sought to find a balance between meeting the training requirements of both the public and private sectors.

Client questionnaires for the most part, were positive in relation to additional learning on offer under the AVES, with one learner indicating: 'when overseas trainers visit the island we learn a lot in a short space of time'. One other AVES Client indicated that she would be happier if the short-term interventions resulted in accreditation. The AVES Community Learning Co-ordinator explained that to date, all but one of the courses offered in this area have been accredited. Probing this matter with the Executive Education Officer, it seems that the Cascara Government is aiming for a 'gentle balance' whereby the workforce are being 'skilled and reskilled' to aid the island's economy but not always being provided with the opportunity to formally (by way of an accredited certificate) take their skills abroad. He was clear in asserting that this was not a view that he supported.

As long as funding mechanisms remain in place, this component of the project is sustainable. These training opportunities are very useful to the marketplace on Cascara and one local tutor described them as 'a convenient quick fix to some of the island's immediate skills gaps and shortages'. While 'quick fixes' might provide temporary solutions, the majority of my research participants noted the need for sustainable, quality provision in the courses offered. The same local tutor noted that quality learning was dependent on a tutor who had a good understanding of the learning content, the Cascarian context and who was able to facilitate the learning processes in a 'confident and meaningful way'. In striving to secure strong, sustainable capacity, Venetoulis (2001) warns that the quality of the input will determine the output ability of those trained or capacitated. My data supported these contentions, further noting that high quality training inputs were dependent on trainers who knew their subject content and who were able to communicate this in a manner relevant to the target audience.

Component 4: The introduction of a NVQ in Business and Administration at Level 4

The AID AVES Consultant and the AVES Co-ordinators described how this component of the project, which is concerned with a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in Business and Administration, had been put on hold until 2011/12. This had been done as there were concerns pertaining to the assessment and verification of NVQs at this level. The Trainers and Educators cohort of my sample indicated that there are very few people on the island who combine the necessary level of professional expertise and familiarity with NVQ processes and requirements to assess and verify at the advanced stage of Level 4. Until the NVQ system under the AVES is less fragile and the Service has more qualified assessors and verifiers in place, there is little chance of this component of the project being introduced – let alone sustained.

3.3.2.4. Establishing e-learning and International Learning Links

Given the geographic isolation and insularity of the island, e-learning and distance learning would appear to be logical solutions for Cascara. In aiming to achieve an integrated approach to lifelong learning, the AVES will need to work towards the establishment of what one of the Awarding Body research participants in my research sample called a ‘virtual college or community’. This virtual college will be the platform by which knowledge and skills will be passed from those who have them to those who do not. The External Verifier further explained:

The college will need to be ready to take the lead and to train and mentor the entire community. There needs to be a collective effort where everybody shares all of their skills. All who have skills to offer, or who know where to access the skills will need to see themselves as part of this college. This is not something that we will achieve overnight, it is something that will need to be co-ordinated, promoted and managed.

The AVES AID Consultant highlighted the need for the expansion of e-learning as being central to this ‘college’. The need to access skilled trainers in an

environment where human resources are in short supply heightens the need for further support from international training organisations.

The AVES Co-ordinators and the Executive Education Officer noted that in its efforts to meet the majority of the island's training needs, the AVES has and will need to continue to strengthen its links with overseas learning institutions. While conducting my research, the AVES IT Co-ordinator informed me that to date, two vocational students have been sent abroad to undertake three year qualifications; and two other students attended a three month course in cabinet making in the metropole. Formal links have been established between the AVES and the college at which the students undertook their studies. In addition to this, the AVES has contracted short-term training consultants to visit the island for short, sometimes technical, training interventions. The AVES Co-ordinators, although generally impressed with the level of training provided by visiting trainers, expressed that they had some concerns in relation to these training interventions. The first of these was that the trainers were not always fully conversant with the Cascarian context and as such, training content and method were not always entirely relevant. Concurring with these concerns, the Executive Education Officer (EEO) suggested that this concern raises the need for a 'deep-rooted and robust link' to be established with only one institution in the metropole. This might be a Further Education College in the metropole that offers the full scope of learning areas that are required and relevant to the Cascarian context, but what is important is that a central co-ordinator at the college oversees all of the training that is destined for Cascara. The EEO, further expressed that this co-ordinator would need to have a solid understanding of the Cascarian context, and if a working partnership between the college and Cascara were to be formalised, it might be prudent to engage the co-ordinator in a familiarisation trip to the island.

Such a partnership, as that described, also lends itself to the possibility of increased e-learning opportunities for Cascarians wishing to access internationally accredited learning opportunities locally. A formal agreement does not need to be in place with an overseas learning institution for the AVES to offer additional e-learning opportunities, but strengthened ties with a college might

save time in expediting processes that are associated with registrations and approvals.

With the shortage of resources on island (particularly human and physical), e-learning would seem a practical solution to the accessing of skills training on the island. The provision of increased e-learning has financial resource implications and the AVES currently spends 9% of its annual recurrent budget on email and Internet access. The speed of the Internet connection is fairly good and the AVES, along with CCHS, have got the best Internet speeds currently available on the island. The reality, as noted in an interview with the AVES IT Co-ordinator, is that the facilities are under-utilised and more research needs to go into the possible mechanisms by which distance learning or video-conference learning could be offered at the AVES. The Deputy Head for Curriculum at CCHS explained that the first video conferencing classes had been launched at the school in Sociology early in 2009 and although the current bandwidth might not fully complement the learning, good progress was being made. The Community Learning Co-ordinator explained that the AVES, in collaboration with some of the other government departments, has established links with a distance learning provider in the metropole.

The Director of the Cascara Development Bureau, suggested now might be the time to explore alternative learning opportunities with distance institutions that have proven credibility. The AID AVES Consultant pointed out that the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), in the United States and the Open University (OU) in the United Kingdom are professional universities that make their 'world-class' material available online as a free open source. Costs only become payable when candidates wish to enrol and take their qualifications. The consultant further suggested that the AVES explore establishing links with the University for Industry in the United Kingdom, which like the Open University offers distance learning – but under the University for Industry, 'learning opportunities are offered as industry equivalents'. Courses available through the University of Industry include: NVQs in areas such as Team Leading, Management, Health and Social Care, Customer Service, Retail Skills, Business and Administration and Business Improvement Techniques. The University also offers a range of courses in Management and Information

Technology. The AID AVES Consultant further suggested that NVQs on offer through the University for Industry might be of particular interest to Cascara, as this system of online assessment and verification, could provide the opportunity to take pressure of assessors and verifiers who are already stretched.

In addition to the extension of distance e-learning, the AVES IT Co-ordinator and the AID Education Adviser both expressed the need for the AVES to explore how it can offer tutorials through video-conferencing. The IT Co-ordinator suggested that video-conferencing tuition could provide learners with a tutor and an interactive learning environment in which they could actively engage. The AVES IT Co-ordinator further explained that an application for additional funding has been submitted to the AID for increased bandwidth so that that e-learning and video-conferencing can be expanded on the island. To further substantiate this, the Executive Education Officer (EEO) stated that he, the Education Senior Management Team and the Education Committee were all fully supportive of the bid to improve bandwidth to the AVES and the CCHS as they saw this as the only long-term sustainable means of overcoming human resource shortages in respect of professional expertise for training. The EEO further suggested that it is 'almost certain' that this funding would be approved. The AVES IT Co-ordinator also stated that it was anticipated, if approval was granted, that the increased bandwidth would be shared between the AVES and the CCHS and that this would be used primarily for video-conferencing. The Deputy Head for Curriculum at CCHS said that the school had established links with a distance learning provider in the United Kingdom called Nelson Thornes Distance Learning (NTDL). According to the NTDL website, they offer distance learning and video conferencing opportunities in the following areas that would support the current AVES Strategy: Accounting, Economics, Electronics, Psychology, and Sociology.

