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Agencification as a Strategy for Implementing Public Policy in Trinidad and Tobago

Sandra Juanita Wall Agarrat
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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Sandra Agarrat

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Walden University
2015

Abstract

Agencification as a Strategy for Implementing Public Policy in Trinidad and Tobago

by

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MSc, University of the West Indies, 2006

BA, University of the West Indies, 1981

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

June 2015

Abstract

Trinidad and Tobago is one of 15 small developing states that comprise the regional integration grouping known as the Caribbean Community. Several agencies were recently created outside of the government using a strategy known as *agencification* to support the implementation of public policy in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. However, there is little available information explaining the rationale for the choice of the strategy, no evidence-based scholarly evaluation found on the effectiveness of these types of agencies, and therefore limited information on whether this strategy results in effective public policy. The purpose of this case study was to gain an in-depth understanding of these semi-autonomous agencies in the implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago as part of the Caribbean Community. The central research question sought to explore the successes, failures, and experiences with executive agencies created through agencification. Principal-agent theory provided the theoretical framework for this qualitative case study. Using a purposive sampling strategy, data were acquired through interviews with 10 individuals representing public servants, agency officials, and academics and a review of public documents. The data were inductively coded and then organized across themes. The findings indicated that while the agencification strategy is being utilized with varying levels of success, several barriers and constraints hamper successful policy implementation. Positive social change implications of this study include direct recommendations for greater autonomy for the directorate of all agencies in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. These recommendations would serve to facilitate the implementation of the policies that they were created to support.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to my amazing partner in life, Franklin, who steadfastly journeyed with me through the ups and downs of the process—never ceasing to be a constant source of strength and encouragement. It is dedicated as well to our four children—Ana, Adrian, Adam, and Amanda to demonstrate that persistence and perseverance often brings rewards. And last, but by no means least, it is dedicated to the memory of my adoptive parents Errold and Rosalie who never had the opportunity to pursue tertiary education, but without whom this achievement would never have been possible.

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I would also like to thank all my family, friends, and well wishers. This project would not have come to fruition without their prayers, encouragement, and support.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Background

Trinidad and Tobago is one of 15 small developing states that comprise the regional integration grouping known as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) (Caribbean Community Secretariat [CARICOM], 2005). Many of these small developing CARICOM states gained their independence from the European colonial powers in the sixties, seventies, and eighties (Bissessar, 2002; CARICOM, 2005). Having gained their independence, policy makers in these countries have formulated a number of policies with the aim of propelling these small states toward the desired level of development, viability, and sustainability in the global environment (CARICOM, 2005). Although formulated with the best of intentions, several policies fail to be implemented promptly, as implementation processes tend to span long periods (Benn, 2009; Jones & Schoburgh, 2004; Lewis, 2009).

According to Anderson (2011), public policy may be viewed as the response by a political system to demands arising from its environment. Anderson (2011) described policies as relatively stable, purposive courses of action, or inaction as the case may be, which are followed by an actor or set of actors in addressing a particular problem or matter of concern. The mandate for the implementation of policy decisions may be handed down as legislation, statute, or executive order (Anderson, 2011). Policy implementation in small developing countries is often difficult (World Bank, 2010). In the English-speaking CARICOM states such as Trinidad and Tobago, the existing institutional and governance frameworks were inherited from Britain during the colonial

period and adapted to the local context (Lodge & Stirton, 2009). In some instances legislation still dates back to the colonial period, and there is need for laws to be revised and modernized (Sayers, 2009). Since their independence, international development agencies such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have exerted considerable pressure on these small Caribbean states to conform to prevailing international governance norms (Bissessar, 2002).

As Denhardt, Terry, Delacruz, and Andonoska (2009) and Ewig and Palmucci (2012) indicated, the theories, advice, and recommendations from Washington-based institutions are often used by policy makers in developing states. This appears to have been the case with the *new public management* approach and the strategy of *agencification*. Agencification is the delegation of authority and tasks and services previously executed and delivered by the public service to semi-autonomous agencies operating at arm's length away from their parent organization. Bissessar (2002) contended that many of the features of the new public management (NPM) model appeared to be in line with the conditionalities of the IMF and World Bank. The Caribbean countries of Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago were among the developing states that embraced some of the public sector reform strategies advocated within the NPM framework (Bissessar, 2002). According to Bissessar (2002), in the case of Trinidad and Tobago, a clear shift towards NPM could be noted, particularly with respect to privatization, contracting out, and the introduction of managers who were employed on a contractual basis and given the freedom to manage.

As Sulle (2011) observed, however, developing countries often lack the administrative capacity to implement sophisticated reforms based on NPM notions.

Trinidad and Tobago, like other developing countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, and Tanzania, had some success with the introduction of some facets of the NPM approach to public sector reform (Bissessar, 2002; Joshi & Ayee, 2009; McKerchar & Evans, 2009; Sulle, 2010). In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, however, Bissessar (2002) indicated that while some human resource management systems and procedures had been implemented, no significant change in the functioning of the wider bureaucracy was evident. Given the number of agencies created in Trinidad and Tobago in recent years with the aim of guiding and supporting the implementation of policy, the use of executive agencies as a strategy appears to have gained some traction in policy circles in Trinidad and Tobago. The Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, the Children's Authority, Occupational Safety and Health Authority and Agency, the Telecommunications Authority, the Environmental Management Agency, and the Regional Health Authorities, are just a few of the agencies that have been created (Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, n.d.).

The Occupational Safety and Health Act (2006) of Trinidad and Tobago (Ministry of Legal Affairs, 2013) provides an example of the inclusion in legislation of provisions mandating the creation of an agency, authority or *body corporate* as it is often termed. In keeping with the Westminster parliamentary process, the Act was assented to in 2004 (The Occupational Safety and Health Authority, [OSH Authority] 2013). Prior to the introduction of this piece of legislation, workplace safety and health matters were

handled within the framework of the Factories Ordinance of 1948 (amended in 1952). The Factories Ordinance had been in force since the period of colonial rule (OSH Authority, 2013). Given the narrow scope of the early legislation, its provisions were deemed inadequate, as they covered neither the many modern occupations and workplaces, nor took into consideration the needs of the burgeoning industrial sector in Trinidad and Tobago (OSH Authority, 2013). In response to calls for the old legislation to be reviewed and updated, a number of drafts and amendments had been proposed since 1973 (OSH Authority, 2013). Following amendments to the 2004 version, the OSH Act was proclaimed by the President of Trinidad and Tobago in February 2006, and thereby came into force after a protracted process (OSH Authority, 2013).

The OSH Act provides for the creation of two executive bodies, namely the OSH Agency and the OSH Authority (OSH Authority, 2013). The OSH Authority is a regulatory body that reports to the government of Trinidad and Tobago on the implementation of the provisions of the OSH Act (OSH Authority, 2013). The Authority also serves as an advisory body on OSH-related issues and policy, and provides recommendations on codes of practice and regulations in the area of OSH (OSH Authority, 2013). The OSH Agency, on the other hand, serves as an enforcement body, and its main purpose is ensuring compliance with the provisions of the Act and its accompanying regulations (OSH Authority, 2013). The Agency is vested with the legal power necessary to gain access to industrial establishments, to conduct investigations, and to intervene legally through the issue of *improvement or prohibition notices*, and by

initiating prosecution procedures in the Trinidad and Tobago justice system (OSH Authority, 2013).

In the case of the OSH Authority and Agency, two separate entities were established: one of which governs and advises, and another that implements. In other cases, the legislation has been developed or amended over time to include the establishment of the body corporate or advisory unit, which is tasked with the duty of carrying out the policy of the government in relation to the particular issue, such as the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago Act, Chapter 49:02, Act 49 of 1979; Children's Authority Act, Chapter 46:10, Act 64 of 2000; Environmental Management Act, Chapter 35:05, Act 3 of 2000; Financial Intelligence Unit of Trinidad and Tobago Act, Chapter 72:01, Act 11 of 2009; Port Authority Act, Chapter 47:31, Act 39 of 1961; Strategic Services Agency Act, Chapter 15:06, Act 24 of 1995; Telecommunications Act, Chapter 47:31, Act 4 of 2001; the Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Authority Act No. 33 of 2000; and Water and Sewerage Act, Chapter 54:40, Act 16 of 1965 (Ministry of Legal Affairs, 2013). In some cases the top management officials of the agencies are appointed by the president, and in some instances by the line minister.

Problem Statement

Little is known about the rationale behind the choice of agencification, or the creation of semi-autonomous agencies that operate at arm's length away from the parent department as a strategy for supporting public policy in Trinidad and Tobago. In addition, there appears to be an absence of evaluation of the use of the strategy, and a dearth of

empirical evidence indicating the successful utilization of executive agencies in support of policy implementation in Trinidad and Tobago.

Agencification is a strategy that gained popularity within the framework of the NPM, and its usage and implementation varies across countries (Manning, 2001; Pollitt, Bathgate, Caulfield, Smullen, & Talbot, 2001; Verschuere & Bach, 2011; Verschuere & Vancoppenolle, 2012; Yesilkagit & van Thiel, 2011). Agencification was seen as a means of achieving improved performance and service delivery of public organizations and has become an attractive option and feature of public sector management in contemporary times (Sulle, 2010). Verschuere and Bach (2011) contended that in parliamentary systems of government, executive agencies tend to fall within the purview of the parent department (or Ministry) and the political leadership. In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, a parliamentary democracy, the legislation often provides for the establishment of an agency that serves as an enforcement body, whose main purpose is supporting the implementation of the Act and ensuring compliance with the legislation. These executive agencies are usually semi-autonomous and fall under the purview of a parent Ministry. This creation of the executive agency to support the implementation of policy in the Trinidad and Tobago context, therefore, appears to conform to the concept of agencification as described by Pollitt et al. (2001), Verschuere and Bach, and other scholars who focused on issues related to the creation of semi-autonomous executive agencies in the sphere of public policy.

Purpose of the Study

This case study sought to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of the executive agency in the implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago. In the process, the transfer of the model was examined with a view to ascertaining whether it was fully transferred, or whether selected aspects were imported and utilized. For this purpose, a case study framed by the constructivist paradigm was chosen as the strategy of inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). It assisted in examining the transfer and use of the agencification model to Trinidad and Tobago for public policy implementation.

Research Questions

The central research question addressed by the study was: Did the creation of executive agencies to support the implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago fulfil its role? The following supplementary questions were used to expand and develop the central research question in an effort to obtain the in-depth information necessary to arrive at an answer to the research question:

1. What has been the role of executive agencies in the implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago?
2. What have been the significant achievements to date?
3. What agency challenges or failures have been experienced?
4. What factors helped to facilitate the work of agencies?
5. What have been some of the main constraining factors?

Theoretical Framework

The notions of agencification and the *new public management* (NPM), principal-agent theory, and policy transfer frame the study. Agencification is one of the mechanisms propagated within the framework of NPM for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery in the public sector (Bach, Niklasson, & Painter, 2012; van Thiel & Yesilkagit, 2011; Verschuere & Bach, 2011; Verschuere & Vancoppenolle, 2012). Strategies arising from the NPM approaches popularized in the early 1980s were among those recommended by international agencies, and embraced by developing nations such as those in the Caribbean (Bissessar, 2002). Given the challenges experienced in the implementation of public policy, developing countries like those in the Caribbean sought to embrace and emulate the NPM strategies, encouraged by the success achieved in the developed countries such as the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (Bach et al., 2012).

The use of executive agencies may vary according to context, but in general agencification has become an attractive option and a feature of public sector management in contemporary times (Bach et al., 2012; Sulle, 2010). In parliamentary systems of government, executive agencies tend to operate at arm's length from the governmental unit to whom they report (Verschuere & Bach, 2011). In the parliamentary democracy of Trinidad and Tobago, a number of executive agencies have been established to support policy implementation, and reporting lines have been established to a parent ministry or minister, as determined by the law or statute governing the creation of the agency.

According to Schillemans (2013) most of the public service reforms in past decades are based on agency theory, either implicitly or explicitly. Schillemans (2013) contended that agencification, by its nature, is associated with agency theory, as agencification implies that the agent acts on behalf of the principal, and is delegated the authority to take action that would be expected of the principal in some situations (Schillemans, 2013; Shapiro, 2005). The relationship between the principal and agent tends to be hierarchical and contractual by nature (Schillemans, 2013). Van Thiel and Yesilkagit (2011) argued that agencification can involve a series of actions in which actors can function both as principals, as well as agents, depending on their role in the process at a given point in time. For example, politicians may serve as agents in their roles as elected officials by fulfilling their representation functions (i.e., on the basis of their election to office by their voters, or principals) (Yesilkagit & van Thiel, 2011). Politicians, however, may in turn act as principals who delegate duties to officials in executive agencies that are tasked with the responsibility for implementing policies and programs (Yesilkagit & van Thiel, 2011). The tasks and responsibilities outlined in the legislative provisions for the creation of agencies in Trinidad and Tobago are characteristic of those generally associated with agencification (Ministry of Legal Affairs, 2013).

According to McCarthy-Jones and Turner (2011), the policy transfer process involves the diffusion of ideas, knowledge, institutional frameworks, policies and programs from one location and time, and their subsequent adoption in various other locations. The process may involve the importation of the notion or idea in its entirety, or

of only select aspects (McCarthy-Jones & Turner, 2011). The process may also be voluntary, or imposed, and the actors involved may be from various spheres of society (McCarthy-Jones & Turner, 2011). The use of executive agencies was examined within the framework of policy transfer, and efforts made to ascertain whether the model was transferred in accordance with this notion, and if so, whether there was full or partial transfer with contextual adaptation.

Nature of the Study

The study sought to gain an in-depth understanding of the executive agency's role in the implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago. The study was best suited to a qualitative design because, as affirmed by Stake (2010), qualitative researchers usually strive to understand and improve the context or phenomenon being studied. In most cases, the in-depth understanding and insights generated by the study conducted by the qualitative researcher contribute to bringing about the desired improvement in the social context (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Qualitative research is described as experiential, in line with its naturalistic, field-based orientation, and as situational, because of its contextual specificity (Stake, 2010). Qualitative research is also viewed as personalistic because both empathy and interpretation play important roles as the research unfolds, often with the researcher serving as the main instrument (Stake, 2010).

The study is framed by a constructivist philosophy (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Guba and Lincoln (1989) posited that the constructivist approach is based on the interaction between the researcher and the participants in the study. The findings emanate from the interaction, and are therefore truly representative of the way things are

and work, as opposed to being simply the conclusions and recommendations put forward by the researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). As a result of the interaction, the constructed nature of the findings is recognized and the different contexts and values that work to create the whole are acknowledged and taken into consideration (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The interpretive nature of the research arises from the objective of understanding, codifying and explaining in a meaningful way, the differing views and opinions of the participants in the study (Stake, 2010). The study of the different views and ideas on the phenomenon under study was facilitated through the development of a case study, utilizing a purposive sampling strategy and thematic coding in the analysis of the data collected (Stake, 2010). The case study was seen as the best option for the strategy of inquiry given the evidence of its successful utilization in various fields of study in facilitating a deeper understanding of complex social phenomena (Yin, 2014). Case studies have also been successfully used in evaluation research, and based on the rich data provided by participants, have served to provide invaluable insights into the processes and outcomes of programs and interventions under study (Patton, 2002).

For the purposes of the study undertaken, the executive agency served as the focus of the case study. Snowball and criterion sampling techniques were the primary purposive sampling techniques used, and open-ended interviews were the main source of the qualitative data to be collected (Patton, 2002). Interviewing, according to Patton (2002), facilitates the gathering of information that cannot be directly observed by the researcher, and allows the researcher access to the thoughts and perspectives of the interviewee. The open-ended nature of qualitative interviews affords participants the

opportunity to fit their own feelings, knowledge, and experience into the questions asked (Patton, 2002). Open-ended questions also allow participants to express themselves and recount in their own terms their individual experiences in relation to the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2002).

In line with the objectives of the study, the views and experiences of the technocrats, academics, representatives of the private sector, and other key stakeholders who have been actively involved in the formulation of public policy and who would have influenced or have been affected by the policy, were sought. The choice of interviewees was premised on their ability to provide the information-rich data that would facilitate the in-depth understanding of the problem and issues being studied (Patton, 2002). Given Patton's (2002) observation concerning the likelihood that the utilization of a single strategy of inquiry to increase the vulnerability to error in the study being undertaken, additional sources of data were sought. In this regard, the review of publicly available documentation and records related to the creation of the agencies and their activities was also an important aspect of the information-gathering phase (Creswell, 2007). The types and sources of data were as follows:

1. Publicly accessible documentation, records, and information pertaining to the enactment of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago.
2. Interviews with key stakeholders (e.g., technocrats, academics, and public and private sector officials) who participated in the policy development processes leading to the adoption of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago which provided for the establishment of the executive agency.

3. Interviews with policy makers and officials who were actively involved in the creation and operationalization of policy.
4. Interviews with a cross-section of individuals in Trinidad and Tobago to obtain their perspectives on the role of executive agencies in promoting and ensuring compliance with public policy.
5. Follow-up discussions with individuals who were interviewed, for the purpose of validating the data collected during the interviews.

With respect to the interviews, the data collected were transcribed, coded and categorized in preparation for interpretation and analysis (Maxwell, 2013; Stake, 2010). Detailed notes were taken on the documentation accessed, and this information was used in the analysis stage as a means of triangulating the data gathered from the interviews, particularly with a view to enhancing the trustworthiness and credibility of the study (Stake, 2010).

Definitions

The following terms occur throughout the study and are, therefore, defined hereunder for clarity.

Agencification: The creation and use of semi-autonomous executive agencies that operate at arm's length from their line ministries, carry out public tasks at the national level, and are financed by the state budget (Pollitt et al., 2001).

Caribbean Community (CARICOM): A regional integration grouping comprising 15 member states. The members are Antigua and Barbuda, the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, the Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, the Republic of

Guyana, the Republic of Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat the Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the Republic of Suriname, and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. For the most part, the people of the Community share a common history and culture. CARICOM states are considered to be developing countries (CARICOM, 2005).

Constructivist philosophy: Guba and Lincoln (1989) contended that although the constructivist (i.e., naturalistic, hermeneutic, interpretive) paradigm has existed for several hundred years, it has not been widely understood, particularly by individuals in English-speaking countries. It is premised on relativist ontology, subjectivist epistemology, and hermeneutic methodology. Truth in this context is defined as the best-informed, most sophisticated construction on which there is consensus. Proponents of the constructivist paradigm assert the existence of multiple, socially constructed realities that are not governed by natural laws, and argue that the findings of an investigation are the creation of the process of inquiry. The methodological approach is one that involves continuous iteration, analysis, and critique that eventually leads to the construction of a case.

New Public Management: The New Public Management philosophy reflected an amalgam of public choice theory and notions of entrepreneurial governance. Performance management, outsourcing of public services, sub-contracting, and the creation of autonomous executive agencies are some of the measures that are usually associated with the NPM framework (Benn, 2009).

Quango: An organization that is tasked with the implementation of public policy and which is allowed to operate at arm's length from the parent governmental department, but for which public funding is provided for the execution of its portfolio (van Thiel, 2004).

Assumptions

The study sought to gain an in-depth understanding of the role played by the executive agency in the implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago. In developing the study, several assumptions were made. These assumptions are primarily concerned with the nature and role of the executive agency and the stakeholders who would participate in the study. The assumptions provided the basis for the development of the study, and were integral to the logic that underpins the study conducted. A key assumption was that the creation of executive agencies in Trinidad and Tobago was in line with the main facets of the notion of agencification. Another was that the decision to create the executive agency as mandated in the policy provisions of Trinidad and Tobago was influenced by the interest of the decision makers and stakeholders in addressing the challenges that are faced in the implementation of public policy. On the basis of the biographical and professional information available on the group of persons from which participants were chosen, it was assumed that they were actively involved in the process of developing public policy, and would be suitable candidates for participation in the interview process. There was also the assumption that the individuals selected to participate in the study would be able to provide the rich, thick data needed to develop the case study (Patton, 2002). In addition, it was assumed that the individuals to be

chosen would agree to participate willingly in the study, on a voluntary basis, and, would be candid and honest in their responses to the interview questions. Furthermore it was assumed that the participants selected through the initial purposive, criterion sampling would be willing to refer other appropriately suited individuals who would in turn agree to participate in the study. Finally, it was assumed that there had been some success to date with the implementation of public policy, and that the executive agencies that had been instrumental in the process, in keeping with the mandate.

Scope and Delimitations

In the light of the mandate given in some public policy provisions in Trinidad and Tobago (such as the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 2006), the study focused on agencification, or the creation of an executive agency to support policy implementation . A case study was conducted, which looked at a particular type of organization, namely the executive agency, and its operation in a specific context, that of Trinidad and Tobago. The study, therefore, examined the role played by the executive agency in the implementation of the policy within the framework of the notions of agencification and the New Public Management approach, principal-agent theory, and policy transfer. Other possible theories, agencies, or individuals that might also have exerted influence on the implementation process were not examined within the framework of the study. Data for the study were gathered from two main sources, namely publicly available documentation and open-ended interviews with selected participants.

Limitations

There were certain limitations associated with the choice of the case study as a strategy of inquiry. A major limitation in this regard is the narrow focus this strategy permits. Following the qualitative tradition, the sampling strategy is purposeful by nature (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). The chosen sampling strategy presented another limitation. The initial candidates were selected on the basis of specific criteria (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). In line with the snowball sampling strategy, these first few participants made recommendations on possible candidates for participation in the interviews. Limitations arise as well from the use of qualitative interviews and the review of documentation as the main sources of data. While these areas could be viewed as weak points in the study, it is noteworthy that in keeping with the qualitative tradition my intention was not to achieve generalizability, but rather the transferability of the results, particularly given the historical, cultural, social, and institutional similarities that characterize the English-speaking CARICOM member states.

