

ABSTRACT

The 1992-1996 Public Service Reform Policy Agenda in Trinidad and Tobago: A
Case Study of the Ministry of Education

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The aim of this thesis is to examine and evaluate the efforts undertaken in reforming the Ministry of Education in the context of the wider public service reform policy agenda during the period 1992-1996. The thesis focuses on attempts at reform during this period. The thesis argues that the reform intervention was systemic in scope and systematic in nature. It further argues that while a few articles and reports on reform of the public service and of the Ministry of Education exist, an in-depth study and analysis of this holistic approach to the reform was never attempted.

The thesis will therefore be the first of its kind within the Caribbean. It suggests that while there have always been on-going attempts to reform systems, structures and processes in the public service since the 1950s onwards, these were piecemeal in nature and often confined to specific areas or departments. However, this piecemeal approach to public service reform changed during the 1992-1996 period.

Apart from internal factors, reform was also influenced by external forces. In the late 1980s conditionality imposed upon the government of Trinidad and Tobago

by International Lending Agencies demanded a comprehensive overhaul of the public service. The decade of the 1980s also witnessed the emergence of the New Public Management in many developed Commonwealth countries. This initiative moved beyond the shores of these countries influencing developing nations as well. Trinidad and Tobago was no exception.

With the impetus for comprehensive reform of the public service from within as well as from outside, it was therefore not unusual for the Ministry of Education (and by extension the school system) to be included in this wider reform initiative, an experience from which it benefited immensely and from which much success was realised despite numerous challenges encountered.

Keywords: Nan Gosine-Ramgoolam; public service; reform; education.