Whichever route the AVES decides to opt for, it is evident that work has already begun in this regard and it is encouraging that stakeholders have already begun to realise the boundless opportunities that exist in the context of distance-based, video conferencing and e-learning.

3.3.3. Andragogical Experiences and Expectations of AVES learners

For adult learning programmes to be successful, it is paramount that varying theories of adult learning inform the learning programme from its conceptualisation through to its design and delivery. These theories support a particular approach to teaching and learning that endeavour to understand and accommodate the social, economic, political and personal positioning of the adult learner. For the most part, the data that I gathered indicated that andragogical practice was supported and operational under the Service. This may account for AVES learner participation being so high, as well as for learners seeing the learning experience as worthwhile and relevant.

It was encouraging to note that the data also revealed that many island tutors practice Dewey's (1902) contention that there are many advantages of learning through various learner-centred activities rather than traditional teacher-centred pedagogy. Within the framework of transformative and self-directed learning, the data revealed the need for adults to be in control of their own learning pathways (Knowles *et al.*, 2011) because their reasons for learning are different to those of children. The data showed that adults have a variety of personal commitments that need to be considered when planning and committing to participation in training and development. The data also illuminated that adults tend to participate in learning opportunities with the ultimate goal of improving their positions in the workplace. The data further supported the theorising of Knowles (1984) and Knowles *et al.* (2011) in that it demonstrated that individuals will only take initiative for their personal learning if they can see the practical use of it in their everyday lives.

In this section, I present my analysis in respect of the andragogical experiences of:

- AVES Learners
- AVES stakeholders

3.3.3.1. AVES Learners

The information received through the AVES Client questionnaires suggest that, for the most part, learners are happy with the way in which they are taught. The client questionnaires indicates that the AVES is satisfying its clients with regards to the times at which courses are offered. The AVES Co-ordinators proposed that most of the AVES learning opportunities take place during the working day with, few taking place after government working hours (08h30 – 16h00). The learning opportunities on offer after hours tend to be courses in further and continuing education. These courses are scheduled for a particular day of the week and take place during the evenings. Transport to and from these learning opportunities is provided by the AVES. The AVES IT Co-ordinator explained that she has recently introduced the European Computer Driver Licence (ECDL) as a learning opportunity under the AVES curriculum and because this is a self-taught course attendance is offered on a flexi-time basis. The IT suite is open for two hours of the working day and then access is extended to two hours beyond the working day. Two AVES client questionnaire responses commented on their appreciation for this; with one stating that it is ‘nice to be able to attend a course that might open doors to me without having to get approval from my line manager’. This comment draws attention to the need of adults to be in control of their learning pathways. The Executive Human Resource Officer explained that the practice on Cascara is for line managers to approve the attendance of their staff at training. As emphasised by this respondent, some adults would like the opportunity to engage in professionally related training outside of work. The AVES Community Learning Co-ordinator shared that some public sector learners had confided in her that their line managers had often refused their request to attend training.

Pfeffer (2003) reminds us that individuals and groups have different values, goals and interests. These, as reported by the AVES Community Learning Co-ordinator, can impact on the professional development of employees who have line functions from which they need to gain approval. Pfeffer (*ibid*) further contends that the degree to which stakeholders enact or realise their values, goals and interests is essentially about converting their power into action. This is an important political act because not only does it give learners the opportunity to

gain skills, therefore empowering them – but in the Cascardian context, it also moves away from colonial control towards economic and personal emancipation.

Other learner respondents, employed in both the public and private sectors, indicated that they were happy to attend work-related training during working hours and personal training sessions outside of working hours. This view supports the andragogical contention that adult learners are motivated to learn to the extent to which they perceive the learning will be of benefit to them.

One area in which it emerged that andragogical practice was not fully supported was raised by at least three of the client questionnaire respondents who noted that line managers often forced them to attend training interventions in which they had no interest. One respondent wrote:

[The] AVES trainer is very encouraging but I only went to the training [session] because my manager told me in my staff appraisal that I had to. The job that I do does not involve presentation skills so I can't see the connection.

The views of this respondent highlight the need for adult learning to be relevant and they also show that it is imperative that the learner sees the benefit of the learning to his/her personal and/or professional lives. In contrast to this, one respondent commented on the support she received from her line manager and noted that this motivated her to want to advance her work-related skills.

The final area in respect of the andragogical perceptions and expectations of AVES learners relates to the relationship that learners have with their tutors as well as to the quality of tutoring. Two of the AVES clients who had previously attended business training courses offered by the AVES raised concerns about the 'approach of the tutor' describing her as 'authoritarian' and 'inflexible'. This emphasises that adult learners are equally concerned with the relevance of what they learn as they are to the way that they are treated in the classroom (Zemke, 2001). Two learners also commented on the 'level of the work', with one stating that the concepts were too difficult, and the other suggesting that she had not learnt much on the training. Such feedback stresses the need for facilitators of adult learning to be cognisant that it is their task to "guide the learners to their

own knowledge rather than supplying them with facts” (*ibid*). This feedback also shows that it is important to get adult approval. By doing this, learners will be more readily be guided to meet their goals.

With the exception of the two negative comments noted above, the remaining client questionnaire respondents made positive comments about their tutors, their relationship with them and the quality of the tuition they provided. Some of the comments, were:

- most instructors is [*sic*] friendly;
- I wasn't forced into doing anything I wasn't comfortable with;
- I feel the tutors/instructors are easy to approach and friendly;
- they [the tutors] are willing to offer additional coaching;
- my tutor is professional, though friendly; and
- all the AVES tutors are dedicated.

These comments from AVES learners suggest that good relationships exist with them and their tutors. Relationships such as these would be grounded in mutual respect and therefore support theories of adult learning. This andragogical practice is further supported by what appears to be tuition of a good quality. Of the 47 returned client questionnaires, most replies that I received were complimentary of the tuition on offer. Many tutors are not trained as teachers but, for the most part, provide a good quality service. The AVES IT Co-ordinator noted that the ‘professional attitude of the AVES tutors contribute to the general development of skills on the island’. With dedicated tutors and willing adult learners, the possibilities for grow and development are immense.

3.3.3.2. Other AVES Stakeholders

While the AVES client cohort of the sample were, for the most part, complimentary of the AVES facilitators, this was not the case with all of the other stakeholders. The AVES Community Learning Co-ordinator provided an example of a numeracy tutor who spoke to a group of learners from the agricultural sector ‘as if they were primary aged children’. This tutor used overly expressive language, a loud voice and infantile language. When probed as to whether

training had been provided to tutors in andragogical practice, the co-ordinators indicated that they had never considered doing this. Given the human resource shortage on the island, many of the tutors are teachers or ex-teachers from the formal schooling sector, while many tutors have not had any previous teaching experience at all. On a positive note, the Executive Human Resources Officer (EHRO) recognised that:

[The] AVES is very fortunate to have access to many well qualified and experienced trainers and instructors, often they are well respected people in the community with a good track record. ... The [Cascara] Government provides a flexible working scheme and allows employees to take on extra work in their own time or using their annual leave. ... This is something that we have to do because we are such a small community and specialist skills are hard to come by.