With respect to possible areas of personal interest, I have worked for many years in the development field, particularly in the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean, and as a result, I am cognizant of the social and economic challenges faced by these small developing Caribbean states. In the process of conducting the study, any preconceived notions with respect to the challenges and strategies for dealing with public policy and its implementation in the English-speaking countries of CARICOM were articulated and critically examined in relation to the scholarly arguments discussed as part of the literature review. In addition, the triangulation of data sources through validation and

member checking were strategies used to address potential bias, and to enhance the integrity and reliability of the research (Creswell, 2007).

Significance

The proposed study is intended to contribute to scholarly research in the field of public policy in the English-speaking member states of CARICOM and to generate interest in policy-related research among Caribbean scholars. In this regard, the work on public service reform in the English-speaking Caribbean emanating from the University of the West Indies (UWI) in the early 2000s is relevant (Bissessar, 2002; Benn, 2009; Jones & Schoburgh, 2004; Jones, 1992, 2001; McKoy, 2009).

Painter and Yee (2011) observed that in the process of social learning and transfer, the traditions and cultural norms of the receiving country may influence the manner in which new models and approaches are adopted and applied in the national context. Although the influence of the recipient country is acknowledged, Howlett (2012) argued that insufficient attention has been paid to differentiating between various types of policy success or failure. Howlett further stated that the conditions under which success and failure are likely to occur should be examined and that solutions be suggested for future policy processes. Given the limited scope of this exploratory study, all these aspects were not addressed in relation to executive agencies in the Trinidad and Tobago context, but context specificities that have had an impact on the transfer, areas of success and failure, and recommendations for improving the implementation process were key aspects of the study.

Several views prevail on the utilization of NPM strategies such as agencification in developing countries. According to Manning (2001), when compared to early predictions, relatively few aspects of NPM are to be found in developing countries, with little apparent evidence of the evaluation of the NPM strategies in these countries. Sulle (2010), who has examined the use of agencies in policy processes in African countries, contended that while there was evidence of the infusion of the concepts of NPM and agencification in developing countries, there appears to be limited empirical data on the experience of individual countries with the transfer and implementation of these strategies. With reference to the suitability of the NPM model to the developing-country context, Manning (2001) observed that most critiques were based on a priori reasoning rather than on empirical assessment. According to Manning (2001), the model was deemed to be unsuitable, but there appeared to be no systematic evaluation of the outcomes, only conjecture and anecdotal information on outputs and future direction. Based on the review of the literature, there appears to be little evaluation of the use of executive agencies as a strategy for the implementation of public policy in the English-speaking Caribbean. This study is intended to contribute to the country-specific information available on the utilization of the strategy for the purpose of policy implementation, but there is need for further research, particularly in the area of evaluative studies.

Implications for Social Change

By its focus on the use of agencies as a strategy in Trinidad and Tobago, this study facilitated a better understanding of the transfer of conceptions and the challenges

that may arise in policy implementation. This critical discussion on policy implementation processes in Trinidad and Tobago was intended to highlight the need to actively seek strategies that would assist in overcoming the context-related challenges that are often faced in the policy implementation phase in the small developing countries such as those in the English-speaking Caribbean. As Bissessar (2002) contended, success in the adoption of imported strategies and ideas is very often dependent on factors in the domestic environment, such as the political system, governmental structure and operations, the state of the economy, and the ethnic composition of the target population. Given the historical, cultural, legal, and socio-economic similarities of the countries, the findings of the case study on the policy-related experiences of Trinidad and Tobago would be of significance to the other CARICOM states.

As in other contexts, public policy processes in Trinidad and Tobago are intended to benefit citizens and residents. These intentions and objectives can only be achieved through successful implementation of the policy and compliance with policy provisions. It is against this backdrop that the strategy of agencification was examined. The role played by the agency in the policy implementation process in Trinidad and Tobago, and the viability of agencification as an option for addressing some of the policy implementation challenges experienced in the specific context were discussed. The increased awareness facilitated by the study are intended to examine the strategy, its genesis, and the rationale for its selection and continued use in policy implementation processes in Trinidad and Tobago.

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the study on the role of executive agencies in the implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago, which sought to address the lack of information available on the decision to create the executive agency and to assess the role of agencies in the implementation of the policy. The study was conducted with the intention of obtaining an in-depth understanding of the role played by executive agencies, and was framed by the notions of agencification and the NPM approach, principal-agent theory, and policy transfer. The constructivist philosophy underpins the qualitative case study. A purposive sampling strategy was utilized, and ten participants selected for open-ended interviews. Public documents containing information pertinent to the agency and its role and function were examined. The study builds on the scholarly material available on public policy processes in the English-speaking Caribbean, specifically in relation to the Trinidad and Tobago context. The study examines the challenges experienced in the transfer of policy conceptions and their implementation in developing-country contexts such as Trinidad and Tobago. As Ohemeng & Owusu (2013) observed, lessons learned from individual country experiences should be seen as recommendations that can be adapted to country-specific contexts as opposed to a more generic approach. In this regard, given the historical, social, economic, and cultural similarities that characterize the countries of the English-speaking Caribbean, the findings and lessons learned arising from the Trinidad and Tobago study would be of relevance to developing states with similar contexts and characteristics.

The next chapter contains a comprehensive review of related literature. Chapter 2 begins with an introduction, followed by a discussion of the selected theoretical framework. A thorough literature review is then presented. The final section discusses the current gaps in literature.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Pressman and Wildavsky (1984) argued that the value of a particular policy is not only in its usefulness, but also in its potential for implementation. Policy implementation in the small states of the English-speaking Caribbean tends, however, to be frustrated by protracted negotiations at the adoption stage and challenges encountered in the enforcement of provisions after adoption (Lewis, 2005). The failure to successfully implement several of the policy decisions made in these small developing Caribbean states is a source of concern (Bishop & Payne, 2010; Lewis, 2005). In response to this concern, and partially based on the popularity of the approach (Bach et al., 2012), some Caribbean governments have adopted measures advocated by the proponents of NPM (Bissessar, 2002; Lodge & Stirton, 2009). Within this framework, agencies are a mechanism for achieving efficient operations, similar to the gains achieved by private companies (Bach et al., 2012).

The concept of agencification and its use in policy processes, particularly in policy implementation in developing countries such as Trinidad and Tobago, was the focus of the literature review. The review takes the form of a critique of the concept of agencification and provides the backdrop for the discussion of the utilization and effectiveness of agencification as an implementation strategy for public policy in Trinidad and Tobago. Since the pioneering work conducted in the early 1980s and the mid-2000s, there appear to be few studies from the small developing states of the English-speaking Caribbean with a focus on the implementation of public policy, or the

impact and use of agencification. In the absence of recent scholarly material from the Caribbean, comparative information on the use and impact of agencification drawn from studies of other developing states such as Ghana, Hong Kong, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda was sourced and referenced in the review (Conteh & Ohemeng, 2009; Crook, 2010; Joshi & Ayee, 2009; McKerchar & Evans, 2009; Sulle, 2010; Sulle, 2011).

A number of databases were searched in an effort to locate the scholarly material used in the review of the literature. Walden University's library was the primary source of material, and particularly ABInform, Academic Search Complete, ERIC, Political Science Complete, and ProQuest Central. My searches involved key words such as agency, executive agency, agencification, autonomy, developing countries, institutions, institutional framework, policy processes, policy implementation, public sector, and public policy. In addition, I used the Google Scholar search engine, particularly when articles pertaining to the Caribbean context were difficult to locate. In an effort to keep track of the material sourced and to prepare for the discussion in the literature review, I developed my own database of articles in which I noted all the key words used in the search.

Agencification and the New Public Management

Agencification essentially refers to the creation of semi-autonomous bodies tasked with the implementation of policy or the discharge of functions normally provided by the public service (McKoy, 2009; van Thiel & Yesilkagit, 2011). Agencification generally takes place within the framework of the reform of public administration, and involves decentralization and the delegation of tasks to agencies (McKoy, 2009). The

trend towards the creation of executive agencies has become common in recent times in the management and reform of the public sector, and the modernization of state administrations (Sulle, 2010; van Thiel & Yesilkagit, 2011). Agencification was also seen as a means of assisting governments in achieving their objectives through managerial autonomy and a focus on results and accountability (Joshi & Ayee, 2009; Pollitt et al., 2001; Sulle, 2010; van Thiel & Yesilkagit, 2011). The attractiveness and appeal of the notion may be attributed to the underlying assumptions that the establishment of agencies could enhance the performance of the public sector (Pollitt et al., 2001), particularly since the reforms were aimed at creating a slimmer, more effective public sector (Sulle, 2010). Agencification has been associated with the ideology related to neoliberal reform and the NPM doctrines that were popular during the 1980s and 1990s (Sulle, 2010). International financial institutions promoted the notion as part of the public sector reform programs advocated by these institutions, particularly in developing countries (Bissessar, 2002; Sulle, 2010).

The structure, role, and function of agencies tend to vary from country to country and are often influenced by the domestic political system (Sulle, 2010; van Thiel & Yesilkagit, 2011). Arriving at a definition for agencification that is universally accepted might be illusive, therefore, given the range of peculiarities and differences (Sulle, 2010; van Thiel & Yesilkagit, 2011). Not only are there differences in terms of the legal form and nature of the entity, but also variations in terms of the financing and equipping of agencies (van Thiel & Yesilkagit, 2011). There are nonetheless some generally accepted features, such as the structural separation from a parent organization, but with budget and

operational objectives that fall within the purview of government officials (Bach et al., 2012; Pollitt et al., 2001). The definition also encapsulates semi-autonomous organizations, including quasi-governmental organizations (often referred to as quangos), fringe, non-departmental, or executive bodies (Bach et al., 2012; Sulle, 2010; van Thiel, 2004). In spite of their semi-autonomous nature, agencies are still usually considered to be part of the state apparatus (Pollitt et al., 2001).

The popularity of the NPM approach and its promise of reform and improved public service delivery appear to have fuelled the shift towards the delegation of public tasks in many countries (Pollitt et al., 2001). The result was an increase in the use of agencies in the discharge and execution of public policy functions (Gilardi & Maggetti, 2011; Pollitt et al., 2001). Among the most-cited motives or incentives for the move to agencification were the anticipated increase in the credibility of policy commitment on the part of the principal (or government), facilitated by the expectation of minimized opportunity and incidence of political interference by the principals, and a lower risk of partisanship (van Thiel & Yesilkagit, 2011). Agencies generally represent a form of organization that is not too far removed from the bureaucratic government ministry or department (Pollitt et al., 2001; van Thiel & Yesilkagit, 2011; Verschuere & Vancoppenolle, 2012). The creation of semi-autonomous single-purpose agencies facilitated the shift of tasks and services that were traditionally delivered by public servants to entities operating outside of the public service (Pollitt et al., 2001; van Thiel & Yesilkagit, 2011; Verschuere & Vancoppenolle, 2012).

The ideal NPM semi-autonomous agency is characterized by structural disaggregation and the capacity and autonomy to execute tasks that usually fall within the ambit of public administration (e.g., regulation, service delivery, adjudication, and certification) (Joshi, Lazarova, & Liao, 2009; Nemeč, Mikusova Merickova, & Vozarova, 2011; Pollitt et al., 2001; Sulle, 2010). Agencies usually have a cadre of core staff drawn from the public service (although they may or may not function as civil servants in the agency role), state financing for operations, and subjection to legally prescribed administrative procedures (Joshi, et al., 2009; Nemeč et al., 2011; Pollitt et al., 2001; Sulle, 2010). In line with the NPM doctrine, agencies were promoted as being more specialized, efficient, and performance oriented than their traditional, bureaucratic public sector antecedents (van Thiel & Yesilkagit, 2011). In addition, the agency would be highly performance-oriented and attentive to its stakeholders (Pollitt et al., 2001; Verschuere & Vancoppenolle, 2012). Agency operations would be subject to minimal political interference, and would be managed in a professional manner, demonstrating transparency, flexibility and customer responsiveness (Pollitt et al., 2001; Verschuere & Vancoppenolle, 2012). These are among the features attractive, and made the move to agencification an appealing option for countries interested in improving policy execution and public service delivery on the whole, and in reducing the uncertainty principals tend to experience about outcomes (van Thiel & Yesilkagit, 2011).

The expectations about agencies were perhaps fuelled by the claims associated with the NPM discourse, which suggested that the separation of policy formulation and policy implementation was a means of increasing efficiency and effectiveness in the

public service (Bach & Jann, 2010; Bach, 2012; Verschuere & Vancoppenolle, 2012). A key underlying assumption, therefore, was that the responsibility for policy formulation resided with elected officials and ministries while agencies carried the responsibility for implementation (Bach, 2012; Bach et al., 2012). In line with this thinking, agencies were to be found more in the area of policy implementation, and tended to be tasked with the delivery of services or programs, regulation, or the exercise of public authority (Bach et al., 2012). Agencies were generally created as public law entities that related to ministers or to the government in the same way as agents do to a principal (Bach et al., 2012). It was a relationship in which agencies provided services that were bought by the central government, and the services and collaboration provided were delivered on a contractual basis in many cases (Schillemans, 2013). This separation of the administrative function from the executive or central government, however, necessitated the development of effective working relationships between the partners involved in policy formulation, policy implementation, and enforcement (Schillemans, 2013).

The Concepts of Agencification, Agency, and Autonomy

Agencification is often presented within the framework of agency theory. The principal-agent conception implies that at times the agent acts on behalf of the principal, taking the same action as the principal would in the given situation (Schillemans, 2013; Shapiro, 2005). The applicability of agency theory perhaps arises from the tendency towards a contractual relationship between the agency as the service provider and the ministry and the government as the purchaser of services (Schillemans, 2013). According to Shapiro (2005), the theory of agency in the field of political science gained popularity

in the 1970s, with political scientists developing a more diverse array of scenarios for the delegation of power than were associated with the paradigm of economists. The contractual arrangement in political science was one in which principals selected agents who operated at arm's length, and who espoused different policy preferences (Shapiro, 2005). Within this contractual arrangement, however, principals conferred a considerable amount of discretion and autonomy to their agents, while at the same time attempting to ensure accountability (Shapiro, 2005). These core tenets of agency theory are synonymous with the notions that frame agencification.

The principal-agent model as a theoretical framework for agencification, however, has inspired contending views. Hicklin and Godwin (2009), in their critique, argued that policy decisions are made by individuals and not by institutions. Hicklin and Godwin (2009) argued that, while principal-agent models have facilitated a better understanding of policy design, the focus on the institution, as opposed to the individual, has resulted in the failure to capture critical aspects of the behavior of individuals in the decision-making process. In this regard, Hicklin and Godwin (2009) highlighted the tendency to use the institutional term *bureaucracy* as a generic label for a cross-section of stakeholders, including public sector management officials, bureaucrats, as well as agency personnel. On the other hand, in their critique, McCann and Ward (2012) argued that the extant literature overlooks the role of the agency and focuses more on the agent, and by so doing minimized important practical, institutionally related factors in the policy-making process.

The notion of agencification connotes some degree of autonomy, given that agencies operate at arm's length from their political principals (Bach et al., 2012; Verschuere & Vancoppenolle, 2012). But the relationship between the principal and agent is seemingly often beset by challenges. Given the varying degrees of autonomy that may characterize the principal-agent relationship, some agencies may have the leeway to make authoritative process- or program-related decisions concerning the goals, expected outputs, and target groups (Verschuere & Bach, 2011). Others may have the discretionary space to exert influence over the direction of their strategic, tactical, or operational processes (Verschuere & Bach, 2011). Under these circumstances, the principal-agent relationship could be adversely affected by information asymmetries arising from the concern and fear on the part of the principals over possible abuse of the discretionary space given to agents, and the limited information and knowledge about the activities that might be forthcoming as a result of the structural separation (Schillemans, 2013).

In discussing the relationship between principals and agents, Schillemans (2013), contended that, at given points of the process, the interests of agents may differ significantly from those of the principal, and consequently agency theory is often viewed as premised on conflict, and associated with the exercise of control. This conflict may be seen in some agency operations. The autonomy accorded to an agency is often enshrined in its legal status, and statutory dependence on the ministry is often a fundamental element of the relationship (Bach & Jann, 2010; Verschuere & Bach, 2011). Under the parliamentary system of government for example, agency chiefs may be appointed either by the government or the minister with political responsibility for the activities of a

particular agency (Bach et al., 2012). The tasks to be carried out are usually delegated by statute, and the autonomy of the agency and its role are both decided and delegated by the parent ministry (Bach et al., 2012). In some cases, however, the legally prescribed functional separation from their parent ministries provides agencies with decision-making powers that the parent ministries themselves may not enjoy (Bach & Jann, 2010; Verschuere & Bach, 2011). In other cases, the creation of an agency might result in more complex relations involving multiple stakeholders and a range of principals (Bach et al., 2012). The separation and autonomy accorded to agencies therefore are factors that help to complicate the relationship between principals and agents in policy processes.

In his discussion, Schillemans (2013) argued that agents might at times exploit the asymmetries and associated fears of principals to further their own interests. In such scenarios, negative implications for the relationship between the parties might arise when there is need to correct or regularize the behavior of the agent (Schillemans, 2013). In this regard, Schillemans (2013) highlighted the need for appropriate instruments or mechanisms to be put in place to control or mitigate any anticipated fallout from the self-interest of the agent.

Agencification as a Strategy for Efficacy in the Public Service

Agencies are afforded some level of autonomy, and often operate at arm's length from their political chiefs (Bach et al., 2012). In spite of the apparent differences from country to country with regard to the nature and scope of agencies, the significant area of convergence lies in the belief that the creation of agencies signified a government's modern, progressive approach to managing the apparatus of the state for greater

efficiency and improved results (Pollitt et al., 2001). Agencification, therefore, was an appealing option as it was a globally attractive concept, which was contemporary and modern, management-focused, and not unduly ideological (Pollitt et al., 2001). Countries such as Belgium, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States were among those where the strategy of agencification or the delegation to public agencies has been employed with varying degrees of success (Bach et al., 2012). The concept of agencification had academic and theoretical appeal. Pollitt et al. (2001) observed that agencification infiltrated the discourses in the conference circuit and international organizations primarily because it denoted modernization for the public sector, but stopped just short of privatization. Agencification was also politically attractive. Given the separation of policy making and implementation, and the hiving off of operational and administrative responsibilities from ministries to the new entities in many instances, some politicians might have viewed agencies as an escape route, and a means of avoiding blame in situations where policy processes failed to produce the expected results (Pollitt et al., 2001).

Under the Westminster parliamentary model that prevails in the English-speaking Caribbean states such as Trinidad and Tobago—the system inherited from the British during the colonial period—politicians have the responsibility for establishing policy objectives, defining the expected outcomes and outputs, and setting the standards for service delivery (Lodge & Stirton, 2009). Traditionally, ministers of government carry the weight of accountability for performance and the delivery on policy objectives (Lodge & Stirton, 2009; Sutton, 2008). Within this system, in keeping with tradition,

public servants are expected to be virtually anonymous, operating in the background without attracting visibility (Lodge & Stirton, 2009). This anonymity contrasted significantly with the managerialism associated with agencification and the creation of executive agencies, and the implicit increased level of accountability, which for Caribbean public servants represented a departure from the tradition (Lodge & Stirton, 2009).

Pollitt et al. (2001) argued that although there may have been significant discussion and deliberation about agencification and the benefits to be derived through its utilization as a public sector management strategy, the decisions taken by many governments may not have resulted in the specific identifiable change in administrative behavior that might have been anticipated. Similarly, Bissessar (2002) noted that while some of the NPM human resource management systems had been introduced in Trinidad and Tobago, there was little evidence of significant change in the functioning of the wider bureaucracy. In this regard, Pollitt et al. concluded that because behavior change does not necessarily translate into improved performance, the connection between the nexus between theoretical deliberation and results in the case of agencification is complex.

There is little available evidence, however, on how the decision to embrace the notion of agencification in Caribbean countries such as Trinidad and Tobago was made, and the theoretical bases for the decision to use the strategy in support of the implementation of public policy. Pollitt et al. (2001) argued that empirical research indicates that theoretical conceptualizations tend to feature more in scholarly contexts

than in the reality of politico-administrative decision-making. According to Pollitt et al., the decisions made by politicians and public officials are often made in an ad hoc manner, and when theory does play a role, its application may be haphazard, and in many instances modified to suit the practical and political considerations of the particular context in which application occurs.

The experiences of both developed and developing countries with agencification are well documented (Bach et al., 2012). In spite of the popularity of the notion of agencification and the availability of case studies on the performance of specific agencies, there appears to be little empirical evidence of the results achieved by the creation of agencies in general, and their contribution to the overall expeditious improvement in the quality and efficacy of public service delivery, particularly with respect to policy implementation (Pollitt et al., 2001). This observation also pertains to the English-speaking Caribbean, as there appear to be few scholarly studies evaluating the impact of the use of agencification. In this regard, McKoy's (2009) assessment of the quality of service delivered by executive agencies in Jamaica and that of their traditional public service counterparts is worthy of mention.

Policy Implementation in Contemporary Times

Policy implementation as a field of scholarly research has grown incrementally in contemporary times (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984). Policy implementation has been described both as a process and end in itself, but what is clear is that it simply cannot be described in terms of a distinct, one-off activity, nor should it be envisaged as a single activity encompassing all that is required for the achievement of the stated policy

objectives (Jones & Schoburgh, 2004). Interestingly, according to Hicklin and Godwin (2009), much of the scholarly work in the field of policy implementation examines the factors that influence the adoption of legislation or the factors that influence the outcomes of policy decisions. Research often fails to take into consideration the human and behavioral component, namely the link between the behavior of individuals, particularly public managers, and policy outcomes (Hicklin & Godwin, 2009). Public managers can influence the activities and strategies employed in the pursuit of policy outcomes (Hicklin & Godwin, 2009). The focus on processes and institutions, however, has resulted in the behavioral aspects not being afforded much consideration in many models (Hicklin & Godwin, 2009).

