

Abstract

Control and Public Enterprise in Trinidad and Tobago: The Case of the Public Transport Service Corporation

**Heather Dawn Clarke
(1997)**

In the late 1980s, against a background of declining economic fortunes, the government of Trinidad and Tobago embarked upon a process of public sector reform. The basic objectives of the reform initiative were to:

- (i) reduce the dependence of select state enterprises on public funds. In fact, these enterprises were mandated to generate a surplus.
- (ii) improve the efficiency of these enterprises i.e. to reduce costs.

In this type of scenario, the thesis examined the reform process in the case of the Public Transport Service Corporation. It argues that the reforming of the enterprise would necessitate the entire re-orientation of the organisation. The social welfare aspect built into its operations would have to be de-emphasised. The organisation would have to operate more like a business, that is driven by profits.

The thesis contends that the government's attempts to reform the PTSC were largely unsuccessful. It postulates that the major reason for the lack of success revolves around the fact that power was not truly delegated to management. The management was not fully in control of the change programmes.

An analysis of the management process in the organisation reveals that it was strongly influenced by the issue of state patronage. The thesis illustrates the fact that certain critical aspects of the reform process at the organisation were not implemented, because they posed a threat to the state power base. The workers understood their own political power and so vigorously opposed any reform which may have resulted in their loss of personal benefits.

The evidence suggests that the issue of state patronage is a very serious one and must first be dealt with if the reforming of state enterprises is to enjoy any measure of success. This is true of a number of other countries where reform was attempted and it is also true of Trinidad and Tobago in the case of the Public Transport Service Corporation.

Keywords: Heather Dawn Clarke; Control and Public Enterprise; Public Sector Reform; Management Control; State Patronage; Political Control.