The EHRO's comment accords with the argument of Jones and Lowe (1990: 9) which draws attention to the importance of "good tutors modelling desired behaviours". By sharing specialist skills with learners in an accommodating, insightful and patient manner, the tutor is able to be the intermediary between the learner and the body of knowledge (Gould, 2009). The AVES Community Learning Co-ordinator demonstrated a disagreement with the EHRO when she explained that competent and experienced tutors were difficult to source.

The final theme that emerged regarding andragogical practice relates to learner-tutor relationships. It was interesting to note that non-learner stakeholders were divided on how they perceived these relationships should be. One of the AVES Co-ordinators stated in the focus group interview that she felt that as the AVES pays good rates to trainers and service providers, the service, and therefore the relationship between tutor and learner, should be 'professional and business-like'. When probed, it was evident that not all co-ordinators were in agreement. For example, another co-ordinator suggested that although it was important that the learning environment was professional, it was 'equally – or more important' for there to be a happy learning environment where the skills and capabilities of the learner could be used to compliment the learning environment. When I explored this with the Trainer and Educator cohort of the sample, it seemed that they too were divided. The two local training providers saw a professional

learning environment as more important, as did one assessor and one verifier. The other assessor and verifier, along with the two AVES tutors indicated support for participatory or partnership learning. These differing views foreground two of the three learning styles forwarded by Lenz (1982). The participatory or “partnership style” supports andragogical teaching-learning relationships and respects the roles of both the tutor and the learner. Lenz’s “client-consultant style” (*ibid*) where the tutor attempts to fulfil the expectations of the learner reflects the views of some of the participants in my sample who support the idea that a professional relationship should exist between learner and tutor. Whichever style is adopted, it is important that the andragogical experiences of the learner are maximised so as to ensure the best outcomes.

3.4. RISKS TO THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE AVES AND ITS SUPPORTING CURRICULUM

Curriculum change and sustainability were central to my analysis and emerged significantly in my findings. Virtually all of my research participants raised sustainability as a central concern in respect of the fledgling Adult and Vocational Education Service, with little credence given to the notion of change. Only 20% of the respondents referred to the concept of ‘change’ when it was not the basis of any given question. This could imply a few things:

- Firstly it may suggest that they did not, for the most part, see the introduction of the AVES as representing substantial change;
- Secondly, it might indicate that given the ongoing initiatives of the AID on Cascara, Cascarians do not identify projects such as the AVES as representing change but rather as a continuum of what they perceive to be the standard or the norm;
- Thirdly, it may suggest that Cascarians recognise the sustainability of any new or change interventions as being more important than the actual change process;
- Finally, the responses of the research participants may represent a combination of some or all of the above.

The Deputy Head for Curriculum at Cascara Community High School noted that the isolation of the island, coupled with the colonial legacy make the issue of sustainability key to any initiative on the island:

... so, as long as they [the AID] hold the purse strings, [Cascarians] are obliged to do whatever they dictate. Sometimes the ideas are well intentioned but most don't work because they are not clearly thought through ... not only do we have a shortage of skilled people on the island, but we also need money to keep projects going. It is pointless to receive money to start something and then have it collapse because you can't keep it going. ... [The AID] sometimes don't consider this [sustainability] when they make the annual budgets The time has really come for [the AID] to give back some of the decision making power to us [Cascarians].

These sentiments emphasise to the notion of sustainability, but also the issue of marginality. This accords with the views of hooks (2008; 2003; 1995: 341) when she argues that “marginality is a place of deprivation, possibility, resistance, new perspectives and the possibility of new worlds”. hooks’ argument is relevant to the Cascarian context because if the change is not sustainable, the island has little hope of moving out of the ‘margin’ to realise emancipation. If the sentiments of this stakeholder are representative of many other islanders then freedom from the colonial ruler might provide an opportunity for Cascarians to plan their own sustainable way forward. Another stakeholder concurred with these views when he stated: ‘sometimes I feel like we [the councillors] are under pressure to sign things off without having been involved in the build-up collaboratively’. These sentiments highlight the need for a shift in power because, as stated by Pfeffer (2003) the effective use of power, involves dialogue, collaboration and the inclusion of all stakeholders. A shift of decision-making power towards Cascarians will aid in relieving the dynamics that have resulted from the legacy of colonial rule.

My analysis in respect of risks to the sustainability of the AVES and its supporting curriculum will be discussed under the following sub-headings:

- Issues relating to Operational Sustainability
- Historical and Local Sustainability Issues
- Integrating Lifelong Learning

3.4.1. Issues relating to Operational Sustainability

If sustainability is going to be achieved on Cascara, stakeholders need to work together to ensure the sustainability of the AVES. The AID, the Cascara Government, the Cascara Education Department and the stakeholders of the AVES have already begun working towards making the AVES more sustainably viable. In the fragile context of Cascara, sustainability is not easily achieved. Therefore, to support the sustainability of the AVES and the learning that it offers – the limited financial, physical and human resources available to the Service need to be carefully utilised. This will require attending to the following key issues:

- Staffing of the AVES
- Funding available to the AVES
- The AVES Charging Policy

3.4.1.1. Staffing of the AVES

In order for the AVES to continue to function effectively and to provide relevant and appropriate learning opportunities it needs a strong management team to lead its Strategy. In addition to this, the AVES needs to have ‘at its disposal a bank of trained and readily available assessors, verifiers, tutors and instructors who are able to deliver the curriculum’.

The key need under the AVES has been its capacity to create the physical and staffing structure for the Service and the broad network of relationships with partners, trainers, service providers and awarding bodies. The Executive Human Resources Officer (EHRO) noted that:

... positive relationships that develop between the AVES staff and other valuable stakeholders will contribute to the success of the Service. ... Another key issue

for [the] AVES is the securing of qualified and experienced [full time] staff who can implement the Strategy and take it forward. ... They also need to source [part time] people [tutors, instructors, assessors, verifiers, training providers, etc.] to deliver the curriculum.

Numerous participants indicated that the AVES had developed good relationships with key stakeholders in recent months. There is also a need for strong and competent staff to drive the strategy forward.

One theme that emerged repeatedly from the data was that of the low wages paid to Cascarian civil servants. The average salary range is far below that which is on offer in the metropole and many Cascarians leave the island to earn salaries, often four or five times, more than they would on the island. The outward migration is ongoing and the uncertainty around the construction of the airport had accelerated the process of this migration. Many island activities such as the roll out of an appropriate and relevant adult and vocational curriculum are not going to be sustainable without human resource to drive the process forward, or without people to train. The data in this respect, supports the contention of Foley (2001) in so much as seeing human resource as central to the actual sustainable implementation of any intervention.

The need for well trained and professional staff does not end with AVES Management. There is also a need to ensure that the available pool of assessors, verifiers, tutors and instructors is also sustainable. This is particularly relevant in respect of those areas (such as NVQ provision) which are dependent on accreditation processes through awarding bodies in the metropole. Given the fragility of the NVQ system under the AVES there is an ongoing need for a local dedicated NVQ and Quality Assurance Co-ordinator. Participants indicated that plans are currently underway to train a local counterpart who has already been identified. There is a need to increase the local pool of NVQ assessors and verifiers. Most of the assessors and verifiers hold fulltime jobs and the added responsibility of assessing and verifying places pressure on employees who are already stretched in their usual places of work.