The wide range of theoretical models that have been advanced over the years to explain the implementation of public policy is perhaps reflective of the challenges of reaching consensus on the definition of policy implementation itself. The models have demonstrated linear, interactive, top-down, and bottom-up approaches to the study of policy implementation and its challenges (Goggin, 1986; Grindle & Thomas, 1989; Matland, 1995; Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980; Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). These models take into consideration the steps involved in the processing and execution of the policy directives by individuals in both the public and private sectors for the achievement of the desired goals (Simpson & Buabeng, 2013). As Jones and Schoburgh (2004) noted, however, while there may not be agreement on the best approach to the study of policy implementation, there is consensus that the concept of perfect implementation is non-existent.

There are some generally held assumptions about the manner in which policy implementation occurs. For example, it is assumed that once a government has decided upon a policy, it will be implemented, and that once the goals of a particular policy have been formulated in a legitimate, binding manner, implementation is usually regarded as the next step in the process (Hupe, 2010; Smith, 1973). As a result, in situations where the anticipated outputs and outcomes are not forthcoming, the lack of success is almost always attributed to faulty implementation (Hupe, 2010). The result, however, might have been influenced by several variables during the process, such as the capacity and skill of the staff involved, the time frame, and availability of resources, as well as prevailing institutional and cultural norms and values (Jones & Schoburgh, 2004). In addition, the factors influencing and contributing to the accomplishment or lack of success in the implementation phase may vary from one policy to another (Simpson & Buabeng, 2013).

Pritchett, Woolcock, and Andrews (2013) argued that success in the implementation of many governmental objectives requires institutions with the capacity to effect and support the actions and practices of individuals involved in the process. Achieving this level of capacity in the developing-country context may be challenging since those charged with policy implementation are often not part of the formulation process (Crosby, 1996). Policy implementation, as Hupe (2010) argued, tends to involve a range of actors who interact at various levels, and implementation may necessitate organizational change, as well as the introduction of a range of new skills, competencies, and resources in order for policy objectives to be accomplished (Crosby, 1996).

According to Crosby (1996), lack of ownership, the disruption, and challenges arising from the process of change are among the factors that could result in a protracted period of implementation. Hupe (2010) contended that there could be many possible contingencies such as fluctuating priorities, changes in personnel, inertia, indifference, active opposition, conflict and compliance in the process of implementation. Hupe's (2010) argument seems to support the view expressed by Hicklin and Godwin (2009) on the important role of individuals, as opposed to institutions, in the process.

Another factor that often helps to shape the implementation process is the content or substance of the policy (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984). The aims and objectives of the policy are usually outlined in the provisions, which usually specify the context in which implementation should happen, the role and identity of the key actors, the instruments and tools to be utilized in the process, and the resources that will be made available in support of the action to be taken (Ewig & Palmucci, 2012; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984; Simpson & Buabeng, 2013). As Hupe (2010) affirmed, the implementation of public policy does not occur in a normative vacuum, but rather in an open system. In such a system, factors such as the context, actors, tools, and resources have an impact on the success of the implementation process (Ewig & Palmucci, 2012; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984; Simpson & Buabeng, 2013). The context also influences the process, and as Jones and Schoburgh (2004) contended, implementation deficits tend to be wider in environments characterized by uncertainty, turbulence, and unpredictability, particularly where the formal and informal values and norms shape and influence the capability and limitations of the actors involved. This type of instability and volatility is typical of the

policy environment in many developing countries (Denhardt et al., 2009; Horowitz, 1989).

Success in the policy implementation phase may be viewed in terms of the program, process, or political perspective (Marsh & McConnell, 2010; McConnell, 2010). Programmatic success is usually equated with policy, while process relates to the procedures and legitimizing of outcomes and political success is judged on the basis of the contribution of the policy to the attainment of the political goals and objectives of the government of the day (Marsh & McConnell, 2010). Many of the earlier studies of policy implementation tend to zero in on the program aspects, and particularly on challenges experienced during implementation (e.g., bureaucratic red tape, organizational goal displacement) (Howlett, 2012; McConnell, 2010). From a programmatic perspective, these studies adhered to the traditional view that successful implementation involved the attainment, or exceeding of the original programmatic goals and objectives within the anticipated timeframe and budget as much as possible (Howlett, 2012).

Process-related success is often determined in relation to the completion of the various stages of the policy process without hindrance, from creation to implementation (Howlett, 2012; Marsh & McConnell, 2010). In many instances, process-related failures arise from issues related to institutional capacity and design, which stymie implementation (Gleeson, Legge, O'Neill, & Pfeffer, 2011; Howlett, 2012). Process failings may occur at various stages in the policy process (e.g., formulation, implementation, or evaluation) (Howlett, 2012). Process-related errors may be avoided by enhancing institutional capacity and improving policy design, as well as by ensuring

that mechanisms for policy appraisal and evaluation are established and adequately resourced (Howlett, 2012; Turnpenny, Radaelli, Jordan, & Jacob, 2009).

As Gleeson et al. (2011) observed, tensions may exist between the views, priorities, and objectives of policy developers and those of the officials involved in the operational or policy implementation phase (Gleeson et al., 2011). Similarly, differing skill sets may be required of the officials involved in the various policy stages (Gleeson et al., 2011). Recommendations for improving the linkage between policy development and implementation are few, however, Gleeson et al. (2011) proffered several recommendations for improving policy implementation. These included the establishment of quality assurance systems, the provision of coaching and support during the process, improving the management of the human resource component, enhancing the knowledge base and capacity for policy implementation, and strengthening the links between policy makers and implementers (Gleeson et al., 2011).

Gleeson et al. (2011) also drew attention to the need for officials involved in policy implementation to be fully apprised and aware of the underlying rationale and values of the policy being implemented in order to be able to contribute to the decision-making processes. The need for officials to be creative enough to convert strategy into the appropriate action for the achievement of policy objectives was also highlighted (Gleeson et al., 2011). Based on the findings of their research, Gleeson et al. (2011) called for emphasis to be placed on planning for implementation during policy development. Gleeson et al. (2011) also saw the need for implementers to be involved in policy development and for planners to participate in the implementation phase in the

interest of establishing the requisite linkages between the officials and units involved in the two phases. These recommendations will be taken into consideration in the study of the role and function of executive agencies in policy implementation processes in Trinidad and Tobago.

Policy Processes in Developing Country

Horowitz (1989) contended that the systemic framework for policy processes in the developing countries is significantly different from that in developed countries. In this regard, Horowitz (1989) identified a number of factors that may at times militate against successful policy processes. These include the dominant role played by the state in developing countries, the political power and influence wielded by governments in these countries, and the cultural and social heterogeneity that is so often characteristic of developing states (Horowitz, 1989). As Denhardt et al. (2009) affirmed, institutions generally provide the framework that facilitates a state's economic growth and development, as well as the delivery of public services and goods. In spite of the power and influence wielded by governments, however, the institutions that comprise state infrastructure in developing states can be weak, with little capacity to either effect or support the social change proposed within the policy framework (Denhardt et al., 2009). As a consequence, policy processes in developing countries may be called upon to address issues that are seldom dealt with in similar processes in developed countries (e.g., attitude change, cultural practices) (Denhardt et al., 2009). It is for this reason, amongst others, that policy scope and coverage in developing and developed countries are perceived to differ considerably (Denhardt et al., 2009; Horowitz, 1989). An appreciation

of the challenges faced by developing countries, therefore, is essential if policy processes in the developing world are to be better understood and improved (Denhardt et al., 2009; Jones & Schoburgh, 2004).

The Notion of Policy Transfer in Context of Context of Developing Countries

According to McCarthy-Jones and Turner (2011) policy transfer is one means of approaching policy making in developing countries. Policy transfer, convergence, or diffusion, bandwagoning, and similar processes, generally focus on exogenous forces, and describe the process of transfer and adoption of policies from a particular location and time to other contexts (McCarthy-Jones & Turner, 2011). McCarthy-Jones and Turner (2011) describe the policy transfer process through which ideas, knowledge, institutional frameworks, policies and programs from a particular context to another, as one which involves the purposive selection by the actors concerned of entire policies, or of selected aspects. The transfer may be undertaken voluntarily or may be imposed, and the actors involved may be from international organizations, civil society, the public or private sector (McCarthy-Jones & Turner, 2011).

In the transfer process learning may happen vicariously or may occur through trial and error, as a result of the involvement of the actors with various experiments and different approaches and methods used in other contexts (Ohemeng & Owusu, 2013). Experiences may result in the imitation or adoption of procedures that were successfully implemented or considered good practices in other locations (Ohemeng & Owusu, 2013). In this way, policies, programs, and routines may be copied from one context and utilized in another (Ohemeng & Owusu, 2013). In the process, consideration is usually given to

the ideological differences, political variances, government and institutional capacity, language, and other contextual factors present in the receiving country that might hamper successful transfer (McCarthy-Jones & Turner, 2011). The study sought to ascertain whether the use of executive agencies as a strategy for supporting policy implementation processes in Trinidad and Tobago could be the result of the policy transfer process, and if so, the extent to which some adaptation to context is evident.

In discussing the challenges associated with policy implementation in developing states, a general understanding of policy processes in these countries is critical. In this regard, not only is the manner in which policy-related ideas and instruments are transferred from one location and context to another worthy of discussion, but also the inspiration and motivation that underpin the importation of foreign conceptions (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2012). Such an understanding facilitates a better comprehension of where advice and particulars are sought, the learning assimilated in the process, and the subsequent utilization of the information (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2012).

According to Howlett (2012), the policy learning process tends to be viewed as a government-related activity, and the information gathered and lessons learned in the process contributes to reduced risk of failure in the policy formulation or implementation phases. With respect to possible motives for the behavior of officials in policy processes and the resulting decisions, Howlett (2012) contended that officials who seek to copy and emulate successful policies that appear from other contexts may be exploring the possibility of learning from those policy processes and the experiences of other countries, or may be seeking to avoid blame in case of unanticipated outcomes in the transfer to

their own context. It would appear, however that the interest of public officials in the assimilation and application of foreign models differs considerably. Dolowitz and Marsh (2012) argued that the interest of politicians or elected officials in an external policy may be influenced by their political motivations or objectives. The interest and engagement of bureaucrats, however, may be stimulated by other factors such as the details pertaining to policy transfer, the implementation strategy, and the operational aspects of a particular policy or foreign model (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2012). In a similar vein, Ohemeng and Owusu (2013) observed that while political leadership can play an important role in the learning process, the time frame for learning tends to be short and limited, given the politically determined periods for elected and government-appointed officials.

The process of learning about policy may be one of the ways in which information about policy processes is disseminated across the globe by policy elites, particularly to developing countries (Conteh & Ohemeng, 2009). Howlett (2012), however, contended that contrary to earlier assumptions, recent studies on policy-making processes in the last four decades indicate no clear role for the utilization of research in the transfer process, and there is no evidence in support of the notion that policy makers base their decisions on the available technical and scientific information, scholarly material, and reports. Howlett, (2012) argued that decision makers and policy personnel tend to use the information sourced for bolstering their existing policy positions, and seldom for developing new positions, or for formulating alternate strategies or action plans. Fawcett and Marsh (2013), however, cautioned against the use of policy transfer as a mechanism for obtaining quick solution or result. Unfortunately, whether intended as a

quick fix or otherwise, it appears that policy importation has seldom achieved the desired results in developing countries (Denhardt et al., 2009).

While the policy transfer process may be deemed a success from a political or operational perspective, this may not necessarily be the overall view (Fawcett & Marsh, 2013). For instance, the policy objectives may not have been achieved in spite of the success of the transfer process (Fawcett & Marsh, 2013). The failure to achieve the objectives may occur in the original context, in the receiving country, and in some instances, in both cases (Fawcett & Marsh, 2013). But whether successful or not, policy transfer stimulates learning and the assimilation of knowledge and new information on policy-related issues (Conteh & Ohemeng, 2009). In the transfer process, stakeholders in the recipient country may adjust their ideas and thinking, and may consequently amend existing policy or create new instruments (Conteh & Ohemeng, 2009). Such new information, it is argued, must command sufficient consensus among interested elites so as to serve as a guide to policy designs in order for the policy to achieve some social goals (Conteh & Ohemeng, 2009). This new information and knowledge may result in the policy elites altering their beliefs and ideas, which may lead to the creation of new policies or may affect policies that are already in existence (Conteh & Ohemeng, 2009).

Pressures Exerted by International Development Agencies on Policy Processes

External pressure and advice are often cited in relation to the influence exerted by the Washington-based lending agencies in the late eighties and nineties on developing countries to conform (Denhardt et al., 2009). The policy agendas of the international funding institutions based in Washington, particularly the World Bank and the

International Monetary Fund (IMF), appeared to be in sync with basic NPM principles (Bissessar, 2002; Denhardt et al., 2009; Ewig & Palmucci, 2012; Sulle, 2011). These institutions, therefore, supported the introduction of the NPM-type measures in developing countries such as those in Latin America and the Caribbean (Bissessar, 2002; Denhardt et al., 2009; Ewig & Palmucci, 2012; McCourt, 2008). The advice provided and pressure exerted by the international lending agencies and development organizations in relation to a particular issue or challenge, as well as the interests and demands of powerful political officials who may wish to emulate the policy successes and rewards achieved elsewhere, have been cited as key sources of influence (Conteh & Ohemeng, 2009; Dolowitz & Marsh, 2012).

In developing countries, the checks and balances that tend to characterize governmental institutions and systems in developed democracies may be absent (Denhardt et al., 2009). The instability and inconsistency that are features of the institutional framework in many developing countries can present significant challenges for public servants in their efforts to negotiate with the various stakeholders in policy processes (Denhardt et al., 2009). In spite of the apparent institutional weaknesses, the messages emanating from international governance institutions in the 1980s underscored the importance of the need to scale up policy and institutional reforms in developing countries in order to ensure economic growth (Conteh & Ohemeng, 2009; Grindle & Thomas, 1989; Horowitz, 1989).

In the face of the challenges with which they were confronted during the 1970s and 1980s, the governments of many developing countries appeared to have few options

as far as their policy choices and the reshaping of the administrative arms of the state were concerned (Bissessar, 2002). Many countries followed the stern advice of the powerful international agencies on which they depended heavily for funding in many instances (Bissessar, 2002; Conteh & Ohemeng, 2009; Denhardt et al., 2009). In this way, the international organizations were able to penetrate and exert a significant level of influence in the policy spheres of developing countries (Conteh & Ohemeng, 2009; Denhardt et al., 2009). In this regard, Conteh and Ohemeng (2009) argued that it would be difficult to view as autonomous the policy choices and measures adopted by the governments of developing countries. The introduction of the NPM approach in the face of the uncertainty and challenging institutional context of many developing countries, and the minimizing of their bureaucratic systems as promoted by the NPM ideology, however, may not have produced the desired results (Denhardt et al., 2009; Manning, 2001).

Crook (2010) viewed the proposals emanating from the international institutions as attempts to transfer ideas and reform techniques that had been successfully utilized in the developed countries, such as those related to NPM, to the countries of the developing world. Thus, policy transfer processes for the most part involved the borrowing and adaptation of ideas, instruments, and practices (Conteh & Ohemeng, 2009). In this regard, governments in developing states were advised that practices such as bandwagoning were among the means through which the innovative ideas and successes of other governments in the developed world could be copied, emulated, and adopted (Conteh & Ohemeng, 2009). As a result, policy elites and officials in developing

countries engaged in monitoring the policy processes and changes in other countries, seeking to pinpoint possible successes for import, as long as the framework and conditions were considered appropriate (Conteh & Ohemeng, 2009).

Emulating best practice is one of the options often pursued in the search for successful policy processes. Woolcock (2009) observed that best practice options are often preferable in contemporary times that are characterized by the quest for the achievement of goals and targets, perhaps as a result of their assumed transferability across contexts. The underlying assumption of best practice models is predictability, predicated on the promise that same outcomes will be delivered irrespective of contextual variances and domestic implementation procedures (Woolcock, 2009). In such a scenario, outcomes may be predicted, costs estimated, and processes extrapolated and more easily managed even in the face of challenges in the receiving country (Woolcock, 2009).

Determining Success in Policy Transfer Processes

In deciding whether or not the policy transfer process has been successful or not, three key factors may be considered, namely the adequacy of the available information, the completeness of the process, and the appropriateness of the transfer (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2012; Fawcett & Marsh, 2013). According to Dolowitz and Marsh (2012) and Fawcett and Marsh (2013), insufficient information and knowledge concerning the policy and its functions in the original context may be a key contributing factor to limited success in the transfer of the policy to another locale. In addition, when only some aspects of the policy are imported while others that may have been pivotal to the success achieved during implementation in the original context are not, success in the transfer

process may be hampered (Fawcett & Marsh, 2013). The transfer process may be considered appropriate when there is convergence in critical contextual areas (Fawcett & Marsh, 2013). Convergence is essential since contextual factors such as language, culture, and political and institutional framework, might serve as barriers in the implementation process, and could militate against successful policy outcomes (Fawcett & Marsh, 2013).

As indicated by Jones and Schoburgh (2004), during the 1980s and 1990s and subsequent periods, a significant amount of scholarly work was devoted to addressing the policy challenges experienced by developing countries. The scholarly work produced by Crosby (1996), Grindle and Thomas (1989), Horowitz (1989), Jones and Schoburgh (2004), and Smith (1973), focused in particular on the application of techniques and theories, the choice of style and the issues addressed in policy formulation, deficiencies in the conceptualization, analysis, and implementation of policy, and the challenges of technological and institutional transfer, amongst others. In light of the challenges faced, Jones and Schoburgh's (2004) assertion that policy implementation should be viewed not only as a process, but also an end in itself is significant, and emphasized the need for key actors in policy processes in developing countries to understand the difference between process and result. An understanding this important difference should lead to better choices with respect to the action required and may result in a fewer deficits and failures (Jones & Schoburgh, 2004).

In spite of the impediments, social, economic, and sectoral policies were formulated and reforms contemplated, and introduced, in many developing countries

(Grindle & Thomas, 1989). There appears to be little empirical data, however, on the process through which policy-related issues were brought to the attention of policy makers in developing countries, the criteria for the inclusion of issues in the policy or reform agenda, the level of importance given to the policy advice received, the political commitment to effecting change, or on the process of effecting change and institutional reform itself (Grindle & Thomas, 1989). In addition, little is known about the factors that influence the sustainability of policy decisions, and whether or not they are eventually pursued or reversed as a result of political pressure (Grindle & Thomas, 1989).

In the Caribbean context, Jones and Schoburgh (2004) alluded to an imbalance in the attention given at the formulation and implementation stages of the policy processes in the region. The less than optimal outcomes have been primarily attributed to faults in policy design (Jones & Schoburgh, 2004). Faults in policy design have been blamed on adherence to external policy advice and guidelines, and failure to ensure that these guidelines were appropriate, and sufficiently adapted to the Caribbean context (Jones & Schoburgh, 2004). The challenges are not specific to the design stage, but are also evident in the gaps that occur in policy implementation, which according to Jones and Schoburgh (2004), have been prevalent in the Caribbean context since colonial times through the post-adjustment period. Jones and Schoburgh (2004) contended that the pressures on Caribbean countries to develop and implement policies that were internationally acceptable were both discreet and overt. In addition, as was the case with many other developing countries, the capacity for achieving implementation of a high level and quality required for success tends to be low (Woolcock, 2013).

But the pressures may not be only from external sources. Conteh and Ohemeng (2009), in their case studies on Ghana and Botswana challenged the widely held view that all developing states are simply policy hooks influenced by the games of decision makers in international circles. In their argument, Conteh and Ohemeng (2009) contended that countries are subject to both internal and external pressures in making their policy-related decisions. In many instances, the influential factors include, but are not limited to, the current state of the economy, the political framework, and the role and function of the private sector in the country (Conteh & Ohemeng, 2009). In Conteh and Ohemeng's (2009) view, only attributing the experiences of developing states to one source fails to take into consideration the complexity and variables involved in policy processes in developing countries (Conteh & Ohemeng, 2009). In this regard Conteh and Ohemeng (2009) argued that while the experiences of some developing countries with the introduction of new policy approaches, such as those associated with NPM, may conform to the conventional mold of the imposition of ideas from the developed world, it is possible that the policy experiences of other developing countries might be quite divergent and completely unconventional.

These scholarly opinions on policy transfer processes were taken into consideration in the study. An effort was made to obtain information on the rationale that underpinned the creation of executive agencies to support the implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago. In addition, there was interest in ascertaining whether the decision to utilize the strategy was premised on in-depth research and investigation into the success of this strategy in other locales and contexts, particularly within the

developing world, and whether the creation of the agencies was seen as a means of achieving a quick fix to avoid some of the impediments experienced in implementation processes in other policy areas. In order to obtain a better understanding of the decision to employ this strategy, the role played by policy elites in the decision-making, possible external pressures exerted by international development agencies, as well as the influential roles of political interests and domestic interest groups were explored.

The Growing Importance of Evaluation in Policy Processes

Pressman and Wildavsky (1984) highlighted the importance of evaluation in policy studies. According to Pressman and Wildavsky (1984), the implementation process produces the experience that is questioned and examined during the evaluation, and the questions and issues raised during the evaluation often facilitate improved program delivery. Continuous evaluation, therefore, is one of the best means of determining the effectiveness of programs and their contextual suitability (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984). The utilization of the results and recommendations arising from the evaluation is equally dependent on the ability of the evaluators to learn from their experience, and the capacity and willingness of those tasked with implementation to use the results of the evaluation (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984). There has been more emphasis placed on both the implementation and evaluation phases of the policy cycle in recent years (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984).

A similar argument could be made in relation to the linkage between policy formulation and policy implementation since the process of translating policy decisions into the requisite practice to facilitate successful implementation is often subjected to

several influential factors (Hicklin & Godwin, 2009; Simpson & Buabeng, 2013; Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). The factors most commonly cited include the prevailing social, economic, and political environment, policy standards and objectives, available resources, communication between the organizations involved, as well as the characteristics and disposition of the implementing agencies and the implementers (Simpson & Buabeng, 2013; Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). As Pressman and Wildavsky (1984) observed, however, complete understanding of a problem may only happen after it has been solved; similarly, the full impact and implications of a particular idea may only be clearly seen in hindsight, after its application and adaptation to a range of contexts.

