

Abstract

## Parliament in the Age of Information and Communication Technology

### “ The Role of ICT in Parliamentary Affairs: Enhancing Confidence and Participation ”

The paper seeks to give an account of the incidence and diffusion of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the parliamentary affairs of Trinidad and Tobago. While there have been key innovations in office automation, electronic campaigning, e-government and networking in representative politics and the recent “live” broadcasting of proceedings, there still exist ICT barriers to the fuller adaptation of technology as a resource to improving the way politics work within the House. Indeed there is a little assessment of the range and quality of service that are available.

Historical and crown colony institutional and cultural forces continue to impede the absorption of ICT in a closeted and bureaucratized public service system. The forces blocking ICT are no different from wider obstacles to public sector reform. Parliament’s “nodality” is relatively weak given the associated challenges of cost, scope and citizens’ demand for ICT. However, the paper ends by arguing that in a composite model of US based ICT driven political representation and the procedural based Westminster model there can emerge a productive diffusion of ICT that works at both the constituency and central levels. This augurs well to reverse decades of high political apathy and citizen disengagement from politics and public affairs.

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