All of the participants who formed part of the Awarding Body cohort of my purposive sample indicated that action plans had been developed with the AVES to ensure that the pool of assessors and verifiers was increased over time. The NVQ system should become less fragile once fulltime assessors and verifiers are appointed within the Education Department.

It was suggested that the market place for the recruitment of such tutors may be: retired teachers; reallocated Department of Education Staff; Public Sector employees desiring additional income; and Private Sector employees looking for additional work. It was further suggested that the AVES should use these tutors on a contractual basis, as appropriate, whenever the need arose. The AVES AID Development Aid Project, has, in its implementation, supported this notion by aiming to develop the bank of part time instructors available to the AVES. There is a need for the increased participation of local tutors but the credible sustainability of the Service is dependent on individual tutors and instructors who, as the AID Education Adviser suggested, 'have the competence, not only in relation to the discipline that they will teach, but also in relation to teaching techniques and more specifically in understanding how and why adults learn'.

The Executive Education Officer (EEO) noted that AVES staff were 'stretched' and that the current management structure of the AVES needed to be extended to reduce the ratio between staff compliment, duties and responsibilities. In doing my fieldwork and my job, I noticed that the responsibilities of the AVES management team were largely operational, with strategic decision-making lying with the EEO and the Education Committee. At least three research participants all suggested the establishment of a new co-ordinator position under the AVES that would focus primarily on work placements and technical and trades training. When I probed this matter further during the focus group interview with AVES Co-ordinators, they all told of the increasing demands placed upon them and explained how their scope of work had grown beyond that of their job descriptions. The data also showed the need for additional administrative support within the AVES. The Executive Human Resources Officer explained how the human resource shortage on the island required employees to multi-task and to take on additional responsibilities created by the shortage. The Cascara Government was working on a revised Pay and Grading system for all

government employees at the time I conducted my research and that this would be linked to the appraisal process which was also under review.

In respect of the difficulties associated with staffing, the Education Decision-Makers research cohort all advocated for the expansion of e-learning (distance and video conferencing) opportunities on the island as these would aid in alleviating some of the problems associated with staffing. The shortage of tutors and instructors in all areas of the AVES curriculum demonstrated the need for ensuring a pool of qualified instructors

Finally, the Head of Departments participant cohort both alluded to the need for the AVES management to initiate a procedure for continual staff development as this should result in improved learning delivery. Staff with improved administrative and time management skills and staff who are motivated to effectively meet the demands of their profession will be an asset to the sustainable delivery of learning under the AVES. To support this view, the Chair of the Education Committee also stated that:

As far as possible, the continuing dependence on overseas expertise for appointments to key posts in government needs to be averted as without developing and promoting local capacity, the situation within the Service will remain fragile and we will continue to be dependent on overseas staff.

Staff training and development has budgetary implications that cannot always be borne by the Education Department.

3.4.1.2. Funding available to the AVES

The AVES Strategy is critical to the economic and social development of Cascara Island. My analysis elicited interesting responses in respect of both the annual recurrent and development aid funding streams received by the AVES from the AID.

With or without an airport, the government has a responsibility to attend to the training and developmental needs of the island and its people. The AID

Education Adviser noted that the funding made available to the AVES; both through the annual recurrent budget and the AVES AID Development Aid Project are the 'driving resources behind the delivery of adult and vocational learning on [Cascara] Island'. Concerns were raised by participants about future funding and the sustainability of project initiatives. What is important is that dependency on the metropole is ultimately reduced by the AID supplying sufficient substitutable resources. Fullan (2005) and Mintzberg (1982) both highlight the need for substitutable resources to be readily available so as to ensure the sustainability of an initiative. It emerged that it was difficult for the AVES Management to plan longer-term initiatives when funding was uncertain – this uncertainty impacts negatively on the sustainable development of the AVES.

Four of the AVES Client respondents noted that the current funding arrangements suited them, because as one learner stated: 'some of the [Development Aid] project courses are free'. The AVES Co-ordinators confirmed that training initiatives delivered under the AVES AID Development Aid Project are offered at no charge to AVES learners as the funding originates from outside of the annual recurrent budget. During my tenure as AVES Manager I proposed, and subsequently gained approval from the Education Committee, for this also to apply to private sector stakeholders.

The Education Decision-Maker research cohort all reinforced that the funding made available to the AVES has aided the Service in making, what one participant termed, a 'promising start'. A high proportion of investment has been assigned to infrastructure development within the Service and this is largely seen as wise by stakeholders who see the benefits of distance learning through the use of information technology, well equipped training venues and well resourced learning environments.

Although due acknowledgement should be given to the positive developments within the Service; the reality is that future provision of adult and vocational learning on Cascara Island is dependent on funding. Both the annual recurrent training activities and those implemented under the AID Development Aid Project rely on the funding that ultimately originates with the AID. The activities introduced under the AVES AID Development Aid Project appear to be

sustainably vulnerable as the project has a life of four and half years and there is currently no commitment from the AID to bolster the recurrent budget so as to ensure the continued delivery of these learning opportunities.

The data also elicited some interesting suggestions in relation to how the funding could be best utilised: Firstly, the system of NVQs on offer could be stabilised and consolidated by concentrating efforts on sectors where there is immediate potential and where few alternative vocational paths exist. The biggest challenge in this regard is that of increasing the pool of local assessors. The data also highlighted the need for more integration of island-wide resources to concretise the AVES as a centralised training Service. Integrating learning provision has the potential of maximising human and financial resources. One participant suggested that in order to get the most out of the allocated funding, all departments and private sector companies needed to 'buy into' the notion of a training Service through which all of the island's training needs were centrally co-ordinated.

Alongside the efficient use of financial resources, there is also the issue of the target learning community which is decreasing year by year. The data showed that it is forecasted that that the cohort of 16-year olds will reduce from 60 to 30 over the next five years. This decline is projected to impinge on all age groups, with the overall result being a reduced clientele for the AVES. Therefore with sustained funding the AVES will need to aim at engaging all Cascardians who are still on the island. This may even provide the scope for the promotion of learning that is not entirely work-focused, essentially learning for personal enjoyment.

Therefore, in respect of the sustainability of learning provision in relation to funding, as was succinctly noted by the AID Education Adviser, 'thought needs to be given to the balance of responsibility in meeting any training costs between the public purse, the individual and the employer'. This will need to be considered in relation to the extent of any offsetting savings that might be achieved through a more aligned training Service.

3.4.1.3. The AVES Charging Policy

The data drew attention to the fact that the private sector is particularly aggrieved by the AVES (fee) Charging Policy and feel that the curriculum on offer should be equally accessible to the public and private sectors. The current policy provides for training at no cost to public sector employees as the AVES is a section of the government's Education Department. Public sector employers and employees are charged a percentage of the full cost of the course for participation in AVES learning opportunities. The Chair of the Cascara Chamber of Commerce, in speaking for the private sector, was clear in stating:

We have received feedback from our members that the fees to be charged to the private sector, even after the recently announced discounts are applied, are much too high. The level of fees proposed are, quite frankly, just not affordable for private business and will mean that there will be little or no take up, with the exception of possibly government departments. This is a serious situation, given that the stated policies of both the [Cascara] Government and [the AID] are to support private sector development on the Island, and rebalance the economy away from the public sector.