Smith (1973) observed that policy-related theory building and research tended to focus primarily on process issues, with little attention paid to explaining the policy formulation or to instructing policy makers on strategies and methods for improving policy processes. Similarly, Woolcock (2009) contended that the development community lacks an in-depth understanding of varying paths taken in the process of implementation, and the contextual differences that shape results and effectiveness. This lack of knowledge tends to limit the capacity of key actors to predict, with any degree of accuracy, the impact a decision or project is likely to have (Woolcock, 2009). Evaluation research is one of the best available tools for addressing issues pertinent to policy formulation and development, and for generating data that could be used to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of policy implementation processes (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984).

When effectively utilized, evaluation studies can facilitate a better understanding of the underlying reasons for policy success or failure and for refining policy-related processes (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984). The effectiveness of evaluation is enhanced when its design and intent are utilization-focused from the outset (Patton, 2002; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984). In this way, the evaluation and its findings would be appropriate and context-specific, and would facilitate learning and improved processes in the future, based on the learning from past mistakes (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984). In this regard, if evaluation studies are to be used as the basis for improving effectiveness, there needs to be a deeper understanding of the factors that contribute to the range of paths and processes through which implementation occurs, and through which impact may be achieved over time, and the various contexts and differing scales and levels of impact (Woolcock, 2009). As Woolcock (2009) affirmed, this knowledge is critical to an in-depth understanding of the situations, times, and variances may occur, and could result in accurate assessments of effectiveness on the basis of empirical data.

In spite of the benefits to be derived, evaluation may be a costly venture, and the strategies employed to monitor, evaluate and review policy may increase tensions in the area of administrative capacity (Gleeson et al., 2011). In addition, a formal evaluation phase is seldom included in planning processes, and where planned, may be restrictive in their scope (Gleeson et al., 2011). Formal evaluations may carry political implications, as a negative report may have undesirable consequences if its findings are not in line with the interests and objectives of key stakeholders (Gleeson et al., 2011). Also, given the pressure often associated with political accountability, summative evaluations appear to

be the preferred choice of politicians, in spite of the limited capacity of this type of evaluation for influencing policy development (Gleeson et al., 2011).

Chapter Summary

The literature review was used to critique the key conceptions that frame the study. The focus was primarily on scholarly articles that explored and examined the notion of agencification and the creation of executive agencies for the purpose of improving the quality of service delivery by the public service. The review led to searches in multiple databases using certain key words, and to the use of alternative search engines in my quest for research material. Based on the scholarly work sourced, agencification, New Public Management, agency theory, and policy transfer emerged as the key conceptions and constitute the conceptual framework for the study. Comparative information was sourced to shed light on the experiences of developing countries with the New Public Management model, and the creation of executive agencies in support of policy processes. The role played by the transfer process was examined, and particularly in relation to the influential ideas and notions propagated by the international financial institutions and developing agencies and other policy elites. The review revealed that while scholarly studies had been produced for several African countries within the last five years, there were few empirical studies on the use of agencification in the Caribbean countries. Given this gap in contemporary scholarly material on the experiences with agencification in the Caribbean context, the qualitative case study on the role of executive agencies in the implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago is both timely and valuable. Filling the gap with respect to empirical research on the experiences with

the use of agencies in policy processes in Caribbean countries is critical. As McKoy (2009) affirmed, the pragmatic approach is one of adaptability, and this involves understanding why agencies may not be performing optimally, and taking the corrective measures and replicating those, which are exceeding expectation. This can only be achieved if the requisite performance-related information and evaluation studies are conducted. This case study is intended as a step in this direction.

The next chapter conveys details of the research process. Chapter 3 discusses the justifications for the research method, design, and sampling strategy. The chapter also presents the role of the researcher, issues of trustworthiness and ethical procedures.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

According to Stake (2010), research is an effort to understand a particular phenomenon. Whether the approach is quantitative or qualitative, researchers need to look for underlying causes, influential factors, preconditions, and correlations (Stake, 2010). For those seeking to understand history, a particular problem, or seeking to effect policy change, research findings can provide useful insights (Stake, 2010). As Stake (2010) affirmed, the collation and analysis of the data itself does not resolve the problem. More importantly, it is the researcher's interpretation of the data, together with the observations and the measurements applied that help to persuade individuals to accept a particular meaning or explanation over another (Stake, 2010). In line with this thinking, this study was undertaken with the purpose of gaining a deeper understanding of the role and function of executive agencies in the implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago, and by extension, to contribute to the body of knowledge of policy processes in the Caribbean.

The interest in gaining a deeper understanding prompted the use of the qualitative approach and the case study as the strategy of inquiry. As Stake (2010) affirmed, qualitative researchers who seek to examine and report on the complexities of specific contexts often use case studies. This case study was focused on public policy processes in Trinidad and Tobago and explored issues related to the implementation in that specific context. The research findings examined some of the context-specific challenges that are experienced in the implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago, specifically

drawing on experiences related to the implementation of public policy where the creation of an executive agency was involved. The study intended to contribute to a deeper understanding of the policy implementation processes in Trinidad and Tobago and to add to the scholarly work in the field of public policy emanating from the Caribbean.

Research Design and Rationale

Rationale for Choice of Design

Babbie (2008) argued that the philosophical position or paradigm that organizes and frames the individual's observations and reasoning underpins the explanations and theories that the individual puts forward. A paradigm, or worldview, is the manner in which an individual conceptualizes and makes sense of the complex situations that occur in the world (Patton, 2002). In this regard, Babbie (2008) and Maxwell (2013) highlighted the importance of explicitly stating and acknowledging the paradigms on which the research draws. Maxwell (2013) contended that the views expressed by individuals are usually influenced by the paradigm within which they were socialized and assessments tend to be compatible with their own worldview. When the researcher clearly articulates a philosophical and methodological stance, it is, therefore, easier to explain and justify the decisions made with respect to the research design (Maxwell, 2013). Many different paradigms exist within the qualitative tradition, but the one which has influenced and shaped my interest as a researcher and evaluator is the constructivist philosophy (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). A key assumption within the constructivist philosophy is that phenomena are best understood in the context in which they are

studied, and that problems and solutions cannot be generalized from one situation to another (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

The constructivist philosophy underpins the study conducted on the role played by the executive agency in the implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago. The use of executive agencies in policy implementation has become increasingly popular as a strategic option, and has been employed in various contexts (i.e., in both developed and developing countries) with varying levels of success (Sulle, 2010). Framed by the constructivist philosophy, generalization is not assumed on the basis of the success achieved in similar developing country contexts. The assumption is that the use of the executive agency as a strategy for policy implementation in Trinidad and Tobago is not only influenced by the context in which it was introduced, but also affected by the context (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Given the philosophical framework and the purpose of the study, the qualitative approach was deemed best suited. In keeping with the qualitative tradition, therefore, the views and ideas of key stakeholders who have been actively involved in the development and implementation of public policy were sought, collated, coded and analyzed (Stake, 2010).

Research Design

The quest for a deeper understanding of a particular phenomenon, the utilization of an experimental approach, and the holistic treatment of the phenomenon being studied are among the distinguishing factors of a qualitative research design (Stake, 2010). The use of a qualitative research design is synonymous with an iterative process in which the researcher plays an integral role (Maxwell, 2013). As a result, qualitative inquiry tends

therefore to be interpretive, experiential, situational, and personalistic by nature (Stake, 2010). Among the main features of the research design for the qualitative case study conducted are the purposive sample drawn from key stakeholders, and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques. As Stake (2010) observed, the qualitative researcher relies heavily on interpretive perceptions throughout the research process. These interpretations are usually a combination of the researcher's experiential understanding of the phenomenon, personal experience and the experience of others participating in the study, and information and material accessed during the research process (Stake, 2010). This was the approach taken in this particular study. The qualitative research design facilitated the interpretation of the data through the interviews and document reviews at the data collection stage, as well as during the coding, data analysis, interpretation, and final write up (Stake, 2010). As Maxwell (2013) observed, sample sizes in a qualitative study tend to be relatively small, given the focus on preserving and documenting the distinctiveness of the context. Ten in-depth interviews were conducted in the data collection process. Throughout the process there was noticeable similarity in responses to key questions, and after the tenth interview it was felt that there was sufficient data to facilitate the analysis and drawing of conclusions (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002).

Research Question

Stake (2010) highlighted the central role of the research question in the research design noting that the research question influences the choice of research methodology. The research question may be seen, therefore, as the linchpin of qualitative design, as it informs, and is sensitive to all other components (Maxwell, 2013). Similarly, Stake

(2010) contended that the research question is of greater significance than the research methodology, since decisions concerning the choice of methodology are generally shaped by the research question. In Maxwell's (2013) opinion, the formulation of the research question had implications for the feasibility of the methodology, the plausibility and relevance of threats to the validity of the study, and the capability of adequately addressing the threats (Maxwell, 2013).

The central research question addressed by the study is: Did the creation of executive agencies to support the implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago fulfill its role? Some supplementary questions were formulated to flesh out and facilitate the answer to the central research question, namely:

1. What has been the role of executive agencies in the implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago?
2. What have been the significant achievements to date?
3. What agency challenges/failures have been experienced?
4. What factors helped to facilitate the agencies' work?
5. What have been the main constraining factors?

Role of the Researcher

The researcher plays an important role in qualitative research in that the researcher serves as the instrument through which observations, descriptions, and interpretations are noted (Maxwell, 2013; Stake, 2010). As Stake (2010) observed, the role of the researcher in qualitative inquiry is, therefore, personal and subjective. My own role as researcher was integral to the process from the data collection stage through the

interpretation, analysis and presentation of the findings (Stake, 2010). I developed the interview protocol and questions, selecting participants, conducting the interviews, interpreting and analyzing the data, and compiling the report based on the findings. In spite of this highly personal role, however, every effort was made to ensure that the data were gathered, analyzed, and presented in an objective manner (Stake, 2010). Stake (2010) argued that the studying and questioning implicit in the research usually leads to both objective and subjective interpretation, and both should be facilitated. Given the highly personal role of the researcher in the qualitative tradition, Stake (2010) highlighted the importance of elucidating and explaining the biases that might be confronted in the process of interpreting the views and experiences of the participants in the study.

Researcher Bias

According to Stake (2010) bias, though undesirable at times, is ever-present. As a consequence, researchers, and particularly those who subscribe to the qualitative tradition, must learn to deal with bias by recognizing its existence and alerting others to it (Stake, 2010). Maxwell (2013) appeared to support this opinion, and observed that while it may not be possible to eliminate the perceptual lens, theories, and beliefs of the researcher, it is essential that the researcher provide an explanation of possible biases and how they are handled. Guba and Lincoln (1989), adopted a different stance, and proposed construction as an alternative to bias in relation to the qualitative tradition. Noting that bias seemed to connote a nefarious nature, Guba and Lincoln (1989) contended that the introduction of the opinions of the researcher would not be problematic once they are declared and critiqued in the same manner as all other inputs.

Maxwell (2013) highlighted some possible threats to the trustworthiness of qualitative conclusions that could be attributed to subjectivity on the part of the researcher. Among them were the selection of data that stands out in the opinion of the researcher, and the selection of data that fit existing theory to which the researcher subscribes and the goals and preconceptions of the researcher. For Maxwell (2013), the goal in qualitative research is not the elimination of influence, but rather to be able to understand and use that influence in a productive manner. Bias involves predisposition, and for the researcher, such predisposition can lead to an inclination to make mistakes, and therefore the possibility of inaccuracies in the data (Stake, 2010). While there may be errors in the data at times, in Stake's (2010) opinion, researchers should not be concerned with cleaning up perceptions, beliefs, and biases but with minimizing the effects of those biases on their research. This can be accomplished through better research designs, triangulation, skepticism, and checking the data gathered and the analysis through validation (Stake, 2010).

Stake (2010) argued that a study might be flawed when the research questions, selection of participants and settings, data gathering and analysis processes are driven by the researcher's personal interest and desires. As a result, there may be no careful assessment of the implications and potential impact of this personal interest on the conclusions and findings of the study (Stake, 2010). Explicitly stating any predispositions, clearly defining terms and functions, and having the research instruments and protocols critically reviewed and scrutinized, are among the steps recommended by Stake (2010) for handling subjectivity and any influence as a result of personal

preference. Some additional strategies outlined by Stake (2010) include paying attention to planning, question development, and data presentation formats, and measuring performance against explicit standards. These strategies and techniques framed my own approach in confronting my own interest in conducting the case study on the role of the executive agencies in the implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago, and my efforts to enhance the reliability, validity, and trustworthiness of the research and its findings.

According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), it would be unwise to assume no a priori knowledge or opinion of the subject on the part of the researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The issue is not the opinions themselves, but the manner in which those opinions or constructions are exposed and dealt with as the study unfolds (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). As far as my personal interest in relation to the case study on the role of executive agencies is concerned, it is noteworthy that I have worked for many years in the field of development, and particularly on issues pertaining to the small developing states of the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean. I have been involved in the roll out of developmental programs in the Caribbean. My involvement in these programs has always been limited to administrative oversight, but this involvement and interest in contributing to improved public policy processes in the Caribbean undoubtedly influenced the choice of policy implementation as the overarching focus of my dissertation study.

Methodology

As Stake (2010) observed, the research methods used in the collection of data are generally chosen on the basis of their suitability to the research question and to the

preferred style of inquiry of the researcher. The purpose of the study and the philosophical orientation shaping the role of the researcher in the study are also important considerations in the choice of the research method (Maxwell, 2013). In this regard Maxwell (2013) drew attention to the interrelationship between the research question and data collection strategies. Decisions concerning the research methodology are contingent on the research question, the situation, and the strategy most likely to be effective in the given context and facilitate collection of the requisite data (Maxwell, 2013). Given the purpose of the study, my constructivist-interpretivist philosophical orientation, and my research goals and interest in obtaining a deeper insight into the role played by the executive agencies in the implementation public policy in Trinidad and Tobago, qualitative methods were deemed most suitable and most likely to produce an answer to the research question.

Strategy of Inquiry

In conducting the case study, I utilized a purposive sampling strategy and thematic coding in the analysis of the data collected (Stake, 2010). The case study was deemed the best-suited strategy of inquiry given the evidence of its successful utilization in various fields of study in facilitating a deeper understanding of complex social phenomena (Yin, 2014). As Yin (2014) observed, the case study is generally used to answer “how” and “why” research questions, which tend to be explanatory by nature. Yin (2014) defined the case study as an empirical inquiry that facilitates an understanding of a real-world case, with contextual factors that are pertinent to the case. As a result, the

boundaries between the phenomenon and context may not be clearly distinguishable, and there may be several variables of interest (Yin, 2014).

According to Yin (2014), the single case can be used to test a significant theory, and to determine whether the theoretical propositions are correct, or whether there are other possible explanations that might be more relevant. The strength of the case study as a strategy of inquiry rests with its ability to handle a wide variety of evidence from several sources, such as documents, interviews, and observation (Yin, 2014). Framing the case study by previously developed theoretical conceptions can be beneficial, as these conceptions can help to guide data collection and analysis (Yin, 2014). The case can represent a significant contribution to knowledge and theory by the confirmation, challenge, or extension of the theory derived from the case (Yin, 2014). This was one of my own research objectives in conducting the study on the apparent use of agencification as a strategy for implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago.

The notion of agencification, particularly the creation of an executive agency to support policy implementation that operates at arm's length from its parent governmental ministry (Pollitt et al., 2001; van Thiel & Yesilkagit, 2011; Vershuere & Vancoppenolle, 2012), appears to have framed the establishment of the executive agency in Trinidad and Tobago. There seems to be, however, no empirical data in support of this deduction. Other notions such as NPM and policy transfer also appear to have influenced the decision to establish the executive agency. My research was intended to shed light on these issues, and by so doing, to make a scholarly contribution to research on policy

implementation processes in the context of a specific developing country—Trinidad and Tobago.

Case study research has often been used in evaluations as a means of conducting an in-depth examination of a particular case in its specific real-world context (Yin, 2014). In line with the specifications and guidelines for the conduct of case study research as outlined by Yin (2014), specific boundaries were established for the study to be developed, in that the location was Trinidad and Tobago, the data collected were specific and may shed light on the implementation process, and the time frame took into consideration the current situation at the time of conducting the dissertation study. As Patton (2002) affirmed, case studies have been successfully used as a strategy of inquiry in evaluation research, and the rich data provided by participants are generally sources of invaluable insights into the processes and outcomes of the programs and interventions studied.

Sampling Strategy

For qualitative researchers, the purpose of the research is not generalization but enhancing the understanding of a particular phenomenon through the contextual examples examined (Stake, 2010). As a result, purposive or purposefully selected samples are generally a feature of qualitative designs (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The nature of the case is usually decided in the design phase and determines the basis for the purposive sampling strategy to be used in the data collection phase (Patton, 2002). A small, purposefully selected sample was sought to provide the information needed for a better understanding and illumination of the research problem and the phenomenon in the

case studied (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). In the first instance, criterion sampling, which involves the selection of participants who fit the specifications outlined, was utilized (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Patton, 2002). In this regard, key stakeholders who were actively involved in the development and roll out of public policy in different sectors in Trinidad and Tobago were interviewed.

As Marshall and Rossman (2011) observed, the selection of the sample might often commence with accessible cases, after which a snowball sampling technique might be used to build on the insights and connections gained in the early data collection phase. This was the technique of choice for the initial interviews, following which more participants were sourced using the snowball sampling technique. Snowball sampling allows for the identification and selection of information-rich sources on the basis of information provided by the initial group (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Patton, 2002).

Patton (2002) contended that no rules govern the size of the sample in qualitative inquiry, since the sample size is dependent on what the researcher is seeking to ascertain, what is at stake, what would be useful, what would have credibility, and what can be done in light of the time and resources available to the researcher. In this regard, Patton (2002) further argued that the sample for a qualitative inquiry might seem small when compared to the sample size needed for representativeness and generalization. A small sample can be used in case studies (Creswell, 2007), and can be valuable, particularly when information-rich cases are selected (Patton, 2002). In a case study, a small sample is generally deemed sufficient for the identification of themes and for cross-case theme

analysis (Creswell, 2007). In conceptualizing the study, it was envisioned that approximately 10 to 12 interviews would be conducted. In the data collection process, however, saturation is considered to be the point at which the information provided by participants provides no further insight, and interviews were conducted until it was felt that this point had been reached (Creswell, 2007; Patton 2002).

As Seidman (2013) observed, interviewing requires the researcher to access and establish contact with potential participants whom they have never met, and often requires the researcher to overcome shyness, take initiative, establish contact, and schedule the requisite interviews. Indeed, this was the case with this study of executive agencies in Trinidad and Tobago. The sample was drawn from among the technocrats, officials, academics and advisors, and key stakeholders who would have influenced the formulation of the policy, or participated in its development and roll out. The interviewees were chosen specifically because of their roles and involvement in the shaping of the policy document and the proposals and in the decision-making process that would have led to the choice of the executive agency as a suitable mechanism for implementing the Act, and in the eventual operationalization of the agency in the implementation phase. As a result of their involvement, these individuals were well positioned to elucidate many of the issues to be addressed by the study, and to provide the type of information-rich data that would facilitate the in-depth understanding of the situation (Patton, 2002).

The request for participation in the study was sent to potential interviewees via e-mail initially. The request outlined the main aspects of the study, such as the problem and

purpose of the study, the rationale for the request for participation, and precise details on the requirements (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). As Seidman (2013) affirmed, e-mail has become a prominent component of the contact process in contemporary times.

Admittedly, there may be some skepticism about the receipt of e-mail from unknown contacts, and a potential participant may quite easily disregard an initial contact by e-mail (Seidman, 2013). Acknowledging that e-mail messages could be perceived as impersonal, follow-up telephone calls were made to ensure receipt, and to personalize the request, and to ascertain whether additional information was needed on the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Data Collection Techniques

Data for the study were collected from: 1) publicly accessible documentation, records, including legislation, reports compiled by international development agencies and financial institutions, reports and material available on the websites of executive agencies in Trinidad and Tobago, and media reports; 2) initial interviews with key stakeholders as well as policy makers and officials who were actively involved in the creation and operationalization of the policy, and 3) follow-up discussions and member checking with individuals who were interviewed for the purpose of validating the data collected during the interviews (Creswell, 2007).

Interviews serve several different purposes, and are commonly found in case study research for which they are considered one of the most important sources of case study evidence (Stake, 2010; Yin, 2014). Interviewing, as Patton (2002) and Rubin and Rubin (2012) indicated, facilitates the gathering of information that cannot be directly

observed by the researcher, and allows the researcher access to the thoughts and perspectives of the interviewee. This view is upheld by Seidman (2013), who argued that where the goal of the researcher is to gain an understanding of the meaning people involved in the case make of their particular experience, interviewing provides a necessary, if not always completely sufficient, means of inquiry. While the questions in quantitative strategies, such as surveys and questionnaires, tend to be closed-ended, the open-ended nature of qualitative interviews affords participants the opportunity to fit their own feelings, knowledge, and experience into the questions asked, and to express themselves and recount, in their own terms, their individual experiences in relation to the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2002). In other words, the questions in qualitative interviews deal with specific events and actions as opposed to the generalizations or abstract opinions often generated through quantitative techniques (Maxwell, 2013).

Interviews (conducted over the Internet via Skype, by telephone, and face-to-face) were the primary data gathering technique and main source of the qualitative data collected during the study. During the interviews participants were asked to express their opinions about the phenomenon, to share their insights, and to interpret certain occurrences (Yin, 2014). Maxwell (2013) noted that while the research question articulates what is to be understood from the study, the interview questions are formulated to obtain the information needed to facilitate that understanding. As Maxwell (2013) affirmed, the development of good interview questions requires creativity, insight, and a fundamental understanding of the context of the research. The list of interview questions developed for use in the study were geared toward gaining a better

understanding of the reasons for the creation of executive agencies to support policy implementation, to gauge whether any influence was exerted by external parties, to ascertain whether empirical evidence or comparative material on the use of executive agencies in similar developing country contexts provided the basis for the decision to use the executive agency, and to assess the role of the executive agency in the implementation process, and the level of success achieved to date.

