

ABSTRACT

The Challenges Facing Committee Systems in Bicameral and Unicameral Parliaments in the Commonwealth Caribbean: A Comparison of Dominica and Trinidad and Tobago

Maukesh Basdeo

In democratic states the legislature has various functions. One of the key functions is to scrutinise the legislative proposals of the executive and keep an eye on government activities. The committee system is the central organ that allows legislators to concentrate in particular areas of activity. It is therefore the most significant legislative mechanism and is often referred to as “miniature legislatures” or “microcosms” of their parent bodies. This thesis examines parliaments in the Commonwealth Caribbean by using comparative institutional analysis of two republics in the region: Dominica and Trinidad and Tobago. Using the broader definition of legislatures in these two countries, the study will focus on the role of parliamentary committees in securing government accountability.

The thesis is made up of seven chapters. It starts with an introduction followed by Chapter Two which discusses the theoretical issues surrounding accountability and the research methods used in the study. Chapter Three will discuss the general academic literature on legislatures and its potential effects on the Executive. The empowering characteristics of the legislature identified in Chapter Three will serve later in Chapter Four as a background upon which to assess the literature on the organisational arrangements of committees and their relative strengths in securing executive accountability. Chapters Five and Six carefully examine the functions of parliament and parliamentary committees in Trinidad and Tobago and Dominica in holding the executive accountable with an academic structure supported with primary and secondary data. Chapter Seven makes a comparative review of the role of committees in the two countries and report the findings of the study based on the questionnaires and results drawn from previous chapters. An overall summary and concluding remarks are also presented in this final chapter.

Keywords: Legislatures; Parliament; Committees and Executive Accountability