The AVES Charging Policy has created a perception within the private sector that the Cascarian Government is unwilling to support their development. This is a perception which is not helpful to the fledgling Service. One of the local trainers (who also owns a retail outlet) suggested that the charging policy is a barrier to private sector employees accessing the learning opportunities that the AVES curriculum offers.

By increasing the participation of learners in AVES courses and by making participation more accessible, the economy of the island stands to benefit. Keynes (1930) noted that some degree of government intervention is always needed to control the success of economic activity. In this instance, the data suggests that the Cascarian Government needs to revisit the charging policy of the AVES so that ultimately, the economy of the island will benefit.

It emerged that the resentment amongst the private sector about AVES fees often impacts on their participation in courses on offer. On the issue of fees, the

Executive Education Officer suggested that the AVES Charging Policy should be reviewed because the ‘monies collected were not substantial at all’. He further commented that the AVES might be classified as a ‘training charity’.

3.4.2. Historical and Local Sustainability Issues

The context of Cascara is an interesting and complex one. Sustainable interventions can be challenging enough in mainland contexts. Isolated and insular contexts such as Cascara are faced with many other issues that impact on sustainability. While the notion of ‘sustainability’ in respect of the AVES Curriculum on Cascara might be seen by stakeholders as “maintaining and improving standards” (Herremans & Reid, 2002: 17), it also needs to consider (as became evident in my study) “other basic needs and high level social and cultural necessities” (Brown *et al.*, 1987: 716). The potential change facing Cascara is immense and this change has the possibility of permeating, amongst other things, the values and culture of the island.

My analysis in respect of historical and local sustainability issues is presented in four sections:

- The effect of local leadership
- The legacy of colonialism
- The impact of financial dependency
- The influence of geographic isolation and insularity

3.4.2.1. The Effect of Local Leadership

The colonial trajectory that is the island’s history still appears to influence power and leadership relations: who makes the decisions; how the decisions are made; and why the decisions are made. While the effect of power and leadership is not only restricted to the public sector, this analysis points primarily to these issues in this sector.

The first theme that emerged in respect of power and leadership related to the AID and the control that they have over the island. It transpired that some viewed

the island as a possession of the metropole; with one participant suggesting that it was disappointing for Cascara that counties within the mainland borders of the metropole had more autonomy in decision-making than overseas territories like Cascara. This sentiment was also communicated through one of my AVES Client questionnaire returns when the respondent wrote ‘[the AID] has far too much control and this is a barrier’. One of the AVES Tutors told me that:

... they [the AID] send consultants here who have never even heard of [Cascara]. They think they are coming here to tame the natives [*sic*] and when they get here they get a fright to not see us swinging in the trees down at the Mule Yard³⁵.

These colonial tensions that exist between the ‘coloniser’ and the ‘colonised’ demonstrate the need for control to be steadily handed over to the people of Cascara.

The leadership and power of the AID is further amplified by the appointment of local government leadership: a Governor, a Chief Administrator and numerous other expatriate staff are all appointed on contracts from the metropole. The focus group interview with the AVES Tutors, Assessors and Verifiers revealed the unhappiness that exists with many islanders in respect of the appointment of a Governor and Chief Administrator who had limited experience of the island. One participant stated the following:

I have never been able to work out if the role of the Governor is to represent the government of the [metropole] to the people of [Cascara], or whether it is to represent the people of [Cascara] to the [metropole]. I think I know what it should be, but I don’t think it is that.

These sentiments find synergy with the argument of Cope & Kalantzis (1997) in respect of the need to preserve and respect the cultural and economic capital of a people.

Ten of the thirteen Head of Department positions are occupied by Cascarians. This might indicate that the AID have started to relinquish some of their power by

³⁵ The Mule Yard is alongside the moat at the seafront in the capital of Cascara. It was historically a place where mules were left while islanders conducted their business in town. It is now a recreational area with lawn, play equipment and takeout food stands.

appointing local people to these high level positions. It may, however, also suggest that the AID are seeking cost saving options by paying local people less than they would an expatriate employee. Of concern was that six of the AVES Client respondents made reference to the manipulation of power by their Heads of Department and other line managers. Some of the unedited comments received included the following:

- Sometimes they [Heads of Department] fear us young ones taking their jobs;
- Some people do not want to teach or train others in the job;
- Government Officers don't always release staff for courses;
- By not taking AVES seriously managers do not monitor staff who participated in courses; and
- Senior staff does not like senior members of staff to be more educated than them.

Some of these comments imply concern in respect of the power dynamics that exist within certain departments. It seems that many senior officials replicate the same behaviour that they themselves detest. What is of concern is that culture is a learned process of norms and expectations and it is an important factor to deliberate in the changing and improving of educational provision. Sergiovanni (2006) suggested that the core values of an organisation's culture determine what is and what is not deemed as acceptable behaviour. In the Cascarian context, views in respect of acceptable behaviour are seen differently by managers and the managed. This finds synergy with the dynamics that exist between the coloniser and the colonised. One AVES Co-ordinator noted that the 'power dynamics seem to exist in the work place but minions are not brave enough to speak up'.

My analysis revealed that power relationships and dynamics also exist across sectors with stakeholder at equal levels in government. It became evident that power dynamics exist between the Executive Education Officer (EEO) and the Education Committee. The EEO described how the newly elected Education Committee seemed to want to exercise their political decision-making authority beyond the parameters of what has previously existed in the Education Department. The following comment made by the EEO demonstrates this claim:

The Education Committee has traditionally been responsible for ensuring that the provision of education stays within the laws of the island ... while the previous committee were not as dynamic as the new committee, they understood that [decisions relating to] curricular content was not part of their remit. The new committee seem eager to please the rest of council without fully understanding how we function and what our budget restrictions are. ... Getting the balance right is something that we will need to work at.

Power struggles such as these are not unique to Cascara but they are amplified given the morphological, economic, biological and cultural insularities (Biagini & Hoyle, 1996) of this isolated island. However, what is important to note, is that individual autonomy can only be achieved through interface with others. Through this interaction, Smith (1999: 134) argues that people “help each other understand the ways in which power is taken away from us and exercised over us”. In the small island context of Cascara, people have worked out how to continue to work together even though the power struggles continue.

3.4.2.2. The Legacy of Colonialism

The majority of the Cascarian workforce is employed by the government and the island has historically been controlled by the government of the metropole through the AID and its associated funding.

There seems to be trend towards moving away from dependency on the metropole but one of the local trainers stated that: ‘dependency on *big daddy* has been ingrained in the older workers and there is a danger of it permeating through to the lower ranks’. Concerns like these are not isolated, with another participant describing her fellow islanders as not being driven to aspire to greater things, this she stated was an ‘instilled trait’ which has been ‘inherited through the years of colonial rule’. This notion supports Foucault’s (1979; 2006) argument that the combination of colonialism and dependency perpetuates white supremacy and “prepares docile bodies”. It is obvious through the achievements of many Cascarians that they are an able people, but the challenge seems to be in mobilising more Cascarians to develop and exploit their talents and abilities. Giroux (2010; 1992: 98 - 99) alludes to this and states that the coloniser and the

colonised need to aspire to a “critical pedagogy” and in so doing, they need to think seriously about knowledge and should pay particular attention to the relationships that exist “between self, others, and the larger world”.

