

Editorial

Regular readers of the journal will know that *SRJ* was launched in 2019, with the express aim of encouraging writings on research in and about Seychelles. This is now our sixth issue and, once again, it has been a delight to receive articles on a range of different topics. The vitality of research in this small island state is remarkable and bodes well for the further development of the nation in its transition to become a knowledge-based economy.

On this occasion, it is the subject of education which takes pride of place. For the first article, Jean-Michel Domingue, the former CEO of the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), provides an authoritative account of the development of tertiary education and its legislative framework. It is hard to think of anyone better placed to do this as, before his leading role with TEC, he was CEO of the Seychelles Qualifications Authority (SQA). Much has happened in the time that Domingue has been at the helm and, had it not been for the impact of the pandemic, by now we should have seen the introduction of a new Tertiary Education Act. In fact, as part of wider changes to the governance of education, TEC has now been dissolved in favour of reallocating responsibilities to the Ministry of Education and the SQA.

With the pandemic halting development of a new Act, another member of the TEC team, Emma Padayachi, undertook a study to assess the wider impact of Covid-19 on the tertiary education sector. Events were to have an immediate effect, with the overnight closure of institutions and then the introduction of measures to enable education to continue on a measured basis. Some subjects, especially those involving practical classes and places of work, proved more difficult to manage than others. For all aspects of learning, though, innovation was called for, the most prominent being the development of different means of digital learning. This is a global issue and Seychelles can collaborate with other countries to find a new way forward.

Third in the set of education articles is my own contribution, in which I look at universities in small island states in the Indian Ocean. I acknowledge that it is tempting to combine forces where possible, even to the extent of considering a federal structure like the University of the West Indies. The drawbacks, however, for that kind of arrangement seem to outweigh the possible benefits. Better, it is suggested, to look for new forms of collaboration and specialization to make best use of scarce resources. There is scope for Vice-Chancellors in the region to explore more fully what might be possible.

As well as education, law makes an appearance in the form of an interesting article by Dr Godknows Mudimu, a Legal Researcher in the Seychelles Judiciary. What, asks the author, is a correct form of sentencing? Veer too much in one direction and it can result in what is regarded as insufficient punishment, but go too far in another direction and it can seem little more than vengeance. Nor is it just a question of assessing what is appropriate, for no less important is achieving consistency. How does one ensure that what is done is fair, whoever

is presiding? One way is to introduce minimum sentencing, which takes away the discretion of a judge. That is all very well but not if it results in what is clearly an unfair sentence, which a discretionary approach might have corrected. As Dr Mudimu shows, this is a seemingly intractable problem, no nearer consensus now than in the past.

From the choppy waters of the courtroom, we look next at the ocean and another aspect of the Blue Economy. Angelique Pouponneau, a leading campaigner and executive in Seychelles, is well placed to write on the effects of the pandemic on the development of the Blue Economy in Seychelles. A trained lawyer with a specialism in environmental law, she is CEO of the influential body formed to manage funds for Blue Economy projects, received in exchange for international debt repayment. She has written a comprehensive article which not only explains the impact of the pandemic on the Seychelles economy but also points to possible solutions. Although the Blue Economy has the potential to make the national economy more resilient in the face of a global shock like that currently experienced, it is acknowledged that ocean-based projects are not yet sufficiently developed to do this.

One of the current problems for the country is that Seychelles is highly dependent on tourism, which has been hit badly by the drastic reduction in the number of overseas visitors. More research on the tourism industry is timely and this time there are two contrasting articles. In the first of these, Dr Hervé Atayi offers a theoretical exploration of the concept of authenticity in tourism. Visitors come to Seychelles with a pre-conceived notion of what to expect, portraying the venue in terms of an elusive version of paradise. Atayi uses a set of images to test reactions of tourists and local residents alike. It is not surprising that the two perspectives differ, with the latter only too aware that, for all its attractions, Seychelles is not paradise. In fact, neither perspective can claim that what they experience is authentic, although the concept persists in promotional material to market the islands as a tropical idyll.

In contrast with Atayi's article, Dr Benno Rothstein and Drenushe Nuhui get down to the 'nitty gritty' of energy costs to accommodate tourists in luxury venues. This is an important topic because it highlights the contradiction between tourists coming to Seychelles for an authentic experience close to nature, while consuming a disproportionate supply of energy. Riding everywhere in electric-powered buggies, enjoying the benefits of air conditioning for the entire time of their stay, and relying on a laundry service to meet expected 5-star standards, all represent a high price to pay for a country with limited energy resources of its own. The authors point to a need to improve this kind of infrastructure to meet environmental as well as luxury specifications.

Finally, the book review in this issue responds to Peter Rudge's recent publication, *Beyond the Blue Economy: Creative industries and sustainable development in small island developing states*. Seychelles is not alone in its vulnerability to a limited source of revenue, centred largely around tourism. The importance of Rudge's book is that it looks, as the title indicates, beyond the Blue Economy for ways to provide a more sustainable economic base. His particular

theme is that small island states could acknowledge the potential of the creative industries to diversify the economy – not so much by encouraging activities in a traditional sense but by exploring the scope of digitization. There are challenges in doing this, not least of all because of the limited presence of population clusters, where ideas and innovation can flourish. But that is no reason to shy away from the challenge. Change is needed and no-one would claim that it comes easy. The ideas in this book are too important to ignore. It follows from this that Peter Rudge has been invited to join the international panel of this journal; his contribution as a new member of the panel will be a welcome addition.

On a technical note, various authors have asked that their articles be given a digital object identifier (DOI). A procedure is now in place and details can be found on the *SRJ* website.

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