It is acknowledged that while interviews can be an excellent source of data, there may be some limitations to their use. Apart from recall error, some other weak points include the possibility that some responses may be distorted as a result of politics, the personal bias of the participant, the participant's reaction to the interviewer, anger or anxiety on the part of the interviewee, or lack of awareness (Patton, 2002). Suffice it to say that interviews can be greatly affected by the emotional state of the participant at the time of the interview (Patton, 2002). With this in mind, the information gathered from the interviews was triangulated with publicly available material on the implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago involving the creation of an executive agency. As Patton (2002) affirmed, an organization's records and documents can be a rich source of information. In this regard, any publicly available documents on the agencies were examined in the data collection process in an effort to corroborate or elucidate issues related to the operations of the executive agency that emerged during the course of the interviews.

Instrumentation

A standardized open-ended interview protocol was developed for use in the data collection process primarily because it facilitated data analysis by making it possible to quickly locate answers to the same question and to categorize similar questions and responses during the analysis phase (Patton, 2002). In addition, the standardized instrument could be made available for inspection exactly as it was used, and interviews could be focused to allow for more efficient use of time during sessions (Patton, 2002). Other formats such as the conversational and interview guide approaches may offer greater individualization and flexibility, but are at the same time susceptible to greater subjectivity and judgment on the part of the researcher given the likelihood of qualitative variance as a result of differences in the breadth and depth of information collected from the interviewees (Patton, 2002). According to Patton (2002), credibility issues are less likely to arise with the standardized format since the same information is collected in each case, and each interviewee is regarded as a unique source with a singular perspective. Given the limitations of the standardized approach, in that it does not allow for the spontaneous exploring of issues or topics not included at the time the interview questions were prepared, and provides little opportunity for querying individual differences and peculiar circumstances (Patton, 2002), follow-up sessions were proposed as a means of clarifying or validating issues arising from the interviews, where necessary.

Using the standardized approach, an open-ended interview protocol listing the questions that are to be explored in the course of the interview was prepared (Patton, 2002). The preparation of the protocol ensured streamlining of the process, as each

interviewee was asked the same questions and probes, in the same order, and in the same manner (Patton, 2002). Careful consideration was given to the wording of each question in preparing the interview protocol, and every effort made to include any clarifying questions in the appropriate places, as deemed necessary (Patton, 2002). According to Patton (2002), the inclusion of some probing questions in the interview protocol reduces the need for the researcher to exercise subjective interpretation and judgment during the interview. The questions were targeted and focused in an effort to prioritize issues and to make maximum use of the time available, as it was indicated that the timeframe for each interview was an hour or so (Patton, 2002). The questions used in the interviews were informed by past research and premised on the approaches and issues examined and discussed in the literature review.

The interviews were conducted individually, with each session lasting approximately one hour in duration. Eighteen questions were included in the protocol. While face-to-face interviews were preferable, there were cases where the participants are no longer resident in Trinidad and Tobago, and these interviews were conducted via Skype or by telephone. The interviews were recorded electronically to facilitate transcription during the analysis phase. The documentation and records accessed were publicly available (i.e., the websites of ministries or the agencies themselves, reports and publications). The data collection process was completed over a period spanning three months.

Data Analysis

As Stake (2010) observed, analysis involves the search for elements and association. While analysis and design are often separated conceptually, any qualitative study necessitates decisions concerning the handling of the analysis, and such decisions inform and are informed by aspects of the research design (Maxwell, 2013). Maxwell (2013) argued that while there is no single or correct way to analyze qualitative data, the use of qualitative data analysis strategies should be planned and modified where necessary so as to fit the data with which the researcher is working, to be able to answer the research questions, and to address any validity threats that might have negative implications for the research findings and conclusions drawn.

As outlined by Maxwell (2013), the initial stages of the analysis involved listening to the interview tapes prior to transcription. The interviews were subsequently transcribed and the interview transcripts read (Maxwell, 2013). Maxwell contended that listening to interview tapes prior to transcription provides the researcher with just as much of an opportunity for analysis as does the actual transcription of the interviews or the rewriting and reorganizing of the rough notes made during sessions. Maxwell (2013) recommended that researchers use the initial listening and reading to write memos and notes on the information gathered, and to begin the process of developing tentative ideas about possible categories and relationships for use in the data analysis, and this was the process followed.

In the second stage of the analysis, the data were categorized and coded. Categorizing involves the identification of relations on the basis of common features or

resemblances that are identified through comparison, irrespective of time and place (Maxwell, 2013). Coding (or classifying and sorting) is the main strategy for categorizing qualitative data (Maxwell, 2013; Stake, 2010). Maxwell (2013) defined coding as not simply a process of counting items, but primarily a means of breaking up the data into units or segments, and marking and rearranging them into categories that would facilitate the comparison of items in the same category with the objective of developing theoretical conceptions. In the coding process, the data sets were sorted according to the topics, broad themes, and issues deemed pertinent to the study (Maxwell, 2013; Stake, 2010). The process of coding the data sets, grouping the data according to category, and assigning labels allowed for the examination and comparison of the data both within and between categories (Maxwell, 2013). As the study progressed, the categories were further focused and tweaked as new meanings emerge, and new relationships became apparent (Stake, 2010).

Maxwell (2013) pointed out the distinction between organizational categories and substantive or theoretical categories. Maxwell highlighted the difference, noting that beginning qualitative researchers tended to make use of organizational categories to in the data analysis process without the systematic creation and application of substantive or theoretical categories in the development of their conclusions. Maxwell described organizational categories as broad areas or issues that are useful to the researcher in organizing the data, or represent issues or topic areas that the researcher would like to investigate. Substantive or theoretical categories, on the other hand, relate to the content of the statement or action of the participant, and often make a claim about the issue under

study (Maxwell, 2013). Relationships premised on contiguity involve the identification of the actual connections between items, as opposed to their similarities and differences (Maxwell, 2013). These relations are usually identified in the actual context in which the data are gathered, such as in an interview transcript (Maxwell, 2013).

Maxwell's (2013) description of the various data categories and relationships informed my approach to the analysis. The text of the interviews, and the notes made from the review of available, pertinent documentation were categorized and coded to facilitate the interpretation of the data and the drawing of conclusions for inclusion in the report on the findings. In the coding process I utilized the NVivo 10 software package. The use of computer software in the analysis of qualitative data has increased in popularity over the past decade (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Yin, 2014). As Yin (2014) observed, the software assists in the coding and categorizing of data gathered during open-ended interviews, as well as documentation and other written material. Yin (2014) also drew attention to an important point concerning the use of computer software, emphasizing that the responsibility for completing the analysis rests with the researcher, since the software is a tool, and in that regard can only assist the researcher with the analysis. The written transcripts from the interviews conducted were uploaded to the NVivo 10 software, which was used to assist with the categorization and coding according to the themes that emerged during the initial reading and analysis.

As Stake (2010) observed, the research process in the qualitative tradition is iterative and involves the collection of data; analysis of the information gathered through the fragmentation and segmentation of the data; interpretation of the various units; and

synthesis during which components are put back together. The iterative process of qualitative research, from the gathering of the data, through the stages of analysis, interpretation, synthesis, to the write up of the final report allows the researcher to arrive at a deeper understanding of the research problem and related issues from which the process initially evolved (Stake, 2010). This iterative process was followed with the intention of ascertaining a better understanding of the role and function of executive agencies in the implementation of policy processes in Trinidad and Tobago.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Reference is often made to areas of weakness in qualitative research, such as its inherent subjectivity and personalistic nature (Stake 2010). Guba and Lincoln (1989), however, questioned the applicability of positivist criteria (including internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity) to qualitative studies, and substituted criteria that, in their opinion, would be ontologically and epistemologically more meaningful in the constructivist paradigm. As a result, the quality and trustworthiness of the study were assessed by its credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Given that my own work is framed within the constructivist paradigm, these factors were taken into consideration in planning and executing the study to be conducted.

The credibility criterion involves ensuring that the constructed realities of the participants match those represented by the researcher and attributed to the participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This criterion was addressed primarily through member checking, and progressive subjectivity (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The member checking

strategy is considered to be a critical technique for enhancing the credibility of qualitative research (Creswell, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Stake, 2010). Member checking involves the presentation of the draft transcript of an interview to the participant that provided the information for checking (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Stake, 2010). As recommended by Stake (2010), prior to the commencement of the interview process, my intention to have participants review the transcripts was indicated. I also used memos and notes to monitor the developing construction regularly throughout the study and to record the progress made (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Guba and Lincoln (1989) described this process as progressive subjectivity, and highlighted its usefulness as a means of recording the emerging construction. Utilization of the progressive subjectivity strategy was a means of ensuring that the constructions put forward by participants were well integrated and represented in the findings and that the conclusions were the result of a collaborative effort involving the researcher and the participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

The transferability criterion was addressed through careful documentation of the time, place, context, and cultural milieu framing the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In addition, a cross-section of stakeholders were interviewed in an effort to obtain a range of views and responses with respect to the issue being examined. While generalization is not the objective, the detailed description is intended to facilitate the transferability of judgments and the applicability of the study to other contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The documentation of the methodological decisions made and the unfolding of the process were intended to address the dependability criterion, while confirmability was infused by the careful attention paid to the constructions developed in the study and the

efforts taken to ensure that they could be traced to original sources, and that the process through which the conclusions were drawn is clearly defined (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

The triangulation of data sources was a means of instilling trustworthiness (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 2010). Triangulation serves to increase the researcher's own confidence in the evidence gathered (Stake, 2010), by allowing for the corroboration of evidence from various sources (Creswell, 2007). Maxwell (2013) argued that the use of triangulation as a strategy is a means of asserting that the interpretations of the data are credible and that the real views of the participants are reflected in the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). In addition to the strategies outlined above, from the outset I sought to outline and clarify any assumptions or opinions of my own that might influence the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Ethical Procedures

One key principle to be followed in conducting research is that of respect for persons (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). In this regard, Marshall and Rossman (2011) underscored the importance of valuing participants and recognizing the potential impact on the participants of the personal interactions that take place during the inquiry. In other words, the participants in the study were not viewed as the means to an end, and were treated with dignity and respect, with consideration given to their rights as participants in the study, and to the preservation of their privacy and anonymity (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). As Maxwell (2013) affirmed, efforts should be made to anticipate any potential concerns participants may have about the interview process, and to devise a plan for addressing those concerns. Uncomfortable settings, a lack of understanding of the

objectives and purpose of the study, differences in power and status, perceptions, and fear of possible consequences may hamper the interview process and have a negative impact on the proceedings (Maxwell, 2013). In line with the rules established by the university, no data was collected until approval to do so was received from the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

In keeping with good practice, and in an effort to deal with any possible ethical issues, informed consent forms were developed for participants to sign prior to the commencement of the interviews, and detailed information was provided to participants in advance on the nature and purpose of the study, and how the information gathered would be utilized and stored (Seidman, 2013). Participants were also informed at the outset that transcripts of the interviews would be made available for checking (Stake, 2010). At all stages in the process steps were taken to ensure that participants are not harmed by their participation in the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Confidentiality was guaranteed, and participants were assured that all information disclosed during interviews would be handled within the framework of trust within which it was provided, and would not be divulged to others without their permission (Rudestam & Newton, 2007).

The information gathered during the data collection process has been stored electronically on the computer. All files were systematically backed up and duplicated in order to avoid the loss of information (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 2010). The audio recordings from the interviews were transcribed and stored on the computer. A database was kept in which the details of the type of data, the sources, and the dates and times

collected were noted (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). All data and information used in the study has been stored in a secure area in the researcher's study area located at the place of residence in Trinidad and Tobago.

Stake (2010) noted that many social researchers tend to identify the improvement of decision-making processes as the main goal of their research, but perhaps the aim should be a better understanding of how things function in their particular context or setting. Indeed, gaining a better understanding of the role and function of executive agencies in the policy implementation processes in Trinidad and Tobago was the main research goal of this particular study. In this respect, the study examined the contextual complexities associated with the policy implementation processes. Through the insights gained, the study is intended to contribute to the improvement of those processes. The research methodology, the research design, data collection and analysis strategies and techniques were all selected with a view to facilitating this deeper understanding, which is explained and presented in the research findings.

Chapter Summary

The methodology chapter provided the rationale for the use of a qualitative research design. The case study was undertaken with the executive agency as the unit of analysis. The constructivist philosophy underpinned the choice of the qualitative tradition and design. In addition, my interest in obtaining a deeper understanding of the role and function of executive agencies in the implementation of public policies in Trinidad and Tobago justified the choice of the qualitative design. A small, purposively selected sample, open-ended interview questions, and the review of publicly accessible documents

and records were among the qualitative techniques used in the study. The subjectivity associated with the qualitative approach, and particularly the integral role of the researcher, might appear to give rise to some concerns about the trustworthiness and validity of the study.

A number of strategies were utilized, therefore, in an effort to address concerns related to subjectivity and possible bias. The disclosure of personal interest from the outset, the triangulation of data sources, and the steps that address criteria such as credibility, dependability, and transferability were among the strategies used in this regard. The choice of the qualitative methodology facilitated the collection and analysis of the data required to adequately address the issues raised by the research question.

The next chapter provides discussion of the pilot test employed as well as the demographics of the participants. Chapter 4 also details how the data collection process unfolded and what data analysis steps were taken. The remainder of chapter 4 then focuses on the results of the case study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to obtain a deeper understanding of the use of executive agencies as a strategy to support policy implementation in Trinidad and Tobago. Specifically, the case study sought to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of the executive agency in the implementation of public policy, and in the process to determine whether the agencification model was fully transferred, or whether only selected aspects were imported and utilized. The central research question addressed by the study is: Did the creation of executive agencies to support the implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago fulfill its role? The following probing questions were proposed as a means of obtaining more in-depth information:

1. What has been the role of executive agencies in the implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago?
2. What have been the significant achievements to date?
3. What agency challenges or failures have been experienced?
4. What factors helped to facilitate the work of agencies?
5. What have been some of the main constraining factors?

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the findings of the study. The data gathering, analysis and interpretation processes are explained, and the chapter culminates with a presentation of the findings within the framework of the research questions.

Piloting of the Interview Instrument

Marshall and Rossman (2011) highlighted the usefulness of pilot studies not only for trying out strategies but also for strengthening arguments in relation to the chosen genre and techniques employed in the study. Pilot studies may be used to refine research instruments such as questionnaires and interview schedules, but are also a means of considering important research issues including validity, ethical concerns, and representation (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). In line with the initial plan for conducting the study, the interview questions were piloted prior to the commencement of the data collection. The pilot was intended to ascertain whether the questions were well designed, and would in fact lead the researcher to the answers sought. The pilot involved three participants, all of whom had been actively involved in public policy processes in Trinidad and Tobago. The participants had fulfilled different roles. They were drawn from the academic community and independent consulting communities and were experienced professionals with expertise in the field of public policy.

The pilot served as preparation for the in-depth interviews to be conducted for the collection of data for the study. According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), pilot interviews can assist the researcher to gain a better understanding of self, and can also help to address barriers such as resistance to audio recordings and skepticism and mistrust of the researcher's agenda. For this reason, the pilot interviews were conducted using the same settings that were envisaged for the conduct of the data-gathering interviews. Three interviews were conducted—one face-to-face, one by telephone, and the other by Skype, since these were most likely to be the means through which the

interviews would be conducted. Each mode provided a means of observing beforehand some of the dynamics that were likely to have an impact on the process, and to devise means of addressing or handling possible challenges and opportunities. The pilot was focused on verifying the relevance of the questions and determining whether the instrument as designed and formulated would generate the desired responses and produce answers to the research questions. Based on the feedback received from the pilot some questions were reworded for clarity and others re-ordered in the sequence.

The completion of the pilot interviews helped to facilitate a clear understanding of my own goals and intentions as the researcher, as well as the data needed to successfully complete the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). By conducting the pilot, thought was given to types of probing questions that might be needed in some instances and to strategies that could be used to put participants at ease in order to obtain the best possible responses to the questions, as well as to gain some sense of the verbal cues being conveyed, given the likelihood that some of the interviews would not be conducted in the face-to-face mode, and the observance of non-verbal cues would not be an option. The pilot therefore served to prepare me well for ways in which I could effectively follow up to attain desired information.

Setting

Like several other developing countries including Ghana, Jamaica, Nigeria, and Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago has over the years introduced various aspects of the NPM approach to public sector reform (Bissessar, 2002; Joshi & Ayee, 2009; McKerchar & Evans, 2009; McKoy, 2009; Sulle, 2010). Given the number of agencies created in

Trinidad and Tobago in recent years with the aim of guiding the implementation of policy, agencification appears to have gained some traction in policy circles in Trinidad and Tobago. The Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, the Children's Authority, the Environmental Management Authority, Occupational Safety and Health Authority and Agency, the Telecommunications Authority, and the Regional Health Authorities are among the agencies that have been established (Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, n.d.).

There is a paucity of documented evidence on the rationale underpinning the establishment of semi-autonomous agencies as a strategy for supporting policy implementation in Trinidad and Tobago, or the scholarly material that would have informed the choice. There is also a scarcity of empirical evidence indicating the successful utilization of executive agencies in support of policy implementation in the context of Trinidad and Tobago. These gaps in knowledge prompted the interest in obtaining a deeper understanding of the use of executive agencies, particularly in the implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago.

In an effort to generate the data needed to answer the principal research question, the sample was purposefully selected and included individuals who were actively involved in policy processes involving agencies in Trinidad and Tobago. In addition to their active participation in policy processes in Trinidad and Tobago, participants were in all cases highly knowledgeable in their respective fields. The passion to contribute to social change was demonstrated not only in the eagerness to participate in the study, but

also in the frank and open manner in which participants responded to the questions, in many instances going into great detail to ensure clarity.

Demographics

Initial participants were selected on the basis of their active involvement in public policy processes in Trinidad and Tobago where an agency had been created to support the process. Given the number of agencies established to date, an attempt was made to engage participants from a cross-section of agencies operating in different sectors (e.g., public health, occupational health and safety, finance, and social services) (see Figure 1).

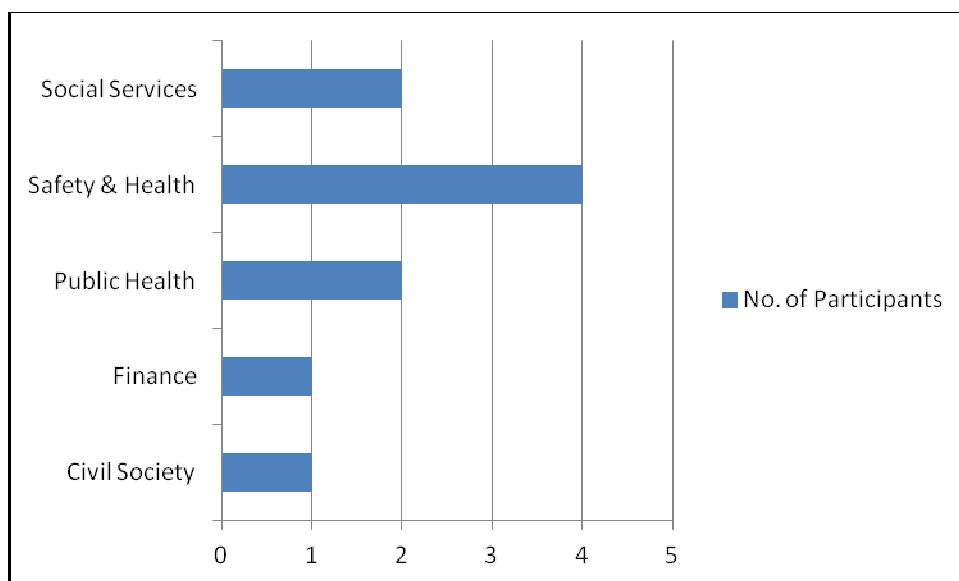


Figure 1. Representation of participants interviewed according to the sector in which the agency operates.

From the outset it was envisioned that approximately 10 to 12 interviews would be conducted with a cross-section of individuals from various sectors, selected on the basis of their active participation in policy processes in Trinidad and Tobago where an

agency had been established. Efforts were made to secure interviews with individuals from each of the sectors identified. Ten interviews were conducted, with more positive responses to the invitations to participate obtained from the Health and Safety sector than any other sector.

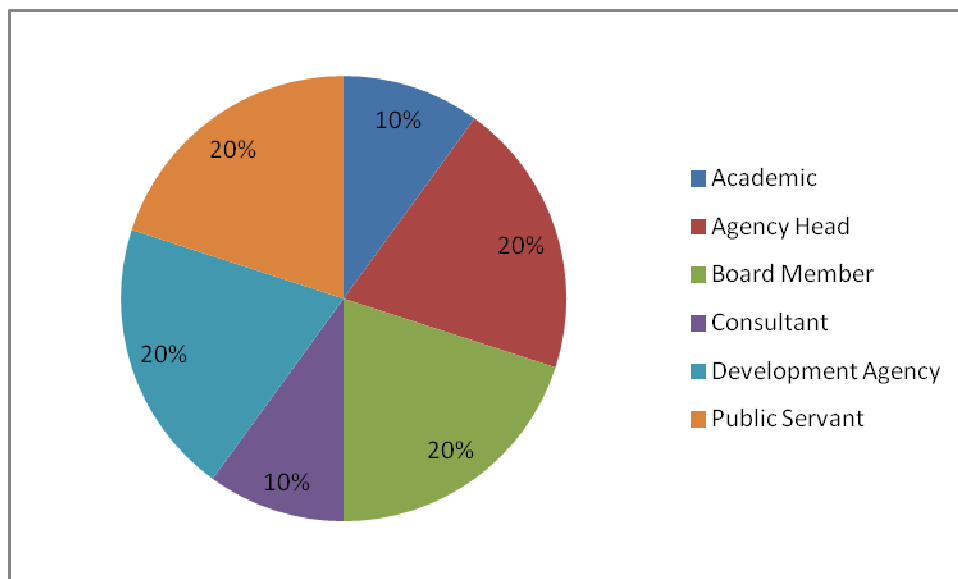


Figure 2. Participants interviewed in the study categorized by occupational grouping.

