

Author: Terrance Jurawan (PhD)

Thesis: The Impact of the Municipal Corporation Act, 1990
on the Operations of Local Government in Trinidad

Abstract

This study examines the impact of the Municipal corporations Act, 1990 on the Local Government system in Trinidad. More specifically, this thesis evaluates the provisions of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1990 on the operations of Local Government from 1991-2000. In the undertaking the research the following methods of data collection were utilized:

1. A literature review on Local Government so as to demonstrate the benefits that can accrue to a country having a Local Government system.
2. In order to evaluate the extent of the reform, a review was undertaken on the policy paper informing the reform through the Municipal Corporations No. 21, 1990 and the Municipal Corporation Amendment Act No. 8, 1992.
3. An assessment of official document and policies so as to be informed of the political and administrative setting in the Municipal Corporations Act No. 21, 1990 had to be implemented.
4. Interviews with the selected Local Government politicians and officials who have been involved in the implementation of the Municipal Corporations Act. This aspect of the research facilitated the collection of data with respect to the assessment of the workings of the referred Act. Moreover, it provided reasons for the lackluster

performance of Local Government under this Act and recommendations both in the short and long term to address the present situation.

5. Administration of a questionnaire sampling eight-four (84) persons presently attached to the Municipal Corporations. The sample comprised administrators, Local Government politicians and technical officer. The survey provided information on what is actually occurring in the Local Government system as opposed to what was promised in the reform through the Municipal Corporations Act.
6. The perusal of reports from 1992-2005 on seminars, public and in-house consultations, various public meetings as well as the MORI poll on Local Government operations in Trinidad. This made available, information on the actual workings of the Act, the challenges faced by the citizens and the administrators and also provided sources for recommendations to remedy problems in the system.
7. From the data collected it was found that the referred Act did not have any major or significant efforts on the operations of the system. While the Act did ensure continuity of the system, this was not characterized by any major improvements.

The operations of the various bodies, especially at the Regional Corporations level, were plagued with problems similar to what had occurred under County Council system or the pre-1990 era. The evidence suggests that while these local bodies were given corporate status, their activities were not indicative of this commensurate status.

The thesis concludes by advancing recommendations for the short term improvement of Local Government under the referred Act and the ultimate reform of the entire system in Trinidad.

Finally, the thesis attempts to contribute to the body of knowledge of Local Government in the English speaking Caribbean. It is envisaged that countries embarking on Local Government reform could be better advised on the type of framework that is needed for legislative changes in Local Government.