The Director of the Cascara Development Bureau cited ‘colonial mentality’ as one of the major barriers to the development of the private sector on the island. She advocated that in general terms, Cascarians are ‘not forceful or ambitious enough to become successful entrepreneurs’. These are harsh words but they support Freire’s (2001: 150) view that the product of “colonial education is in effect a cultural invasion that silences the colonised”. Contrary to this view, the Chair of the Cascara Chamber of Commerce (CCC) stated that his experience of the private sector was that of a ‘dynamic group of entrepreneurs’ who had devised and implemented business development action plans that included the training and development of their staff. However, when probed, the Chair of the CCC was unable to provide me with specific examples of independent training being undertaken by any of the small private sector companies.

The AVES has an important role to play in providing ‘developmental’ or emancipatory learning opportunities. These opportunities might include the prospect of developing entrepreneurial skills and spirits; extending understanding of human rights and employment related issues; and providing training in soft skill areas such as assertiveness and conflict management. This would demonstrate a move towards curriculum as praxis.

In reflecting on training and development that might address colonial influences, some participants spoke of a ‘dependency syndrome’ that is also evident in the fact that most people expect training needs to be delivered to them and do not really have, as the AVES IT Co-ordinator put it: ‘self-inspired career aspirations’. This attitude may be attributed to the fact that for most people, the public sector is the employer of choice – although civil servants are not paid too generously, they will receive a pension on retirement and they will qualify for all state benefits.

It was interesting to note that only one of the AVES Client respondents identified colonialism as having any impact on the AVES Curriculum or on their current

state of learning. The lack of acknowledgment of AVES clients to the impact of colonialism on the AVES Curriculum might indicate that Cascarians are less concerned with the colonial trajectory of the island and more focussed on the opportunities that the present and future might bring; it might also show that Cascarians see the new AVES Curriculum as a shift away from colonial dictates and attitudes; and finally it may suggest that many working class Cascarians have come to accept their colonial relationship with the metropole.

3.4.2.3. The Impact of Financial Dependency

The AID AVES Consultant's report of May 2009, showed that the economy on Cascara is heavily dependent on aid from the metropole, which represents some 75% of total Gross National Product (GNP). This total includes remittances from overseas, and an even higher percentage still of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The public sector accounts for two thirds of income and employs in excess of 70% of the working age population. The exact percentage of this depends on whether the established public sector is considered to include Wisedoms, the largest 'private sector' employer with a range of interests, but with nearly two thirds government ownership. As already noted in this thesis, the colonial trajectory of the island, coupled with the island's financial dependency presents many unique challenges. The issues associated with financial dependency are one of these unique challenges.

The Director of the Cascara Development Bureau noted that financial dependency brings into question the Cascara Government's policy of outsourcing its non-core functions. This she mentioned is a 'vital function' that will stimulate the private sector and 'focus the government on its core financial and legal functions'. She further indicated that to reduce dependency on government, the 'right price' would need to be paid to the successful contractor for the outsourcing of these non-core functions. The Chair of the Cascara Chamber of Commerce proposed that that the private sector has not really existed by 'any great measure' since the collapse of the flax industry in the 1960s. Since that time, the island has had no noteworthy export industry and has increased the need for financial aid from the metropole over time. Information obtained from the statistics' office show that the total earnings of the island in

2009 amounted to only ±US\$165,000. Remittances from Cascarians living and working abroad amounted to between US\$1.6m and US\$3.3m per year since 2001. Table 17³⁶ summarises these figures.

Year	Total GNP (US\$m)	Total GDP (US\$m)	Resident Population	The AID (US\$m)	Remittance Income (US\$m)
2007-08	13.55	11.52	4134	10.49	1.69
2006-07	12.89	9.27	4030	7.43	3.35
2005-06	10.40	8.41	4072	8.30	1.73
2004-05	11.36	9.05	4185	8.11	1.95
2003-04	11.46	8.33	4140	7.35	2.33
2002-03	12.32	7.73	4357	6.32	2.89
2001-02	7.95	6.76	4490	6.89	2.15
2000-01	7.07	7.83	4427	6.68	1.68
% Change 2000 - 2008	92%	68%	-6.60%	57%	1%

Table 17: GNP, GDP and Main Sources of income – 2001 to 2008

The Executive Development Officer explained that only in recent years has the private sector started to expand and provide an alternative to public sector employment. This may also be attributed to the government's adoption of an Outsourcing Policy which aims to decentralise some services traditionally provided by government with the aim of developing the private sector. Whilst the intentions to implement this policy might be good, one AVES Client respondent told of how the 'outsourcing scheme was doomed before it began because we [the private sector] cannot provide the service for what government thinks it will cost'. On this topic, the Chair of the Chamber of Commerce maintained that:

... if the private sector is going to be grown and the control shifted away from central government, than the full costs of services will need to be calculated to make the outsourcing viable to private sector businesses. ... What government seems to forget is that we [the private sector] do not qualify for benefits like pension and the new tax laws are making it impossible for small businesses to break even.

³⁶ Sourced from the Cascara DEPD Statistical Year Book 2007 - various tables; and the Cascara Social Policy Plan 2009/10-2014/15: Situational Report May 2009.

The Director of the Cascara Development Bureau stated that concerns such as these call for a review of the government's outsourcing procedures because this will be the first step towards 'autonomy' or emancipation.

As it strives to move the people of Cascara away from dependency and its financial control, the AID needs to keep its vision in mind:

A prosperous, peaceful and democratic society for all achieved through sustainable economic, environmental, and social development leading to a healthy and eventually financially independent [Cascara] (Cascara Sustainable Development Plan, 2007: 6).

3.4.2.4. The Influence of Geographic Isolation and Insularity

For reasons particularly of demography and geography, the positioning of Cascara is challenging. Cascara Island is at least a five day journey from the nearest landmass, from where it derives most of its supplies.

Reviewing government statistical records, I discovered that the resident population of Cascara stood at 9000 at its peak during the last century, but has dropped to below 4000 in the last ten years.

The population is becoming elderly and live births in 2008 were down to 30, from 60 in 1998. There are eight hundred youth under the age of 14, with there being 289 young people between the ages of fifteen and nineteen. Young adult cohorts on the island are even smaller with 155 people aged between 20 and 24; 162 people aged between 25 and 29; and 185 people aged between 30 and 34. This tallies to only 502 people between the ages of 20 and 34. The working age population has dropped from 2858 to 2224 since 1998, and is now at less than 57% of the population. The proportion of the population over 60 years of age has increased from 15.5% to 26%. Table 18 summarises these figures:

Age Group	1998			2008		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
0 - 4	172	140	312 (6.4%)	84	82	166 (4.2%)
Compulsory School Age (5 -16)	511	462	973 (19.8%)	301	255	556 (14.0%)
Working Age (17 - 59) ³⁷	1510	1466	2858 (58.3%)	1150	1138	2224 (56.8%)
Retirement Age (60+)	344	416	760 (15.5%)	523	511	1034 (26.0%)
Not Stated	4	6	10	1	0	1
Total	2481	2432	4913 (100%)	2022	1959	3981 (100%)

Table 18: Age of Cascarian Citizens – 1998 and 2008

This picture of depopulation and falling birth rate and their combined impact came up repeatedly in my interviews. Statistics show that many Cascarians have left the island, mainly for the metropole. These Cascarians do not visit often because they cannot afford to travel back and forth to the island and the travelling time takes far too long. The Executive Development Officer (EDO) indicated that many did, however, want to return to Cascara to retire, and in the meantime they 'keep a toehold on the Island' by maintaining property. The EDO further suggested that there are 500 empty properties on the island out of a stock of about 2000. These statistics support the views of Cross & Nutley (1999: 317) who purport that insularity often "implies dependence on the mainland" and the need for people to travel to the mainland to support themselves and their families. This dependence is usually of an economic nature. To support this view, the Executive Human Resources Officer further affirmed that the insularity of the island meant a 'weak economy, poorly paid jobs and the necessity for many [Cascarians] to go abroad'.