The interview participants were drawn from various professional and occupational backgrounds. They included senior public officials, academia, agency officials, technical advisors and consultants, civil society, and development agencies (see Figure 2). The inclusion of the various categories of stakeholders in the interview process produced a range of perspectives on the issue of agencification. The perspectives were as a result not limited to those persons employed on contract by the particular agency itself, but were provided by persons who serve or have served in the parent organization, in an advisory capacity, or as members of the executive board or governing body of the

agency. This range of perspectives and insights helped to enrich the information gathered in the study.

Data Collection

The review of publicly available documentation and in-depth qualitative interviews were the main sources of data for the study. The data collected facilitated the answering of the central research question. It also formed the basis for the conclusions arising from the study.

Review of Documentation

The review of documentation pertinent to the creation of executive agencies in support of the implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago was an important initial step in the data gathering process. In this phase, documents and statements that are publicly available on the websites of executive agencies and government ministries, or published in the local media were reviewed and analyzed. These documents included legislation (e.g. Acts of Parliament), draft policies that have not been enacted, reports and statements emanating from the agencies themselves, media releases issued by the agencies and parent ministries, and newspaper articles covering the events and activities of the agencies.

The legal and policy documents that were reviewed provided a wealth of information on the purpose for the establishment of the institution, the intended structure, their staffing, reporting, and other operational arrangements. For example, Parts XII and XIII of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of Trinidad and Tobago provides for the

establishment of the Authority and the Agency (OSH Act of 2004, pp 64-74). The functions of both units are clearly delineated in the Act.

66. (1) The functions of the Authority shall be—

- (a) to assist and encourage persons concerned with matters relevant to any of the general purposes of this Act to further those purposes; ...
- (d) to perform such acts and functions in accordance with law to enforce the provisions of this Act;
- (e) to submit from time to time to the Minister such proposals as the Authority considers appropriate for the making of Regulations under this Act; and
- (f) to advise the Minister on the organizational structure, staff requirements and operations for the proper and efficient functioning of the Agency. (OSH Act of 2004, pp 64-74).

Similar guidelines were also provided in the Trinidad and Tobago Revenue Authority Bill (2010), which was not enacted (Part II, p. 10) (“*Overview of the proposed Trinidad and Tobago Revenue Authority*,” 2010), and in the legislation governing existing agencies such as the Children’s Authority Act (Part II, p. 8) and the Environmental Management Act of 2000 (Part II, p. 13).

Under the Act, the EMA is mandated to:

- Draft and enforce laws and regulations for environmental management.
- Educate the public about the nation's environmental issues through awareness programs.

- Consider applications for Certificates of Environmental Clearance to new development projects that may impact the environment.
- Request an Environmental Impact Assessment from the developer when required.
- Co-ordinate environmental functions performed by organizations and persons in Trinidad and Tobago.
- Provide for the designation and protection of environmentally sensitive species and areas.
- Develop and establish environmental standards and criteria.
- Ensure the effective enforcement of environmental laws.
- Establish and co-ordinate institutional linkages locally, regionally and internationally. (*About the EMA*, 2011)

Newspaper reports and media releases provided a wealth of information on the challenges faced in the operationalization of the agencies. For instance, the staffing challenges of agencies have been ventilated in the news media (“Hospital bed shortage,” 2006; “PM Decries Vacancies,” 2014; “Uncertainty, Confusion at SSA,” 2012). So too, the impediments to the passage of legislation on the Trinidad and Tobago Revenue Authority have been documented in the media (“TTRA Bill derailed,” 2010; “TTRA Bill failed,” 2010). As a means of authenticating the information from these sources, where not mentioned by participants, probing questions were asked during interviews, on the basis of information obtained from media releases. In all cases information obtained from media releases and articles was compared with the first hand information obtained via the

interviews. The reports from lending agencies such as the Inter-American Development Bank proved to be a useful source of information on the progress made in policy areas for which funding was provided for the roll out of policy-related programs (Inter-American Development Bank, 2011; Pan American Health Organization, 2008). In addition, the websites of the government ministries in Trinidad and Tobago were the source of information on progress in the implementation of public policy and programs (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Legal Affairs, n.d; *Social sector improvement programme 2007*, n.d; *Strengthening efficiency*, n.d.). The information gleaned from the review of the documentation informed some of the probing questions asked during the interviews (*Public Investment Programme*, 2003; *The division of ageing*, n.d.). In addition, the documents reviewed provided were a source of data for the study, and in the analysis phase served as a source of comparative data for the information obtained during the interview. Using the results of the document review, the interview data were checked for points of convergence or divergence.

Interviews

Ten participants were interviewed. Three participants were selected initially on the basis of published information indicating their direct involvement in executive agencies established to support policy implementation. As planned, the snowball technique was utilized, and the initial participants provided the names of persons who could be contacted for interviews. The recommendations were followed up and proved to be useful contacts. Where possible, face-to-face interviews were conducted, however since some of the respondents were no longer residing in Trinidad and Tobago, and

others were not available during office hours, interviews were also conducted via telephone and Skype. Three face-to-face interviews were conducted. Of the remaining six, three were conducted by telephone, and four via Skype. In all cases, based on my observation and interaction with the persons interviewed, they were both willing and eager to be interviewed and demonstrated no discomfort or uneasiness with the interview process or questions. In addition, there were no instances of reticence or withdrawal from the process once initiated. Individuals spoke candidly and freely during the interviews and often at length providing detailed information about their experiences during the policy implementation processes in which they were involved. Interviews varied in length from 48 minutes to 130 minutes, with the average duration being 65 minutes.

Although lengthy in duration, participants demonstrated no signs of fatigue or exhaustion in the process. Participants were at all times very much engaged in the process, expanding on issues where necessary and offering supporting documentation where applicable. There were few brief responses, and the information provided was useful and pertinent. The interview instrument comprised 18 questions, and in most cases all questions were answered. Each invitation to participate was accompanied by a brief synopsis of the study, which included an explanation of the notion of agencification and the main features that characterize executive agencies. The questions pertaining to recommendations for improvement and the continued use of agencies as a strategy for use in Trinidad and Tobago evoked passionate, thought-provoking responses. The question on agencification, however, evoked witty responses with most admitting to never having heard the term prior to preparation for the interview. Some respondents

even offered their own interpretations of the term, and a few provided similar terms that they had coined to explain the persistent use of the strategy in policy processes in the Trinidad and Tobago context.

The opportunity to observe a meeting of the board of an agency did not materialize during the data collection phase. Observation was intended to provide first-hand glimpses of the operations of the agencies, and where possible, in the case of the board or Authority, to view the interaction between various stakeholders. The operational challenges being experienced by some agencies militated against this proposed action. This snag was offset by the willingness of participants to thoroughly elucidate the challenges and constraints of operating at arm's length from the parent department during the interviews.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data involved some initial manual coding as well as the use of the NVivo software (see Figure 3). The transcription of the interviews produced some initial thoughts on issues raised by respondents. By the final interview, some recurring words and phrases had been noted. Using the process described by Saldaña (2013) as descriptive coding—a first cycle coding method—the details of the responses provided by participants were perused and descriptive annotations related to the related topic, issue, or attribute recorded against sections of the text.

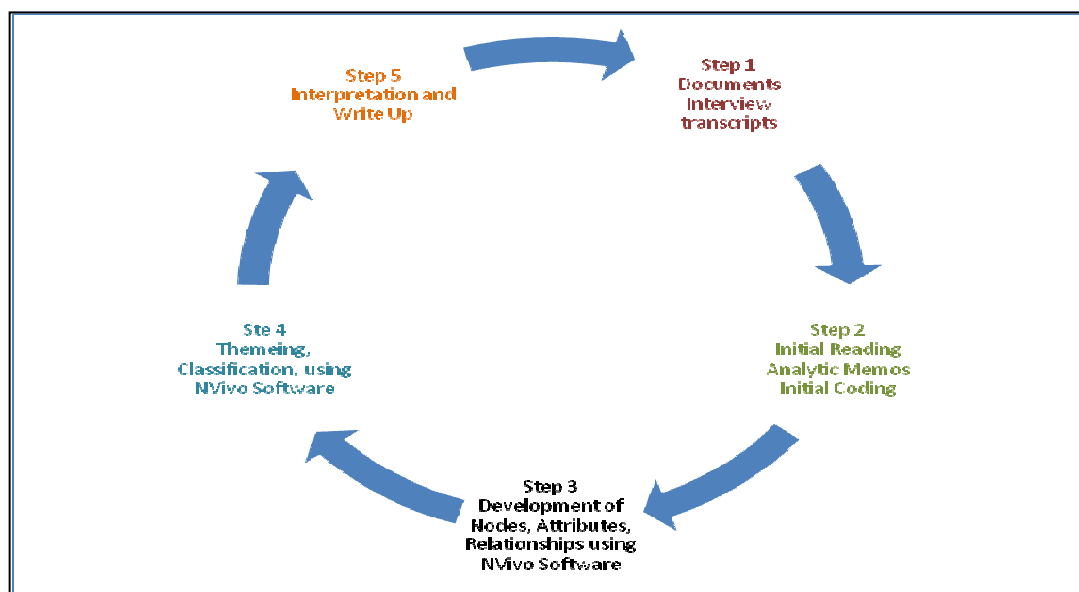


Figure 3. Process utilized in data analysis and interpretation.

According to Saldaña (2013), description is the foundation of qualitative inquiry, and the primary goal is to describe what is seen and heard in data gathering. In addition to the description, any salient details from the interviews or thoughts that occurred during the initial coding were also recorded in memos for follow-up action and later use in the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered (see Table 1).

Table 1

Descriptive Coding Matrix (Excerpts from Qualitative Interviews)

Text from Interview	Preliminary Thematic Description
...because they are not part of the public service and are usually contract people, who may be coming in at better salaries and so on, you have to manage the expected resistance. And that is one issue too with the public servants	Resistance
...the constraint was a lack of understanding and appreciation of how things happened on the ground in the Caribbean.	Context
...the challenge was the relationship with the line Ministry and the capacity to influence implementation.	Relationship
There was some bureaucracy in decision-making process,	Bureaucracy
They [the Agency] have been hamstrung for a number of reasons... Their staffing has been a problem, and they've had various setbacks. [For example] finding the level of qualification that they want.	Staff

Following the initial coding process, the NVivo software package was used to further classify and analyze the data. The transcripts were uploaded to the software and the initial descriptive codes generated as nodes. Using NVivo, the sources were coded and attributes added to facilitate classification. A word cloud was also generated with a view to ascertaining whether there were any other recurrent words that may have been overlooked (see Figure 4).

Aggregate	Classification	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
Nodes\\Recommendations\\Agency as Strategy						
Document						
Internals\\Interviews\\2						
Yes		0.0211	1			
				1	SJWA	24/02/2015 22:15
the way the public service is structured the kind of dynamic, flexible, anticipatory actions and policies that are needed cannot be accommodated in the public service.						
Internals\\Interviews\\3						
Yes		0.0136	2			
				1	SJWA	24/02/2015 23:01
If it could get a little more autonomy. If the Agency could have its own budget; if the agency could have a better decision making process, that would allow it to make its decisions and just implement and all of that, I would say let it stay in the Agencv.						
				2	SJWA	24/02/2015 23:02
I say it can be used. It can be used effectively once you have it well structured.						
						Page 1 of 20

Figure 5. Snapshot of NVivo 10 Coding for recommendations by participants.

By the end of the cycle, several nodes had been created, and with the help of the software various reports and diagrams generated that facilitated further analysis and interpretation of the data (see Figure 5).

Evidence of Trustworthiness

As proposed, steps were put in place to ensure the credibility of the findings and that the representations put forward by the researcher in the transcripts of the interviews matched the constructed realities of the participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This was addressed primarily through member checking. In each instance, the interview transcripts were returned to participants for review as a means of ensuring that their ideas and expressions were accurately captured (Creswell, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Stake, 2010). The developing construct was monitored throughout the process and analytical

memos kept as a means of recording thoughts and observations as they occurred (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This process of progressive subjectivity, as described by Guba and Lincoln (1989), was a way of ensuring that the constructions articulated by participants were integrated and represented into the findings, and that the conclusions drawn at the end of the process were indeed the result of a collaborative effort between the researcher and the participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

As far as the transferability criterion is concerned, efforts were made to include representation from a cross-section of agencies from various sectors (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Attention was also paid during the interview to details provided by participants on organizational peculiarities and cultural differences. Although generalization was not intended, the contextual issues explored and elucidated, and the insights provided by the study could facilitate applicability and transferability to other contexts in the Caribbean (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

The research process was characterized by careful documentation and recording of developments as they unfolded. Methodological choices, decisions made with respect to the participants, the interview settings, challenges and opportunities were documented as a means of ensuring dependability (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Attention was also paid to ensuring that the constructs developed in the study were grounded in an original source, and that clear links could be established between the conclusion drawn and the data sources. In this way, the confirmability criterion was addressed (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). As intended, data were gathered from two main sources, namely from the responses provided to the open-ended questions asked during the in-depth qualitative interviews

that were conducted and through the information gathered from the review of documentation. While opportunities to conduct observations in the agency setting did not materialize, the observations noted during the face-to-face interviews conducted with participants were very useful and allowed glimpses of the operational challenges detailed in the interviews. The use of more than one source of data, and the corroboration and triangulation facilitated by this strategy, was intended to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 2010). It is also noteworthy that my own position and assumptions as the researcher were declared from the outset so as to mitigate any possible influence on the study and its findings (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Results

The 18 interview questions included in the protocol were formulated with a view to generating responses to the central research question, and each of the five supplementary questions that framed the study. The interview instrument comprised 18 questions, which have been grouped under each of the five framing questions as they were designed to obtain as much data as possible to facilitate answers to these questions.

1. What has been the role of executive agencies in the implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago?

Participants were selected on the basis of their active involvement in policy processes in Trinidad and Tobago for which an executive agency was created to support the implementation process. In the course of the interviews, participants were asked to provide a rationale for the creation of the agency and to state some of the ways in which the agency had contributed to the roll out of the policy. Apart from those who admitted

that they were unaware of the underlying reason, and those that cited the legislative or policy mandates as the basis for the establishment of the agency, participants provided a range of responses including the need for specialization and technical expertise in the particular area; improving efficiency and effectiveness, and circumvention of the inherent public service bureaucracy; sidestepping issues related to allegations of bribery and corruption; facilitating the inter-ministerial collaboration that was required to address the issue; and the emulation of previous examples, particularly from the developed countries.

The legislative framework for agencies in Trinidad and Tobago clearly outlines the mandate of the particular agency.

6. (1) It shall be the duty of the Authority to—
 - (a) Promote the well-being of the child;
 - (b) Recognize and give effect to the right of the parent to be heard and the right of the parent to a fair hearing;
 - (c) Act as an advocate to promote the rights of all children in Trinidad and Tobago;
 - (d) Take all reasonable steps to ensure the availability of accommodation necessary for compliance with this Act;
 - (e) Take all reasonable steps to ensure the availability of staff required for proper implementation of the Act, inclusive of programs for training;
- (Children's Authority Act, p. 10)

From the variances in the responses, however, even where outlined in the legislation it appeared that there was no clear agency articulation of purpose and mandate to staff and technical advisors.

R1: Mainly to be to be more efficient in the implementation of the policy as opposed to the public service approach that was used to a more laid back approach. This is why there was the move to contract workers.

R3: I don't ... no, I can't say. No. No, because I didn't come on from the very beginning.

R4: Now what is the rationale? The rationale for forming an agency instead of going directly to the public service? [It] is that they needed an agency that would seek to address all aspects of the [issue] so obviously there is not one public service agency that would have existed that could address all aspects of the [issue]

R8: In my opinion, the institutional principle of agencification was chosen on the basis of earlier experiences in T&T... and international examples. The main example didn't come from the Netherlands or from other countries, but in my opinion mainly from the UK. This is the construction that was used in the United Kingdom [in dealing with this issue], reporting to the responsible minister.

R9: One of the things said was that they had to create the [agency] because it was a specialist area of knowledge.

Participants were also asked their opinions on the contribution of the particular agency and whether or not it has been fulfilling its mandate. They were also asked to state their views on whether or not the agency had proven to be an effective

implementation strategy for the particular policy. As can be seen from Figure 6, the majority of the responses (i.e., 70%) were positive).

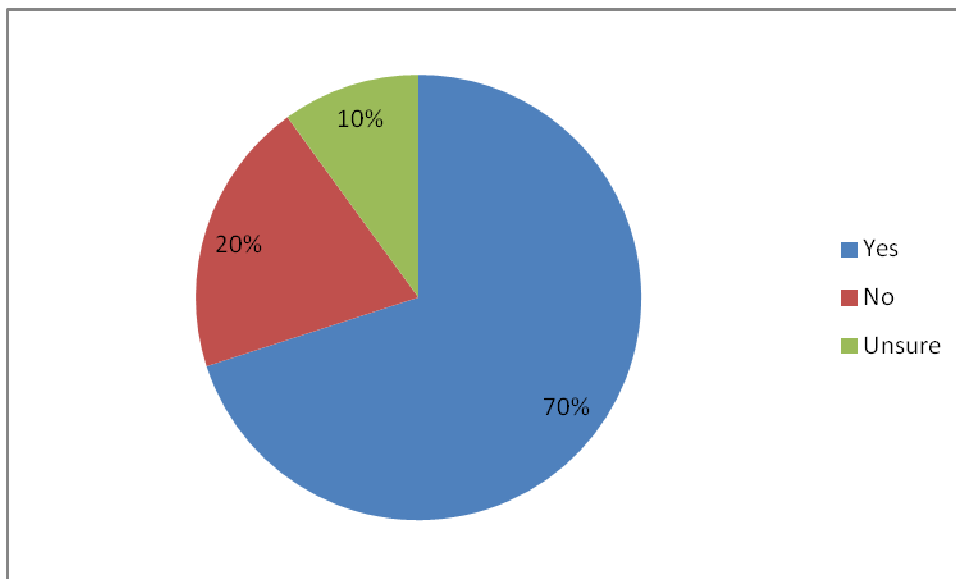


Figure 6. Perceptions of participants on the success of the agency strategy.

2. What have been the significant achievements to date?

In some instances the achievements of agencies were highlighted by the media and in the implementation reports of lending agencies such as the Inter-American Development Bank.

The North West Regional Health Authority (NWRHA) on Friday said 18 patients will be sent to private health facilities, but this will be done on a “phased” basis.

Moving the patients who are not in need of medical attention and making additional beds available in the NWRHA is “phase one” of the program to improve conditions for the elderly. (“Hospital Bed Shortage”, 2006, para II)

When asked about the achievement of agencies, participants highlighted the successes with which they were involved without hesitation. The contributions of the

agencies were easily recalled and recounted, and for the most part, the responses revealed that participants perceived that in spite of the challenges experienced, agencies had achieved some measure of success.

R1: The agency started to expand its coverage to the whole of Trinidad and Tobago...And we started to make inroads...It has contributed particularly in the area of raising awareness. There has been a lot of effort to make people aware of the Act such as educational programs and seminars, informational material, etc.

R3: We were able to develop the standards and the protocols...we were able to develop the training program. With the standards and protocols we went as far as having ... procedures manuals that people would be able to follow through.

R4: I would say timely implementation. I would say efficient spending of funds.

R5: So to the extent that it has ... the implementation of the policy has influenced the landscape, you know.

R7: I would say the assembling of the skilled personnel. That would be the putting together in one place highly qualified and experienced people who sit together and work out plans So that to me is a strength of the unit – bringing together key people who could then implement and do things very efficiently and very effectively. That's the strength of it.

In some instances the respondents were undecided about the achievements of the agency. The respondents who expressed uncertainty as to whether or not the agency with which they were involved had made a substantive contribution to policy implementation

highlighted the need for the institutionalization of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms with indicators and targets against which results can be measured.

R2: Nothing could be done by us until the new agency was set up. No systems. Nothing.

R9: I'm not sure to what extent it has impacted the culture...I mean, I don't see the indicators of change. They've thrown money at it yes, but what are the tangibles that say the Agency [has been] more successful ...

R10: At this moment, or so far, I don't think it's working as expected.

3. What agency challenges/failures have been experienced?

From the responses it was clear that the operationalization of agencies in the Trinidad and Tobago context was often characterized by conflict and challenges. Both operational challenges and institutional barriers and bottlenecks were identified. For example, with respect to the operationalization, lengthy delays were experienced in the establishment of agencies in spite of the legislative mandate, and once established, there were difficulties with staffing, housing, and in some instances the financing needed to carry out the agency mandate. In some cases, the legislation indicated an estimated timeframe for the commencement of agency operations, but as participants affirmed during the interviews, the period that elapsed during the establishment and operationalization of agencies was lengthy.

69. (1) There is hereby established the Occupational Safety and Health Agency (hereinafter referred to as "the Agency")...

(5) The Agency shall not later than three months after the commencement of

this Act, initiate consultation with governmental entities performing various inspection functions, with the objective of formulating memoranda of understanding or other arrangements between the Agency and such other governmental entities, which shall establish the mechanisms for co-ordination across jurisdictional lines and provide for the implementation of integrated occupational safety and health programs (OSH Act of 2004, p.67)

Participants were asked to recall how soon after the enactment of the legislation or the decision to adopt the policy the agency was established. From the responses given, a period of two or more years tended to elapse after the decision to adopt and roll out the policy or the enactment of the legislation and before any action was taken for the creation of the agency. It would appear, however that where there were boards (or Authorities), these were established with far more alacrity. In one particular case the Authority was established, but the agency—the implementing arm— failed to get off the ground. As a result, the roll out of the policy was stymied.

The institutional barriers and bottlenecks encountered were generally the result of the structural separation from and relationship with the parent organization. Participants were asked to identify the affiliated parent organization, and to reflect on and comment on the relationship with the principals of that particular organization. With regard to the relationship with the parent organization, the responses indicated several challenges ranging from resistance from the public and various sectors, micro-management by the parent organization, reluctance to delegate authority, bureaucratic approaches to approving the financing and implementation of agency projects, to name just a few.

R1: While some segments of the business sector welcomed the work of the agency, others saw it as a hindrance. In addition, the previous legislation...dated back to 1934, and some people wanted to continue along that line of thinking and not to embrace the new legislation.

R2: Resistance from the unions ... resistance from the unions and resistance in public opinion

R3: Back to the ministry. Back to the ministry for that. So we can come up with our plans; we can come up with our programs and everything; come up with a budget and all of that, and submit it to the ministry and then – trouble.

R5: Right now the way it is ... everything has to go through ... I mean, if you have to buy a paper clip, the ministry, the PS in the ministry, has to buy that paper clip for you. I think that's why it has not been given any credence, because if it is really given the autonomy that it should have...

R8: Within a couple of months' time a new minister came on who had not been involved in the whole process... and the parliament discussions, the setting up of an agency. And also the Permanent Secretary...went to another ministry

The respondents highlighted a number of institutional norms and behaviors that served as barriers to success. Some barriers arose from the incongruent relationship with the parent organization experienced by some agencies (e.g., resistance, bureaucracy, overlapping roles), and others had to do with prevailing behaviors and attitudes, and the institutional framework and mandate given to the agencies (e.g., alleged bribery and corruption; lack of sustainability) (see Figure 7).

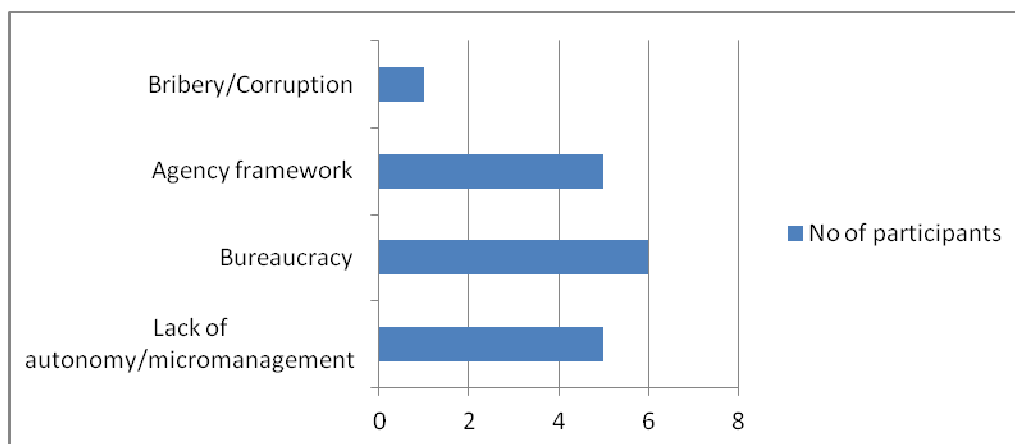


Figure 7. Main institutional barriers in agency creation.

The responses however revealed that not all relationships were unharmonious. On the contrary, some relationships were described as cooperative and supportive, with participants indicating that no major difficulties were experienced in the relations with the parent organization during their tenure.

R3: Yes, with the PS it was a good working relationship...they were supportive.

They were supportive, but I think they were just cautious.

R6: there was a willingness on the part of the government to implement...
develop and implement...

R7: [The Permanent Secretary] was very cooperative...we had a very good relationship with the Permanent Secretary

4. What factors helped to facilitate the work of agencies?

In order to understand how the work of the agencies was facilitated, participants were asked to identify those individuals or groups that, in their opinion, have served as champions in the creation of the agency. They were asked whether the views of any

individuals or groups were particularly influential in the decision to create the agency.

Participants were also asked whether they were aware of any pressure to create agencies exerted by external agencies such as international finance institutions or development agencies.

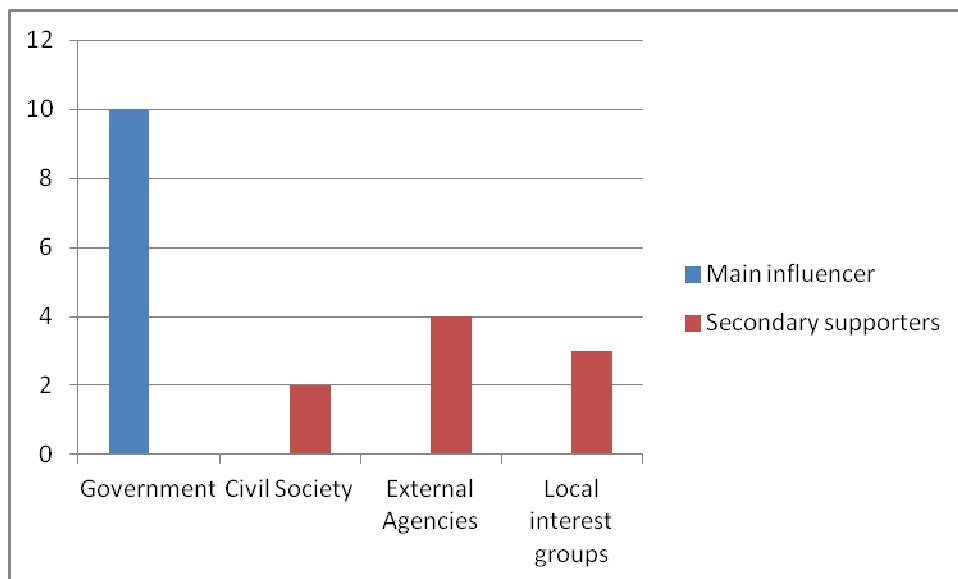


Figure 8. Key influencers in agency creation.

All participants attributed the major influence in the creation of agencies to the government (see Figure 8). Champions were viewed as the government of the day or a particular government official, but the overwhelming response was that the government shaped and influenced the process of agency creation.

R1: The government of the day – the politicians – championed the decision

R2: Mainly the government...the private sector for the most part supported it, but they weren't champions of it. This was led almost entirely by the government

R3: It was a government-led [initiative]... It was government-led at the time.

R4: I know there was government leadership for the start and, interestingly,

although it started with one government, when ... you had a new government come in they were supportive.

R5: The Government itself would have been the one that decided the final look...

R6: I guess the government. Because, yes, ...

R7: Yes, the government ...

R8: Some of the main persons, championing the creation of the Agency were the political and top-official functionaries. First of all...the minister...at that time (and likely also his predecessor). He was intensively involved in this whole process of getting the law through parliament. So he was very much involved and I know that he had very clear ideas on it. The second person was the then Permanent Secretary...

R9: A lot of the time when they develop agencies it's because the government has greater latitude in how they formulate and who they hire.

R10: Obviously, it's the government ... yes ...the government is very influential
In some instances there was support from the business sector, or civil society groups (e.g., the trade union) and from international development partners and funding agencies. Some influence was also attributed to the funding agencies particularly because of the conditionalities that are usually associated with the finances provided.

Among the key enabling factors identified as facilitating the creation of agencies were the political will demonstrated by the government and top political officials, the availability of experts and competent staff to fill the technical and managerial roles in the

agencies, and the availability of funding for the establishment of the agencies or for the roll out of programs within the associated policy framework (see Figure 9).

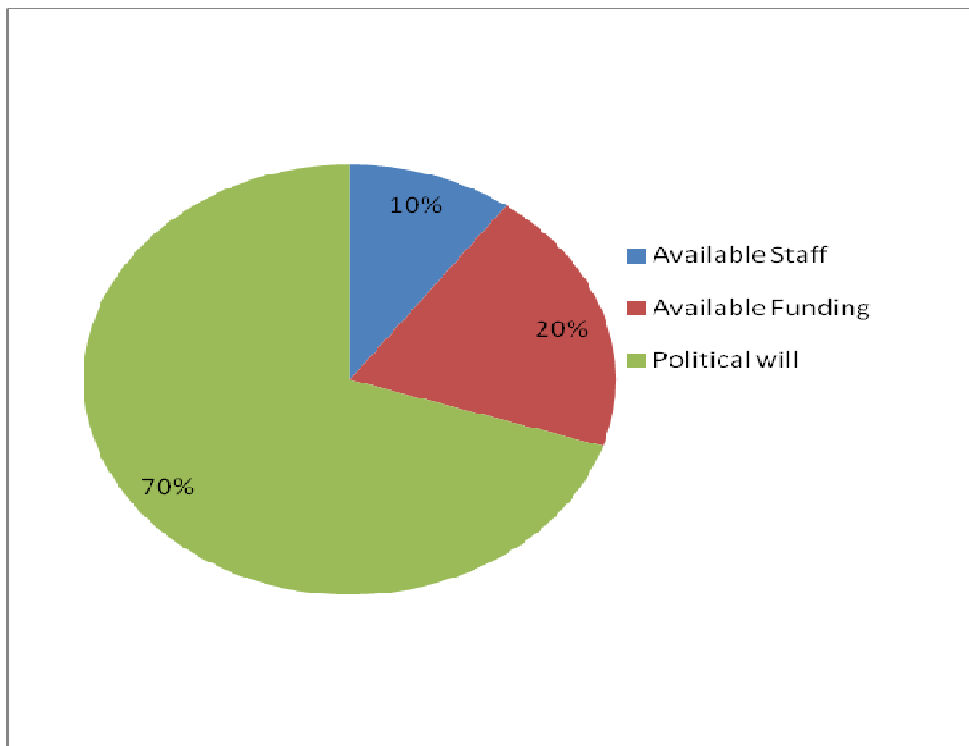


Figure 9. Key enabling factors in agency creation.

4. What have been some of the main constraining factors?

The operational constraints faced by agencies were also discussed. Participants were questioned concerning the adequacy of the available financing and staff, particularly in relation to carrying out the mandate of the agency.

R1: The organization had no house of its own. There was inadequate accommodation.

R2: Nothing could be done by us until the new agency was set up. No systems.

Nothing ... Now what you have to bear in mind is that the agency was never really finally set up...

R3: We had some problems with the...we had some problems with the other Ministry ...

R4: ...we became too top heavy; each...having this top executive management ... so there was a lot of resistance. So... the main constraint was the resistance of the public servants to the management of the authorities ... They created another layer of management. So... they were overlapping. But I don't think there was a good system established, So you know, because they had these two groups of people -- one working for [the Authority], one working for Government --you know ... and sometimes you know there would be personality issues because it's a small country...So [there was] a lot of conflict because of the new categories of staff that the [Authority] introduced ...

R5: Money...money and government control of the financial part of the equation.

R6: ...people felt threatened and ... yes, they felt threatened. They felt that we were on their turf and all those kinds ... of all those kinds of situations, yes

R7: So [the unit] would be pushing and trying to get the PS to get things and get the minister to get things moving, but sometimes it just didn't happen within the expected time frame.

R8: The assignment of a new minister, who was confronted with the lack of clear definitions of the level of autonomy of the Agency and the role of the Authority,

combined with changes in the top management of the Ministry, caused some political/managerial hampering, with some consequences for the effective decision-making.

R9: Staffing has been a problem, and they've had various setbacks.

R10: The main constraint was the financial management because it should be autonomous, but it's very dependent on the Ministry... and not separated ... not independent.

The staff-related issues and challenges that plagued agency operations were highlighted by the news media. It is noteworthy that staff-related issues were among the causes identified for the failure to establish a particular agency.

The collapse of the TTRA [Trinidad and Tobago Revenue Authority] Bill now derails a memorandum of agreement (MoA) which Government desperately sought to reach with the Public Services Association (PSA) on job security for thousands of Board of Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise Division workers in two days of negotiations. ("TTRA bill derailed", 2010, para I)

This issue [staff vacancies] was among a list of recommendations which needed urgent attention listed in the first report of the Child Protection Task Force ...

Fielding questions from the media after the event, [Minister] De Coteau said the delay in filling the vacancies centered on salary negotiations. ("PM decries vacancies at Children's Authority," 2014, para III).

Participants identified the lack of adequate staffing as a key constraint. Some other staff-related issues included the top-heavy management structure, redeployment of

key officials (political and technical), resistance from staff and key stakeholders, and turf issues. Financial challenges were mentioned by three of the interview respondents (see Table 2).

Table 2

Key Operational Challenges Identified by Participants

Key Challenge Identified	No of Participants
Inadequate staffing	7
Bureaucracy/Resistance from parent department	6
Micromanagement/lack of autonomy	5
Overlapping roles/responsibilities	5
Inadequate funding	3
Inadequate facilities/accommodation	3

5. Other questions related to the theoretical framework and evaluative component)

Principal-agent theory, the notion of agencification that emanated from the NPM approach, and the concept of policy transfer framed the study. In this regard, a number of questions were included in the interview questionnaire with a view to exploring the pertinence of these concepts in relation to the creation of executive agencies in the context of Trinidad and Tobago. Participants were therefore asked whether the term agencification was familiar, and what it signified to them; whether the agency with which they were affiliated conformed to the general characteristics outlined by Bach et al. (2012) and Pollitt et al. (2001); whether they knew if the experiences of other countries

with the use of executive agencies in the implementation of public policy, and previous research on the use of agencies had informed the decision to use this strategy in Trinidad and Tobago; whether they would recommend the strategy based on their own experience with policy implementation utilizing the agency model; and whether there were any recommendations for improvement to be put forward.

Based on the interview responses, the term agencification was not well known. Only one of the participants demonstrated familiarity with the term and concept prior to participation in the interview process for this study. The question nonetheless generated some interesting responses with participants surmising and interpreting the term based on their own experiences in the field.

R1: No. While I know about the movement away from public service in the interest of more efficiency and effectiveness, particularly in Europe, I had not heard the actual term until you used it.

R3: No, no, no. It's when I read it in your document ... ha ha! When I read it in your document I saw it... I kind of saw it for the first time – agencification.

R4: No, I have not ... and I said, “Oh, this is an interesting term – agencification.” What did I think about it? What does it signify for me? Just looking at the term in the context of your background, I saw it as a strategy for managing the public sector. And without giving my opinion on whether agencification is a good thing or a bad thing -- I'm just understanding it as one strategy for public service management.

R5: Not necessarily. I think the concept, I understood. But agencification no... I thought it was correlating to when we talk about the agency model ... So, whether or not you're in the service model or agency model. So I've had some cross with the term -- not agencification -- but I understood what it meant. And it's one of the things that we necessarily didn't buy into ... because it was a mechanism that was being employed by government to bypass the protocols of the public service.

R7: No, it's the first time I heard it when you used it. I used to use another term I used to use a term called *projectitis* – that was my term, because you know we said they tried to solve all these problems and issues by developing projects. And I suppose it's the same thing you're getting at. Rather than fixing the public service and getting it to be efficient and effective, they tried to sideline it by setting up separate units or setting up a project

R8: Yes, sure. Before I came to Trinidad I worked in Turkey and before that I was ... in the Netherlands ... However we have never become an agency, we were in the intensive process of agencification ... Just before I left ... this process of agencification was stopped due to ... political decisions. So we never really became an agency, but all preparations (organizational, contractual, financial) were prepared. That's why I'm very familiar with it.

The questions on further recommendation of use of the model and suggested improvements generated passionate responses, with participants thoroughly examining and candidly discussing the barriers to success and possible solutions. In spite of the weaknesses identified and the challenges experienced, participants, for the most part felt

the model was workable provided that their agencies afforded adequate resources to function efficiently and effectively, and accorded the requisite level of authority for decision-making and discharge of its role and function (see Figure 10).

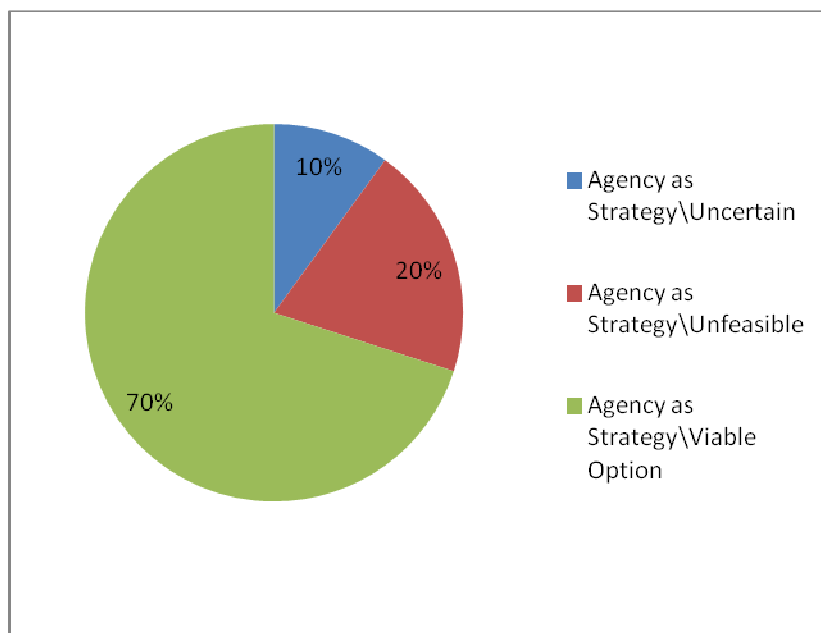


Figure 10. Percentage of participants recommending further use of agencies as a strategy.

Discussion on the Findings

The central research question of the study sought to ascertain whether the creation of executive agencies to support the implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago has fulfilled its role. In an effort to answer this question, several aspects of the issue were examined. Firstly, in order to obtain a better understanding of the role and function of the agencies, clarity was sought on the rationale for their creation. Various explanations were proffered, ranging from the need for increased efficacy afforded by the hiring of contracted employees and the avoidance of the highly bureaucratic public

service; the need for professional expertise and specialization not available in the public service; the conditionalities and stipulations generally associated with donor funding; and alignment with provisions handed down in the legislation and policy documents.

Apart from the fact that the creation of agencies is mandated by law or statute to support policy implementation, there were some enabling factors that facilitated the creation of agencies such as the political will demonstrated by governments and politicians; the availability of experts and professionals to fill the leadership roles in agencies; and the technical and financial support provided by development agencies and financial institutions for policy and program implementation. In spite of these enabling factors, many barriers to success were highlighted. The responses indicated that the enthusiasm and passion for instituting social change demonstrated by those involved in the conceptualization and planning of the agency and the initial roll out of the policy implementation process, often waned as these officials are transferred out of their positions of influence, or as political regimes are changed. Some examples of poor performance and failure were provided such as the case in which the decision to establish the agency was abandoned, and sustainability of a particular unit was hampered because there was inadequate planning for the transition phase.

Some operational challenges were identified as well, which in many cases served to stymie the success of the agencies. These included inadequate human and financial resources; unharmonious relations with the principal, which often resulted in duality and overlapping roles and responsibilities, limited autonomy and decision making powers, and high levels of micro-management. In this regard, the implementation reports of donor

institutions such as the Inter American Bank provided several insights, particularly with respect to the lessons learned.

Institutional capacity and availability of skilled local staff must be well assessed, understood and acknowledged in order to create the appropriate organizational structure, project cycle, division of tasks, management systems, etc. (IADB, 2011, pp. 14-15).

A complete institutional assessment of all the entities involved in the execution of the programme is needed prior to its commencement. For the HSRP [Health Sector Reform Programme] the several co-entities charged with the execution of different activities had varied strengths, capabilities and commitment to the goals and objectives of the programme. The PAU suffered from insufficient staff and skills deficiencies in some areas (IADB, 2011, p.15).

In spite of the challenges outlined, agencies have registered some measure of success, particularly with respect to awareness raising and publicity campaigns, the execution of training programs and the preparation of educational, promotional, and operational manuals. For the most part, participants perceived agencies to have contributed to the policy implementation process, and were willing to recommend the strategy for use in policy processes. The responses to the interview questions indicated that some research had been undertaken, and the experiences of other countries with the use of the agency model taken into consideration. Based on the responses, participants were of the view that the agency model had been transferred and adopted as originally conceptualized and institutionalized in other contexts. Successful transfer in the context

of Trinidad and Tobago has been hampered however by contextual challenges emanating from leadership challenges, a lack of understanding of the role and function of the agency; failure to accord the requisite operational autonomy and to delegate the authority necessary for decision making and program roll out. The need for strong, committed leadership is highlighted in the implementation report of the IADB (2011).

Strong and committed leadership and senior management are critical to effective implementation. The tardiness and reluctance of senior managers to make decisions in a timely manner created significant delays. Oversight and management need to be robust to ensure performance. (IADB, 2011, p.15)

Given that the agency model continues to be a strategy of choice in the Trinidad and Tobago context, the barriers to success need to be addressed if agencies are to fulfill their mandates in the policy implementation processes. While a few participants suggested that agencies should in fact cease to operate as semi-autonomous entities and should instead be embedded as a means of bolstering the competence and capacity of the public service, the majority expressed the view that the strategy was viable once agencies were given the requisite resources and accorded the level of autonomy needed to successfully carry out the mandate. These were among the recommendations for improvement put forward by participants (see Table 3). Some of the other recommendations included the need for an accountability framework; the need for more advocacy, consultation, and participatory involvement of stakeholders and key partners in the creation of agencies; the need for careful consideration of the nature and scope of the policy at the design stage, and assessment as to whether the agency would in fact be the

best possible means of contributing to successful policy implementation; the need for adequate human and financial resources; the need for monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to be included in the model, with the requisite indicators for measuring and reporting success; and, the need to put in place a transition strategy for agency operations to be migrated to the public service after a specified period in time.