These factors pertaining to isolation and insularity have a direct impact on the sustainability of Cascara as a working and functioning island because without human resource, civic activities cannot take place. The AVES, the services that the AVES provides and engagement with the AVES are examples of civic duties that depend on the participation of citizens. The AVES Co-ordinators also remarked that the insularity of the island also makes it difficult to bring in trainers,

³⁷ School leaving age was raised from 15 to 16 in September 2008, after the 2008 census.

consultants and advisers, and the time for skilled people to travel to and from the island can make the process very costly.

An additional concern that arose through my data with regards to isolation and insularity is that of the distance and the time that it takes for resources to reach the island. The AVES Co-ordinators and Tutors, Assessors and Verifiers cohort expressed that forward planning in terms of purchasing resources like stationery and equipment was imperative. Although these stakeholders demonstrated that they understood the dynamics associated with the need for purchasing learning support materials in advance, they stated that problems arose when timescales were dependent on outside stakeholders. People based in the metropole, who did not always appreciate the difficulties associated with the isolation and insularity of the island were usually suppliers of materials and equipment. One example mentioned was that of the late arrival of examination scripts. This is a regular occurrence on Cascara because the postal system is dependent on the arrival of the ship. To overcome this difficulty, Cascara could move towards making arrangements with awarding and examination bodies overseas to allow for these to be emailed in a secure manner.

Insularity and isolation are important in respect of the sustainable delivery of an appropriate adult and vocational education curriculum on Cascara Island. Sustainable provision is further influenced by matters relating to colonialism and control.

3.4.3. Integrating Lifelong Learning on Cascara Island

Sustainability can be secured by the integration of a successful Lifelong Learning Strategy. This is, however, dependent on the effective use, centralisation and sharing of resources – human, financial and physical – in an integrated and meaningful way. The current demographics means that there is a shortage of human resource to fill positions. Both the Deputy Head for Curriculum at Cascara Community High School (CCHS) and the Chair of the Education Committee spoke of the movement of staff out of the formal teaching sector into the AVES. The Executive Education Officer confirmed that since the establishment of the AVES, four teachers had left the schooling sector to work for the AVES. One of

these has subsequently resigned from the AVES to take up employment in the metropole. The loss of teachers to the AVES from the formal schooling sector is not helpful to the Education Department on the whole, and the effects on students who might not have received the best possible tuition may have bearing on the AVES at a later stage. During their focus group interview, the Tutors, Assessors and Verifiers cohort proposed that it would be more beneficial if AVES Co-ordinators were based at the CCHS where they could carry out their co-ordination and management roles but also contribute towards the school teaching timetable.

The idea for the need of the sharing of resources is not limited to staffing, but also extends to physical and financial resources. The CCHS has a well equipped Technical Centre, much of which has been financed by the AVES AID Development Aid Project. The CCHS have two computer suites which are not used in the evenings or over weekends. Likewise, the AVES has a computer suite which is under-utilised and the Deputy Head for Curriculum expressed frustration over the shortage of computer access during the teaching day. The Executive Education Officer also identified the need to share resources and explained that the CCHS was built for 600 students but due to the declining population currently had a roll of about only 250. This would therefore suggest that empty venues must exist and it would be worth exploring the possibilities and benefits associated with the merging of the two centres: the AVES and the CCHS. The need for partnership working was also noted by Lincoln (2007: 7) as being “paramount to overcoming organisational constraints as well as promoting and delivering fledgling services not yet fully resourced either financially, materially or in staffing” (*ibid*). Combining resources has the potential to ensure that more learners benefit from the AVES curriculum. Partnership arrangements will benefit the public sector, the private sector, individual learners and the island in general. The need for partnership working, resulting in a co-ordinated approach to training delivery was also identified by Willerup (2006) who suggests that skills development is maximised when resources are used effectively.

The AVES, despite initial resistance from some government sectors, has begun the process of working towards the concept of an integrated Lifelong Learning Strategy. My data indicated that not all intended activities have operated or

remained under the remit of the AVES. In some instances other government departments have not been willing to buy into the idea of the newly formed training Service, while in other instances this has been intentional – albeit not entirely in the best interests of the fledgling Service. For example, the AVES Community Learning Co-ordinator explained that A-level courses taught at Cascara Community High School (CCHS) fall outside of the responsibility of the AVES, and access for AVES learners to these courses is subject to the approval of the head teacher of the school. Another instance of this is demonstrated in the example provided by the Executive Human Resources Officer. She explained that each year her department selected a few candidates to attend work-related training or higher education in the metropole. The AVES IT Co-ordinator also told of distance courses in Accounting that are still managed by the Fiscal Department. These examples highlight the problems that relate to a central training umbrella that is not, in practice – exactly that: a central point on the island for the co-ordination and delivery of all adult and vocational learning and training.

Many research participants identified that the AVES could become a stronger Service if there was agreement to integrate additional aspects of the scope of activities covered by the AVES and other sectors – particularly in the Education Department.

One of the many suggestions made by my research participants included the centralising of the Youth Training and Work-Placement Schemes under the AVES. Currently, these schemes, or different aspects of them are co-ordinated by the Human Resources Department, the Employment and Social Security Department and the AVES. This often makes co-ordinating and managing them very difficult as there are no clear policies that define where the responsibilities of the different stakeholders start and end. Both the NVQ and Quality Assurance Co-ordinator and Deputy Head for Curriculum at CCHS described the introduction of local traineeships or apprenticeships as an interim alternative that would give the AVES time to train local assessors and verifiers, while at the same time not disadvantaging young people who wish to move from the formal schooling sector to learning a work-based trade. While this compromise, contradicts the Deputy Head's advocacy for internationally accredited

qualifications – it provides an interim alternative and the opportunity to develop local capacity.

Another suggestion emerged during my interview with the Executive Human Resources Officer about integrating the provision of bursaries. With the current arrangements, the awarding of scholarships does not fall under the remit of the AVES, but rather with a central Scholarships Committee that is controlled by the Human Resources Department. The AVES Co-ordinators, the Deputy Head for Curriculum at CCHS and the Chair of the Education Committee all questioned why most scholarships were issued to academic students who wished to study in the metropole. The EEO confirmed that to date, only two vocational students had received financial support for overseas studies: one in Hospitality and Catering and the other in Automotive Vehicle Maintenance. In addition to this, four AVES Clients made reference to their aspirations for overseas vocational studies. This further supports the argument for the need to centralise scholarship management on the island so as to ensure that equality of access is provided to learners with different training needs and requirements.