Table 3

Recommendations Put Forward by Interview Participants

Recommended Action	Number of Participants
Mandate	
Prior consultation with key stakeholders/raising of public awareness	5
Improvements in conceptualization/legal provisions	3
Short-term with transition plan public service integration	3
Customization/No “one-size-fits-all” approach	2
Institutional framework/organizational structure	
Increased autonomy/ Delegation of authority	6
Clear reporting lines/role definition	3
Establish champions/counterparts in parent organization	2
Accountability framework	1
Operationalization	
Monitoring and evaluation plan institutionalized	3
Adequate staffing/enhanced skills and competencies	2
Enhanced internal communication	1

The issue of monitoring and evaluation, although mentioned by three participants only during the interviews, was highlighted in several paragraphs of the lessons learned section of the IADB implementation report, which called for the inclusion of evaluations in the operational planning and budgeting aspects of programmes (IADB, 2011).

Clear measurement of management performance with objective indicators would help (IADB, 2011, p.15).

Efficient document management would have prevented the misplacement of critical documents, which affected the PAU and its ability to report, evaluate, procure, disburse, etc. Ex-post evaluations of individual projects would also have been useful to identify and investigate bottlenecks, document lessons learned and promote project cycle management and organizational development. Such evaluations could be included in the operating manual and in the budget (IADB, 2011, p.15).

The recommendations emanating from documents reviewed and the interview responses provide a means of enhancing agency operations. While it is clear that some success has been recorded by agencies to date, their role and function in the policy context in the Trinidad and Tobago context appears to be thwarted by the challenges faced. In this regard, consideration could be given to the recommendations provided, given the apparent preference for the creation of agencies as a strategy to support the implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago.

Chapter Summary

The data collection process yielded many insights on the role and function of agencies in Trinidad and Tobago. The central research question sought to ascertain whether agencies have been successful in fulfilling their mandate as a strategy to support the implementation of public policy in the Trinidad and Tobago context. The review of documentation and the transcripts of the open-ended questions put to the ten respondents who agreed to participate in the qualitative interviews generated the data used in the study. The analysis and interpretation of the data gathered was facilitated through a

combination of manual coding in the first instance and the use of the NVivo software package. An interpretation of the research findings is provided in Chapter 5, as well as the conclusions drawn on the basis of the data gathered. Both practical and academic recommendations arising from the study are then provided. The chapter concludes with a discussion of important policy provisions and implications for positive social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This qualitative case study was intended to obtain a deeper understanding of the use of executive agencies as a strategy for supporting the implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago. The interest in obtaining a more in-depth understanding of the role and function of agencies in policy implementation processes in Trinidad and Tobago was prompted by the observation that several agencies have been established in recent years, and the agency model continues to be a strategy of choice for supporting policy processes in Trinidad and Tobago. In spite of the proliferation of agencies, however, there are few scholarly studies based on empirical evidence on the use of executive agencies in policy processes in Trinidad and Tobago, and in the English-speaking Caribbean. It is noteworthy that some pioneering work emanated from the University of the West Indies in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Bissessar, 2002; Jones, 1992; 2001; Jones & Schoburgh, 2004; Lodge & Stirton, 2009; McKoy, 2009), and it is hoped that this study will serve to stimulate further scholarly interest in policy-related issues pertaining to the small developing states of the English-speaking Caribbean.

Interpretation of the Findings

The notions of agencification, New Public Management, principal-agent theory, and policy transfer framed the study. According to Bach et al. (2012), Belgium, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States were among the countries that initially opted to introduce agencies. The use of semi-autonomous agencies that often operate at arm's length from their political chiefs constitutes the concept of

agencification (Bach et al., 2012). Agencies may vary from country to country, as they are often influenced by the domestic political system, which results in differences in structure, role, and function (Sulle, 2010; van Thiel & Yesilkagit, 2011). Bach et al. (2012) indicated that in countries where there is a parliamentary system of government, the heads of the agency may be appointed either by the government or the minister that carries political responsibility for the activities of the particular agency. In addition, tasks are generally outlined in statutory provisions governing the creation of the agency, and the level of autonomy accorded to the agency and its role are decided and delegated by the parent ministry (Bach et al., 2012). Based on the findings of this study, this is the operating framework that has been followed in Trinidad and Tobago.

As Lodge and Stirton (2009) observed, under the Westminster parliamentary model inherited by former colonial states such as Trinidad and Tobago, the ministers of government shoulder the accountability for the execution and achievement of policy objectives. Traditionally, while politicians have had responsibility for establishing policy objectives, and for defining the expected outcomes, outputs and service delivery standards, public servants, who carried out the tasks, were expected to operate in the background in virtual anonymity (Lodge & Stirton, 2009). As Pollitt et al. (2001) affirmed, in spite of the variances in the nature and scope of agency operations from country to country, the significant area of convergence has been the belief that agencies would be indicative of a government's modern and progressive approach to improving the efficiency and service delivery of the state apparatus. The new managerialism with which the creation of executive agencies is associated, however, introduced a new level of

accountability and represented a departure from tradition for public servants in the Caribbean context (Lodge & Stirton, 2009). The challenges of adjustment to and assimilation of this new model were highlighted by the responses of participants during the interviews conducted as part of the study.

Several points from the literature reviewed were confirmed by the data arising from the study. For instance, Pollitt et al. (2001) contended that empirical research indicated that the decisions related to the organizational structure of agencies made by ministers and civil servants appear to be ad hoc in nature, and that theoretical conceptualizations tended to be a feature more so of scholarly contexts than the reality of politico-administrative decision making. The apparent gaps in the policy provisions outlining the structure and organization of agencies appear to corroborate this assertion by Pollitt et al. (2001). Pollitt et al. (2001) also highlighted the dearth of empirical evidence on the contribution of agencies to improvements in the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery in the public service. This point was echoed by a participant during the interviews. In the Caribbean context, McKoy's (2009) assessment and comparison of service delivery by executive agencies in Jamaica to that of their counterparts in the public service is one of few scholarly evaluation studies on executive agencies emanating from the Caribbean.

Some of the barriers to policy implementation experienced by agency staff were associated with the relationship between the parent ministry (the principal) and the agency (the agent). Schillemans (2013) observed that as a result of the contractual nature of the relationship between the agency which is the service provider and the ministry and

government, which functions as the purchaser of services, agency theory often serves as the framework for the notion of agencification. Agency or principal-agent theory is premised on autonomy, as it implies that the agent would act as principal (i.e., on behalf of the principal) in certain circumstances (Schillemans, 2013; Shapiro, 2005). As affirmed by Shapiro (2005), within the contractual nature of the principal-agent relationship is the assumption that principals confer a considerable amount of discretion and autonomy to the agents, even as they try to ensure the requisite accountability on the part of the agents. Autonomy is decreed within the legal framework governing the establishment of the agency, with dependence on a particular ministry or department also mandated (Bach & Jann, 2010; Verschuere & Bach, 2011).

The achievement of the balance between autonomy and accountability may present challenges however, as agencies may be vested with authority for decision-making, goal setting, or may have the discretionary space to influence strategic, tactical, or operational processes (Verschuere & Bach, 2011). In some cases, agencies may have decision-making powers that principals may not themselves enjoy (Bach & Jann, 2010). The leeway and discretionary space afforded to agents may give rise to fear and concern over the possible abuse of authority, and may result in an asymmetrical relationship between the principal and agent (Schillemans, 2013). Given some of the examples cited by the participants in the study, some of these challenges and conflicts were evident in the principal-agent relationships that characterized agencies in the Trinidad and Tobago context, and in some instances the contractual arrangement was not well articulated,

which led to the resistance, duality, micro-management, and turf issues recounted by participants.

In the Trinidad and Tobago context, executive agencies are utilized primarily as a strategy to support the implementation of public policy. According to Hupe (2010), the assumption is generally that once a government has made a policy decision, the policy will be implemented; and once the policy-related goals have been formulated in a legally binding manner, implementation would be the next step in the process. Based on this assumption, when the anticipated outputs and outcomes are not forthcoming, failure is generally attributed to faulty implementation (Hupe, 2010). Factors such as capacity and skill of staff, time frame, and the availability of resources may influence implementation, as well as institutional and cultural norms and values (Jones & Schoburgh, 2004). In addition, the factors influencing success or failure in implementation may vary from one policy to another (Simpson & Buabeng, 2013). During the interviews, participants cited instances where resource inadequacies, organizational culture, and contextual challenges served to stymie agency operations and implementation processes.

Policy transfer is the process that occurs when ideas, knowledge, institutional frameworks, policies and programs are selectively and purposively taken from one context and time to the policy development process in another place and time (McCarthy-Jones & Turner, 2011). The transfer process may involve importation the policy in its entirety or of select aspects of the policy; the transfer may be undertaken voluntarily, or may be an imposition; and the actors involved in the transfer process may be representative of the public or private sector, civil society, or international organizations

(McCarthy-Jones & Turner, 2011). In the policy transfer process, successful procedures or good practice from policies or programs implemented in other contexts may be imitated or adopted (Ohemeng & Owusu, 2013). Attention is usually paid to political variances, government and institutional capacity, language, and other factors in the recipient country that might hinder the process (McCarthy-Jones & Turner, 2011).

McCarthy-Jones and Turner (2011) posited that policy processes in developing countries may be society-centered, influenced by the power relations and interactions between social groups, or may be state-centered and shaped by the interactions and perceptions of state officials. The data gathered during the study indicated that the introduction of the agency model into the Trinidad and Tobago context was primarily government-led. Agencification had been used in developed country contexts with varying levels of success (Bach, 2012; Bach & Jann, 2010; Bach et al., 2012), particularly in the United Kingdom, whose examples were emulated, in specific sectors in the Trinidad and Tobago context. While the findings indicate the transfer of the model, no indication of contextual adaptation of the agency model emerged from the evidence.

Pressman and Wildavsky (1984) contended that implementation and evaluation could be viewed as flip sides of the same coin. In explaining this assertion, Pressman and Wildavsky (1984) observed that while the implementation process produces experiences that are questioned and examined during the evaluation process, the questions and issues arising from the evaluation often lead to improved program delivery. In this regard, Pressman and Wildavsky (1984) argued that continuous evaluation is one of the best means of determining a program's effectiveness and contextual suitability. The need for

monitoring and evaluation to be institutionalized in policy implementation processes was mentioned on a number of occasions by interview participants.

The findings arising from the study provided many insights on the strengths and opportunities offered by the use of executive agencies in the implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago. For example, by operating at arm's length and outside of the public service, agencies provide the opportunity to address many issues aimed at improving the lives and wellbeing of the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago. The framework and structure of the executive agency lends itself to the contracting of experts in the specific field (both national and international), and to the formation of teams and working groups comprising a cross-section of experts from various ministries, technical, and educational backgrounds for the purpose of tackling a particular issue or challenge. On the other hand, the agency model is a departure from the traditional public service approach to handling issues, and is met with some resistance. The participants were a rich source of recommendations for improvement, while retaining the popular strategy. The recommendations were in most cases practical and useful, and are worthy of consideration. In short the findings indicate that while there is little evidence of adaptation to the semi-autonomous agency model during transfer, and in spite of the presence of enabling factors, agencies have registered limited success in fulfilling their mandate, as many barriers are encountered and several challenges hamper efforts geared towards successful implementation.

Limitations of the Study

This study took the form of a qualitative case study which explored issues related to the role and function of executive agencies in the implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago with a view to obtaining a deeper understanding of the utilization of the agency model in this context. There were, however, a number of limitations in conducting the study. First, the choice of methodology was determined by the exploratory nature of the study. Based on the chosen methodological approach, the qualitative case study was deemed best suited, given the focus and objectives of the study. Similarly, the data collection and analysis techniques were chosen in accordance with the nature and purpose of the study. These choices were the source of some limitations.

The case study as a strategy of inquiry is, by its nature, narrow or bounded in scope (Stake, 2010). In addition, the sampling strategy employed was purposive and selective, and geared toward the recruitment of candidates who met stringent criteria for participation in the study (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). The initial candidates were chosen on the basis of the criteria, and following the initial interviews, the snowball sampling technique was utilized for the recruitment of additional candidates who met the selection criteria, based on recommendations received from the initial respondents (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). Participants may be viewed as few in number, but a wealth of information was gathered during the in-depth interviews. The similarity of responses to key questions became evident from the outset particularly with respect to the contributions of the agencies, the enabling, and constraining factors. The decision was taken to move to the analysis phase after the tenth interview as new information was no

longer forthcoming. Another limitation arose from the data sources for the study, for which the review of publicly available documentation and qualitative interviews served as the main sources of data. More observation of participants in their operational environment was proposed, but this was not feasible given the challenges with agency accommodation and the tight timelines for completion of this exploratory study. As a result observation was limited to the few contextual snapshots facilitated by the face-to-face interviews.

These areas may be seen as weak points in the study, but in keeping with the qualitative tradition, the purpose of the study is the transferability of the findings to other similar contexts, and not to achieve generalizability. Checks were put in place at every stage of the process to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the research findings. In this regard, my prior involvement at administrative and programmatic level in the development field in the Caribbean was disclosed from the outset. The credentials of the participants were checked prior to their selection as potential candidates and then verified during the interview process to ensure their eligibility on the basis of the selection criteria. All participants agreed to and signed the informed consent documents prior to their participation in the interviews, and in addition, the salient points concerning my role as the researcher, the voluntary nature of their participation, the right to withdraw from the process at any point during the interview, and the potential risk involved, and the absence of any monetary benefit or compensation were reiterated before the interviews commenced. Potential bias was addressed through the triangulation of data sources and member checking that were rigorously applied throughout the research process.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study on the role of executive agencies in the implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago was exploratory in nature. It was intended to obtain a deeper understanding of the use of executive agencies as a strategy for the policy implementation in the Trinidad and Tobago context.

Practical Recommendations

As the findings of this study demonstrated, while there are several agencies in operation in Trinidad and Tobago, there is a dearth of evidence on the justification for their use in policy processes. Sulle (2010) observed that while there is evidence of the infusion of the concepts of NPM and agencification in developing countries, limited empirical data are available on the experiences of individual countries with the transfer and implementation of the strategies. This observation is also applicable to the Caribbean context, and there is need for further scholarly research on the use of agencification in Caribbean countries. Documentation of the experiences would provide useful information that could inform future decisions by policy makers both in the country concerned and in similar contexts.

It is noteworthy that Howlett (2012) observed that insufficient attention has been paid in past research to differentiating the various types of policy success or failure. In this regard, Howlett (2012) called for more assessment of the conditions under which success and failure are likely to occur, and to providing prescriptions that might increase the chances of success in future policy processes. This exploratory case study highlighted some experiences in different policy areas where an executive agency was created to

support the implementation process in Trinidad and Tobago. In the course of the interviews, participants provided invaluable insights and recommendations for improving agency operations based on their own experience, and drawing on their expertise. These recommendations are worthy of consideration and may be useful in the design and conceptualization of agencies and their mandates.

Recommendations for Further Research

In recent times there have been few scholarly studies emanating from Caribbean scholars with a focus on the experiences pertaining to the use of the agencification strategy in public policy processes. In this regard, this study was intended to rekindle interest in this particular thematic area, and also to build on the pioneering scholarly research conducted in the late 1990s and early 2000s by Caribbean scholars including but not limited to Bissessar, (2002), Jones (1992, 2001), Jones and Schoburgh (2004) and McKoy (2009). In spite of the absence of empirical evidence and scholarly assessment of the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and risks associated with the continued utilization of this strategy, the practice is ongoing not just in the Trinidad and Tobago context, but in other countries of the English-speaking Caribbean as well.

Acknowledging McKoy's (2009) view that the pragmatic approach is premised on adaptability, and involves taking corrective measures, and the replication of successes, and taking into consideration Pressman and Wildavsky's (1984) affirmation that evaluation research provides the means of addressing issues and generating data that could serve to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of policy implementation, the need to fill the gap in empirical research on the use of agencies in the Caribbean context

is being highlighted. There is need for scholarly evaluation studies on the utilization of executive agencies as a strategy for policy implementation, clearly demonstrating the benefits that have been derived to date from the utilization of the strategy, the areas of success or failure, and providing evidence-based recommendations for improvement. On this basis, the viability of the use of agencies as a strategy for the implementation of public policy in the countries of the English-speaking Caribbean may be determined.

Implications for Social Change

Public policy is generally intended to improve the lives and wellbeing of the citizenry and residents of a particular location. The study's contribution to bringing about positive social change arises from the examination of issues pertinent to the implementation of public policy in the context of Trinidad and Tobago. It is hoped that the findings of the study facilitate a better understanding of policy processes involving the use of executive agencies that operate at arm's length from their principals, and provide insights on the barriers and challenges to success that may be encountered in the policy transfer process.

The critical discussion on the use of executive agencies as a strategy to support the implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago, premised on previous research, and grounded in the evidence gathered during the data collection process, should serve to focus attention on the need to actively seek strategies that are suited to the local context, and which can be adapted so as to overcome the context-specific challenges that may emerge during policy implementation (Bissessar, 2002). Given the socio-economic and cultural similarities of countries in the English-speaking Caribbean, the

research findings, even though grounded in the experiences of Trinidad and Tobago with the utilization of executive agencies in policy implementation, should also be of significance and relevance to the other states in the Caribbean region.

Conclusion

Agencification may be regarded as synonymous with terms such as delegation and decentralization and is usually used in reference to the creation of semi-autonomous entities that are tasked with the implementation of policy, or functions that would normally be provided by the public service, particularly in the interest of public sector reform (McKoy, 2009; van Thiel & Yesilkagit, 2011). The use of agencification as in the context of public policy and administration was popularized in the 1980s and 1990s, during the era of New Public Management approach (Gilardi & Maggetti, 2011; Pollitt et al., 2001; Sulle, 2010). In the developing country context, the promotion of the notion of agencification and other strategies within the NPM approach is usually associated with influence exerted by international financial institutions as part of the public sector reform programs advocated by these institutions (Bissessar, 2002; Sulle, 2010). The reforms were intended to create a slimmer and more efficient and effective public sector (Sulle, 2010).

Manning (2001) contended that in comparison to early predictions, there are relatively few aspects of NPM to be found in developing countries. This assertion may be juxtaposed with the continued use of one particular strategy—agencification—in the Trinidad and Tobago context, and also in some countries the countries of the English-speaking Caribbean, such as Barbados, Guyana, and Jamaica. Manning (2001) also

acknowledged that there is little evidence of evaluation of the NPM strategies, noting that most critiques of the use of NPM in the developing countries were based on a priori reasoning as opposed to empirical assessment. Manning (2001) observed that the logic was that the NPM model was unsuitable in the context of developing countries and therefore did not work well, but in the absence of systematic evaluation of the outcomes, there was a reliance on conjecture and anecdotal information concerning outputs and future direction. The absence of documented empirical information on the role and function of agencies in public policy implementation processes in Trinidad and Tobago underscores the need for evidence-based, scholarly evaluation of the outcomes of the utilization of the agencification strategy in the Caribbean context. It is therefore hoped that this study serves to stimulate further interest in researching the phenomenon of agencification and its utilization and applicability for use in the sphere of public policy in the developing country context of Trinidad and Tobago, and the other countries of the English-speaking Caribbean.

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Appendix A: Invitation to Participate in Study

Mr XXX

Dear -----,

Requesting your participation in my dissertation research study

I am a doctoral candidate in Walden University's Public Policy and Administration Program, and, I am working on my dissertation study, which looks at the use of executive agencies as a strategy for supporting the implementing public policy in Trinidad and Tobago. The main criterion for participating in the study is active involvement in public policy processes in Trinidad and Tobago. Since your name is published on the website of one such agency, I am contacting to see whether you would consent to participate in the study.

Your participation would be entirely on a voluntary basis, and you may opt to withdraw at any time. By participating in the study, and sharing your own expertise and experience in policy processes, you will have the opportunity to contribute to enhancing the knowledge and scholarly information concerning the implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago..

I look forward to hearing from you soon, and to the opportunity to have a more in-depth discussion on the study and its objectives. You may contact me by e-mail at sandra.agarrat@waldenu.edu, or by telephone at 1 (868) 686-9029.

Kind regards,

Sandra Wall Agarrat
Ph D Candidate
Public Policy and Administration (Policy Analysis)
Walden University

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. Were you involved in the implementation of public policy in Trinidad and Tobago that involved the establishment of an executive agency to support implementation? If yes, in which policy specifically? What exactly was your role?
2. In your opinion why were the provisions mandating the creation of executive agency to support the implementation of that particular policy introduced?
3. Do you know whether information on the experiences of other countries with the creation of executive agencies in policy processes was sourced prior to the decision to create the particular agency under reference?
4. In your opinion, who championed the decision to create the agency in the policy processes in which you were involved?
5. How influential were the views of politicians or government officials in the decision to create the executive agency?
6. What about international financial or development agencies – in your opinion did they play a role in the decision-making process concerning the establishment of the executive agency in the particular policy processes in which you were involved? To what extent, if any?
7. Do you recall how soon after the passing of the particular policy or piece of legislation was the agency established?

8. In what ways has the agency contributed to the implementation and roll out of the policy based on your knowledge?
9. What in your opinion have been the main constraints faced by the agency?
10. How is the agency financed? Does it have an adequate amount of financial resources to carry out to fulfill its mandate?
11. Is the agency adequately staffed to fulfill its role? What gaps can you identify?
12. In your opinion, what have been the key areas of success?
13. Is the agency directly affiliated to a parent organization in the public sector? If yes, how do the agency's officials relate to their principals in the parent organization?
14. In your opinion has the agency been fulfilling its mandate as specified in the provisions? Has the executive agency been an effective implementation strategy for the policy in which you were involved?
15. Were you familiar with the term agencification prior to this interview? What does the term signify for you?
16. Agencification implies certain features. For example, agencies tend to be semi-autonomous entities within the state apparatus, but there is structural separation from the parent department, which has responsibility for the budgetary and operational objectives for the agency (Bach et al., 2012; Pollitt et al., 2001; Sulle, 2010). Were these features characteristic of the agency with which you are familiar?

17. Based on your own experience and involvement with the particular agency under reference, would you recommend the creation of an executive agency to support policy implementation in Trinidad and Tobago in the future?
18. What alternatives or recommendations for improved operations, if any, would you propose in relation to the particular agency discussed?