In addition to the need for a more synergised relationship between the AVES and the CCHS in the provision of a vocational curriculum, there is also a need for human resource development plans to run across all government departments and private sector businesses. The AID AVES Consultant suggested that the information collected by the Training Needs Analysis should be used to inform the training plans of the AVES and that these should be disseminated to government departments and businesses so that they might be used to assist with training plans within the different sectors. The Chair of the Cascara Chamber of Commerce (CCC) and one of the AVES Client respondents, both expressed the need for greater communication between sectors. The Chair of the CCC complained that the AVES did not consult with the private sector on an ongoing basis, while the AVES Client felt that he was not given the necessary support, advice and guidance from either the AVES or the CDB. These perceptions highlight the need for increased communication between all stakeholders if an integrated approach is going to successfully serve the needs of the people and economy of Cascara Island.

In addition, to the need for integration and cross-sectoral working, there is also the need to source expertise beyond the shores of Cascara. The human resource deficit on the island has made it necessary for the AVES to ‘buy-in’ skilled trainers from time-to-time.

3.5. CONCLUSION

My qualitative case study methodology provided a detailed account of the AVES, its stakeholders and the challenges associated with implementing and sustaining a relevant Adult and Vocational Curriculum in the isolated Cascarian context. In my analysis, I was able to continually probe participants and data sources, so as to direct and redirect the study in my efforts to gain information that would provide me with a rich understanding of how the stakeholders perceive the AVES, its curriculum and how it is aiming to sustain the island given the imminent change. In documenting my findings, I noted the views, perceptions and expectations of stakeholders in respect of the research questions I set out to explore. Grundy (2002: 61) argues that the greatest measurable in assessing the change process is in how it ultimately meets its “overarching framework”. The data uncovered current practices and illuminated some of the main issues and barriers, but it also provided suggestions for improvement and a clearer way forward. What became evident was that there is little literature that exists on curriculum change and its implementation on isolated and dependent islands and territories.

The data also showed that there was a distinct relationship between learning opportunities on offer and the perceived needs of the market. While literature exists on the link between education and training and the needs of the labour market; there was limited literature on this link in economies that were aid dependent and mostly public sector driven. In the unique Cascarian change context, it is evident that the AVES tries as far as is viably possible, to meet the skills gaps that existed in both the public and private sectors.

In preparing for educational change, Bush (2010: 111) reminds us that “above all, planning must consider the pre-implementation issues of whether and how to start, and what readiness conditions might be essential prior to the

commencement”. Acknowledging the good in current practice and including these in future innovations can only work to aid success .

Through this analysis, I learnt that change and sustainability on the isolated island of Cascara are very complex. Colonial attitudes and relationships interwoven with the dynamics of dependency and financial aid make for a very intricate and interesting landscape. The AVES on Cascara, in the context of a neo/post-colonial territory of the metropole faces numerous challenges: primarily these are around access to the island and the declining population which impact directly on the Service. The main concerns that arise out of these two challenges are the limited AVES client base; the cost of learning provision; and the unavailability of suitably experienced and qualified local tutors. What was encouraging is the fact that the AVES staff and other associated stakeholders have come up with creative solutions to develop the provision of learning under the Service.

My analysis of the relationships that exist between the AVES Curriculum, the Workforce, the Economy, Sustainability and Change on Cascara Island provided me with insight (in some cases unexpected) into the challenges of delivering a sustainable Adult and Vocational Education Curriculum on an isolated island.

What was encouraging for me was that stakeholders, who although for the most part despondent given the announcement of the airport ‘pause’ by the AID, still appeared invested in the AVES, its curriculum and the possibilities that they might present in respect of personal and economic growth. Their support and optimism backs up what Purkey & Smith (2003: 436) contend, in so much that stakeholder involvement in the implementation and support of change will ultimately determine the success of it. The passionate views of the various AVES stakeholders not only illuminated deeper sustainability concerns, but also their commitment to the AVES. My analysis is therefore further supported by the contention of Sarason (2004: 61) who notes that: “when a process makes people feel that they have a voice in matters that affect them, they will have a greater commitment to the overall enterprise and will take greater responsibility for what happens to the enterprise”.

My analysis suggests that the potential for the AVES to serve the people and economy of Cascara is vast. The establishment of the AVES and the implementation of its Strategy and Curriculum have begun the process that will support economic, social and cultural change. What is important now is that the AVES continue to evolve and respond to the ever changing needs of the island. Jansen (1990: 196) maintains that a curriculum is only as good as its context. This is therefore pivotal in determining the success of any curriculum change or reconstruction. Consequently, it is important that the context – geographical, demographical, social, cultural and economic – are carefully considered as this will determine how successful the curriculum is in meeting its intentions.

What is most significance is that we keep in mind the contentions of Pinar *et. al* (1998: 57), when he states – if we bracket “what is, what was, and what can be”, we become free of it and liberate ourselves to choose the present. Whilst a move away from colonial control and dependency is an exciting prospect, the data also flagged that the effective use of power – and an approach that will move Cascara away from current control regimes involves dialogue, collaboration and the inclusion of all stakeholders. Deal & Peterson (2009: 72) warn that this is not always a straightforward process, describing the process as a “dynamic social system of complex interrelationships and symbolic webs”. These concerns emanated through my data and while the frustrations of stakeholders were identified, it must be remembered that these ‘interrelationships and symbolic webs’ are all part of a larger change process that will present Cascarians with numerous learning, development and economic possibilities.

In contemplating these change dynamics, it is important to remember that sustainable change can only be achieved if there is synergy between the economic, social and environmental values in any given context (Herremas & Reid, 2002: 17). It is important to note that the data suggests that the AVES has begun to make good progress and that the training on offer has already begun to serve the needs of the local economy. It is important now for the AVES to continue to respond to the needs of individuals, business, government and the economy; at the same time working collaboratively with island stakeholders to ensure the long-term sustainability of the service.

This study investigated the challenges of implementing and sustaining an adult and vocational education curriculum on an isolated island. In endeavouring to uncover these challenges, this chapter has presented answers to the critical questions that I posed for the three aims I set out for my study:

- to examine the current state of curriculum implementation and its associated challenges within the Adult and Vocational Education Service;
- to investigate how the current curriculum is satisfying the needs of the island by aiding workforce development to support economic growth on the island; and
- to explore the challenges relating to the sustainability of the Adult and Vocational Education Service in providing a relevant vocational curriculum.

In the area of curriculum implementation the data provided answers to the questions in respect of: stakeholders and beneficiaries of the curriculum; the design and content features of the curriculum; the rationale for curriculum content and the operationalisation of the curriculum.

The critical questions posed in relation to the curriculum and the economy, probed the needs of island – particularly as the island prepares for air access and its related economic activity. My findings encompassed issues pertaining to stakeholders; skills important to the workforce at this time in the island’s history; the changing needs of the island; and how curriculum implementation could support economic growth

Curriculum learning sustainability under the AVES was one of the greatest concerns raised by my research participants. My data showed which stakeholders were responsible for the sustainability of the Service; what the difficulties of sustaining the AVES and its Curriculum are; why it is important that the AVES provides a relevant and sustainable curriculum; and how a relevant curriculum can be realistically sustained.

In the chapter that follows, I offer my recommendations to the AVES in respect of my research findings.